The Heritage of British Bhangra: Popular music heritage, cultural memory, and cultural identity.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Gurdeep John Singh Khabra.

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In memory of Charan Singh & Nasib Kaur.

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Abstract

Authorised narratives of British popular music history have been deployed as representations of national identity by a range of institutions and individuals. The London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony, for example, presented a range of musical artists and songs that had been selected to represent aspects of British cultural identity to an international audience. The following year, a speech delivered by British Prime Minister David Cameron cited examples of British popular music in order to demonstrate British cultural successes in an international field. This thesis argues that authorised narratives such as these have failed to reflect the diversity of music cultures in the UK, drawing upon literature that highlights the concerns of ethnic minority groups who are frequently faced with exclusion from mainstream heritage narratives, and on a case study on British Bhangra music.

British Bhangra is a musical genre closely associated with the BrAsian community, and in this thesis it is used to explore the relationship between popular music heritage and multiculturalism and address the following research questions: How have individuals involved with the British Bhangra music industry and audience groups responded to authorised narratives (Smith, 2006) of British popular music? How has British Bhangra been constructed as heritage – whether authorised, un-authorised or self-authorised – and where is this taking place and by whom?

In order to address these questions, the thesis adopts two methodological approaches: qualitative research in the form of ethnographic fieldwork, and the analysis of particular musical works produced by British Bhangra artists and promoted as heritage – such as songs featuring in audience-constructed online charts attempting to define the '50 Best British Bhangra albums'. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in three areas in England: Bradford and Leeds in the North-East of England, Birmingham, and Tower Hamlets in East London, and enabled an exploration of British Bhangra heritage sites and practices in each location. Face-to-face and email interviews were also conducted with artists, music promoters and archivists involved with the British Bhangra music industry as well as with Bhangra audiences, and published interviews from print and online sources were consulted. This

helped to examine British Bhangra heritage from the perspective of the artist, audience and music industry workers involved.

At the same time specific British Bhangra songs were analysed in order to explore musical constructions of national identity and cultural memory and related concepts, such as 'homeland' or 'authenticity', both of which emerged as highly valued by British Bhangra audiences and artists. Attempts by artists and music journalists to construct a 'canon' of British Bhangra music frequently involve efforts to evaluate these musical works in terms of their perceived ability to express authenticity, or to evoke connections with a rural Punjab. The music is analysed in relation to such debates, and the way in which particular artists and songs have become enshrined within British Bhangra music heritage practices is explored.

Introduction

This thesis contributes to existing knowledge in the field of popular music heritage and in the study of British Bhangra music. The research for the thesis was conducted as part of POPID, a three year research project entitled Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity, which was funded by the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) Joint Research Programme (2010-2013). The connection to the project is indicated by the subtitle of the thesis, but it should be noted that throughout the thesis the focus is on popular music heritage. The POPID project aimed to explore the relationship between popular music and contemporary renderings of cultural identity and national cultural heritage in a pan-European context. Its overall aim, as designated in the project's mission statement, was twofold: '(i) to assess the role played by local popular music, as a mass mediated cultural form, in the negotiation of cultural identity in a local, national, and European context; and (ii) to specify how the European music industry can feed into Europeans audiences' ongoing connections to local popular music heritage in a way that continues to be meaningful for local audiences.' (POPID, 2013). POPID was a collaborative project that involved comparative research in four countries: England, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Austria. A research partnership between four universities - the University of Liverpool, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna - enabled this comparative research to take place. The England research team based at the University of Liverpool comprised me, Professor Sara Cohen and Dr Les Roberts.

Through discussions with project partners, methodological and theoretical frameworks for researching the nature of popular music heritages in the unique cultural contexts of each host country were developed. This thesis addresses the aims of the POPID project by using the music of a particular diasporic community in England as a case study; namely, British Bhangra music, a style of music prominently produced and consumed by members of BrAsian communities in locations across the UK[1]. The focus on diaspora and minority heritage in this thesis helps uncover the ways in which different popular music heritages function in the context of England – and primarily the ways in which local expressions of heritage contribute to representations of cultural identity and cultural memory.

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[1] The terms 'British Bhangra' and 'British Asian' imply a broad scope that encompasses the entirety of the UK – however this thesis maintains a focus on the popular music of England throughout. Further discussion of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' can be found in Chapter 2.

Three research questions guide the thesis: How have individuals involved with the British Bhangra music industry and audience groups responded to authorised narratives (Smith, 2006) of British popular music that have failed to reflect the significance of British Bhangra music as part of BrAsian cultural identity? How has British Bhangra been constructed as heritage – whether authorised, un-authorised or self-authorised – and where is this taking place and by whom? And what kind of British Bhangra music has been categorised as heritage?

It is important to note that this thesis focuses predominantly upon British Bhangra music, rather than the music of the BrAsian community more broadly. The works of 'non-Bhangra' artists such as Asian Dub Foundation, rap group Fun-Da-Mental, and indie band Cornershop, are therefore not within the scope of the thesis. Dealt with extensively elsewhere, particularly in publications such as *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* (Sharma et al., 1996) and *Brimful of Asia* (Hyder, 2004), the development of non-Bhangra music within the BrAsian community has presented alternative ways of negotiating notions of 'heritage' and homeland. The diversity of BrAsian music cultures is clearly evident, but British Bhangra music is intentionally framed as a primary object of research here for a number of reasons. The music of British Bhangra artists has rarely been afforded the same level of attention by scholars as that of more overtly politicised artists such as Asian Dub Foundation. Among the primary sources that explore the themes evoked around British Bhangra music, Kalra (2002) explores themes of migration and loss in the lyrics of 1970s and 1980s Bhangra music; Dudrah (2002c) provides a reading of British Bhangra with regards to diasporic identity formation; and Roy (2010) explores how globalisation has impacted the production and reception of Bhangra music worldwide. While British Bhangra music is indeed a 'part' of the musical output of the BrAsian community, it is certainly the case that artists and audiences feel strongly that the genre demands its own cultural space and, to an extent, a separation from other genres in the form of distinct music charts and spaces for community discussion. This becomes clearer in Chapter 4, which explores the discourse around particular music charts that have become significant for British Bhangra artists and audiences.

The work of Rodney Harrison, which discusses the nature of 'multicultural and minority heritage' (2010), is significant in helping to describe the different structures and tensions that define minority heritage in contrast to authorised heritage narratives. Laura-Jane Smith's concept of the 'authorised heritage discourse' (2006), which she defines as the way national institutions tacitly impose particular boundaries of exclusion upon mainstream heritage narratives, can also be invoked and applied in the context of popular music. I

propose that this conceptualisation, which takes into account the multifarious work of different national institutions, is helpful for thinking about how different constructions of British identity come into being. It also provides a useful way to explain how local, smaller-scale institutions (that still take an interest in 'producing' heritage narratives) can function alongside their national, mainstream counterparts. Importantly, the ways in which audience groups construct narratives of their own represents a significant disjuncture from the more typical structures that engender dominant heritage narratives to come into being. The use of the internet in this context, particularly British Bhangra fan websites, is given in-depth treatment in order to uncover how audiences are able to actively produce their own heritage narratives.

Often these narratives clash with those narratives produced by more 'authorised' actors, who within the field of British Bhangra, I have defined as music journalists and artists. Allowing for a global discourse of Bhangra to develop, the ability Bhangra fan communities now have to immediately discuss new releases, as well as to actively appraise and re-appraise past releases, has enabled vibrant online resources dedicated to British Bhangra, as well as Bhangra artists located elsewhere in the diaspora and in India. Music audiences from across the global South Asian diaspora – primarily centred within the global Punjabi community that Anjali Gera Roy describes as the 'panjabiyat' (2010:199) – take part in these online exchanges. Online users rate, comment, and promote new music, and with many of the album and single sales within the British Bhangra music industry now taking place online, these discussions take on wider significances for artists and record labels. Online Bhangra music charts, both those claiming to be 'official' (such as the UK Asian Download Chart) and those taking reference from alternative sources such as audience votes (SimplyBhangra Online Top 10), provide focal points for the community – providing artists with particular goals, and providing audiences with ways to interact with and contribute to the discourse around British Bhangra music. The hierarchy constructed by British Bhangra audiences who take part in these online debates is discussed in relation to the work of Matt Hills (2002), who argues that fans can 'compete' when demonstrating knowledge or skill within their fields. In this way, individuals or groups who have established their 'mastery' of British Bhangra, or who possess superior access to artists, would prove more influential as part of the group discussions that take place on these websites. The importance of internet forums and websites such as SimplyBhangra to the heritage of British Bhangra is highlighted in this thesis, and their successes are underlined in order to demonstrate the ways in which online heritage practices appear to be taking on dominant positions for artists and music audiences.

A point that should be stressed is that what can be defined as 'authorised' is a distinctly subjective matter. While a heritage narrative of popular music produced by an institution such as English Heritage, or reproduced at a highly publicised event such as the London 2012 Olympic Opening ceremony, may indeed be considered 'authoritative' by a range of different actors and music audiences – other music audiences may have differing views over the legitimacy of particular institutions, particularly with regard to regional or locally significant aspects of popular music. For example, the high profile and national recognition of an institution such as the Performing Rights Society may afford them a large degree of respect among particular audiences with regard to any 'heritage work' they take part in. However fans of music genres that rarely use the Official UK Charts as a barometer of success, and which have their own more nuanced and difficult to record measures of artist profile may not look to national institutions for any level of definitive comment.

Using British Bhangra as an example, national radio stations such as the BBC Asian Network do hold great significance for many British Bhangra artists – owing to the potential of radio airplay for artists who may be unable to access other radio stations, as well as the reputations held by a number of the station's prominent DJs as knowledgeable figures in the world of British Bhangra (including DJs who are former British Bhangra artists themselves). In this way, the BBC Asian Network is in a sense a 'more authorised' informant than, for example, the Performing Rights Society, with regard to audience perceptions of the respective heritage narratives expressed by these institutions. The opinions and judgements of individuals who have worked within the British Bhangra industry – as well as the prominence of the medium through which they are expressing these narratives (ie. the BBC Asian Network) - are factors in making these particular heritage narratives of more significance to British Bhangra music audiences.

Representing a shift from analyses of British Bhangra music that have sought to reproduce heritage narratives, as opposed to questioning their origins and the manner of their construction, this thesis addresses the nature of minority heritage within the field of popular music. The way in which these narratives are constructed, and the extent to which they interact with more authorised narratives, constitutes a large portion of the original work presented here. With the inclusion of ethnographic work that attempts to revisit a number of 'heritage sites' significant within the field of British Bhangra, particularly in UK urban centres home to large South Asian communities such as Birmingham and Bradford, the thesis closely examines how these sites are memorialised, and through which mediums this memorialisation takes place. The recording studios at Abbey Road in London, and famous

music venues such as The Roundhouse, are often recalled as significant sites in the history of British popular music – primarily due to their associations with prominent artists, including The Beatles and Pink Floyd, and their continued relevance to modern artists who record or perform there. In the case of Abbey Road Studios, the notorious pedestrian crossing outside the studio, as seen on the cover of The Beatles' *Abbey Road* album, has itself been a tourist site for many years. Indeed the Abbey Road Studios website is home to a 'Crossing Cam', a 24-hour live webcam that allows visitors to the website to see the crossing in real time.

Inevitably the camera shows groups of tourists around the crossing at most daytime hours, and users are even able to 'search for their crossing shots' – looking through a database of archived webcam images to find the moment at which they crossed themselves (presumably in case they were unable to find a willing participant to photograph them at the time). While perhaps somewhat of an outlier, in the sense that the reputation this crossing has developed seems particularly remarkable, especially considering that its prominence as a sight of tourist intrigue is not especially invited by local authorities (the crossing has always been fully functional), the kinds of audience attention centred around architectural features or aspects of the built environment such as this can be seen as representative of the allure of popular music heritage sites. Observing some of the sites that have become enshrined as significant within the world of British Bhangra, this thesis explores issues surrounding the notion of 'music heritage tours', a number of which are now well established within several of the UK's major cities. More broadly, the ways in which individual local authorities have sought to maximise the profitably of music tourism sites in their own districts, something prominently reported upon by the UKMusic organisation in their national report on music tourism (2013), are discussed and analysed with respect to their effects on the nature of music heritage. With economic considerations such as attracting tourism now a prominent part of the work many local councils are looking towards in order to replace depleted industry or make up for cuts to funding during a period of global financial instability, the place of music tourism within this milieu is interesting to observe – particularly considering how audience groups themselves often take part in producing these tourism sites, or in memorialising heritage sites in their own ways.

Chapter 1 engages with debates around BrAsian identity and provides a review of literature germane to the study of popular music and heritage. BrAsian identity is viewed as a contested construction, and as it is a term used throughout the thesis, the particular communities that it refers to is made clear. Other conceptual ideas are introduced, including

Laura-Jane Smith's description of the 'authorised heritage discourse', and the work of Roshi Naidoo and Rodney Harrison on aspects of minority and diaspora heritage.

Chapter 2 engages with national representations of music as cultural heritage, such as the presence of popular music at national cultural events including the London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony. An outline of national expressions of popular music heritage in England is presented, representing the milieu in which local expressions of heritage co-exist. The way in which music tourism initiatives have engaged with popular music heritage at national and local levels is also explored.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of fieldwork conducted in three primary locations in England - Bradford and Leeds in the North-East of England, Birmingham, and Tower Hamlets in East London. An exploration of British Bhangra heritage sites and practices is detailed in each location, demonstrating the ways British Bhangra artists and audiences are engaging with heritage in ways that aim to address the failure of mainstream heritage narratives to represent their musical style.

Chapter 4 explores audience narratives of British Bhangra music heritage through research and interviews conducted on British Bhangra fan community websites such as SimplyBhangra.com and Chakdey. In particular, traits that audience groups, artists and music journalists value as part of British Bhangra music, and utilise when constructing British Bhangra as music heritage, are identified through an analysis of interview data and online discourse. The presentation of research closely tied to the British Bhangra music industry, including audience interviews and online ethnography, aims to interrogate the ways in which the construction of popular music heritages and memorialisation is a meaningful activity within this diasporic group.

Chapter 5 looks in detail at particular British Bhangra songs that have been presented as music heritage by music journalists and audience groups. Of particular concern here is how these memorialised works musically represent traits valued by audiences, artists and music journalists, as identified in Chapter 4. What is taking place musically that has resulted in these particular songs being validated and authorised by audience groups or music journalists as the musical heritage of British Bhangra? A closer analysis of British Bhangra music itself focussed on British Bhangra music from different eras, aims to interrogate notions of national identity that emerge as part of institutional, audience and artist discourse. The songs chosen for analysis have been constructed as British Bhangra heritage in various ways. Online fan communities, music journalists and artists have been involved in the production of a number of 'Best of British Bhangra' charts, identifying key artists, albums

and songs since the development of British Bhangra as a musical style in the late 1960s. These charts provide a wealth of information on the musical works valued by both producers and consumers of British Bhangra music, and commentary on the charts in print and online sources provides an insight into why these works are valued. Particular attention is given to concepts that emerge within this discourse as significant criteria for evaluating British Bhangra music, whilst analysis of these musical texts enables a focus on how British Bhangra artists musically and sonically produce meaning, and how particular stylistic signifiers tie into representations of authenticity, tradition and homeland.

Methodology

To address the research questions outlined in the introduction, the thesis adopts two methodological approaches: 1) qualitative research in the form of ethnographic fieldwork, and 2) textual analysis of particular musical works produced by British Bhangra artists and promoted as heritage[2]. Fieldwork was conducted at three primary locations in England that were chosen for several reasons. To begin with, an approach developed by the POPID research partners involved focusing on a number of locations within each country, in order to gain insight into heritage practices in particular localities. As well as being spread across England[3], the locations chosen here (West Yorkshire, Birmingham, and Tower Hamlets in London) all host large South Asian migrant communities with distinct ethnic identities (while being by no means homogenous): most prominently these are Bradford's Pakistani community, Birmingham's Punjabi community and East London's Bengali community. Fieldwork at these locations was conducted in order to assess how British Bhangra is being constructed as heritage in different regional contexts. The presence of different ethnic identities in these locations allows me to explore the significance (or lack thereof) of British Bhangra as part of these ethnically varied communities. Chapter 3 (Locating Bhangra in the UK) presents the findings of this fieldwork.

Research conducted on the online spaces of British Bhangra supplements fieldwork conducted in English cities. Owing to the importance of online networking to the present-day

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[2] These include songs featuring in audience-constructed online charts attempting to define the '50 Best British Bhangra albums', for example.

[3] The cities of Bradford and Leeds are in West Yorkshire in the North East of England; Birmingham is in the West Midlands; and East London is in South of England. The goal here is not to essentialise these regions by the chosen cities, but to zoom in on the specificities of British Bhangra heritage practices taking place in each location.

functioning of the British Bhangra music industry – as a mode of consumption, tool of promotion and portal for discussion – Chapter 4 (Online Bhangra Communities) focuses on how online fan communities are taking art in heritage practices centred around community fansites, including SimplyBhangra and Chakdey.

Textual analyses of songs that have been presented as examples of heritage by music journalists and audience groups interrogate the process of heritage construction taking place here. Why have these particular songs been selected above others as representative of, for example, the 'Best of British Bhangra' – and is it possible to identify particular musical traits shared among particularly highly valued 'heritage' songs? Chapter 5 utilises four case studies of songs that have been, in various ways, nominated as canonical examples of British Bhangra.

Why bring these two methodological approaches – ethnography and textual analysis - together, rather than focusing on one approach throughout the thesis? The answer to this question relates to how this project developed and my reaction to particular observations early in the research process. At the outset of the research project, interviews were selected as the appropriate method to address my research questions, which are repeated here: 1) How have individuals involved with the British Bhangra music industry and audience groups responded to authorised narratives of British popular music that have failed to reflect the significance of British Bhangra music as part of BrAsian cultural identity? And 2) How has British Bhangra been constructed as heritage – whether authorised, un-authorised or self-authorised[4] – and where is this taking place and by whom?

Interviews with audience groups and individuals working in the British Bhangra music industry (artists, promoters, and journalists) helped to reveal the ways in which British Bhangra has been constructed as heritage by these groups by enabling a direct dialogue. Interviews are also integral to fulfilling the aims of POPID, which proposes taking sample groups from different regions of the country in order to access a range of participants not limited to one particular geographical location. It became apparent from my initial research that online spaces – particularly community fansites – had become increasingly significant centres for the discussion and appraisal of British Bhangra music. For this reason it was decided to highlight the importance of these online spaces by firstly, engaging with users of the websites as interview participants, and secondly, providing detail on the role of these websites in constructing different heritage narratives of British Bhangra.

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[4] These terms are explained and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

My background and perspective as both an ethnomusicologist and a practicing musician prompted me to explore the musical detail of British Bhangra in more depth. The decision to include textual analysis as part of this research project occurred after my initial fieldwork trips. Upon conducting research into the existing heritage narratives of British Bhangra – which encompassed audience-participatory narratives constructed online, journalistic articles memorialising particular musical works and texts such as *Birmingham: Bhangra and Beyond* (Dudrah, 2007) – it became clear that particular artists, albums and songs had attained a high degree of respect among audiences and journalists. Consequently, a number of songs that had frequently been named as part of these narratives were identified in order to assess whether there were any musical features shared among them that had led individuals to position them as part of a British Bhangra heritage narrative.

The two core methodologies outlined here – ethnographic research (online and offline), and textual analysis - constitute the two major strands of this thesis and are closely entwined. What follows in this section is a detailed discussion of how they were employed.

Ethnography

Ethnographic research techniques, specifically face-to-face interview and participant observation, were utilised to uncover examples of British Bhangra music heritage practices, as well as allow music audience and artist narratives to emerge. While long-term engagement with a particular musical community (as in the work of Mantle Hood and Clifford Geertz, for example) was not a part of my methodological approach here, several fieldwork trips to English cities that are significant as centres for British Bhangra helped to verify and detail the musical routes and roots that characterise the genre.

I visited Birmingham in April 2012 accompanied by researcher and archivist Jez Collins, and photographer Gursharanpal Singh (known as Boy Chana). Both Jez and Boy Chana are involved in heritage and archival work themselves – Jez having developed the online 'Birmingham Music Archive' and making the documentary *Made in Birmingham: Reggae Punk Bhangra* released in 2010, and Boy Chana possessing a collection of photography documenting British Bhangra in Birmingham. This trip encompassed a walking tour of Soho Road, a part of Birmingham highlighted by both Rajinder Dudrah (2007) and the organisation Punch Records as being central to the history of British Bhangra. The purpose of the trip was to observe particular sites – venues and music shops for example – along that

road that have been highlighted as historically significant to British Bhangra music, and to conduct interviews regarding the heritage of British Bhangra with individuals in Birmingham.

In July 2012 I visited Tower Hamlets in East London and spoke with Ansar Ullah of the Swadhinata Trust. The Swadhinata Trust is a community group that aims to promote Bengali history and heritage amongst young people, and has engaged in work detailing the heritage of the music of the British Bengali community in Tower Hamlets. The purpose of this trip was to ascertain whether British Bhangra music had any significance for this particular community, and whether it featured as part of the heritage work undertaken either by the Swadhinata Trust or by local individuals.

In February 2013 I visited Oriental Arts in Bradford and spoke with founder Champak Lambachia. Oriental Arts and Champak have been involved in promoting British Bhangra in the North East of England since 1976, and are particularly well known for organising the Bradford Mela, which first took place in 1988. This visit allowed me to utilise the archival materials collected by Oriental Arts, as well as to gain a perspective on the heritage of British Bhangra in the North of England.

These trips focused on how British Bhangra is present in these locations - both historically and currently. In this way audience narratives are explored in more detail, as well as providing examples of how British Bhangra has become a part of the experiences of communities of varied ethnicities. Interview participants were identified in each fieldwork location through working with key organisations or individuals in each location – Oriental Arts in Bradford, Boy Chana in Birmingham and the Swadhinata Trust in London. Working with these organisations and individuals allowed me to access particular resources related to music heritage – for example, the Swadhinata Trust provided me access to a collection of interviews conducted with Bengali musicians, while Oriental Arts possessed a large collection of British Bhangra posters and flyers.

In researching the online spaces of British Bhangra, I focussed on two websites in particular – SimplyBhangra and Chakdey. Both of these websites have large communities of users and are updated on a daily basis with news of the latest British Bhangra music releases. Often these websites run features or articles related to appraising the music of British Bhangra, and these are the processes I focus on in Chapter 4. I communicated with writers and community members who use these websites. At first this took place informally by email in order to raise awareness of my research project, and after initial contact I asked for volunteers to take part in a structured questionnaire on the heritage of British Bhangra music

(Appendix A). Eleven website users responded to express their interest in the study, with five proceeding to complete and return the questionnaire.

When conducting face-to-face interviews I invoked Spradley's important work entitled *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979). Following his lead, I was explicit about my purpose when interviewing. From the outset I made my intentions and goals clear to all participants. I was also especially careful to follow established guidelines[5] concerning ethical issues and matters of representation, particularly as this study includes participants of varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. Eight face-to-face interviews were conducted in total, and these took place in a range of public and private locations agreed upon by both me and the interviewee. I conducted interviews both in Punjabi and English. Interviews were relatively unstructured and tended to take the form of conversations, apart from a number of questions I had prepared such as: 'which artists or songs are most important to you, and why?' And 'what do you think is the heritage of British Bhangra?' All interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines outlined by the University of Liverpool. Interview participants were required to provide either written or spoken (recorded) consent for their interviews to be drawn on in the thesis and other research outputs, and the details of the project were made clear to all participants in advance of the interviews in order to allow them to decide whether they wanted to participate and give their informed consent. Participants were offered the opportunity to use a pseudonym of their own choosing if they wished to protect their anonymity, although none chose to do so. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time, in which case any information of a confidential or sensitive nature would not be included in written outputs.

Music Analysis

An analysis of British Bhangra music, in the form of four case studies, attempts to further scholarship that has thus far neglected to explore the impact of the sounds and rhythms utilised by early British Bhangra artists, although there have been studies focusing on lyrical analyses such as Kalra (2000) and Roy (2010). Adam Krims (2000) details an approach to musical analysis that, as well as exploring the nature of musical sound that forms musical works, emphasises an engagement with the existing discourse around particular

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[5] All research conducted as part of this thesis adheres to ethical guidelines established as part of the POPID project and approved by the University of Liverpool.

musical genres and songs – including that of the media, audiences and artists. In this way an analysis of popular music as text is contextualised by the debates and discussions about aspects of music important to those involved in both its production and consumption. Rather than detail only the harmonic, melodic, and textural components of British Bhangra music, I also furnish these analyses with reference to extra-musical details such as audience responses to the songs or, where possible, the intentions of artists as expressed in interview.

Scholars who have written texts on British Bhangra music have most often approached the topic from a position of sociological inquiry (see Huq 2003, Dudrah 2002b and Kalra 2000), and while the music of British Bhangra is often discussed, rarely is the question of 'what is taking place musically?' addressed. In *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, Krims argues that scholarship that fails to recognise the importance of musical organisation in rap music misses some of the 'cultural workings' of the style:

> I focus on what seems to me a relatively neglected but crucial aspect of rap music's cultural force: namely, the particularity of its sounds. The central thesis offered in this book – that what I call the 'musical poetics' of rap music must be taken seriously, because they are taken seriously by many people in the course of its production and consumption – is meant partially as a corrective to the vast majority of rap and hip-hop scholarship which takes the music seriously but gives little, if any, attention to its musical organisation. Such approaches, I will argue, miss some of its cultural workings. (2000:3).

The aforementioned studies of British Bhangra music used interviews with audiences and musicians in order to consider the issues of diaspora identity, musical hybridity and multiculturalism. While attempts are made to discuss the aspects of musical fusion that have often defined British Bhangra since its inception, scholars have not attempted to look more closely at particular musical works of British Bhangra in order to help define what is taking place musically. It should be noted that scholars tend to discuss British Bhangra in terms of its status as a 'hybrid' form of music, but as the discussion of Hyder (2014) and Bhabha (1994) in Chapter 5 makes clear, British Bhangra can be more appropriately termed a 'syncretic' style of music. Problematically, the term 'hybrid' can suggest the mixing of two or more cultural forms and is predicated on the notion that these cultural forms are in some way 'pure'. Gilroy summarises his anxiety towards the term 'hybrid' succinctly: ''Who the fuck wants purity? […] the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior

purities […] I think there isn't any purity; there isn't any anterior purity […] that's why I try not to use the word hybrid […] Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails' (1993:54-5). To presume that British Bhangra were dependent in any way upon a 'pure' Punjabi folk music tradition would be disingenuous, and Schreffler (2011) in particular offers much to contest any notion of this.

While the depth of insight provided by sociological inquiry is thorough and substantial with regards to British Bhangra, a closer engagement with musical detail will enable scrutiny of how British Bhangra artists actually engage with different musical forms. This thesis aims to address the underutilisation of musicological approaches in the study of British Bhangra by providing an analysis of the musical detail in four different British Bhangra songs, ranging from the early works of groups such as Bhujhangy Group in the 1970s, to more recent British Bhangra from the 1990s and 2000s. In this way a better indication can be given as to the extent that musicians were adopting ideas from different musical styles, in a way that moves beyond the surface-level descriptions of musical detail present in existing texts that discuss British Bhangra.

The existence of multiple trends and stylistic variations within the genre of British Bhangra also introduces a number of points of interest. A major stylistic fork within British Bhangra is represented by a large number of artists who aim to perform 'traditional' or 'folk' Bhangra music. These artists presuppose the existence of older forms of Bhangra music that predate modern or Western influences, and often the performance aimed for here is one that eschews overt aspects of musical fusion or diversion from a 'traditional' ideal. Taking influence from Punjabi folk singers, a number of whom are extremely popular both in India and in the global South Asian diaspora, these artists appeal to those members of the British Bhangra music audience that value notions such as tradition, or the idea of homeland, most highly. While British Bhangra is often viewed as a monolithic entity, and can be defined in Simon Frith's terms as being part of a commercial and cultural process (1996:89) and therefore is a constructed genre, there are wider tensions among artists and audiences who often disagree on the extent to which the genre should be kept 'pure' of outside influence. Often audiences utilise categories such as 'Old School Bhangra', 'Pop Bhangra' and 'Folk Bhangra' in order to distinguish between musical works that adopt different perspectives on the issue of 'purity'. Franco Fabbri objects to the notion that formal musical and technical rules are the only useful considerations when discussing genre, arguing that it has reached a point 'where genre, style and form become synonymous.' (1982:55). Accordingly, it is necessary to clarify the usage of 'style' and 'genre' as terms in this thesis. Fabbri offers a

definition of genre as 'a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules', and suggests that behavioural, social and semiotic dimensions should also feature as part of genre definitions (*ibid.*:56-57). In this way, music on its own is only one facet of the definition of a genre, and the way British Bhangra audiences have constructed these rules is discussed in depth in Chapter 4. For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'genre' is used to refer to the wider configuration of British Bhangra as it is socially and culturally constructed by these rules, while 'style' is used to refer more specifically to its characteristic musical aspects. Work conducted on fan discourse and online fan communities helps to define which of these particular values are most routinely held by audiences themselves, and the ways in which these judgements about music are being made – both in public and private spheres. Another stylistic fork within British Bhangra is represented by artists who encourage stylistic fusion within their music, often incorporating rhythmic devices or instrumentation derived from traditions outside that of Bhangra music.

The positioning both of these artists who openly incorporate other musics, and of musicians who project more traditional aspects throughout their musical work or performance practice, is of primary importance to listeners of British Bhangra. Discussed in depth in Chapter 4, a number of key factors take prominence within fan discourse on British Bhangra music. The use of the Punjabi language is nigh-on ubiquitous throughout British Bhangra music, and the way audience opinion converges around the use of Punjabi as being crucial to providing a sense of stylistic identity to British Bhangra is described in detail. Despite many British Bhangra artists being open to stylistically innovative practices, often what structures the musical sounds, and what underlies much of the inclusion of material from outside of the field of British Bhangra music, is a rigorous attention to retaining a sense of the origins or 'roots' of Bhangra music itself. Through looking at examples of Bhangra music from artists on both sides of this stylistic divergence, the nature of the pressure artists face to produce music that simultaneously reproduces the 'realness' of folk Bhangra music, as well as representing the shifting nature of BrAsian identity, becomes clearer.

Reflexivity and Ethics

In Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant's *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Wacquant describes reflexive sociology as the 'self-analysis of the sociologist as cultural producer' (1992:36-37). Bourdieu and Wacquant propose a methodological approach for the social researcher that demands transparency and honesty regarding the researcher's position in relation to the object of their research. Reflexive social research argues that the very involvement or presence of the researcher in a particular research situation – be that fieldwork, the interview process, or less immediately physical research processes such as online research – can influence the research findings through the introduction of numerous biases. Furthermore, factors such as the researcher's social status and political views must be taken into consideration as aspects that play a role in determining the relationship between the researcher and the research subject. The authors idealise an objective viewpoint from which social research could be performed, even if the elimination of researcher biases is impossible. Presented here is an outline of my personal research motivations and connections to the topic of study, with the goal of framing the thesis in a way that transparently addresses the factors determining my relationship to the research subject.

Coming from a family that emigrated to England from India (specifically the Punjab region) in the 1950s, I include myself among the group defined as 'BrAsian' (a term described in more detail in the following chapter) throughout this thesis. In this way my engagements with research participants and informants who consider themselves BrAsian are marked by my status as somewhat of an 'insider' depending on the specific context. Discussed in more depth in Chapter 1, religious identity is important to the formation of 'BrAsian' identity, and representations of British Bhangra music. Religious identities such as Hindu, Muslim and Sikh are contained within the broader definition of 'BrAsian' – and often particular locations with significant BrAsian populations are defined by the dominance of one particular religious identification over others (for example, Muslim communities in Bradford, and Gujurati communities in central Leicester). British Bhangra music itself is closely associated with Punjabi cultural identity and expressions of the Sikh faith. Sikh religious signifiers are often expressed visually or verbally in songs, and many performers openly discuss aspects of their own Punjabi or Sikh identity in interviews. While I am non-religious, I am aware that having been brought up in a Sikh background – and in particular, having an identifiably Sikh name – may affect interactions with individuals involved in the British

Bhangra music industry, whereby I am immediately seen as more of an 'insider' to the musical community.

In anthropology, the emic/etic debate raises questions over the consonances between the perspectives of, for example, a researcher who is an 'outsider' to a particular research subject or culture, and the perspectives of individuals who are 'insiders' to the culture. *Emics and etics: the insider/outsider debate* (Headland et al., 1990) explored this issue, discussing ways for researchers to approach this issue. As I have observed, various parts of my own cultural and ethnic background make me, to some extents, an insider to British Bhangra music communities. My familiarity with the musical style itself and my training as a musician may also have impacted this, but my ethnographic work did not include performing music with research participants.

My familiarity with British Bhangra music comes not from encountering it curiously in adulthood as a musical style emerging among the BrAsian diaspora, an encounter that was generally illustrated by Western media in the mid-1990s, but from early-life experiences of hearing British Bhangra music played around the house, in the car, at melas, weddings, parties and at school. While I am not a regular listener of British Bhangra music, its ubiquitous presence throughout my childhood has been contrasted by its stark absence throughout my adult life. Not only did this musical style appear to disappear from my consciousness as a young teenager, as I became more interested in indie rock and electronic music, it also appeared never to have existed at all judging by my own engagements with music, whether through radio, music magazines or at school. This musical style that had been omnipresent at one stage in my life suddenly seemed to stop existing, and exploring the reasons why this occurred provided the stimulus for much of my research. It appeared to be the case that British Bhangra music was invisible in the mainstream as a form of British popular music, and rarely, if ever, received attention from commentators who recognised its importance to the histories of several migrant communities in the UK.

My neutrality as a researcher on a topic ostensibly close to my own cultural 'roots' is partly buoyed by my ambivalence towards the genre itself, while my attempts to explore the history and heritage of British Bhangra are stimulated by a desire to learn more about how the genre came to take form, and how it manages to continue operating within networks seemingly separate to those of much mainstream British popular music. My basic knowledge of the Punjabi language, a language I picked up in early childhood through conversation with older members of my family, grants me a degree of access to British Bhangra music that would otherwise be elusive. This access proved invaluable in engaging with lyrical material,

as well as enabling the interpretation of particular references to Punjabi culture that occur as tropes in British Bhangra music.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the goals of this thesis align with and address several of the themes and questions posed by the wider POPID project. A concern voiced by a number of colleagues and peers at the outset of this project has been over the perceived difficulty of fulfilling the aims of the POPID project, while producing work that addresses the issues that I myself have identified as important and worthy of scholarly attention. Research I conducted at Undergraduate and Master's level addressed the music of the BrAsian community in various ways, and being a part of the POPID project offered a way to continue my research in this area with the added benefit of being among a team of researchers. The presence of an international POPID team of researchers proved invaluable in allowing ideas to be cultivated and scrutinised among a group who shared broadly similar goals in their own work. While there has been an effort to maintain through the thesis a thematic connection with the wider POPID project, and with the work of scholars involved with the project who were based in other institutions, ultimately this thesis is the result of my own independent research conducted on British Bhangra music.

Chapter 1: Contextualising British Bhangra music heritage

Introduction

This chapter is intended to give background information on many of the issues discussed in later chapters. It provides contextual information about the BrAsian community, introduces and clarifies what is meant by the term 'British Bhangra', and reviews literature relevant to the topics of music and heritage. The chapter is organised into four main sections. The first section looks closely at the term BrAsian and the reasons for it being preferable here to the more frequently used 'British Asian', with reference to notable scholarly literature focusing on the BrAsian community including the work of Ballard (1994), Sharma et al. (1996), and Ali et al. (2006). A historical overview of the flows of post-Second World War migration to the UK, and an initial detailing of the important sites of musical activity for South Asian migrant groups, provides background detail for subsequent chapters. Section two provides a working definition of British Bhangra music as referred to throughout this thesis, introducing the genre with reference to the work of scholars such as Dudrah (2002a, 2007, 2011), Roy (2010), Huq (2003) and Schreffler (2012). Section three engages with literature related to heritage, and in particular with issues concerning the representation of minority heritage. Section four introduces examples of popular music heritage, such as heritage plaque schemes, walking tours and audience-constructed narratives.

Defining BrAsian

> BrAsian is not the correct answer to the question of British Asian subjectivities, but nor is there a better answer we can turn to. (Sayyid, 2006:7).

British Asian is a term frequently employed to refer to individuals of South Asian origin now resident in Great Britain. Often, even the usage of the term 'Asian' on its own in Britain excludes individuals of Southeast Asian or East Asian origin, for whom it has become convention in public discourse to be defined more specifically by a country of origin – 'British Chinese' for example. This is a nuance that leads to frequent confusion, as outside of the UK, 'Asian' does not immediately connote individuals with South Asian ancestry. An exemption to this is within the context of British government discourse, where often

individuals of South Asian, Southeast Asian and East Asian origin are grouped together. This acceptance of a broader definition of the term 'Asian' is out of keeping with the ways in which the term is applied and understood in regular usage by the broadcast media, print media and within academia. For example, in its question regarding ethnicity, the 2011 UK Census opted to use the broad category of 'Asian/Asian British', with subcategories titled 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', 'Chinese', and 'Other Asian'. For this reason, population statistics are often presented with a grouping titled 'Asian/Asian British', comprising individuals who have self-defined as one of these subcategories. Data available from the Office for National Statistics (2013) shows that as of 2011, 7.5% of people who completed the UK Census self-defined themselves within the 'Asian/Asian British' category – equal to 4,213,531 individuals in a total population of 56,075,912.

When counting only the subcategories of 'Indian', 'Pakistani' and 'Bangladeshi' – not counting the categories of 'Chinese' and 'Other Asian' - the total is 2,984,670. Empirically speaking, the term 'British Asian' and its variants in popular usage refer to these roughly 3 million individuals, despite their distinct national identities. Of note is the fact that 835,720 individuals - 20% of the total number of people who described themselves as 'Asian' or 'Asian British'- self-identified within the 'Other Asian' category. The fact that the number of people using the 'Other Asian' subcategory is roughly equal to the number of people in both the 'Bangladeshi' and 'Chinese' subcategories combined is indicative of, firstly, the diverse ethnicities of individuals who broadly fit into the 'Asian/Asian British' category, and secondly the inadequacy of these subcategories to effectively represent this diversity. Analysis from the ESRC's Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity has shown that over 10 years, self-identification across the range of 'Other' ethnicity categories – including 'Other Asian', 'White Other', 'Other Black', 'Other Mixed', and 'Other' – has increased by 2 million, an increase of 238% (Jivraj, 2012:2). The report suggests that the increasing use of 'Other' groupings indicates that 'existing ethnic group categories are, perhaps, becoming increasingly less meaningful for many people' (*ibid.*:1). Further research substantiates this; a study conducted at the London School of Economics has shown that the term 'Asian' is largely being rejected by those for whom it bears most relevance, at least among the small sample of London-based respondents in the pilot survey group (Saraswati & Sircar, 2012). Respondents claimed that negative media uses of the word 'Asian' and an inability to reflect their own more nuanced identities made the term unfit for purpose:

[…] in the aforementioned self-identification question in our survey, a majority indicated 'Asian' as the least favoured option. Respondents avoided the term 'Asian' since it had negative connotations in the media (e.g. 'Asian youth gangs') and did not reflect their nuanced ethno-linguistic and religious identities vis-à-vis other British-born individuals of South Asian heritage in London. (Saraswati & Sircar, 2012).

This apparent rejection of a term by the BrAsian community is by no means unprecedented. Until 1988, the term 'black' was often used as an ethnic group category that comprised Asians as well as individuals of African or Caribbean origin (see Anwar, 1990). The notion of political 'blackness' developed in the mid-1970s as a way to express solidarity between different migrant communities in Britain, who often shared the experience of having migrated from a former British colony. It was argued that experiences of racism in Britain had been shared by these non-white migrant communities despite their distinct backgrounds, and converging under the banner of 'black' was seen as a useful strategy as part of anti-racist struggles (Sayyid et al., 2006:64). The use of 'black' featured so predominantly as part of the discourse on race and politics in Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s as to be described as 'hegemonic over other ethnic/racial identities' at this time (Ali, 1991:195). Modood stresses that emphasising 'multi-textured identities' (1994:859) over political formations could be more beneficial for the BrAsian community, explaining how the use of 'black' in this sense harms BrAsians: 'it falsely equates racial discrimination with colour discrimination and thereby obscures the cultural antipathy to Asians and therefore the character of the discrimination they suffer. 'Black' suggests also a false essentialism: that all non-white groups have something in common other than how others treat them.' (1994:859).

The term 'black' as self-description was rejected by BrAsians themselves, with Drury (1996) giving the example of his study of around a hundred teenage Sikh girls in the 1980s, 92% of whom refused to use the term; although many agreed that there were shared aspects to the experiences of non-white people. Despite this lack of everyday usage, Modood comments that the old terminology of 'political blackness' is still in use in British scholarship on race, where in the field of race sociology it 'still flourishes' (2006:65). On the surface the term presents an opportunity for members of different migrant communities to converge, potentially more able to challenge racial discrimination and the marginalization felt by these groups. However, Modood argues that due to the non-neutrality of the term 'black' among non-white groups – evoking the histories of people of sub-Saharan African origins primarily, with other groups always appearing secondary to this – it leads to the marginalisation of

ethnicities not synonymous with 'blackness' in the same way that African or Caribbean ethnicities immediately are (*ibid.*:66).

With the negligible usage of 'black' in the sense of 'political blackness' outside of race sociology, and its lack of usage in public discourse in Britain, this term is not used in this thesis to refer to the South Asian community in Britain. Particularly in light of recent changes to migration patterns to the UK, where migrants are just as likely to arrive from countries within the EU as they are from former colonies of Britain, does it still make sense to talk about racist struggles in terms of 'blackness', or of any grouped resistance against racial discrimination as being a 'black' struggle? For example, could discrimination in 2013 and early 2014 aimed at (often, only potential) migrants to the UK from Romania be considered part of a 'black' struggle, when clearly skin colour is not of primary concern when considering individuals from Eastern Europe? Similarly, the racism suffered by earlier generations of Irish migrants and East European Jewish settlers was rarely motivated by skin colour, suggesting that the experience of racism in Britain is not only something shared by non-white immigrants from former colonies – the group to whom 'black' is often used to refer to - but also by white immigrants, whether they are from countries that were former colonies or not.

The terms 'British Asian' and 'Asian' remain in frequent use to refer to Britain's South Asian community, most notably by media sources such as the satellite broadcaster Brit Asia TV, radio station BBC Asian Network, British weekly newspaper 'Eastern Eye' and the online 'Asians in Media' magazine. The term was deployed in the title of the March 2013 Radio 2 broadcast 'The People's Songs: Brimful of Asha – The British-Asian Experience in Pop'. While subtle, the use of the hyphenated 'British-Asian' in the title here is suggestive of just how little consensus exists over the correct usage of these terms. As well as 'British Asian', 'British-Asian', 'British South Asian' and simply 'Asian', the 2011 UK Census additions of the category of 'Asian British' and accompanying subcategories together comprise a collection of terms that refer to a broad group of individuals with widely varying ethnic, religious and regional identities, and who are increasingly eschewing the use of these terms to identify themselves. It is unclear exactly why these terms remain prevalent across a wide range of media despite this, but I would argue that the potential ease and convenience afforded by terms such as 'British Asian' and 'Asian British' is one of the reasons for their continued use. Unfortunately, there are no easy ways to reconcile the wide range of ethnic, class and religious concerns that define the individuals in this broad group.

Scholarly discontent over the continued use of the terms 'British Asian' and 'Asian' was first articulated in the 1996 edited volume *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* (Sharma et al.). Until this publication, 'British Asian' was used widely and often uncritically throughout the literature (examples include Perks 1987, Modood 1994, Banerji 1988 and Baumann 1990). Raminder Kaur and Virinder Kalra, writing in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*, suggested the (con)fusion of the words 'British' and 'Asian' - 'Br-Asian' - as a potentially more useful conceptual term than the commonly used 'unproblematized 'ethnic' categories' (1996:230), particularly when discussing music. It is important to note the original hyphenation of this term as 'Br-Asian', whereas later scholarship predominantly uses the unhyphenated 'BrAsian'. While both terms are related, the later adoption of the unhyphenated 'BrAsian' coincides with an effort to provide a more precise articulation of the term than the early formulation of 'Br-Asian' present in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*. Of the term 'British Asian', Kaur and Kalra note that: 'The over-used and poorly defined category 'British Asian' is problematic as it essentializes both terms, as well as hierarchizing the former against the latter. Further it does not fully convey the various and sliding subjectivities that come into play in response to historical, social and political vicissitudes.' (1996:219). With 'Br-Asian', the authors are attempting to disrupt the essentialist notions that the use of both 'British' and 'Asian' cannot avoid – opening the possibility for representing unfixed notions of Asian identity while resisting the desire to engage in an attempt for the 'complete categorization' of South Asians in Britain (1996:221).

The authors argue that the term can be applied easily to cultural forms that enable the display of 'sliding subjectivities' (1996:219) such as Bhangra music, stating that 'In contemporary Britain, the multiple use of languages, whether Bengali, Urdu or Gujurati, does not act as a barrier to a sense of solidarity in identifying with displaced South Asian-derived musical cultures.' (1996:220). Similarly, it is argued that the way in which Bollywood films are received in Britain – often widely distributed across Punjabi, Gujurati, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi communities alike, with dubbing or subtitling into multiple languages[6] – is emblematic of the way certain cultural forms are able to transcend regional and lingual differences between the varied South Asian communities in Britain.

The term 'Br-Asian' failed to gain wider usage in scholarship throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, and suffered from a lack of ideological development. A dearth of literature focusing upon South Asians in Britain during this time would seem to be to blame

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[6] In the last decade the various film industries in India (for Bollywood is not the only centre of Indian cinema) have opted to remake popular films in order to suit particular regional audiences.

for this, as well as the wider media traction of the terms 'British Asian' and 'Asian' – helped along later by the national launch of the BBC Asian Network in 2002. Indeed until the publication of *A Postcolonial People* in 2006 (Sayyid et al.), 'Br-Asian' was fast becoming an anachronism. Eschewing the originally hyphenated form of the term, *A Postcolonial People* articulates a meaning of 'BrAsianness' and 'BrAsian' that is dependent on the status of South Asian settlers to Britain as postcolonial subjects (2006:8). Sayyid, writing in *A Postcolonial People*, identifies that the debate regarding the correct terminology to use when referring to South Asians who settled in Britain following the decolonisation of British India is not only a matter of concern in public policy or issues of classification. Often this debate is concentrated in 'kebab shops and bazaars, in streets and clubs, in homes and offices, in short in locales that bring together people who share a sense of belonging to South Asia, a sense mediated by coloniality and marked by racialised subordination' (2006:4).

The debate involves not only the question of 'what shall we call them?', asked by a bureaucratic system of a migrant community, but also the question of 'what shall we call ourselves?', asked inwardly by the community itself. Arguing for the use of 'BrAsian' throughout the volume, the author notes that the term is used to 'designate members of settler communities which articulate a significant part of their identity in terms of South Asian heritage. The choice of this term was not only a stylistic device aimed at avoiding circumlocutions like 'people of South Asian heritage', but, more importantly, a recognition of the need for a category that points one in a direction away from established accounts of national identities and ethnicised minorities.' (2006:5).

In this thesis, the term 'BrAsian' is used throughout, with an awareness of its inadequacies as a term and its lack of general usage outside of scholarly literature. While aspects of this thesis foreground the Punjabi diaspora in parts of England, communities of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity are also engaged with – and it is for this reason that 'BrAsian' retains usefulness as a term here. British Bhangra is often closely associated with Punjabi culture – however, as I argue later, there are useful observations to be made when assessing the impact of British Bhangra on BrAsian communities more broadly.

Discussing women of Punjabi Sikh background in England, Parminder Bhachu provides an insight into the impact of English regionalism on the community since South Asian migration to the UK began (van der Veer, 1995:222-244). Bhachu explains that the specificities of regional and class identity are influential in how particular cultural formations are expressed – in her example, the conduct of marriage rites such as the giving of dowries (wedding gifts) have evolved to encompass different regional styles, varying from high-end

'London-Knightsbridge-Sloan Square' dowries to more provincial Midlands and Mancunian types (1995:236). Class and regional identity also play a more direct role in marriages – 'these regional patterns are also obvious from the marriage circuit – an informal metropolitan hypergamy – which operates in Britain. London girls tend not to marry outside London and the southeast. If they are married out, in a majority of cases they move back to London to set up a nuclear residence within a couple of years of marriage.' (1995:236). For Bhachu, these shifts and changing trends are products of the migratory experience (1995:232), and are illustrative of why it is necessary to view migration as a process that continues long after settlement, rather than as an event beginning with departing one nation-state and ending with arrival in another. It is important to note how, following settlement in the UK, members of the BrAsian community have developed qualities of regional distinctiveness. With regard to British Bhangra, particular regions hold great importance in the development of the genre, as will be explored in Chapter 3. The following section introduces 'British Bhangra' and explains how the term is being used in this thesis.

Defining British Bhangra

The term 'British Bhangra' is used in this thesis to denote a particular genre of music. This is a genre of music that developed in England following the settlement of Punjabi migrants in a number of urban localities – most importantly for the development of British Bhangra as a musical genre, in London and Birmingham. Particular artists that are associated with British Bhangra include 1970s and 80s groups such as Apna Sangeet, Heera, DCS and Alaap, and artists representative of British Bhangra from the 1990s onwards, such as B21, Aman Hayer and RDB. The music of earlier British Bhangra groups is characterised by the use of a 'rock band' paradigm, and was often based around live performances of Punjabi-language music at weddings or functions (Schreffler, 2011:1). British Bhangra in the late 1980s and 1990s underwent a period of stylistic shift, whereby live musicians were often eschewed in favour of DJs, remixes and sampling – or as Schreffler explains: 'at some point a more rousing style of accompaniment came into favor, inspiring such labels as "bhangra beat" […]. This music bore little resemblance to any accompaniment to bhangra dance in Punjab, and the use of the term "bhangra" could be said to apply to the fact that it was Punjabi and it was dance-oriented.' (*ibid.*).

Of note is that the word 'British' is used, rather than 'English' – despite the development of the genre within English cities. This slippage of terms mirrors the usage of 'British' in the term 'British Asian', as detailed earlier in this chapter, and fails to address the development of the genre within BrAsian communities based in England, as opposed to in Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland. Despite this lack of specificity, the term itself is used frequently in scholarly literature, among audiences and by artists. The genre first came to scholarly attention in 1990 following Banerji and Baumann's work on British Bhangra from 1984-88, which proposed the musical genre as an important example of diaspora identity formation, suggesting that the genre was 'remarkably effective in enhancing the cohesion of the Punjabi community across political, moral, aesthetic, and many social divides' (1990:91).

A number of broad definitions of the genre have been proposed. Rajinder Dudrah has described British Bhangra as 'a genre of British popular music fusing Punjabi lyrics and the beats of the Indian drum, the *dhol*, with other Black music and British pop sounds, producing an urban anthem and commentary about the lives of its British South Asian audiences.' (2002b:219). Arts organisation 'Bhangra in Birmingham', formed by the directors of two record labels involved in promoting British Bhangra for over 20 years (Bal Kumar of Realtone Records and Ninder Johal of Nachural Records), describes British Bhangra thusly:

> Bhangra music and dance has evolved into many forms and guises but still retains its influences from its roots, which is the unique element creating the fusion between young and old generations. The definition of "Bhangra" is a popular energetic form of "folk dance" of the people of Punjab, which has developed into a label for a popular style of music combining traditional Bhangra music and songs with modern Western instruments and rhythms. From originating in Punjab it has been popularised by the Punjabi community in Britain. (Bhangra in Birmingham, 2007).

Heritage project 'The Southall Story' aims to celebrate the cultural and economic successes of the area of Southall in West London, and proposes the following definition of British Bhangra:

> Inspired by rural traditions in India and the Punjab that still remain today, Bhangra originally described a type of folk dance and song performed by groups of men celebrating their crop harvests, with traditional and self-created tales of greatness. With simple musical accompaniment (dhol barrel drum and mono-stringed toombi), dancers thrust out their chests with pride, jigged their shoulders and even performed

acrobatic feats to enjoy the rewards of their labour in the fields. Between the mid-1960s and mid-1990s, Bhangra was gradually reinvented in the UK, to the extent that its rhythms, lyrics and dance styles influenced music produced in India and songs in Bollywood films. (Bhamra, 2014).

These three definitions describe a syncretic style of music that marries influences from both traditional Punjabi folk music and Western popular music, and as definitions they are representative of the most prevalent definitions of British Bhangra as a musical genre. What is alluded to is an origin in a 'folk dance' tradition that predates modernity and is deeply rooted within the culture of the Punjab in India. Schreffler disagrees that these definitions of British Bhangra are useful, arguing of British Bhangra that: 'Musically speaking, little in it could reasonably be called "traditional".' (2011:1). For Schreffler, the supposed 'folk' influences that British Bhangra is often said to draw from are distinctly modern, originating in a post-partition Punjab in the dance and music competitions that became commonplace at Punjabi colleges (*ibid.*:4). Chapters 4 and 5 engage in more depth with perspectives on British Bhangra that often frame itin relation to a pre-modern folk music and dance.

Arjun Appadurai's theory of 'scapes' describes how globalisation has facilitated multi-directional flows of culture and knowledge, enabling the types of cultural exchange that allows not only British Bhangra artists to be influenced by Punjabi artists, but also for Punjabi musicians to be influenced by British Bhangra music. In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai describes five 'scapes' that are fluid and provide better ways of explaining the flows of culture in a globalised world (1996). Of particular relevance to this thesis are ethnoscapes, which refer to the movement of peoples across different national borders and cultures; mediascapes, which refer to the variety of media forms that are a part of global cultural flows; and technoscapes, which refer to the influence of modern technology on global interactions between cultures. For Appadurai, British Bhangra would exist in a global 'mediascape', and the ability for diffusion and global spread (facilitated by changes in the 'technoscape' – with the internet in particular playing a prominent role in the dissemination of British Bhangra) enables multiple engagements to take place – not only between British Bhangra musicians and musicians in the Punjab, but also between musicians and audiences in countries such as Canada, where there is a large community of migrants from Punjab. Considering the aforementioned debates regarding the extent of the influence of 'traditional' Punjabi folk music on British Bhangra, Appadurai's theory would suggest it is most

appropriate to consider British Bhangra as the product of complex global cultural flows, and it becomes clear through engaging with discussion and debate around British Bhangra online (Chapter 4) that individuals value particular musical aspects that foreground an 'imagined' Punjab.

While the extent to which British Bhangra is influenced by Punjabi folk music is debatable, the usage of the term itself in this thesis is primarily due to its frequent usage by artists, audiences and journalists, for whom the term describes a particular usage of sounds, and prominently, usage of the Punjabi language. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the use of Punjabi as the primary language is ubiquitous throughout much British Bhangra music. I argue that musical and stylistic definitions of British Bhangra are useful, but only to a limited extent. While certain musical and linguistic features are common, even expected[7] as part of a British Bhangra song, examples of both older and modern British Bhangra music exhibit influences from a wide stylistic range. A more pragmatic definition of British Bhangra can be based around the network of music labels and radio stations who promote the music using this name, and the usage of the term itself among music audiences.

A number of record labels – including Multitone Records, Moviebox, Oriental Star Agency and Nachural Records – have been involved for many years with what is described variously as the 'British bhangra music industry' (Dudrah, 2002b:1), the 'Bhangra industry' (Bhangra in Birmingham, 2007) and the 'Bhangra music industry' (McEwan et al., 2005). The implication of prefixing 'music industry' with 'British Bhangra' or 'Bhangra' as in these examples is that there must be ways of distinguishing the 'British Bhangra music industry' from, say, other types of 'music industry'. Parminder Singh Jutla describes the British Bhangra (stated here as 'UK Bhangra') music industry as 'underground', explaining that:

> It may not have a definite infrastructure or meet the mainstream standards, but for an unregulated and virtually invisible industry to the UK investors and music industry, the UK Bhangra industry has created a worldwide appeal and an international export market. The industry has been an underground industry since inception. Many of its sales were not recorded and were not recognized through mainstream outlets. In the early years the Punjabi folk bands would club together for a recording session and pass their 7" records through the pubs. It has been estimated that many of the songs produced and sold could have entered on the mainstream charts based on unit sales.

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[7] These expectations are explored in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

The industry is still invisible and remains underground, but is slowly moving into the mainstream, through its ability to influence other music forms. (2007:2-3).

Describing the informal and unregulated nature of the 'underground' British Bhangra music industry, Jutla expresses the belief that the industry is 'still invisible' today. Despite this, Jutla insists that it is meaningful to describe it as an 'industry':

The "Bhangra Industry" has been known as an industry since the early 80's when the news media in London took notice of the noises being made in Birmingham. There is no formal identifiable asset that can easily be recognised as being 'the industry' but the "Bhangra Industry" is an industry, as it creates, performs, promotes, and preserves music. (*ibid.*:2)

For Jutla, the fact that a group of music labels and artists 'create, perform, promote and preserve' music is enough to warrant the term 'industry' being used here. Within the scope of this thesis the term 'British Bhangra' is used to refer to the music promoted and sold as part of this 'industry', with a caveat that artist and audience discourse regularly leads to debates regarding what constitutes 'real Bhangra' – a topic covered in Chapters 3 and 4. Having provided contextual information on terms used throughout this thesis – namely 'BrAsian' and 'British Bhangra' – the remainder of this chapter engages with literature related to the fields of heritage studies and popular music heritage.

Heritage Debates

British heritage is the heritage of a nation of nations, shaped through waves of migration and diaspora, wide-ranging imperial histories and contemporary flows of globalisation. Not that you would necessarily know that from a cursory glance at many of its key sites and symbols. The St George Cross, afternoon tea and stately homes have often been used as emblematic of 'British heritage': a process in which white (and often upper- or middle-class) Englishness is used to define the past. (Littler and Naidoo, 2005:1)

1999's seminal Arts Council 'Whose Heritage?' conference, and the subsequent keynote speech by Stuart Hall, represent a major attempt to critically explore the concept of 'British Heritage' and its relationship with cultural diversity. The conference presented an

argument against heritage, in that it effectively extended the British imperial mission to command and preserve cultural knowledge – a mission that was largely propagated by those with wealth and status. It was recognised that racial inequality was a particular issue in the way in which heritage was treated, and the conference provided a case for why cultural diversity should be embedded in the UK heritage sector.

Now, fifteen years on from 'Whose Heritage?', its legacy as a catalyst for initiating a shift in perspective for those working in the heritage sector is clear, with, until recently, several established organisations in London actively working towards changing the way in which heritage is created. Much of the public debate around heritage and cultural diversity since the conference has centred around expressing the importance of feeling a 'part' of the national story for minority groups, a sentiment Stuart Hall puts across succinctly when he states that 'The National Heritage is a powerful source of [cultural] meanings. It follows that those who cannot see themselves reflected in its mirror cannot properly "belong."' (Littler & Naidoo, 2005:24). Additionally, it is not just the case that some heritages are left hidden and remain invisible within the 'mainstream' narrative of English history – but also that those heritages remain uncovered even to the minority communities themselves. Harrison has written about the changes that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s with regards to official recognition of 'minority voices':

> At an official level a major influence on heritage throughout the 1980s and 1990s was increased recognition of minority voices, which involved a shift of emphasis so that 'histories from below' were perceived to be just as important as 'official' or 'mainstream' histories. 'Whose heritage?' was a frequent query in relation to places that were being conserved as part of the World Heritage Convention. Countries with significant indigenous and migrant populations began to question the emphasis on material heritage within the World Heritage Convention and the Venice Charter […], as well as the emphasis on individual 'sites' and buildings […]. These challenges saw a major shift in the approach from the production of a single heritage 'canon' to the development of more 'representative' approaches to heritage. (2010a:196).

The London Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH), which launched its initial report titled 'Delivering Shared Heritage' in 2005, challenged the status quo of 'mainstream sector' dominance of heritage, arguing for the benefit of a more meaningful relationship with culturally diverse heritage organisations. One of the

developments that this report led to was the establishment of the Heritage Diversity Task Force (HDTF), a partnership made up of key figures from museums, archives, libraries and community arts organisations which aimed towards a more practical, useful dialogue around cultural diversity and heritage. Although now defunct, the HDTF's term enabled a number of changes to be initiated including a race equality declaration signed by organisations that were part of the HDTF network aiming to address the under-representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic people in the sector's workforce.

Stuart Hall's speech in 1999 became a catalyst to initiate these steps towards change, as he tackled the question of how cultural diversity and heritage interact. Within his keynote speech, Hall noted the importance of popular culture and 'new diasporic forms' evident within African and Asian communities in England (Littler & Naidoo, 2005:34). Emerging musical genres such as ragga, jungle, rap and electro-funk were examples of leading-edge cultural phenomena – allowing musicians from Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities to assert a transgressive, modern identity. For Hall these examples of hybrid cultural forms truly represent the essence of multiculturalism, post-nationality and an emerging global sensibility (*ibid.*). Arguing that 'perhaps this aspect of cultural production needs no "archive" or "heritage"', Hall asserts that the development of these cultural forms is proceeding 'unrecorded and unanalysed, consigned to the ephemera of its day – expendable'. This perhaps correctly identifies the invisibility of these developments within the wider heritage sector, but I contend that there are certainly attempts to record and analyse some aspects of these cultural forms, if only at a local level. There are also, of course, many examples of the way in which popular music has become part of the heritage of a specific place. Examples of these initiatives are discussed later, but at this point I will explain some of the key issues around heritage and diversity.

Illustrating the inherent problems that face any attempt to categorise a minority heritage, Pnina Werbner's work on Britain's South Asian diaspora emphasises the diversity and nuances evident within the construction of BrAsian identity. Stating that '[there is a] bewildering variety of different religious streams, denominations and movements in South Asia transposed into Britain' (2004:905), Werbner explains how there a lack of homogenisation within groupings such as 'British Asian' or 'British Muslim', demonstrating the difficulty of maintaining such categorizations and problematizing any usefulness they may have. In particular Werbner notes two contrasting representations of Britain's South Asian diaspora which are represented in the public sphere. The first of these presents itself through the UK's South Asian entertainment industry, characterised by Werbner as

'inclusive, absorbent, experimental, reflexively satirical and politically incorrect, rooted in bodily pleasures, sexuality and desire' (*ibid.*:904). This is contrasted with the diasporic Muslim public sphere, dominated by male community leaders and characterised as 'socially exclusive, high cultural, puritanical, politicized and utterly serious' (*ibid.*). Even within these two specific public spheres, there is a clear lack of homogenisation that disrupts simple attempts to categorise and label them, as Werbner discusses:

> A further historical process which occurred in Britain was the diasporic encounter with other Muslims coming from the Middle East. This did not lead to convergence, however. Language, culture and nationality have remained a major block to the homogenization of British Islam, despite public invocations of unity, and despite the fact that mosques are open for worship to any Muslim, whatever his or her affiliation. (*ibid.*:906).

Using these two conflicting representations, and identifying the multifarious factors such as religious denomination, language and nationality that work to configure identity within them, Werbner's study elucidates the complexity of Britain's South Asian diaspora. Discussing the movement of over a million indentured Indian labourers to tropical plantations throughout the latter half of the 19th century, Cohen (2008:64) provides an analysis of Indian diasporic identity that emphasises contrasts between the 'three main Indian ethnic/religious groups – Sikh, Hindu and Muslim' (*ibid.*:65). For Cohen, these ethno-religious identities are distinctive in ways that resist broadly defining a 'South Asian' or 'Indian' diaspora. As an example of how these distinctions are manifest, Cohen explains that, in contrast to Hindu or Muslim groups, Sikhs could 'invoke a distinctive history of Sikh settlement abroad (mainly as soldiers in the colonial employ or as free farmers), [and] an intimate bond with the Punjab' (*ibid.*). For Cohen, the historical definition of 'diaspora' relating to a single major incident, typically an example of trauma or loss of homeland, resulting in a mass dispersal of a population, is no longer efficacious. Aiming to 'loosen the historical meanings of the notion of 'diaspora' to encompass new forms of mobility and displacement' (*ibid.*:124), Cohen stresses the importance of reflecting the changing nature of international migration – no longer a unidirectional phenomenon, whereby 'asynchronous, transversal, oscillating flows that involve visiting, studying, seasonal work, tourism and sojourning' (*ibid.*:123) form the new paradigm.

Dusenbery poses the question 'When does a diaspora come into existence?' (van der Veer, 1995:17). Discussing whether it is possible to define a 'Sikh diaspora', a global dispersion of peoples from the Punjab in India who share a religious identity, Dusenbery questions whether it is legitimate to foreground religion in this particular context: 'early international migrants from colonial Punjab, whatever their religious practices before or after migration, were not conscious of themselves as forming a "Sikh diaspora". […] it was their Punjabi identity – their common "culture", "place of origin", and "mother tongue" – that was most meaningful to these early twentieth-century migrants.' (*ibid.*:18). However Dusenbery goes on to argue that Sikhs who have left the Punjab have self-defined themselves as comprising a diaspora group in their own right, coalescing around the idea of a Sikh homeland or 'Khalistan'. The example of Sikhs in Canada, who at one time demanded to be considered as a group separate to other migrants from India, demonstrates that Cohen's ethno-religious groupings are useful in helping to define a diaspora group. The Sikh community in Canada in the early 1980s objected to being a part of the Canadian government's attempted to consider and treat the country's South Asian migrant population as homogenous, arguing that 'Sikhs are "a separate people" who should be known neither as East Indians nor as Canadians of Origins in India but simply as Canadian Sikhs.' (*ibid.*:34). In this way the meaning of 'diaspora' in this context is loosened from historical connotations relating to a single mass trauma, and the community itself is engaging with attempts to define and control it, in this case by the Canadian government. This specific issue - the intersection of Sikh and Punjabi diasporic identity - is further discussed in the following chapter with the example of the song 'Sher Soorma', and also as part of a case study in Chapter 5 ('Tharti Hilde' by Aman Hayer), where Sikh religious imagery is evoked as part of a music video to a song that otherwise carries no overt Sikh theme.

Accordingly, any attempt to represent a minority heritage exists within these complex configurations of diasporic identity. Ashworth and Tunbridge's work on 'dissonant heritage' (1996:21) comments on the contested nature of heritage, and the importance of interpretation – in particular, *how* it is interpreted, and by *whom*. Two main sets of reasons explain why dissonance is something intrinsic to the nature of heritage. First, the commodification of heritage (see also Hewison 1987) is considered to be one of the principal causes of contested heritages globally, with Tunbridge and Ashworth observing that the 'landscapes of tourism consumption are simultaneously other people's sacred places' (2007:37). The touristic uses of heritage lead to tension and discomfort stemming in part from the multi-interpretations evident within the binary of tourist (for whom heritage is an economic commodity) and

'domestic' consumer (for whom heritage plays a cultural role) (*ibid.*:36). Secondly, Tunbridge and Ashworth describe the process of 'disinheritance', with the implication that 'the creation of any heritage actively potentially disinherits or excludes those who do not subscribe to, or are not embraced within, the terms of meaning attending that heritage' (*ibid.*). Resulting in inevitable dissonances, disinheritance is seen as a predictable result of attempts to create concordance within a heritage discourse – a discourse which by its very nature must be in some way exclusive.

Disinheritance can be viewed as a particular cause of distress and tension when the group of people claiming to 'inherit' the heritage actively seek to exclude others. Allen (2010) and Harrison (2010a, 2010b) have recognised the close connection between heritage and nationalism, with Harrison noting that 'Nations combine the idea that societies must hold shared cultural beliefs with heritage in order to root those beliefs, and the structures of power and authority that underlie them, in the past. In doing so, they connect these beliefs closely to the idea of racial and ethnic origins' (2010a:169).

The close connections between nationalism and heritage, and the accompanying links to beliefs of racial and ethnic origin are extremely problematic within multicultural societies. Any notion of a state-endorsed, singular narrative of heritage is at risk of alienating swathes of members of that nation who feel they are not being represented. Furthermore there is the problematic issue that the origins of heritage, in terms outlined by Graham et al., 'lie in the modernist nexus of European state formation and Romanticism, which is defined in political terms by nationalism.' (2000:55-56). In his study of multicultural and minority heritage in plural societies, Rodney Harrison discusses the multitude of ways in which the 'alternative histories and heritages' (2010a:164) of social and ethnic minorities within plural societies can be seen as a challenge to the notion of a national heritage. Citing the post Second World War growth of 'multi-ethnic societies, and the development of new voices which challenge the monolithic view of national heritage produced by the state' (*ibid.*), Harrison explores how national heritage may exclude the histories of subaltern and minority groups in society, and looks at how these groups have developed voices to challenge constructions of mainstream heritage – a mainstream which in reaction to the existence of 'competing or alternative (particularly minority) heritages' (2010a:197) can at times take on 'predatory forms' (*ibid.*) that seeks to erase other voices.

There are difficulties when attempting to construct a binary definition of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' heritage, or 'official' and 'unofficial'. Laura-Jane Smith suggests the existence of an authorised heritage discourse (AHD), referring to a set of ideas, practices and

texts about heritage that determine both what heritage is and is not. The AHD 'takes its cue from the grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces the idea of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics" (2006:299). Smith cites 'authorisers' of heritage including institutions such as UNESCO and English Heritage, who she sees as embodying the AHD. Smith describes UNESCO as 'a project of cultural legitimisation – it recognises, authorises and validates certain cultural expressions as "heritage"' (2006:111). Notably Smith remarks that the AHD may exclude marginalized groups, due to it 'setting in stone' a set of ideas about what heritage is (Harrison, 2010a:170).

Also in her work, Smith explores tensions that exist between institutional notions of 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage. Arguing that within the Western AHD, the definition of heritage as 'material (tangible), monumental, grand, "good", [and] aesthetic' dominates (2008:3), Smith explains the discomfort arising from recent attempts to incorporate intangible heritage by UNESCO, marked by the organisation's acceptance of the 'Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' (ICHC) in 2003, formally recognising the 'intangible' as a third category of heritage within international policy (2008:300). The World Heritage List produced by UNESCO is described by Smith as being 'Eurocentric in composition' (2008:1), and not representative of 'non-Western manifestations and practices of heritage' (*ibid.*). It is interesting to note that English Heritage's definition of heritage remains rooted in tangible, material heritage – while it is with reluctance that intangible heritage as expressed through song, dance, music and crafts are acknowledged. In addition, due to the contested nature of heritage, Smith calls into question the UNESCO concept of 'the shared heritage' of humanity. Noting that any universal values cannot be maintained, Smith discusses how the ICHC poses a challenge to the Western AHD that underpins UNESCO's concept of heritage (*ibid.*:3).

Any notion of a 'national heritage' must contend with critiques based around its potential function as a tool of bourgeois hegemony. A Gramscian critique of notions of cultural heritage as discussed in this chapter may progress along the following lines: national institutions such as English Heritage reproduce a dominant image of cultural heritage (Smith's 'AHD') that helps to 'manufacture consent' and legitimate the ruling classes (Gramsci 1971:12). English Heritage, in this example, are the dominant group: afforded a level of prestige as a result of its position, the organisation imposes a definition of what is 'valued' and worth preserving in society which the population consents to. Reproducing a message that the heritage of England is most easily represented by stately homes, country

gardens and castles, the population is coerced into believing that these opulent bourgeois demonstrations of wealth are the objects most valued in society. In this way the population is under a form of cultural control, encouraged to view themselves in relation to these valorised heritage artefacts and to bring themselves in line with a worldview in which these demonstrations of wealth are to be aspired towards.

Stuart Hall would contend that Gramsci's reading eschews the potential for an individual to produce their own meanings of these representations of heritage, disavowing that individuals are able to create a space for conflict when confronted with expressions of dominant ideology. Hall's system of 'encoding/decoding', which describes the ways individuals can produce their own interpretation of texts based on a variety of factors including social class, race and gender, can help to develop a reading of national heritage that accepts the ability of individual or group agency to disrupt dominant cultural representations (1980:128-38). Under Hall's reading, the AHD as portrayed by English Heritage would be inscribed with a dominant ideology – this would be the text's 'preferred reading'. A reader confronted with English Heritage's notion of national heritage may accept the preferred reading, thus producing a 'dominant' reading themselves. For Hall, a 'dominant' reading is produced when an individual's social situation – class, race, gender – favours the preferred reading. A reader could also produce a 'negotiated' reading of English Heritage's AHD – inflecting the preferred reading with aspects that take into account their own social standing. Hall also proposes that a reader can produce an 'oppositional' reading – produced by readers whose social position puts them into direct conflict with the preferred reading. So for example, an individual confronted by English Heritage's AHD may feel alienated by what is being represented, and their own social position may lead them to directly oppose this. In this way Hall moves beyond Gramsci's neo-Marxian notion of a strict top-down bourgeois cultural hegemony, and invites the potential for disruption by actors representing a variety of racialised, gendered and classed subjectivities.

Popular Music and Heritage

> Heritage is intimately linked with identity – exactly how it is linked and its inter-relationship is yet to be fully understood – however, a key consequence of heritage is that it creates and recreates a sense of inclusion and exclusion. At global, national and local levels, heritage, however defined, is used to define a sense of place. (Smith, 2008:7).

It is useful at this stage to discuss the notion of a 'British Music Heritage', and consider how this can be defined. From the tangible – the built environment, clothing, flags, vehicles – to the intangible (by UNESCO's definition) – visual art, dance, music or song - all can be eulogised as representative of heritage. Popular music can be seen to have its tangible forms, primarily physical records and memorabilia, as well as its intangible forms – for example, sound recordings and live performances. Were UNESCO to one day decide to 'safeguard' (to use the organisation's own terminology when it engages in preservation activities) British popular music, this would certainly take place under the organisation's 'intangible heritage' scheme. In this institutional context 'tangible' heritage refers to natural landmarks, momuments of historical import and buildings. While popular music does bring with it its tangible aspects – album art or ticket stubs, for example – it is clear that institutionally the term 'intangible' has an incredibly broad meaning, with UNESCO including disparate cultural phenomena such as Japanese Kabuki Theatre, Mongolian Throat Singing and 'Viennese Coffee House Culture' on its representative list of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2015). It is important to note regarding music that connections with aspects of tangible heritage can be created, most often seen through the linking of musicians with particular locations.

Is it possible for one to extricate the Beatles from the heritage and 20th century story of the city of Liverpool, or reggae groups such as Steel Pulse from Birmingham? In the case of Liverpool, we can see clearly how tourism and heritage industries intertwine, with the Beatles now perhaps providing *the* key tourist attraction in the city, with a number of the city's major tourist destinations themed around the band (The Beatles Story museum, the 'Yellow Submarine' and 'Magical Mystery Tour' tours, the re-opened Cavern Club and associated tribute bands). While serving as a celebration of the birthplace of one of the most famous bands in the world, does this overwhelming bias towards The Beatles obscure many of the diverse histories that made up 20th Century Liverpool? Is there still room for the stories

and histories of the music of Liverpool's diaspora groups to be a part of the city's 'official' story, or are they marginalised? Referring back to Stuart Hall's point that 'those who cannot see themselves reflected [in the National Heritage] cannot properly 'belong'' (2005:24), what is the impact of an exclusionary, dominant narrative on the cultural identity of diaspora groups and their sense of belonging?

In the case of Liverpool there is clearly an image being portrayed to the outside world, aided by the booming tourist industry, which seeks to cement connections between the city and The Beatles. In her work on Liverpool's local music industry, Sara Cohen has discussed tensions around how, amongst other artists, The Beatles were seen to have 'turned their back' on the city by leaving for London soon after their success (2002:284). Placed into the context of industrial decline in Liverpool during the 1970s and 1980s, when the city's population dramatically fell as people sought work elsewhere, Cohen points out the existence of a 'rhetoric of loss' (2002:283) – which manifested itself through tensions between musicians who stayed 'loyal' to the city, and musicians who decided to relocate, usually to London. Considering that the loyalty The Beatles had for the city of Liverpool was under question (a sentiment that Cohen notes is not new, with the first newsletter of the new Beatles fan club titled 'Did The Beatles turn their backs on Liverpool?' (2002:284)), it is all the more interesting that in the modern day, connections between the city and The Beatles are in limitless supply – an example being the National Trust tour buses that depart four times a day during the summer and boast of being the only Beatles tours that include entry into the childhood homes of Sir Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

Mapping can provide an important framework for solidifying connections between music, memory and place. Cohen and Lashua's (2010) work on Liverpool's urban environment and connections to music reveals much about the alternative popular music heritage of the city. Inviting musicians to draw their own maps of the city's music venues, the study reveals an extensive array of networks that musicians operate within. Many such maps already exist that describe locations significant to The Beatles in the city[8], but allowing Liverpool musicians to describe their own journeys through the city makes clearer the connections between popular music and the 'local'. The exercise of mapping enables one to perceive the differing, at times seemingly parallel worlds that musicians from across different areas of Liverpool existed within, and certainly is not limited to locations important to The Beatles.

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[8] As part of the Beatles Story exhibition and website, or through fan websites such as 'Beatlesfans.com' for example.

Figure 1 – *Radiohead's Oxford map* from the Green Plastic website.

Music audiences also take active roles in commencing mapping projects. The example of the 'Radiohead's Oxford' online map from Radiohead fan website 'Green Plastic' shows a fan produced map detailing locations significant to members of the band Radiohead in their hometown of Oxford. The way in which the map is presented on the website is significant, framed with cultural information about the city of Oxford that clearly seeks to demystify parts of British culture that may confuse tourists:

- Locals hate students and the University, and used to kill them on a regular basis in the 16th century.
- The music scene in Oxford is one of the best in the world at the moment. Started by Ride, Oxford bands now include Radiohead, Supergrass, Hurricane #1, The Egg, and Thom's younger brother's band, The Unbelievable Truth.
- Football (soccer to Americans) is obsessive here as it is in other parts of Europe. See http://www.oufc.co.uk.
- Everyone seems to ride bikes, it is almost impossible to drive into the centre without killing one.

- Most importantly, don't ever make the mistake of assuming people from Oxford are all upper-class snobs, you can't be further from the truth. Oxford has one of the largest homeless populations outside London. (Green Plastic, 2011)

The nature of this framing material seems oblique in relation to the music of Radiohead, but clearly there is a sense that the cultural background that defines the city of Oxford is both important to understanding the origin of the band, and ultimately to gaining a better understanding of the band's music. Locations marked on the map are supplemented by descriptions explaining what connects the band to that particular place. Included are significant former venues that the band performed at, a music shop where the band could be 'seen regularly' and places that are referred to within song lyrics. With the connections between each location and the band currently lacking the physical permanence provided by, for example, a plaque scheme, it will be interesting to note how the map develops in future – is there a sense of impermanence regarding the sites chosen on this map, or will audiences make sure that such connections are not forgotten?

Along with music maps, music walking tours are another way in which connections between music and place are being solidified. Manchester Music Tours provide a number of walking tours based around important landmarks in the city's music scene from the 1970s to the 1990s. They provide tours based around the bands Oasis, The Smiths and Joy Division, as well as a general tour encompassing important venues across the city. There is a clear focus on the city's indie and rock music scenes, particularly focusing around landmarks such as the Hacienda nightclub and Factory Records. Indeed, much of the mythology of the Manchester music scene is dominated by retellings of stories associated with the Hacienda, Factory Records and associated musicians, including representations within cinema through films such as *24 Hour Party People* and *Control*, a biopic of Joy Division's lead singer Ian Curtis. English Heritage's blue plaque scheme, founded in 1866, commemorates links between notable individuals and the built environment. There are now over 850 plaques around London, with additional plaques erected by the Society of the Arts, the London County Council, and the Greater London Council also termed as 'official' plaques that are recognised by English Heritage. Musicians John Lennon (who has two plaques in London) and Jimi Hendrix both have English Heritage plaques - the conditions of which require the plaque recipient in question to either have been dead for twenty years, or for the centenary of their birth to pass. Others including Keith Moon, The Beegees, Ian Dury, and Marc Bolan have plaques from organisations other than English Heritage, which are therefore not subject to the

same restrictions. It becomes clear, however, from the numerous 'unofficial' organisations erecting their own plaques – the Nubian Jak Community Trust and the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail, to name two that I would like to focus upon – that there is something lacking from the 'official' plaque schemes. These two organisations have erected their own plaques that somehow sit outside of the 'official' narrative of English Heritage's plaque scheme. It is illuminating to consider what drives the desire to represent these, as yet, untold stories.

> Music is central to the diasporic experience, linking homeland and hereland with an intricate network of sound. Whether through the burnished memory of childhood songs, the packaged passion of recordings, or the steady traffic of live bands, people identify themselves strongly, even principally, through their music. (Slobin, 1994:243)

The unveiling of 'unofficial' plaques seems intrinsically tied up to a sense of community and local identity. The Nubian Jak Community Trust is responsible for 17 plaques nationwide for figures who are considered to have made a notable contribution to the history of Black Britain. Recent plaques unveiled include a tribute to Claudia Jones, founder of the Notting Hill Carnival, and a plaque for Bob Marley at his first London residence. In an interview with the Guardian, Jak Beula of the Nubian Jak Community Trust spoke regarding the need for these 'unofficial plaques', referring in particular to a plaque on the wall of the Foreign Office in Westminster commemorating Ignatius Sancho, former slave, composer, actor and writer – 'That plaque is going to be there forever. Do you know how many people see this each day? If they tried to take this down, there'd be uproar' (Muir, 2011). For Beula, the plaque serves as a permanent representation of history – a physical manifestation that anchors memory, made all the more important due to the fact that it *will* be seen, and cannot be ignored.

For a community group, perhaps this permanence and visibility makes it all the more significant – a solid, physical grounding of heritage, intrinsically connected to the environment we live in and interact with each day. Beula continues and discusses a sense of 'rightful' belonging that is not being represented: 'It is important that these people take their rightful place in the history of this country.' (*ibid.*). Issues of belonging come to the fore here, along with the sentiment that the current process of history-making has been unable to 'rightfully' represent people. The 'unofficial' plaques become attempts to 'right' and 're-write' the inadequacies of current plaque schemes. For a diaspora group, perhaps the act of nailing a plaque to a wall can be seen as the culmination of anxieties over the lack of any

distinct 'steady point of reference' in Appadurai's terms (1996). Perhaps it is a fear that memories may be lost within this state of flux – a fear of cultural amnesia – that generates the desire to represent heritage in such a way. Without the physical permanence of a plaque, perhaps that particular historical figure's efforts or works will be forgotten - or perhaps there are fears that the history of individuals such as Ignatius Sancho are at risk from groups perceived to be taking on 'predatory forms' in Harrison's terms (2010a:197). This would include groups such as the BNP who propose a racially determined heritage that seeks to exclude minority heritage from their representations.

Continuing on the theme of minority heritage organisations, the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail (ASHT) aims to promote greater understanding of the shared heritage between Britain and the Sikh community. The organisation hosts regular events that provide information about the history of Sikhs, and particularly any connections with Britain - ranging from historical material from the Anglo-Sikh wars, to exhibitions looking at life following post-war migration to the UK. As part of their work, the organisation has a series of nationwide plaques drawing attention to sites of particular interest with regard to the Sikh community in the UK. Many of the plaques concern museums hosting exhibits related to Sikh history or historical locations significant to Sikhs in the UK, marking out a trail of over 40 locations that can be viewed online. It is interesting that the decision has been made to mark many locations where there are static exhibits or collections, and there is a clear focus on military history throughout the trail. Throughout the work of the ASHT, military history and the apparent lack of recognition of Indian soldiers fighting alongside the British during the World Wars is a recognisable focus. Qureshi (2013) has noted how this focus on a military past is problematic, and representative of an increasing militarization of British citizenship post-9/11[9].

Qureshi suggests that the trend towards militarization is indicative of a need to 'belong' by diaspora groups – and cites how British citizenship is becoming linked with an 'obligation to military service in exchange for the rights of citizenship' (2013:410). Bhangra music and dance plays an important role in how the Sikh community is expressing this militarization. The song 'Sher Soorma', by Gupsy Aujla, and its accompanying video, were produced with the support of the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trust, with a proportion of money raised by the song's sales going back to the trust itself. Released on Youtube, the song's video incorporates archival footage of the Sikh Regiment of the British Army during World

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[9] See also Gilroy (2006) and Ware's (2010) writings on multiculturalism during times of war.

War II, and portrays an aspect of military history that the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trust aims to raise awareness of. What we see in this video is essentially the telling of an alternative heritage story through the medium of the bhangra song and music video. However this is certainly an area of contested heritage, which due to the politics of militarization that surround it would trouble many in the UK's Sikh community. The problematic area here is that, while there are clear issues with attempting to define a singular heritage for the BrAsian diaspora (a project fraught with as many complexities as attempts to define a singular British narrative, or a 'universal story' in UNESCO's case), this song and video are privileging solely the Sikh community's military background.

By creating a narrative based only around Sikh contributions to the British Army, the fact that the British colonial army in India contained not just Sikhs, but also many Muslims and Hindus, is obscured. Music here plays a distinct role in the way this selective narrative is being unfolded. Why was this narrative chosen to be expressed through the form of a bhangra song and music video? I argue that there are connections between bhangra music and a perceived authenticity (tied in with connections to homeland) that help to reinforce the underlying links to heritage the song seeks to portray. Performed solely in Punjabi, a language predominantly associated with the Sikh community in India and the Sikh diaspora, the song style is seen as being an authentic way of representing this history, and one that will appeal to members of the Sikh community. Interestingly there seems to be no English language version of the song, which points to a lack of desire to present this particular version of history to a wider English-speaking audience. In the following chapter I return to look at 'Sher Soorma' and its music video, examining in closer detail the ways in which the song can represent 'Britishness'.

While heritage remains 'dissonant' even within the diaspora, it is important to consider the existence of alternative networks of musicians and audiences that seem able to resist incorporation into the wider British popular music industry. These networks and histories are at risk of remaining hidden, but the web provides archivists an opportunity to bring local stories and knowledge to a wider audience. An example of heritage in the digital age, the website 'Soho Road to the Punjab' (SRP) has become an extremely important web resource for information pertaining to Bhangra and its relations to place in particular. Connections between bhangra and various locations around the UK are explored, including important regional musicians, promoters and venues. Localities such as the city of Birmingham and Southall in London become apparent as centres for bhangra, not least due to their importance as places of migration for workers from the Punjab in the post-war period.

The website and related exhibitions take on a significant role when considering the relative invisibility of bhangra music within UK music charts. Banerji and Baumann (1990) have commented on the importance of alternative networks and economic systems that supported bhangra concerts and the distribution of cheap, pirate cassette tapes. Huq has written on the prevalence of piracy within the bhangra music scene, noting that 'illegal copying was rife' (2003:39). Documenting Bally Sagoo's signing to major label Sony and his first album release on the label in 1995, Huq notes that Sagoo's 'illegal bootleg sales were seen to have not sufficiently translated in commensurate unit sales' and he was subsequently dropped by the label (*ibid.*:49).

While Bally Sagoo's prominent success within local bhangra music scenes may be undocumented by Official UK music chart compilers, websites such as SRP allow one to observe his important influential role within local music scenes. SRP also documents a network of diasporic music and music listeners – in particular, links between the locations of Southall in London, Birmingham and Leicester in the Midlands and Bradford in the North of England. All of these locations are home to large communities of BrAsians, and as such were symbolically 'connected' by music-making taking place within the bhangra scene. A well-established touring circuit became the link between these locations, with live bhangra groups performing at weddings, functions and day-time events (Dudrah, 2007) frequently.

Cultural geographer Divya Tolia-Kelly uses the metaphor of the 'cultural landscape', to describe how the BrAsian diaspora creates a 'territory of belonging and a cultural nationalism within the British landscape' (2006:341). In her own examples Tolia-Kelly explores a range of visual and material culture, such as photographs, postcards, artefacts and souvenirs to discuss how BrAsians construct a diasporic national identity. I suggest that for the BrAsian community, music also forms a part of that landscape, and provides a space where heritage can quite literally be 'performed' – giving the diaspora an avenue for active participation in the discourse of heritage. Some writers have discussed this in the sense of attempting to fill 'gaps in the story', such as Steven Quinn's discussion of the 'Invisible History of Drum'n'Bass' (2002) and the importance of the style in representing an untold story of migrants in the UK.

Quinn discusses how drum'n'bass music in the UK can be viewed as a representation of the ('often invisible' in Quinn's terms) effects of Britain's long history of race and migration on the nature of British cultural identity and popular music. In the article a familiar story is told; that of a style of music locally influential and significant, and yet obscure in a national context. Reflecting upon the problematic issue of historicising drum'n'bass, Quinn

explains how the style, through its performance of 'pluralities often neglected in dominant renderings of history and memory' (*ibid.*:3) is able to challenge the dominant narrative and effectively become a 'clear manifestation of the way in which music can be a crucial form of expression for those populations whose histories and experiences have been denied visibility in the more traditional forms of visual and textual history' (*ibid.*:10). For Quinn, drum'n'bass as a musical style exists outside of the AHD, and he comments on how the style can help represent 'gaps in the story':

> The significance of drum'n'bass resides in its sonic maintenance of the legacy of those whose heritage and experience of being British has not been widely recognized within the more traditional and dominant characterisations of British culture and identity. Moreover, it also attests to the existence of an emerging British identity, one that is still to be marked upon the maps of its own present. The intertwining of memories evoked on the visual or the aural plane reveals a background teeming with colour and no longer blankly white as in the London Underground map. What, perhaps, is most significant is drum'n'bass' performance of a certain form of history: as a memory tonic for the amnesiac it continues to guide our attention towards those gaps in the story, those tears in the page, that may no longer be visible, but are far from being forgotten. (*ibid.*:10-11).

For Quinn, the 'dominant characterisations' of Britishness are mostly represented by the Britpop wave in the 1990s, with the 'pastoral rhetoric of a green and pleasant land' seen as having little meaning for a new generation of Britons (*ibid.*:7). This remains an underdeveloped idea in Quinn's paper, however, and is perhaps indicative of a narrow interpretation of Britpop based on its perceived exclusivity and nationalistic sentiment. Contrastingly Andy Bennett provides a reading of Britpop that sees it as a pluralistic and inclusive style - one that can be co-opted by groups and individuals to define their identities in the same ways that Reggae and Bhangra can:

> It could be argued that Britpop, rather than symbolizing a return to nationalistic values on the part of young people, is symptomatic of the pluralism which is increasingly becoming a feature of the identity politics of British youth (significantly, there is still little empirical proof that only 'white' youth in Britain listen to Britpop). To put this another way, it could be argued that like reggae, South Asian Dance music and rap,

Britpop is simply another resource through which young people in Britain can choose culturally to situate themselves. This is not to discount the claims made earlier, that Britpop may function as a form of 'magical recovery' of more traditional notions of Britishness. However, the cultural fragmentation which has led some to seek ways in which to revive such traditional notions of Britishness has, at the same time, also given rise to new ways of looking at Britain as a nation and considering what it means to be British. (Bennett, 1997:31).

It is clear that for diaspora groups, the notion of a national heritage in which they cannot see themselves reflected is problematic. This chapter has covered some of the ways in which localised histories are being told, and are able to act against the dominance of officialised histories. There is a call for heritage to be seen as a discursive practice, shaped through histories, interests, patterns, collisions and politics. As Roshi Naidoo has stated:

Too often the multitude of ways of being Asian in Britain are condensed around particular oversimplified and retrograde signifiers. The story of all sorts of minorities in Britain is simply the story of Britain and not something that can be hermetically sealed off from 'mainstream' heritage representations. (2005:47).

Having introduced key terms and the concept of popular music heritage in this chapter, the following chapter continues to discuss the construction of a 'British popular music heritage' with a focus on themes of nationalism, tourism and diversity.

Chapter 2: The Heritage of Popular Music

Introduction

This chapter outlines some of the ways popular music is presented as British heritage. Examples of instances where popular music has been promoted as national heritage are provided, such as the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, the use of music by far-right political organisations such as the British National Party, and the activities of music tourism organisation UKMusic. A wide range of organisations, institutions and cultural gatekeepers in the UK create a discourse around the notion of British popular music. These organisations include English Heritage, British Phonographic Industry (BPI), and Performing Rights Society (PRS) – but also notable are politicians, radio DJs, and music magazine, all of whom make relevant input on debates regarding music and British nationality. Each of these actors and their roles in the creation of British popular music as an ideological construction will be discussed throughout this chapter. I will argue that the work of these actors in constructing a narrative around popular music history based on national identity is ultimately restrictive in a number of ways.

Firstly, these narratives limit and exclude artists who are not easily categorised under a rubric based on national identity, such as the music of diaspora groups. The example of British Bhangra music and how these national institutions have interacted with the genre will be important to my argument, as often this genre has been excluded from the dominant narrative. Secondly, these narratives often privilege artists that fit stylistically alongside a group of canonised bands and artists – an example being the way in which bands such as Oasis and Blur in the 1990s were easily subsumed as part of a 'British 'Re'-Invasion', in the eyes of the music press neatly continuing the work of 1960s British bands The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Kinks.

One approach to canon formation in popular music is suggested by Karja (2006). Karja theorises three categories of canon, derived from Philip V. Bohlman's typography of folk music canonisation. These categories are introduced and utilised tentatively, aiming to provoke further debate around how to discuss canon formation in popular music, rather than being suggested as a catch-all solution. These are in the form of an alternative canon, a mainstream canon and a prescribed canon. Karja describes the mainstream canon of popular music as being characterised by the domination of 'rock journalism', as indicated in the example of a Finnish book entitled *Aution saaren levyt* ('Albums of a desert island')

(2006:12). The author of the book, a leading rock critic in Finland, surveyed over seventy Finnish music journalists to name one hundred popular music albums they would take with them to a desert island. The top 100 album list reveals a consensus towards older classic albums, including seven albums from the Beatles, four from the Rolling Stones and four from Neil Young (*ibid.*). Temporally and stylistically – as many of the albums selected for this book are from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as arguably definable as 'rock' albums – Karja sees this as a predictable result, and characteristic of the processes of mainstream popular music canonisation. Karja defines an alternative popular music canon most prominently in terms of a smaller scale of communication channels relative to representatives of the mainstream canon. These channels include 'small 'independent' record companies, marketing and promotion through specialised magazines or, better yet, flyers and informat contact networks, and , from the turn of the millennium on, increasingly the Internet.' (2006:13). In this sense musical styles that hold transgressive potential – in Karja's example, Finnish death, speed and black metal – can appropriately be characterised as possessing their own alternative canons, defined as the margins in relation to the mainstream popular music canon's centre.

The final category proposed by Karja is perhaps the most interesting and useful in helping to think about the canonisation of British popular music as discussed in this thesis. Prescribed canons are explained as deliberate constructions, often by a state aiming to promote a particular style of music but also potentially as part of record companies in their attempts to 'control markets' (2006:16). Karja uses the predominance of girl and boy bands in the 1990s as an example of a prescribed canon. The way in which manufactured groups such as All Saints and the Backstreet Boys were presented as groups who had formed autonomously, as opposed to on the initiative of the music industry as was the actual case, was indicative of an attempt to create an 'imagined past' for these groups (*ibid.*). A more openly state-mandated example is that of East Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s, where the state openly dictated 'which forms of popular music were the appropriate ones, and, therefore, which would be granted permission to be performed in public' (2006:17). In the context of British popular music, is it possible to consider the range of artists proposed by politicians as evocative of British national identity, for example, as an example of a prescribed canon?

If one were to accept the narrative delineated by a wide-range of institutions, male guitar-led rock bands continue to form the backbone of the British popular music canon. Bands such as Coldplay, Arctic Monkeys and Kasabian demonstrate stylistic and superficial

(in terms of visual presentation) connections – as well as reflecting distinctly male gendered identities - to earlier canonised British popular music groups. Finally, the very nature of a national popular music idiom is problematic for the answers it suggests to a complex question that has drawn much public attention in post-2010 political debate in the UK - 'What does it mean to be British?'.

Anthony D. Smith interrogates nationalist movements and the creation of what he terms the 'collective cultural identity of the nation' (1991:97). Describing the 'globalization of nationalism' (1991:143), Smith argues that the ubiquity and pervasiveness of national identity as a concept has seen peoples across the world construct, express and fight for the survival of nationalist ideals. For Smith, nationalism as a modern ideological formation can be seen as developing upon pre-modern notions of national identity, often dependent upon tracing the 'ethnic history' of a nation (1991:70). While Smith insists that the modern 'nation' is deep-rooted, often drawing upon 'shared ancestry myths, common historical memories, unique cultural markers and a sense of difference' (*ibid.*) – he does critique modern constructions of national identity. Discussing the importance of the arts to various historical nationalist movements, Smith states that:

> Nationalists, intent on celebrating or commemorating the nation, are drawn to the dramatic and creative possibilities of artistic media and genres in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, opera, ballet and film, as well as in arts and crafts. Through these genres nationalist artists may, directly or evocatively, 'reconstruct' the sights, sounds and images of the nation in all its concrete concrete specificity and with 'archaeological' verisimilitude. (1991:92).

The eagerness with which national institutions and political figures turn to popular music as emblematic of British identity should be considered as stemming from a desire to 'reconstruct' the nation, in Smith's terms. What should be problematized, then, is what exactly this 'reconstruction' consists of, and the role of aforementioned gatekeepers as part of this process.

Benedict Anderson would suggest that this construction of nationhood is representative of the 'imagined community' that defines his characterisation of the modern nation-state (1991). For Anderson, modern nations and nationalist ideology are, foremost, political and economic constructions, and any connection to ancient or primordial cultures should be viewed with intense scrutiny. The 'imagined community' itself is dangerous as a

political formation due to its complicity in wars and conquests, making it possible for 'so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.' (1991:7). As Anderson stresses, nationalism and nationhood are intensely serious phenomena, as borne out in the devastating human cost of conflicts involving political or moral struggles between nation-states. As iterated in the previous quoted passage, Anderson seeks to address a fundamental question regarding nationalism and national identity – what is it about these phenomena that encourages people to die in their names? Along with the historical constructions and myths that comprise Anderson's 'imagined community', as Smith observed, nationalists often take to artistic media to express nationalist sentiments and to serve as emblematic of specific national identities. By exploring both the importance of popular music as a facet of national identity in the UK, and the attempts by various institutions and individuals to 'use' popular music in order to express British national identity, this chapter critically engages with these issues.

The deployment of popular music within British party politics is by no means a modern trend (see Cloonan 2013 for an in-depth study of UK government attitudes to popular music post-1950). However the evocation of various artists seen as representing Britain and British identity by, amongst others, British Prime Minister David Cameron, appears to be a recent emergence owing to recent public questioning over the nature of British identity, and the task of attempting to define it. According to these public figures, popular music is an intrinsic part of being British, and an important cultural good that Britain produces as a global export. While Margaret Thatcher would have been unlikely to namecheck bands and artists popular during the 1980s – understandably perhaps, considering a not insignificant number of them had written songs critical of her time in government – Britain's modern Conservative party leader does not share that same reticence, having given a number of exuberant speeches that define, celebrate and champion British popular music artists. At a G20 summit in September 2013, during an empassioned speech extolling the global cultural influence exerted by Britain, David Cameron remarked that: 'Our music delights and amuses millions. The Beatles, Elgar, and slightly less congruously, One Direction, have conquered the world.' (Parker, 2013). The increasingly prominent deployment of particular British artists, who will be described in detail later in this chapter, by politicians and leading cultural figures, again leads to a narrowing of this category of British popular music, and of which artists can be considered the acceptable face of this constructed category on the International stage.

Beginning from the starting point of claiming an artist or musician as having a British nationality - which is rarely an uncomplicated assertion to make - these various actors define

the field of British popular music, providing their own answers to questions such as: Which musical artists can be called 'British'? Who represents British music in National and International contexts? And which artists are, in some manner, important to the nation and to the idea of Britishness? Crucially, the issue of what exactly constitutes Britishness is far from resolved, and yet well into the second decade of the twenty-first century, questions around Britishness appear to be taking an ever more prominent position at the heart of political and social discourse[10]. Consecutive nationally significant cultural events in the UK from 2011 to 2012 – the Royal Wedding in 2011, and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympic Games in 2012 – provided retailers an opportunity to furnish otherwise innocuous products with Union Jacks, a trend bolstered by marketing strategies that aimed to present seemingly each and every sellable good as '100% British'. As well as the repackaging of everyday goods to showcase their British roots, there are many examples of music products released during this time that aimed to emphasise British national identity.

Figure 2 - A collection of music scores entitled 'A Celebration of British Music' published in 2011, to coincide with the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton.

The above example shows a collection of classical music scores that presents an image of Prince William and Kate Middleton on its front cover – a collection released in

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[10] Paul Ward, in *Britishness since 1870* (2004), explores in great depth the issues surrounding the construction of different identities in the British Isles.

2011 to coincide with the date of the couple's wedding. Many compilation CDs of popular music that claimed to represent the 'best of British' were also released at this time, including the example below:

Figure 3 - 'Best of British' compilation album, released in April 2011. Artists listed on the front of the album include The Rolling Stones, Queen, Coldplay and Blur.

Outside of the increased vigour of marketers to repackage products in order to capitalise on the renewed attention British national identity was receiving, celebrations that highlighted national identity became increasingly prominent. The revival of the street party, a post-war trend in England and parts of Wales associated with the celebration of peace time and marking royal anniversaries, was a huge success, leading to over 9000 road closures across England and Wales according to the Local Government Association (2012). This predominantly English tradition became a hallmark for outward displays of national, ostensibly British, pride – although the complete lack of documented street parties in Scotland and Northern Ireland leads on to questioning to what extent this trend is able to represent the entirety of the UK.

This example of English cultural dominance over Scottish, Irish and Welsh national identities when British identity is brought to the fore is important to note, and this issue is of huge significance with regards to questions of national identity overall. A joke frequently told of tennis player Andy Murray based on how he is represented in sports media, is that when he wins he is British, and when he loses he is Scottish. Such a refrain is evocative of attitudes towards national identity in the British Isles, representing the fluid way in which British identity can be deployed as needed, but also removed when deemed fit – in this case by sports tabloids and fans seeking to celebrate Murray's victories as a national success, and to

distance themselves from his losses. Amongst the economic and political reasons for the current resurgence in popularity for the Scottish independence movement and devolution in the British Isles more broadly, the dominance of English cultural figures and traditions above and beyond those of other constituent members of the British Isles must be seen as equally important. As an example, the use of popular music to represent British music at the London 2012 Olympic Games provides an insight into the processes involved in the creation of British identity, and the dominance of English identity therein.

Music at the London 2012 Olympic Games

A pre-opening ceremony concert held in London's Hyde Park brought together four artists, each of whom represented one of the four nations that make up the United Kingdom – Stereophonics for Wales, Paulo Nutini for Scotland, Duran Duran for England, and Snow Patrol for Northern Ireland. All of these artists fit neatly into the white, male, guitar-led canon I have suggested – with the addition that these artists were performing here as representatives of their respective home nation. This concert represented a conscious attempt to include the various national identities that British identity encompasses, and as a result it raises a number of questions. The selection criteria here may have been deceptively complex, but on face value it appears to be primarily based upon the birthplace of the musicians comprising the band, followed by the artist having achieved a certain level of success and popularity more broadly. Neither of these artists have, throughout their individual bodies of work, made expressing national identity a prominent part of their image. Indeed the Welshness of Stereophonics, or the Northern Irishness of Snow Patrol may be entirely lost on consumers, to whom these bands are rarely (if ever) marketed on the basis of their national identities. Much more commonly one might find these bands featured on compilation albums claiming to showcase the 'Best of British' music, such as the example shown in figure 3.

I contend that rather than any musical or lyrical factors – rather than any form of intentional nationalistic sentiment on the part of the artists, in fact – the bands selected to represent their home nations at this concert were so chosen primarily based on origin or birthplace. In addition, the easy co-option of these artists into becoming part of a 'tradition' or constructed canon of British popular music further facilitated their selection here. While this was clearly and distinctly a 'rock concert' in the tradition of major rock groups who have previously performed at London's Hyde Park (most prominently the Rolling Stones), the

exclusion of any number of groups of people – female artists, non-white artists, non-rock musicians – is at odds with an attempt to represent national identities across the British Isles. The selection of artists who themselves have little interest in expressing their own national identities through their music, lyrics or image problematizes whether this was a useful theme to base a musical performance around. If the primary criteria are birthplace or the location where the band was formed, this does not provide a great deal of merit or weight to the concept of national identity itself. Is national identity – in this context, national identity as associated with the home nations in the United Kingdom – mainly about where you are born?

It appears that often, particularly when examining the ways in which popular music has been utilised by politicians and national institutions, birthplace and origin are major factors that come under consideration when ascribing a national identity to an artist. This is a logical basis on which to determine national identity, but an artist, and indeed an artist's fanbase, may place very little or no importance on their national origins - but simply by virtue of provenance they can be considered 'hometown' or 'home nation' heroes, and deployed as national figureheads by a host of actors with a vested interest in 'claiming' a particular artist as their own. It is interesting in this respect to consider Snow Patrol's representation of Northern Ireland at Hyde Park. They are a band containing members from both Northern Ireland and Scotland, and they formed while attending the University of Dundee. Having spent the majority of their formational years in Scotland, the band's history indisputably has much more to do with Dundee and Glasgow than Northern Ireland. In this situation both the pubs and venues of Dundee in Scotland and the seaside towns of County Down in Northern Ireland can lay claim to Snow Patrol in some respect – Dundee for being the place the band first met and honed its skills, and County Down for being the place of birth of a number of the band's leading members. With this profile, the band could conceivably have also represented Scotland at the Hyde Park concert – but the main point here is that Snow Patrol do not appear to have had the definitive say in the matter, with other actors having agency over ascribing a national identity to the band. Tourist boards in both Dundee and County Down can attempt to capitalise on their connection with Snow Patrol, and aside from attempting to stop this by legal threat, the band themselves have little control over which institutions choose to 'claim' them as their own.

This example is useful as it illustrates how integral birthplace is to notions of nationalism and heritage. If a musician was not born in their adopted country – as for example was the case for many early Bhangra musicians in the UK – under which nationality is their music categorised? To conjure a more complex example, how would one categorise

the music of an immigrant born in India, resident in England from the age of 25, performing traditional Punjabi folk songs in local pubs? How would one categorise the music of a second-generation BrAsian music producer, born in Scotland, borrowing stylistically from ragga, hip-hop, r'n'b, as well as Punjabi folk music – and with their music predominantly being listened to in India, Canada and the US? I would argue that the term 'British music' is in many ways inadequate to describe either of these two examples, and attempting to ascribe a national identity to the music or musicians here in the sense of 'Englishness', 'Scottishness' or otherwise, would be an exercise of limited usefulness. The reason for this is not only because of the nature of the global flows of musical style taking place in this example, or the identity of these musicians as members of a diaspora group – but also the loosely defined nature of terms such as 'Englishness' and their inadequacy at expressing the complexity of individual identities and how they themselves are constructed.

Many of the most prominent artists featured at the London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony itself – a large scale event that received tremendous exposure and was viewed by an estimated global audience of 900 million (Ormsby, 2012) – can be categorised as forming part of the white, male, guitar-led popular music canon alluded to earlier in this chapter. The opening ceremony presented a narrative of British popular music that, while still featuring the 'usual suspects' – The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, and the Who were all included – seemed conscious of the difficulty of pleasing everybody with its song choices, featuring a number of more daring musical choices for a global event, including the work of artists with anti-establishment personas such as The Specials and the Sex Pistols. Whether or not British Bhangra featured in the opening ceremony is a surprisingly difficult question to answer. There was a piece of music played that could conceivably be called 'Bhangra' in style, but it was actually a song composed by Bollywood composer A.R. Rahman called 'Nimma Nimma' that aimed to mimic the British Bhangra sound. Also, the performers featured while the song was played were not British Bhangra artists, but the BrAsian dance duo 'Signature', who are most known for being runners up in the 2008 series of Britain's Got Talent. Furthermore, the actual appearance of the song 'Nimma Nimma' itself is confusing in execution, as it seems to intrude upon the chorus of the Dizzee Rascal song 'Bonkers'.

It seems apparent that 'Nimma Nimma' was included somewhat as an afterthought, and was not chosen due to its significance to British culture, or for its poignancy at expressing parts of the immigrant experience. Particularly considering that the ceremony had moments that focused on immigration to the UK, it seemed an oversight to fail to include

music relevant to this – music that was relevant to the immigrant experience, an experience that is intrinsic to so many now living in the British Isles. There are British Bhangra songs that explicitly discuss aspects of migration to the UK, and there are songs that speak to large groups of the BrAsian community that characterise and soundtrack their arrival and settlement to the country. With this in mind, the fact that the 'Bhangra' song included in the opening ceremony was in actuality a well-constructed replica, seems all the more a cause for concern regarding the exclusivity of British Popular music heritage. While even punk and reggae bands, some of whom are often noted for their anti-establishment credentials[11], were included as part of a ceremony in which at times the royal family and Queen Elizabeth II herself – surely the very embodiment of the British establishment - took centre stage, it seems even more puzzling that British Bhangra was excluded in this way.

The overall effect here is one of 'othering' British Bhangra. Not able to be seen alongside the established canon of British popular music, British Bhangra is relegated to a genre of music whose actual 'Britishness' is implicitly called into question. Whether it is the use of non-Western instrumentation or the deployment of lyrics sung in a foreign language that creates an alienating effect, the significance of the ways British Bhangra has represented the immigrant experience for many South Asians now resident in the UK was not represented at this ceremony.

Music Heritage, Nationalism and Militarisation

As mentioned previously, the major cultural events of 2011-2012 in the United Kingdom led to an increased scrutiny of, and emphasis upon, the nature of Britishness. This questioning of national identity, taking place across social networking websites, tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, and in political debates, has also led to immigration becoming a particularly prominent issue in the United Kingdom – mirroring sceptical attitudes which permeate the upper political echelons of many member states across the breadth of the European Union. Radical right-wing political elements, particularly the English Defence League (EDL) who took form in 2009, took to the streets in protest against the perceived cultural contamination of radical Islam in England. For the first time in over thirty years there were large numbers of people gathering in England's town centres, vocal in their disdain for what were described as 'open door' immigration policies ostensibly brought in by Tony

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[11] The Sex Pistols, Frank Turner and The Clash were among the artists featured in the opening ceremony.

Blair's Labour government in the 1990s. The last extreme right-wing political group to achieve this level of support and media attention was the National Front in the 1970s, who were buoyant in an economically fractured, post-'Rivers of Blood'-speech Britain – and whose stock-in-trade was a similar anti-immigration, pro-white English political platform.

The UK Independence Party also achieved large-scale successes following the 2008 recession, receiving support based on their policy to have the United Kingdom leave the European economic union, and on tapping in to a public desire to retain a sense of 'British cultural tradition' against an apparently non-stop flow of immigration. A number of canards frequently enter into debates around immigration to the UK, and are often repeated by leaders of, and members of, these aforementioned political groups. For example: it is often repeated that the small islands that make up the British Isles are 'full up', and being such a small land mass, can support no more people than it already has[12]. This oft-repeated belief is born out in some of the cartoons used by right-wing British political parties and newspapers, usually representing the British Isles sinking amidst the overwhelming influx of immigrants. The globally recognisable grievance of 'immigrants taking jobs from native workers' – a refrain surely being heard in one place or another since the age of antiquity – and similar objections such as immigrants receiving priority for social housing, benefits and healthcare – have all increasingly become a part of the political landscape of Britain in the 2010s.

Predominantly as a result of the popularity right-wing parties achieved post-2008, the major political parties of the UK have had to specifically deal with the issue of immigration in order to appease voters. An increased public scepticism over the supposed benefits of mass immigration, and negativity over the nature of the multicultural society project, represent ways in which the modern debate around immigration has taken shape – and consequently has led to an increased emphasis on the rights of 'indigenous Britons'; an ethnic group who, as made clear in the discourse of far-right political groups in the UK, are in danger of becoming a 'minority in their own country'.

The far-right British National Party (BNP) has taken a number of steps towards staking a claim to British music heritage. Although now dissolved, the Great White Records record label operated from 2005 to 2009, releasing a number of albums from nationalist musicians such as Joey Smith and Colin Auty. Music was viewed by the party as a way to spread Nationalist views, with one senior BNP member remarking that: 'people will listen to a song over and over again and take all the words in, in a way that you would be very lucky

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[12] See for example, comments made by the British Democratic Party (Stevens, 2013) and the Daily Express (Pollard, 2013) echoing the narrative of the British Isles 'sinking' under the burdern of mass immigration.

to get one in 100 of them to listen to a speech. Music is a very effective way of getting our views across.' (Lancaster Unity, 2009). Such a statement tallies with Anthony Smith's argument regarding the importance of art and culture to nationalist movements, whereby sounds are used to help 'reconstruct' a concept of national identity (1991:92). The defunct record label was supplanted by online nationalist radio station 'Radio Red White and Blue', who maintain strong links with nationalist politics. The radio station website sells a number of pop and folk albums that explicitly state their claims to heritage, including an album simply titled *Heritage'* by nationalist group Ainscough and Backhouse (Radio Red White and Blue, 2011), while the BNP's merchandise website Excalibur sells an album entitled *Proud Heritage: Music of Sandyhills Flute Band* (Excalibur, 2014). A 2009 statement seeking new musicians for the Great White Records label outlines the nationalist ideology it seeks to spread:

> GWR is determined to create a musical medium for patriotic artists. We wish to educate people through music the issues that are of such concern to the silent majority in this Country; most namely the thinly disguised persecution of indigenous British people, especially those who speak out against social ills such as immigration, political correctness, crime and foreign wars which are of no concern to us. Unlike most record labels we also wish to celebrate our unique history and culture, after all we do have one! (MashedUK, 2009).

This example of an extreme right-wing nationalist approach to notions of heritage illustrates the importance of *who* interprets heritage and *how* it is being interpreted. There is a clear sense of entitlement to being the 'inheritors' of a heritage, in line with the BNP's nationalist ideology and their claims to represent an 'indigenous British' culture. The 'disinherited' group within this example comprises of non-White Britons, immigrants, and potentially anyone who disagrees with the nationalist political motivations of the party. It is important to note that the term 'heritage' can carry connotations of nationalism, and lends itself to becoming embroiled within the discourse of racism and cultural superiority that far-right political parties such as the BNP subscribe to. Anthony Smith's work on nationalism helps to clarify why music (among other art forms) is important as part of BNP attempts to assert an ethnic British identity, whereby songs and artists chosen for their connection to British national identity can be utilised as part of an effort to 'reconstruct' a national identity,

as well as part of attempts to appeal to individuals otherwise disinterested in nationalist rhetoric.

Heritage is, centrally, highly politicised, and the policy decisions that affect the construction of heritage discourses can have deep ramifications. At its most extreme, and as illustrated through the example of far-right political usages of the term, heritage can be seen as a marker of a national identity that needs to be kept pure of outside influence. Stemming from the same anxieties that fuel BNP beliefs that British identity and culture is constantly 'under threat' from outside influences, heritage becomes something to be guarded, preserved and – to use terms frequently deployed by the BNP – kept ethnically white and indigenously British. At the core of this notion of an exclusive, racially defined heritage are fears and tensions that are consistent within nationalist political discourse – a fear of 'outside' contamination and a desire to preserve that which seemingly represents the 'inside' and is at risk[13]. The use of heritage in this context is to help assuage a fear of loss – loss of nationhood, loss of self-identity, and loss of national values. While the case of the BNP and their notion of a nationalist heritage exists on the fringes of modern politics and represents a set of views held by a proportionally small number of people, I argue that the anxieties and the palpable fear of loss represented within this example are important to consider within wider debates around heritage.

The selection of tangible objects as representative of heritage - for example the music albums chosen by the BNP – safeguards against these fears, providing a grounding of identity when often these points of reference are in states of flux. Arjun Appadurai, developing Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of the 'invention of tradition' (1983), has written about the difficulty groups face when searching for certainties in identity markers:

> […] This is a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in a cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference, as critical life choices are made, can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere that the invention of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship, and other identity markers) can become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication. As group past's become increasingly parts of museums, exhibits, and collections, both in national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices

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[13] The use of 'outside' and 'inside' here is kept purposefully imprecise, in keeping with the vagaries that characterize much nationalist discourse.

and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences. (1996:44).

Hobsbawm and Ranger's analysis of 'tradition', asserting that 'traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented' (1983:1), is essential to bear in mind as part of discussions around heritage and national identity. In this reading of 'tradition' the concept is open to manipulation from institutional and political agency, as exemplified by Hobsbawm's example of the use of the American flag in US schools: 'the educational system was transformed into a machine for political socialization by such devices as the worship of the American flag, which as a daily ritual in the country's school, spread from the 1880s onwards.' (1983:280). This is a clear example of a 'tradition' (worshipping the American flag daily) being 'invented' (mandated as part of state and municipal politics). Having been instituted as a daily practice, how soon after its invention can this particular tradition be considered as 'appearing or claiming to be old'? Would a generation of schoolchildren taking part in saluting the American flag in school in the 1960s question how long this practice had been taking place, or simply acquiesce to it clearly being a tradition that dates back innumerable years? For nationalists seeking to find cultural 'certainties' – to construct a national heritage free of impurities – the invention of tradition is central to fulfilling this goal.

While Appadurai was originally referring to problems of identity that concerned diaspora groups, the same issues of cultural flux are surely significant when considering the invention of tradition by other groups including nationalists such as the BNP. A fear of loss within this 'cultural flux' is significant in the production of at least two anxieties: firstly, the anxiety to construct an untouched, unbroken and indisputable national heritage, and secondly, the anxiety driving minority groups to want to either be recognised as a part of this national story, or to construct their own narrative. In both of these cases there is a sense that an anchoring of history is desirable; that the uncertainty of existing within a state of flux necessitates the valorisation of particular objects, narratives or localities that together help to hold off a looming cultural amnesia that a state of flux threatens.

Vron Ware's work on the nature of 'militarisation' amongst diaspora groups in the UK is illuminating when considering how immigrants in the UK, or the children of immigrants, reconcile their desire to express a British identity, while being confronted with political groups and nationalist discourses that deny this facet of their identity (2010). For

example, within Britain's Sikh diaspora, there are a large proportion of people who will have had ancestors who served in the British army in India. The Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail (ASHT), discussed in the previous chapter, is an organisation that aims to uncover this particular historical narrative. Throughout the work of the ASHT, military history and the apparent lack of recognition of Indian soldiers fighting alongside the British during the World Wars is an identifiable focus.

Ware's argument suggests that immigrants who possess this claim to involvement in Britain's military history are increasingly utilising this as a way to 'justify' their belonging in the UK. Under the scrutiny of political figures and tabloid newspapers questioning whether immigrants and diaspora groups can ever truly be called 'British', an attempt to increase awareness of colonial involvement in the British army can be seen as a powerful 'bargaining chip', in a crude sense – allowing particular groups to emphasise their right to 'belong' (at the expense of other groups accordingly, some of whom may share no such history and therefore be at a relative disadvantage). The militarisation of diaspora is a significant point when considering British Bhangra music. Many producers and consumers of British Bhangra affirm an Indian Punjabi identity, itself closely entwined with Sikh religious identification. Many Bhangra artists openly display signifiers of the Sikh faith – the wearing of turbans, the display of religious artefacts such as the kara (metal bangle), or the use of the khanda (the iconographic crossed-swords used to symbolise Sikhism) as visual imagery.

The relationship of Sikhs to the British Raj is complex, and most notable for the historic designation of the Sikhs as a 'martial race' within the British imperial project. Following defeat in the two Anglo-Sikh wars in the 1840s, many Sikhs joined the British colonial army, serving in India, Hong Kong, and other fronts. As Katy Sian has noted, many Sikhs retain a pride in having been deserving of this 'special' martial status as designated by imperial Britain (2013). This is demonstrated in the ongoing presence of Sikhs in the British army, and the frequent deployment of Sikh military in war commemorations and remembrance services. In *Mythologies* (1972), Roland Barthes uses the example of a young black cadet in the French Army saluting on the cover of Paris-Match magazine, on the surface a representation of a racially diverse, integrated French community. The depiction of the well-assimilated, loyal ethnic subject here is at odds with the discrimination that ethnic minorities faced in France at this time. Such an image can be seen re-represented in the usage of imagery depicting loyal Sikh soldiers in the British army, for example – with a similar decoded meaning that portrays this ethnic minority as well-integrated and assimilated. With the background of Anglo-Sikh relations in mind, it is interesting to observe the deployment of

markers of British identity, and British military imagery, within the music of British Bhangra artists.

Figure 4 - A still from the music video for 'Sher Soorma'.

The song 'Sher Soorma', by Gupsy Aujla, and its accompanying video, was produced with the support of the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trust, with a proportion of money raised by the song's sales going back to the trust itself. Released on Youtube, the song's video incorporates archival footage of the Sikh Regiment of the British Army during World War II, and portrays an aspect of military history that the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trust aims to raise awareness of. What we see in this video is essentially the telling of an alternative heritage story through the medium of the bhangra song and music video. The problematic area here is that, while there are clear issues with attempting to define a singular heritage for the BrAsian community (which is a project fraught with as many complexities as attempting to define a singular British narrative, or a 'universal story' to use a term employed by UNESCO), this song and video privilege solely the Sikh community's military background. Music here plays a distinct role in the way this selective narrative is being unfolded. Performed solely in Punjabi, a language predominantly associated with the Sikh community in India and the Sikh diaspora, the song style is seen as being an authentic way of representing this history, and one that will appeal to members of the Sikh community. There is no English language version of the song, which points to a lack of desire to present this particular version of history to a wider English-speaking audience. Ashworth and Tunbridge's work on 'dissonant heritage' (1996:21) comments on the contested nature of heritage, and the importance of interpretation – in particular, *how* it is interpreted, and by *whom.* Many nuanced identities exist within the

broad term 'BrAsian', and it is possible to view some of these tensions manifested in this music video – and in particular how the problem of exclusion that can lead to the dissonance spoken about by Ashworth and Tunbridge can remain prevalent within a diaspora group.

Drawing back to the questions posed earlier in this chapter – is Gupsy Aujla a British artist, and is the song 'Sher Soorma' an example of British Popular music? Stylistically the music contains many signifiers of Bhangra music – Dhol drums playing a traditional Bhangra rhythmic pattern; Algozey flutes providing melodic accompaniment; and male vocals in Punjabi sung at the upper end of the singer's register, allowing them to occupy the higher pitches of the song's range. Divorced from the visual imagery of the music video (which would be outside of the context of the song's original release, which was strongly linked to the accompanying video), the song may be seen as a conventional example of the modern Bhangra music style, but certainly not containing any musical elements that could be read as overtly British, or indeed, 'non-Punjabi' in terms of musical signifiers.

The music video itself – containing imagery of British soldiers in World War II, quotes from Winston Churchill, and visuals of Gupsy Aujla himself adorned with a British flag on his shirt – is more clearly identifiable as having connections with British identity than the music itself. In addition, having knowledge of the production and release of the song – which was produced in the UK, and is sung by a British national – can provide additional information that could be used to categorise the artist and song in terms of national identity. I propose that this conceptual area, where the national identity of an artist or song are in the process of being decided, is one of great interest – and almost certainly an area where subjective opinion rules over objective fact. For a white British national who is unable to understand the Punjabi lyrics of this song, 'Sher Soorma' may be seen as non-British music quite clearly – firstly, it represents a language and culture not native to the UK, and secondly, it diverges stylistically from music known widely to comprise the category of 'British popular music' in terms of the 'pop canon'. In this context and from the perspective of this imaginary observer, this song and the artist may not be considered British in any significant way. From the perspective of an Indian Bhangra music fan, who keeps up with Bhangra emerging from Britain through the internet, this song may contain a number of elements delineating it as 'British' – its origins as a product of well-established Bhangra musicians from the UK; slight variations from stylistic features used in, for example, Indian Bhangra music, or Bhangra music produced in Canada (recognisable due to the listener's ability to discern these factors as a fan of the genre); and lyrical content that may hint at the artist's British identity. None of the elements observed by either of these two listeners are definitive,

but neither is it simple to argue against either of the assessments regarding the nationality of the song and artist.

Consider whether 'Sher Soorma' would ever be proposed for inclusion in a 'Best of British'-style compilation CD, of the kind discussed earlier. For the artist this song may represent an important facet of their British identity, spreading the story of how Sikh soldiers have taken part in British military engagements for well over a century. However, the use of a language other than English, as well as a combination of stylistic devices that musically distinguish this song from the sound worlds typically evoked by stalwarts of the British popular music canon, creates enough doubt over the song and artist's national identity as to all but eliminate it from any potential usage as a signifier of 'Britishness' in commercial fields.

'Sher Soorma' is an example of how British Bhangra can be seen as inacting a form of self-imposed exclusion, actively asserting a British Sikh identity to the exclusion of other South Asian identities. Discussed in the previous chapter, Cohen observes that among Indian diaspora groups, the ethno-religious identities of 'Sikh, Hindu and Muslim' (2008:65) are dominant, resisting broader definitions that categorise South Asian diaspora communities as homogenous. In 'Sher Soorma' we can observe the enacting of British Sikh identity – the utilisation of imagery and lyrical material that draws upon the history of Sikh battalions in the British Indian army being central to this, with the use of Punjabi language acting as a linguistic barrier to the exclusion of non-Punjabi speaking South Asian groups. For Anthony D. Smith, this attempt to present an ethnic nationalism would signify the British Sikh community seeking to express 'shared ancestry myths, common historical memories, unique cultural markers and a sense of difference', all aspects he considers to be deeply rooted aspects of the 'nation' (1991:70). The exclusivity granted to British Bhangra by the use of Punjabi is clearly a double-edged sword – it is integral to audience perceptions of authenticity that figure so highly as part of the criteria by which British Bhangra is assessed[14], but simultaneously it excludes all but the relatively small proportion of individuals (both in the UK and globally) who are proficient enough in Punjabi to understand the lyrical content. This dichotomy is central to understanding British Bhangra, and online communities for fans of British Bhangra are notable for featuring contradictory statements whereby British Bhangra should be open to growth and entering the 'mainstream' popular music industry, but also making sure not to stray too far from the stylistic features that make it distinctive – with

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[14] Chapter 4 includes detailed discussion of these audience perceptions, and the ways in which they impact British Bhangra.

language being a crucial part of this. Discussed in depth in Chapter 4, the controversy over artist Naughty Boy and his inclusion in the Asian Download Chart illustrates how members of British Bhangra fan communities often prefer to retain an element of exclusiveness, and are active in policing what can be defined as British Bhangra and what cannot.

Popular Music Heritage and Music Tourism

Returning to the notion of the existence of a predominant 'British Popular Music' canon, I propose that Laura-Jane Smith's concept of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (2006) is a useful formation that allows us to observe how different heritages are constructed in the UK. Many of the national heritage institutions in the UK, such as English Heritage, task themselves primarily with the built environment. The impulse to protect and preserve these important sites is often driven by a desire to honour past generations, maintaining a link to historical traditions and reaffirming the status of current generations as the inheritors of a grand cultural past. With intangible heritage, such as popular music, English Heritage has had a small level of engagement – mainly through the erection of plaques, as dicussed earlier. The British Music Experience at the O2 Arena in London is a major exhibition of popular music in Britain, and as such offers a narrative of British popular music extending from 1945 to the present day. Notably this exhibit marginalises British Bhangra music, constructing a narrative that includes significant mentions of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Glam Rock, Punk, Reggae, The 90s Manchester music scene, and Britpop. It becomes clear from progressing through the exhibit that this is a narrative of British popular music that British Bhangra is not a part of.

The various institutions who have taken up the mantle of representing British music – PRS for Music, the British Council, VisitBritain, the British Music Archive and a host of others – promote their own brands of 'British music', and are all involved in the process of canon creation. Increasingly British music is also seen as an economic boon to a local area. Consider the number of cities that draw tourists in with relics and sights related to artists that originated there – as mentioned earlier, Liverpool, Manchester and Oxford are all cities that have willingly or unwillingly become pilgrimage sites for particular music fan groups. Since the decline of British industrial interests in the 1980s – the national shift towards ending the era of large scale goods manufacturing, and the beginning of an era based around a service-led economy – cities in Britain have increasingly looked to alternative revenue streams such

as tourism to boost the money spent in the local area. While the bulk of tourism to Britain centres on the sights of the capital cities of the home nations, a focus on local cultural heritage allows smaller cities to distinguish themselves, making themselves desirable as tourist destinations in their own ways.

Gibson and Connell cite 'new affluence, mobility and nostalgia' as factors determining the surging popularity of tourism related to music (2005:43). Central to these are the places where popular recorded music has been made, with highlighted examples such as Memphis (a city intimately connected to the life and music of Elvis Presley, as well as a vast range of soul and blues recording artists) and Nashville (central to the American country music industry from the 1950s onwards) in the US, and Liverpool in the UK. These are cities whose identities have been shaped due to their connection to particular artists, record labels or music producers, and as such they represent the largest scale examples of popular music tourism (2005:58). Representing smaller scale examples, recording studios and performance venues also become sites of pilgrimage for fans of particular artists, including Abbey Road Studios and The Cavern Club which form part of the history of the Beatles (2005:60). Gibson and Connell discuss music tourism's socio-economic impact, asserting that music tourism has 'direct economic impacts on places and people, and there are many intangible benefits in terms of image and marketability that come from associations between music and place.' (2005:93). The shift towards making the most of associations between music and place with regard to the economic benefits it could bring to a city is linked to discourses of 'the creative city', 'where culture is a key component of urban development planning' (2005:113) and where economic growth is geared around making the most of artistic and cultural works and their connections to place. In the UK this shift is exemplified by a recent report that argued for the development of music tourism resources and stating the importance of maximising the benefit of music heritage sites in cities.

The October 2013 report carried out by national organisation UKMusic proposed that music tourism is worth upwards of £2.2 billion to the British economy, encouraging over 6 million tourists to visit. The report uses figures calculated from the number of tourists who came to the UK for a reason related to music in some way – whether that is attending a concert, going to a music festival or taking part in music tours. Sandie Dawe, Chief Executive of VisitBritain emphasises the importance of popular music as part of British culture, and to the British tourism industry:

British music is a cultural asset that inspires people overseas. Our music heritage is as much a part of our appeal as Buckingham Palace or fish and chips. Heritage doesn't stop at castles and stately homes: from the Roundhouse to The Cavern Club, historic music moments have been, and always will be, made in Britain. After all, we are the second largest exporter of music in the world. (UKMusic, 2013:9).

Drawing upon nationally recognisable symbols such as Buckingham Palace, the report attempts to raise the profile of music tourism, asserting that music is crucial to what visitors to Britain want to experience. Many of the examples given here – Buckingham Palace, the Roundhouse and The Cavern Club – are all based in England, rather than the other home nations. This is a trend throughout the report, as are passages where London takes a predominant position over other cities in Britain.

Other contributors to the report include Ed Vaizey, the current minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, and Paul Latham, CEO of major live music operator Live Nation. The involvement of actors from the highest reaches of political and commercial fields underlines the gravitas afforded to popular music in the UK as a potential economic boon. In economic terms, music tourism is seen as a resource that is as-of-yet untapped and relatively easy to harness – for example, if an internationally known band like the Rolling Stones formed and recorded in a city, the majority of the groundwork is already done. The legacy of the Rolling Stones' recording career, and breadth of live performances across the city, creates an indisputable connection between the band and that location. All that is left is for local government to emphasise these connections, and if music fans wish to see where Jagger and Richards cut their performing teeth, the traders of the city will be happy to oblige. In this way I argue that music tourism is implicated in deploying music histories in a manner akin to that of a natural resource – some cities were built close to, and possess, natural deposits of minerals or ores; some cities have mineral water springs nearby; Liverpool have the Beatles and the burgeoning music tourism trade based around them.

The report draws together a range of arguments and figures, backing up the significant impact music tourism can have in bolstering the UK economy. Throughout, it is stated that cities across the UK should try to emulate the successes of Liverpool, which has already created a strong tourist trade based on the city's music heritage – 'Other towns in Britain can replicate Liverpool's ambition and push their own musical heritage' (UKMusic, 2013:12). In addition, the familiar faces of Britain's legitimised pop canon are reiterated, as in this passage:

The UK has always produced world class musical talent in every genre from dance to classical. Some of the biggest rock and pop stars on the planet, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and David Bowie, have launched from Britain's shores and their music is available and bought in countries from Australia to Zimbabwe. (*ibid.*:17).

The deployment of music heritage as a 'tourism net', aimed at drawing in economy-boosting tourism to a local area, brings with it a set of deeply embedded problems. Inevitably this leads to a situation where 'what the tourist wants, the tourist gets' – if a tourist visits a city such as Liverpool expecting endless Beatles tribute bands and souvenir shops, local businesses would be loath to miss out on the opportunity to have an influx of tourists. The UKMusic report makes clear the importance given to money-spending tourists, describing them in bluntly economic terms – 'Overseas tourists are gold dust. They comprised just 6% of the total population of music tourists in 2012, but accounted for 20% of music tourist spending.' (*ibid.*:14). Work in the field of tourism studies has looked at how cultural practices mould around the expectations of tourists (for example, Guerrón-Montero, 2006; Creighton, 1997). Musicians in contexts where they must please tourists – performing in a popular local restaurant for example – make changes to repertoire or performance style, consonant with the expectations of consumers. A report expressing a desire to transform cities across the UK into music tourism hubs, promoting the historical legacy of artists who were born there, can be seen as potentially toxic – transforming the music cultures of UK cities into backwards-looking, unimaginative money-spinners. A cynical view, but the dangers of privileging particular artists in this way are clear.

For a tourist visiting Liverpool with the express intention of visiting various Beatles tourism sites, what of the obscured and hidden histories that are no longer given attention? As another example, consider a tourist in Birmingham exploring the legacy of 80s metal bands such as Black Sabbath - how would they deal with an encounter with British Bhangra music, another crucial element of Birmingham's musical heritage? For the purposes of this thesis, the exclusions that are put in place here in terms of diaspora heritage and diaspora music are of primary importance. Discussing the nature of tourism and how it affects both visitors and natives, Cabezas states that: 'In International tourism, only some people are able to travel and experience a respite from the crushing banality of their lives; others, too poor to go anywhere, are relegated to servicing the needs of foreign travelers' (2008:21). While this is perhaps

more true in the context of Caribbean tourism within which Cabezas writes, the economic downturn and its effect on the ability of people in Britain to freely take holidays abroad means a similar relationship now exists between overseas tourists to Britain and those resident in tourist-heavy cities.

UKMusic's report on the effects of music tourism on the British economy suggests that individuals in UK cities could benefit from making more of the 'raw materials' of the music tourism economy that exist in their localities. However what Cabezas argues, and what I will argue is also true in this context, is that tourism inherently creates an imbalance, leaving local economies at the mercy of overseas investment, at the whim of the demands of tourists whose needs may not match up with the reality of life in the cities they visit. Cabezas compares the nature of tourism to the Dominican Republic today to that of the sugar trade a century ago: 'a monocrop controlled by foreigners and a few elites that services the structures of accumulation for global capitalism' (*ibid.*). While the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic is based much more on an exploitative economic project than tourism in the UK is, the comparison between tourism and natural resources is a cogent one.

As UKMusic's report suggests, popular music tourism in the UK is, in terms of how cities manage and maximise their connections to popular music, still at a comparatively early stage of development. As a result it is difficult to prophesise what could happen several decades ahead in the cities that continue to emphasise their musical heritages. However it is clear that a music tourism economy that plays to the desires of tourists must deal with the prospect of changing consumer attitudes. If music audiences suddenly decide that they no longer wish to visit Liverpool based on its connections with the Beatles – a distinct possibility as populations age and younger generations decide to travel, perhaps being entirely unaware of the Beatles' legacy – how does the music tourism industry react? Will the city be left as a wasteland of un-booked tribute bands, empty Cavern Club replicas and dusty Beatles paraphernalia? Or will the tourism industry shift to favouring a newer band that has caught the imaginations of a new generation? The problem that emerges here is based on whether the development of the music tourism industry initially occurred as a result of attempts to harness tourist interest, or as a result of a genuine desire to commemorate the band. I argue that a desire to establish memorabilia remembering the band will long outlast the trends of tourist trade – and of course this is a difficult nuance to uncover prior to the aforementioned potential death of tourist trade.

Much of what takes place in the field of 'national identity formation' takes place based around audience expectation, rather than attempts at true representation. The many

compilation CDs aiming to showcase the 'Best of British' are charged with providing consumers purely with what they expect – no more, and no less. A consumer purchasing a CD entitled *Britain's Best Pop* will no more expect to hear the sounds of British Bhangra, than they would the sounds of Indonesian Gamalan or German lieder. A British Bhangra song on a CD such as this would surely be considered nothing more than a foreign contaminant, the subject of confusion followed by an immediate search for the 'skip' button. Pulp; The Smiths; Pink Floyd; Led Zeppelin; and so on – these are the bands that we would expect to hear on this CD. This expectation is something forged in a variety of ways, through magazine features, prominent radio airplay, presence in public settings such as pubs, clubs and venues, journalistic acclaim, and more recently for many bands, long-form BBC4 feature documentary films. The truth of the diversity and dynamism, the fluidity of exchanged ideas and syncretism, present in many of Britain's popular music styles, is discarded here in favour of easy, inarguable selections based around a consensually agreed-upon range of music artists that have come to represent British popular music in the global, commercial marketplace.

In the same way that privileging parts of the built environment such as stately homes with an 'officially recognised' status can lead to a narrowing of what 'Britishness' can comprise, the privileging of certain musical artists by organisations such as English Heritage, exhibits such as the British Music Experience and music tourism initiatives across the nation can lead to a similar excluding effect with regard to musicians and music listeners in Britain who do not see themselves as a part of that narrative. This raises problematic issues around nationhood – what can be defined as British popular music, and what are the limitations of the term with regard to ethnicity? Furthermore – how does an artist enter into this canon, and what are the limits for inclusion or exclusion?

Heritage, Diaspora and Diversity

With regards to the notion of 'official' and 'unofficial' narratives, Arokiasamy's recent work on attempts to embed cultural diversity in London's heritage sector highlights how certain narratives - in this case those of many diaspora communities in London – can be forced to look for representation outside of 'mainstream museums, galleries and archives':

> Despite their long-standing presence in the UK, and the fact that they comprised
> 30% or more of London's population, the immigrant communities' involvement
> in the planning and delivery of London's mainstream museums, galleries and
> archives was negligible. The small number of staff from ethnic minorities
> generally occupied lower grade jobs, and were notably absent from middle and
> senior positions and in governing bodies. (2012:341-342).

These institutional failures effectively made it impossible for diaspora communities to see themselves reflected within the museums and galleries of London. Arokiasamy observes how this results in the creation of 'informal community networks' that allow immigrant communities to separately express their intangible heritage (*ibid.*:342). The overarching effect of this is to prevent the creation of a shared sense of heritage, with the implied legitimacy of organisations such as English Heritage, and their aforementioned limitations which can often exclude particular narratives, compounding this. This can be particularly problematic when a narrative especially important to a community group and seen as playing a crucial part in helping to define cultural identity, such as music to the BrAsian community, is not being reflected within the wider heritage sector. Arokiasamy's study is indicative of the rich availability of objects that are representative of diaspora communities, and which are currently not displayed – mostly due to inaction, but perhaps also partly due to a confusion over what to do with these materials:

> Little or no attempt had been made to bring to life the many African and Asian
> objects stored in the vaults of the heritage institutions or held by the communities,
> or to provide opportunities for the diaspora communities to illustrate the
> intangible elements of those objects on display. (*ibid.*:342).

The question of how to approach the display and archiving of such materials certainly presents a challenge for heritage organisations. Particularly with music and memories of

music – which often consist of ephemera such as ticket stubs, printed flyers and posters – it is difficult to gauge the usefulness of these materials if little contextual detail is provided. The story of British Bhangra music seems particularly elusive, with much activity taking place during the 1970s and 80s, and with little written history of the era. However the recent emergence of texts exploring the growth of British Bhangra (Dudrah 2007, Roy 2010) and exhibits such as the Soho Road to the Punjab roadshow, which displayed album art and other ephemera, have begun to unpack the history of the genre – albeit seemingly separating the genre in such a way that it seems to exist in parallel to the 'rest' of British popular music. I suggest that these examples seem consistent with Arokiasamy's observation of alternative networks that are adopted to disseminate the heritage of a diaspora group. The texts in question seem to exist somewhat uneasily alongside authorised representations of heritage such as the narrative of British popular music portrayed by organisations such as English Heritage and exhibitions such as the British Music Experience.

Gard'ner is critical of heritage organisation practices that effectively marginalise the cultural identity of ethnic minority groups, providing a case study based on the Bangladeshi community of Tower Hamlets in East London (2004:74). Explaining that a disparity exists between the types of sites valued by London's Bangladeshi community and the types of heritage sites recognised by the English Heritage organisation, Gard'ner explores sites in Tower Hamlets that are representative of what one of his interviewees terms the 'lost British Bengalee heritage' (*ibid.*:80). Due to the categorisation by English Heritage of the small Georgian houses that were significant to the silk weaving trade in Tower Hamlets as being 'fourth rate', there is currently a lack of importance placed on recognising these buildings as historically significant (*ibid.*:82). However, for the Bangladeshi community these buildings constitute important links to the past, particularly that of the arrival of Bangladeshi immigrants to the UK, predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s. This example demonstrates the clash that can occur between the notion of a national heritage narrative, and local sites that, despite their significance to the community, can be excluded from this. I will continue by discussing some examples of the heritage of BrAsian music, and recent initiatives that have sought to represent this history.

The importance of music to the BrAsian community is exemplified by its prevalence at major social occasions, as well as by the large scale of the network of musicians and music listeners who produce, perform and listen to Bhangra music. Highly attended and being of great cultural importance to the BrAsian community, *melas* are festival events that take place across the country, with major *melas* taking place in Bradford, Manchester and London

amongst other cities. The BBC Asian Network, a national radio station specialising in programming for the BrAsian community, has recently been heavily involved with hosting mela events across the UK. In London, the annual London mela and the Baisakhi Mela in Tower Hamlets are, along with the Notting Hill Carnival, some of the biggest street festivals in the UK. Along with food and dance, music plays a central role at the mela, where often UK Bhangra musicians – as well as artists from India – are invited to perform to large audiences at the outdoor events. Explored in more detail in Chapter 3, such events are seen as being among the most prestigious for a Bhangra artist to perform at. These events, particularly those in London, Birmingham and Manchester have long histories that have followed the movements of South Asian migrants in the UK, and in many ways have become valuable markers of identity for BrAsian. Amidst anxieties over belonging, nationhood and homeland (See Sharma et al., 1996), melas constitute a public space where BrAsian identity can be performed.

As well as melas, particular urban locations hold significance for BrAsian music. Areas such as Soho Road in Birmingham and Southall in London were previously major hubs for musical activities, with the many record shops, artist agencies and performance spaces of Soho Road perhaps best exemplifying the music scene at its most prolific. Although many of the artist agencies and record shops on Soho Road are no longer open, some existing work on Bhangra music has focused upon the importance of the street to the development of British Bhangra music, and the multitude of stories and narratives about that street that have remained untold (Dudrah, 2007). Constituting in many ways one of the 'informal community networks' discussed by Arokiasamy, the *Soho Road to the Punjab* (SRP) website provides much information about Bhangra music nationwide, although as the name of the website makes obvious, the core focus is on Soho Road.

The website has become an extremely important web resource for information pertaining to British Bhangra and its relations to place in particular. Connections between Bhangra and various locations around the UK are explored, including important regional musicians, promoters and venues. Localities such as the city of Birmingham and Southall in London become apparent as centres for Bhangra, not least due to their importance as places of migration for workers from the Punjab in the post-war period. The website and related exhibitions take on a significant role when considering the relative invisibility of Bhangra music within UK music charts.

The development of the Soho Road to the Punjab website, and the prominence of user debate and commentary on it, as well as on popular Bhangra fansites (discussed in more

depth in Chapter 4), is representative of how British Bhangra audiences take prominent roles in considering the heritage of this musical genre. However, as well as audiences contributing to the discourse around British Bhangra and its heritage, musicians and artists also add to the discussion with their own interpretations, concurrences and disagreements with existing narratives. A particular dispute that occurred following the release of Rajinder Dudrah's *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* book in 2007 speaks to the way in which issues around heritage take on a wide significance, particularly when individuals or groups feel excluded in some way.

Figure 5 - Birmingham Mail – November 6, 2007

Musician Gurcharan Singh Mall, member of a number of Bhangra music groups in the 1980s, felt that his contribution to British Bhangra music was downplayed in the book. Having had a 40-year career within the British Bhangra industry, and having collected numerous awards and accolades, including performances in front of the Queen, Mall believes he should have been represented more prominently than he was in the book – despite being named several times in the book as a highly influential figure. Mall states that 'I was

pioneering bhangra in this country when the writers of this book hadn't been born. […] I know I have been mentioned, but I feel my contribution hasn't been given the prominence it deserves.' (Brady, 2007). In this way Mall disputes the authority of the authors of the book – questioning their legitimacy in writing a narrative of British Bhangra's history, when, in his words, he was 'pioneering bhangra' before the writers had been born. Although a provocative statement, this attitude towards the authority of the writers of this particular narrative gives us useful information about the types of judgements used when assessing particular heritage constructions. Upon encountering the *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* book and noticing his exclusion from the narrative, Mall's initial reaction is to ask 'who wrote this narrative, and what gives them the authority to write it in the first place?' (to which his answer is, as given in the article, people too young to have been around when he was influencing the early British Bhangra scene). By disputing the creators of this narrative, this effectively serves to discredit the source, and accordingly, the authority of this particular heritage narrative.

These questions of inclusion and exclusion from the narrative – even within a genre as relatively recent in its inception as British Bhangra – are subjects of intense debate and heightened passions amongst artists and audiences. The anger that was felt at this exclusion prompted Dudrah to respond personally, stating that 'we recognise Gurcharan as a pioneer of the Bhangra scene, but the book is not an encyclopaedia, nor does it claim to be the only or official story of British Bhangra music.' (*ibid.*). While the book may not claim to represent any form of 'official story', in the context of British Bhangra music, the *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* book is among the only published resources that looks closely at the regional specificities of British Bhangra music. The book is currently the closest to a dominant representation that exists for British Bhangra music, and as such the decisions made around whom or what to include or exclude are subject to intense scrutiny. In this way the book, against the author's intentions, becomes tantamount to an official story – and the disputes and anger held by a musician such as Gurcharan Singh Mall from being, in his mind, overlooked from the narrative, is representative of the regard in which the book is held. Hence this book could be described as an authorised text – taking on a more authoritative voice in comparison to alternative narratives of British Bhangra, which may be unpublished, or not produced with the same attention to detail as the *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* book.

There are a number of ways in which an artist or group may become a part of the authorised canon I discussed earlier. Prominently, record sales and chart successes count for a large part of this. Groups that have achieved notable successes in the Official UK Charts have

a better opportunity at becoming part of the memorialised discourse. For example, The Beatles are often noted for the number of Number One records they achieved in the UK Charts, a feat often brought up by institutions and publications that memorialise the band. However, record sales and chart successes seem to be, in the age of unlimited digital access to music, a somewhat old-fashioned method of gauging the popularity of an artist or group. While recent trends have meant that institutions such as the Official Charts Company have had to consider digital downloads along with physical record sales as part of their chart-making process, many millions of music listeners choose streaming facilities to access music in increasingly unrecorded and ephemeral ways. The use of Youtube by young people to access music (explored in Chapter 4) is one example that discredits barometers of popularity and cultural significance which rely primarily upon record sales. Of note is that many of the major outlets for British Bhangra music now exist primarily online.

While some of the prominent record labels involved in early British Bhangra music are still releasing new music in physical formats – including Moviebox and Oriental Star Agencies – the trend since July 2008 (when Moviebox announced they would be allowing consumers to download digital copies of albums on the same day they are physically released) has been towards an almost total dominance of digital media. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the thriving online communities where discussion of British Bhangra music takes place are the primary locations where taste-making happens and fan discourse is generated. Users of community websites are involved in processes such as canon creation – resulting in many features and articles attempting to reach some consensus on what should constitute the 'Top 10 Bhangra Albums of All Time', for example. What this turn towards the digital means is that British Bhangra music and its fans have been able to construct their own music histories, outside of mainstream conceptions of British popular music, and outside of institutional representations of British pop that often elide the history of Bhangra in the UK. What this also means is that no indisputable single history of Bhangra music, either in the UK or in India, is universally agreed upon, and indeed much online debate takes place based around differences in opinion between listeners expressing different views regarding the origination of the style. The digital shift has also meant that piracy, frequently seen as being a major factor in the dissemination of British Bhangra historically, has facilitated an increased – and unrecorded – proliferation of Bhangra music across the internet.

In a historical context, piracy in its many forms (including forms which record companies may consider piracy, but consumers may consider fair use) – the lending and copying of tape cassettes and compact discs, shops that openly deal in counterfeit physical

media, and online file sharing – makes truly assessing the impact of any musical recording based on sales alone all but impossible. While it may be argued that, due to piracy, any record sales that do occur are more prominent purely because they occurred even despite the existence of pirate copies, it is arguable that music piracy exists in a higher concentration among particular genres of music. For example, the rampant piracy of music within the British Bhangra scene is well documented. In 2005, the British Phonographic Industry conducted investigations into a number of Asian music record shops, focusing in particular on the album *Authorised* by producer DJ Sanj, an album known to feature copyrighted material from major label artists. Based around the use of instrumental samples and vocal samples that had gone uncleared, this raid was significant in being the first attempt by the BPI to intervene in the BrAsian music industry. Notably at this time the BPI revealed that piracy figures within the BrAsian music market were far higher than the national average – with the national rate of pirated music recordings being around 5%, and the 'rate of piracy in the Asian music market at more than 40%' (BBC, 2005). The fact that piracy is, and historically always has been, prominent within the field of British Bhangra was not lost on the musicians and performers, many of whom took the sale of recordings as a less meaningful mark of success than other factors.

For this reason, live shows often precede record sales as a measure of a British Bhangra group's success – an example of a context in which record sales are not held as the only important standard artists should be remembered for. Banerji and Baumann (1990) have commented on the importance of alternative networks and economic systems that supported bhangra concerts and the distribution of cheap, pirate cassette tapes. Huq has written on the prevalence of piracy within the bhangra music scene, noting that 'illegal copying was rife' (2003:39). Documenting Bally Sagoo's signing to major label Sony and his first album release on the label in 1995, Huq notes that Sagoo's 'illegal bootleg sales were seen to have not sufficiently translated in commensurate unit sales' and he was subsequently dropped by the label (*ibid.*:49). While Bally Sagoo's prominent success within local bhangra music scenes may be undocumented by Official UK music chart compilers, Bhangra community websites allow one to observe his important influential role within local music scenes. These websites also document a network of diasporic music and music listeners – in particular, links between the locations of Southall in London, Birmingham and Leicester in the Midlands and Bradford in the North of England.

Furthermore these websites enable connections to be formed between Bhangra music listeners in a global setting. Prominently, Canada, the United States and India are home to

members of the South Asian diaspora, some of whom contribute to community websites as a way of keeping up to date with new Bhangra releases, and communicating with fellow fans. The aforementioned locations in the UK are home to large communities of BrAsians, and as such were symbolically 'connected' by music-making taking place within the Bhangra scene. A well-established touring circuit became the link between these locations, with live Bhangra groups performing at weddings, functions and day-time events frequently (Dudrah, 2007). The fact that this network existed separately to the commercial realm of English popular music – evidenced by the lack of recognition by chart sales – leads to a questioning of the merits of a nationally ordained popular music canon that is unable to reflect the significance of this genre to large numbers of British citizens.

Throughout this chapter I have looked at examples of media discourse, institutions, and individuals in places of power that have influenced and are involved in the active creation of a British popular music canon. I have argued that, firstly, such a canon does indeed exist. While there are frequent disputes over who should be included in such a list, the involvement of an array of actors in different fields – including media, political and institutional – has enabled a group of privileged artists to achieve a certain level of universal national acceptance. Furthermore, the work of music tourism initiatives across the UK – both those currently in existence and those being proposed by national bodies such as UKMusic – have a powerful effect on the histories being told in UK cities regarding their own music heritage. The nature of these histories, and the lack of diverse representation they often contain, is fundamentally problematic for members of diaspora communities in the UK – and in the case of my particular study, a problem for members of the BrAsian community who often do not see British Bhangra music represented at a national level. Elisions at all levels – a lack of mainstream chart radio play, exclusion from the London 2012 Opening Ceremony, as well as smaller-scale exclusions from CD releases such as those claiming to represent the 'Best of British' music – create somewhat of a paradox for British Bhangra music and its fans.

Unable to see the genre attain a degree of national recognition, musicians involved in the genre and its fans are forced back in upon themselves, having to create an insular network focussed around online digital downloads and community web forums. This network is both separate from mainstream British popular music discourse, and stretches well beyond it – reaching a wider global network of British Bhangra music listeners, who previously will have been unable to take part in discussions about the genre. Crucially this insularity makes it more difficult for British Bhangra artists to be recognised on a national stage – and indeed

many artists do not consider widespread popularity across the British Isles as the foremost goal to be seen as successful. Achieving popularity amongst the network of connected fans in the South Asian diaspora, as well as those in South Asia, is often seen as a prominent goal. Many British Bhangra artists make an effort to connect with fans on a global level, seen through involvement with Bhangra community websites in the form of artist interviews, exclusive features and direct engagement with fans through websites such as Twitter. Before engaging with the issues raised by the proliferation of digital media as an integral part of British Bhangra in Chapter 4, the following chapter details ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three sites in England, and aims to underline the existence of different British Bhangra heritages across England. In this way the offline networks that defined pre-millenial British Bhangra are explored and discussed.

Chapter 3: Locating Bhangra in the UK

Introduction

The constellation of artists, audiences and promoters involved in the British Bhangra industry are concentrated in major urban centres in the UK, predominantly those areas where South Asians immigrants settled en masse during several waves of immigration in post-war Britain. These locations are easy enough to define, due to their proximity to the industries and businesses where South Asian migrants sought work during this time. Heathrow Airport in West London; the textile mills of Greater Manchester; the steelworks of the West Midlands – the urban areas close to these current and former examples of large-scale industry in the UK are areas where many South Asians settled from the 1950s onwards (Kalra, 2000). Initial waves of immigration from the commonwealth countries to the UK were stimulated by a need for cheap labour at this time, when resources had been depleted following the Second World War. Invited by employers who advertised for workers in India, South Asian migration began primarily under starkly economic terms. The wages offered for menial positions in the UK far outstripped those available even for skilled labour in India – and many men who emigrated at this time did so believing they would eventually return to their home nations. The passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 added restrictions to the free movement of workers within the Commonwealth, and at this point many workers from South Asia decided instead to settle in the UK with their families eventually joining them.

By the late 1960s, members of the South Asian community in the UK had begun to experiment with the creation of musical groups. Dated as first forming in 1967, Bhujhangy Group began while the founding members were still in their teens. Releasing a 7-inch EP in 1967, the group approached music store owner Muhammad Ayub about recording a full album in 1969, at around the same time that Bhangra group Anari Sangeet Party approached Ayub with the same request. Producing recordings for these two groups, which are often seen as the earliest wide releases of British Bhangra music, Ayub formed Oriental Star Agencies, a record label that continued to influence the trajectory of British Bhangra music throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s – and eventually contributed to bringing many artists of global renown to the UK, such as Qawwali singer Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Discussing why he wanted

to start Oriental Star Agencies, Ayub comments on how attempting to keep 'tradition' alive played a prominent role:

> I thought we must keep our culture alive. We must pass our traditions onto our next generation. Living in this country, I am sure they would have been totally westernised listening to the Madonna's and Michael Jacksons. I felt that unless we do something, it will be very difficult to keep our language alive and our culture alive. (Farooq, 2013).

Citing fears that aspects of South Asian culture may be lost unless an active attempt is made to hold on to them – specifically in this context with regard to musical tradition – Ayub believed that providing a musical outlet for BrAsian artists fulfilled an important goal. This remains consonant with British Bhangra music audience concerns that highlight retaining links with tradition and historical legitimacy as primary to an appreciation of Bhangra music. In particular Ayub voices concerns that the music of popular Western artists – such as Madonna and Michael Jackson – might 'Westernise' South Asians, who would be at risk of losing touch with their own traditions. Interestingly while there are fears over the extent to which 'Westernisation' will diminish the 'home traditions' of the South Asian community, musicians involved with British Bhangra music would routinely evoke music of different styles. Commenting on how Bhujhangy Group produced music and the source of their different influences, Ayub notes that:

> They wrote some wonderful songs, which became very popular and they tried to incorporate the modern beats. They used to listen to Western music as well. Then the influence from the Bollywood music crept in. They created some wonderful music. (*ibid.*)

Describing how an influence from the sounds of Western music was present, even at this early stage of British Bhangra's origin, Ayub explains how 'modern beats' quickly became a part of Bhujhangy Group's musical repertoire. Furthermore the sounds of Bollywood music also provided additional musical material. In this way it is possible to observe a duality in the perception of 'Western influences' in this context. Western musical influences that have been assimilated by South Asians in the UK, and which have been added into a musical milieu with 'Bhangra' at its core – as in the example of Bhujhangy Group given here by Ayub – are considered acceptable, even encouraged as part of a band's

repertoire. However, unadulterated examples of Western popular music – such as Madonna and Michael Jackson, to use the examples given by Ayub – are considered to have potency as potentially bad influences that could threaten the specific South Asian identities of migrants to the UK, leading individuals to shed their traditional cultural values and succumb to 'Westernisation'. This dichotomy, within which the assimilated sounds of particular Western popular music styles such as rock and hip-hop are acceptable within the field of British Bhangra, as long as some sense of 'true' Bhangra remains at the core, remains a prominent formation to this day, as is evidenced by the musical analyses presented in Chapter 5.

Ayub goes on to explain that there was a high demand for a record label such as Oriental Star Agencies to represent local BrAsian artists who were unable to find representation elsewhere:

> We realised there was a need for a music company because this way we can keep the next generation in touch with the music and language. I was working for the BBC radio where there was a big request for the local music produced from here because that was contemporary to the modern English music. So we thought we should fill that gap. (*ibid.*)

The demand for music produced by local artists – in this case, local to Birmingham – is cited as a reason Ayub formed Oriental Star Agencies. Furthermore the desire to express traditional music and language is reiterated, and making sure these aspects are emphasised alongside 'modern English music' is described as being valuable. In this way, the genesis of British Bhangra as a musical style becomes closely tied with the locality of Birmingham from a particularly early stage. While there were a number of established and large South Asian communities in cities across the UK at this time, histories point towards a number of events in Birmingham, primarily in the area of Handsworth, as the early points of formation for British Bhangra. Gerry Farrell's study of South Asian music in Britain (2005) provides a broad overview of the consumption and production of British Bhangra. Highlighting Birmingham and London as central to the development of the style, Farrell stresses that the 'venues, recording studios and musical distribution networks' (2005:113) available in larger cities were crucial to British Bhangra becoming a mass market and global musical style. The presence of a large South Asian community in Handsworth, which became a centre of migration for South Asian migrants to the UK during the 1950s and 1960s, has shaped the area both geographically and culturally. The emergence of Asian music shops, and eventually

a number of record labels in addition to Oriental Star Agencies, helped to define Handsworth and one location in particular – Soho Road – as being crucially important to British Bhangra music production and consumption. Later in this section I will provide an ethnographic case study of British Bhangra in Birmingham, focusing primarily on Soho Road as it stands today. The aim of this case study is to look in more detail at the heritage of British Bhangra music – and to explore various audience and critical voices that highlight parts of Birmingham as being intrinsically important to the story of Bhangra in the UK.

Bhangra in the North East of England

While Handsworth in Birmingham is characterised by the high proportion of South Asian migrants there who are originally from the Punjab in the north of India, and who are members of the Sikh faith (as evidenced by the presence of the Soho Road Gurdwara, one of the largest Sikh temples in the UK), other areas in the UK are home to groups of South Asian migrants who claim dramatically different national and regional identities. One example is the city of Bradford in the north of England, within which 26.83% of the population self-describes itself as Asian (a total 140,000 people), according to responses to the 2011 Office of National Statistics Census survey. The vast majority of the South Asian community in Bradford are Muslim, with 24.7% of the total population of Bradford describing their religious views as Muslim in the 2011 Census. The vast majority of Muslims in Bradford regionally identify as originating from the Mirpuri region of Pakistan (Hodgson, 2014:201). With such a disjuncture between the regional, religious and ethnic identities of community groups in both Birmingham and Bradford, one might expect to find vastly different styles of music being consumed in both locations. However, the popularity of British Bhangra music amongst the BrAsian community in Bradford is demonstrable through the activities of particular institutions and events that highlight the musical style. The historical importance of the Bradford Mela as a cultural event that prominently features British Bhangra groups as headline artists is of particular significance here.
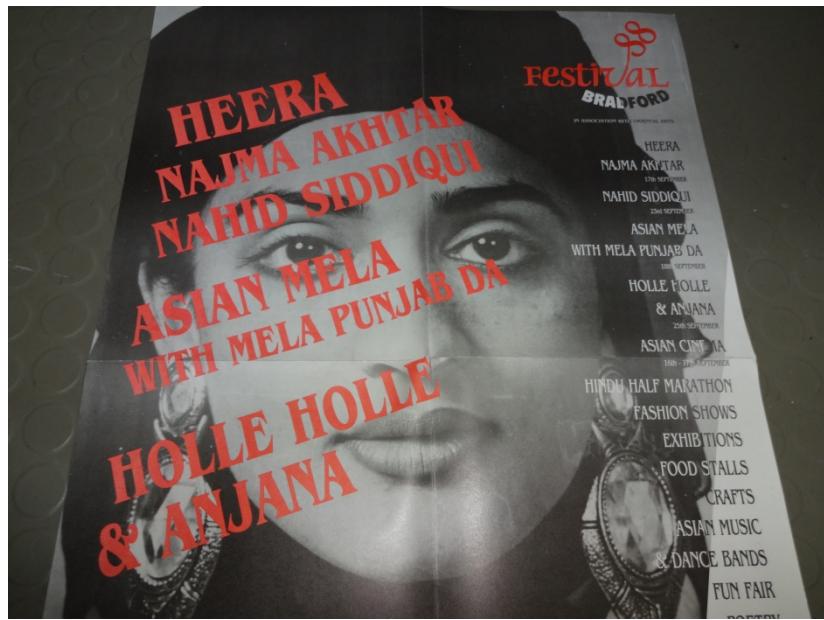
Figure 6 - A poster advertising the very first Bradford Mela as part of the Bradford Festival in 1988 (Reproduced with the permission of Oriental Arts, Bradford).

Thomas Hodgson, in *Music, Culture and Identity in the Muslim World* (2013), discusses the Bradford Mela at length, including interactions between the Mela as a cultural event, and contextual cultural disruptions such as the Rushdie affair that dominated newspaper headlines and media portrayals of Bradford during the late 1980s. Furthermore Hodgson identifies a dislocation between the apparently thriving musical cultures of the Mirpuri community in Bradford, and the dismissal issued by many interviewees that Mirpuris are simply uninterested in music: 'I was in Bradford to learn more about Mirpuri Muslims' discourses and practices of music, but three months down the line and I had been met with incredulity among South Asians and blank looks at the local city council. […] How could it be that such a large number of people were supposedly without music?' (2013:201). Later Hodgson identifies ways in which Mirpuris took part in the city's Mela celebration – a large festival that plays host to over 100,000 people a year (*ibid.*:205) while presenting the food, music and dance of the variety of different cultures that make up the city of Bradford.

As seen in figure 16 – a poster used to promote the very first Bradford Mela in 1988 – British Bhangra group Heera constitute the headline performance at the event. In this way the ability of British Bhangra to appeal among different BrAsian communities emerges, despite differences in regional or religious identification. Importantly however, while Punjabi Sikhs in Birmingham and Pakistani Muslims in Bradford may not share regional or religious codes of identification, aspects of culture that stretch back beyond the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan are still seen as being shared in specific ways, representing 'Punjabi' culture more

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broadly as a transnational formation. In this way British Bhangra music is seen as an acceptable type of music owing to its origins in the folk music of the Punjab – a region that stretches across both India and Pakistan, and which pre-partition shared a significantly more homogenous culture than it does at the present time.

As a result of ethnographic work conducted at the Oriental Arts organisation in Bradford, I found that the prominence of British Bhangra in Bradford historically was easy to discern. Many of the popular British Bhangra bands, as well as folk singers from the Punjab, performed in Bradford from the 1980s onwards, retaining a popularity that continues to the present day. A flyer for an early concert from Bhangra group Alaap at St George's Hall, seen below, is representative of how local organisations as well as students were involved in developing this network of British Bhangra performances. Arranged by 'Bradford Students & Oriental Arts', the flyer advertises that tickets for the concert can be purchased at the Bradford University Students union, as well as a number of local record shops. Champak Limbachia, head and founder of Oriental Arts, was heavily involved in the Bradford students union, and was instrumental in bringing many of these British Bhangra groups to Bradford.
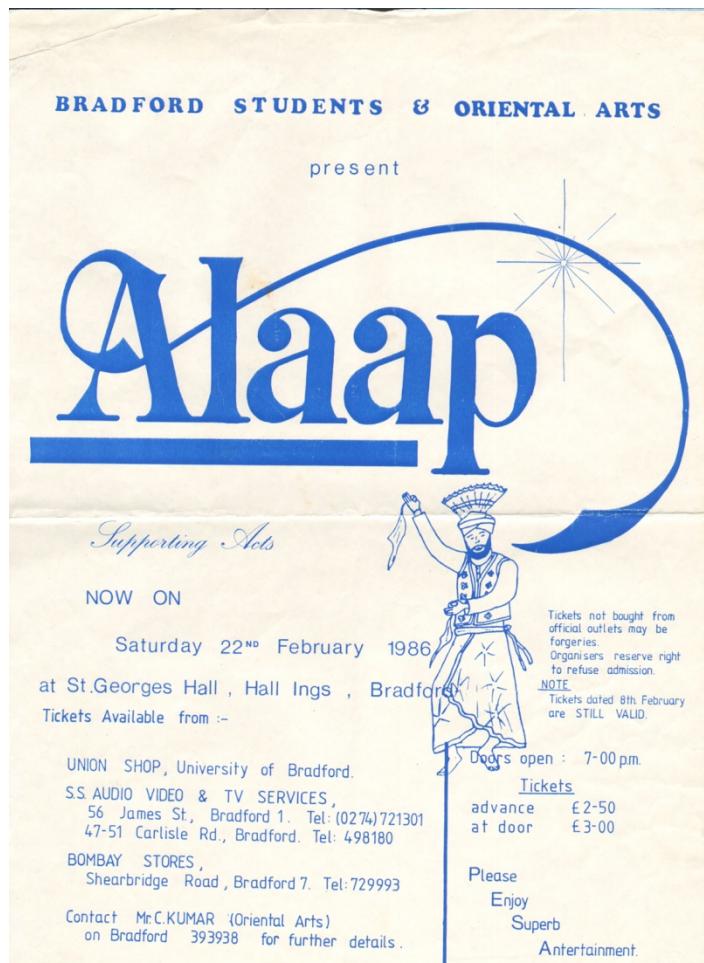
Figure 7 - Poster advertising an Alaap concert at St George's Hall, Bradford (reproduced with permission of Oriental Arts, Bradford).

Oriental Arts was also involved in promoting concerts in nearby Leeds, which often took place with involvement of the Leeds University Asian society. The flyer below advertises a Valentine's Day concert by British Bhangra group DCS in 1988, and prominently is touted as being a 'Daytime Party'. Daytime events are discussed by Rajinder Dudrah in his book *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* (2007), and are described as important events in allowing members of the BrAsian community to enjoy aspects of the nightlife scene in major UK cities, but during daytime hours when individuals were less likely to be chastised by their elders. Many daytime events were held in Birmingham and London, and this poster demonstrates that the daytimer event trend spread to the North East of England at an early stage.

Figure 8 - A flyer advertising a Valentine's Day concert by D.C.S. in Leeds – the right-hand side of the poster is cut off. (Reproduced with permission of Oriental Arts, Bradford).

The flow of British Bhangra bands to Bradford represented, for many groups, the northernmost extremity of areas that formed the touring circuit. Bands rarely travelled further north into Scotland for example, with major cities considered part of this circuit including London (west London in particular), Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. These cities were not only host to large South Asian communities, but also were home to arts organisations such as Oriental Arts, and individuals such as Champak Limbachia, who took it upon themselves to make sure British Bhangra artists noticed their cities and performed there. More recently, particularly during the late 1990s until the mid-2000s when British Bhangra bands, in the sense of groups such as Heera and Alaap, were often displaced by the prominence of Bhangra DJs and home producers, folk singers from the Punjab who took on more traditional approaches to Bhangra music performance have achieved a great deal of success as part of live concert tours of the UK. The poster below, advertising a concert for popular Punjabi singer Gurdas Maan in Bradford in 2005, is indicative of how audiences in Bradford continue to demand Bhangra – in a form that could be described as more aligned with Punjabi folk music than contemporary British Bhangra. As a performer, Gurdas Maan is well known for his representations of Punjabi daily life and portraying nostalgic imagery in his lyrics and music that evoke notions of homeland. Gurdas Maan's presence in Bradford

and his appeal to a broadly different audience group in terms of religious background demonstrates how audience groups perceive Bhangra music as representative of ethnic identity, ie. Punjabi identity, as opposed to being closely associated with a particular religious faith.

Figure 9 - A poster advertising a 2005 Gurdas Mann concert, held in Bradford (reproduced by permission of Oriental Arts, Bradford).

Describing the 'heritage' of British Bhangra in Bradford, one discovers that the concert hall performances by Bhangra groups and daytime events which characterise British Bhangra in other parts of the UK were indeed prominent. However unlike large metropolitan centres such as Birmingham, the diffusion of migrants across cities in close proximity in the North East of England – mainly including Bradford, Leeds and Huddersfield – allowed British Bhangra artists access to the North East region, as well as the cities therein. While South Asian communities were present in Bradford, Leeds and Huddersfield during this time, the ethnic and religious makeup of these migrant groups differed greatly. Bradford is characterised by the predominance of Mirpuri Pakistani communities, with a large proportion of Bradford's South Asian community being of the Muslim faith. Similarly Huddersfield, a former mill town known historically as a significant industrial centre in the North of England, is also home to a South Asian community made up predominantly of individuals from India and Pakistan of the Muslim faith, with smaller numbers of Sikhs. By contrast, Leeds was

home to a more diverse South Asian community that comprised of almost as many immigrants from India as Pakistan, and also a significant number of individuals described as 'twice-migrants' (Bhachu, 1985) – Indians who had settled in East African countries following their roles as indentured labourers working in railroad construction at the turn of the 20th century, many of whom had been forced to emigrate to the UK (most prominently due to Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972). With these different South Asian communities diffused around cities in the North East, the presence of British Bhangra and its ability to appeal to, for example, the Mirpuri communities of Bradford, as well as the student-led University Asian society in Leeds, is representative of the importance of Bhangra music as part of the historical narratives of these different communities.

Exploring tensions between British Bhangra and the music of London's Bangladeshi community

To provide a contrasting example, the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets is an example of a South Asian community in the UK for whom British Bhangra music has rarely been considered a prominent cultural form. Owing to a dramatically different trajectory of migration and settlement to the previously discussed migrant groups, Bangladeshis in East London can be seen as representing their regional distinctiveness through musics that distinguish themselves from the domination of Punjabi beats and sounds that characterise British Bhangra. With a large arrival of immigrants from Bangladesh to London throughout the 1970s and 1980s (census data puts the number of Bangladeshis in the UK in 1971 at 22,000, while by 1991 there were over 160,000), the majority of members of the Bangladeshi community arrived in the UK after the arrival and settlement of migrants from India and Pakistan. In London, the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants settled in and around the East London area of Tower Hamlets, with Brick Lane eventually becoming a street synonymous with the Bangladeshi community. This is in contrast to, for example, Punjabi settlers in London, who mainly arrived in West London and settled in areas close to Heathrow Airport such as Southall, for example. These spatial boundaries are compounded with the linguistic differences that demarcate the Punjabi and Bangladeshi communities, with dialects such as Sylheti being widely spoken within Bangladeshi communities, and with little shared between the two languages. What becomes clear is that these different migrant trajectories result in historical narratives of migration that run in parallel, and the story of music in the

Bangladeshi community is no different as my work with Ansar Ahmed Ullah at the Swadhinata Trust, a Bangladeshi community arts organisation based in Tower Hamlets, revealed.

The Swadhinata Trust, alongside their work documenting the history of the Bangaldeshi community, have also conducted a number of projects focussed on the history of music in the community, featuring oral histories collected from prominent musicians. Bengali musicians who arrived in the early 1970s, such as Abdus Salique, have commented on how the presence of other South Asian communities with their own musical traditions in the UK at the time of their arrival was visible:

> I came to London suddenly and saw; there was no Bangladeshi music group but there were Indian and Pakistani music groups. There were some people who used to sing pastoral songs in their homes, with the dofki, dotara and other instruments. I thought, it can't be, we have to have our own cultural groups of our own to represent our country and our community. (Swadhinata Trust, 2006).

Salique goes on to discuss how seeing these Indian and Pakistani musicians made him eager to perform Bengali music that expressed his and his community's distinct identity:

> I joined the Labour Party Trade Union. I saw the Pakistani and the Indian people singing in those occasions but no Bangladeshi representation was there. Some of the Indian people used to sing Bangla songs. I met some of them and talked to them. They were a bit … they were mocking to me and said, "The Bengalis only sing the pastoral music". This made me determined that I will make a music group and I collected some of the likeminded friends. I discussed with them. I had a cousin who could play the tabla and I could play the harmonium. We started to practice and our first appearance was at Altab Ali Park. It was the first Bangladeshi carnival in the UK. (*ibid.*)

Salique's anxiety over the relative invisibility of Bengali music, in comparison to what he describes as Indian and Pakistani musics that were often present at trade union meetings, is integral to influencing his decision to put together his own ensemble. The Baisakhi Mela, now a hugely popular event in Tower Hamlets that draws around 80,000 people each year, has its origins in these small scale musical gatherings in Altab Ali Park at the bottom of Brick Lane, in Salique's view. The oral histories continue to explore the

musicians involved in retaining some of Bangladesh's prominent musical traditions, such as the Bengali Baul songs, a form of poetic song performed on instruments such as the Mundira and Ektara and sung in the Sylheti dialectic. Other musicians interviewed include Hasan Ismail, a member of Joi Bangla Sounds, a band formed in Tower Hamlets in 1986 as the offshoot of a Bangladeshi youth organisation with the aim of expressing Bengali identity. Joi Bangla Sounds describe themselves as an 'East-West fusion', a band who took influence not only from the Baul songs and folk music that comprised traditional Bangladeshi music, but also modern Bengali pop music and Western styles such as hip-hop (2006).

Sam Zaman, known as a DJ under the name of 'State of Bengal', is a widely recognisable name known as part of the 'Asian Underground' music scene, and his comments on the Bangladeshi community's musical output in relation to other South Asian communities in the UK illuminates the contrasting historical narratives that are in play here: 'Yes, we were doing it before anyone else, before the whole Bhangra scene had erupted. Bengali music that was being mixed with other styles of music was pretty much before anyone else has done it in this country. So Bengalis were the pioneers in mixing Asian music before Bhangra.' (2006). Describing how Bengalis in the UK were involved in fusing their own traditional musics with Western musics, prior to British Bhangra artists' involvement in musical fusion, Zaman's comments make clear how divergent the trajectories of, one the one hand, British Bhangra, and on the other hand, the music of British Bengalis, truly are.

These are not musical communities that can be described as sharing a musical heritage in any sense, and indeed the domination of Punjabi music and Bhangra in particular in the UK (in the sense of radio airplay through mediums such as the BBC Asian Network, for example) can be seen as minimizing awareness of the accomplishments of British Bengali musicians, for example. The example of the Bangladeshi community in East London is useful in helping to express how the diversity of patterns of migration and regional identities related to particular locations in the subcontinent can have a stark effect on processes of memorialisation and heritage construction. The presence of different traditional musics and linguistic barriers makes it clearer that the heritage of British Bengali music is not the same as the heritage of British Bhangra music.

Birmingham: The home of British Bhangra?

Birmingham, in the Midlands of England, has been heralded as a cultural centre for British Bhangra music by a wide range of commentators. Among these, scholar Rajinder Dudrah has written prominently about the importance of the city in the development, production and consumption of British Bhangra music. Filmmaker and scholar Jez Collins's film *Made in Birmingham: Reggae Punk Bhangra* documents the multiple histories of Birmingham's musical heritage – including reggae artists UB40 and Steel Pulse and punk groups the Killjoys and Fuzzbox, as well British Bhangra groups such as Apna Sangeet.

Birmingham's location and status as home to many different groups of immigrants is crucially important to the city's facilitation of the development of such a range of musical styles. Like a number of other UK cities and areas, including Bradford, Leicester, Nottingham, Manchester, and boroughs of London including Southall and Tower Hamlets, Birmingham's ethnic makeup has changed drastically in post-World War II Britain. Birmingham found itself in a prime location for immigrants arriving in post-World War II Britain who sought out work in the foundries of the Midlands. Many South Asian immigrants at this time emigrated to the UK with the desire to earn money they could send back to relatives back home, with the wages available for workers in labour intensive jobs such as metal working in the UK comparatively much higher than wages for similar jobs back home. The eventual goal of many workers was to return home, whether that be to India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, having earned enough money in a short period of time to allow them and their family to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle. In reality, many immigrants remained in these labour intensive jobs for many years, as the reality of higher living costs in the UK and worsening job prospects elsewhere began to set in. Stories are abound of early South Asian immigrants in the UK sharing simple two-bedroom homes with as many as fifteen to twenty others, all men who had arrived with the intention of working, earning and leaving promptly. A recent BBC Panorama investigation revealed the lengths Punjabi immigrants in London had gone to in order to be able to afford living costs in the country (BBC One, 2013).

These tales of more recent South Asian immigration to the UK, often by individuals without official documentation, mimic the earlier travails of post-World War II South Asian immigrants. The unfortunate situation that many of these recent migrants find themselves in is one of extremely poor employment opportunities, high costs of living, and hostility not only from those who consider themselves to be 'British natives', but also from former

migrants who are now already established in the UK. Filmmakers have worked with some of these migrants to document their stories, and a prominent contributing factor to the plight of these individuals is the hostility demonstrated by members of the South Asian community who have already settled in the UK – charging high rents for extremely poor quality accommodation (in London, these are often sheds that have been 'converted' into barely permissible housing), and taking advantage of the cheap labour these individuals provide. This dire situation has meant many recent migrants are now homeless, often stuck without a way in which to return to India – and in addition many of these migrants sold property and spent thousands of pounds to make their way to the UK, leaving them with little to return to in India if they do eventually return.

What is represented here is how the notion of making one's fortune in the UK retains a particular allure, despite the reality of life here being incredibly difficult for migrants. Comments from a number of these recent migrants have aimed to strongly deter would-be immigrants to the UK from India to reconsider their options, stating that the fortunes they believe to exist in the UK are fictional. What is worth highlighting here is the myth that romanticises the UK as home to riches and a path to success for an individual. Such a myth long predates the arrival of recent migrants to the UK, and has been a notion circulated around the Punjab since individuals in the 1950s began to consider emigrating. Arrival in the UK was seen as heralding a level of success, and the ability to achieve levels of wealth that were not possible in India. This relationship, whereby the UK is seen as a pathway to wealth, success and modernity, and India is seen as relatively poor, yet traditional and beloved as a homeland, is significant in that it is evoked in the music of a number of British Bhangra artists.

Many of the earlier immigrants made great changes to their intended plans and chosen lifestyles over the course of their stay in the UK. Early South Asian immigrants decided that, rather than send dwindling amounts of money back home, to a family they rarely had any contact with, they would instead bring their families to the UK. Marriages, often arranged and sometimes not entirely legitimate, allowed settled South Asian migrants in the UK to bring their families to stay with them, if they had left a family behind. If not, they were able to arrange a suitable marriage across International borders, allowing them the chance to start a family in their newly adopted country. The nature of the transformation of the relationship these immigrants had with the UK is of interest – shifting as it did from simply wanting to earn as much money as possible and leave, to coming to the realisation that earning quite so much money would be difficult (and perhaps also that there were things aside from the

comparatively higher wages to like about the country), to deciding to fully settle with their families. Understanding the fluid shifts between these three stages of relationship with the UK is integral to understanding the development of musical genres such as British Bhangra, and indeed these fluid states of connection were made audible by the genre.

Amongst the literature on British Bhangra music, Soho Road in Birmingham is clearly recognised as an important focal point for the production and consumption of Bhangra music by several sources. This includes the recent work of Rajinder Dudrah, whose 2007 book *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* charted the history of record labels, studios and musicians that together formed the prolific network of music producers and consumers that centred upon Soho Road. Closely related and featuring many of the same contributors, the online 'Soho Road to the Punjab' web archive contains detailed information about the road's chequered musical history, and an exhibit drawing upon information from the web resource toured the UK in 2009. Notably there are numerous Bhangra songs that name check the area and local landmarks, such as the Apna Sangeet song 'Soho Road Uteh', meaning 'On Soho Road'. It is important to note that Apna Sangeet, like many British Bhangra groups, wrote their music with two distinct audiences in mind – listeners in India and listeners in the UK. For audiences in India, the song romanticises Soho Road for a group of people who would have no familiarity either with the road, or with the UK. For listeners in the UK, the lyrics are both comical – portraying Soho Road as the dramatic meeting place for two star crossed lovers is somewhat over the top – and empowering, name checking an area that locals will be familiar with. At this stage in my research I was keen to find out more about Soho Road itself, and in particular, what the road looked like at present. Did any tangible links to its musical past remain on the road, and did the area retain its significance to British Bhangra music?

I was taken on a tour of Soho Road by Gursharanpal Singh Chana, also known as Boy Chana – a writer and photographer who contributed to the *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* (2007) book, and who is himself a Bhangra music DJ. His local knowledge was invaluable in accessing some of the important sites on Soho Road, particularly as many of the important stores and venues have now closed, with new shops in their place. Many of the locations he pointed out to me during the walking tour had now been converted into grocery shops, often displaying prominent advertising for cheap international phone cards – and these were common sight indeed considering that there are over 300 shops over the entire stretch of Soho Road. The area on and around Soho Road clearly remained extremely diverse and active – with Polish shops a more recent addition to the previously visible Afro-Caribbean

and Asian grocery stores on the road. One Bhangra music record store that had remained in business since the 1970s was Jaysons & Co – although its main business now comes through designing and selling wedding invitations and stationary.

Jaysons was, and still is, a key distributor of Bhangra music, although unlike other Birmingham businesses Oriental Star Agency and Roma Music Bank, it did not have a record label attached to it. Upon visiting in the store in April 2012, music was still prominently displayed throughout the shop. Many recordings were considerably old, with a large selection of cassette tapes still available for purchase despite the format's obsolescence. Many older Bollywood and Bhangra recordings can be difficult to find in Compact Disc format, making this trade in cassette tapes still viable for those looking for rarer recordings.

Stocking the most recent Bhangra music releases alongside older albums now considered 'classics', the music available in Jaysons represents what could be described as a parallel world when compared to UK chart music. There is a varied selection of music by artists from the UK, but also that of musicians from Canada and India. Styles range from older 'folk' style Bhangra to modern synth-infused British Bhangra, and from the songs of classic Bollywood playback singers to recent high-budget film soundtracks. Indeed the variety available is akin to the range and diversity of styles one might expect to find within the entire UK music chart. Yet this music is mostly unheard of, and due to the exclusivity of its availability in only a handful of music stores countrywide, generally unavailable to the vast majority of music listeners in the country.

Aside from Jaysons, there are few music retailers still in existence on Soho Road, and those that do sell Bhangra music certainly do not rely upon this as their main trade. As with much of the music retail industry, business is moving online and physical Bhangra music record shops are rapidly becoming an anachronism. With this decline in mind, it seems more interesting that much importance is still given to Soho Road. However, the mythological construction of 'Soho Road' reaches far beyond the borders of the United Kingdom.

Figure 10 - The 'Soho Road Naan Kebab' takeaway food van in Vancouver, Canada (author's own photograph, August 2012).

The above picture was taken in Vancouver, Canada, and shows a street food cart branding itself using the Soho Road name. This particular cart is owned by a Vancouver resident who emigrated there from Birmingham, and who had fond memories of Soho Road from having lived nearby. Clearly this is now a context far removed from Bhangra music, and equally far removed from the physical location of Soho Road itself. Any passers-by in Vancouver unfamiliar with the geographies of Bhangra music, or the geography of Birmingham for that matter, will be clueless as to the origin of the food cart's name. And yet for this food cart owner, the name 'Soho Road' still carries meaningful value – but why, exactly, and what kind of value are we talking about?

It is important to note the particular patterns of migration that meant that the majority of BrAsians in and around the Soho Road area were of Punjabi origin. Soho Road was not just where young musicians gathered to write, listen to and perform music – it was also a place where BrAsian entrepreneurs set up their first businesses in the UK, many of which still trade today. As immortalised in songs such as 'On Soho Road', Soho Road became a place that BrAsians came to look towards as being a home away from 'homeland'. It was perhaps for many the first area in which they felt comfortable setting up their own businesses in the UK and, for musicians, the first area in the UK that, with its numerous music traders, venue

spaces and talent agencies, seemed to constitute a new British Bhangra music scene. Although now certainly less significant as a focal point for Bhangra musicians, the historical vibrancy of the road – for new businesses, for Bhangra music, and for newly arrived Punjabi immigrants – is embedded in the mythmaking of musicians and writers. With the current dearth of musical activity on Soho Road, references to the road seem to refer more to a specific *moment in time* than to anything more tangible. This is a moment in time that encapsulates a vibrancy, an optimism about the fact that here, on Soho Road, for the first time, is a street in the UK that not only are you, as an immigrant, living on, eating on, and sleeping on – but a street that you in some small part are in ownership of. For diaspora groups, this is an incredibly important moment in the process of migration, and one that is being recorded in the making of the myths of Soho Road.

This chapter has looked at three locations in England, each of which holds a different connection to British Bhangra. In Bradford and Leeds, British Bhangra artists often toured the region, a fact documented by the materials present in Oriental Arts' archive. From the student's union gigs by British Bhangra groups in the 1980s, to recent performances from Punjabi Bhangra artists such as Gurdas Maan, Bhangra music has had a vibrant history in the North East of England. In East London, British Bhangra music is seen as a genre against which Bangladeshi artists were reacting and became representative of the homogenisation of BrAsian identities. In Birmingham, particular locations such as Soho Road have become mythologised in audience, artist and academic narratives for their significance to the production, promotion and consumption of British Bhangra music. There are indeed a number of British Bhangra heritage narratives, most usefully defined in terms of region, and which are being expressed in a variety of ways in each location as responses to authorised narratives of British popular music. The following chapter builds upon the fieldwork described in this chapter, and engages more closely with the ways British Bhangra journalists and fans in England and abroad utilise digital technologies, looking at how multiple heritage narratives are actively in the process of being created through the new communication options facilitated by the proliferation of digital media.

Chapter 4: Online Bhangra Communities

Introduction

This chapter explores audience narratives of British Bhangra music heritage through research and interviews conducted on British Bhangra fan community websites such as SimplyBhangra and Chakdey. In particular, traits that audience groups, artists and music journalists value as part of British Bhangra music, and utilise when constructing British Bhangra as music heritage, are identified through an analysis of interview data and online discourse. Anjali Gera Roy (2009) discusses in more depth the global flows of Bhangra music facilitated by the internet – but in this chapter the focus is on the way these websites allow users to construct what could be described as an online community heritage. The work of Henry Jenkins (2006) and Matt Hills (2002) is evoked in order to contextualise my observations of these online fan communities, and to help unpack how these communities contribute towards shaping the meanings and identities around British Bhangra, Furthermore I will explore how community discussions centred on these websites enable users to actively structure the field of British Bhangra music, appraising artists and constructing multiple canons and lineages that help to define the genre.

The importance of online technologies to British Bhangra music is introduced discursively through the example of the song 'Ay-Ha!' by Tigerstyle. The following section explores online debates regarding authenticity and ownership of British Bhangra music, focusing in particular on a dispute regarding inclusion criteria for the 'UK Asian Download Music Chart'. The third section details how online technologies are impacting the way modern British Bhangra artists are learning to play music – exploring how individuals striving towards representing an 'authentic' Bhangra sound are now able to access tuition unavailable to previous generations. The final section of this chapter uses the example of Bhangra dance in the UK to explore notions of authenticity and expressions of heritage which are relevant to debates around British Bhangra music.

Digi-bhang – The digitization of British Bhangra

The single 'Ay-Ha!', from the album *Digi-bhang* by Glaswegian musicians Tigerstyle, was released for digital sale in October 2012. Musically the song contains many elements that could be considered characteristic of the Bhangra folk music style. At the outset of the song a dhol drum pounds out a 4-beat rhythmic pattern typical of the rhythms used to accompany Bhangra folk dance. The algozey flute, which is sampled, plays a repeated melodic fragment that sonically suggests the sound of traditional folk Bhangra, while its repetitive and riff-based nature as well as its textural framing within the song (it is not accompanying or mimicking a vocal melodic line, and is used solely for the melodic and timbral qualities it provides) demonstrates an engagement with the modern dance music idiom. The sounds of traditional instruments are melded with harsher, electronic drum beats and synthesisers, instruments more reminiscent of modern drum and bass & dubstep music. The use of acoustic, or 'traditional' sounds in otherwise electronic, digital compositions is by no means a new concept, and has been an important technique for modern electronic music composers in a wide variety of fields.

Historically British Bhangra music has an uneasy relationship with certain types of production and post-production techniques, however. During the 1990s a divide emerged between the, by this time, aging Bhangra bands known on the touring circuit – such as Alaap and Heera – and home producers, who would make use of sampled instruments and purchased vocal recordings in order to make remixes or their own original songs. Often individual folk singers were given prominence over the bands at this time, with artists such as Gurdaas Maan and Malkit Singh, both popular in the 1980s throughout the Punjab, rising to prominence in the UK with a renewed focus on live tours and UK record releases. Remixes of these two artists and their contemporaries became significant in comprising a large portion of newly released music, and in contrast to earlier forms of British Bhangra, often did not contain the use of any live instruments. Often these songs structurally aimed to represent the musical form of folk Bhangra music, invoking digitally sampled instruments to fulfil the same textural and melodic purposes as they did in much Bhangra music. In many senses this schism still exists today, with the presence both of artists who trade on a relationship with tradition and folk Bhangra styles, and producers who predominantly make use of sampling and digital production techniques for their music.

The juxtaposition of musical styles in 'Ay-Ha!' is interesting as the song is structured in such a way that the instrumental Bhangra samples are utilised within a contemporary dance music framework, rather than attempting to replicate the structures of traditional folk Bhangra music (as much sampled modern Bhangra attempts to do). The nature of this juxtaposition can be extended into a useful musical metaphor, not only for the way in which digital technology is now so heavily utilised in the production of British Bhangra music, but also for the impact of new technologies and the internet on the functioning of the British Bhangra music industry as a whole. Consider the ways in which the performances of instruments such as the dhol and alghozey flute, traditionally played at harvest festival dances by musically inclined farmers, are disrupted, broken up by industrial, electronic sounds that seemingly come from an entirely different musical idiom – as well as being used in contexts far removed from their conventional purposes in Bhangra music. Lumping this song in stylistically with more typical examples of Bhangra music seems to disavow the musical syncretism taking place here, and hence the title of Tigerstyle's album – *Digi-bhang*, reiterating the symbiosis between the digital and the traditional present in 'Ay-Ha!' – seems to be a useful new portmanteau.

However, the truth is that 'Digi-bhang', in the sense of the British Bhangra music industry's move to digital networks and marketplaces, is by no means a new phenomenon. From the early 2000s onwards, Bhangra music websites have played an integral role in the way people appraise and remember older Bhangra music, and are discovering new Bhangra music. Two of the most prominent websites, Chakdey and Simply Bhangra, both have large communities of members, and frequently play host to discussions around people's memories of Bhangra music. Although until recently they were largely ignored in favour of physical releases, digital downloads have in the past two years increasingly become the only way to purchase particular Bhangra songs. The next section introduces academic debates around the area of online fan communities, and explores how community discussions centred on these websites enable users to actively structure the field of British Bhangra music, appraising artists and constructing multiple heritage narratives that help to define the genre.

In his discussion of fan communities, Jenkins (2006) describes how the rise of participatory culture has resulted in dramatic changes to how individuals consume and produce media: 'Audiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture. Producers who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminishing revenues.' (2006:24). For Jenkins, the modern ubiquity

of the internet is central to defining these participatory practices – which, as he states, have existed throughout the 20th century in various forms that were previously hidden: 'The Web has made visible the hidden compromises that enabled participatory culture and commercial culture to coexist throughout much of the twentieth century. Nobody minded, really, if you photocopied a few stories and circulated them within your fan club.' (2006:137). An example of online fan community practices given by Jenkins is 'fan-fiction' written by Harry Potter fans, where fan-written stories based on characters and the setting from the Harry Potter book series are shared online as part of Harry Potter fan websites. These stories and their online dissemination led to interference from Warner Bros. Studios, who felt the stories infringed on the copyright and trademarks they own. This example from the early 21st century came arguably at the beginnings of online participatory culture, where corporations and audiences alike were unsure of how to approach the subject of fan appropriations. From the 2010s onwards, fan appropriations appear to have become a regular part of internet culture, and are often supported by media companies, rather than being subject to heavy handed copyright violation orders. With regard to popular music, the 'singalong' video – most often a home-recorded video uploaded to the YouTube website, showing an individual miming and/or dancing to a particular song – has become emblematic of participatory culture and music on the internet. British Bhangra fans taking part in online fan communities do also engage in these practices, especially related to popular songs or artists, although often these websites serve primarily as discussion forums related to appraising music. An article on the Simply Bhangra website provides an example of this.

Figure 11 - Dipps Bhamrah's Bhangra Top 5 on SimplyBhangra.com (Bhamrah, 2013)

A 2013 article published on the Simply Bhangra website provided an opportunity for users of the website to share some of their most loved Bhangra music albums. Radio host Dipps Bhamrah provided a *High Fidelity*-style (2000) top 5 list of his favourite Bhangra albums, and inevitably, many website members responded with praise or criticism of Bhamrah's selections, with many users providing their own top 5s. Dipps Bhamrah himself is a significant figure in British Bhangra, having performed as a keyboard player for Apna Sangeet in the mid-1990s before embarking on a successful production and DJing career, leading to his current status as host of a Sunday evening Bhangra music show on BBC Asian Network. Having a long involvement with Bhangra in the UK, Bhamrah's selections could be seen as carrying a certain level of weight owing to his status as a de-facto gatekeeper – however the many pages of user debate generated by this article indicate that many website users are keen to add their own input to the attempted canon creation taking place here, and in addition a number of users actively take part in discrediting Bhamrah and his credibility as a musician. Regarding his selections for the most significant UK Bhangra albums, many of his choices focus on what Bhamrah regards as epochal moments in the history of the genre in the UK – particularly moments where syncretism between folk Bhangra and ideas from popular Western chart music began to take place more openly. For example, Bhamrah's choice of *Diamonds from Heera* by Bhangra group Heera as the second most influential UK Bhangra album was made to a large extent due to its significance as an album where syncretism of musical styles is evident:

> Welcome to the westernisation of Bhangra music. AS.Kang, Alaap, Azaad, Bhuchangy, Premi, Kuljit Bhamra were just some of the names making great music in the late 70's and early 80's. Armed with a handful of the standard traditional instruments used in making Punjabi/Bhangra music they made some wonderful songs and anthems. Then Deepak Khazanchi met Heera and their collaboration gave all musicians of Punjabi music a new vision. Deepak was the first producer to grab UK Bhangra by the scruff of the neck, introduce it to 80's Pop music and said 'im [sic] the vachola [negotiator], you're getting hitched'. The marriage was the most perfect possible and showed every artist how you can make amazing Punjabi music while fusing it with the music that the 2nd generation British Asians were moving towards. 'Diamonds from Heera' may well be the birth of the UK Bhangra scene. (Bhamrah, 2013).

Seen as a highly important record by Bhamrah, the 1987 album *Diamonds From Heera* is held up as a recording that represents the first true fusion between 'UK Bhangra' and '80's Pop', in Bhamrah's own words. Often in Bhamrah's selections, historical context is highlighted – including the trends within UK Bhangra and the way in which particular artists were seminal in instigating what are seen as paradigm shifts among British Bhangra musicians. Discussing the mid-1990s rise to prominence of Birmingham-based Bhangra group B21, Bhamrah provides a self-admittedly subjective historical overview of the culture of British Bhangra during this time:

> When the UK was on a high after football came home, we were all picking our favorite Spice Girls, the desi audience had their heads turned by the sight and sounds of 3 lads from Birmingham. It was 1996 and Bhangra music was going through a real off period. Band culture was declining, DJ mixing culture increasing, Bhangra music was being fused left right and centre with any genre possible to make it relevant (and I [sic] mean everything from jungle, to rave, to acid and god knows what else...as you can see i wasn't really a fan) and the essence of happy go lucky Bhangra was almost non existent. (*ibid.*)

Bhamrah goes on to argue that B21's 1998 album *By Public Demand* represented a shift from the 'off period' he claims Bhangra was going through in the mid-1990s. Explaining that attempts to fuse Bhangra with multiple styles of music 'from jungle, to rave, to acid and god knows what else…' were part of the reason for his dislike of some British Bhangra during this time, Bhamrah situates B21's contribution to UK Bhangra within a wider popular cultural context within the UK at the time – referencing events such as the Euro 96 football tournament and the wide popularity of the Spice Girls. It is abundantly clear however that this article represents predominantly a personal retrospective of British Bhangra during the 1990s, with Bhamrah's own opinion on which music should be valued and remembered taking ultimate precedence. Several judgements are made on which types of British Bhangra and which artists are to be excluded from this narrative - for example, Bhangra music which overtly sought to incorporate elements of jungle or dance music in an attempt to achieve 'relevance', or artists forming part of the 'DJ mixing culture' that was leading to a decline in British Bhangra's band culture.

This article overall is an example of a process of history-making taking place, with Bhamrah expressing his views on what he terms the 'birth of the UK Bhangra scene' as well

as describing his own criteria for inclusion or exclusion from the canon. However the process that follows – whereby users of the website are able to comment, agree with or criticise these selections for whichever reason – is of interest here, as it indicates that the process of creating a history of UK Bhangra, even the kind created by a highly experienced Bhangra musician such as Bhamrah, is open to query and disagreement, in contrast to the nature of 'authorised' heritage as discussed in earlier chapters. Users took the opportunity to provide their own 'Top 5 UK Bhangra Albums', many disagreeing with Bhamrah's selections and describing their own reasons for choosing particular artists. In this context the nature of heritage is almost always 'unauthorised', even when produced by a figure of relative authority with regards to experience and respect within the boundaries of the genre.

For consumers of British Bhangra music, these discussions are of utmost importance, and can be seen as representative of the way in which audiences may 'compete' with regard to knowledge of their chosen subject. Matt Hills describes how participants of particular fan cultures engage in activities to demonstrate their mastery, thereby constructing a social hierarchy among those who share their interest (2002:46). Hills adopts a Bourdieusian perspective, arguing that audiences 'recognise the "rules" of their fan culture, attempting to build up different types of fan skill, knowledge and distinction.' (*ibid.*). Read in this way, Dipps Bhamrah's status as an insider to the British Bhangra industry affords him a degree of legitimacy that those without such a level of access are denied. The debates about his selections could be seen as evocative of the way in which fan culture operates under a social hierarchy, with different commentators seeking to demonstrate their 'skill' by suggesting overlooked albums, or criticising Bhamrah's own choices.

Users also issued agreements with the selection of particular artists and albums by other users, suggesting that a process of community-based canon formation is taking place here. While music heritage in the UK often privileges artists who form part of an authorised and legitimised canon – frequently involving bands such as the Rolling Stones, the Who and so on – there are few British Bhangra artists on which there is a clear consensus of their importance. In a sense this takes the power of canon creation away from those who traditionally play the biggest role in proliferating them, such as music journalists, and into the hands of the audience – particularly as there is not a dominant and constantly reiterated Bhangra music canon to compete against. Furthermore fans based in a variety of locations globally are able to interact with one another, enabling listeners to engage with British Bhangra despite being physically separated from the regular touring circuit of artists and easy availability of their physical record releases. In this way, the notion that British Bhangra fans

'compete' with regard to their knowledge of the field takes on a wider significance, as the decisions and consensus reached through forums such as online community websites can be integral to the formation of a British Bhangra canon. Members of the community who are especially well respected within the field, or have 'exclusive' connections to artists – Dipps Bhamrah serving as one example – could have a significant effect on the memorialisation of British Bhangra.

As a musical genre British Bhangra is often associated with pirated recordings (Huq 2003, Roy 2010) and record sales that remained unaccounted for on chart listings (Huq 2003, Dudrah 2002b), historically due to the lack of Bhangra record shops that were recognised and monitored by the UK official music chart. Online download charts have provided a way to counter this, with the BBC Asian Network's Official Asian Download Chart becoming the first Asian music chart compiled by the Official Charts Company in 2010. Bhangra websites themselves also provide their own charts – in particular the Simply Bhangra website, which provides several. Their top 10 chart has been compiled since 2009 based on sales in the ABC Record Store in Southall, London, and in addition the website provides a chart based on votes from users of its website. Due to Bhangra music listeners being spread across the world, having a chart based on votes is significant – it means that instead of only focusing on sales in the UK, as the Official Download chart does, this chart is able to provide a better representation of the tastes of Bhangra music listeners worldwide. While British Bhangra is produced in the UK, it is certainly intended to appeal to a global audience – and with official charts unable to represent this nuance, this is an example of the community's own chart system providing a better solution to this problem.

One point I wish to emphasise is the significance of this overall shift towards digitisation, considering the roots of British Bhangra music. Rajinder Dudrah, writing about early 1980s British Bhangra, has described the 'secluded halls and venues' (2002b) where the music was initially performed. British Bhangra music in the 1980s was centred around a number of key locations. Areas such as Soho Road in Birmingham, and Southall in London, were previously major hubs for musical activities. Although many of the artist agencies and record shops on Soho Road are no longer open, some existing work on Bhangra music, such as the photography and archival work of DJ Boy Chana, has focused upon the importance of the street historically to the development of British Bhangra music.

It almost seems an anachronism in 2013, to talk about Bhangra music in terms of particularly important streets, or significant record shops that are hubs of activity for Bhangra music. I argue that many of the important interactions, and transactions, between current

Bhangra artists and music listeners are now taking place almost entirely online. Bhangra artists are now, in line with much of the rest of the music industry, choosing to move away from physical recordings and are adopting digital distribution methods through services such as iTunes as their primary way to sell music. With music heritage so often focusing on the physical object, the vinyl record, or the ticket stub, I propose that in lieu of any of these physical materials being available, online community heritage practices such as those employed by the Bhangra websites discussed earlier will take on increasing significance for music audiences. Indeed these online spaces may be increasingly popular due to the inability of British Bhangra to achieve mainstream media exposure. Deller explains how, 'fans, feeling stigmatized by society and the media, seek solace, community and understanding amongst others with a common interest.' (2014:237). For British Bhangra fans, joining fan websites could provide their only outlet for sharing their interest, where like-minded music fans can discuss their favourite releases or debate classic albums and artists. Describing the activity of 'fan talk', Deller argues that the interaction between fans on these online spaces can, 'have a range of functions: information sharing, interpretation (for example of song lyrics), sustaining relationships, negotiating private issues, engaging in commerce, and 'noise' – mis-sent posts, spam, empty messages and so on.' (*ibid.*). These interactions are clearly taking place on websites such as Chakdey, and users of the website engage in debates that help to define the genre of British Bhangra.

Responses to a survey conducted to find out more about the ways in which users of Bhangra community websites value music are helpful in clarifying how varied tastes and preferences are, even within a relatively narrow genre such as British Bhangra. Chakdey website member Navdip describes the artists that are particularly significant to him as a Bhangra music fan, and why: 'Important artists for me would include Kuldeep Manak, because he was probably the finest Punjabi singer ever, and was massively influential on many of today's songs. Tigerstyle are very important too as they are so diverse in their production, music will always need artists to push beyond what is popular and drive forward the industry.' (Responses to POPID survey, 2013). Navdip describes two varied artists – Manak, a celebrated Punjabi singer noted for his folk performance style, and Tigerstyle, the Glaswegian duo who fuse the sounds of British Bhangra with electronic dance music. Citing that Manak's influence on modern Bhangra music is significant, and that Tigerstyle are representative of the desire to move forward and innovate in musical terms, the respondent's selections are indicative of audience attitudes that value both the 'traditional' and the innovative.

Sadly Manak passed away in 2011, and the outpour of reaction from Bhangra artists and audiences was testament to his highly regarded status as a Punjabi folk singer (Tandon, 2011). Manak's influence is seen particularly clearly in the music of Jazzy B, a popular Bhangra artist from the early 1990s onwards – and Manak's last recorded vocal was featured on Jazzy B's 2011 album *Maharajas*. While Jazzy B is a relatively youthful performer, beginning his career as a teenager in the early 1990s, his music often makes far less use of elements of musical fusion than other Bhangra music from this era. Although samples and synthesised instruments are used in Jazzy B's earlier music, there is a distinct emphasis on calling back to the music of folk singers such as Manak. Many British Bhangra artists continue to see traditional Punjabi folk singers as highly praiseworthy, with guest vocal recordings and features from these singers (who will often record their vocal parts in the Punjab before sending them to a producer in the UK) attracting a great deal of attention among Bhangra audiences.

Continuing, the respondent explains the method of engaging with music most important to them: 'Personally I'd say physical media, as I like to own music as part of a collection that I can listen to at any time. Live performances aren't always feasible to go to, and a lot of music doesn't need the internet or radio to be good, as an example, I'm a huge fan of dub reggae which doesn't have much in terms of commercial exposure, yet I still listen to it.' (*ibid.*). Despite being an active member of an online Bhangra music community, physical records remain the most important way for the respondent to interact with music. The respondent cites the ability to 'own music as part of a collection' as a reason that physical media retains an attractiveness for them, an aspect that digital access to music, now more often than not taking place through streaming websites, is increasingly moving away from. The concept of music ownership has, in the era of digital access, become a much less commonplace ideal for record labels and music resellers in the form of streaming companies such as Spotify. These streaming services rely upon selling access to music, rather than music itself – and if, for example, the Spotify streaming service were to shut down, none of its users would be able to access any music through the service, as all of the music is stored on Spotify's own servers. Similarly for music listeners who access music through YouTube, copyright notices and requests to take down particular music recordings are becoming a more frequent occurrence in light of legal victories by the major record labels – and any recordings accessed in this way are never owned by the listener in any way.

The desire to own and 'collect' music recordings, as mentioned by the respondent, are still held as important concepts by some music audiences, who are increasingly faced with an

environment where, as consumers, they are encouraged more frequently to simply buy access to recordings rather than the recordings themselves. For British Bhangra music this poses a number of problems. Considering the global nature of the British Bhangra music audience, and the international makeup of users of online Bhangra community websites, it is difficult for record companies (many of which are small operations) to provide access to physical recordings to individuals in all of these locations. Faced with the decision of whether or not to purchase expensive imported recordings from the UK, Bhangra music fans outside of the UK are increasingly turning to digital means of accessing music as a way of hearing recent British Bhangra releases. Whether this will have an impact on how future generations of British Bhangra music listeners remember and memorialise the music significant to them, or how online Bhangra community websites will change to adapt to this digital shift, will become clearer over the next decade.

Online Discourse on British Bhangra Music

Online fan communities regularly take part in processes that actively construct the boundaries of British Bhangra as a genre. For example, a June 2013 article posted on the 'Chakdey' website posed the following question: 'Should Naughty Boy be Number 1 on the Asian Download Chart?' (Chakdey, 2013b). Referring to the Asian Download Chart, a chart that began in 2010 at the behest of the UK Official Chart Company, the article raises questions over whether BrAsian music producer Shahid Khan, known as Naughty Boy, should be allowed to feature in the Asian Download Chart. The article laments how the initial positivity and potential for legitimacy afforded by the Asian Download Chart is being undermined by Naughty Boy's inclusion:

> When the UK's Official Chart Company, at the instigation of the BBC's Asian
> Network, introduced an official Asian Download Chart in early 2010, this gave the
> Asian music scene a new legitimacy and industry presence that had long been
> missing. We all hear the stories of how Bhangra releases were shifting thousands of
> units in the early 90s but not making the national charts because they were effectively
> being sold outside of the official loop. (*ibid.*)

The narrative here, of British Bhangra music releases often being sold 'outside of the official loop', echoes the concerns of Jutla, discussed in Chapter 1, who comments on the lack of official recognition of British Bhangra music sales (2007:2-3). Of note here is how the article conflates 'Asian music' with 'Bhangra'. The article argues that Naughty Boy's major label backing (as an artist signed to Virgin Records) gives him a large advantage over other artists who may feature in the chart – the majority of whom do not have access to the same level of marketing and music production expertise as Naughty Boy. In this way the potential to prove the British Bhangra scene's legitimacy outside of the 'official loop', as the article terms it, is lessened. What becomes clear is that in addition to concerns over Naughty Boy's advantages in both technical and marketing capacities, there is also a stylistic issue in that his music does not fit into the Bhangra music idiom.

Writing English language pop-dance songs, and containing little or no musical material that could be described as taking influence from Indian musics or instrumentation, the music of Naughty Boy discussed in this article can be seen as representing a wider field of chart-oriented British pop music, a field rarely entered into by musicians active in the Bhangra music scene. As such, part of the anxiety implicit in this article is over the fact that Naughty Boy has easily been able to cross over between these genre fields – being able to achieve mainstream success in the Official UK Chart, while also topping the Asian Download Chart by a significant margin – while the majority of artists who regularly appear in the Asian Download Chart have little opportunity to reach the Official UK Chart. The article also voices grievances regarding inconsistencies in how Naughty Boy's songs have been featured in the Asian Download Chart:

> […] The decision to include his latest single (and current UK Number 1, "La La La", feat. Sam Smith) in the Asian Download Chart calculations is a mystery. Last November, Naughty Boy scored a Top 10 hit with "Wonder" (featuring Emeli Sandé on vocals); a national Top 40 track like that would have guaranteed an Asian Download chart-topper for a good few weeks, yet the track was excluded from the Asian chart calculations. Why, on this occasion, it was decided by the powers that be to include "La La La" is anyone's guess. It's doubtful whether the OCC [Official Charts Company] would have taken this decision independently and it also throws into question the neutrality of the chart when track inclusion/exclusion rules are not applied consistently. (*ibid.*)

The Asian Download Chart is seen as a hugely important asset for the British Bhangra fan community, and this article demonstrates the feeling that, over and above other genres of music, the chart should focus on representing Bhangra music first and foremost. A number of points made regarding inconsistencies in which artists are included in the chart are valid - not including an earlier Naughty Boy song implies that decision-making has taken place regarding inclusion criteria that now allows his music to be recorded in the chart. A user comment on the article questions how valid inclusion criteria based around ethnicity is, and how inconsistent the chart has been in taking this approach: 'MIA's last single 'Bad Girls' reached # 43 in the UK national Singles Chart which means it would have (should have) been an Asian Download Chart # 1 based on those sales… but it was excluded and hence never charted on there.' (Chakdey, 2013b). Clearly, ethnicity is a problematic choice as inclusion criteria for a popular music chart – and yet this is precisely what the Asian Download Chart, in name and at times in practise, is using as a framework for its chart listings. Bhangra music fans who believe the chart should give prominence to Bhangra artists do not agree that ethnicity should be the sole deciding factor, arguing that criteria such as major label backing should be considered as a reason to exclude artists – or at the least, that a more consistent inclusion criteria be adopted.

The article decries the fact that a number of British Bhangra artists will have missed out on prominent chart positions, suggesting that as a result of Naughty Boy's dominance:

> 'DJ Dips' "Tere Wargi" collaboration with H-Dhami & Garry Sandhu, a chart dynamite threesome, had no chance of reaching the pinnacle with Naughty Boy in the running. In fact, it debuts at No. 2 in this week's chart. With Naughty Boy having been excluded, it would no doubt have entered at the top. (*ibid.*).

Discussing the latest single of Bhangra singer Raj Bains, the article suggests that a lack of production tools available to the singer compared to Naughty Boy puts him at an immediate disadvantage: 'There's minimal or no studio wizardry involved in this one, his vocal is a belter and his debut single is a broad appeal pop Bhangra number and will be around for the good part of the summer, like it or not. No-one would begrudge him a No. 1 but we're predicting he'll miss out for the same reasons above.' (*ibid.*). The anxiety expressed here represents fears that what seemed to have been a new era of industry recognition and legitimacy for the British Bhangra music scene, embodied by the Asian Download Chart, is apparently under threat. New artists who would benefit from the encouragement and success

provided by topping the chart are now finding themselves in a situation where they are competing with artists who achieve record sales of an entirely different, higher level.

What appeared to be a way for the Bhangra music scene to prove itself after years of being out of the 'official loop' of British popular music, is suddenly undoing itself. Ultimately an argument is made against Naughty Boy's inclusion based around provenance. Comparing Naughty Boy's potential chart dominance with that of singer Jay Sean's several years ago, it is contested that Naughty Boy may not be suitable for inclusion in the Asian Download Chart because he was not an artist 'produced' by the Asian music scene in the UK – rather, his emergence took place in a separate stylistic field: 'A few years ago the chart compilers were in a similar predicament with Jay Sean (although the difference there was that Jay Sean was originally a product of the Asian music scene, while Naughty Boy is not)' (*ibid.*). The issues illustrated in this article are representative of the ways online fan communities are constantly producing the British Bhangra music scene and defining its boundaries. As Hills discusses, fan communities often engage in activities that require an in-depth knowledge of the field (2002:47), and community members are deeply involved in shaping the meanings and identities around Bhangra. In this example, clearly Naughty Boy is seen as an outsider to the scene – his musical work seen as belonging to the world outside of the Asian music scene, and his wide range of successes outside of the field of BrAsian music making him an outlier whose inclusion in the Asian Download Chart should be called into question. Furthermore the desire to make sure younger Bhangra artists are given a fair chance at success is a prominent concern – with the lower overall record sales that take place for artists within the British Bhangra music scene, their ability to compete with mainstream artists based purely on record sales is limited.

However, as discussed earlier, record sales are wholly unable to provide a complete picture of success with regard to modern music artists – particularly in genres such as British Bhangra, where music streaming, fan interaction and online music videos are extremely prominent forms of dissemination. Despite this, music charts describing themselves as 'Official', including the Official UK Top 40 Chart, and the Official Asian Download Chart, retain a level of respect and credibility among music fans. British Bhangra fans in this article and in the comments to this article are clear in demonstrating that chart success is still seen as an important goal for young artists, and is increasingly becoming an indication of artist success following on from the history of unrecorded sales and piracy that previously defined British Bhangra. Discussing the ways in which UK Bhangra record labels and artists have themselves been unable to tackle the issue of piracy, the members of Bhangra group

Tigerstyle have voiced their frustration at the lack of focus on reaching a wider, mainstream audience: '[…] The desi distribution not having bar codes or any of the sales actually being legit is stupid, and that can be useful towards chart positions or a legit record of sales or whatever. At the end of the day, they don't know how to actually get those sales in. It's such a weird structure, and from a mainstream perspective it's a mess. No Asian act has been trying to press the mainstream.' (Tigerstyle, 2013). Arguing that the issue of a lack of chart recognition is a self-inflicted problem owing to record companies who have failed to legitimise their own record sales, the members of Tigerstyle raise the issue that often, 'Asian acts' do not try to break the mainstream charts at all. Often, local radio station airplay, or presence on more accessible charts such as the Asian Download Chart (which generally requires a significantly lower number of record sales in order to achieve a prominent position than the Official UK Chart does), become important markers of achievement for British Bhangra artists.

It remains to be seen whether the Asian Download Chart will gradually develop a more nuanced approach to artist inclusion, or whether the 'Asian' aspect of the chart's title simply refers to the ethnic identity of the musician or artist who performed the song. While the general definition of 'Asian' in the UK is most commonly used to represent individuals of South Asian ethnic origin, as discussed at the outset of this thesis, it is unclear whether the 'Asian' implied in this music chart effectively excludes individuals of East Asian origin – albeit unlikely considering the historic use of the word in post-war Britain. In addition, such an unspecific inclusion criteria can also unfairly privilege the performer of a song – for example, in a situation where a song has been written or produced by an individual who could be described as BrAsian, but performed by a non-Asian singer, will this song be considered for inclusion in the Asian Download Chart? Such questions are impactful upon the relationship between listeners of the music represented by the Asian Download Chart – which comprises music that can be described as British Bhangra – and the institution of 'official charts' themselves. As described earlier the ability of online communities to discuss and appraise their own selections in 'unofficial' music charts forms a significant part of the activities that members of online fan communities take part in – and while official charts such as the Asian Download Chart retain an uneasy level of credibility amongst these communities, for many British Bhangra music listeners the 'unofficial' charts may continue to take precedence over them.

An article by musician Teed Rockwell posted on the India Currents website – a website that focuses on the South Asian community in the United States – posits a question

relevant to British Bhangra audiences and musicians: 'Who owns Bhangra?'. Rockwell attempts to find some consensus on the answer to this question, particularly focusing on the genesis of the style and how contrasting opinions on this matter have fermented in the online arena. Using the Wikipedia page for Bhangra music as a starting point, Rockwell observes the passionate debate being carried out there over the origins of Bhangra music. The Wikipedia 'Talk' page – a page that allows users to communicate directly with one another regarding the article itself, and which for many Wikipedia entries involves intense debates between users – has for Bhangra music become a site of considerable contestation. Stating that the Wikipedia Talk page for Bhangra contains a 'bewildering range of opinions and attitudes' (2012), Rockwell's attempt to uncover some consensus over the 'true' story of Bhangra music leads him to interviewing Punjabi Bhangra musician Daler Mehndi, often seen as among the most popular Punjabi folk singers internationally (Roy, 2010:95), and garnering Mehndi's view on the genesis of Bhangra music. What is revealed is an incredible disparity between the view of contributors to the Wikipedia Bhangra page, and Mehndi's own perception of Bhangra music's history. Rockwell describes the 2012 version of the Wikipedia Bhangra page, which asserts the origins of Bhangra as an English genre of music: 'The current Wikipedia page claims that bhangra was developed in England by Punjabi expatriates, and that "Birmingham is considered to be the hub of Bhangra music." The essential quality that defined bhangra was "a need to move away from the simple and repetitive Punjabi folk music" and consequently "folk instruments were rarely used."' (Rockwell, 2012). There are also major disparities between how different users explained the origins of the name 'Bhangra' itself, as well as the historical legacy of the musical style. Some users commented that the name came from an intoxicant made from marijuana called 'bhang', while other users proclaimed this as a story derived from folklore.

Regarding the broader history of Bhangra music, commentators discussed whether the style could have formed a part of wider Punjabi culture stretching back over a thousand years – while the Bhangra page itself described a history that only stretched back to the 1960s in Britain. Mehndi replied as follows after being told of these user contributions: 'Absolutely not! Unfortunately you are ill-informed. Bhangra is from Bhangu clan (one of original Jat tribes)—from the inner most hearts of Punjab.' (2012). Mehndi certainly posits a more plausible story for the origin of the name, but his definition of it is almost opposite to the one in the Wikipedia article. For him, Bhangra is Punjabi folk music that British artists are moving away from. Mehndi claims, "I have the credit of taking bhangra global." Some British bhangra fans, however, argue that Mehndi's music is not really bhangra at all, but

should be called "folk pop."' (*ibid.*). Here we see a real dislocation between definitions of 'Punjabi folk music' and 'British Bhangra'. Passionate fans of British Bhangra have made their presence felt on online forums such as the Wikipedia Talk page discussed here, with commentators discussing their various individual likes and dislikes of particular artists, often allowing these preferences to structure the content displayed on the page: 'I personally think Daler Mehndi has twisted bhangra into a Bollywood mockery but I have kept him on their along with others.' (*ibid.*). The often difficult to locate boundaries that are constructed between genres such as 'Punjabi folk music' and 'British Bhangra' are made visible in this online forum, complete with the individual preferences and choices that often characterise processes of heritage creation.

An interesting aspect to note is the way in which audience members contributing to this Wikipedia page were making use of record sales to help with regards to deciding which artists to include, for example, in order 'to distinguish important bhangra artists from "somebody's brother-in-law,"' (*ibid.*). Despite an awareness that music piracy and unrecorded chart sales have an impact on the record sales of Bhangra artists, audiences in this case retained the use of metrics based on chart performance as a way to move away from anecdotal or unconfirmed sources (as evidenced by the implication that 'somebody's brother-in-law' might otherwise be proposed as an 'important Bhangra artist'.). Rockwell goes on to discuss a particular matter of controversy that took place on the Wikipedia Talk page for Bhangra music – the removal of Daler Mehndi from the entry. Mehndi here is curiously seen as an 'inauthentic' performer – as a previously quoted user comment reveals, the influence his music has taken from the sounds of Bollywood contributes to this. Rockwell questions the impulses that drive Bhangra audiences in this forum to react to Mehndi with hostility: 'What is it about Mehndi's music that so deeply offends bhangra purists that they refuse to even grant him the name? These "purists" reject the need for folk instruments, and some even claim that the 90s introduction of authentic folk music into bhangra remixes led to the death of bhangra.' (*ibid.*).

The chasm between Punjabi folk music and British Bhangra is emphasised, particularly with regard to the considerations of music audiences contributing to the online debate. While it is a fragmented example of an 'online community' – one in which the users rarely interact with each other outside of discussing the content of the page specifically – the Wikipedia Talk page for Bhangra represents a microcosm of the global debate taking place around Bhangra music, a debate frequently centred around online discussion forums and social networks. The bewildering array of opinions and historical narratives that present

themselves in this particular arena are reiterated many times in many different online avenues, and Rockwell's search for consensus – whether from Bhangra music audiences, or from musicians themselves – is thus fruitless. A consensus may not be required, however, for audiences to retain a powerful connection with the musical style. Through the process of open debate as facilitated by forums such as Wikipedia, memorialisation and history-making - of the kind that previously will have only been accessible to a legitimised few (publishers, those with the capital to access institutional ways of representing historical narratives) – is made open to a global, online audience. What is revealed by the turbulent, argument-filled, incessant nature of this debate could be seen to represent the one indisputable truth of British Bhangra's own history – that there are multiple, divergent histories in existence here, none of which can be definitively legitimated over any of the others.

Learning British Bhangra Online

A 2009 forum thread on the 'Bhangra Teams Forum', an online discussion board and Facebook group, is evocative of the ways in which individuals are not only appraising and critiquing Bhangra music online, but also using these networks as pedagogical tools to aid their own study of music. The thread, titled 'How Do You Play Algozey?', invites members of the discussion forum to provide suggestions and advice on playing the algozey flute – an important folk instrument in the Punjab, but one that has been frequently omitted from popular Bhangra music. Part of this is to do with the steep level of difficulty involved in learning the instrument. Playing the algozey flute requires the use of circular breathing techniques which can be time consuming to learn, and is a learning process often aided by the guidance of a musician who is already proficient at the technique. While some aspects of the performance practice of the algozey can plausibly be discerned from recordings – melodies, rhythms and timbre, for example – the technical proficiency required to master an instrument such as the algozey is not easily transmitted by aural or mediated visual means.

Many early British Bhangra musicians took a DIY approach to music making that encouraged the use of instruments atypical to the traditional folk Bhangra style – however they would often use these unconventional instruments, such as synthesisers, to mimic the sonorities and textural functions of less accessible instruments used in folk Bhangra, such as the sarangi or the algozey flute. With the availability of cheap imported Indian instruments (relative to prices in the 1970s or 1980s), and the establishment of distribution centres that deliver nationally such as Jas Musicals in Southall, London, instruments such as the algozey

are now widely available to a new generation of musicians. However, although the instruments are more widely available, access to learning remains a challenge, with very few resources and teachers available to learners. Part of this is to do with the way in which folk Bhangra was often taught in the past, relying on close familial or community links – some of which are still present to an extent in the Punjab, but which did not travel along with South Asian migrants to the UK.

Similar to the way in which Hindustani classical musicians rely upon the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' – a system of learning involving a close relationship between a learner and their 'Ustad' (teacher) – folk Bhangra music learning often took place within members of close family, or by following the example of locally known and more experienced Ustads. The genesis of British Bhangra in the late 1960s is marked by a group of South Asian migrants using whatever musical expertise and technical knowledge they had available to create their music – without the guidance and training of an Ustad. The system whereby one knowledgeable individual passes on their musical training and expertise to their pupils was no longer applicable to South Asian migrants in mid-20th century Britain. Often the locations where this learning took place became the gurdwara, or local temple, where small travelling groups of musicians known as 'Jathas' – playing the tabla, harmonium and singing Sikh worship songs – would perform on a regular basis. Instruments which were performed and taught at the gurdwara were often used in early British Bhangra music, with the rhythms of the tabla drum in particular influencing musicians, who utilised the instrument's ability to produce a myriad of sounds in their productions. More recently British Bhangra producer, DJ and artist Bups Saggu is an example of a recent Bhangra artist for whom the gurdwara was significant as a site of musical learning – while he plays a number of instruments, 'his first instrument was the tabla which he learnt to play at the gurdwara' (Bupps Saggu, 2013). The similarity between the uses of the harmonium in the spiritual music of the Sikh faith (known as Shabad Kirtan), and the use of synthesisers in the music of British Bhangra artists, is of note in considering how musicians were taking their musical educations from the gurdwara, and utilising this learning to help create the three to four minute pop songs that characterised the British Bhangra style.

The harmonium is a European instrument with a colourful history in India, having been imported in the 19th century. Widely adopted across the subcontinent by the 20th century, the harmonium is now an instrument integral to a wide range of folk and spiritual music traditions in India where it used for accompaniment, including Bhajans, Urdu Ghazals, Qawwali, Khyal vocal music and the aforementioned Shabad Kirtan. Possessing a strident

tone and an ability to produce loud, clear sounds, the harmonium has not been an uncontroversial instrument in India despite its near-ubiquitous usage. Banned in India from 1940-1971 by All India Radio, and 'still only provisionally accepted on the national airwaves' (Rahaim, 2011), the harmonium became emblematic in the 20th century of an unwanted imperialistic contaminant, in an increasingly nationalistic India. Despite this notoriety, the instrument remains in popular usage in India. The usage of the harmonium in Sikh Shabad Kirtan is as a heterophonic accompaniment to the vocalist – often the harmonium will introduce a melody, which is then sung by the vocalist, at which point the harmonium will begin to follow and embellish the vocal melody. Furthermore the harmonium aids the tabla player in maintaining the rhythmic cycle, or tala, of a musical piece – with repeated figures lasting between five to thirty-two beats. As the harmonium is not required to fulfil any harmonic tasks – the usage of chords or harmony in the Western sense are not concepts easily applicable to much Indian music, with Shabad Kirtan being no exception – the musician will use one hand to pump the hand-bellows on the reverse of the harmonium, while the other hand plays single notes on the keyboard of the instrument.

In early British Bhangra, synthesiser instruments often took on this musical role, introducing melodies and playing repeated figures while a vocalist sings, with regular melodic embellishments – discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Considering that the harmonium is not an instrument used frequently in Punjabi folk Bhangra, I argue that the usage of the synthesiser in the music of early British Bhangra artists was heavily influenced by the pedagogical training that centred around the gurdwara, where the harmonium is a crucial instrument. In this way the musicians were not relying upon a notion of historical tradition, or hoping to accurately represent a folk musical tradition – instead they had adapted to the resources available to them, and made use of the techniques that were accessible at the time. Figure 7 displays a cassette tape cover from a 1983 album by Southall Bhangra band Premi Group. On the cover can be seen a number of modern electronic instruments, alongside acoustic instruments both imported and those more easily available in the UK – a duality that defined much early British Bhangra music. Present are a tambourine, a tumbi, a synthesiser, a dholak drum, an electronic lap steel guitar, and a set of congo drums. The adhoc approach to instrumentation as demonstrated here can be observed in much early British Bhangra music, where musicians often utilised alternative instruments in lieu of difficult to obtain or expensive imported Indian instruments.

Figure 12 - An early cassette tape sleeve from 'Premi Group' from Southall. Note the use of an electronic instrument that appears to be a lap steel guitar front centre, and part of a synthesiser keyboard behind the percussionist. (Premi Group, 1983).

Not present are any of the instruments earlier described as being intrinsic to the Shabad Kirtan tradition of gurdwaras, the site of the musical education of many Bhangra musicians. However, instruments are present which require similar skills to those taught to perform on instruments in the gurdwara. The congo drums can be played in a not dissimilar manner to a set of tabla drums, although many of the technical and sonic nuances afforded by a set of tabla drums will be lost. Replicating the rhythmic devices and patterns played on a tabla is certainly possible however, and on the recordings of much early British Bhangra, congos can be heard fulfilling exactly this role. Similarly the synthesiser is able to fulfil a number of roles, including that of the harmonium. While a similar technique to that of playing the harmonium is still applied – using one hand to play monophonic patterns on the instrument's keyboard – the musician's other free hand allows them to utilise effects present on the synthesiser itself, such as pitch-bend – again, an effect often heard on many early Bhangra recordings. Overall the approach to music-making shown here – involving the utilisation of more easily available instruments to either mimic or entirely replace the use of less accessible instruments – is representative of a do-it-yourself aesthetic that pervaded the music of 1970s and 1980s British Bhangra groups.

I wish to highlight a post-millennial shift where the combination of cheaper imports of instruments, the establishment of Indian music shops in the UK and a desire amongst music makers to re-discover the instruments used to perform traditional folk Bhangra have led to an increased awareness and urge to learn these instruments – as made evident by the 'How Do You Play Algozey?' question asked on the Bhangra Teams Forum. This shift is significant when reading into modern trends within British Bhangra, and in appraising what listeners of British Bhangra find important or significant within the music they listen to. British Bhangra music fans often have divided opinions over the music they consider representative of the 'Top 10 UK Bhangra Albums', for example – and passions are often raised with regard to the question of authenticity, including issues such as the use of the Punjabi language and representations of Punjabi culture. However British Bhangra fans do share particular strategies for assessing the music they listen to, and while different fans may reach different conclusions, the assessment criteria often remain similar. Questions of authenticity, provenance and representation of tradition are central – and musicians seen to actively downplay Punjabi culture in their music, for example by shunning the use of the Punjabi language, are often ostracised by online fan communities. Similarly, producers who are predominantly known for sampling, or even copying without giving recognition to, the work of other musicians, are rarely afforded the same level of admiration as that given to artists seen as creating their own 'authentic' sounds, or for using the vocals of a renowned and 'legitimate' Punjabi folk singer. Within this milieu the usage of instruments seen as authentic or inauthentic takes on a role of renewed importance, after a number of decades in which UK Bhangra groups saw fit to adopt the use of many musical instruments previously unheard in Bhangra recordings.

Integral to the increased awareness amongst fans of the usage of instruments in British Bhangra is the 1990s rise of Punjabi folk singers in the UK. The British Bhangra of the 1980s had become a heavily produced style, utilising electronic instruments and the use of post-production effects that had no precedent among the acoustic sounds of folk Bhangra music. The rise of Punjabi folk singers in the UK during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, such as Malkit Singh, Gurdas Maan, and Daler Mehndi, provided an alternative to the music of British Bhangra bands, and these artists traded in particular on providing a sense of authentic Punjabi culture and on representing 'tradition' both musically and in their respective visual styles. The majority of these artists had been born and brought up in the Punjab in India, and had achieved a level of fame and popularity among Punjabi audiences that allowed them to release recordings and eventually to tour the UK. Notably these

musicians frequently utilised instruments that had been previously unused by British Bhangra bands, such as the harmonium by Malkit Singh as seen in Figure 8:

Figure 13 - The harmonium being played by Bhangra singer Malkit Singh.

The incredible popularity of these Punjabi folk singers and a number of others (Roy, 2010) instigated a paradigm shift in the way British Bhangra artists perceived and represented themselves. Furthermore attitudes have shifted among British Bhangra music listeners to favour sounds and artists evocative of this 'traditional' sound, as represented by artists such as Malkit Singh (Roy, 2010:95). The following chapter looks more closely at the music of Punjabi folk singers and the music of British Bhangra bands, exploring the uses of instrumentation and how 'authentic' sounds are being represented in both examples. Here I will explore the ways in which the discourse of online fan communities of British Bhangra reflects these attitudes towards authenticity and the representation of Punjabi culture.

Returning to the 'How Do You Play Algozey?' forums thread – a number of suggestions are made on how to learn to play the flute, many emphasising the difficulty in learning the instrument even with the help of a teacher. A number of YouTube videos are suggested as ways to learn the technique of circular breathing integral to playing the algozey, as well as users themselves providing step-by-step instructions to help others learn the technique. The rise of YouTube in this respect is significant, and many users of the website have uploaded videos teaching many aspects of Bhangra music and dance. Prominent among these videos are those explaining how to play the integral rhythms of the Dhol drum, featuring instructional examples and performance techniques. A number of these videos have

reached over 100,000 global views, and combined with the discussions on pedagogy taking place amongst online Bhangra communities, they appear to be important tools for users deciding to learn how to perform Bhangra music. This is significant in instigating another great shift in how Bhangra music is taught, and an example of how digital technology is facilitating the exchange of knowledge about the music itself, as well as recordings and music videos. An individual hoping to learn to play Bhangra music in the 1970s or 1980s in the UK might be limited in their options.

As discussed earlier, the gurdwara formed a predominant site of music learning (and continues to do so today) for young learners of Punjabi music, but unless a potential learner had some other form of access to music – a relative or friend who could teach them or help them to access an instrument, for example – it would be difficult for a musician to develop beyond a certain level. Often recordings sourced from India – including Punjabi folk recordings and Bollywood film soundtracks – were used by early British Bhangra musicians who had no access to live performances. Today, with a globally-sourced archive of Bhangra music tuition available via the internet, individuals around the world can access resources to help them learn more about the rhythms and techniques used in Bhangra music. Questions can be raised regarding the validity of teaching materials available on YouTube – considering that any user with internet access can upload their own video – but the communities of users who access these videos are often vocal in praising or dismissing particular videos for the quality of their taught content. Overall the modern facilitation of learning through the use of the internet leads to a vastly different context to that which early British Bhangra musicians were producing music in. A musician in the late 1970s attempting to procure and learn to play the algozey flute in the UK may stumble on many hurdles – access to the instrument itself, access to recordings where the instrument is used, and access to tuition in order to learn the instrument – but a musician attempting to learn the flute today would easily be able to surmount those tasks. Such a shift means not only that British Bhangra musicians today have access to a much wider array of resources than their predecessors, but also it provides an explanation for the early uses of instruments in the early era of British Bhangra, and why, more often than not, a DIY approach to music making formed an important part of musical activity at this time.

Authenticity and the UK Bhangra Dance Phenomenon

The presence of University Bhangra societies in the UK has, in the past ten years, become an increasingly common sight – particularly in cosmopolitan centres such as London, Birmingham, Nottingham and Bradford. A number of large-scale national Bhangra dance competitions – such as Capital Bhangra and Bhangra Wars – invite University Bhangra dance teams to showcase their dance routines, featuring men and women dressed in Punjabi attire dancing to a variety of British Bhangra and frequently, acoustic folk Bhangra music. The beginnings of Bhangra dance competitions as national events in the UK can be traced to the 2007 'Bhangra Showdown' event, arranged by the Imperial College London Bhangra society. This event drew together University Bhangra dance teams, as well as featuring performances from folk singers including Malkit Singh.

While influenced by similar dance competitions that became a trend in the Punjab as part of college festivals from the 1950s onwards (Dhillon, 2002), Bhangra dance in the South Asian diaspora has moulded itself around a different set of aesthetic and cultural parameters. Schreffler has written that the emergence of video sharing websites such as YouTube in 2006 'revolutionized' the global Bhangra dance scenes (2011:7). Footage from Indian dance teams allowed diasporic dance teams to 'study the folkloric form' (*ibid.*), for the first time able to access a seemingly authentic range of dance and musical gestures. An International scene of dance teams has emerged online, with teams from across the United States, Canada and the UK all taking part in discussions regarding questions of authentic performance, appraising the best performances globally, and raising awareness of competitions in their own localities. Centred predominantly around the NachdaPunjab website, users frequently debate the performances of other teams – whether rivals or colleagues. A recent user critique of an American Bhangra dance team, Bhangra Empire, is illustrative of the debates and appraisals that take place in this virtual setting:

> Dont get me wrong, Im NOT faulting them on their choreo, formations and synchronizations and gimmicks, Its what the public want to see, but im afraid its not real bhangra cause other NA teams do the real bhangra perfectly and they dont get much coverage as BE do. Even the UK is catching up to be worthy of even placing in NA competitions. This years JVDs set in Bhangra wars had the whole NA scene buzzing about a team that can actually potentially compete against Bhangra Empire.

In my opinion this was the best set ive seen to date of REAL BHANGRA (The right mix of modern and traditional bhangra) (NachdaPunjab, 2013).

Discussing how Bhangra Empire (BE), a popular and highly acclaimed US Bhangra team who appeared on TV talent show America's Got Talent, are not indicative of 'real bhangra', the user goes on to suggest that other teams which do represent 'the real bhangra' are not achieving the same level of recognition. The question of what represents 'real bhangra' for this user is based on their interpretation of Bhangra Empire's use of 'gimmicks' – such as the incorporation of hip-hop dance, and the lack of nuance in performing traditional Bhangra dance moves. According to this user, 'real bhangra' eschews these types of fusion (in this context, the fusion of dance moves from different contemporary styles) and features a more distinct emphasis on correctly portraying the movements used in traditional Bhangra dance. Another forum user interjects with their alternative viewpoint on 'real bhangra':

As for "real" bhangra, no such thing. What you see now as bhangra didn't even exist before the partition, and since then it looks very different to the way it does now even in Punjab. Every team has their own style, Empire just happens to stand out more because they decided on that style for themselves to be as uniform as possible and appeal to the mass audience. As for competition rubrics, there are modern and traditional competitions that lean more to one or the other side (in the states since ours are generally all similarly traditional) and so favour teams that match up with their style. (*ibid.*)

Arguing that what currently exists as 'Bhangra' in the West is a distinctly modern invention, this user provides a counterpoint to the first user's statement regarding the authenticity of Bhangra (which in their opinion was being disregarded by the Bhangra Empire team). Debates regarding authenticity are a frequent occurrence among members of online Bhangra fan communities, and the question of what constitutes 'real bhangra' is of interest both to practitioners of Bhangra dance in the West, as well as musicians and music audiences. While the modern creation of national and international Bhangra dance competitions truly is a modern invention – many of the competitions having been created in the past decade – the 'traditional' form of Bhangra dance used to accompany the yearly harvest festival is universally seen as the harbinger of modern styles. A similar argument regarding the 'inauthenticity' of a number of British Bhangra bands could be made, many of whom have taken musical influence from a variety of sources without paying proper attention

to retaining a notion of 'authentically' representing folk Bhangra music – and equally a counter argument can be made regarding the relatively recent construction of modern 'Bhangra' as divorced from its origins as part of the harvest festival – both as a music and dance form.

Schreffler's interjection regarding the authenticity debate around Bhangra is crucial. He cites the emergence of Bhangra dance and music in its currently accepted 'traditional' form as being an invented tradition that can be traced back to the 1950s in the Punjab (2011:4). Schreffler channels the work of historians Hobsbawm and Ranger and their 1983 volume *The Invention of Tradition,* which presents an argument claiming that many cultural phenomena that are claimed as being ancient, or at least pre-modern in origin, are in actual fact recent inventions. Citing the disintegration of community Bhangra practices that may have existed prior to the 1947 partition of the Punjab region into Pakistan and India, for Schreffler the authenticity debates that concern Bhangra dance teams in the modern era are fundamentally flawed – dealing as they do with relatively modern cultural practices as though they were conceived hundreds of years ago. In particular, the phenomenon of 'staged' Bhangra – performance intended to take place on a staged area for the benefit of an audience – is seen by Schreffler as alien to pre-partition Bhangra practices, where often dances were performed only once a year and in community settings (2011:3). Schreffler's analysis of historical information – both written and oral – leaves him only able to trace the history of Bhangra as a dance and music form to the early 20th century, at odds with portrayals of Bhangra music as an ancient, folkloric tradition. What is left following this realisation is the utilisation by Bhangra dance teams (as well as Bhangra artists) of particular visual and musical signifiers that portray an imagined sense of tradition and authenticity.

While the ancient provenance of these tropes is extremely doubtful, the usage of predominant sounds, instrumentation and rhythms by these groups demands critical analysis to help generate an understanding of the manifestations of Bhangra's 'tradition'. It should be noted that performers and audiences rarely give prominence to the historical reading that Bhangra, as a whole and in its modern form, is a recent invention. For many individuals both within India and as part of South Asian diaspora groups globally, the historical significance of Bhangra dance and music provides important ways of negotiating questions of identity, homeland and tradition. Challenges to Bhangra's historical provenance can be seen as hostile, or as attempts to discredit the achievements of Punjabi culture. Schreffler notes that responses to his assertion that modern Bhangra music and dance is based on extremely recent innovations, which he made at the 2008 International Bhangra Celebration in Vancouver,

were distinctly muted: 'the historical information I shared, including how most of the content in currently-seen bhangra dance was invented in the 1970s, left some of them crestfallen and rather speechless.' (*ibid.*:6). These factors all structure the debate regarding authenticity within Bhangra music and dance, and are influential for audiences and artists who often vary in their own opinions regarding the history and traditional nature of Bhangra as an art form.

The actual content of many performances of Bhangra dance teams in the diaspora often relies upon deftly combining two key aspects: elements that can be considered evocative of 'traditional' folk Bhangra, and elements that are representative of musical fusion or stylistic innovation. However there are also examples of competitions that specifically require dance teams to feature live music (often using a range of instruments associated with folk Bhangra dance) as part of their performances, in contrast to the more orthodox usage of recorded music to accompany dances. These competitions aim towards featuring entrants who exhibit many elements evocative of traditional folk Bhangra, both in dance styles and in musical performance – and often the teams entering these competitions will exclude any aspects of musical or dance fusion in their performances. Here I will look at two examples of Bhangra dance teams, one of which represents the fusion-heavy style of performance that is broadly more commonly practiced at the current time, and another representative of an emerging trend for more 'traditional' performance styles.

Figure 14 - University of Birmingham Bhangra dance team – at the 2014 Bhangra Showdown.

The winners of the 2014 Bhangra Showdown, held at the Hammersmith Apollo on the 15th of February 2014, were the University of Birmingham Bhangra dance team. The figure above shows the dance team in a variety of coloured outfits – a combination of chaadra (cloth wrapped around the waist), kurta (a long shirt) and pagri (turban) for the men, and salwar

kameez (Punjabi dress) and chunni (scarf) for the women. A piece of additional material shaped like a fan is often worn as part of the pagri, and is known as a turla. These colourful garments are evocative of traditional depictions of Bhangra dance in the Punjab, and are a universal feature of University Bhangra dance teams in the UK. Also notable are the uses of colours that are often seen as associated with femininity in the West, such as purple and pink, used in this context as predominantly male colours – owing to the fact that these colours do not share the same gendered connotations in the Punjab. The music that accompanied the University of Birmingham Bhangra team's performance incorporated a typical mixture of modern Punjabi music releases (such as 'Pendu' by Nit Mann), influences from dance, house and garage music, and older music more evocative of folk Bhangra, predominantly featuring instruments such as the dhol, algozey and chimta (a percussion instrument).

The dance routine itself draws upon movements often used in folk Bhangra dancing, while also introducing elements drawn from the large-scale dance routines ubiquitous to Bollywood cinema, such as a high level of synchronization between dancer's movements, and a presentational style geared towards performing on a stage, whereas folk dance in the Punjab will often be performed with audiences watching the performance from all sides. Overall the intended effect of the performance, as with many of the routines of UK Bhangra dance teams, is to achieve a balance between respecting traditional performance values, while also representing the influences that have moulded the style in different ways in a diasporic context. The earlier discussed internet user's views regarding 'real Bhangra' come to mind, and although musically Bhangra teams will often include short clips of different musical styles and British Bhangra music that incorporates influences from other styles of music, sartorially and in the context of performance practise there is rarely much variation or experimentation.

A contrasting example comes from the 2012 Folk-Stars dance competition, held in Birmingham. This contest highlights the ability of performers to showcase a 'traditional folk Bhangra' dance, aiming to present Bhangra devoid of any external influences: 'Over the years, bhangra has evolved and diversified into different forms, however, the core roots remain the same. We strive to unite the community by presenting bhangra in its truest form, which will inevitably bring the audience closer to their roots.' (Folk-Stars.com, 2012). Represented here is a desire to return to the 'core roots' of Bhangra – demonstrating a departure from the aims of competitions such as The Bhangra Showdown, where individual teams have a relative freedom to represent modern Bhangra music and dance forms. Indicative of audience attitudes towards the significance of valuing one's 'roots', this

paragraph evokes a sense that by mixing with many different genres of music, and fusing with dance moves present in other styles, a sense of the 'truest form' of Bhangra has been lost. This viewpoint results in the Folk-Stars Bhangra competition, whereby entrants must dance alongside live musicians performing traditional folk Bhangra music. Unlike The Bhangra Showdown and other contemporary Bhangra dance competitions, no recorded music is allowed, and neither are the extravagant light shows that frequently complement dance teams at these events.

The event demonstrates an interesting combination of influences, in that while attempting to 'turn back' to more traditional forms of music and dance, the event retains a central focus on stage performance and competitiveness. While the often mentioned traditional context for folk Bhangra music and dance is at the annual harvest festival, the Folk-Stars dance competition aims to evoke the core of folk music and dance in a competitive context, and often takes place in modern performance venues – far removed from the context of folk Bhangra performance in the Punjab, which often takes place outdoors and non-competitively among different performers. Here the concept of 'real bhangra' is taken seriously, and indeed comprises the primary criteria for assessing the success of dance teams in the competition. Describing how participants for the contest are selected, the Folk-Stars website states that: 'The teams are invited based on various factors that fulfil the Folk-Stars performance criteria. Since our aim is to showcase bhangra in its truest form, the teams that are selected represent traditional folk bhangra.' (Folk-Stars.com, 2012). Often the selected teams display similar qualities and performance practices - musicians join dancers on stage, and stage performances often comprise musicians playing the dhol, chimta and algozey, as well as a singer who leads the ensemble and issues shouts of encouragement to the dancers. In addition, as well as singing, spoken-word sections punctuate the performances, where a vocalist will attempt to engage the audience as well as expressing the virtues of Punjabi heritage and tradition.

To take one example of a performance, the Gabru Chel Chabileh (GCC) Bhangra dance team, based in the UK, performed at the 2012 Folk-Stars Bhangra dance competition. The performance begins with a lone vocalist singing in the Punjabi language in a high register, with a melismatic approach to melody throughout. Notably the vocalist is singing live, and is also on stage with the dancers – already a departure from the performances of the University of Birmingham Bhangra dance team, for example, where recorded music is used throughout. A spoken word section, where the vocalist extols Punjabi culture and engages the audience, builds up to the dance routine itself. The introduction of the musical instruments –

only the dhol drum, aglozey flute and chimta are used as part of this performance – is notable for the musicians all being present on stage, as well as the novelty of hearing a live Bhangra music ensemble performing on traditional folk instruments without the usage of any additional effects – such as synthesisers, or post-production effects for example. The prominent sounds associated with British Bhangra are often the result of the use of samples, post-processing techniques or synthesised instruments – thereby making the sound of this acoustic ensemble striking by its lack of any of these features. The ensemble performs at a variety of different tempos, allowing the dancers to demonstrate particular Bhangra dance manoeuvres that require different rhythmic speeds to perform. In addition, the vocalist and algozey flute perform a structured set of different folk songs – the algozey flute often mirroring the vocalist's melody in these sections. In this way, this presentation of 'traditional' folk Bhangra maintains a close connection to the modern Bhangra dance contests, such as the Bhangra Showdown, for example.

At events such as the Bhangra Showdown, the recorded music used to accompany performances presents a number of different contemporary and folk Bhangra compositions, at a range of different tempos. The creation of 'mixes' that may include 20 different songs within a 10 minute performance fundamentally structures the movements that make up these dance routines. The usage of live musicians in the case of the Folk-Stars Bhangra dance competition does not preclude that the purpose of these musicians is in essence to replicate the purpose of recorded music in modern Bhangra dance competitions. While there are fewer, less dramatic shifts in rhythm, melody and texture than there would be as part of a recorded music 'mix' used in a modern Bhangra contest, the live music used by the GCC Bhangra team in the Folk-Stars contest fulfils a very similar purpose – and in this way they can be seen as sharing an important quality with supposedly 'inauthentic' presentations of Bhangra dance. Ultimately what appears to distinguish the GCC Bhangra team's performance from the University of Birmingham Bhangra team's performance is a larger focus on reproducing live music, using authentic instruments played on stage. In dance movements, GCC's performance on the surface eschews any influence outside that of traditional Bhangra dance. However the very fact that a synchronised routine is being performed, in a contest format with strict criteria for what a performance should consist of, in effect constitutes a significant influence from Western-influenced dance competitions such as the Bhangra Showdown.

The act of competing to demonstrate an ability to – not just accurately, but more accurately than anyone else - represent traditional forms of music and dance is in itself a useful impulse to analyse with regard to the heritage of British Bhangra. A high degree of

legitimacy is afforded in arenas such as the Folk-Stars dance contest to authenticity and the expression of traditional (in this case, Punjabi) cultural values. Such an impulse is at odds with the performance practices and recorded music outputs of many British Bhangra artists, for whom the expression of multiple cultural values – often in the form of musical sounds, structures and instrumentation adapted for use from styles other than traditional Bhangra – was an important facet of their work. Chapter 5 explores in more depth the ways in which British Bhangra artists demonstrated these values, and in particular how respecting the provenance of particular authentic forms did not constitute a primary concern for many of these musicians, especially in the absolute terms dictated by contests such as Folk-Stars.

Debates around 'real' and 'inauthentic' Bhangra are significant for fans of British Bhangra, who utilise terms such as 'roots' and 'tradition' to outline criteria that is considered important for musicians (and in the case of dance contests, dancers) to pay attention to. As well as issues regarding the presence of British Bhangra as part of the wider narrative of British popular music as expressed by national cultural institutions and authorised actors, the debate regarding authentic and inauthentic forms of Bhangra music adds additional complexity to the issue. In this chapter I have studied how online British Bhangra fan communities respond to different examples of Bhangra, some of which are considered more authentic than others, and attempted to make explicit the discourse that leads audiences to make these decisions. Furthermore, the way Bhangra learning takes place online, and the emergence of Bhangra dance teams as a core aspect of Bhangra performance in the UK, were both discussed in relation to debates around authenticity and 'traditional' representations of Bhangra. The presence of these debates in various forms, whether as part of social networks or online fan websites, is a large part of how individuals are memorialising different parts of British Bhangra and its history. While the official production of the heritage of British popular music may be taking place in print publications, or in speeches made by senior politicians for example, increasingly the way in which British Bhangra heritage narratives are produced and reproduced takes place online.

The clear distinctions that lie between official, authorised narratives of the wider field of British popular music, and local, community-driven narratives of British popular music are less visible in the context of British Bhangra music – where often online websites can be respected enough to attain an authorised status among audience groups. Attempts by fan community websites to produce their own heritage narratives, in the form of features detailing the most historically significant albums, or interviews with particular artists considered as influential, can attain a high status of authoritativeness for British Bhangra

audiences comparative to other forms, owing to the permission of user debate on these websites, as well as the status of contributors to these websites who are often seen as insiders to the Bhangra music industry itself.

Debates around the Asian Music Download chart are illustrative of how audiences view these types of metrics as important – reacting badly when individuals seen to be outsiders to British Bhangra music industry (in this example, Naughty Boy) are allowed inclusion to the chart which ostensibly provides BrAsian musicians an opportunity for success on their own terms and without major label backing. A British Bhangra music artist may never form a part of the officially accepted canon of British popular music, but considering the predisposition of British Bhangra audiences to conduct their debates regarding authenticity in online arenas, resulting in the creation of narratives that eschew mainstream reproduction, perhaps audiences and artists are content with this – and the existence of a parallel world, at once inside the UK (where British Bhangra is produced) and outside the UK (where much of British Bhangra music is consumed) resisting easy adoption as part of British popular music's authorised narrative.

Chapter 5: Analysing British Bhangra

Introduction

This chapter presents textual analyses of British Bhangra songs and in doing so, represents an initial attempt to address the lack of focus on musical detail within scholarship on British Bhangra. Crucially this chapter focuses on music that has been selected by artists, journalists and audiences as representative of 'classic' British Bhangra songs – of which some representations can be described as narratives of the heritage of British Bhangra[15]. These representations emerged through the interview process, or have been elucidated in features or articles on popular British Bhangra fan websites, such as Chakdey and SimplyBhangra. A key research question underpinning the textual analyses presented here is: are there musical similarities between the various songs and artists who have been included as part of these British Bhangra heritage narratives? Informed by the work of Adam Krims (2000) I argue that by failing to engage with musical detail, academics have overlooked the potential to draw upon techniques of music analysis that could offer valuable insight into questions of authenticity in British Bhangra.

To begin I will explain how close examinations of musical detail have been on the periphery of current scholarship. The following section highlights artist concerns regarding authenticity in British Bhangra which bears relevance to the subsequent analytical material, particularly in relation to the output of early British Bhangra groups such as DCS and Alaap. Following this I introduce several case studies of British Bhangra songs. It is important to note that these analyses are not homogenous in nature, and in each case several different issues are highlighted. These include closer examinations of musical factors including song structure and form or the use of vocal techniques such as vibrato and glissando, as well as contextual detail such as the audience and fan narratives that have come to existence around the songs, and the content of music videos that accompany the music releases (particularly for more modern British Bhangra songs for which music videos are increasingly significant as promotional tools). Towards the end of the chapter, a focus on the portrayal of femininity in British Bhangra is foregrounded through an analysis of music lyrics and music video, drawing upon the music of British Bhangra artist Hard Kaur. While the aim of this chapter is

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[15] Particularly those artists selected as part of discussions framed around assessing the 'Top British Bhangra Songs of All Time', such as the 2013 BBC Asian Network poll.

to observe whether musical similarities exist between the range of songs considered a part of the British Bhangra music 'canon', this additional focus on lyrical and multimedia content helps contextualise the analyses presented here. The case studies include the 1986 British Bhangra song 'Gidhe Wich Nach Baliye' by 'Bhujhangy Group', the 1992 song 'Apna Sangeet Vaje Apna Sangeet' by 'Apna Sangeet', 'Tere Tille Ton' by Kuldeep Manak (1976) and 'Tharti Hilde' by Aman Hayer (2005).

Adopting a Krims-inspired approach to music analysis that takes into account the conversations and aesthetic judgements taking place between British Bhangra music makers, audiences and critics, these case studies will elucidate the types of knowledge that a music-analytical focus on British Bhangra music can contribute to. The final section here addresses the representation of gender in British Bhangra, owing to issues that emerged throughout the analytical process and the dominance of male performers, both in my own musical examples and in the musical genre as a whole.

Rajinder Dudrah (2002b), Virinder Kalra (2000), Rupa Huq (2003) and Gerd Baumann (1990) have explored the significance of British Bhangra as a diasporic music, examining the musical genre and its relationship to identity and ethnicity in Britain. There has been a focus on aspects of musical hybridity, including modern incorporations of reggae, hip-hop and RnB idioms - but often a close reading of the music itself is eschewed in favour of readings based upon theories of cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality, for example. Writing about the field of popular music studies, Adam Krims suggests that 'the notion is widespread […] that analysing popular music in the "musicological" sense distances one from the real engagements of both artists and audiences, both of whom presumably do not relate to any significant extent to the music as modeled' (2000:19). Reviewing the current literature, one could assume that these same concerns are shared by scholars of British Bhangra music. Musical descriptions such as the following passage from an article by Rajinder Dudrah are typical of scholarly writing on British Bhangra:

> British bhangra is a genre of British popular music fusing Punjabi lyrics and the beats of the Indian drum, the *dhol*, with other Black music and British pop sounds, producing an urban anthem and commentary about the lives of its British South Asian audiences. (2002b:197)

Elsewhere, British Bhangra is described by Dudrah as 'Incorporating traditional Indian percussion instruments and lyrics with Western synthesized sounds and modern

rhythms.' (2007:10). As introductory statements outlining in broad detail the elements that could potentially come together in a British Bhangra song, these passages may seem unproblematic. However, it is rare that scholars move beyond this level of depth when describing musical detail in British Bhangra. Inevitably the term 'Black music', as used in the first description, refers to the incorporation of Reggae and Dancehall influences as exemplified by 90s artist Apache Indian, as well as the ubiquitous modern day influence of contemporary RnB on British Bhangra from the late 1990s onwards. The influence of British pop music alluded to in the first description has generally escaped further scrutiny – precisely which aspects of 'British pop' have influenced British Bhangra music are not made clear in the literature.

Writing about Bhangra music in Toronto, Canada, Jacqueline Warwick suggests that '[Bhangra] draws on elements as disparate as the Punjabi folk genre whose name it shares, the songs of popular Hindi movies, and other diasporic dance musics such as reggae, hip hop, and drum & bass' (2008:39). Without offering further clarification of *how* Bhangra sonically reproduces these disparate musical elements, it seems difficult to convincingly argue that Bhangra evidences as much musical hybridity as commentators would suggest. Furthermore, what actually characterises British Bhangra as a musical genre; what musical qualities do artists aim to represent, and what do audiences value and listen for in British Bhangra music? I contend that approaches that have focussed on British Bhangra from sociological, anthropological and cultural studies perspectives have undervalued the importance of the *sounds* that constitute this musical genre. While perspectives from a range of disciplines on the value of British Bhangra music are eminently useful, writers have overlooked the potential to draw upon techniques of musical analysis that could offer valuable insight into the development of this diasporic music genre. Varinder Kalra has written usefully on the expression of migratory themes and a sense of loss within the lyrics of early British Bhangra bands:

> It is the fact of dispersal, a sense of loss, a yearning for home and other themes
> concerned with migration which emerge from an analysis of Bhangra songs of the
> 1970 and 1980s. The lyrics of many of the songs from this period betray a nostalgic
> evocation of rural Punjab, while also pointedly critiquing the racism that awaits Asian
> male migrants to the UK. (2000:85-86)

For Kalra the lyrics of early British Bhangra music are broadly nostalgic, evoking homeland and serving important functions for performers and audiences as part of the formation of identity in the diaspora, at a time when racism was a daily occurrence for migrant groups in the UK. In the same manner that Kalra's analysis of lyrical content led to the emergence of particular wider social and cultural themes evident within these early British Bhangra songs, my analysis of musical features here attempts to extricate meaning from the sounds, and the manner of the usage of those sounds, in British Bhangra recordings. Are there any musical sounds, rhythms, or textures that could be seen as evocative of homeland, in the same way that Kalra found lyrics that produced this effect? The intended purpose here is to address the paucity of research that has focussed on musical meaning within British Bhangra, in order to provide more insight into processes of heritage construction and memorialisation that concern artist and music audiences alike. In the title to his analysis of British Bhangra music lyrics, Kalra calls to go 'beyond Bhangra's emblematic status to a translation of lyrical texts' (2000:80). Here the aim is to go beyond Bhangra's status as lacking in musical meaning.

One pertinent question is around the status of British Bhangra as a 'genre' and the debates around the purity and authenticity of the musical genre that audiences and artists often engage in (as discussed in Chapter 4). Scholars including Jason Toynbee and Simon Frith have discussed the term 'genre' and its usage throughout discussions around popular music. For Frith, genres are constructed, and he states that they must be understood 'within a commercial/cultural process; they are not the result of detached academic analyses or formal musicological histories.' (1996:89). Therefore it is only useful to consider genres as malleable, and as part of a process that involves artist, consumer, journalist and music industry. Toynbee argues that a genre is a localised grouping within a larger culture, a section of a field defined in time, space and through the practices of a particular taste community (2000:36-42). For British Bhangra, the genre lines are clearly drawn – there are musical elements and tropes that can be observed as being repeated throughout a wide range of musical recordings, as will be illustrated throughout this chapter. As will be discussed in the following section, it may well be that the use of the Punjabi language serves as the most defining feature of much British Bhangra music, serving to linguistically distinguish the musical genre from British popular music more widely. As Frith states, cultivating this exclusivity is germane to the concept of musical genre: 'Genres initially flourish on a sense of exclusivity; they are as much (if not more) concerned to keep people out as in.' (1996:88). The question of how musicians and audiences participate in ongoing processes of genre

construction – how particular British Bhangra songs are categorised as 'new school' or 'old school' Bhangra, for example, or how some British Bhangra songs are more easily subsumed as being representative of 'folk Bhangra' – will be addressed throughout the analyses presented in this chapter.

Bhangra and BrAsian Identity

The development of British Bhangra music is significant in showing how early South Asian migrants to the UK used a variety of popular music styles to make their presence in the country audible, at a time when scepticism over mass immigration and multiculturalism questioned their right to belong. During this time period spanning the late 1960s and early 1970s, when British Bhangra bands began to form and release recordings for the first time, British Bhangra music was certainly not the only style of music that BrAsians were listening to. Indeed when asked about their musical influences, Shin, lead singer of Birmingham Bhangra group DCS, remarked that the Rolling Stones were among the group's foremost influences (Ward et al., 2013). Such a realisation should stimulate the urge to prevent essentialist impulses that construct British Bhangra as a genre made 'by Asians, for Asians', and as the genre of music that most effectively communicates the experiences of South Asian immigrants to the UK in every situation. The varied influences that early British Bhangra musicians took on, often in the form of artists popular in the UK Charts during the 1970s and 1980s, must be understood in order to correctly place the criteria valued both by Bhangra musicians and music audiences. The influence of rock bands such as the Rolling Stones and Queen helped to shape British Bhangra bands in a number of ways. The visual presentation of early British Bhangra groups is vividly extroverted, and popular groups such as Heera and Alaap were known for their exuberant visual styles.

Figure 15 - Album cover art from Diamonds From Heera, Heera's second album (1986).

Often dressed in jump suits and adorned with sequins and glitter, the frontmen of these Bhangra bands were making clear references to the larger-than-life personas evident in contemporary stadium rock bands such as T-Rex and Led Zeppelin. The structuring of these bands and the fact that they featured 'frontmen' is a departure from the performance practices of folk Bhangra, where dance and communal performance play a larger role than showmanship and individual exuberance. In this way these groups sought to knit together the influence of performance practices they had encountered in the UK, while retaining the sounds of folk Bhangra in aspects of musical structure and form. Consider the lead singer of Heera, performing on stage in front of the rest of the band - gesturing and goading the crowd to encourage audience interaction, moving deftly around the stage, microphone in hand. This was a drastically different form of performance to the communal folk Bhangra practices that defined harvest festival dances in the Punjab. However, it was certainly not a drastic departure from the types of performance seen across the UK, by rock bands performing in venues ranging in size from pubs to stadiums, or bands seen on the then hugely popular Top of the Pops TV show. The influence of British popular music at the inception of British Bhangra is clear - borne out both anecdotally from musicians such as Shin, and in the specific performance practices of bands such as Heera. These musicians felt comfortable incorporating stylistic devices from a range of different styles - a form of creativity characterised by Jason Toynbee as indicative of the 'fragmented and volatile' field of popular music (2003:113). In such a way the popular depiction of British Bhangra as a style of music

seemingly transplanted from the Punjab somewhat unchanged from its traditional forms is discredited.

In a number of crucial ways the music of this early era had more in common with popular rock of the early and mid-1970s, including importantly, the structuring of the bands and bandmembers in typical rock band/frontmen setups, and the adoption of British rock music's visual language. The use of instruments such as guitars, kee-tars, synthesisers and drum machines enabled a mode of performance that moved away from the manner in which folk Bhangra was routinely presented in significant steps. The amplification of the voice of the lead singer, a role which in folk Bhangra would have required the ability to project one's voice over a raucous music and dance ensemble, enabled similar shifts in vocal performance technique that mirrored the way the adoption of the microphone as part of Western popular music performance allowed singers to practice more personal and varied singing styles. Similarly the use of production techniques, both as effects used during performance and those added in post-production, enabled a shift in the way Bhangra music recordings were conceived. The ability to add reverb to a particular sound or vocal recording (an effect often used in early British Bhangra recordings) allowed artists to simulate the sound of performing in a large concert hall, which were often the venues these bands were hoping to perform in as part of the touring circuit. The use of synthesisers to emulate different sounds – typically the harmonium, but also including horns, sitars and flutes – added a sense that musicians were no longer so limited by the unavailability of certain instruments, and could achieve similar goals with regard to texture and timbre.

This marriage of musical gestures from both the Punjabi culture of the bandmembers, and the pervading British music culture from the time of the bandmembers' settlement onwards, can be read in a number of ways. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, argues that this aspect of cultural interaction is representative of the way in which colonizers and the colonized are dependent in constructing a shared culture. Bhabha argues that there is a space 'in-between the designations of identity', and that 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.'(1994: 4). In this sense hybridity for Bhabha is less the end result of two cultures mixing, and more the space in which the mixing occurs – where fixed identities are dislocated and reassembled, posing a challenge to the notion of culture as unchanging or stable. This is a space of productive play (Bhabha's 'Third Space'), and with regard to the postcolonial encounter suggests that the liminal space between the culture of both colonizer and colonized is ultimately one that holds resistive potential:

It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences -- literature, art, music, ritual, life, death -- and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation -- migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation -- makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition (1994: 247).

For Hyder (2004) this notion of hybridity as explained by Bhabha does not go far enough in helping to describe the fragmented nature of contemporary cultural identity. Describing syncretism as a model that moves 'on from a simple model of hybridity where two distinct traditions merge to form something novel' (ibid: 86), the idea of the syncretic offers a way to understand ongoing patterns of cultural and ethnic identity. To bring this terminology to bear within the context of this thesis, British Bhangra is, ostensibly, the result of clash and convergence between British and Punjabi cultures. Discussed in the previous chapter, this perspective emerges through the commentary of artists, audiences and journalists on British Bhangra fan websites, for example, where the idea of musical fusion is often highlighted. Read in this way, British Bhangra may be described as a cultural product of hybridity, a constructed space wherein aspects of both British and Punjabi culture are enacted. However a more nuanced perspective would address the fact that both British and Punjabi cultures are hardly monolithic, representing fragmented and fractured cultural identities that are in constant states of transformation. In this way describing British Bhangra as a syncretic musical form is useful, as it offers a more accurate way of understanding the complexity of cultural self-expression and identity taking place here.

While Shin of Bhangra group DCS has openly expressed the influence that Western pop music had on the output of early British Bhangra bands, it is interesting to note that other musicians from this era disagree with approaches to composition that draw heavily on aspects of musical fusion – going so far as to proclaim their music as representative of 'tradition' against other stylistic trends that could interrupt the authenticity of Bhangra. Speaking in interview in 2003, lead singer of Bhangra group Alaap, Channi Singh, comments on the

increasing number of British Bhangra artists who adopt influences from different musical traditions:

> I think if we take this music to the extreme, if we lose the authenticity of Bhangra and the authentic instruments then we will lose the charm of Bhangra and we won't be able to call it Bhangra music anymore. If we are starting rapping with the modern beat behind it then it will be black or white music which is already prevailing in the market. This new music has very little to do with Bhangra so we can't call it Bhangra. (Channi Singh, quoted in Dixon, 2003).

Channi Singh is commenting here about retaining what he terms the 'authenticity' of Bhangra – which he cites as being linked to the authentic instrumentation used that provides the 'charm' of Bhangra. What is most interesting here is to consider the way in which Alaap, founded in 1977, themselves fused the music of Punjabi folk Bhangra with aspects of instrumentation, performance practice and song form influenced by Western popular music. While Channi Singh is questioning the authenticity of modern (post-2000) British Bhangra musical fusion, a practitioner more inclined towards representing the 'true' folk Bhangra of the Punjab may indeed question the authenticity of Alaap's musical output, containing as it does many modifications to the acoustic, communal, festival-related origins of Bhangra music in the most often shared history of the musical genre.

Essentially what Channi Singh is stating in this interview is that he does not feel the modern attempts at fusing the sounds of Bhangra music with what he describes as 'black or white music' are *as* authentic as the musical output of groups such as his own band Alaap and their contemporaries. It is also worth highlighting Channi Singh's assertion that adding musical attributes such as rapping to Bhangra music will lead to the music simply aping 'black or white music' which is already commercially successful – whereas British Bhangra is often characterised by a lack of a presence in the mainstream popular music charts. The use of racialised identities here is representative of how Channi Singh positions British Bhangra music – clearly it is neither 'black' nor 'white' music, in his terms, as these types of music are the kinds which are now being adopted as inauthentic additions to Bhangra. Therefore British Bhangra sits outside of 'black' or 'white' musics for Channi Singh – representing how Indian identities, or even Punjabi cultural identities, are seen as distinct from these categories in this context.

The divergence of opinion between the artists Shin and Channi Singh suggests that there are two conflicting discourses present within the style of British Bhangra music. On the one hand, aspects of the style are inherently syncretic, and musicians strive to incorporate musical elements from varied sources. On the other hand, there is a form of protectionism as illustrated by Channi Singh's commentary, whereby the genre is bound to representing its distinctive 'roots' – and where musical elements that are evocatively 'Punjabi' are considered highly desirable. In this way the genre is defined by a hierarchy[16] of textual elements in which those elements defined by artists and consumers as 'Punjabi' are foregrounded.

While modern examples of British Bhangra almost certainly include musical influences drawn from a diverse range of styles, nostalgia and memorialisation are major factors for Bhangra music audiences. Reproducing trends more broadly in British popular music towards 'revival' concert tours and album re-releases – as represented by, for example, the well-publicised comebacks of bands such as Blur, Spandau Ballet and The Stone Roses, as well as the creation of music festivals such as Rewind Festival, an 80s revival festival featuring artists such as Kim Wilde, Rick Astley and Bananarama – many older Bhangra groups have, in the past five years, reformed and begun touring again. The Bhangra Legends concert, first held in 2011, brings together many of the major figures from British Bhangra's early history for a performance steeped in nostalgia for audience members. Marketed at older British Bhangra music fans, who may have experienced the music of these groups as it was released in the 1970s and 1980s, concerts such as this demonstrate how the desire to re-experience and remember the music of these artists is certainly present among the British Bhangra music audience. While the music of these artists may be difficult to find on recording due to many releases having been made on cassette tapes which easily deteriorate over time, performances such as this allow audiences to immerse themselves in the music they perhaps grew up with, or remember hearing at weddings and parties.

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[16] This is a hierarchy in the sense that certain musical elements are expected and appreciated above others, such as those musical elements that are able to express a sense of Punjabi ethnic identity including instrumentation and vocal performance style.

Figure 16 - Poster for the Bhangra Legends Concert 2012 in Birmingham.

In this way the urge to memorialise, remember and re-experience is certainly not limited to music audiences that are interested in musicians and artists that form part of more authorised, mainstream music narratives. For British Bhangra music fans who closely identify with this early era of British Bhangra, official and national representations of popular music entirely elide these artists – and therefore concerts such as this become important sites where memorialisation and the construction of heritage narratives takes place. Promoted by record label Moviebox, and satellite TV channel Brit-Asia TV, the selection of artists included for this concert in itself represents an act of heritage creation – and of course the presence here of a record label heavily involved in the production of much early British

Bhangra music and the promotion of artists casts doubt on the neutrality of inclusion criteria for this concert. With many of the artists included having been artists featured on the Moviebox label historically, the exclusion of British Bhangra groups who featured on alternative music labels is visible and detrimental to any claim the concert may have as to objectively attempting to represent the 'Bhangra Legends' of British Bhangra – however as a commercial event, attempting to present an 'authorised' range of artists is not within the scope of the concert in any case.

The primary defining characteristic that immediately distinguishes British Bhangra from other forms of popular music in the West – and which continues to do so today – is the use of the Punjabi language. Without exception, Bhangra music – whether produced in the UK, India or Canada – is sung in Punjabi. Although often utilising limited vocabularies and lyrical themes - artists are cognisant of the fact that younger generations in the South Asian diaspora are less likely to have a strong command of Punjabi (and indeed some artists may themselves have limited access to Punjabi if they are in the diaspora) – use of the Punjabi language is truly ubiquitous throughout Bhangra music. This is also true to the extent that English language lyrics are actively avoided by the majority of British Bhangra artists. The use of language in this way has a number of functions. It limits which individuals can be involved with the field of British Bhangra, particularly singers or lyricists – namely, it limits the field to only those with a knowledge and understanding of Punjabi. This can also have the effect of limiting the involvement of music audiences who do not understand the language, strengthening the insularity of the musical genre. The use of Punjabi also strengthens ties with diaspora communities globally where Punjabi is spoken – it helps to emphasise the connections that exist beyond national borders and which stretch to encompass communities on all continents. Furthermore it is seen as a way to keep the language alive.

The threat of the loss of the Punjabi language, and the lack of fluency in speaking and recognition among the children of Punjabi migrants, are often seen as indicative of cultural assimilation and the loss of one's heritage within diaspora communities. Often gurdwaras in diaspora communities will offer Punjabi language classes for children. Considering the existence of audience perspectives that value the notion of 'roots' and 'heritage' in British Bhangra music, the Punjabi language is closely connected to notions of tradition and belonging in important ways. The ever-present use of the Punjabi language in British Bhangra music can be read as a way of retaining connections with both the wider global Punjabi diaspora, and the Punjab itself. When considering British Bhangra music that incorporates elements of other styles of music, such as RnB or Hip-Hop, the use of Punjabi

language can be seen as a marker of identity that retains an essence of Punjabi culture, even though musically the song may be stylistically divergent from folk Bhangra. These are criteria that vary between audience groups however, and while a Hip-Hop song sung in Punjabi might constitute 'Bhangra' for one audience group, another group may only classify folk Bhangra-influenced music that incorporates the use of traditional instruments as well as Punjabi lyrics as true 'Bhangra'. However, a BrAsian artist performing a hip-hop song sung in English – even if the lyrics may touch upon issues within the BrAsian community, or reference Bhangra music – would hardly ever be considered a 'Bhangra' song.

A piece of music such as this would be more likely subsumed under the genre of 'hip-hop', as happened with the song 'Big Trouble in Little Asia' by BrAsian rap group Hustlers H.C.[17] – despite this song lyrically addressing the BrAsian community and expressing the Punjabi identities of the rap group's members. In the forthcoming analysis some lyrical analysis will be provided, as it is useful in helping to develop an overall sense of the songs. However lyrical analysis will not be focussed upon in great depth, and I assert that often in British Bhangra music, it is the sounds and vocalisations of the Punjabi language that are more significant for their presence alone than the specific lyrical content of a song. Indeed the absence of the sounds of the Punjabi language would lead audiences to question whether the song was indeed a Bhangra song at all, while a divergence of lyrical meaning would lead to no such debate. The use of Punjabi simultaneously makes British Bhangra music an exclusive and inclusive genre: exclusive in the sense that non-Punjabi speakers can feel excluded due to an inability to understand lyrics; and inclusive because of the ways cross-national ties are emphasised by the use of the language, and the way in which listening to and sharing the music can help to cultivate a sense of place and belonging.

While some Punjabi diaspora communities live in relative isolation – forming small overall proportions of the wider communities where they live – the sharing and communal enjoyment of Bhangra music can adopt a functional role in developing connections with other Punjabi communities. Although they are distant in location, these communities to some extent share particular values, cultural conventions, and linguistic features. The global availability of British Bhangra music enables an acoustic representation of some of these values – particularly aspects of language – to be shared widely in a manner significant to expressions of identity and belonging in Punjabi diaspora communities.

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[17] A live recording of this song is available here: https://youtu.be/1MuT5-m5_Ms

An awareness of the stylistic diversity of early UK Bhanga groups leads to a number of questions regarding modern British Bhangra, and the high regard given to 'traditional' Punjabi folk singers who are seen as representative of the 'roots' of Bhangra. In several ways the music and visual performance styles of early British Bhangra groups such as Alaap and Heera were more representative of an openness to stylistic, lyrical and visual innovation than many of the Bhangra artists currently popular in the UK (as indicated by popularity on the Asian Download Chart, as one metric). What has driven this 'turn back' to the sounds of traditional folk singers and acoustic instrumentation? Furthermore has this return resulted in stagnation for the genre of British Bhangra, or a more stringent construction of criteria defining what can and cannot constitute Bhangra? I will now go on to present the case studies, following which I will provide a comparative overview of the materials presented, locating consonances and dissonances between these musical examples.

Case Studies

Regarding the selection of these songs as case studies, all have been chosen due to their prominence in different media. Notably the BBC Asian Network's '50 Greatest Bhangra Anthems' online vote from 2013, which encompassed British Bhangra recordings from the early 1970s onwards, was an important source as part of the selection of songs. Around twenty songs were considered for inclusion before narrowing the selection down to those analysed here, and these were all songs that had emerged through fan, journalist or artist discourse as being among the most important British Bhangra recordings. An effort was made to include recordings that were identified by journalists and audiences as representing different aspects of British Bhangra music, and these sources include online fan communities. In order to provide a broad view of British Bhangra from its early history to the modern day, one song was chosen to represent what is now termed 'old school' Bhangra, a term referring to older British Bhangra music that features as part of concerts such as the 'Bhangra Legends' tour discussed in the previous section. For this I chose a song by Bhujangy Group, who began performing in 1967 and are among the earliest British Bhangra bands. Another song represents the early 1990s sound of British Bhangra, an era described by Dipps Bhamrah (2013) as a defining moment for British Bhangra as artists moved towards a more technologically influenced sound that incorporated sampling and the increased use of post-production effects. The second song, by the group Apna Sangeet was chosen here as they are

a group that began in 1979, but continued performing and releasing new music well into the 1990s before breaking up. Due to their career spanning multiple decades, they are a band whose music can help to describe some of the shifts British Bhangra music has gone through over this time period. The third song was chosen to represent the influence of notions of 'tradition' and 'roots' to the performance practice of British Bhangra. Artist Kuldeep Manak was identified and discussed in Chapter 4 as particularly evocative of these notions, and his song 'Tere Tille Ton' is provided as an example of his status as 'probably the finest Punjabi singer ever' as described by Chakdey website user Navdip. Finally, the fourth song was chosen to represent modern British Bhangra – the 2005 release 'Tharti Hilde' by Aman Hayer. Unlike the other case studies, this song was released at a time when the Internet had begun to play a critical role in the reception of new British Bhangra music. As such the impact this particular song made on a number of British Bhangra fan websites was the main reason for its inclusion here, as well as to provide an example of post-2000s British Bhangra. Further details regarding selection are discussed as each song is introduced throughout the chapter.

The song 'Gidhe Wich Nach Baliye' by Bhujhangy Group[18] was released in 1986 by Oriental Star Agencies, a prominent British Bhangra record label in Birmingham. Bhujhangy Group began recording and performing in 1967, and are cited by a number of sources as being among the first Bhangra groups to record in the UK. These sources include the aforementioned *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* (2007) and a number of online British Bhangra fan communities including Bhangrasquad.com and SimplyBhangra.

Adam Krims proposes an analytical framework for rap music that takes into account 'remarks by […] artists, institutions and audiences, whose views on aesthetic issues in rap music often correlate extremely closely' (2000:31). In this way, instead of being limited to analyses focusing upon melodic or harmonic material for example, a close reading of a rap song may focus more upon terms and concepts that 'form part of the consciousnesses of those that produce and consume the music', such as the often-debated quality of 'hardness' or 'hardcore' in a rap song. These qualities are signified by certain elements within a musical performance – for example, 'hardness' in a rap song may be demonstrated by an artist who uses particular approaches to vocal rhythm, pitch and timbre, as well as lyrical content.

Observing common aesthetic debates regarding British Bhangra, it becomes clear that the notion of 'roots', or the 'traditional', is a highly valued quality among music makers,

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[18] A recording of the song is available at this link: https://youtu.be/AZyAcEa_PWo

listeners and critics. One important aspect of emphasising 'roots' is the usage of the Punjabi language – considered to be a crucially important part of any Bhangra song, and adhered to in the singing of 'Gidhe Wich Nach Baliye'. In conversation with DJ Radical Sista, also known as Ranjit Kaur, a prominent female Bhangra music DJ during the 1980s and 1990s, Ranjit remarked that if a British Bhangra song was released and sung in English, 'she wouldn't have played it' during her time as a DJ due to the potential adverse reaction of her audience (Ward et al., 2013). Anjali Gera Roy identifies what she calls the *asli-naqli*, or authentic-inauthentic debate among Bhangra music listeners (2010:53), with British Bhangra often seen as inherently inauthentic relative to Punjabi Bhangra due to its perceived openness to adopting Western popular music idioms. I would also point to the presence of the *dhol* drum or common *dhol* rhythms as having a highly esteemed aesthetic importance among Bhangra music listeners and critics. As well as examples such as the earlier description by Rajinder Dudrah, which highlighted the presence of the *dhol* drum as a key part of British Bhangra music, the regular presence of the *dhol* drum at Punjabi weddings, social gatherings and festivals bestows the instrument with a considerable ability to evoke a feeling of 'roots' or 'tradition'.

A basic arrangement of *dholki* drums, keyboard synthesisers and male vocals makes up the entirety of the song. Prominently, one of the synthesisers plays arpeggios based on major chord triads in the opening of the song, and again at moments throughout the song when the singer has reached the conclusion of a verse. The use of such an arpeggio in traditional Bhangra accompaniment would usually be limited by a lack of melodic instruments, particularly those with a range of more than several tones. The use of the synthesiser in this way leads me to believe that the musicians were not trying to simply emulate the use of a similar instrument as it would be used in traditional Bhangra. There is simply no parallel in traditional Bhangra music for this melodic content, and whether it was an attempt to mimic the melodic flourishes of Bollywood film songs, or a creative interjection by the musicians, is unclear. An additional synthesiser plays in heterophony with the vocal part, generally mirroring the vocal melody but at times providing embellishments. A melodic accompaniment such as this is typical of a number of Indian music styles, including Qawalli and Sikh devotional music – an important fact considering that Bhujhangy Group, among other early British Bhangra musicians, often first performed music at Sikh temples in the UK. However, again there is no apparent parallel for this heterophonic melodic accompaniment in traditional Bhangra music.

The use of the *dholki* drum is prominent throughout the song. In a 4/4 time signature the drum plays a basic version of the *Chaal* rhythm, the most common rhythmic pattern played on the *dhol* drum and derived from the ubiquitous *Kaherwa* taal, a rhythmic cycle common to many musical styles in India. The pitch modulations created by manipulating the skin of the *dholki's* bass drum on the first beat of every bar are among the most distinctive sounds one hears in this song. While an actual *dhol* drum is not used – and *dhols* were not widely available in the UK until the late 1980s – the rhythmic pattern used here is typical of that heard during traditional Bhangra performances.

The vocals are replete with frequent embellishments and micro-tonal modulations of pitch, singing an overall verse structure that bears strong similarity to traditional sung parts of Bhangra music, known as *boliyaan*. Strikingly, the vocal recording is extremely saturated with a reverb or delay effect. This brings to the foreground the notion that perhaps the musicians had little interest in creating a record that displayed all the qualities of a 'traditional' Bhangra performance, and were in fact experimenting with different recording and production techniques to differentiate their sound. I would argue that the over-use of vocal effects here is representative of the pragmatic approach to music making that many British Bhangra artists of this era took, where often the instruments and recording techniques used by musicians were the ones most readily available.

In conversation with Champak Limbachia, head of the Bradford-based 'Oriental Arts' arts organisation for the past 35 years, and an individual responsible for promoting Bhangra music across much of the North East of England, I learnt about the early conditions of the production of British Bhangra music:

> In the 1970s and 80s whenever we had musicians come over to tour from India, we would always ask them if they could sell us their instruments. So whatever they had, whether it was Dhols, Harmoniums or anything, we would try to buy it from them – because at that point there was no other way to get hold of these instruments. (Ward et al., 2013).
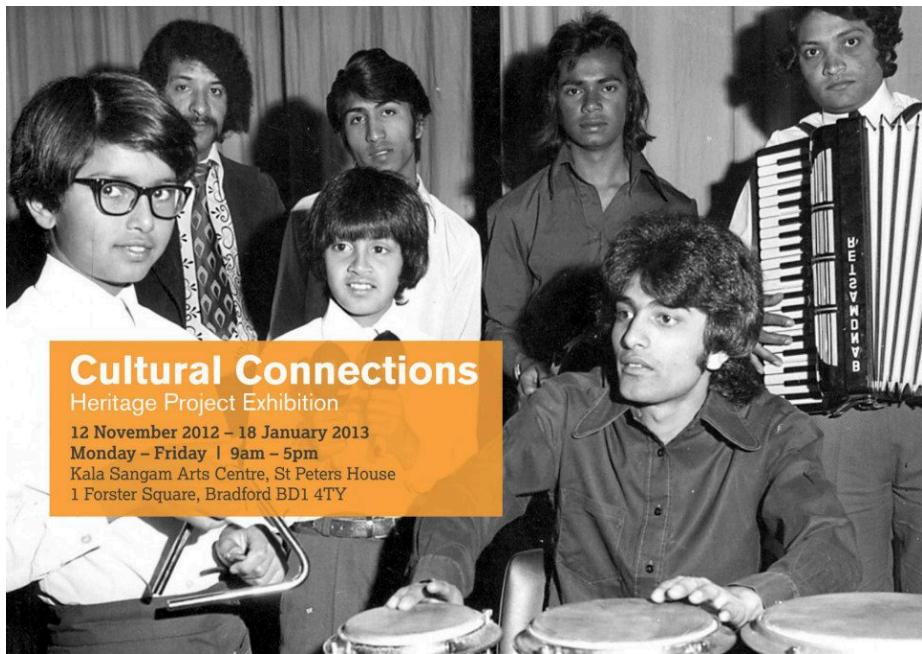
Figure 17 - Champak Limbachia (Right) performing with a Bollywood music group (Reproduced with permission of Oriental Arts, Bradford).

In the above figure, Champak is on the right performing with a Bollywood music group in the 1970s, and rather than playing a *dhol* drum, or Indian *tabla* drums, he is performing on a set of small bongos. In the background you can also see a musician playing an accordion. Bearing this in mind, the use of synthesisers by Bhujhangy Group, along with the use of heavy reverb on the vocal track, could be a demonstration of the 'try it and see if it works' approach to music making that early British Bhangra musicians were forced to take, due to a lack of easy access to both music tuition, and musical instruments.

Moving onto the next case study, the song 'Apna Sangeet Vaje Apna Sangeet' by Birmingham Bhangra group Apna Sangeet is highly regarded among British Bhangra music audiences. Voted the greatest Bhangra anthem of all time (BBC, 2013) by listeners of national radio station BBC Asian Network (as part of the '50 Greatest Bhangra Anthems' vote in 2013), the song also appears on the highly rated 1992 album *Jam to the Bhangra*, considered by Bhangra fan website Chakdey to be among the '30 Albums You Need To Hear Before You Die' (Chakdey, 2013a). The song utilises varied instrumentation, beginning with the use of an electric guitar in the song's intro utilising a two-handed tapping technique. The distorted guitar sound, combined with the use of this distinctive technique, is evocative of the sounds of American rock music in the 1980s – in particular, the introductions to two songs by Van Halen that are almost identical in execution – 'Eruption' and 'Hot For Teacher'.

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While it would be unnecessary to describe this introduction as plagiaristic – the guitar techniques popularised by guitarist Eddie Van Halen became incredibly widely used during the 1980s – it can certainly be described as an act of musical quotation. The appearance of this musical quotation at the beginning of the song serves a number of purposes – it indicates to the listener that this is not a 'traditional' song from the outset, and provides a demonstration of the syncretism one can expect from the rest of the song. As the introductory guitar motif fades out, it is replaced by the presence of a number of instruments evocative of 'tradition' – namely, the dhol drum, the tabla drum, and the one-stringed tumbi. These instruments provide an enthusiastic rhythmic introduction to the song, based on the foundational rhythmic pattern of *keherwa*. This short, 10 second portion of the song featuring these three instruments is the only section in which more traditional instruments are isolated in the entire piece of music.

As such, this short section functions to ground the song firmly within the Bhangra genre, signifying in no uncertain terms which genre it belongs to. While a listener encountering the opening guitar motif may be unsure as to where the song may fit stylistically – most likely within the rock music idiom owing to the guitar sound and performance techniques used – a listener encountering the rhythmic section that follows may be able to decode certain features based on the instrumentation used and types of rhythms on the recording. In particular a music listener with a familiarity with British Bhangra music will instantly recognise the sounds and rhythms here – such is the ability of the aforementioned instruments to signify 'Bhangra'. The shout of 'Haripa!' – an exclamation meaning 'Hooray!' frequently heard as part of Bhangra music performances – marks the end of this introduction. This evocation of an oft-heard exclamation both in recorded Bhangra music and as part of live music and dance performances invokes a communality with Punjabi culture. Following this introduction section, two new instruments are introduced to the milieu. Most prominently, and featured loudly as part the song's recording mix, is a synthesised bass playing a syncopated bassline. Shortly afterwards, synthesised trumpets perform a 4-bar melodic riff based in the Ionian mode over the chord progression 'I-ii-V-I' (23 seconds).

The bass-line moves along with this chord progression, utilising a 'walking bass' technique to follow the chords as they change. The verse of the song is characterised by relatively little harmonic activity, with the chord progression of the musical introduction shortened simply to 'I-ii' (34 seconds). A sixteen-bar instrumental section following the verse introduces new harmonic material with a 'vi-ii-IV-IV' chord progression that leads back to the tonic-supertonic movement of the song's verse (54 seconds). During this instrumental

section, a synthesiser performs a solo that utilises a number of effects – predominantly the 'pitch bend' effect featured on many synthesiser instruments (65 seconds). This pitch bend effect allows the musician to replicate the use of vibrato that vocalists in Bhangra music often use, including the singer in this song. Following the second sung verse of the song, a brief (8-bar) modulation to the relative minor key, in this case A Minor, occurs, featuring the harmonic progression 'VI-iv-v-i' (92 seconds). During this brief section a distorted electric guitar repeats a melodic riff based on the A Minor scale, before the chord progression from the introduction – 'I-ii-V-I' – returns, prior to the beginning of the next verse. This shift to the relative minor provides a moment of harmonic interest in the piece, while the distorted electric guitar echoes the rock music influences already heard in the Van Halen-esque introduction to the song.

These musical sections I have described comprise the first two minutes of the song, and the remaining two minutes of the song re-use the same musical material with very little variation. The vocals in this song, while present in verses, seems to act in a manner almost subservient to the instrumental sections – which both outnumber the vocal sections, and supersede them in terms of melodic range and rhythmic variation. Indeed the vocal sections of the song are melodically narrow in range, utilising exclusively the tonic, second, third and fourth degrees of the Major scale. Interest is added to the vocals of the song by the inclusion of emphatic shouts such as 'Hoy! Hoy!', evocative of the hollering and shouting that often accompanies Bhangra music and dance. The most identifiable part of the vocal performance relies upon a slide up from the third to the fourth degree of the scale, before sliding back down to the third degree – followed by a return to the root note of the scale via the second degree (as heard several times at the 40 second-mark of the song, as well as in every other sung verse of the song). This vocal movement between notes is typical of approaches to singing based in Indian folk styles such as Bhangra, as well as the types of melodic movement that would be acceptable within other styles such as Hindustani Classical music, for example. Described as a 'gamaka' in Hindustani and Caranatic Indian Classical music systems, this particular ornamentation is a device that, along with the use of traditional instruments and rhythms, has become a recognisable signifier within Indian music disciplines. In this context, the use of gamaka provides a distinctly 'traditional' sound as part of the vocal melody, in amidst an ensemble that frequently makes use of sounds and instruments more consonant with Western popular music traditions.

The application of harmonic strategies such as the shift to the relative minor key following the second sung verse of the song, is representative of how the song is rooted

harmonically and structurally within the popular music idiom. The use of typical song structures within Western popular music – the familiar 'verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, verse, chorus' for example – are well documented as being enshrined as part of the form and structure of many popular musics from the 1950s onwards (Von Appen, 2007). The song structure of 'Apna Sangeet Vaje Apna Sangeet' does vary from a generic 'verse, chorus' form however. Rather than the sung verse leading into a chorus with different melodic and/or harmonic material as one might expect, the vocal during the verse gradually introduces more degrees of the scale to the melody before shouts of 'Hoy! Hoy!' announce the end of the verse. In this way the song does not have a conventional chorus, in the sense of a particular section that is marked out from other sections by an aspect of melodic or harmonic interest, for example – rather, the end of the sung verses themselves function in similar ways to a chorus, repeating the title of the song in the lyrics. Frequent instrumental sections in the song allow musicians to foreground their own musical material, in a manner not dissimilar to how jazz musicians take turns when soloing over a particular set of chord changes. In particular the instrumental section that modulates to the relative minor key is representative of the function of the prototypical 'bridge' section of a song, indicating a shift in harmonic material prior to the re-emergence of the original material.

Looking more closely at the sound recording itself, the use of synthesised instruments and post-production effects is easily discernable. Indeed synthesised instruments often represent the most audible instruments on the recording, with the use of a synthesised bassline and trumpets especially prominent throughout the song. The foregrounding of contemporary technology here highlights the syncretic nature of this song, which draws upon the sounds of Punjabi folk instruments alongside electronic instruments and post-production techniques. The resultant song is one that retains a number of elements that are crucial to the stylistic consistency of British Bhangra music – the use of the Punjabi language, the application of acoustic, folk instruments associated with the Punjab, and exclamations that draw upon communal Punjabi culture – but which also makes predominant usage of musical signifiers representing modernity – synthesised instrumentation, post-production techniques, and the distorted electric guitar.

At this point I wish to draw attention towards a contrasting example of Bhangra music, and one that in particular is remarked upon for the ability to express the concepts of 'tradition' and 'roots' that are viewed as important by Bhangra music audiences. Kuldeep Manak is a Punjabi folk singer who developed a famed career in the Punjab, becoming a particularly celebrated performer across the breadth of the global Punjabi diaspora. Until his

death in 2011, Manak influenced several generations of Bhangra artists, including the Canadian Bhangra artist Jazzy B who enjoyed a close relationship with Manak and featured his vocals on a number of albums. Manak's prominence as a highly regarded performer is evidenced by the wide range of tribute albums that were released, and concerts that took place, following his death. Honoured by concerts held by satellite TV Station Brit-Asia TV in 2012, tributes from Bhangra fan community websites including SimplyBhangra and Chakdey, as well as a tribute album entitled 'The Folk King' on the Moviebox label featuring performances of Manak's songs by contemporary folk singers, Manak's legacy as one of the most celebrated Punjabi singers of all time has been solidified as part of Bhangra audience narratives.

His reputation as a highly traditional performer evocative of the traditional heritage of Bhangra music is also clearly observable. Many figures in British Bhangra music responded to his death with their own tributes, with contemporary British Bhangra singer H-Dhami describing Manak as 'a legend whose voice touched millions of hearts & an icon that will never be forgotten', while Glasgow Bhangra artists Tigerstyle added the following: 'Biggest inspiration in Punjabi folk music has sadly left us. RIP Kuldip Manak ji, Kaliyan de Badshah!' (Bhangra.org, 2011). As well as often being described as the 'king of folk singing' – the title of the Moviebox tribute album included – Manak is frequently referred to as 'Kaliyan da Badshah', meaning 'king of Kaliyan' (Kaliyan is a Punjabi poetic form, often known as 'Kali' when used as part of a sung composition). Manak's association with the Kaliyan form of folk singing, seen as an especially rare and traditional style of which he is the primary proponent, affords him additional respect among Bhangra music audiences who value his recordings of folk music as particularly 'authentic' examples.

The song 'Tere Tille Ton' by Kuldeep Manak[19] was released in 1976 on the album 'Ik Tara' (meaning 'One String' and referring to the ubiquitous *tumbi*) by the HMV label in India. The song makes use of the tumbi prominently, which plays an ostinato pattern ascending and descending the root, second and third degrees of the D minor scale repeatedly. The third degree of the scale played here as part of the ostinato - a minor third interval in relation to the root of the scale - is tuned very fractionally sharp relative to the equal temperament tuning commonly used in Western musics. The note is only around 5 cents sharper than it would be in an equal temperament tuning system, and yet this slight variation in tuning produces an effect that is either somewhat jarring, if one is not accustomed to non-

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[19] A recording of the song is available at this link: https://youtu.be/-28rGWKgeqk

Western systems of tuning, or a nuance identifiable and welcomed by an individual familiar with Punjabi folk music, for whom this form of tuning may be more recognisable than equal temperament.

This particular ostinato, ascending and descending the first three notes of a minor scale, is identifiable as a recurring musical trope within Bhangra music and Punjabi folk music. This pattern can be heard in the 2002 global chart hit 'Mundian To Bach Ke' by Punjabi MC, amongst many others, and the combination of the plucked, shrill timbre of the tumbi, and the repetitive ascending and descending melodic pattern, is highly evocative of the histories of Bhangra music. Tricia Rose asserts that 'samplers allow rap musicians to expand on one of rap's earliest and most central musical characteristics: the break beat.' (1994:73). I argue that the continuous sampling or reiteration of this tumbi ostinato by British Bhangra artists from the 1980s onwards is evocative of a similar ideal – with the sound and melodic pattern of this ostinato being seen as a 'central musical characteristic' of British Bhangra.

Used here in the introduction to the song, as well as in instrumental passages between verses, the tumbi performs the role of establishing the tonal centre of the song, as well as echoing Manak's vocal melody, which revolves heavily around the first three notes of the scale. It is notable that the tumbi is a highly limited instrument, only able to produce a maximum of four notes with little possibility for the use of varied techniques for its performance. Despite this, it has retained popularity among British Bhangra performers well into the era of heavily produced, synthesised sounds – with the acoustic timbre of the tumbi readily employed by music producers. The tumbi is accompanied in the intro to 'Tere Tille Ton' by chimta, a set of metal bells that are used to provide rhythmic material, a dholki drum, a two-headed drum often used in North Indian folk musics, and the harmonium. The song is basic in structure, comprising two main sections – an instrumental section and a sung 'verse' section. Instrumental sections of the song last four bars (except for the introduction which lasts eight bars), while verse sections of the song last twelve bars.

The song comprises eight sung verses of twelve bars each, each interspersed by four bar instrumental sections. In the introduction to the song the harmonium doubles the ostinato played by the tumbi, but an octave lower, while in the verses the harmonium mirrors the vocal melody. In its instrumentation the song is uniform throughout, with instrumental sections adopting the same ensemble as during the introduction section, while verse sections adopt a sparser textural approach. The rhythmic pattern played on the dholki drum during the verse is less prominent, placing emphasis only on beats 1 and 4 of each bar, whereas during the instrumental sections the dholki improvises more freely around the kehewra rhythmic

cycle. Similarly while the tumbi plays an ostinato pattern during the introduction and instrumental sections of the song, during the verses it limits its melodic movement strictly, backing the singer's melody by playing only the root note of the scale. In this way the instruments vacate enough melodic and rhythmic space within the texture of the song for the vocal of Kuldeep Manak to dominate.

The melodic material in the verses can be explained as two four-bar phrases: the first phrase focuses upon the first four scale degrees of the D Minor scale, concluding with a motif utilising the seventh scale degree (a C#) an octave below as a passing note before returning to the scale root. This four-bar phrase repeats itself twice in each verse. The second phrase places emphasis particularly on the fourth scale degree (G), with the range of the melody now focussed upon the third, fourth and fifth scale degrees in particular. This phrase concludes with a return to the root of the scale via the same motif as in the first phrase, again utilising the seventh scale degree an octave below as a passing note. During the second phrase, the instrumental backing remains the same as in the two repetitions of phrase one – harmonically motionless around the note 'D'. The second phrase provides some harmonic interest, as the singer's emphasis of the fourth degree of the scale provides a hint of a shift to chord iv, but the rapid return to the root note of the scale returns the song to a position of unchanging harmony. An exception to the exclusive use of these phrases is the outro of the song, at which point the singer repeats the melody of the first two bars of phrase one in quick succession, leading to a climactic moment at the end of the song.

Moments of melodic interest are sparse, with the gamaka effect of the singer sliding down from the third degree of the scale to the seventh degree an octave below, before reaching back to the second degree and finally ending on the root, representing a key motivic moment within the song. This flourish of notes concludes each four-bar sung phrase, and is repeated with little variation throughout the song. Throughout the song, melodic intensity takes a subservient role to vocal timbre and expressive techniques used by the singer. The key of the song places the melodic range used at the upper echelon of the singer's vocal range, which itself is within the tenor range for a male singer. The upper note of the vocal melody is an A4, which occurs once per verse and represents the climactic moment of each verse. The use of vibrato throughout the vocal is prominent, and is used in particular to add emphasis to notes during the gamaka that concludes each vocal phrase. The lack of variation in various parts of the song in musical terms – considering elements such as melody, harmony, texture and instrumentation for example – allows more emphasis to be placed on the nuances of the singer's voice, his expressive range and the poeticism of the lyrics themselves.

The simplicity of 'Tere Tille Ton' with regards to musical elements is abundantly clear. The production of the 1977 sound recording analysed here also portrays an uncomplicated approach, presenting a mono recording with little use of studio effects such as the reverbs that were often used on British Bhangra recordings produced at this time. The ensemble of instruments that perform on this recording are representative of the types of instruments one might see at live performances of Punjabi folk music, and an attempt has been made to represent the sounds of these instruments with little synthetic instrumentation or use of post-production. Such a minimalist production methodology contrasts with that of British Bhangra groups at this time, for whom experimentation with music technology and recorded sound was often integral to their works. Predominantly, Kuldeep Manak's vocal technique and the lyrics themselves are foregrounded in this song, through a combination of static harmonic material, minimal variation in melody, and the understated presence of the instrumental backing.

A final case study looking at a more recent (post-2000) British Bhangra song will help to locate variances between the works of early British Bhangra artists, and that of modern producers. The song 'Tharti Hilde' by UK British Bhangra producer and singer Aman Hayer[20] achieved sixth place in the BBC Asian Networks '50 Greatest Bhangra Anthems' chart – a chart compiled through the collection of votes via social networking websites. Bhangra fan website Desitunes4u's enthusiastic review of the song is indicative of the wide impact made by 'Tharti Hilde':

> The beat is banging, Angraz Ali's tone matches the melody excellently. But the main thing about this track is the hook; you just can't help singing along. Since this tune got released, it has dominated club land, and when I mean people go rago [crazy] to this track, bruv it's like you can actually hear the ground moving when they dance! Mc-ing is not that bad, but more so than that this song as a whole package is probably gonna be one of the best tracks of the year if not the best. Hat's off to the genius that is Aman Hayer and yeah and g'waan with those Khanda dhols in the video!'(Usman, 2005).

The review suggests that the song has dominated 'club land', referring to the nexus of nightclubs and events across the UK that cater to a BrAsian audience. Typical examples of such events include those run by event organisers such as Brit Asia, affiliated with the satellite TV channel Brit-Asia TV. These events feature prominent DJs or music producers,

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[20] A recording of the song is available at this link: https://youtu.be/BOOqLPo6cr4

known either through their recent music releases and success in the various Bhangra music charts, or who are otherwise historically well known within the British Bhangra industry. At these events, music is usually played in recorded form rather than making use of live musicians, but live singers are almost certainly featured. Often these events, which characteristically target younger generations of BrAsians – as evidenced by events such as the 'Brit Asia Uni Tour', a touring club night that began in 2008 held as part of University fresher's fairs across the country – appear to exclude the sounds of older British Bhangra music, such as the music of bands such as Apna Sangeet or Heera. This becomes apparent upon observing the musicians involved in many of these touring concerts – the majority of whom are modern producers known for their adoption of Western popular music styles, particularly hip-hop and RnB, as ways of structuring the sounds of British Bhangra.

Figure 18 - Poster advertising the 'Desi Mania Meets Brit Asia Uni Tour' in 2012.

The above poster details the line-up for a joint promotion concert in 2012, with British Bhangra events organisers Desi Mania and Brit Asia combining to present this tour. The majority of names in the line-up are those of British Bhangra producers and DJs, with a number of singers also listed – prominently including Angrej Ali and Gurbhej Brar, both of whom are folk singers from the Punjab who have been featured on songs produced by artists at this event. This is representative of a common trend among modern productions of British

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Bhangra music – while often, music producers and DJs will be born in the UK and produce music heavily influenced by the sounds of American hip-hop and RnB, for example, often the vocal of a particular song will be sung by a Punjabi singer who otherwise does not live in the UK. During the 1990s this was often accomplished by recording artists in the Punjab who would sell their vocal recordings to UK-based producers, who would then base their song around the provided vocal. In modern practice, Punjabi singers and lyricists are often flown to the UK and take part in live tours in person – with Punjabi folk singer Angrej Ali, featured on Aman Hayer's 'Tharti Hilde' song an example of this practice in action. These decisions to include Punjabi singers on songs that differ greatly from the traditional sounds of folk Bhangra music are worthy of deeper scrutiny. As discussed, the use of the Punjabi language in British Bhangra music is, with very few exceptions, ubiquitous – in fact the use of the language can be seen as a useful delineation of whether a song is accepted as a Bhangra song or not by audiences. Often commentators have lamented the loss of the Punjabi language among second and third generation migrants in Punjabi diaspora groups globally, and expressed anxieties more broadly regarding the loss of tradition or authentic culture within these groups. Punjabi singers are seen as being representative of part of Bhangra music's 'authentic' roots – and their strong command of Punjabi relative to many in diaspora communities, as well as appropriate pronunciation and use of dialect makes them desirable for use as singers in British Bhangra music. These ties to homeland and Punjabi heritage are important issues for British Bhangra audiences, and the use of Punjabi singers is one way for musicians to represent these concepts and, in this way, reproduce 'authenticity' within their music.

In 'Tharti Hilde', Angrej Ali's high-pitched, mellifluous vocal acts as an acapella introduction to the song, before rapper G Money provides a series of vocal introductions typical of introductions to hip-hop music that attempt to engage the audience directly, particularly within nightclub settings (including exclamations such as 'Jump to the beat!' and 'Get down on the dancefloor!' for example). The interplay between these two vocalists – Angrej Ali's high-pitched Punjabi language vocal, and G Money's English-language rap – provides an interesting dynamic to this song that enables insight into connections between modern British Bhangra and an 'authentic' Bhangra past. Ali's vocal introduction, lasting 20 seconds and with very minor accompaniment from strings and piano, highlights his vocal ability through use of vibrato and gamaka throughout the passage. Ali's voice in the verses of the song is supplemented with occasional interjections from rapper G Money, with exclamations such as 'Shake your booty girl!'. This approach of combining the sounds of two

contrasting vocalists – one primarily responsible for singing in the verses and providing the melody of the song, and the other providing rhythmic interjections or exclamations throughout the song – is a trope often heard as part of hip-hop, pop and RnB music, where choruses are sung by a male or female vocalist and verses are rapped.

Examples of this trope are incredibly common, and include songs such as Puff Daddy's 'I'll Be Missing You' featuring Faith Evans, or more recently the Wiz Khalifa song 'Let It Go' featuring Akon. What is happening in 'Tharti Hilde' can be seen as representative of an approach that attempts to marry aspects of Bhangra's supposed 'traditional' sound with a modern influence in the form of rapped verses. What becomes a prime signifier of tradition and authenticity in this song, therefore, is the vocal of Angrej Ali. In many ways it is evocative of the vocal performances of highly regarded Punjabi folk singers such as Kuldeep Manak – making use of a high pitch register, frequent use of gamaka, and vibrato embellishments throughout. The use of the Punjabi language is incredibly important here, and the presence of Ali's Punjabi vocal allows rapper G Money the freedom to insert English language lyrics into the song, whereas a lack of Punjabi altogether may evoke criticisms from elements of the Bhangra music audience and press due to a lack of 'authenticity' being demonstrated. Furthermore, Punjabi instrumentation primarily in the form of rhythm instruments such as the dhol drum and tabla are featured in the song. Sampled instruments are prominently used here, and samples of rhythm instruments provide easy access to a range of 'traditional' sounds that are often utilised by modern British Bhangra artists. Accompaniment in the song is based around the vocal performance, and consists mainly of synthesised instruments that follow the vocal melody in heterophony – drawing a comparison with the use of synthesised instrumentation in the case study of Bhujhangy Group earlier. The presence of a young *dholi* (dhol player) in the music video to the song again reinforces connections between the song and Punjabi culture (figure 14).

Figure 19 - A still from the accompanying music video for 'Tharti Hilde' displaying a dhol player performing on a dhol drum adorned with the Sikh 'khanda' symbol.

The music video for the song displays the singers and producers involved in the song drinking in a nightclub setting, interspersed with imagery of a dhol drummer performing on a dhol drum prominently displaying a Sikh religious symbol, known as the 'Khanda'. The representation of this religious symbol is not uncommon within British Bhangra music, and its usage reinforces connections between Bhangra music, Punjabi culture, and a Sikh religious identity. Furthermore its presence can be linked to a desire to display and demonstrate authenticity – in this case, in the form of a shared sense of religious identity. Interestingly the usage of the Sikh religious symbol, a symbol denoting a religion that promotes abstinence from intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs of all kinds, does not preclude the individuals in the music video from displaying a nightclub scene where the consumption of alcohol is clearly apparent (as seen in the below figure).

Figure 20 - The producers and singers of 'Tharti Hilde' in the music video, shown in a nightclub setting with a bottle of champagne.

The juxtaposition of these two images – a party atmosphere and consumption of alcohol in a nightclub setting, together with an overt religious symbol – may seem immediately at odds with one another. A parallel can be made between the contrast displayed here in visual terms and the musical juxtaposition of Punjabi folk singing and rapping also evident in this song. However these signifiers of both modernity and tradition co-exist in this song, as well as often being present in other examples of British Bhangra. Such combinations of different values have led to Bhangra music at times being criticised by religious groups, who see the evocation of religious symbolism within music videos and lyrics as incendiary. The music of folk Bhangra artists such as Gurdas Maan, and artists such as Amar Singh Chamkila (a popular Punjabi singer who rose to fame due to his frequent performances in Punjabi villages) has often drawn criticism for lyrical content that encourages the consumption of alcohol, or represents taboo subjects such as infidelity. In Chamkila's case, the perceived vulgarity of his songs led to his assassination at the hands of a religious militant group (Times of India, 2013). Described as 'double-meaning' songs – a term originally used to describe provocative songs from Bollywood films, but which has now slipped into usage within the field of Bhangra music – the lyrical content of these songs can be sexually suggestive, and is often at odds with religious affiliations that can be demonstrated as part of the same performance (most often affiliation with the Sikh faith). In 'Tharti Hilde', seeing themes of religion and hedonism collide is only representative of wider trends that are a part of Punjabi music – as can be observed in the outrage reserved for particular Punjabi folk

musicians such as Chamkila – and as such places this song, in its lyricism and visual presentation, well within the accepted boundaries for a Bhangra music performance.

The connections between older and younger generations of British Bhangra performers should be emphasised. An interview with Birmingham-based DJ Harvey reveals a close familial connection between himself and the older generation of British Bhangra bands, as he discusses in interview his father's involvement in 1980s Bhangra group 'Sangam':

> My father has many memories and stories about the period of bhangra music but the one that is most memorable for me is when my father started playing with the legendary Bhujhangy Group and how they used to travel to functions in a Cortina with their vaja, dholki, mandolin, speakers plus as many band member as they could cram in. This just shows how much dedication and commitment they gave to bhangra music! (Nitin, 2014).

Describing how his father's Bhangra group toured with Bhujhangy Group, DJ Harvey provides an insight into his own musical past, and indeed his own musical heritage. As opposed to folk Bhangra performances, or open-air village concerts in the Punjab, DJ Harvey's memories are tied up with the musical experiences of his father and his British Bhangra group – in this example, squeezing into a Ford Cortina along with another band, in order to tour the UK. While younger British Bhangra performers often diverge musically from that of earlier British Bhangra groups, connections do exist between performers of different generations – for example familial, as in this instance, but also communal connections, in that a number of the same music producers and record labels are still involved in the industry long since the decline of most early British Bhangra groups. These connections are important to consider when comparing the musical output of musicians from these different generations, as it helps to distinguish continuities and discontinuities within the musical genre.

With much of British Bhangra music being performed and composed by men, the position of women in Bhangra music is a topic that deserves further attention with regard to their portrayal within the lyrics of Bhangra music, as well as the reception of female Bhangra artists. A typical British Bhangra music video will invoke a number of well-worn tropes related to gender and identity. Prominently, men are the protagonists in these videos - and indeed they are also frequently the producers, singers and promoters involved in the British

Bhangra industry. Women are the objects of affection, desire and, at times, figures of worship. The notion of women as figures worthy of worship is indicated, to give one example, in the song 'Darshan' by B21 (2000), a song written in the style of a piece of worship music while featuring lyrics that replace words that usually denote a god or deity with words for 'woman'. The chorus line of 'Darshan', represented below, uses the word 'Darshan', usually reserved to mean the worship of god, or to catch a glimpse of god, and recontextualises the word to refer to the 'worship' of a woman:

Oh ni, tere hoye savere darshan,   Girl, I've seen your presence

                  this morning,

aj din vadiya lagoogaa.   Today the day will surely

                  be wonderful.

(Lyrics, 'Darshan' – B21)

While the song functions in a sense as a parody of worship songs such as Bhajans, including in the choice of melody and instrumentation in the song, the lyrical content of the piece is indicative of attitudes towards the feminine that pervade British Bhangra music. In early British Bhangra this particular trope is often utilised within music videos and song lyrics, and in this context the concept of 'woman' frequently becomes a site of longing as well as desire. Part of this can be understood as a response to particular aspects of the migratory experience undertaken by many South Asian migrants to the UK in the post-war period. The vast majority of these early migrants were men, many of whom had left family behind in India in order to be able to move to the UK. The original intention of many migrants was to arrive in the UK to work, earn a vast amount of money (relative to respective incomes in India) before returning to their families. However the resultant settlement of many South Asian immigrants in the UK occurred due to the easement of laws allowing the wives and children of these men to move to the UK.

In this way I suggest that one mode in which the treatment of women, both in the sense of fetishising the female body and the de facto worship of femininity, can be read, is through the lens of the early male migrant experience - where for many men, the longing for their partners and children would have been a very real situation. Songs such as 'Soho Road Uteh', a romantic song that fantasises about a situation where a man in the UK meets his

lover from the Punjab on a high street in the UK, can be seen as evocative of these feelings of longing, tapping into aspects of the South Asian migrant experience in ways that other forms of media were unable to. Describing a man searching for his lover on different streets in 'Bradford, Coventry, Derby, London and Soho Road in Birmingham' (Dudrah, 2002c:362), the song produces an elusive female figure, mysterious and unobtainable – and notably, a figure often reproduced in British Bhangra music. At a time when the important women in many migrant's lives were elusive in a sense (with regard to the difficulty of receiving permission from the home office for families to be reunited), songs such as this were able to evoke those particular feelings that bound together South Asian migrants who were sharing this experience.

Frequent lyrical tropes evocative of motherhood, home cooking, and village life also exemplify the way in which femininity is afforded an exalted place in the music of British Bhangra artists. Many of the most popular Bhangra songs - such as what could be termed the unofficial Punjabi anthem 'Apna Punjab' by Gurdas Maan (Roy, 2009:130) - evoke these images of femininity, provoking memories of life in the Punjab by describing things such as typical home cooked dishes, or daily practices such as tending the farm. Lyrically the song lists a number of things that should be present in one's life (with most phrases in the song ending with '*hove',* meaning 'hopefully will be there' more literally) in order for it to be considered perfect:

Apna Punjab hove,	Our Punjab should be there,
ghar di sharaab hove,	Home-made liquor should be there,
mooli naal gandha Hove,	Radish and onion salad should be there,
baan waala manja hove.	A bamboo bed should be there.
Ho manje ute baitha,	And atop the bamboo bed,
jatt oye banea nawaab hove.	The Jatt who has become a king should be there.

The second verse of the song continues to reference aspects of 'home', this time evoking the presence of a mother figure's cooking:

Pehle tor vaali vichon,	From the strong home-made liquor,
dooja pegg laya hove,	A second swig to be taken should be there,
gandhlan da saag vadi,	Saag made from greens,
Bebe ne banaya hove.	Mother should have made it.
Koonde vich ragre masale da sawaad hove.	Home-ground spices for flavour should be there.

References to home cooked food and 'mother's cooking' are made frequently in the music of British Bhangra artists, and are representative of tropes that construct femininity in particular, restrictive ways. It must be emphasised that a tension exists within British Bhangra, whereby Jat Punjabi identity is emphasised over and above other caste identities. Jats represent the farmer caste in the Punjab, and are often landowners, thereby affording them an often higher social status to members of other castes. While many of the major religions of the Punjab, including Sikhism, forbid the presence of castes and discrimination along caste lines quite specifically, in the past as well as currently casteism has a significant legacy both in the Punjab and the entirety of India. Discrimination has remained a problem between members of different castes, affecting which groups of people for whom it is socially acceptable to interact, marry and socialise together. Furthermore with Jats owning large amounts of the land in the Punjab, disputes over labour exploitation with regard to lower castes are common. These issues of caste identity are significant even within the context of South Asian diasporas, where casteism remains an issue even for second and third generation migrants where parents are concerned about finding 'legitimate' marriage matches for their children. Thus such issues can be read in the music of British Bhangra artists, for whom the issues of casteism are prominent - and since the 1990s the awareness that often Bhangra music privileges the Jat caste over other identities has been a cause of friction, both between audiences and musicians who share different caste identities (Dudrah, 2002c). The presence of Bhangra songs that emphasise particular caste identities such as 'Jat' - as in 'Apna Punjab' - reflect tensions within the Punjabi community and the wider South Asian diaspora.

Women in Bhangra music videos, frequently the object of male desire and viewed through the male gaze, are rarely given their own voices or ability to respond. As DJ Ritu, a female Asian music DJ, attested to, the presence of females at Bhangra music events has been a difficult process since the beginning. Speaking at the World Bhangra Day event, Ritu explained how women suffered discrimination even for trying to take part in Bhangra concerts or daytime events, as were popular at the time (Ward et al., 2013). Her experiences as a woman both involved in the Bhangra industry as a DJ, and as a Bhangra music fan, are invaluable, as she provides a perspective of female interaction with the genre that has otherwise been elided. The history of women and their involvement in the Bhangra music industry is a long one, and stems from the existence of a parallel music and dance form the Bhangra that specifically involves women - known as Giddha. Giddha is a communal dance and music form where women gather communally, often in a manner that mimics the male-dominated field of Bhangra, while singing lyrics that are frequently bawdy and explicit in

talking about sex, relationships and modern life. In these Giddha performances, two women will often take the roles of husband and wife, enacting situations such as marital disputes or arguments in sung form. While often considered light-hearted, many female performers have become successful folk singers in their own right, achieving a level of acclaim usually reserved for the prominent Punjabi folk singers that rose to popularity in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s.

However, while male Bhangra performers have often taken part in innovative fusion works, or utilised musical trends from different styles such as hip-hop, until recently women in Bhangra were much more frequently subject to expectations that labeled them as 'traditional' or 'homely' - where musical innovation was often implicitly frowned upon. The predominant characterisation of female Punjabi folk singers until the mid-2000s is that of representing tradition, almost certainly dressed in salwaar kameez, and performing music that is distinctly anodyne in comparison to the experimental works being produced in the field of male-dominated Bhangra. Such characterisations tie into representations of women in Bhangra lyrics, where they are often portrayed as virginal, or as mothers, or otherwise as having little agency of their own.

The recent popularity of Hard Kaur - a BrAsian female artist whose music combines aspects of Bhangra with hip-hop - represents a shift in expectations for female Bhangra performers, although negative reaction to Hard Kaur in a number of ways is notable for allowing the observation of how divisive her persona has made her. Producing music videos and writing lyrics that frequently place herself as the protagonist, often reversing the role of women in Bhangra by making men the object of attention and desire, Hard Kaur has faced criticism from both religious groups and audiences of British Bhangra who view her music and persona as an aberration. Beginning with her controversial stage name (the 'Kaur' part of Hard Kaur's name refers to the name given to all women of the Sikh faith, and has strong religious connotations – its juxtaposition here with the term 'Hardcore', often used to describe pornography, has been a contentious issue amongst religious groups), Hard Kaur aims to provoke a response from audiences – and rarely meets expectations with regard to what a female British Bhangra artists should look or sound like. While the sexualisation of women and femininity is a tacitly acceptable trope within British Bhangra, and rarely becomes the subject of criticism from various groups, the reversal of the trope is seen as objectionable in ways that are revealing of the gendered boundaries that structure the field. For example, Hard Kaur's song 'Sexy Boy' places her in the role of pursuer, describing what type of man she is interested in:

I want a man that rocks my world,

Cos I need a gangsta,

Don't know about you girl but,

I need a gangsta.

Ek sona sona munda,   A nice, nice boy

I need a gangsta,

te thoda sa lafanga,   And a little bit out of control

cuz I need a gangsta.

While a British Bhangra song may more commonly feature the lyric 'ek sona sona kuri' (a very nice girl), here the roles are reversed. Similarly in the video, Hard Kaur is seen taking part in what are frequently portrayed as male activities in the field of British Bhangra – drinking alcohol, visiting a nightclub and flirting with members of the opposite sex. Making use of both English and Punjabi lyrics, Hard Kaur also subverts the dominance of the Punjabi language within British Bhangra music, while retaining fragments of Punjabi that serve to distinguish her music from mainstream pop releases. Similar to the way in which US artist Missy Elliot reversed the gender binary in hip-hop music, refusing to simply become subject to the male gaze, Hard Kaur refuses to allow her sexuality to be defined for her, instead choosing to express herself in her own terms. Importantly, however, and as is also the case for Missy Elliot, Hard Kaur is qualified to succeed by the will of a number of different men in powerful positions around her – including songwriters, producers and promoters. While taking some of these roles on herself, including writing her own lyrics, Hard Kaur is still subject to the demands of a music industry that is vastly male dominated, and within which the ability to succeed can only be permitted by male gatekeepers at every stage – from the production and release of music, to the promotion and radio airplay of music. Nevertheless the relative success of Hard Kaur as a British Bhangra artist represents a shift in portrayals of women in Bhangra that are limited to a narrow range of repressive categories. Now a popular actress and singer in India, Hard Kaur has used her persona as a strong female personality within the masculine world of Bhangra to propel herself to greater success - in a manner that suggests that perhaps the reversal of this prominent trope and the success of a female artist like Hard Kaur was both desired by sections of the Bhangra audience, and long overdue.

What emerges from these analyses are a number of factors that are shared between all of the examples given. Prominently, the vocal performance in each recording is given primary emphasis. In this way, the ability and timbre of the singer's voice is highlighted, particularly concerning the application of gamaka and vibrato. In all examples given, gamaka forms an important vocal technique that each singer expresses – and the usage of this technique in examples ranging in date from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s suggests an expectation from performers and audiences alike that melismatic vocal techniques be present within a British Bhangra song. These vocal techniques form a crucial part of vocal performance across the Indian subcontinent, and while in the Classical music traditions the use of gamaka varies greatly from South Indian (Carnatic) music to North Indian (Hindustani) music, its use stylistically as part of British Bhangra provides the musical style with a definite musical connection to a range of Indian musics. Although the use of gamaka in British Bhangra music is not necessarily distinctive when compared to the application of gamaka in many Indian music styles, musicians and audiences value the presence of gamaka and vibrato as part of a musical genre where vocal performance is highly valued.

The use of the Punjabi language, as previously identified, is also a highly important factor that Bhangra audiences expect to see represented within a particular song. With the exception of G Money's rapping in 'Tharti Hilde', all four of the Bhangra songs studied are sung in the Punjabi language. The use of Punjabi acts as a crucial signal that allows audiences to identify a piece of music as 'Bhangra' – and often this can occur even when stylistically the music does not replicate traditional Bhangra music forms. For example, the introduction to 'Tharti Hilde' utilises subtle piano and string accompaniment, providing a backing for the Punjabi language vocal of Angrej Ali. The use of Punjabi here signals that this is a Bhangra song to Bhangra music audiences – as opposed to a Western pop song for example. The limited use of the Punjabi language in other musical styles – Hindi is often the preferred language for Bollywood film music, for example (although the Punjabi film industry continues to grow) – strengthens this connection between language and musical genre. Observing the influence that Punjabi singers and lyricists continue to have on young BrAsian musicians in the British Bhangra music industry, it appears likely that the use of Punjabi as the de facto official language of Bhangra will continue into the future.

Musically, a number of instruments are shared among the musical examples studied. The dholki drum, a two-headed drum that approximately matches the timbral qualities of the tabla drum, is utilised by Bhujhangy Group, Apna Sangeet, and Kuldeep Manak. This drum is closely associated with performances of folk Bhangra music, and tends to be considered less

technically complex than the tabla drums, for which an extensive classical music tradition and repertoire exists. The percussive sounds of the dholki are rarely heard alone, and are often accompanied by chimta (in the case of Apna Sangeet) and harmonium (in the Kuldeep Manak song). Chimta, essentially a set of metal tongs (indeed a direct translation of 'chimta' is 'tongs') with bells attached, are used for percussive effect, producing sounds of a higher pitch than that of the dholki drums or tabla. Primarily, percussive rhythms and sounds are shared across these four examples, and the emphasis of beats 1 and 4 in each bar is a frequently heard trope – as part of the rhythmic pattern known colloquially as the 'Bhangra' rhythm.

Table 1: Comparison of Case Studies

Artist	Bhujhangy Group	Apna Sangeet	Kuldeep Manak	Aman Hayer
Song Title	Gidhe Wich Nach Baliye	Apna Sangeet Vaje Apna Sangeet	Tere Tille Ton	Tharti Hilde
Year of Release	1986	1992	1976	2005
Instrumentation	Dholki, tabla + synthesiser	Dhol, tumbi, electric guitar, synth bass	Tumbi, chimta, dholki.	Piano, synth strings, Dhol, synthesised drums, bass, sampled instrumentation.
Vocal performance	Punjabi language, melismatic, use of vibrato, repetition of verses and choruses.	Vocal group exclamations + traditional melismatic Punjabi vocals.	Vocal dominates the recording, high register, melismatic + Punjabi language.	Combination of 'traditional' Punjabi vocals, and Western rapped verses. Utilisation of an 'authentic' Punjabi vocalist.
Post Production	Rudimentary use of reverb + delay throughout, oversaturated with effects.	Use of synthesisers and effects such as reverb.	Minimal and sparse, vocals are highlighted throughout.	Crucial to the recording – use of sampling + reverb. Modern approach to production that emphasises drums + bass sounds.

The above table highlights some of the key comparative points gathered from the analyses in this chapter. Through a closer examination of the musical detail of early British Bhangra, it has been possible to make sense of some of the ways in which these diasporic music makers adapted to the conditions of their new country. With the scarce availability of both traditional instruments and musicians with backgrounds in Bhangra music performance, South Asian migrants in the UK made use of whichever instruments and influences were most readily available to them. While retrospectively the music has been dubbed 'British Bhangra', I question to what extent these musicians were actually trying to emulate or take influence from Bhangra music. Using 'Gidhe Wich Nach Baliye' as an example, the musical content here bears little similarity to the traditional musical accompaniment to Bhangra dance, long said to be the major influence for British Bhangra music, and from which its name is derived. Similarly the music displays a minimal regard for demonstrating the valued quality of 'roots', doing so primarily through the use of *dhol* drum rhythms and lyrics sung in Punjabi. Perhaps it would be more fruitful to focus on the 'British' in 'British Bhangra', rather than the 'Bhangra' – with 'British' here referring to the conditions in Britain within which recent migrants chose to make use of any instruments that came to hand for their music making, loosely defining their own musical style as they started to perform and record.

To finish on a point about the types of knowledge a musico-analytical interrogation of British Bhangra music could contribute to; Music journalists often talk about the quality of 'craft' in terms of songwriting – the 'craftsmenship' evident in a song such as 'Yesterday' by the Beatles for example, or the inherent qualities of songcraft displayed within the oeuvre of a particular songwriter such as Bob Dylan. Critically acclaimed popular music is 'well-crafted' in some way – but I would argue that the musical example of 'Bhabhi Gidhe Wich Ayee', as well as other early songs from British Bhangra artists, could be defined in terms of their distinct lack of 'craft'. The song structure, instrumental performances and rudimentary use of recording techniques display a simplistic approach to songwriting, and it is crucial to acknowledge this. Enscribed within the musical detail of 'Babhi Gidhe Wich Ayee' is a historical text. A few years prior to the recording of the song, the musicians in Bhujhangy Group had taken their first steps as migrants to a new country; the musical text here documents their first steps in a new musical style.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the heritage of British Bhangra music with several questions in mind. How have individuals involved with the British Bhangra music industry and audience groups responded to authorised narratives of British popular music that have failed to reflect the significance of British Bhangra music as part of BrAsian cultural identity? How has British Bhangra been constructed as heritage – whether authorised, un-authorised or self-authorised – and where is this taking place and by whom? What kind of British Bhangra music has been categorised as heritage? A combination of musical analysis and ethnographic work looking at locations significant to British Bhangra music have enabled insights into the heritage of the genre, and therefore, a part of the heritages of the diverse ethnicities of BrAsians groups who value British Bhangra music.

The thesis has revealed how the multiple histories and narratives of British Bhangra – whether produced by audiences, or actors in more authorised positions – are being expressed, debated and memorialised as part of ongoing attempts to construct the heritage of British Bhangra. Scholars have explored the history of British Bhangra as a genre of music in the diaspora that has been significant as a form of cultural expression for migrants and the children of migrants to the UK (Sharma et al. 1996, Dudrah 2002c, Huq 2003) – and what this contribution adds to this conversation is a focus on how music audiences, journalists and artists themselves are remembering and memorialising British Bhangra. While national institutions, heritage organisations and tourism bodies continue to focus on a set of canonised music artists, considered representative of 'British popular music', the audiences of British Bhangra music are taking part in constructing their own heritage narratives. Bolstered by the ease of access to Bhangra fan community websites, debates around British Bhangra music's origins, most prominent artists and so on, are taking place in multiple locations at the same time – frequently on spaces facilitated by online networks. Birmingham and London emerge as crucial cities in the history of British Bhangra, with early artists and groups based around Birmingham's Soho Road forging connections with local recording studios, where the first British Bhangra albums were recorded. Due to the central contribution of very few locations to the development of British Bhangra as a musical genre – primarily Birmingham and parts of west London – it is difficult to argue that extensive regional variations exist within examples of British Bhangra music. While recently the Glaswegian group Tigerstyle have released a number of pioneering recordings - ostensibly under the banner of 'British Bhangra'

(at least with regards to the marketing and media portrayal of their recordings) but more realistically defined as electronic dance music – it is not possible to talk about the 'Scottish sound' of British Bhangra, for example, as there are not enough examples to justify this. While variations do exist and are subject to audience debate – particularly in the sense of rivalries between Birmingham and London (Farrell et al., 2005:113), rather than regional variations, it seems more useful to talk about variations between the British Bhangra sound and modern Bhangra sounds emerging from the Punjab itself – and the interaction and exchange between artists who move between these two fields is a frequent occurance (exemplified in this thesis by the example of Punjabi vocalist Angrej Ali, who sings in the song 'Tharti Hilde').

Furthermore, the thesis contributes analyses that look more closely at the musical detail of British Bhangra than scholars have previously attempted – providing more information on the ways audiences and journalists distinguish particular artists and songs as part of heritage narratives. Audience narratives based around highly regarded values within British Bhangra music – notably the qualities of 'roots' and 'authenticity' – were explored, particularly with regard to how these qualities are evoked by musicians. Audience comments on the varying degrees of authenticity represented by musicians or performers are taken into account, particularly when issues such as the 'realness' of a particular performance is questioned. The use of musical and linguistic signifiers by British Bhangra artists has been of primary concern – particularly how these artists knowingly reproduce these signifiers in ways that evoke the 'traditional' and 'authentic' qualities identified by Bhangra music audiences – what Roy terms the 'asli-naqli' debate (2010:53). Subtle musical signifiers, such as the sharpening of particular scale degrees when used in certain musical contexts – such as how the third degree of the minor scale is sharpened as part of the tumbi's repertoire of ostinatos – are employed by musicians, and throughout British Bhangra's history have become enshrined as representative of 'authentic' Bhangra. More broadly the use of the Punjabi language and how it has become ubiquitous throughout Bhangra music globally is viewed in the context of how artists and audiences value these links to heritage – and in the context of migrated peoples in diaspora groups, how they continue to seek ties with (an imagined) homeland. This relates to the topic of cultural memory, as these aspects of musical and linguistic meaning contribute towards the way fans of British Bhangra music value particular sounds and musical devices. Music in this context functions as an aide-mémoire, particularly with regard to the concept of homeland. It becomes clear that British Bhangra is a crucial part of the cultural identity of a global Punjabi diaspora, and music that achieves the goal of re-

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imagining and re-constructing a Punjabi homeland for older generations in the diaspora – and serving as a historical narrative for younger generations in the diaspora – is of wide significance.

With regard to the question of how British Bhangra music has interacted with a wider field of British popular music heritage and tourism – it becomes clear from an examination of artist and audience discourse that British Bhangra music is often considered as an 'outsider' to mainstream popular music in the UK. With very few artists having achieved wider mainstream success outside of often mentioned examples such as Punjabi MC, audience groups see alternative measures of success, such as the Asian Download Chart as highlighted in Chapter 4, as prominent metrics to use as a guideline for measuring an artist's success. The appearance of Signature, the dance duo who rose to fame as part of the national televised talent contest 'Britain's Got Talent', as the sole representatives of British Bhangra (and BrAsian) music at the London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony is indicative of how mainstream and national institutions approach the task of representing the musical genre.

While British popular music at the opening ceremony was represented by a range of historically recognisable, canonised artists (David Bowie, Happy Mondays, and Blur amongst many others), the contribution of British Bhangra music and the many artists that have developed large followings both in the UK and globally was not recognised – in favour of showcasing the recognisable presence of dance group Signature. A similar process writ large across the field of British popular music as a whole may elide the contributions of The Beatles or Pink Floyd, in favour of presenting Susan Boyle to a national audience. The rich heritage(s) of British Bhangra, which have often gone unrepresented as part of institutional or mainstream heritage narratives, are instead being formed and debated as part of participatory audience communities. The analysis of online British Bhangra fan communities demonstrated the ways in which debates around authenticity are of primary concern for Bhangra audiences, and play prominent roles with regard to considerations of heritage. The increasing presence of Bhangra dance competitions, where music is ubiquitous, as part of BrAsian youth and University culture, helps demonstrate how these considerations of 'roots' and evocations of homeland remain significant topics, even for younger generations of BrAsians.

Indicated by the example of the Folk-Stars Bhangra dance contest, where 'traditional' and 'authentic' representations of dance and music are highlighted above all else as performance criteria, audiences maintain strong connections with what constitutes a 'real' Bhangra performance, and what does not. Comparing the performances at the Folk-Stars competition and the Bhangra Showdown dance competition, the main observable difference

lies in the presentation of music. Are the instruments being used the same as those that may also be used as part of a Bhangra performance in the Punjab? Are the instruments being performed live? Is the singer singing in fluent Punjabi and utilising appropriate gamaka? Is the lyrical content coherent with regards to Punjabi culture and values? These are the questions of authentic performance that attendees of the Folk-Stars dance competition must address, and comprise the crucial differences between competitions such as this, and less constrictive competitions such as the Bhangra Showdown. Early British Bhangra artists – for whom the use of Western instrumentation was an unproblematic stylistic convention (as detailed in the analysis of several early British Bhangra songs) – did not share these concerns, or at least not in the same manner. The very notion of 'roots' appears to have meant different things to these two different generations of British Bhangra performers.

For early British Bhangra artists such as Bhujhangy Group, the incorporation of instrumentation outside the remit of traditional Bhangra music was wholly acceptable. The use of musical structures that vary from traditional examples of folk Bhangra music was also permissible. While part of modern British Bhangra culture can be characterised by a 'turn back' to traditional forms – as evidenced by the Folk-Stars contest – the music of early British Bhangra is best characterised as constituting a 'look forwards', with occasional glances back towards the folk music of the Punjab. In this way a useful continuation of this project may explore further the modern trends within British Bhangra that aim to accurately represent traditional forms. Scrutiny of these forms and how authenticity is being represented can illuminate the ongoing processes of heritage construction that are taking place among British Bhangra artists and audiences.

With one observable trend being this 'turn back' towards traditional cultural forms, the potential for any increased future engagements with mainstream heritages of British popular music appear limited. Whether it is the language of Punjabi itself, ubiquitous to British Bhangra, or a broader disinterest in the sounds, rhythms and dances that characterise British Bhangra as an artistic form that limits the musical genre from further visibility within British popular music cultures, is indiscernable. What is clear however is that in lieu of official representations of British Bhangra, audience heritage narratives have taken on wider signifiances within this musical genre, for whom national representations have thus far made invisible the developments and contributions of British Bhangra music. The nature of British Bhangra as a significant genre of music in the global field – where Punjabi diaspora groups encounter the music and take part in online audience communities, with geographical location having little bearing on their involvement – is one of the factors that may be limiting

the connections between the musical genre and British identity. As artists want to appeal to a demographic wider than the BrAsian community – encompassing communities in India as well as diaspora groups across the world – the emphasis on Britishness and portrayals of British culture are often limited on the part of artists who aim for a global audience, thereby leading to the foregrounding of Punjabi cultural identity above others.

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Appendix A: POPID Email Questionairre:

POPID (Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Identity and Cultural Memory)
Questionnaire

Question 1: Which particular artists or songs are most important to you, and why?
Question 2: Out of the following, which are most important to you and why? - a) physical media (CDs, Vinyl records etc.), b) live performances, c) internet/social networks, d) radio.
Question 3: Are there any specific examples of the above (eg. A particular CD, live concert that sticks in your mind, or website) that are particularly important to you, and what makes it stand out?

Your name:
Age:
Gender: