

**The Politics of Participation:
Burning Man and British Festival Culture**

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Abstract

Numerous industry reports and publications have acknowledged the dramatic transformation of the British music festival industry over the last two decades, with the emergence of what has been described as a new 'boutique' model in festival production. Using a selection of boutique events, this study reveals a nexus of British events culturally aligned with the 'No Spectators' ethos of Nevada's Burning Man. How far it is possible to claim that the politics of Burning Man has transformed participation at festivals in Britain, is a question central to this investigation.

Documenting the emergence of a transatlantic politics of participation, this study explores the relationship between Nevada's Burning Man and British festival culture. Firstly, a theoretical chapter surveys literature from interdisciplinary fields, identifying concepts previously utilized in the interpretation of festival and carnival forms. This analysis exposes the differences in audience engagement implied by contrasting carnival types, which form key conceptual frameworks throughout the investigation. Following this preliminary, a discussion of the concert-model event reveals the impetus for 'No Spectators' and critiques uniform interpretations of festival audiences as 'active'. Through the discussion of its milieu, production values and interpretive discourses, an examination of Burning Man exposes a fusion of participative precept and praxis. Retaining a set of indicators for extreme participation, a detailed case study investigation of Cambridgeshire's Secret Garden Party exemplifies an attempt at achieving a similar synthesis. The idealizing discourse of Secret Garden Party is presented as a form of positioning that, despite producing a broader posture of authenticity that rejects commoditization and sponsorship, is subordinated by commercial necessity. Underlining Britain's inevitable de-radicalization of 'No Spectators', these findings are contextualized by a critical examination of the contemporary festival industry and boutique sector, concluding with an action-research-based analysis of the author's own festival, Raisetheroo.

The assumption that the participative doctrine of Burning Man is active beyond the boundaries of its own official international network is confirmed by the investigation. The placement of this event as exclusively responsible for the reproduction of 'No Spectators' outside of Secret Garden Party is, however, presented as problematic. This study concludes by recognizing a synergy of demographic, economic and cultural factors responsible both for the emergence of the boutique festival industry, and the idealization of participation discernable within it.

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List of Abbreviations

BM – Burning Man

SGP – Secret Garden Party

RTR – Raisetherooft

1. Introduction

1.1 Music Festivals and the Spectator

The steep rise in the number of festivals in Britain between 1990 and 2010 is a fact acknowledged by both mainstream and industry-specific media. Superseding an era of free festivals and raves, this proliferation could be interpreted as the ubiquitous commercialization of a culture, legitimizing that which would have occurred, previously, 'under the radar'. Despite some departure from the new age, many festivals nonetheless still paraphrase the idealizing discourses associated with the 1960s and '70s counterculture, inheriting those mixtures of activism and pleasure credited to the iconic Woodstock in the United States, and Glastonbury in the United Kingdom. It is, perhaps, testament to the explicit way in which the '70s pop festival is remembered – with its outspoken campaign slogans – that the comparatively subtle politics of participation discernable today is easily overlooked.

With reference to the letters page of a newspaper, Walter Benjamin once claimed that the apparatus employed by any artistic medium is wholly improved when it is able to transform consumers into producers, or spectators into collaborators.¹ To a large extent, this simple logic encapsulates the ideology of the phenomena central to this investigation. Unfolding annually on a dry lakebed in the Nevada desert, Burning Man (BM hereafter) offers an enduring example of the festival as social experiment. Generating a *social praxis* through synergizing participative ideals with event production, it offers its attendees a critical, though fleeting, utopia.² Central to its philosophy is an idiomatic rejection of the spectator.

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 2, 1931–34, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 741, p. 777, quoted in Claire Bishop, ed., *Participation* (London: Whitechapel, 2006), p. 11.

² *Praxis* is taken from the socialist Antonio Labriola who called Marxism the 'Philosophy of praxis' in *Socialism and Philosophy*, trans. by Ernest Untermann (Chicago: Kerr, 1912). This study employs the concept to indicate ideologically informed practice in the context of festival cultures.

Included in this renunciation is the presentation of passivity as a malaise, a side effect of the materialism guilty of reducing potential participants to consumers. As a resolution to this problematic, a democratized approach to event production attempts to harness audience labour in the transformation of its desert venue into a civic, convivial space.³ This system seeks to temporarily reverse a social dilemma, a fact that audibly chimes with the radical skepticism Victor Turner credits to the liminality of ritual celebration.⁴ Engendering the subjunctive mood of possibility, the liminal festival is a 'betwixt and between' condition, furnishing society with the opportunity to 'look honestly at itself'.⁵ Turning the role of the festivalgoer as consumer on its head, the social milieu of BM casts a skeptical eye on the brand of consumerism on which its external social structures are based. That the festive form occupies a critical space between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces is a common interpretive theme across disciplines; and though festival is often placed as conspicuously affirming or contesting external hegemonies, this study points also to the contestation of intra-event modes of participation that are *symbolic* of external states of being. In this sense, the 'extreme' participation prioritized at BM, and at Cambridgeshire's Secret Garden Party (SGP hereafter), can be considered an embodied form of socio-political action.⁶

The placement of the spectator as a symbol of a negative hegemony delivers, automatically, an implicit critique of the approaches to event production that are considered spectator inducing. The presentational performance propagated by the concert-model event, described in Chapter 3, operates via a number of necessary assumptions rejected by the 'No Spectators' idiom: that genuine performance is virtuosic performance; that the role of the audience

³ The term 'democratization' is used throughout the study. It does not refer to a political system of voting but instead to the process of making event production accessible to the audience.

⁴ Victor Turner, 'Liminality and the Performative Genres', in John MacAloon, ed., *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), pp. 19–41 (p. 22).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21, p. 40.

⁶ 'Extreme participation' is an umbrella term employed in this study to refer to both theatrical engagement (which might include wearing costumes or interacting with performance artists) and involvement in production (which includes the creation of installations and theme camps, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). The conceptualization refers to participation in non-musical activities (workshops etc.), but includes music activities where the participant is the star (for example, in karaoke-style games). 'Extreme participation' is also occasionally described as 'extra-spectatorship'.

member equates to that of the fan and therefore that of the spectator; and for both of these reasons, that the audience member is logically subordinate to the prescribed artists on stage. In actuality, spectatorship might form a relatively minor role in the festivalgoer experience. Nevertheless, these assumptions are essential to the commercial structure of most music events, and their reproduction relies on a number of crucial separations: between artist and audience, but also between producers and consumers. As Chapter 4 maintains, it is this system that stands accused of subverting audience creativity in the politics of BM, and it is this system that the celebration attempts to reverse.

BM is a cornerstone case study of this investigation, yet its deployment is chiefly intended to illuminate, by way of example, the dynamics of participation at work within a growing sector of cultural events in the UK. Concerned with audience-to-artist distinction in the convivial setting, the ‘patterns of theatricality’, carved out by Vicky-Ann Cremona in her examination of Maltese carnival, are employed in the interpretation of comparable patterns within music festival culture.⁷ Explained in more detail at Section 2.7, Cremona evidences the way in which contrasting event designs unwittingly promote or limit the theatricality of the audience. These dynamics can, as the following study shall testify, also be used *purposively* to erode performance distinctions, in an effort to realize a socio-political ideal. This study will augment her work by examining the extension of this principle to organization, in the management, build and production of festival events.

Presenting BM as a vanguard of extreme participation, seeking to transform its audience ‘into the art that it experiences’, this study aims to expose and examine the significance of comparable events in the UK.⁸ The ‘No Spectators’ doctrine central to the discussions in Chapter 4 has been subject to a sizeable quantity of scholarly enquiry. And yet, that there exists an aligned contestation of the spectator in the UK is, to the best of the author’s knowledge, without academic recognition. Addressing this gap in sociocultural research, Chapter 5 shall explore

⁷ Vicky-Ann Cremona, ‘Carnival as a Theatrical Event’, in Vicky-Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch, eds, *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 69–90.

⁸ Hakim Bey, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), p. 40.

the ways in which SGP is explicitly tied to the politics of BM. As later shown, the critical discourse of SGP does not float, in the words of Vivienne Burr, like a balloon, over and above its social milieu.⁹ Both case studies shall testify to a discourse embedded in spatial construction and organizational structure, as well as the latent semiotics of promotional presentation. SGP serves to exemplify the promotion of the extreme participant, yet it should not be viewed as exclusive in its co-option of BM-inspired praxis. With respect to a number of socio-economic shifts identified in Chapter 5, whether or not it is possible to place BM as the source of appropriated ideology and praxes discernable within British festival culture, with respect to SGP as well as other events identified within the boutique sector, also orients this study. Following naturally from the establishment of a cultural nexus inclusive of BM and festivals in Britain, how far the participative ideal characteristic of the former is de-radicalized through commercial co-option is also an issue crucial to the research.¹⁰

1.2 Key Questions

This investigation proceeds, then, from the hypothetical assumption that a 'No Spectators' doctrine has come to influence participation at music festivals in the UK. Its chief concern is to understand the relationship between BM and the British festivals that are not recognized members of its international network. It asks: to what extent have festivals in the UK appropriated BM's politics of participation? If it is possible to argue that there are events that are either significantly influenced by BM, or are 'BM-like' due to an indirect process of cultural exchange, further questioning is inevitably presented following the identification of contemporaneously specific modes of engagement, within this cultural nexus. These overarching issues can be broken down into a number of questions, which are addressed within the scope of this study:

⁹ Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 75.

¹⁰ Wendy Ann Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, 2007).

- How is the politics of participation at BM built upon a rejection of the spectator?
- In what ways do the event's programming, production and audience resonate with this position?
- How far does a similar politics manifest itself within the social milieu of SGP?
- To what extent does SGP de-radicalize the 'No Spectators' idiom of BM?
- In what ways it is possible to argue that BM has also significantly influenced participation at other British festivals?
- How far is extreme participation at festivals in Britain both limited and shaped by the contemporary socio-economics of the music industry?

1.3 Background to the Research Project

Discounting the numerous experiences that have occurred outside of academia would present a fallacious account of the background to this research project. Numerous types of participation within festival culture, over a period of twelve years, have shaped the understanding of the author; perhaps foremost as a festivalgoer, but also as a festival reviewer, volunteer, employee and organizer. Though there are too many relevant experiences to be listed here, the way in which the leisure, practice and scholarship of the author have synergized in the fruition of this study is detailed in this section.

My inaugural festival experience took place at the now-discontinued Homelands at Matterley Bowl in Winchester, at the tender age of fifteen, yet it was Glastonbury 2002 that would spark a deeper preoccupation with their sociocultural function in society. There could be found a blurring of boundaries between entertainment, politics and social experimentation; the alternative

lifestyles and eco-politics performed within this convivial setting exemplified, as described by George McKay, 'politics as pleasure'.¹¹ By the time I was studying for my first degree in Philosophy, I had launched a festival-inspired club night that integrated bands, DJs, stalls, art installations and workshops, and later performance art and dance, which was organized alongside studies. Chapter 6 of this investigation evidences the later use of this event in conjunction with the research.

In 2006 a dissertation entitled *Visionary Neo-Tribes? Resistance, Ideology and the Events Collective* was completed, which explored the intersections of politics, music and event design at feminist gigs in Leeds, for a Masters in Events Management. These broad themes would continue to influence the interests of the researcher. The relationship between politics and pleasure at contemporary eco-festivals in Britain formed a preliminary occupation of the initial PhD research; working at the Sunrise Summer Solstice Celebration, an event that adopted an exhaustive approach to green festival production, in part inspired this preliminary approach. Two developments would occur that would see this focus superseded by an interest in extreme participation and an investigation of the relationship between BM and British festival culture. The initial surveying of literature soon revealed that though there was little scholarly investigation regarding contemporary eco-festivals, they had a documented history. Notable eco-events, such as the Big Green Gathering, were rooted in the early Green Gatherings at the Glastonbury site.¹² Eco-politics and festival culture had not been entirely neglected by the academy, and while a fresh perspective of the contemporary eco-events would have undoubtedly supplemented the existing literature, the subject area no longer maintained the allure of uncharted territory. Correspondingly and with some luck, working at a number of events and attending others for pleasure furnished me with sufficient knowledge to detect an area of research more fertile, and to me, more intriguing. In 2008, I was employed as the production manager of an interactive performance installation that toured a number of summer music festivals across the UK, including Glade, RockNess, Electric Picnic, Bloom and

¹¹ George McKay, *Glastonbury: a Very English Fair* (London: Victor Gollancz, 2000), p. 161.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

Bestival.¹³ This was a formative experience that exposed the way in which audience-centric features were utilized by festivals in the cultivation of immersive and playful modes of participation. Despite competing with high-profile musical acts, these features were often promoted conspicuously by the hosting festival, and were deployed to garner attention from the press. The contemporary proliferation of festivals had also resulted in an apparent new categorization – the ‘boutique’. Simultaneously, a discourse and approach to production had emerged that seemed to idealize participation and resist spectatorship. Despite the fact that most festivals did not comfortably sit within one model or the other, two contrary event designs could be discerned: one commercially relied upon the presentational performance system, while the other provided a critical alternative to the spectatorship implied by this system. Attending BM in 2009, and SGP in 2010, galvanized the way in which participation at the latter could be viewed as the result of transatlantic appropriation. As a leading event, SGP was also influencing other festivals and a playful, theatrical mode of participation seemed increasingly fashionable at a number of British festivals. These experiences culminated in the hypothesis that aspects of festival participation and event production discernible in the UK are, at least in part, evidence of BM’s influence. With all the militancy, emancipating language and symbolic practices characteristic of the Nevada event, its connections with Britain suggested an emergent phenomenon of ideological exchange, while supporting the syncretistic fusion of politics and conviviality, historically credited to British festival culture.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is inclusive of the following parts:

- 1) A literature review and historiography.

¹³ This was the ‘Big Love Inflatable Church’, a performance installation that allowed audience members to get ‘married’ in mock wedding ceremonies, with actors posing as vicars and bridesmaids.

- 2) An industry overview of music festivals in the UK and a focused examination of the sector described as 'boutique'.
- 3) The analysis of BM and SGP as in depth case studies, followed by a brief investigation of other events within the BM-inspired cultural nexus.
- 4) The management and analysis of *Raisetheroof* (RTR hereafter) as action research.

This is a project concerned with revealing a cultural relationship between BM and festival culture in the UK, yet it does not seek to account for every event exemplified by it. It does not aim to be exhaustive; therefore it does not include every event described as 'boutique', every British festival influenced by BM, nor all those with parallel characteristics. The investigation does seek to identify those events most conspicuously demonstrative of the hypothesized relationship at the centre of the study. Following the case study analysis of BM, the limitations of the research have confined the realization of this aim to a single, in-depth, case study investigation of the British festival most pertinent to the investigation (SGP). However, the study attempts to sketch out a far broader nexus of British festivals influenced by BM's paradigm of participation; as such, Section 5.4 dedicates some time to their analysis, while meaningful links to other events relevant to the enquiry are also made in Chapters 6 and 7.

Following the establishment of key analytic themes regarding archaic and contemporary festival forms, as presented in the literature review in the next chapter, this project traverses three interlocking hypotheses. First, is the notion that festival attendance has been problematically generalized with the status of creativity. Using examples of concert-model events, the argument begins by critiquing the suggestion that all popular music festivals are carnivalesque, which the author argues is symptomatic of the distorting influence of scholarly interpretations of 1960s subcultures, and the urge, following the work of Theodor Adorno, to reinstate cultural participants with determinism. By examining claims regarding the 'active participation' of the audience, the need to redress this stereotyped frame by recognizing the presentational performance tradition

underpinning concert-model events, is argued. This forms a crucial preliminary to understanding how the case study events present themselves as alternative offerings.

An analysis of BM then exemplifies the 'No Spectators' idiom, which refers to the socio-political sentiment at the heart of this study. Presenting the audience as performers and producers, over spectators, and fragmenting the construction of festival space via the inclusion of theme camps and diversified attractions, the festival attempts to collectivize production. Attention is fragmented and theatricality is embodied as attendees are invited to perform through costume and engage with interactive installations. At BM, 'No Spectators' is both implicit to its civic spatial construction and an explicit organizing ideal. The case study event is thus hypothesized as an alternative to the standardized participation, performance separations and spectator-inducing entertainments implied by its perceived antithesis, the concert-model event.

Retaining the discourses and praxes of the first case study as key indicators for the resistance of spectatorship, the second half of the study devotes its attention to examining the idealization of extreme participation in the UK. This is supported by a close case study analysis of SGP, an analysis of similar phenomena elsewhere within British festival culture, and the action-research-based analysis of the author's own event, RTR. The relationships between these events are explored, in accordance with the primary research objectives. The culmination of this project, in Chapter 7, concludes with a final consideration of the research aims as outlined in Section 1.2, in view of the findings overall. For further research, this chapter also locates various points of interest relating to the theorized relationship between BM and festivals in Britain, which could not be adequately considered within the scope of this study.

1.5 A Deductive-Interpretive Epistemology

The epistemology underpinning this study leans towards a constructionism that frames 'truth' as a social, and therefore human, creation: truth is both relative and shaped via discourses. Reality, when framed in this way, necessitates certain types

of questions and renders others obsolete; recognizing a multiplicity of truths, how meaning is constructed is a question that takes precedence in a study such as this. Similarly, whether a particular claim is true or false becomes less important than explaining what is true *for whom*, and in what context. Epistemological frameworks are not chosen arbitrarily but are logically bound to certain types of enquiry; in this case, the project examines the injection of 'spectatorship' with socio-political meaning and the idealization of its constructed antithesis: 'participation'. The project thus falls naturally within the social constructionist framework – it concerns a system of meaning created by a culture, operative within, and reproduced by, its social milieu.

Emphasizing the influence of an American event, the findings of this investigation are informed by a series of comparisons. Applying the participatory modes carved out in the literature review, the first comparison provides an analytic contrast: presentational performance and spectatorship are described as characteristic of the Western concert-model festival, while BM accounts for the quasi-politicized *rejection* of spectatorship. This part of the project attests to an ideological antithesis between the two event types, while setting up a conceptual frame of interpretation. The second distinction is able to utilize the first hermeneutically; by laying out the first two models, the 'middle-ground' combination of presentational and participative elements at SGP becomes identifiable. The action-research-based analysis in Chapter 6 also proceeds by comparison; its explanatory power results from an ability to highlight meaningful consistencies and deviations from the case study events. From a macro perspective, therefore, this study proceeds via a discursive, and analytic, comparative method.

Of course, the investigation did not commence with a methodological strategy as neatly sequential as this. As perhaps most researchers in the humanities and social sciences come to find, attempts to follow a prescribed or inductive order of activity were thwarted by frequent and necessary revisions to the research question, usually after experiences in the field. Thus, what actually took place was decidedly deductive, for the research *questions*, as well as the answers, emerged from the investigation itself. Kurt Lewin's paradigm model of progress, a 'hermeneutic-interpretive' spiral Melissa Trimmingham credits with

illustrating the circularity of knowledge generation, offers an effective representation of the approach assumed here.¹⁴ Lewin's model illustrates the way in which the evolution of understanding refines research focus; we return to our point of entry research questions time and again, and these change, consolidating as the project grows and understanding develops. This offers a fitting model for the reflexivity of the research design adopted here, which began with a very loose set of foci that would later crystallize into a deep-slice, sociocultural study. As argued at Section 1.3, it would also be erroneous to omit mentioning the direct and extra-academic experiences at festivals, in both a work and leisure capacity, which occurred outside the predicted frame of the study but nevertheless came to inform its direction in very significant ways. Evidence for the 'porous' parameters of this deductive-interpretive approach is the way in which BM came to be, somewhat accidentally, integral to the investigation. Prior to attending, ideas regarding how the event might have been important were largely intuitive, for the focus was at that early stage only tentatively oriented towards issues of participation and British festival culture. Deductions made from attending this event sharpened the focus of the study; in no small part, therefore, the arguments found here emerged from the researcher's critical interpretation of direct experiences.

1.5.1 Methodological Approach

As McCall and Simmons posited, the debate regarding qualitative and quantitative methodologies is really a debate over the status of 'the subject'.¹⁵ Arguing for or against subjectivity is somewhat fruitless before recognizing that types of research necessitate certain methodologies, rendering others unsuitable. Entire disciplines have been critiqued for taking up the broad empirical method of investigation without asking whether a deeper understanding of the participant experience, as might be gained through the qualitative method, might present a more efficient way of arriving at the same research goal. Festival research is no exception.

¹⁴ Melissa Trimmingham, 'A Methodology for Practice as Research', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 1st ser., 22 (2002), 54–60 (p. 56).

¹⁵ George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, eds, *Issues in Participant Observation, a Text and Reader* (California: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 2.

Holloway *et al.*, for example, pose this criticism of research in events management; oriented towards the issues of optimization that are characteristic of its disciplinary roots, events research has been slow to consider the qualitative method for better understanding the experience of the events-participant.¹⁶ And yet, Holloway *et al.* de-emphasize the problematic inconclusiveness of the participant experience when explored in relation to certain types of research questions.¹⁷ For example, though the audience might serve as the conduit for theatre's socio-political efficaciousness, as Baz Kershaw notes, 'attempt[ing] to *prove* that this kind of performance efficacy is possible, let alone probable, is plagued with analytical difficulties and dangers'.¹⁸ In the event of adopting an experiential framework for exploring issues such as this, a conclusion that theatre is not efficacious could mask the inappropriateness of the method for revealing the nature of its efficacy. Despite the appeal of methodologies grounded in conventional empiricism, both Holloway and Kershaw suggest that attempts to measure and quantify phenomena are inappropriate to many types of research endeavours.

This study is informed by a limited number of informant interviews, yet it does not assume an experiential framework of explanation and thus does not comprehensively review how festivalgoing is considered by festivalgoers: the project does not, and does not attempt to, determine how far the audiences at BM and SGP *consciously problematize* spectatorship. Obtaining a greater degree of audience perspective might have enriched the enquiry, yet achieving the primary research goals with an adequate depth of explanation and analysis meant that it was unadvisable to extend the scope of the study to this area. Adopting an experiential framework to explore participation at the case study events (and those discussed at Section 5.4) is, then, suggested as a potential area of further research that might significantly build upon (or indeed, serve to refute) that which is argued here. This project focuses instead upon the construction of meanings

¹⁶ Immi Holloway, Lorraine Brown and Richard Shipway, 'Meaning not Measurement: using Ethnography to bring a Deeper Understanding to the Participant Experience of Festivals and Events', *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 1st ser., 1 (2010), 74–85.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 1.

outwardly and conspicuously operative within the social milieu produced by the case study events. Thus it is chiefly interested in the event space, promotional literature, brand positioning and programming design implicated by the idealization of participation located at the core of the research focus. Despite the constructionist lean of these occupations, a degree of inference regarding contemporaneous audience experience ought to be made. It is true that festival attendance is motivated by various factors as basic as geography, yet it is logical to deduce, without quantifying levels of awareness, that the act of attending these events (and spending up to £195/\$300 per ticket) indicates a level of compliance with the discourses investigated in this study.

Broadly adopting a qualitative approach, a limited degree of pre-structuring was imposed on the research design. As Miles and Huberman contend, excessive structuring is inappropriate for social phenomena both understudied and complex.¹⁹ The choosing of interview participants did not follow a prescribed or standardized method; neither did the interviews themselves keep to a rigidly structured schedule. Proceeding in this fashion was necessitated by an open-ended research model that, as Dean and Eichhorn argue, makes a virtue of non-standardization by making room for the refinement or redirection of the enquiry, based upon information coming in from the field.²⁰ The adoption of a flexible research design should not, however, be viewed as conducive to the abandonment of the empirical method, which essentially derives knowledge from sense experience. Indeed, since much of the study is deduced from observation, either of direct events or of related artefacts, its outcomes do not rely on abstracted theorizing but are informed by the systematic collection of case study evidence. Though quantitative methods are not generally utilized in this investigation, Chapter 5 is also augmented by some supporting quantitative data taken from industry reports, and Chapter 6 quantifies a selection of RTR volunteer data in order to reflect upon issues of gender and festival production.

¹⁹ Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: a Sourcebook of New Methods* (California: Sage, 1984), p. 27.

²⁰ John P. Dean, Robert L. Eichhorn and Lois R. Dean, 'Limitations and Advantages of Unstructured Methods,' in McCall and Simmons, eds, *Issues in Participant Observation, a Text and Reader*, pp. 19–22 (p. 20).

It is certainly arguable that deductive field research shares the logic of positivist empiricism, yet objectivists would state that problems with the qualitative method emerge at the points of direction and interpretation. Adopting a flexible and open-ended design invariably allows the researcher a key role in deciding what is and is not relevant and grants them the interpretive power to place emphases on particular issues over others. Aside from the criticisms weighed up by the researcher herself, it is true that most pieces of qualitative research do not have within them methods for measuring the extent to which particular readings may be inadvertently over- or underemphasized, based upon the subjective opinions and political leanings of its author. As such, Dean and Eichhorn are able to state that the fundamental drawback of qualitative methodologies is the 'great danger' of erroneous impressions, distorting the data and guiding the research.²¹ The scenario they describe might lead some to infer that this 'danger' is, for many kinds of research, a probability:

[The researcher's] own personal characteristics or personality needs may attract him to have stronger relationships with certain kinds of informants than with others, and thus prepare the way for his receiving an undue amount of information from persons who are biased toward one point of view.²²

It is the epistemological orientation of a study that determines the extent to which this poses a valid criticism. If attracting those whom share in a particular discourse helps to achieve a research goal by bringing that system of discourse to light, the onus of direction and guidance is well placed with the qualitative researcher. Researcher involvement could be considered conducive to bias; but this 'bias' should also be credited with providing a gateway to those actors and contexts crucial to exploring the research phenomena. This is the defence upon which the methodology here is built; and though indeed the social spaces examined relate to the author's own event and so to the author, in this context, these consistencies are placed as research *qualifications*, rather than the opposite. A further elaboration of this defence is provided in *Position of the Researcher*, in Section 1.5.7.

²¹ Eichhorn and Dean, p. 21.

²² Ibid.

1.5.2 Research Design

Some extra-academic involvement of the researcher with the researched was utilized as a boon to data collection, though mixed methods and triangulation were also employed to reduce the possibility of biased interpretations and to ensure broadly informed research outcomes. Taking the principle of 'triangulation' to indicate a mixture of distinct methods, rather than a strict trio characteristic of its traditional use in mathematics, this study provides a triangulated reading of its subject following the implementation of multiple data-gathering tools.

The initial excavation of literature provides a theoretical overview of the subject and introduces the issue of spectatorship within the broader politics of festival culture. This review, and indeed the summation of the project, was necessarily inter-disciplinary and comprises several sequential parts; first, a selective review of archaic and contemporary festival and carnival manifestations from around the world exposes a set of foundational interpretive themes. Then, a focused historiography forges connections with these themes and the development of modern festival culture in Britain, between the late 1950s and the mid to late 1990s. At Section 2.5, a brief analysis of ideologically loaded, communitarian festivals provides a background to the research phenomena, while a review of neo-tribes, subcultures and scenes provides a critical overview of the language and concepts employed in the discussion of popular cultures, at Section 2.6. As deductive research, this endeavour was not undertaken for the purpose of creating a rigid framework for interpretation, but rather, incorporates an explanatory language and potential frameworks into a conceptual springboard – enabling later analyses to revisit the identified issues of experimentation, spectatorship and theatricality, while reflecting on fresh insights generated from the investigation itself.

The second tool comprises an analysis of contemporary phenomena, including in depth case study analyses of BM and SGP. It was a fortunate aspect of these events that such a choice of data and data-gathering options were available. The relationship between these events is contextualized with conjectures on other festivals and the broader festival industry, which are supported by various

secondary sources and direct observations, throughout the latter half of the thesis. The term 'case study' is frequently used in reference to BM and SGP, yet they should not be viewed as exemplifying samples that can be uniformly generalized to other phenomena, but rather are presented as operating at the centre of the idealizing politics under investigation.

Action research constitutes the final method employed in the research design. This incorporated a number of subsidiary tools, which are discussed in more detail in Section 1.5.5 and Chapter 6. By reflecting on the author's own construction of similar social milieu, insights regarding the balance between participative and presentational elements helped address, in particular, the issues of commercial appropriation, de-radicalization and economic contingency as outlined in the research questions set at Section 1.2. This tool identified weaknesses in the relationship hypothesized at the start of the research, yet it also synthesized and underlined some core research findings. In summation, both the case study analyses of SGP and BM, and the execution of my own event as action research, employ multiple tools designed to capture different types of data, in order to yield a rounded perspective of the phenomena in question. The following sections now turn to a more detailed examination of these methods.

1.5.3 Two Case Studies

It has been suggested that dichotomizing the quantitative and the qualitative might be fruitfully replaced by instead asking: what kinds of information are relevant to the research question?²³ In addition, one might usefully ask: what information is realistically *available* for collection? With regard to the former, choosing BM and SGP as case studies was not exactly, as Gina Wisker ascribes to the standard case study, based upon their ability to provide variations to exemplify the 'issues in question'.²⁴ Since SGP and BM are events that in large part *comprise* the research focus, the question of relevance in case study selection is a moot point. What was important was the selection of intra-event data, of which there was a range

²³ McCall and Simmons, p. 6.

²⁴ Gina Wisker, *The Postgraduate Research Handbook: Succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 216.

potentially fruitful in meeting the constructionist-epistemological aim of analysing the 'negotiated social order'.²⁵

Due to information availability, the data used to inform analyses varied widely between the two case study events. There is a small selection of festivals, such as the Notting Hill Carnival, that are not neglected by the interests of academia. This is especially true of BM; as an apparently radicalized and experimental cultural form, widely viewed as a concentration of Californian creativity, it is unsurprising that it is of interest to researchers. Publications on the festival include books, theses and journal articles. Consequently the investigation of BM principally makes use of existing scholarly works on the subject. The author is able to reflect on the event with clarity, and has used some observations to inform the arguments of Chapter 3, yet it seemed sensible to employ the scholarly works of those who have based their analyses on many years of observations and interviews.

Unlike BM, the vast majority of festivals go unnoticed by researchers, but for those entering uncharted territory, there is a wealth of information at their disposal that is reasonably easy to obtain. Bonnie Morris and Eder *et al.*, both conducting ethnography at feminist festivals, were able to supplement their informant interviews with document analysis and participant observation, taking field notes on the spectrum of activities available.²⁶ Eder *et al.* do not reflect upon any issues of access to the field, though the nature of this fieldwork would have likely been closed to male researchers.²⁷ With regard to the second case study, there were no issues of access; participating as a member of the public was easy to do as a credible festivalgoer. In the convivial space of the festival, participant observation was conducted without instigating any suspicion, and various documents that have yielded a significant quantity of relevant data were collected at the 2010 event. Despite relatively few issues of access, the majority of SGP's analysis concentrates on the construction of meanings by analysing materials

²⁵ Gareth Morgan and Linda Smircich, 'The Case for Qualitative Research', *Academy of Management Review*, 4th ser., 5 (1980), 491–500 (p. 497).

²⁶ Donna Eder, Suzanne Staggenborg, and Lori Sudderth, 'The National Women's Festival: Collective Identity and Diversity in a Lesbian-Feminist Community', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 23 (1996), 485–515; Bonnie J. Morris, *Eden built by Eves: The Culture of Women's Music Festivals* (California: Alyson Publications Inc, 1999).

²⁷ Eder *et al.*

relating to, but obtainable outside of, the festival itself. Access to information for documentary analysis was rendered relatively easy, for there was a large quantity readily available in the public domain: festival programmes, advertisements and websites were available either in paper form or at the click of a button. All of the 2010 SGP e-newsletters were collected, as well as relevant newspaper and magazine articles, reviews and previews published between 2008 and 2010, and a thorough analysis of the literature found on the website was also conducted in early 2011. Though none are specifically referenced in this study, *YouTube* videos of the case study events also served as indirect observation, or as McCall and Simmons describe of supporting documents – as ‘surrogate informants’,²⁸ allowing the author to observe a number of festival moments outside her direct experience. Despite the small number, two informant interviews proved invaluable to the examination of SGP.²⁹ A semi-structured interview guide was used, yet the interviews were exploratory and thus were conducted with the low degree of instrumentation recommended for investigative, as opposed to confirmatory, research.³⁰

1.5.4 Action Research

Action research has been described as the ‘most extreme’ of the hermeneutic-interpretive methods, for the researcher is intimately involved with the researched and with the interpretation of outcomes.³¹ In the majority of cases the method is used for the purposes of researching optimization, yet its broad application has induced accusations of ambiguity, and the ‘doubling up’ of business practices as action research has been problematized as lacking the rigour and research standards expected elsewhere.³² It is true that the organization of RTR in 2010, as a pre-existing event, doubled up as action research, yet the event was not intended

²⁸ McCall and Simmons, p. 4.

²⁹ The identities of the interviewees have not been disclosed, though some information regarding their background and relevance to the study can be found in Appendix B.2.

³⁰ Miles and Huberman, p. 43.

³¹ Trimmingham, p. 59.

³² Colin Eden and Chris Huxham, ‘Action Research for Management Research’, *British Journal of Management*, 7 (1996), 75–86 (p. 75).

to stand alone as research, but rather constituted one of a set of tools incorporated into an overall strategy for tackling the research questions, as summarized at Section 1.5.2. Outcomes have not been reliant upon this method, but are broadly informed – as such, the problem of rigour identified by the critics of action research is not entirely applicable here, given the inclusiveness of this project's methodologies.

Prior to detailing the use of RTR as action research, the pre-existing relationship between the event and the research project ought to first be clarified. Organizing a festival as part of a research methodology might have been consistent with scientific orthodoxy if it was planned and executed after the initial research had commenced, as a considered experiment executed solely for the purposes of answering a list of *pre-considered* questions. Nevertheless, it was in no small part the practice of organizing RTR that aided the generation of research questions and the impetus to study the broader phenomenon of similar, extended milieu. That something like the converse is also true frustrates encapsulating a directional flow of influence, for the observation of other boutique festivals has invariably had an impact on the author's approach to event production. For this reason, defining the causal connections between RTR and the broader research project begins to resemble deciding between the chicken and the egg: it is a circular, impossible undertaking. Research and practice in this case are better understood as operating via a symbiotic relationship. Prior to purposively utilizing RTR as action research, theorizing on boutique events while organizing one of my own were two activities that naturally shaped each other. This is not entirely dissimilar to a relationship that might exist, for example, between composition practice and research: at one time it is abstract and implicit, at another it is explicitly drawn into focus as part of a conscious methodological strategy. Academic scholarship and extra-academic experiences often intersected prior to and during this project, and those synergies of knowledge, practice and experience have proven crucial to its direction. Research linearity is thus better replaced with a return to Levin's spiral model of progress; organizing RTR prior to and then alongside the framed investigation aided the deductive-interpretive generation of knowledge, which informed the broader project. As a legitimate methodology in performance studies, this was deemed suitable for addressing the research questions.

1.5.5 Optimizing *Raisetherooft* for Research

RTR is an annual event founded and organized by the researcher. It was launched in Wales in 2004, and later moved to Leeds in 2005, where its launch and development coincided with the author's completion of an MSc at the UK Centre for Events Management. At the time of writing, RTR has spanned a total of seven years and approximately thirty shows. Throughout this time, as different audiences and music scenes have been implicated by the event's changing geography, it has morphed from a student dance music night in Wales to a genre-diverse indoor festival located at the centre of the West Indian population in Chapeltown, Leeds. Its home at the Leeds West Indian Community Centre, coupled with the venue's reputation for dub and reggae events, were circumstances that naturally lent themselves to the programming of live dub, reggae and ska acts, though the event has included folk, electronica, hip-hop, vaudeville and various other styles of live music, with DJs mixing styles ranging from rocksteady through to balkan, jungle and drum and bass. By the time RTR arrived in Leeds, the 'indoor festival' format had been trialed in Cardiff with a 400-capacity event on a Thursday night in 2004, which sold out and made a profit of £1500. Following its move to Leeds, RTR grew from a 200- to a 1000-attended event, over several different venues and a period of five years.

The optimization of RTR for the research project was possible because the author's research and practice relating to festivals had become increasingly convergent following the commencement of PhD research. Prior to the booking of a nationally known act to perform at the event in 2010, the promotional discourse of RTR was already comparable to that of the case study events; participation and interactivity were similarly idealized and for that reason (as is the case at BM) headline acts that would absorb audience focus were avoided. This pre-existing synergy is clear in the festival mission statement that was published on its web pages:

Project Raisetherooof is based on the principle that the more you involve a community in producing its own cultural events, the more relevant and colourful those events can be [...] Inspired by the boutique festival movement, we're excited by spaces that erode the distinctions between artist, audience, producer and consumer; and that is exactly what we attempt to create at Raisetherooof. Though we will bring you top-notch live bands, shift your focus from the stage and you will be pleasantly surprised.³³

The event's pre-existing relationship to the research project was a latent one that precluded its explicit articulation as 'action research'; a strong degree of established synergy between research and organizational focus meant, therefore, that a transformation of the event to suit research goals was unnecessary. Three principal developments were made to optimize the event for better addressing the research questions; an extended area was introduced, allowing the event's programming to better replicate the features characteristic of the case study events, efforts to recruit and place volunteers were strengthened into an operational strategy and a nationally known act was introduced where none had played before. These optimizations are detailed at greater length in Chapter 6.

In addition to underlining the insights generated earlier in the investigation, employing RTR as action research calls attention to the way in which the co-option of BM-inspired discourses and praxes are shaped, and limited, by the intra and extra organizational environments. This insight, though specific to RTR, is extrapolated to the broader industry in order to further explain the adoption, and transformation, of the 'No Spectators' ethos in Britain. Thus, RTR was employed as action research to address the following questions:

- What are the outcomes of attempting to realize a participative ideal through democratizing performance and production?
- In what ways does the inclusion of a nationally recognized act on a festival billing influence the event dynamic and the achievability of a participative ideal?

³³ Roxanne Yeganegy, 'Project Raisetherooof: A Participative Project', *Project Raisetherooof Blog* <<http://projectraisetherooof.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 12 May 2010].

- How far do these outcomes reinforce or deviate from the case study findings?
- How might the outcomes of RTR relate to the broader festival industry?

1.5.6 Data Collection, Reflection and Analysis

Poor quality action research can, Eden and Huxham argue, emerge from the erroneous assumption that practice in a given industry alone constitutes valid research.³⁴ They claim that the label of 'action research' is often affixed to practices that are, alone, contrary to the attributes of reliable research, providing an excuse for 'sloppy' outcomes.³⁵ It is certainly arguable that Eden and Huxham underemphasize the inevitability of difference between the aims and objectives of the organization versus research, yet adopting their stance, which requires some integration of these spheres, stands to reason. Teasing out the pertinent aspects of a given practice through supporting data collection, reflection and use of theory, strengthens both practice as research and practice-based research, and is consequently the approach adopted in the culmination of Chapter 6. As demonstrated by Nelson's model, the embodied knowledge of practice is only one third of three forms of knowledge generation conducive to high-quality action research.³⁶ The author's festival was not repeated in the way suggested in Figure 1, yet this tripartite representation effectively models the way in which management as research utilized conceptual frameworks and critical reflection.

³⁴ Eden and Huxham, p. 75.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Robin Nelson, 'Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge', *Performance Research*, 11th ser., 4 (2006), 105–116 (p. 113).

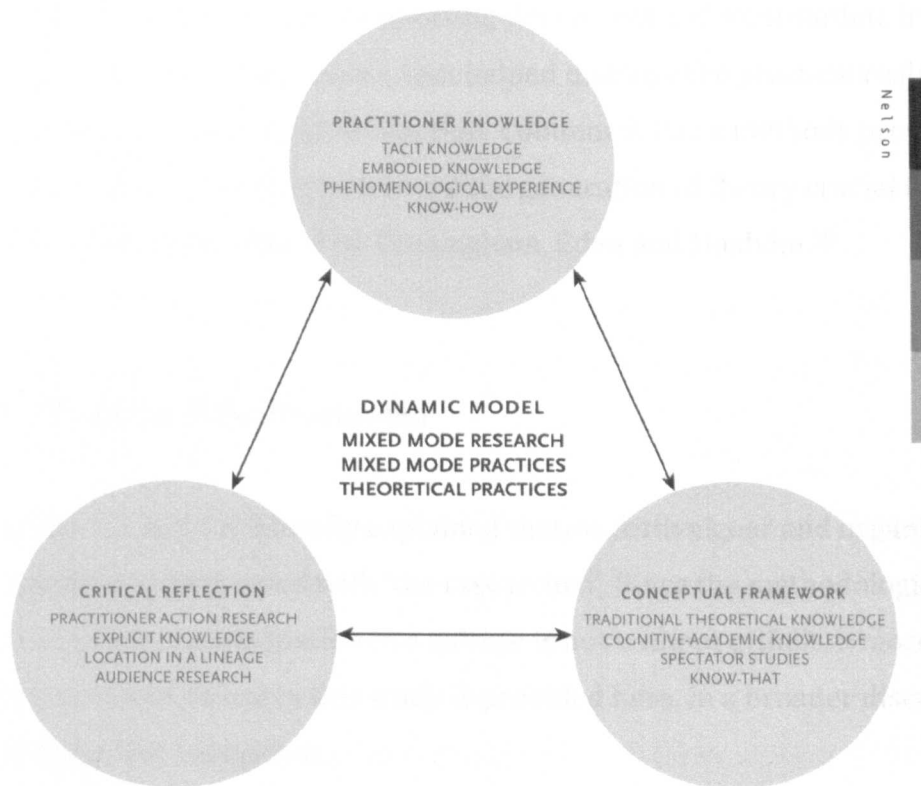


Figure 1: Nelson's Model for Quality in Action Research

Robin Nelson, 'Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge', *Performance Research*, 11th ser., 4 (2006), 105–116 (p. 113).

Against Nelson's contention that there are some practices that cannot be articulated using language alone, Trimmingham argues that despite the relevance of all practice to research, practice does not *constitute* research until it produces analysis, commentary, clarity and linguistic validity.³⁷ The two scholars vary on this point, yet they both emphasize the need to supplement practice with other tools to facilitate reflection and theory generation. Following this recommendation, Chapter 6 evidences the aspects of event design that were developed in order to explore the foci under study, yet these do not stand alone as research but were captured and analysed to address the questions set at the start of the study. Supporting tools included a research journal kept during the eight weeks preceding the event, which took place on the 7 October 2010, and the collection and analysis of several hundred photographs and five hours live footage, with the addition of interviews with key participants post event. Also at the

³⁷ Trimmingham, p. 54.

disposal of the author were supporting documents and information, including crew lists and cash-flow sheets, that helped quantify the practical realization of a democratized approach to production. Combined, these methods provided a wealth of material with which to aid the generation of theory crucial to quality action research, as argued by Trimmingham, Eden and Huxham.³⁸

1.5.7 Position of the Researcher

Sections 1.3 and 1.5.5 briefly explained that, as festivalgoer and organizer, the role of the author overlapped with 'the researched'. Since the methodological use of extra-academic participation in a culture is not without pitfalls, a more detailed examination of its use in this study is provided here, in a broader discussion of the position of the researcher.

It is true that the author's attendance at SGP and BM occurred *after* the commencement of the research, yet it ought to be made clear that the use of the latter as a case study event occurred following attendance as festivalgoer first and researcher second. That this rendered the researcher part of the culture under study would be a claim not without justification; and if one were to adhere to a traditional ethnographic approach, pre-existing involvement in a culture as a 'native' would be seen as a *disqualification* for conducting unbiased and disinterested research.³⁹ It is also true that personal interest in the 'No Spectators' ethic idiomatic of the event, and its partial alignment with the brand of my own event influenced the direction of the research. Such circumstances render the project potentially vulnerable to the legitimate critique of the 'fan as researcher' methodology.⁴⁰ Problematized by both Andy Bennett and Kevin Hetherington, the approach stands accused of advocating and romanticizing cultures, failing to present characteristics with critical reference to the researchers' own, potentially distorting, influence on research outcomes.⁴¹ Bennett in particular points to a

³⁸ Trimmingham, p. 57; Eden and Huxham, p. 78.

³⁹ Andy Bennett, 'Researching Youth Culture and Popular Music: a Methodological Critique', *British Journal of Sociology*, 3rd ser., 53 (2002), 451–466 (p. 460).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Bennett, 'Researching Youth Culture', p. 460; Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 10.

trend in cultural studies for 'younger researchers' to report uncritically on music subcultures, erroneously crediting the effort as 'research'.⁴² For Bennett, this is exemplified by the 'intelligent fanspeak' used in Antonio Melechi's account of rave, to 'fill in' for critical engagement with issues of access, objectivity and field relations.⁴³ Similarly, Bennett is critical of Sarah Champion's 'one-dimensional voice' that narrates the suppression of rave in Wisconsin, and cannot help but perpetuate the 'self-assumed rightness of the movement'.⁴⁴ It is this lack of reflexivity that is really at the heart of the problem identified by Bennett, rather than the fan-as-research methodology itself. He is critical of the 'contrast-pairings' that inevitably make their way into such discussions (mainstream/underground, etc.), yet their interpretation as *discourse* achieves some critical distance between the researcher and the researched. Instead of simply adopting the language of the culture being studied, Bennett suggests that quality research might instead present this language as constructed discourse meaningful to that culture. Similarly, it is the constructionist framework adopted here that enables the researcher to place critical distance between herself and the research topic. From the outset, the study has presented facts and analysis without adopting a position that asserts any judgments of value; presenting the idealization of extreme participation as 'good' or 'emancipating' is not the aim of the author, neither is a presentation of the spectatorship it rejects as 'bad' or 'alienating' intended. The aim is to make clear, without judgment for or against, the discourses and milieu that *constructs* this system of associations, to posit some explanations as to why spectatorship is problematized within this system, and to offer some evaluation of how far this critique relates to a broader pattern of participation observable within contemporary festival culture. Whether or not the beliefs within this system are supportable is not at issue here, and thus it is hoped that the study fails to assume the authorial one-dimensionality that Bennett critiques of Champion's research. That there is a spectrum of ways a researcher might be 'involved' in a culture, in varying levels of intensity, is not emphasized in Bennett's critique – though this in

⁴² Bennett, 'Researching Youth Culture', p. 452.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

⁴⁴ Sarah Champion, 'Fear and Loathing in Wisconsin' in Steve Redhead, Derek Wynne, and Justin O'Connor, eds, *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), cited in Bennett, 'Researching Youth Culture', p. 452.

large part determines whether involvement is or is not a hindrance to a critical capacity. It is worth stating here that my prior involvement with the case study events does not, in my view, qualify me as a 'fan'. It was minimal, particularly in comparison to the years of involvement upon which credible BM scholars have based their publications.

More problematic than potential attachment to the case study events as a fan, were the conflict of interests that arose, not infrequently, from the dual role of event manager and researcher. This was drawn into focus during the exploratory interviews that were conducted for the second case study event, SGP. It was originally my intention to interview as many members of the SGP management team as possible, including the managing director Freddie Fellowes, until it was felt that my role in organizing RTR, if disclosed, might have aroused suspicion and negatively influenced how the research was viewed by the interview respondents. This was particularly pertinent given the degree of brand synergy between RTR and SGP – though RTR is comparatively small, any investigation of its growth makes clear an intention to expand the event in the future, and thus any interviews with the organizers could have been cynically viewed as commercial espionage; a way of gathering insider knowledge for the purposes of improving RTR. If this had been considered the case, it is feasible that the quality and validity of the interviews would have been compromised. Since indeed RTR does draw influence from the case study events, this conflict of interest rendered it unwise to conduct further interviewing under the guise of research, and made necessary the exclusion of information that could not be accessed in the public domain, with the exception of one interview.

The above conflict of interest was largely hypothetical; as a pre-empted issue, conflict itself was avoided. Nevertheless the researcher's role as an events manager and researcher did present other difficulties with data collection. The use of RTR as research and the conversion of practice into usable and meaningful information were not without considerable challenges. That they often arose from the need to meet both organizational and research aims supports Eden and Huxham's warning that the separate process of reflection demands 'extensive'

periods of time in addition to the practice itself.⁴⁵ The reflections diary was built into the research practice, becoming a routine undertaken every couple of days. The difficulty, however, was sparing the time for any activity that did not deal directly with the running and promotion of the event in the knowledge that £10,000 was at stake, constituting the total savings of the author, plus borrowings. The recoup and optimization of this fund depended on sufficient time dedicated to promotion, since promotion translated directly into ticket sales. Under this financial pressure it was difficult to adopt the *mindset* necessary for reflection, before allocating time was even considered. Consequently at the most intense period of promotion in the week preceding the event, a gap occurred in the research diary. It also became clear that many of the activities undertaken in the preparation of the festival had little relevance to the research foci – this was because daily actions constituted the basic tasks involved in event production. It is therefore the case that a large proportion of the activity reflected upon was not directly relevant to the research questions. This was less serious than the fact that any time spent on it inevitably diverted the researcher from the actions that directly increased the likelihood of recouping and making money. Since the event's organization was to some degree already a gamble, the conflict of the author's own interests here had potentially dangerous consequences in terms of financial loss. Fortunately the event did sell out and all cash was recouped. Furthermore, the methodology employed in Chapter 6 yielded data that both augmented and underlined earlier theorizing, which to a large extent justified the risks involved in adopting the 'manager as researcher' role.

⁴⁵ Eden and Huxham, p. 81.

2. Navigating Festival Cultures

2.1 Understanding Festival

It is without doubt that almost all human societies are punctuated by festival modes of celebration, despite their diversity in appearance and form. Following the research direction and method set in the preceding chapter, presented here is an orienting excavation of the scholarly attempts to understand the meaning and purpose(s) of festival, both immediate and underlying. Beginning with an analysis of interdisciplinary theories relating to a broad range of cultural events, this chapter draws together literature from modern history, sociology and anthropology; and from cultural, theatre and performance studies. Though this wide examination does not attempt to be exhaustive, it distils a key point of significance: festivals can be employed to serve many purposes, both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, and their liminal nature engenders the capacity to reimagine or reverse social parameters. As the discussion shall demonstrate, how far this temporary disordering of daily life constitutes a cathartic or dynamic influence on both the individual and society is a question that remains both contentious and answerable only with respect to the inevitable individuality of festival events. Upon this conceptual foundation, a historiography pulls into focus specific works relating to British festival culture between 1956 and the late 1990s. This is an exercise that establishes the historical contingency of participation at festivals – which remains an underlying, though no less significant, interpretive theme for the discourses later examined. Included also is a focused discussion, in Section 2.7, of the politics of participation and spectatorship relating to cultural events. Furnishing the enquiry with the theoretical tools required for framing the phenomena presented in Chapters 4 to 6, the difference between spectatorship and theatricality, as two contrasting modes of audience behaviour implied by different celebratory forms, here illuminates the mechanics of engagement and

reception (or 'patterns of theatricality', as described by Cremona)¹ that correlate with the discourses characteristic of the case study events. Crucially, these cultural patterns provide a way of identifying and interpreting the politicization of spectatorship, which lies at the heart of the study.

2.2 Discourses of Interpretation

An attempt to pinpoint a temporally bounded origin of 'festivalesque' forms would be a fruitless endeavour. Carnivals, festivals and their contemporaneous behaviours are not limited to time and place; they exist in some form or other, wherever (and whenever) people do. Consequently, scholars are wary of the fallaciousness in naming a point of emergence, preferring to state with suitable ambiguity, that carnival is 'an ancient and resilient cultural form'.² Most interpretations point to its folk, communitarian qualities; at its base level festival 'celebrates [...] the unofficial, uncanonized relations among human beings that nonetheless exist'.³

Owing to the troubling inconsistency between events described as 'festival', the descriptive and analytic material relating to them vastly outweighs that which attempts to actually define the term.⁴ Problematically, clarification beyond basic principles has occasionally led to a form of pigeonholing that prioritizes particular types of festival over others, as authentic. Beverly Stoeltje exhibits, perhaps, the same Western tendency to overemphasize solemn ritual forms of which Victor Turner complains in his 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality'.⁵ A degree of variation between festive forms is recognized,⁶ yet Stoeltje disregards the popular and fails to delineate the sacred from the profane, claiming that 'most festivals provide the opportunity for religious devotion', with a central

¹ Cremona, pp. 69–89.

² Beverly J. Stoeltje, 'Festival', in Richard Bauman, ed., *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 261–99 (p. 261).

³ David K. Danow, *The Spirit of Carnival: Magic Realism and the Grotesque* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 3.

⁴ Alessandro Falassi, ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), p. 3.

⁵ Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 4th ser., 6 (1979), 465–99 (p. 469).

⁶ Stoeltje, p. 261.

purpose of ancestor worship.⁷ Given the etymology of the term 'carnival', which points to the pre-Lenten festivities of Roman Catholicism,⁸ one might deem some preoccupation with the sacred acceptable. Nevertheless, broadening the definition of festival to include the profane, as well as the sacred, is a sensible and necessary preliminary to this investigation.

We are left, then, with a single word that stands for an assortment of formations, including public, private, sacred and profane forms, alongside those that 'sanction tradition and introduce innovation'.⁹ Variation is also symptomatic of an inevitable context-dependency, which can be understood via Hans van Maanen's visualization of concentric circles, radiating outwards from the 'theatrical event'.¹⁰ The central circle of context relates to that which is the most immediate in a given performance, while the wider fields of the outer circle, constituting the 'political, economical, judicial and ideological' event environment, frame the perceptions of the audience and their 'aesthetic worlds'.¹¹

Milton Singer was the first to describe festival as a 'cultural performance', viewing it as a form of media that carries 'culture content'.¹² Content and its interpretation, however, fluctuate over time – as can the organizational nucleus of an event itself. Abner Cohen's in-depth study of the *Notting Hill Carnival*, for example, evidenced its dynamism as it came to be dominated by different committees.¹³ In his account and analysis of Afro-Venezuelan celebration, David Guss also points to the reconfiguration of meanings cast by the same event, repeated over time. From this, it is possible to deduce that a single event analysis is likely to have a limited shelf life; for, in his words, 'the same form [...] can easily oscillate between religious devotion, ethnic solidarity, political resistance, national

⁷ Stoeltje, p. 261.

⁸ Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics, Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 3.

⁹ Falassi, p. 3.

¹⁰ Hans van Maanen, model presented to the Theatrical Event Working Group (1999), cited by Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin, Rod Wissler, 'The Festival is a Theatrical Event', in Cremona *et al.*, *Theatrical Events*, pp. 91–110 (p. 100).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Milton Singer, ed., *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959), xii, in John MacAloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), p. 4.

¹³ Abner Cohen, p. 4.

identity, and even commercial spectacle'.¹⁴ His account of Peru's *Corpus Christi* illustrates further the fact that a single event can fulfil dual or even contradicting purposes – the event was 'co-opted' by local religions, while proving equally useful for the 'subversive display of ethnic identity and repressed beliefs'.¹⁵ It is clear that the multiplicity of interests surrounding cultural events – from political parties to the media, all 'tearing at [their] meaning' – renders them irreducible to a single interpretive model.¹⁶

Recognizing the need to allow for 'polyphonic' interpretations of festival,¹⁷ on account of the fluidity of their contexts and uses, need not extinguish the capacity to make any incisive claims. Despite their heterogeneity and propensity for change, they can be understood via a number of common themes. Recurring in anthropological and sociological works is an observation of the extraordinary way in which they 'incorporate' time,¹⁸ which for Stoeltje, is 'in at least two dimensions'.¹⁹ Firstly, it is argued that they are necessarily cyclical, annual celebrations, and thus relate to the movement of the cosmos.²⁰ Through their repetition and regeneration of identity, they also 'emphasiz[e] the past'.²¹ Some of the earliest interpretations sought to identify the way in which religious festival provided a crucial marker for sacred time – for the canonical sociologist Emile Durkheim and his protagonist Roger Caillois, festivals carved out the distinction between the sacred and profane dimensions of social life, by enabling modes of experience that contrasted to everyday, working days.²² Religious festivals helped to shape 'two worlds, the sacred and profane [...] rigorously defined only in relation to each other [...] mutually exclusive and contradictory'.²³ A theme similarly pertinent to festivals of antiquity, as the anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey

¹⁴ David M. Guss, *The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism as Cultural Performance* (California: University of California Press, 2000), p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁸ See Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, trans. by Meyer Barash (Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1959); Emile Durkheim, 'The Positive Cult' in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1915], trans. by Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 243–88; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival: A People's Uprising at Romans 1597–1580*, trans. by Mary Feeney (London: Scholar Press, 1980), p. 306; and Hakim Bey, p. 109.

¹⁹ Stoeltje, p. 267.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Caillois, p. 99.

²³ Ibid.

describes of the pre-Christian saturnalia: these were events that lay 'outside the scope of "profane time"' and as such, were the 'measuring-rod[s] of the calendar'.²⁴ Explanations must, in view of secular formations, at least partly dispense with theories of the sacred, yet the notion that festival continues to offer 'time out of time' maintains an intuitive logic.²⁵ For it is not only entering the sacred that marked the festival event, but also the temporary rejection of mundane time – the suspension, argues Johann Huizinga, of 'normal social life'.²⁶ These events are necessarily distinguished from the everyday, and from 'other kinds of doings'.²⁷ The activities undertaken during festive time are potentially less significant than the negation of the everyday routine,²⁸ a fact similarly applicable to other forms of leisure, including holidays abroad. Anthropologist Alessandro Falassi recognizes the characteristic intensity and excess of festival, which 'carries to the extreme behaviours that are usually regulated by measure'; as 'stylized' versions of ordinary life, they 'heighten semantic meaning'.²⁹ Quoting Leo Frobenius, Huizinga argues that festivals see man 'play[ing] the order of nature as imprinted on his consciousness'.³⁰

Proceeding from a Durkheimian functionalism is the claim that festival celebration comprises a necessary ingredient of social glue, interpretable as a 'uniform expression of a collective consciousness',³¹ a hegemonic 'mechanis[m] for the maintenance of "social solidarity"'.³² Whether or not one concedes to its uniform status, it is logical that, like Huizinga's play, festival satisfies the 'communal ideals'³³ that Stoeltje claims 'serve purposes rooted in group life'.³⁴ The capacity for festival to dissolve the social hierarchies that prevail outside it supports the claim that it operates via the unofficial relations between men (and

²⁴ Bey, p. 109.

²⁵ Falassi, p. 7.

²⁶ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 31.

²⁷ Willmar Sauter, 'Introducing the Theatrical Event' in Cremona *et al.*, *Theatrical Events* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 3–14 (p. 11).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Falassi, p. 3.

³⁰ Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas, Prolegomena zu einer historischen Gestaltlehre; Schicksalskunde im Sinne des Kulturwerdens* (Leipzig, 1932), quoted in Huizinga, p. 34.

³¹ Guss, p. 3.

³² Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 164, in Guss, p. 3.

³³ Huizinga, p. 27.

³⁴ Stoeltje, p. 261.

women),³⁵ re-establishing relationships amongst strangers.³⁶ Johann von Goethe's early accounts of carnival drew into focus their temporary abandonment of class segregation;³⁷ for Mikhail Bakhtin, this was both essential to carnival and tantamount to the exposure of social distinction as false. Hierarchy was replaced, albeit temporarily, with an authentic experience of equality – there was an “unmasking” and [a] disclos[ure] of the unvarnished truth under the false claims and arbitrary ranks’.³⁸ As Graham St John remarks of Turner, this unvarnished truth serves to distil an ‘ineffable affinity’ between ‘co-liminars’.³⁹ Such claims similarly allude to an instinctive and underlying camaraderie that reveals itself through festival, and transcends the arbitrary distinctions that order the social world outside it.

The observation that the communitarian purpose of festival is heightened during times of social crisis, from the social ‘disenchantment’ of the Renaissance, to the postmodern crises of identity in a fragmented and globalized age, proceeds again from a functionalist frame of interpretation. How a response to social anxiety came to express itself through festival forms was brought into focus by David Picard and Mike Robinson in *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*.⁴⁰ Referencing the work of Délumeau, Picard and Robinson claim that social ruptures are always followed by celebratory periods, exemplified by the Renaissance plays, theatre and costume parties which, by ‘recreating the idea of Eden’, offered up a ‘nostalgic react[ion] to the “disenchantment” of the world’.⁴¹ Following the navigation and mapping of the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the notion of an Eden on earth was dispelled, leaving the world ‘abandoned and naked’ and in need of revised ‘signs and meaning’.⁴²

³⁵ Danow, p. 3.

³⁶ Abner Cohen, p. 3.

³⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘The Roman Carnival’ [1789], in Falassi, *Time out of Time*, pp. 13–34 (p. 13).

³⁸ Krystyna Pomorska, ‘Foreword’ in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), vii–xii (x).

³⁹ Graham St John, ‘Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body: Beyond Turner at ConFest’, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 12th ser., 1 (2001), 47–66 (p. 48).

⁴⁰ David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds, *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006), p. 6.

⁴¹ Jean Délumeau, *History of Paradise* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000), cited in Picard and Robinson, p. 6.

⁴² Ibid.

The potential for festival to strengthen disparate or threatened communities is a recurring theme in scholarly works relating to contemporary formations.⁴³ Interpretations of Robert Lavenda's study of carnival in Minnesota point to the nostalgic experience of 'community' they provide, in the face of urban sprawl and the overcommercialization of America.⁴⁴ These events generated 'a social order through which community life [could] be carried out'.⁴⁵ Similarly, those festivals identified by Picard and Robinson that are 'increasingly tied to promoting the spatial setting', reverse the loss of identity considered symptomatic of globalizing forces.⁴⁶ Nicola Macleod also supports this when she observes a revived self-consciousness and pride in the host communities of festivals.⁴⁷ The subtext similarly discernable in the work of Lavenda, MacLeod, and Picard and Robinson communicates the deployment of the festival form to resolve or reverse problematized aspects of modernity. The examples they cite are thus interpretable as distinctly *postmodern* cultural forms, emerging from the 'delegitimation' of the modern world view.⁴⁸ This sensitivity and critique of the modern is, as later illuminated in Chapters 4 to 6, applicable to the events central to this study – for their discourses equate spectatorship with a passiveness symbolic of a perceived modern dilemma.

A temporary solution to the marginalisation and discrimination of social groups has also been credited to events such as Canada's *Desh Pardesh*,⁴⁹ which illustrate, as do the *Pride* events that occur in most large cities in Britain, how festival is often used purposively to generate visibility, and to challenge social stereotyping and perceived misconceptions. As claimed by Guss in his discussion of Venezuelan celebration, where a group has lacked a cohesive sense of identity

⁴³ See Frederick Errington's review of Robert Lavenda, *Corn Fests and Water Carnivals: Celebrating Community in Minnesota* (Washington/London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997) in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4th ser., 4 (1998), 842–43; Saphira Linden, 'A Festival of Light: a High School Healing Arts Event Celebrating the Ethnic Diversity of the School Community', *Arts in Psychotherapy*, 3rd ser., 24 (1997), 255–59; Sharon Fernandez, 'More than an Arts Festival: Communities, Resistance and the Story of Desh Pardesh', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 1st ser., 31 (2006), 17–34; Abner Cohen; and Guss.

⁴⁴ Errington, p. 842.

⁴⁵ Lavenda, p. 97, in Errington, p. 842.

⁴⁶ Picard and Robinson, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Nicola E. MacLeod, 'The Placeless Festival: Identity and Place in the Post-Modern Festival', in Picard and Robinson, pp. 222–37 (p. 224).

⁴⁸ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 37.

⁴⁹ Fernandez, 'the Story of Desh Pardesh'.

and history, festival events are performances that can be deployed to construct 'notions of tradition through enactment, symbolism and a "theatricalization" which abjures any mention of true historical conditions and replaces them with the staged creation of a mythic, detemporalized past'.⁵⁰ With a diaspora of participants descended from African slaves, the *Fiesta de San Juan* created a 'culture of memory', reversing the denial of history 'that others accepted as a birthright'.⁵¹ This is similarly applicable to the *Notting Hill Carnival* – though there exists varying accounts of its inauguration, that it began the same year that the slaves were emancipated in 1834, was an emphasized narrative at the 1984 event.⁵² The origins of the festival remain unclear, yet the mythologizing of this particular account exemplifies the fact that the construction of histories meaningful to the celebrants may preside over historical accuracy.

The festival of San Juan and the *Notting Hill Carnival* generated shared histories, yet festival forms have also been used to unite culturally and ethnically disparate peoples in a postmodern age of diversity, as evidenced in Saphira Linden's account of the *Festival of Light* in the United States.⁵³ Faced with the need to accommodate pupils from numerous religions, the *Festival of Light* was intended to create a sense of shared spirituality and meaning without incorporating doctrines from institutional religions. Claiming that the event helped to build a sense of commonality between those of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, Linden states that there 'emerged a better understanding of the diversity of the community through the shared experience'.⁵⁴ The way in which festival embodies creative responses to social crises strengthens Stoeltje's claim that they are able to maintain links (real or mythologized) to the past⁵⁵ – for histories and traditions can be revived, or newly mythologized, via festival forms. It would be logical to deduce that this is made possible by the dissolution of arbitrary social divisions that characterizes Turnerian thought, for the collective belief in a 'mythic past' must surely be precluded by a propensity for consensus. Underlying these claims is the notion that, via an entanglement with the social crises that Sauter would place

⁵⁰ Guss, p. 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵² Abner Cohen, p. 5.

⁵³ Linden, pp. 255–59.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁵⁵ Stoeltje, p. 267.

in the outer circle of the event context, implicitly or explicitly, festivals embody *response*.⁵⁶

2.3 Hegemony, Catharsis and Reversal

The capacity to respond has given rise to the contested claim that festival harbours counter-hegemonic potentialities. At least for the duration of carnival during the Medieval period, it was possible to witness the ritual rite of ‘inversion’ or ‘role reversal’ that Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie describes in his *Carnival: A People’s Uprising at Romans 1597–1580*, a ‘central nerve impulse of carnival which sent time flowing backwards, and rendered everything topsy turvy’.⁵⁷ It is true that Le Roy Ladurie does not elaborate on the former observation – though the ‘topsy-turvy’ world of carnival is a widely recognized concept, originating from the works of Mikhail Bakhtin.⁵⁸ Employing the literature of Rabelais, Bakhtin depicts carnival with base, folkloric and grotesque qualities. Within this ‘popular-festive system of images’, he claims, is the symbolic uncrowning and mockery of the King, who represents the structure, order and hierarchy that prevails in the world of ‘officialdom’ – of which carnival is the antithesis.⁵⁹ Rooted in the ancient saturnalia, of which ritual beatings, uncrownings and travesties were characteristic, the ‘uncrowned king becomes slave’, and the clown serves as the ‘necessarily short-lived “regent”’.⁶⁰ Following Bakhtin, the reversal of normative behaviour has also been elaborated as characteristic of early modern carnival and various other carnival forms by a number of scholars.⁶¹ Goethe notes the gender inversion of early modern carnival in 1787 and 1788; men would dress up as women, caress other men, and ‘allow themselves all familiarities with the women they encounter[ed], as being persons the same as themselves’.⁶² Described by Falassi as an inversion of the ‘significant terms which are in binary opposition to

⁵⁶ Picard and Robinson, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Le Roy Ladurie, p. 190.

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁶⁰ Bakhtin, pp. 198–199; Danow, p. 4.

⁶¹ See Falassi, p. 4; Goethe, p. 13; Danow, p. 3; Stoeltje, p. 268; and Caillois, p. 114.

⁶² Goethe, p. 18.

the normal life of a culture',⁶³ similarly for Stoeltje, inversion relates to the 'symbolic manipulation' of 'hierarchical societies [...] declar[ing] egalitarianism for the duration of the festival'.⁶⁴

Pervading the accounts of inversion are depictions of its convivial quality; inverted forms and spectacles are delivered in a 'spirit of mockery'⁶⁵ that, through instigating the 'corrosive laughter' that Michael Holquist describes in his prologue to *Rabelais and His World*, temporarily disarms the power of authority.⁶⁶ Le Roy Ladurie's claim that satire was a principal characteristic of carnival between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries⁶⁷ is supplemented by the work of Peter Burke, whose extensive account of carnivalesque parody and playfulness, in the form of mock sermons, weddings and edicts, saw carnival underline the social order of early modern Europe, through its subversion.⁶⁸ This spirit of mockery is a jubilant destruction that, symbolically, makes room for a rejuvenated sociality and pervades even the most grotesque beatings and thrashings in the work of Rabelais:

Bloodshed, dismemberment, burning, death, beatings, blows, curses, and abuses—all these elements are steeped in 'merry time', a time which kills and gives birth, which allows nothing old to be perpetuated and never ceases to generate the new and the youthful. This interpretation is not Rabelais' abstract conception; it is, so to speak, immanent in the traditional popular-festival system of images which he inherited. He did not create this system, but it rose in him to a higher level of historical development.⁶⁹

Such claims make possible the notion that carnival is a 'world in travesty', subordinating official culture by subverting its 'embedded features' and 'commonly held values'.⁷⁰ It is claimed that the presence of such themes in literature, film or theatre, constitutes a reappearance of the carnivalesque.⁷¹ Arguments thus far frame carnival as a liminal stage of anti-structure – allowing, in

⁶³ Falassi, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Stoeltje, p. 268.

⁶⁵ Danow, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Michael Holquist, 'Prologue', in Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, xiii–xxiii, (xxii).

⁶⁷ Ladurie, p. 313.

⁶⁸ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 185.

⁶⁹ Bakhtin, p. 211.

⁷⁰ Danow, p. 3–4.

⁷¹ Ibid.

the words of Turner, 'creative latitude for collective scrutiny of the contemporaneous social structure, often with lampooning liberty', allowing people to 'stand back from their lives and weigh their quality'.⁷² This distance makes possible the 'mutability of people, culture, and life itself'.⁷³ A pervading notion is the way that renewal logically proceeds from the corrosive inversion of carnival – as claimed by Stoeltje, festival involves a shift towards 'frames that foster the transformative, reciprocal, and reflexive dimensions of life'.⁷⁴ The symbolism of carnival denotes 'the primordial chaos before creation',⁷⁵ while 'its hero and author is time itself, which uncrowns, covers with ridicule, kills the old world [...] and at the same time gives birth to the new'.⁷⁶ For Bakhtin, from whom these discourses proceed, carnival is an emancipating and counter-hegemonic force, a fact conspicuous in his claim that the Renaissance was a 'direct "carnivalization" of human consciousness, philosophy and literature'.⁷⁷ There existed, for Bakhtin, a 'very real' struggle between the world of carnival and the 'medieval church/state'.⁷⁸ Supportive of this claim are the intersections of protest and carnival reported by Le Roy Ladurie, who claimed that the carnival at Romans was the 'climax of a vast regional revolt'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Burke argued that 'those excluded from power saw carnival as an opportunity to make their views known and so to bring about change'.⁸⁰

Consequently the counter-hegemonic efficacy of carnival, for Bakhtin and Turner, transcends the realm of latent semiotics. Carnival did not merely encode the *notions* of destruction and change, but in the words of David Guss, offered a very real 'counter-hegemonic performance of political subversion'.⁸¹ His own accounts of the Venezuelan celebrations serve to underline the way in which the accepted purpose of festival was often hijacked to produce statements contrary to the hegemonic structure of the day – and ultimately, served to undermine it. It is this efficacy that, according to Turner, renders public liminality dangerous in the

⁷² Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection', p. 475.

⁷³ Falassi, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Stoeltje, p. 263.

⁷⁵ Falassi, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Bakhtin, p. 207.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷⁸ Holquist, xxi.

⁷⁹ Le Roy Ladurie, p. 181.

⁸⁰ Burke, p. 203.

⁸¹ Guss, p. 28.

eyes of 'whatever powers-that-be who represent and preside over established structure'.⁸²

Bakhtin's 'utopian vision of the folk' leaves the carnivalesque open to a charge of romanticism.⁸³ Indeed, to ignore the claims against the efficacy of carnival would be to distort and overemphasize, perhaps, its counter-hegemonic potential – for there are a number of scholars who interpret the same phenomena as a cathartic release necessary to maintaining the social order, which may be exploitative or oppressive. As we have seen, the apparent unification created by carnival can affirm the world external to it, or deviate from it in a way that might be considered counter-hegemonic. And yet, the fleeting and temporary nature of this deviation has lent itself to the view that this moment of rupture is ultimately hegemonic, for it is interpretable as an outlet for revolutionary energy; in the words of Burke, carnival is a 'means for the subordinates to purge their resentments and to compensate for their frustrations'.⁸⁴

Indeed there is no small amount of evidence demonstrable of the fact that, throughout history, festivals and carnivals have not only been tolerated, but that behaviours rendered illegal elsewhere are, during festival time, temporarily licensed (though not always explicitly so). In the words of Stoeltje, there is a '*licensed* relaxation of norms and rules' [my emphasis],⁸⁵ and this is as true of the carnival described by Goethe in the year 1787 as it is of McKay's *Glastonbury* at the turn of the millennium. The former states that the police ruled with a 'slack hand', permitting all behaviours 'short of blows and stabs',⁸⁶ while the latter suggests that the scale of drug taking at *Glastonbury* more or less constitutes weekend decriminalization.⁸⁷ The breadth of this licensed relaxation certainly augments claims to a radical liminality responsible for producing a skepticism of 'cherished values and rules',⁸⁸ yet this permissiveness also makes possible the claim festivals allow forms of licensed excess and disorder, which ultimately functions to prevent disruptive change occurring on a more fundamental and far-reaching level.

⁸² Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection', p. 474.

⁸³ Holquist, xviii.

⁸⁴ Burke, p. 201.

⁸⁵ Stoeltje, p. 270.

⁸⁶ Goethe, p. 15.

⁸⁷ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 43.

⁸⁸ Victor Turner, 'Liminality and the Performative Genres', p. 21.

Michael Bristol sustains this view when he claims that festival allows the oppressed to unleash 'accumulated resentment' in order that they might be 're-incorporated within the repressive regime'.⁸⁹ In the same vein, Terry Eagleton compares carnival to a 'revolutionary work of art' when he states that both forms are disturbing, and yet, 'relatively ineffectual'.⁹⁰ These arguments depict the festive form, then, as an experiential medium that inevitably diffuses the frustrations of a marginalized people, deactivating them from engaging in a more substantial and effective political discourse. Augmenting this is the evidence for cases where periods of anti-structure have only served to alter social structure in a way that weakens the possibility for spontaneous public liminality. Kevin Hetherington, in his critique of Turner, reminds us that the celebrations at Stonehenge were followed by the introduction of legislation to prevent similar gatherings taking place.⁹¹ Hetherington does not wholly support the cathartic view, yet this observation bolsters the hegemonic interpretation of carnival and invites Cohen's question, of 'whether popular culture is an "opium of the masses", inspired by the ruling classes as part of the dominant culture, [or] whether it is a counter culture, an ideology of resistance and opposition'.⁹² Though both arguments are problematic, that consumption is interpretable as creative action, with the potential for meaningful resistance, is a consideration that has significantly undermined the former.

Arguments that emphasize catharsis and the reassertion of hegemony following carnival constitute what I will refer to as 'safety-valve' theories, reappearing in literature dealing with a diversity of festival forms.⁹³ Notably, Anatoly Lunacharsky put forward the safety-valve metaphor while researching the social role of laughter.⁹⁴ According to Holquist, 'that carnival was a safety-valve for passions the common people might otherwise direct to revolution flew directly in

⁸⁹ Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre: Plebian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 27, in Martin, Seffrin and Wissler, *Theatrical Events*, p. 95.

⁹⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 148, in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 13.

⁹¹ Hetherington, p. 16.

⁹² Abner Cohen, p. 134, in Guss, p. 8.

⁹³ See Burke, p. 202; Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1954), in Guss, p. 12.

⁹⁴ Holquist, xviii.

the face of the evidence Bakhtin was then compiling'.⁹⁵ He maintains that this work galvanized Bakhtin's desire to show that, contrary to the safety-valve theory, the licensing of carnival by authorities merely demonstrates their *deference* to the carnivalesque:

The sanction for carnival derives ultimately not from a calendar prescribed by church or state, but from a force that pre-exists priests and kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be licensing carnival.⁹⁶

Such an argument justifiably undermines the mutual-exclusivity of the 'hegemonic' versus the 'counter-hegemonic' interpretation – for what might have the appearance of the former, might actually have the effect of the latter. Given the 'polyphonic' nature of festival, which 'oscillates' between different meanings and uses,⁹⁷ it is likely that festival has the capacity to simultaneously serve hegemonic and counter-hegemonic purposes. The previously mentioned festival of San Juan provides a colourful illustration of how this was rendered possible by the competing interests of its participants, which included the exploited (the slaves) and the exploiters (the slave-masters). The festival lasted for three days, and constituted the only leisure time that the slaves were permitted throughout the entire year. It was their single, yearly experience of freedom – and for this reason, provided a crucial opportunity for plotting escapes and rebellions. This is where the festival's counter-hegemonic capabilities were located; these occasions were threatening to slaveholders, yet taking away their single experience of relief from their 'insufferable social condition' was considered all the more dangerous.⁹⁸

It may be logical to deduce that the overall effect of the festival of San Juan was a hegemonic one, yet it would also be fallacious to ignore the pockets of resistance and counter-hegemonic action that the temporary freedom of the event made possible. Following a recognition of the multiple purposes of carnival, one might be inclined to support Turner's claim that 'public liminality can never be

⁹⁵ Holquist, xviii

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Guss, p. 10.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

tranquilly regarded as a safety valve, mere catharsis, "letting off steam"⁹⁹ – if it were not for the fact that his conceptualization is problematically based on an idealized community that fails to recognize the competing interests and tensions that often underlie carnival and festival forms. The fact that a festival can be counter *and* hegemonic bolsters the criticisms levelled against Turner by Graham St John in his application of the limen to ConFest in Australia. Interpreting Turner as questionably 'essentialist', St John highlights the way in which Turner depicts liminality only in its dynamic relation to the structure outside it – neglecting the 'contexts of contestation [...] within events'.¹⁰⁰ St John cogently advances the claim that Turner's liminal ritual rarely relates to actual events but rather offers a 'pure, ideal category' that wrongfully 'disregard[s] "complicated" performance spaces and intra-event strife'.¹⁰¹ Supporting this is Cohen's point that real events fall considerably short of the idealized 'communitas', for they are complex and 'characterized by contradictions [...] by themes of conflict as well as consensus'.¹⁰² To interpret carnival as a space of shared consensus that may deviate or reinforce the social structures outside it implies a kind of neutral ground intra-event, 'independent of the distribution and operations of power'.¹⁰³ Neither religious cults nor festival events have, argues St John, been found to be immune from plurality and conflicts. Based upon this argument proceeds his replacement of liminality with an adaptation of Michel Foucault's 'alternative cultural heterotopia',¹⁰⁴ which depicts a broad patchwork of communities, practices and beliefs that can simultaneously coexist and compete at the festival:

As alternative lifestylers are connected to a matrix consisting of diffuse, sometimes openly antagonistic, sometimes submerged vectors [...] the 'culture' consists of a plurality of contradictory and/or complementary discourses and practices – often expressed through heterotopias¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection', p. 474.

¹⁰⁰ St John, p. 47.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁰² Abner Cohen, pp. 3–4.

¹⁰³ St John, p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* (1967)

<<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>> [accessed 25 July 2011].

¹⁰⁵ St John, p. 51.

St John's perspective might offer a more realistic depiction than the ideal type elucidated by Turner, yet it need not be considered inconsistent with the premise that the escapism, inversion and excess associated with carnival together imply a space of potentiality, and thus, social experimentation. These themes are later explored, throughout Chapters 4 to 6, in specific relation to the idealization of audience participation.

2.4 Ordered Disorder: An Analytic Historiography

Contention regarding the counter-hegemonic capacity of festival as liminal space plays into the issues of authenticity that flavour no small portion of the discourses relating to the conspicuous spread of festival culture, in the latter half of the twentieth century. Within these discourses can be found an assumption, both posited and critiqued, that authenticity is compromised when entrepreneurialism appears to 'co-opt' the festival impulse, in an inevitable conflict between 'corporatization and the carnivalesque'.¹⁰⁶ Wrangling of this kind can also be interpreted as a hegemonic/counter-hegemonic discussion not dissimilar to that formerly presented, for it is only in appearing to undermine an imagined 'true' and counter-hegemonic purpose, that the commercial festival is placed as inauthentic. And thus, the analytic historiography presented here does not dispense with those themes, but rather, casts them again in relation to the rise of British festivals and festival culture between 1956 and the mid-to-late 1990s.

As stated, it would be questionable to pinpoint an historical emergence of the festival form. Yet it is possible to identify the origin of the modern pop festival, as we know it today – i.e. one that comprises open-air camping, and a programme of amplified popular music that lasts a weekend or more. The outdoor festivals of jazz at Beaulieu, which ran between 1956 and 1961, helped establish this event format in the UK.¹⁰⁷ Launched by Lord Montagu as a means for generating income to help preserve the Beaulieu estate, according to McKay, Lord Montagu had

¹⁰⁶ Dave Laing, 'The Three Woodstocks and the Live Music Scene', in Andy Bennett, ed., *Remembering Woodstock* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1–17, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 2.

intended to create something similar to America's Newport Jazz Festival – demonstrating the cultural nexus between the Britain and the United States which (as the relationship between the case study events will show) remains pertinent to this investigation.¹⁰⁸ By the mid '50s and beyond, what McKay describes as a 'festival culture' had well been established.¹⁰⁹ It is true that opposition from the police and residents from the local area would eventually blight the events at Beaulieu – elsewhere, however, pop festivals would begin to take hold.

The 1960s were marked by the emergence of the leisure culture, a post-war increase in disposable income and a generation of youth looking to distinguish themselves from their parents via patterns of consumption.¹¹⁰ These conditions were ideal for festivals and concerts to grow exponentially, in both size and number. Quoting Jeremy Sandford, McKay connects the emergence of festival culture during the 1960s with the spread of hippie sensibilities.¹¹¹ This was marked by the transformation of festival audiences from jazz enthusiasts, to the hippies,¹¹² who were open to a wider range of musical styles and propagated sentiments we might today associate with the 'new age'. The diversification of popular tastes was, for Michael Clarke, exemplified by the Richmond Jazz Festival, an event that widened its roster to include blues, and by 1965, was patronized by an estimated crowd of 33,000 to watch the Yardbirds.¹¹³ The event was characterized by the first 'familiar elements of festival culture: open air culture and lifestyle, loud music, crowds of young people, camping out, over-indulgence and local opposition'.¹¹⁴

The hippie culture that developed during the 1960s is perhaps best remembered for promulgating peace and love, and for its association with radical politics, which were either implicit to the experimentation with alternative lifestyles (such as communal living) or explicit in the support of anti-Vietnam and (later) environmental campaigns. Both of these aspects were made visible through

¹⁰⁸ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p. 99.

¹¹¹ Jeremy Sandford and Ron Reid, *Tomorrow's People* (London: Jerome, 1974), in McKay, *Glastonbury*, pp. 4–5

¹¹² McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 6.

¹¹³ Michael Clarke, *The Politics of Pop Festivals* (London: Junction Books, 1982), p. 23.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

festivals during the late '60s, most prominently at America's Woodstock – prompting the conceptualization of what came to be described as a politics of pleasure – 'play power', or 'party and protest'.¹¹⁵ For some, this amounted to an expressive revolution.¹¹⁶ Festivals also came to be viewed as arenas of new age spirituality that revived rejected knowledge. For Christopher Partridge, if festivals in the 1960s were not directly responsible for re-mystification in the West, they certainly manifested the 'occultural significance' of the era.¹¹⁷

1969 came to be viewed as a peak of the '60s counterculture and the inaugural year for the mass festival. 1969 saw Woodstock take place near the town of Bethel, in upstate New York, while the Isle of Wight Festival, launched the same year, was viewed as Britain's counterpart. Following this was the launch of Glastonbury, which, with small beginnings, would grow to become one of the largest festivals in the world. These events allow McKay to claim that it was not until the end of the 1960s, and the early 1970s, that festivals became a particularly popular arena of leisure and experimentation.¹¹⁸ The scale of these events might suggest a departure from the folk carnival forms discussed at the outset, yet David Laing continues to frame their significance with the carnivalesque: following a discussion of Woodstock and the Isle of Wight Festival, he claims that '[a festival] shares [...] the impetus towards the reversal of everyday systems and structures'.¹¹⁹ Given this claim, that rather implies an opposition between festival and the dominant systems of capital that reign outside it, it is not surprising that scholars speak of a conflict between commercialization and the carnivalesque¹²⁰ – though often it seems that greater emphasis is put upon the latter quality. To reduce the growth of festival culture during the '60s to hippie idealism and a desire to experiment would, however, gloss over the entrepreneurialism that fuelled the launch of new festivals. Taken as a whole, youth culture during the '60s and the growing ability to express fandom through the purchasing of records and concert tickets was a commercial opportunity for festival organizers and concert

¹¹⁵ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 165.

¹¹⁶ Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 225, in Kershaw, p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Christopher Partridge, *The Re-mystification of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture* (London: T&T Clarke, 2005), p. 157.

¹¹⁸ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Laing, p. 223.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

promoters, as well as the radio programmers and record labels.¹²¹ Viewing festival culture through the lens of commercialization makes possible the claim that the *Woodstock* event – however steeped in the ideology of an emerging new age culture – also induced the commodification of rebellion.¹²² Though this might have proved, as Frith argued, that ‘the world of hip could only be commercial hip’,¹²³ this did not resolve the tension between the idealism and commercial opportunism unavoidably involved in festival organization – of which the objections to the subsequent and more overtly commercialized *Woodstock* events serve to underline.¹²⁴ The way in which festival culture attempts to reconcile idealism and commerce is not an issue isolated to its presentation here, but remains an important theme throughout the following chapters. The analyses of the ‘60s and ‘70s pop festival depict a problematic hybridization of business and idealistic considerations, yet the later investigation of the ‘boutique’ market found in Chapter 5 will demonstrate an integrated model: the ‘bespoke’ and ‘independent’ positioning feeds into both the unique selling points of the boutique event and, in large part, its idealizing discourses. However, as Chapters 5 and 6 maintain, the realization of an enshrined ideal may be limited by commercial considerations.

The growth of licensed and unlicensed festivals in the 1970s coincided with a nomadism that helped establish a ‘festival circuit’, catering for the counterculture through trading in alternative books and whole foods.¹²⁵ Maintaining a politically responsive air, it is perhaps unsurprising that a purposive and by and large successful union of politics and pleasure was discernable when the Rock Against Racism concerts emerged during the 1970s. Responding to the growth of the National Front, the (RAR) events today constitute perhaps the most robust historical examples of popular music impacting politics, by effectively terminating

¹²¹ Frith, p. 99.

¹²² Cotten Seiler, ‘The Commodification of Rebellion: Rock Culture and Consumer Capitalism’, in Mark Gottdiener, ed., *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture and Commodification* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp. 203–26.

¹²³ Frith, p. 222.

¹²⁴ Marc Eliot, *Rockonomics: The Money Behind the Music* (London: Omnibus Press, 1990), p. 147, in Laing, p. 3.

¹²⁵ David Sibley, ‘Endangering the Sacred: Nomads, Youth Cultures and the English Countryside’, in Paul Cloke and Jo Little, eds, *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalization and Rurality* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 218–31 (pp. 226–27).

the growth of a racist movement spearheaded by the National Front.¹²⁶ It is also arguable that a free festival culture of unlicensed and quasi-political music events became a marked aspect of the 1970s, as did the emergence of new age travellers. Hetherington depicts festivals (both free and licensed) as existing almost symbiotically with the travelling culture, for they combined 'part alternative lifestyle, part youth subculture and part new social movement' in a 'lifestyle and politics emerg[ing] out of the 1960s counterculture'.¹²⁷ Indeed, McKay claims that the solstice and green events in Glastonbury reveal that the origins of its major event are found 'within the free festival zeitgeist of the early 1970s'.¹²⁸

Many free festivals would have passed peacefully, though sometimes they took place without landowner permission; and, if attended by large numbers, free festivals alarmed the local populace. Clarke holds the rise of the festival responsible for animating the social division between festivalgoers and the local residents: provoking 'bewilderment, anxiety, resentment, hostility, and not a little rank jealousy on the part of straight society'. This was true, in part, for both licensed and free events.¹²⁹ Local opposition to festivals continues to exist in contemporary times, yet one might also deduce that the bewilderment reported by Clarke, in 1982, has been replaced by a certain expectation that music festivals will take place, following their proliferation at the turn of the millennium, detailed in Chapter 5.

Attempts to curtail free festivals via legislation were largely unsuccessful during the 1970s. A proposed Night Assemblies Bill failed, though a substantial effort was made to prevent the Isle of Wight Festival from taking place using the Isle of Wight County Council Act in 1971.¹³⁰ With a few exceptions however, the police generally adopted a strategy of containment, rather than suppression.¹³¹ In his analysis of social exclusion in rural Britain, David Sibley supports the claim that

¹²⁶ Derek B. Scott, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 8.

¹²⁷ Hetherington, p. 4.

¹²⁸ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 18.

¹²⁹ Michael Clarke, p. 26.

¹³⁰ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 32.

¹³¹ Hetherington, p. 13.

the '60s and '70s can be thus framed as an era more tolerant of free festivals than the era superseding it.¹³²

Clarke's account of the parliamentary battle between those who wanted to suppress the Isle of Wight Festival and those who sought to defend it, exemplifies not only the kind of contestation that characteristically surrounded pop festivals during the early 1970s, but also the struggle to interpret the devotion to music and abandonment of traditional values, exhibited by the many thousands of young festival attendants.¹³³ Supporters of the festival linked a 'lost sense of belonging'¹³⁴ caused by secularization with a notion that the festival was tantamount to a Dionysian religion of the young:

In the vast crowd at a festival like this [...] they are absorbed into something bigger than themselves, something above themselves – a mass emotion, if one likes to call it that – which is a substitute for religion.¹³⁵

The tensions illustrated by Clarke further depict the opinions sharply divided by festivals, for the view that they ought to be valued as a new form of religion was rather at odds with the view that they encouraged squalor, sinful promiscuity and other morally questionable behaviour. Despite these attitudes, by the end of the 1970s festivals were not only recognizable as a popular form of leisure, but would later be swelled by the convergence of rave and festival cultures. As Hetherington claims, this merging followed the decline of 'mutual suspicion of each subculture by the other'.¹³⁶

The rise of free festivals saw the emergence of a culture that operated outside of the strict regulations applied to licensed events. Particularly for the solstice celebrations at Stonehenge, free festivals sustained and exacerbated the tensions between the counterculture and the governing authorities in Britain. With a spiritually loaded emphasis upon the neolithic stones, the celebrations there

¹³² Sibley, p. 226.

¹³³ Michael Clarke, pp. 51–61.

¹³⁴ Lawyer, Tom Driberg, speaking in a parliamentary debate on pop festivals (Hansard, 18 March 1971, Vol. 821. Debate in second reading), quoted in Michael Clarke, p. 58.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Hetherington, p. 8.

intersected elements of new age spirituality, politics and hedonism, critiquing the commercial structures of its external world with the motto, 'fuck all for sale'.¹³⁷ Elsewhere festivals had grown up around the reception of well-known acts in music that would play upon amplified stages, while the celebrations at Stonehenge were idealized as a return to the medieval fair or carnival; accompanied by a 'syncretist mix of religious beliefs'.¹³⁸ It is no accident that their surge in popularity at a site of Druidic significance coincided with the spread of new age sensibilities, which comprised elements of Druidism and Paganism. The 1970s and '80s free festivals were, for Partridge, particularly 'occultural' in their preoccupation with alternative spirituality. Employing this dimension of festival culture to sustain his broader argument for the re-mystification of the West, it is also an aspect that he considers wrongfully de-emphasized in the work of Hetherington.¹³⁹

Despite the fact that the solstice events at the site had taken place for many years, the celebrations grew so dramatically, in the 1980s, that they prompted decisive action from the National Trust and Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government.¹⁴⁰ There emerged a marked tension between, on the one side, the Wiltshire County Council, the police and the National Trust, and on the other, the new age travellers and festivalgoers.¹⁴¹ The celebration at Stonehenge became considered a human right; for many, this was based on religious grounds.

What has come to be known as the 'Battle of the Beanfield' saw tensions reach a climax in 1985, and police violence towards the solstice celebrants at this event has since been considered demonstrable of a marked shift in attitudes and a decline of tolerance towards free festival culture on the part of the authorities.¹⁴² For some, these events represented far more than disagreement over the use and protection of the stones, but typified the incompatibility between the negative new age stereotype and a particular and idealized notion of the English idyll.¹⁴³ New agers and travellers were often perceived pessimistically for their apparent rejection of the work ethic and participation in drug culture. The traveller was, as

¹³⁷ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 20.

¹³⁸ Hetherington, p. 5.

¹³⁹ Partridge, p. 156, p. 159.

¹⁴⁰ Hetherington, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴² Sibley, p. 227.

¹⁴³ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 35; Sibley, p. 220.

Hetherington claimed, a 'spectre' in the imagination of the public, for (s)he inspired 'social anxieties about social order'.¹⁴⁴ Both Sibley and Hetherington apply Stanley Cohen's 'folk devil' to illustrate why the suppression of free festivals was inextricably linked to social anxieties regarding travellers.¹⁴⁵ Tellingly, 1985 is considered the year that the events at Stonehenge 'came to a head', and the press were the most preoccupied with the subject of travellers between 1985 and 1986.¹⁴⁶ The mid-'80s can be thus interpreted as a peak of tension and conflict within free festival culture, marked by the British government's purposive tactics of suppression.

During this time, Glastonbury had maintained friendly relations with the organizers of the Stonehenge celebrations, and had indeed built their own 'stone circle' for displaced celebrants yet, following the suppression of the solstice, McKay notes a 'bifurcation' occurring as the 'respectable fundraising' of Glastonbury became necessarily distinct from the radical and anarchical Stonehenge.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Glastonbury remained a politically responsive event, and began to forge links with political campaigns during the early 1980s, with a general policy of offering space to campaigners with 'left and liberal leanings'.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, the CND became conspicuously associated with the festival in 1981, and later, environmental movements came into play.¹⁴⁹ Glastonbury had become, for many, the legitimate face of the counterculture, and though some profits were donated to campaigns, the event was a business that developed a firm commercial structure. What Glastonbury came to offer, was the 'weekend hippie' experience. Citing Andrew Blake, McKay recognizes the way in which the festival became an opportunity for a touristic and temporary indulgence of an alternative lifestyle, 'gazing at the authentic'.¹⁵⁰ Such an observation remains pertinent to contemporary festivals – for many of the events that have fuelled the post-millennial expansion of the licensed festival industry claim to offer, with a similarly

¹⁴⁴ Hetherington, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Hetherington, p. 1; Sibley, pp. 218–31.

¹⁴⁶ Sibley, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), in McKay, *Glastonbury*, pp. 47–48.

diversified program of arts, a 'mini Glastonbury' experience. These arguments are presented in greater detail, in the investigation of boutique festivals in Chapter 5.

The 1980s was a decade that saw the continued spread of unlicensed raves, which proceeded to occupy the first half of the 1990s. A brief analysis of rave is necessary, for, as mentioned previously, festival and rave were two cultural forms that were frequently indistinct. The raves that emerged in the mid-to-late '80s coincided with the emergence of acid house as a popular form of dance music. Repetitive beats and electronic sounds formed the aural backdrop to the clandestine invasion of warehouses and various unlicensed premises. There remain differences between the two cultural forms, yet rave tapped into a drug-fuelled hedonism not obviously dissimilar to that which is observable at licensed dance music events today, excepting an illegitimate status that rendered them, particularly in the eyes of the media, explicitly deviant. It would be wrong to imply that raves were and are the only celebratory events of questionable legality – yet it is true that the scale of unlicensed raves in the '80s and '90s, and the attention they received from the press, rather marks their illegitimacy as particular to the era. The hedonism of '80s and '90s rave remains a dominating theme mythologized via nostalgic portrayals in film and other forms of popular culture.

Scholars have balanced the romanticism of this view by recognizing the entrepreneurialism that (like the emergence of the pop festival during the '60s and '70s) similarly fuelled the culture. For Matthew Collins, this was the subversive culture of selling Ecstasy, which employed a Thatcherite 'blueprint for achievement', while inverting its morality.¹⁵¹ This is a view sustained by Mary Anna Wright's claim that raves encouraged ambition and enterprise.¹⁵² Unsurprisingly, the prevalence of Ecstasy as the new and widespread drug of choice within dance and club cultures was legitimized neither by the press nor the authorities. By the mid '80s, the policy on merely containing unlicensed music events had changed, and the government and police were no longer prepared to turn a blind eye.¹⁵³ This being the case, Melechi notes that legislative acts during

¹⁵¹ Matthew Collins, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* (London: Serpents Tail, 1997), p. 7.

¹⁵² Mary Anna Wright, 'The Great British Ecstasy Revolution', in George McKay, ed., *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 228–42 (p. 236).

¹⁵³ Hetherington, p. 13.

the '80s and '90s effectively criminalized raves and free festivals, and attendance became a more pronounced act of dissent.¹⁵⁴

The suppression of rave instigated its commercialization into club culture, marked by the growth of brands such as Cream, Slinky and Gatecrasher, into the late '90s and well beyond. These brands made no serious attempt to extinguish the use of Ecstasy, for the drug had become almost synonymous with the environment in which they operated; rather, these brands provided a legitimate corporate front for Ecstasy culture. It is also the case that unlicensed rave did not cease despite the rise of the 'superclub'. Some became simultaneously more clandestine and overtly radicalized, by incorporating 'anti-state ideas and anarchism'.¹⁵⁵ Squat parties would hybridize anarchism and a 'freedom to party' slogan, that often asserted itself using ideas borrowed from Hakim Bey. Published in 1991, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, often shortened to 'TAZ', assumed a new age pantheism via its proclamation of the 'oneness of being', while adopting an adversarial stance to the consumption and rationalism seen as predominating Western modernity.¹⁵⁶ Unlicensed festival and rave was often ideologically subsumed under Bey's offered solution – the subversive aesthetics of a *poetic terrorism*.¹⁵⁷ His work prioritizes the counter-hegemonic potentiality of carnival behaviours – particularly when he states that 'the last possible deed is that which defines perception itself, an invisible golden cord that connects us: illegal dancing in the courthouse corridors'.¹⁵⁸ Bey's festival is necessarily illegitimate in its capacity to revive what he sees as a stifled civilisation. 'Festal culture', he claims, must be 'removed and even hidden from the would-be managers of our leisure'; for poetic terrorism to succeed, one must refrain from 'perform[ing] with Rockefeller grants and police permits for audiences of culture-lovers'.¹⁵⁹ In Bey's idealized pirate utopia, the concept of 'audience' disappears following the reclamation of art:

¹⁵⁴ Antonio Melechi, 'The Ecstasy of Disappearance', in Steve Redhead, ed., *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), pp. 29–40 (p. 37).

¹⁵⁵ Hetherington, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Bey, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

If art has died, or the audience has withered away, then we find ourselves free of two dead weights. Potentially, everyone is now some kind of artist and potentially every audience has regained its innocence, its ability to become the art that it experiences.¹⁶⁰

'Innocence' here does not refer to moral purity, but instead describes a return to the state of beginning, where the social actor has not yet been absorbed into 'audiences of culture lovers' but holds the potential to become, instead, both artist and object of art.¹⁶¹ Describing the TAZ as a 'pirate utopia', Bey declares that 'we cannot strive for what we do not know', and thus the communitarian and experimental living albeit temporarily offered by festival is – thematically consistent with the works of Bakhtin and Turner – crucial to envisaging alternative futures in the real world, and thus is able to stimulate changes to the external social structure.¹⁶²

This may be broadly true on an ideological plane, yet it is also the case that unlicensed raves actually effected structural change that contributed to their prevention. As previously argued, moments of counter-hegemony can promote the reassertion of hegemonic order. The introduction of legislation specific to the suppression of rave was the result of the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) in 1994, which was raised in response to Castlemorton, a rave of quite staggering proportions. This congregation of some 20-25,000 saw the counterculture realize, for McKay, 'their collective strength and potential',¹⁶³ yet it was also responsible for inducing decisive legislative action that would make it much more difficult for (even much smaller) events to take place again.

Since then, the CJA has become notorious for its apparent 'cultural fascism', effectively criminalizing a particular style of music played in an open space over others.¹⁶⁴ The suppression of the 'repetitive beat' is thus described by McKay as an 'appalling attack on youth culture'.¹⁶⁵ Wright claims that this attack 'united' ravers

¹⁶⁰ Bey, p. 16.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁶³ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

in protest,¹⁶⁶ yet it is generally held that unlicensed rave and festival culture did not return to the scale and notoriety of the events at Stonehenge and Castlemorton. Some interpretations of the CJA legislation and its impact allude to a degree of inevitability, given the socio-economic environment of the times. Sibley, for example, cites the growing cynicism towards materialism and the rising unemployment during the Thatcher era as a likely explanation for why festivals and rave swelled to such a scale, as would see the culture emerge as a 'new, threatening minority'.¹⁶⁷ Steve Redhead sustains this argument when he directly links the hedonism of rave to the 'hard times' of the country.¹⁶⁸ That rural raves should be considered threatening in the first instance, however, is a result of their transgression of the imagined, hegemonic boundary between the urban and the sacred countryside.¹⁶⁹ Applying Foucault's conception of the 'practical sacred', Sibley underlines the way in which the sacralization of the English countryside, as similarly discernible in racist and imperialist discourses, is a strategy that demarcates those who belong from those that do not.¹⁷⁰ Writing in 1997, Sibley describes the CJA as 'the most recent instance of a move by the state to confirm the boundaries of an imaginary rural community through the identification of a number of pariahs'.¹⁷¹ In practical terms, Sections 47 to 49 of the CJA outlined the new 'powers in relation to raves', which enabled a police officer to disperse a gathering of ten or more people if they were suspected to be awaiting a rave.¹⁷² Rave culture is the only culture specified in the legislation, yet the CJA was also intended to curtail the activities of a much broader spectrum of people, including animal rights activists and travellers.¹⁷³

It would be wrong to understate the significance of these historic incidents. However, despite the creation of the CJA, the impact of free festivals should not be reduced to this legislative change in favour of a Conservative hegemony. It may be the case that the free festival ought, as Bey argues, to be viewed as a 'peak experience', and that a return to normality – even a normality that makes festival

¹⁶⁶ Wright, p. 239.

¹⁶⁷ Sibley, p. 227.

¹⁶⁸ Steve Redhead, 'The End of the Century Party' in Steve Redhead, ed., *Rave Off*, pp. 1–6 (p. 4).

¹⁶⁹ Sibley, p. 227.

¹⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacretics* 16th ser., 1 (1986), 22–27, in Sibley, p. 219.

¹⁷¹ Sibley, p. 221.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 221–22.

less possible – fails to erase the minutiae of intangible shifts that have occurred. In the words of Bey, ‘you can’t stay on the rooftop forever [... but] a difference is made’.¹⁷⁴ It is likely true that despite the suppression of rave and free festivals, they provided an experience that would help cement the unprecedented demand for music festivals discussed in Chapter 5, for the next twenty years. Furthermore, though it is not always possible to avoid ambiguity in attempting to locate and define the nature of this relationship, there is some consensus regarding the logical correlation between taking Ecstasy and a questioning of authority.¹⁷⁵ Converging with an attitude of ‘peace, love and unity’, Wright claims that this questioning filtered into the psychological fabric of everyday life.¹⁷⁶ And thus, a lack of overt slogans and associations with activist campaigns should not always be viewed, necessarily, as evidence for political impotency,¹⁷⁷ and likewise, it is claimed, ravers should not be considered hedonistic nihilists, and ‘deserters of the subcultural cause’, simply because the ‘old language’ of resistance and empowerment is less audible.¹⁷⁸ Following this, Collins returns to the interpretations of carnival with the claim that rave culture represented a mission to ‘re-appropriate consciousness, to invert, however briefly, a kind of utopia’,¹⁷⁹ while Hillegonda Rietveld credits the ‘rave-cult’ with a ‘statement of anti-consumerism, pro-vulgarity, anti-rationalism, anti-phallogentrism [...] emit[ing] a definite counter-cultural “air” or appearance’.¹⁸⁰

This section has presented rave, the licensed festival and the free festival as cross-pollinated cultural forms. Previous research places them, like the carnival, within debates regarding deviance, socio-political efficacy and the construction of meanings. Some of the interpretations regarding the history of festival can be critiqued for a utilization of essentialist mainstream/underground contrast-pairings, and a Marxist lens of interpretation over-reliant on counter-hegemonic theories of explanation.¹⁸¹ And yet, the history presented above furnishes the study with concepts that remain pertinent to the analysis of festival culture today.

¹⁷⁴ Bey, p. 101.

¹⁷⁵ Wright, p. 228.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Collins, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Melechi, p. 37.

¹⁷⁹ Collins, p. 5.

¹⁸⁰ Hillegonda Rietveld, ‘Living the Dream’, in Steve Redhead, *Rave Off*, pp. 41–78 (p. 55).

¹⁸¹ Bennett, ‘Researching Youth Culture’, p. 462, p. 452.

Partridge's 'occulture', that emphasizes the re-enchanting discourses and practices operating within this realm, is augmented by Section 4.4 in the broader study of BM, as ritual practices and an alignment with Eastern spirituality demonstrate the continued reproduction of occulture within festival space. Associated first with the squat parties of the '90s, the philosophy of Bey, which seeks to transform audiences into the producers of art, is also one that finds particular expression in the case study events later explored. As outlined in this section, the peak of free festival culture and the beginnings of its incorporation provides a crucial background for grasping the contemporary context in which the case study events operate. As later chapters shall confirm, this is also a necessary prelude to understanding the politics of participation they engender.

2.5 Idealism as Praxis: Utopian Space

If it is possible to claim that utopianism in literature reimagines reality, enabling readers to temporarily de-naturalize themselves from the dominant mode of being,¹⁸² it is possible to follow that (in the vein of Bey), a utopian event might also produce a clearer perspective of the social state which we accept as the everyday. Experiential or imagined, utopias provoke through the inconsistencies between 'the dreamed City and the present',¹⁸³ revealing the arbitrary nature of the socio-psychological parameters that bound fields of possibility. As Bronislaw Baczko states, festivals are 'able to secrete, so to speak, utopian aspirations and images'.¹⁸⁴ They can be understood, then, as a screen 'on which are projected the dreams and models of an alternative society',¹⁸⁵ a metaphor that will prove relevant to the idealizing milieu later explored.

Whereas the previous sections discussed, theoretically, the liminal, carnivalesque and counter-hegemonic capacities of festival, the purpose of this section is to exemplify, with two festivals, the transformation of idealizing

¹⁸² Patrick Reedy, 'Keeping the Black Flag Flying: Anarchy, Utopia and the Politics of Nostalgia' in Martin Parker, ed., *Utopia and Organization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 169–187 (p. 170).

¹⁸³ Bronislaw Baczko, *Utopian Lights: The Evolution of the Idea of Social Progress*, trans. by Judith L. Greenberg (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁸⁵ Baczko, p. 178.

discourses into practice, or *praxis*. This propensity is most prominently marked by those events that integrate idealism with the design and shaping of its social milieu. Through its diversity of features, Australia's *Nimbin*, for example, is described by McKay as an event not dissimilar to that which inspired St John's adaptation of Foucault's 'heterotopia'.¹⁸⁶ Marrying a participative ideal with a democratized ownership structure, the organizers encouraged the colonization of festival space by participating contributors. This was evident in the creation of a shared-ownership scheme – which offered festivalgoers the choice to purchase festival space.¹⁸⁷ The case study events do not allow participants to purchase land, yet the ideologically loaded nature of this communitarian scheme nonetheless, as later chapters will reveal, significantly parallels the ethos at the centre of the study. In addition, the way in which the 'multiple utopics' of diversified festival space actually embodies the participative ideal is a theme particularly pertinent to the case study events explored in Chapters 4 and 5.¹⁸⁸

A fusion of ideals and spatial construction may be even more pronounced when a festival acts out a specific socio-political stance, such as the lesbian-feminist event, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. This event comprises a concentration of feminists, offering a unique experience of separatism difficult to achieve at any other time during life outside of the festival. As stated by author and festivalgoer Bonnie Morris, 'we go because festivals offer the possibility of what our lives *could* be like year-round if we lived each day in a matriarchy actively striving to eliminate racism and homophobia'.¹⁸⁹ At the festival, almost everyone volunteers in some capacity or other, and thus, producers and consumers are indistinguishable. Reinforcing the utopian themes of Baczkó and Patrick Reedy, this Michigan event animates an idealized social vision.¹⁹⁰ The experiences garnered, in this enactment of separatist feminism temporarily achieved, create a culture 'with its own legends, language, and customs', which became part of a broader 'lesbian code'.¹⁹¹ The examples posited here demonstrate the need to extend, as recommended by Burr, the notion of discourses to include the non-

¹⁸⁶ McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ St John, p. 52.

¹⁸⁹ Morris, xiii.

¹⁹⁰ Reedy, 'Keeping the Black Flag Flying'; Baczkó, *Utopian Lights*.

¹⁹¹ Morris, p. 156.

textual¹⁹² – for the physical, structural and social milieu of the festival have the capacity to idealize, and thus, are encoders of symbolic content. The collectivized approach to production observable there, and the alteration of performance distinction this creates, reveals also a key theme that remains pertinent to the praxes revealed in later chapters.

2.6 Neo-Tribes, Subcultures and Scenes

The study of popular music is attended by numerous attempts to understand how and why popular cultures correlate with particular sensibilities, styles and patterns of consumption. This project has shifted from a generalized study of how music is received by the ‘masses’, to examining how music has become a distinguishing factor in the construction of differentiated social groupings – from ‘teenagers to subcultures to scenes and to neo-tribes’.¹⁹³ Troublingly, it may be the case that such discourses on the subject are emerging slower than the rate at which their subject matter is developing. When Michel Maffesoli claimed that ‘sociality is structurally deceptive, unknowable’ in 1996, he could not have foreseen the most compelling transformation of sociality via its online digitalization, following the advent of social networking sites only a decade later.¹⁹⁴ It is true that online social networks neither replace nor add anything fundamentally new to human socialization; these networks have always existed, though in the invisible sort of way that Maffesoli theorized. What sites such as Facebook provide, is a wellspring of visible evidence regarding the way in which human beings are grouped in terms of certain correlations with music, festivals and other interests, as well as the circumstantial ties of geography, schooling and work. Until the implications of this are fully understood and integrated into the discussion, it is certainly arguable that the conceptualizations of neo-tribes, subcultures and scenes are incomplete. Nevertheless, this section aims to provide a succinct overview and discussion of the key themes that have occupied

¹⁹² Burr, p. 75.

¹⁹³ Scott, p. 7.

¹⁹⁴ Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, trans. by Don Smith (London: Sage, 1996), p. 5.

sociocultural theorists in their attempt to understand how music preferences might relate to issues of identity, class and shared experience. This preliminary is important in exploring the social mechanics potentially applicable to the ticket buyers responsible for the spread of music festivals, an issue later explored in Chapter 5.

The use of the word 'subculture' remains entrenched within fields of sociology and cultural studies, yet it is a concept that has been largely refuted by the successors of Dick Hebdige, who founded the term in *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*.¹⁹⁵ Seeking to understand youth delinquency, as well as the teddy boys, mods and rockers of the 1950s and '60s, Hebdige perceived forms of cultural appropriation, which he largely understood in terms of working-class resistance. Against Adorno's view of the indoctrinating effects of popular culture, this interpretation depicted an expressive politics afforded by popular music and its attendant sociality, and would become thematic for the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Subsequent researchers would come to find numerous examples of 'subcultures' inconsistent with the themes emphasized by the CCCS – for example, utilizing working-class frustration as an explanation of the subculture failed, in one sense, to consider the way in which punk was rooted in 'the art-school avant-garde'.¹⁹⁶ Andy Bennett also supported Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's critique of the neglect of women and domestic life from accounts of the subculture, a neglect which helped the CCCS depict subcultures as rigidly defined social groups, rather than groups that one might step into, and then out of, upon re-entering the home.¹⁹⁷ This can be viewed as the distorted result of the academic tendency to be drawn towards sensational areas of research, and to concentrate on subjects that imply political and resistive significance, while giving little credence to what appears mundane and everyday. Such an imbalanced view of culture is largely considered a fundamental weakness to the subcultural theory propagated by the CCCS school of thought.

¹⁹⁵ (London: Methuen, 1979).

¹⁹⁶ Gary Clarke, 'Defending Ski-Jumpers: a Critique of Theories of Youth Subcultures', in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds., *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 68–80 (p. 72), cited in Andy Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste', *Sociology*, 33 (1999), 599–617 (p. 602).

¹⁹⁷ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures: an Exploration' in Richard Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance Through Rituals* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 209–222, cited in Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 602, p. 604.

Similarly, the relationships between subcultures, style and youth – ties that were once considered fundamentally important – have since been contested. It is true that subcultures have emerged as a youth phenomenon in the majority of cases, yet subcultures also age, and not every member loses subcultural identity as a result. For this reason, Scott is supportive of David Hesmondhalgh's critique of the 'privileging of youth'.¹⁹⁸ Later scholars have also dismissed claims regarding a 'homology' between the fashion and music of the subculture. As Bennett states, young people have become 'less concerned with the fit between visual style and musical taste',¹⁹⁹ which is unsurprising given the emergence of popular music cultures that are not obviously associated with style. This does not necessarily mean that certain commonalities in dress should be ignored, but the contention that this tendency encoded rebellion and a rigidly defined group status, became questionable. Reitveld, for example, noted that ravers did not adhere to high street fashion. She admits that this could be viewed as 'a premeditated gesture of resistance by a traditionally marginalized category', yet it is far more likely, she states, that 'the dress sense of the raver was not a style of conscious choice that posed and possessed a threat'.²⁰⁰

The relationships between subcultures, style and youth are likely fluctuating cords that can be invisible, or definitive, depending on the culture in question; as the fragmentation and diversification of festival culture shall later show, it has become increasingly difficult to 'frame' subcultures with a set of neatly transferable tendencies. Nevertheless, despite the evidence against the CCCS, one must concede to a degree of symmetry between style, musical taste and youth in many cases. Evidently, where a nuanced fashion is most pronounced and cohesive within a group, the level of symmetry to a style of music appears greater – for example, goths and skatepunks are aligned to quite specific types of fashion and genres of music, whereas rave culture today is organized around a much broader definition of 'dance music' no longer restricted to the genre of acid house. Without strict adherence to rigidly defined musical sensibilities, one might argue that subcultural style is less pronounced. The direct relationship between music and

¹⁹⁸ David Hesmondhalgh, 'Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes? None of the Above', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8th ser., 1 (2005), 21–40 (p. 38), in Scott, p. 6.

¹⁹⁹ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 613.

²⁰⁰ Rietveld, p. 53.

style has likely been weakened by the far greater availability of music today, accessed online and for free. Because of this there is, perhaps, less investment in and attachment to particular musics than there would have been when records consumed a greater portion of an individual's disposable income. The relationship between style and music must therefore depend, somewhat, upon the degree of music exposure and access – and thus, while explanations from the CCCS might have been more appropriate for the early subcultures, applying them to contemporary manifestations has become awkward. This ought not suggest that the relationship between subcultures and style should be completely dispensed with. Instead, as Bennett states, this relationship ought to be viewed as 'infinitely malleable'.²⁰¹

Crucially, that the subculture is resistive, and therefore automatically a counter-hegemonic phenomenon, is an assumption taken for granted by the CCCS, and is further deconstructed by scholarly accounts of the examples that illuminate its inadequacy. Bennett agrees with Jenkins' contention that 'the concept of subculture tends to exclude from consideration the large area of commonality between subcultures [...] and implies an often deviant relationship to the dominant culture'.²⁰² Consistent with the previous analyses of festival culture, Jenkins points out that subcultures can affirm as well as deny the dominant culture.²⁰³ This was, according to Bennett, rather ignored by the CCCS, which disregarded mainstream-centred subcultures due to a perceived absence of counter-hegemonic potential.²⁰⁴ It is arguable, again, that the sociocultural theory of the subculture did enter the dangerous terrain of overemphasizing a desired truth (the subculture as resistance) over actuality – utilizing the ideological hegemony was also, as Bennett states, an obstacle to the development of fieldwork, applying characteristically Marxist concepts 'weakly comprehended by the social actors involved'.²⁰⁵

For some scholars, the concept of the 'neo-tribe' resolves the erroneous imposition of categorical dividing lines for phenomena that are, in fact, dynamic,

²⁰¹ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 613.

²⁰² Richard Jenkins, *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids: Working Class Youth Lifestyles in Belfast* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 41, in Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 603.

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 604.

²⁰⁵ Bennett, 'Researching Youth Culture', p. 452.

fluid and emergent.²⁰⁶ Maffesoli's neo-tribe emerges from a critique of the mass individualism 'doxa' of postmodern sociology and, according to his supporters, provides a better way of understanding phenomena that are, essentially, unstable. As Maffesoli points out, neo-tribes crystallize from the masses, yet there is also freedom for individuals to move between them.²⁰⁷ Maffesoli presents a dual rejection of identity governed by class, and identity governed by the individual. The latter, he argues, wrongly presents postmodernity as a 'the withdrawal into the self, the end of collective ideals, the public sphere'.²⁰⁸ Such a position ignores the patchworks of identity and the 'developing social forms of today',²⁰⁹ the 'ambiences, feelings and emotions' that underpin tribalized orientations.²¹⁰ Contrary to 'individualist logic', built upon the notion of a 'separate and self-contained identity', Maffesoli depicts social groupings as affectual, utilizing truths dependent on the orientation of the tribe: relative truths. And thus, he is able to claim that the neo-tribe operates via an 'aesthetic paradigm [...] in the sense of a fellow feeling'.²¹¹ An understanding of neo-tribalism, for Maffesoli, must coincide with a new cognitive era; whereas the rational era was characterized by individuation and separation, the 'empathetic period' will be marked by the lack of individual differentiation.²¹²

Andy Bennett and Rob Shields are supportive of Maffesoli's work, which prioritizes a shared, though fluid, state of mind, condensed from the 'homogeneity of the mass'.²¹³ According to Bennett, Maffesoli's neo-tribalism is accentuated by mass consumerism – and, 'that it should become acutely manifest in the closing years of the twentieth century', he argues, is down to the 'sheer range of consumer choices which now exist'.²¹⁴ This suggests that a consumer-oriented society is loaded with choices that make possible the semiotic construction of cultural identities, better enabling the emergence of the social nuance, so exemplified by the neo-tribe. Neo-tribal expression is articulated through style and music

²⁰⁶ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 599.

²⁰⁷ Maffesoli, p. 6.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 10.

²¹² Ibid., p. 11.

²¹³ Rob Shields, ed., *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 108, in Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 606.

²¹⁴ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 607.

consumption and therefore, that the existence of the neo-tribe has a lot to do with the consumer choice that characterizes the postmodern age, is a supportable claim. One might concede, therefore, to a relationship between the neo-tribe and consumer choice, yet it should also be recognized that consumer choices are outward signs that correlate with inward experience. Goths, for example, might easily be identifiable through examining their patterns of consumption – but, one might ask, does it necessarily follow that these patterns alone adequately explains what it is to be a goth? It is possible that Bennett reduces sociocultural theory to the outward, measurable and visible signs that attend the ambient states of mind that are really at the heart of Maffesoli's theory.

Despite providing a detailed and largely coherent critique of the ways in which cultural phenomena in popular music can be theoretically framed, it is also possible that Bennett unhelpfully reduces the matter to a semantic debate. By dwelling upon verbal definitions, parts of his deconstruction serve only to divert researchers from the issues at hand. After dispensing with the word 'subculture' as unworkable, Bennett also questions the use of 'group', claiming that its referent cannot be 'regarded as having a necessarily permanent or tangible quality'.²¹⁵ Bennett may well be overstating the degree to which anyone seriously assumed permanence and tangibility when discussing social groups. It is also arguable that challenges to the accepted definitions of the words 'subculture' or 'group' do not make necessary their total replacement; only a shift in the meaning assigned to the term. Bennett does not explain why it is not possible to adjust the meaning of the 'subculture' to accommodate fluidity, proposing instead, that we must understand them as 'a series of temporal gatherings characterized by fluid boundaries and floating memberships'.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, one might concede to the fact that since Maffesoli's neo-tribe takes these credible qualities into consideration, Bennett rightfully defends it as a replacement of the 'subculture'. Later chapters will explore the notion that festivals, in particular BM, constitute large crystallizations of neo-tribal groupings that – in this case – commonly accede to and reproduce a politics of participation critical of the *spectator*.

²¹⁵ Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes?', p. 605.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 600.

Despite the appeal of Maffesoli's theory, sociocultural theorists have observed that popular cultures often seem to have less to do with a shared, inner 'ambience', as Maffesoli suggests, and more to do with specific events or *scenes*. Implying an even greater level of fluidity than the neo-tribe, scene theory emphasizes membership within particular settings, over Maffesoli's neo-tribal sensibilities. Scene theory draws into focus a crucial element of cultural distinction that is problematically disregarded by the former theories outlined – and that is, the importance and determinism of space. As Will Straw developed in his concept of 'heartland rock', music cultures often 'engage with a heritage of geographically rooted forms'.²¹⁷ What some might describe as 'subcultures' may indeed be linked mostly in terms of spatial nuclei; there are certainly groups that may have little other contact outside of co-experience within geographically specific scenes. Applications of the theory are, however, not without attendant weaknesses. Dowd *et al.* provide a chapter in *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* that essentially argues that festivals 'resemble local scenes'.²¹⁸ Excluding small community events, it is difficult to concede that this is entirely the case – for many festivals, including the small-medium events, tend to attract very diverse audiences from two or three different cities. Peterson and Bennett's similar application of scene theory also seems to imply a degree of audience cohesiveness, a mistake similarly suggested by the subculture, and a fact that is doubtfully applicable to most music festivals. Where festivals are devoted specifically to one particular kind of music, it may indeed bring 'scene devotees from far and wide in one place, where they can enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it'.²¹⁹ This is true of some events, particularly those that attempt to corner particular niches – though it is also true that many today are in fact characterized by a varied programme of music and arts, and attract a multi-generational, varied crowd as a result. It is arguable, therefore, that festivalgoers

²¹⁷ Will Straw, 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music', *Cultural Studies*, 3rd ser., 5 (1991), 368–88 (p. 373), in David Hesmondhalgh, 'Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes? None of the Above', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1st ser., 8 (2005), 21–40 (p. 27).

²¹⁸ Timothy J. Dowd, Kathleen Liddle, and Jenna Nelson, 'Music Festivals as Scenes: Examples from Serious Music, Womyns Music and Skatepunk', in Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, eds, *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), pp. 149–67 (p. 149).

²¹⁹ Richard A. Peterson and Andy Bennett, 'Introducing Music Scenes', in *Music Scenes*, pp. 1–15 (p. 10).

are more open to experience multiple scenes and cultures in this diversified context, a claim that is a little inconsistent with Dowd *et al.*'s depiction of festival culture. In addition, based upon his research on goths, Paul Hodkinson demonstrated that the identity of certain groups could remain important regardless of age.²²⁰ Contrary to the fluid membership implied by scene theory, Hodkinson demonstrated that there was a long-term and lifelong affiliation of members within the goth culture, despite the adaptations of dress and behaviour, that accompany ageing.

It might be less than satisfactory to conclude with a level of diplomacy and critique that fails to neatly characterize the nature of music cultures. However, it is obvious that the goth culture cannot be representative of all subcultures – if we are to retain the term – for not only are there key differences between goths and other groups that might be considered on a par with them (for example, skatepunks), goths also appear somewhat unique in their synergizing of emotion, sensibility, dress and musical preference. This observation might go some way to suggest, more broadly, the inherent difficulty in addressing the issue of cultural groupings: the individuality of social function and member motivation is likely to repeatedly undermine academic attempts to encapsulate their nature. While the conceptualizations of cultural groupings investigated in this section will be revisited in relation to the case studies later examined; this consideration appropriately limits the extent to which the study is able to finitely confirm, or deny, their validity.

2.7 Key Frameworks: Patterns of Theatricality

Participation at festivals is emphasized in this section as a topic loaded with authenticating meanings and thus, introduces those concepts featuring most prominently in the investigation. Evidenced is the issue of spectatorship theoretically problematized by various academics, while later chapters examine the translation of the same concerns into discourses and praxes operating within festival culture. Importantly, Cremona's 'patterns of theatricality' illustrate the

²²⁰ Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

characteristics of contrasting carnival types that, as later chapters shall testify, correlate with the politics of participation at the heart of this study.²²¹

Challenges to the authenticity of festivals can emerge from a consciousness of the proximal relations between basic stakeholders: producers and consumers, performers and their audiences. If relationships are seen as exploitative – as John Hutnyk subtly implies of *Womad*²²² – a festival might be presented as a masquerade of authenticity, behind which, questionable operations are concealed. As was suggested by Bey, when there appears to be a large degree of separation between producers and consumers, which might arise from the shift of creative control from a communal to a restricted ownership structure, a festival event might be considered no longer an output of its ‘community’ – particularly if the event is seen to invite spectatorship over participation. This is in part due to the interpretation of authentic carnival, which, as Goethe claims, is ‘not given to the people but by the people to themselves’.²²³ Deducible here is an association of participant control with the authentic – if the control of an event is leveraged by ‘the people’, the more audible are claims to its authenticity.

The authentic festival is, then, argued to induce a degree of participation well beyond observation. Stoeltje also hints at the inverse, when stating that ‘if those in attendance are primarily observers or consumers rather than participants, the event is not based in the social life of the community’.²²⁴ Again, this claim proceeds from the view that reducing participation to observation appropriates control from the audience, and thus, relegates experience to a mode associated with the passive:

Festival actively engages the participants. It is this feature that distinguishes festival from those large-scale forms that may be observed from a distance or by television or those events in which the participants passively receive messages but have no choice in their roles.²²⁵

²²¹ Cremona, pp. 69–90.

²²² John Hutnyk, *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry* (London: Pluto, 2000), pp. 19–49.

²²³ Goethe, p. 14.

²²⁴ Stoeltje, p. 266.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 262–63.

Stoeltje provides a somewhat abridged version of reality here, for audiences are not necessarily confined to one camp over another; Erik Cohen's anthropological study of the vegetarian festival in Phuket, for example, describes a bifurcated audience at the same event. Cohen examines the transformation of participating locals into spectacle by the tourist gaze: there are those that watch, and those that are watched. The watchers are Westerners, and, argues Cohen, 'outsiders to the culture of the producers'.²²⁶ Failing to internalize the ethic of the festival, the event increasingly became 'less a ritual expression of inner devotion and more a spectacle for the public'.²²⁷ Cohen's version of events appropriately complicates Stoeltje's simplified distinction, though he similarly problematizes spectatorship as a touristic form of weak participation.²²⁸

Marianne Mesnil similarly takes issue with spectatorship, first claiming that 'carnival proper' can no longer take place in the modern industrial city.²²⁹ If one adopts a Bakhtinian view of carnival, she claims, its symbolic disruption can no longer apply, for the decisional centres for politics and values have become distant. Thus, the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic efficacy of carnival is undermined, for it is unable to reference, challenge or support a unified structure.²³⁰ In this new environment, carnival changes into something else: a 'folklorised festival', a show with passive spectators, a 'make-see' and no more a 'make-do'.²³¹ Deducible here is the recurring distinction between spectatorship, aligned with 'seeing', 'looking' and 'observation', and participation, which Mesnil aligns with 'doing'. This is coherent enough, yet the implication that the latter mode has been completely extinguished by the modern industrial city is (as shall be later shown) contrary to many contemporary celebrations that exist today.

The participation one might associate with Mesnil's 'make-do' often depends not upon the state of the macro social structure, as she implies, but upon the micro-organisation of the individual event in question. Cremona's investigation of carnival in Malta reveals that the 'problem' of the spectator has less to do with

²²⁶ Erik Cohen, *The Chinese Vegetarian Festival in Phuket: Religion, Ethnicity, and Tourism on a Southern Thai Island* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001), p. 13.

²²⁷ Erik Cohen, p. 13.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Marianne Mesnil, 'Place and Time in the Carnavalesque Festival' in Falassi, *Time out of Time*, pp. 184-95 (p. 185).

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Mesnil, p. 185.

the impossibility of assuming unified, carnivalesque and symbolic references to the broader social structure, and far more to do with the spatial and organizational arrangements of the festive event, upon which spectatorship depends. Cremona distinguishes between two types of carnival, which relate, more broadly, to two different types of 'eventness'.²³² Taking Caillois' label *ludus*, which he uses to describe organized and competitive forms of play, Cremona employs the term to refer to 'highly regulated' carnivals in the Maltese regions of Valletta and Rabat.²³³ *Ludic* carnival is juxtaposed with the carnival forms she describes as *paidia*: adapting Turner's use of the term to describe unregulated and 'agonistic' forms of play, the paidian carnival is characterized by spontaneity and interaction between performers and participants.²³⁴ For Cremona, 'theatricality' describes the performative engagement that arises from this spontaneous interaction.²³⁵ The audience of the paidian carnival is one that plays a role in theatrical production, and thus, exceeds the role of spectator. Her investigation of different carnival formations in Malta depicts the physical arrangements of space as one of a spectrum of conditions likely to produce or constrain a theatrical, interactive and performative audience. This premise is reinforced in the investigations of Chapters 3 to 6; consequently, her conceptualization is sustained as a key framework throughout the study.

Cremona's ludic and paidian can be usefully aligned with Thomas Turino's presentational and participative modes of performance.²³⁶ The former mode, like the ludic carnival, emphasizes the virtuosity and elaborate display associated with a Western concert tradition, which the latter forfeits in a collectivized and fluid approach to performance, comparable to the paidian carnival. However, whereas Turino describes two essentially distinct types of celebration, Cremona demonstrates that the participative and the presentational can overlap or compete within the same contextual frame. That carnival can pass from a paidian to a ludic

²³² Cremona, p. 70.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70, p. 76.

²³⁵ The term 'performative' has been utilized by scholars to emphasize different meanings. Cremona adopts the term to indicate the combined performance executed by the audience and the procession at Maltese carnivals. She states that the term is intended to convey 'the ability and necessary conditions to perform, as well as the exhibitory and participative quality of the event' (p. 87).

²³⁶ Turino, Thomas, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 23-65.

state is exemplified by Cremona's account of the carnival at Valetta, which also highlights in the clearest terms, how adaptations to convivial space promote or extinguish paidian 'eventness'.²³⁷

The historic Valetta carnival was a spontaneous celebration without a formal organizational structure, and first took place in the immediate surroundings of its participants, running through the narrow streets of the city centre. Such proximity and immediacy induced, what Cremona terms, 'dynamic interactivity':

The huge numbers of spectators within the narrow streets created a physical presence and relationship [...] Their togetherness encouraged direct participation rather than passive watching, giving rise to prompt and spontaneous interaction with the actors in the cortege.²³⁸

Prior to the involvement of the National Festivities Committee in the 1920s, a government organization, the carnival lacked emphasis on display and competitiveness, and included non-competitive vehicles with amateur decoration, which provided platforms for members of the audience to dance upon. By the 1980s the committee had made a number of changes that fundamentally altered the procession and diminished the performative participation of the audience.²³⁹ Significantly, the carnival was rerouted to occupy wider streets, physically separating the spectators from the procession. Cremona does not disregard the fact that some degree of separation between the procession and the audience had always existed, and that the intervention was well meant, yet the impact this proximal change had upon the theatricality of the audience changed the nature of the event. The expansion of the carnival into wider streets increased the distance between the audience and the procession, undermining their spontaneous communication, and the interchangeability of roles that formerly blurred the dividing lines between performers and spectators. The reroute also moved the carnival away from the city centre, which shifted the celebration from the 'daily

²³⁷ Cremona, p. 74.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

space of the people', something, for Cremona, which was 'at the root of its theatricality'.²⁴⁰ Demarcation, which allowed only official and authorized performers to make up the procession, consequently put an end to 'laypeople' joining it on undecorated, unprepared trucks. This, as well as popular and improvised comedy, was lost as the festival became increasingly structured and predictable, and progressively shifted the role of the public from participants to watchers.²⁴¹

Participation does not, then, solely depend upon audience psychology or necessarily upon whether prescribed performances are sufficiently engaging – the proximities determined by event design are also important, as the case study festivals shall demonstrate. The changes made to the Valetta carnival by the National Festivities Committee makes the fragility of audience theatricality apparent, for depicted is a state of participation that can be very easily extinguished by the imposition of changes. In this case, changes resulted in a subdued audience and a carnival that was 'more solemn, and less popular'.²⁴²

As Cremona's distinction between the paidian and the ludic carnival shows, demarcation and subsequent emphasis on spectacle and virtuosity directed the attention of the crowd to a prescribed selection of rehearsed actors, while performance at pre-1920 Valetta was, we might argue, more democratized. Cremona is not afraid to posit, with conviction, that the demarcation of the former carnival type alienated the audience through restricting participation to spectatorship. Government stakeholders are blamed for their impositions on the celebration, which ultimately, through subverting the audience's role in producing the theatrical event, undermined the popularity and economic potential that first attracted them:

Certain features bestow particular qualities on the event which, though not inherent to the theatre, produce theatricality; [... however] the imposition of these features can actually threaten the event itself.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Cremona, p. 74.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 74.

²⁴³ Ibid.

Patterns of theatricality in Maltese carnival are inextricably linked to the geography of Malta, for whether or not the government became involved in carnival depended on their location. Inner-city carnival was quickly recognized as a money-spinner and a tourist attraction, while those located in the countryside were never suspected to hold similar potential: their organization was largely left to the inhabitants of the villages. Because the imposition of structure and demarcation on city carnival destroyed its popular performativity, the demand for countryside carnival increased because its paidian qualities were retained. Preserving a greater degree of audience participation, countryside carnival was increasingly seen as the authentic formation and tourists were attracted to the experiences that could be found there.

Crucially, depicted here is a cultural pattern: there is a reassertion of paidian celebration, following its limitation elsewhere. It is true that the dynamics observed within the realm of Maltese carnival may not neatly apply to other contexts – yet Chapters 3 to 6 illuminate a comparable pattern operating within music festival culture. The concert-model event described in the next chapter is, as will be shown, comparable to ludic carnival insofar as the performers and audience remain necessarily distinct, and little interaction takes place between them. That the audience of the concert-model event retains expression is without doubt, yet the overall emphasis upon the staged line-up moderates the emphasis on audience theatricality. In following chapters, an account of BM's 'participant as performer' philosophy, and its influence, will demonstrate the extreme participation increasingly discernable in Britain can be conceptualized as paidian. Following Cremona, this thesis shall argue, therefore, that there are two types of 'eventness' observable within British festival culture, which can be similarly characterized by the modes of participation they encourage. Yet it ought to be noted here, the points at which the following investigation departs from the conceptual framework described in this section: while the ludic and the paidian distinction is employed throughout, this study is principally concerned with how these modes are ideologically articulated by the events that subscribe to a 'No Spectators' ethos. Thus, whereas Cremona's work reveals the 'performative dynamics' that underpin

'eventness', this study shall demonstrate the symbiosis between the paidian event and its idealization of extreme participation.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Cremona, p. 76, p. 70.

3. Problematizing Participation

3.1 Introduction

The debate surrounding audience participation occupies multiple disciplines. Nonetheless, while Cremona provides a useful delineation of participatory modes operating within Maltese carnival, less has been done to clarify the 'patterns of theatricality' found in contemporary festival culture.¹ Laying a foundation for the identification of such trends in Britain, this chapter examines festival events comparable to ludic carnival: described here, as *concert-model* festivals. Employing a critical overview of audience theory, that the existing scholarship on festivals includes some uncritical assumptions regarding their audiences is an argument central to this chapter. As stated at Section 2.2, festivals have been likened to the media form through their ability to carry 'culture content'.² Despite the intuitive logic of this observation, reified conceptualizations of the 1960s counterculture have largely immunized the music festival from the sort of cultural criticism that has been directed at other mediums, following the work of Theodor Adorno.³ Discussed at the concluding part of this chapter, this has to do with a desire to reinstate the audience with autonomy,⁴ following a trajectory of criticism leveled against claims to the 'opiate' effects of popular music.⁵

Concerns regarding the cultivation of thought and behaviour through mass mediums such as radio and television are responsible for the emergence of what Biocca describes as a 'spectre'⁶ of passivity; a ghost emerging from the same fear

¹ Cremona, pp. 69-90.

² Singer, xii, in MacAloon, p. 4.

³ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁴ Frank A. Biocca, 'Opposing Conceptions of the Audience: The Active and Passive Hemispheres of Mass Communication Theory', *Communication Yearbook*, 11 (1988), 51-80 (p. 55).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Biocca, p. 56.

that was once directed, by Naomi Klein, at the 'stadium-rock model of protest'.⁷ Likely misled by the Live 8 concert, Klein's primary concern was that the celebrity-endorsed event depoliticized its audience through inviting an inert kind of spectatorship – which was 'less dangerous and less powerful [than grassroots demonstrations]'.⁸ If Klein's argument is supportable, the 'stadium-rock model' represents a mode of delivery and reception that is relatively impotent with regard to allowing for creative 'action' on the part of the audience. Despite the unpopularity of cultivation theory, Klein rightly calls into question how one might defend the activeness of this audience, when compared to other types of campaign and direct political action. What the stadium-rock model provides, Klein suggests, is a standardized method of protest, which removes the 'locus of control'⁹ from the crowd, and places it squarely with the television networks, advertisers and celebrities, that stand to benefit from the production.

Despite Klein's allusions to the spectre of passivity, music festivals have largely enjoyed freedom from such potentially disparaging interpretations. Their countercultural heritage appears to broadly exempt them from the criticisms posed by Klein and the wary proponents of media cultivation theory, perpetuating the generalized assumption that festivals are participatory, subcultural and expressive social phenomena that induce a decidedly *active* mode of engagement. Despite Frith's brief recognition that Woodstock 'dramatized the total separation of artists from consumers',¹⁰ the convention of a Western, presentational performance model reproduced by many music festivals also tends to be de-emphasized. This assumption is, perhaps, evidence for the distorting effects of academic as well as popular nostalgia, which tends to revisit Woodstock as a moment of resistance, while generating a similar frame of interpretation for other events perceived within 'countercultural' terrain.

This chapter aims to provide a fresh perspective, via a critique of the uniform determinism broadly granted to festival audiences. Supporting Biocca's

⁷ Naomi Klein, quoted in Andrew Hanlon, 'Don't Let Celebrity Causes Fool You', *Calgary Sun* (9 October 2010) <<http://www.calgarysun.com/comment/columnists/2010/10/09/15644031.html>> [accessed 20 November 2010].

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Biocca, p. 67.

¹⁰ Frith, p. 222.

perception of the active and passive audience as meta-constructs,¹¹ demonstrated here is the need for a delineated typology of participation within music festival culture. The conceptual replacement of passivity and activity with Cremona's patterns of theatricality, as detailed at Section 2.7, is supported following an emphasis on the importance of control in understanding audience engagement. As the title of this chapter suggests, the arguments here problematize existing scholarship, while a discussion of the concert-model festival illuminates a performance system conducive to spectatorship. It is the mode of participation engendered by this system that is, as argued in Chapters 4 and 5, reversed by the case study events.

3.2 The Concert-Model Festival

It is difficult to posit a definitive classification of concert-model events, not least because almost all music festivals include a central main-stage set-up hosting what can be described as presentational performances. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the concert-model where it is most conspicuous within the broader collection of British outdoor festivals operating today. Following rapid sector growth in the last two decades, two fundamentally different approaches to production have become discernable, the extremities of which imply significantly contrasting modes of participation. What is described here as the concert-model event, is that which remains largely an appearance-oriented formula. Contrastingly the boutique festival, which has complicated its programming with visual and performance art, might emphasize immersive themes, participatory features and installations, alongside its line-up of acts.¹² It is only by first establishing the orthodox and presentational nature of the concert-model event, historically rooted in a Western performance tradition, that the alternative modes of participation emerging from the boutique approach can be contextualized and meaningfully understood.

¹¹ Biocca, p. 52.

¹² Boutique events also emphasize luxury, ecology and intimate scales. A full examination of the boutique event is provided in Chapter 5.

The most indicative examples of what can be classified as concert-model festivals are those at Leeds and Reading, though other examples in the UK could include Knebworth, Download, Bingley, and the Isle of Wight Festival. Taking the Festival Republic-owned Leeds Festival as an exemplifying event, focus is generally geared towards the action that unfolds on the main stage, despite its plethora of vendors and stages. Featured there is a substantial list of profile bands, largely from the guitar-based genres of rock and indie, though folk, hip-hop and dance acts are also included. A sizeable stage and eye-catching logos located either side makes for an iconic impression of the festival's brand identity, which until 2008 included the title sponsor Carling. This was abandoned, according to director Melvin Benn, in order to 'reclaim'¹³ the festival's original name. Owing to the successful 'commerce-free positioning'¹⁴ of the boutique event, this was no doubt also a competitive move in restoring to the festival an image of independence.



Figure 2: Reading Festival

The counterpart events at Leeds and Reading constitute a festival that relies wholly upon the programming of acts to guarantee both ticket sales and media attention. Audience experience is based around convivial sociality as well as music reception; however, the event relies on a set of nationally and internationally

¹³ Melvin Benn, quoted in 'Reading and Leeds Festival Drop Carling Sponsorship', *Victoria's Jukebox* <<http://victoriasjukebox.blogspot.com/2008/01/reading-and-leeds-festival-drop-carling.html>> [accessed 18 January 2010].

¹⁴ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals* (August 2008) <http://academic.mintel.com/sinatra/oxygen_academic/search_results/show&/display/id=479850/display/id=280413> [accessed 1 May 2009].

recognized names to induce attendance in the first instance. As the following figures suggest, an advertising strategy is adopted that is not only illustrative of the centrality of named music performances, but of the formulaic way in which these are organized each year.



Figure 3-4: A Star System

Each programmed selection is presented as a new combination of acts. When the lists are compared, it is clear that each round is a refreshed choice that considers both artists entering the market and shifts in the popularity of established and previously featured acts. Headline performances usually reflect who can be afforded as well as who is available each summer, though repeat performances are also common, with positioning on the bill changing as a performer ascends or descends the ladder of fame and notoriety. Leeds and Reading Festival are concert-model events because they principally represent a formula for the commercial utilization of profile artists as cultural capital, which translates into measurable capital for the promoter.

The parallel between the deployment of profile bands and the movie star in film provides a useful illustration of the same formula at work within an alternative industry. That the Hollywood star system is principally an economic

one is an observation made by a number of scholars,¹⁵ for stars constitute assets to those who benefit from their commercialization.¹⁶ Redmond and Holmes rightfully point out that participating in a rock concert constitutes an interaction with celebrity culture,¹⁷ while Graeme Turner erroneously omits the gig promoter in his itinerary of stakeholders in the rock star system.¹⁸ In today's burgeoning festival market, stars in music represent sought-after assets for the promoter and event organizer. As can occur in film, sole attention on acts also engenders simplicity in event format, allowing the main stage performances to stand out as the dominating features. This formula is, therefore, fully reliant upon the recording industry's generation of profile acts. Following the post-millennial demise in record sales, retained here is a business model dependent upon a substantially weakened industry, resulting in fierce competition between promoters to secure a limited number of acts.¹⁹ When the attractive guarantees offered by the full utilization of the star system are considered, it is not difficult to understand why this is the case. As Dyer puts forth, the star offers key commercial capital: stars represent investment and capital outlay.²⁰ It is true that both festivals and films can fail despite the inclusion of profile artists, yet many spend an enormous portion of their overall budgets on their procurement in order to better guarantee income from the audiences that will be attracted to the cultural product, in consequence. Stars in both contexts represent, therefore, a crucial business-model component and offer a commercial safety mechanism. In academic terms, this scenario is yet to induce a cultural critique of the festival industry, whereas in the realm of film, this formula stands accused of defusing the impetus to deliver an original and high-quality narrative.²¹ In the words of Hortense Powdermaker:

¹⁵ Richard Dyer, *Stars*, 2nd edn (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1998), pp. 10–11; Graeme Turner, 'The Economy of Celebrity', in *Stardom and Celebrity, A Reader* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 193–205.

¹⁶ Graeme Turner, p. 193.

¹⁷ Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, eds, *Stardom and Celebrity, a Reader* (London: Sage, 2007), p. 309.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The disadvantages of this formula have not gone unnoticed by the owners of the concert-model event exemplified here. Festival Republic continues to invest in, launch and purchase their own boutique-styled events, which so far have included *Latitude* and *The Big Chill*.

²⁰ Dyer, pp. 10–11.

²¹ *Ibid.*

The system provides a formula easy to understand and may serve also to protect executives from having to pay too much attention to such intangibles as the quality of a story or of acting. Here is a standardized product which can be sold and which banks regard as insurance for large profits.²²

The star system reproduced by the concert-model festival is comparable to that which is employed by the Hollywood film industry, and, as the following chapters testify, lends itself to a form of standardized production that can be similarly critiqued. Since the formula underpins both the concert-model festival and many Hollywood movies, that there is a similar failure to consider elements that may not be vital to its basic commercial function, but might significantly raise the quality of the product, is a potential claim. In film, stars can render complexity and originality of narrative unnecessary, for their inclusion in the drama guarantees a certain number of box office sales. Similarly for the concert-model festival, stars can also render ancillary attractions unnecessary in commercial terms; it is also the case that majority expenditure on live acts can leave little for investing in other areas of entertainment.

To argue that this system necessarily *deprives* its audience would confound the issue, for it is fully dependent upon music fans to 'fuel the economic enterprise of celebrity' – of which participation at a concert-model event is clearly a part.²³ Despite slow ticket sales reported in 2011, the festivals at Leeds and Reading sell out almost every year and represent a highly successful commercial model.²⁴ They can be considered to offer an experiential rite of initiation for teenagers, and many attend the event to celebrate the completion of their GCSE or A Level exams. And yet, this event formula is viewable as one that requires its audience to engage with the perpetuation of a performance convention that must separate them, symbolically and physically, from the fields of production. The concealment of creative production and its removal from the milieu of the audience makes possible the argument that the role of the audience is restricted to that of the spectator and consumer. If the concert-model event is spectator inducing there is,

²² Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: an Anthropologist looks at the Movie Makers* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951), pp. 228–29.

²³ Redmond and Holmes, p. 309.

²⁴ Sean Michaels, 'Michael Eavis: "Glastonbury is on its Way Out"', *Guardian and Observer 2011 Music Season* (11 July 2011) < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/jul/11/michael-eavis-glastonbury> > [accessed 15 July 2011].

perhaps, room for considering Guy Debord's spectacle. He prioritized the mediated image in the production of social separation, and it is surely conceivable that the familiar image of the main stage performance constitutes one that is both central to the festival experience and similarly communicative of a division between artist and audience.²⁵ The impression of the rock star on an elevated stage can be considered akin, therefore, to the Debordian spectacle Claire Bishop describes, i.e. one that reproduces a particular 'social relationship between people'.²⁶ This image of separation is especially characteristic of the concert-model festival, yet the social division between artist and audience is not, as the following chapters maintain, a uniform distinction within festival culture.

3.3 The Active Audience: a Critique

Frith's observation that there was a separation of consumers from artists at the 1969 Woodstock, constitutes no more than a single line in his *Sound Effects*.²⁷ Indeed, emphasizing the spectatorship intrinsic to many festivals is contrary to the (albeit scant) scholarly opinion existing on the subject. His perspective seems rather at odds with the broader, though questionable view that outdoor festivals produce a carnivalesque, participatory and 'active[ly] engag[ed]' crowd, found (for example) in the work of Laing and Botstein.²⁸ There, expressivism is evidenced by crowd sociality, visible jubilation and dance. Problematically, these are behaviours that become the signifiers of a liberated intentionality that, for the latter scholar, offer up a sharp contrast to the subordinated silence with which he appears to label the audience of the concert hall.²⁹ Laing also emphasizes active participation in his refutation of complaints regarding a 'mismatch' between the 'virtues of Afro-American music' and the mode of delivery reproduced at the concert-model event,

²⁵ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

²⁶ Bishop, p. 12.

²⁷ Frith, p. 222.

²⁸ Laing, p. 7; Leon Botstein, 'The Audience', *The Musical Quarterly*, 4th ser., 83 (1999) 479–86 (p. 481).

²⁹ Botstein, p. 481.

citing a jubilant, 'Dionysian' crowd as evidence against the artist/audience separations problematized by Bayles and Frith.³⁰

Where little engagement is outwardly observable, the participation of the audience is questioned; when the body assumes an expressive mode, audience 'activity' is assumed. As Bishop suggests, the notion of participation in the arts has replaced the cerebral act of thinking with a 'paradigm of physical involvement'.³¹ Botstein also illuminates the pervading association of cerebral response with passivity:

The more one listens as if 'moved by the contemplation of beauty' the more passive one must appear; it therefore becomes easier to conceal what one is thinking or feeling, or whether one is responding profoundly at all to music being played [...] and that requires the public signals of repose, decorum, discretion, and silence, which all might well be mistaken for passivity.³²

Problematizing the views of Ezra Pound, whose ideal performance necessarily occurs 'under glass', and 'on the other side of the footlights, apart from the audience',³³ Botstein revisits Adorno's critique of Wagner to support the argument that this separation 'further mystifies the artist beyond Wagner [...] offer[ing] us a strict regimen of behaviour befitting the so-called spectator, one ideally suited to utilize concealment'.³⁴ The view that this audience can be interpreted via a mystification of art and the artist is here accountable; however one may define the notion of 'activity', concert hall audiences are privy to the behavioural regimen that separates them, necessarily, from the objects of their attention. Botstein's remarks reveal justifiable cynicism towards the notion of passivity, theoretically consistent with Jaques Rancière, for, as stated by the latter; the 'paradox' of the spectator is based upon a 'tricky dramaturgy of guilt and redemption', and stereotyped oppositions between 'collective and individual, image and living

³⁰ Laing, p. 6-7.

³¹ Bishop, p. 11.

³² Botstein, p. 480.

³³ Murray Shafer, *Ezra Pound and Music. The Complete Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 82, cited in Botstein, p. 479.

³⁴ Botstein, p. 480.

reality [...] self-possession and alienation'.³⁵ It is surprising then, that Botstein alludes to the similarly slippery notion of the active audience in his attempt to dichotomize the inaccessibility of the concert hall performance with the determinism of the rock concert audience:

In the case of rock concerts [audiences] are so actively engaged in their own *self-expression* that, as audience members, they *create* their own event and sound. They are also convinced that the 'meaning' of that to which they are listening is not stable and lies not in the music itself and is certainly not limited by any authorial intentionality. Rather it is *created* by the context of the event and their own personal responses and associations [my emphases].³⁶

Beyond the combination of autonomy and context-dependency that can be inferred from the above, is an essentialist distinction between the audience of the concert hall and the audience of jazz and rock concerts. Justifiable is the claim that the rock experience is not limited by authorial intentionality; why this should be particular to the rock concert is trickier to defend, for employing the comparative lack of expression that characterizes the concert hall audience as grounds for denying them similar subjective powers of creation seems illogical. This inference of creativity on the part of the rock audience, and converse impotence on the part of the classical, is likely owing to an enduring association between festival and counterculture. Nevertheless, this distinction utilizes a false antithesis. Botstein's depiction of the two audience types questionably equates audience expression with audience control, falling privy to the passive/active meta-constructs justifiably critiqued by Biocca.³⁷ Passivity is seen as a form of participation subordinated to the cerebrum, while activity is expressive, communicative and intentional. Botstein's emphasis on personal determinism constitutes an unhelpful retreat into subjectivity; the role of the music 'author' is not wholly denied, yet (s)he is certainly de-emphasized in favour of the individual, who, merely by virtue of their ability to experience and express, is granted rather disproportionate

³⁵ Jaques Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator', unpublished conference paper <<http://digital.mica.edu/departamental/gradphoto/public/Upload/200811/Ranciere%20%20spectator.pdf>> [accessed 21 July 2011].

³⁶ Botstein, p. 483.

³⁷ Biocca, p. 51.

powers of determination. Such a view is not independent of the now-critiqued frame of cultural resistance employed by the CCCS in the interpretation of music-oriented social groupings, as detailed in Section 2.6. While the subjectivity of experience cannot be denied, this depiction of the festival audience does not allow room for recognizing important nuances in festival forms and contemporaneous modes of participation. The categorizing delineation of the concert hall audience as passive, and the rock concert audience as active is contrary to the germane view that they merely exhibit different standards of behaviour implied by contrasting types of celebration. The intuitive logic of Turner, who recognized that all celebratory behaviour is framed behaviour, is neglected in this 'liberated' interpretation of the rock audience.³⁸ This audience fails to embody the uniformity of attention that leads Botstein to lament the 'cold, impersonal' concert hall of the twentieth century,³⁹ though both cultural forms reproduce a presentational performance ideology. A depiction of the rock audience as the antithesis of that which occupies the concert-hall neglects, therefore, the commonalities shared by the social frames in which they exist. Despite their differentiation in the reified categories of the 'high' and 'popular' arts, they both emerge from the quintessentially Western and presentational performance tradition identified by Turino, where in both cases, there is a separation of artist from audience.⁴⁰

Recognizing the presentational underpinnings of Western concerts helps balance the overemphasis on audience determinism, as problematized here. An historical bifurcation between the entertainer and the entertained can be speculatively located; Botstein for example observes a transition from the command of music as craft by both musician and listener in the eighteenth century,⁴¹ to a post-1830 separation, where the 'possessor of convivial craft and skill' became a listener and spectator, on whom 'great expectations with respect to aesthetic sensibilities now rested'.⁴² The presentational performance model emerged symbiotically with the notion of musical connoisseurship; whether or not music was understood and appreciated became a matter of social distinction and

³⁸ Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), p. 28.

³⁹ Botstein, p. 484.

⁴⁰ Turino, pp. 139–41.

⁴¹ Botstein, p. 480.

⁴² *Ibid.*

cultural capital. As noted by Turino of presentational and participative performance in Zimbabwe, following an influx of European culture in the 1930s and '40s, the former became associated with 'educated people, advanced technical musicianship, refinement and being "civilized"'.⁴³ Botstein also relates the presentational model to the 'elevated' high art forms, yet he neglects the fact that similar mechanisms of social distinction are at work within the popular realm. The rock concert audience is not necessarily required to intellectually deconstruct, for example, the performances of rock and indie at Leeds and Reading Festival, yet attendance functions as a mark of affiliation with a music culture, distinguishing the audience member as separate and above the perceived musical 'mainstream'. This similarly represents a system of distinction and connoisseurship co-ordinated around music performances.

The work of Frith, Michael Clarke, Laing and McKay also provides ample evidence for the presentational heritage of the concert-model festival. Emerging from the jazz club scene (which McKay traces to a single club in Southampton), the trail-blazing outdoor festival at Beaulieu arose, in 1959, as a method of presenting a larger number of acts on the bill, because it could be spread out over several days.⁴⁴ As discussed in Section 2.4, these events formed a significant prelude to the establishment of a broader festival culture. Laing similarly depicts festivals as an extension of the jazz club experience. For jazz audiences accustomed to a single or limited number of acts at an evening club performance, the outdoor festival offered multiple acts, and a 'novel method of presenting music'.⁴⁵ The pop and rock festival emerged within the domain of jazz culture, attracting the same audience of jazz fans.⁴⁶

Similarly, the relationship between rock music and rock concerts is evidence for their inextricable existence and a presentational quality; indeed, concerts arose principally from the realization, by the end of the 1960s, that there was 'more money to be made out of rock music than out of other forms of pop'.⁴⁷ Outdoor concerts were methods of capitalizing on the popularity of new music;

⁴³ Turino, p. 139.

⁴⁴ McKay, *Glastonbury*, pp. 2-3, Michael Clarke, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Laing, p. 5.

⁴⁶ John Hammond and Irving Townsend, *John Hammond on Record: an Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 1981), p. 336, in Laing, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Frith, p. 100.

they were platforms for the celebration of profile musicians from the outset. The significance of the festival line-up has not been neglected by all; while Frith notes that rock musicians became ‘new sorts of idols’,⁴⁸ Arthur Marwick describes music festivals as the ‘join[ing] hands’ of the ‘idolatry’ inspired by rock music, and ‘nature, love, drugs and mass togetherness’.⁴⁹ Given the centrality of featured musicians, Laing’s use of Bey’s *Temporary Autonomous Zone* in defining the social significance of the outdoor festival glosses over those events that are inconsistent with Bey’s conceptualization. As Section 2.4 testifies, not only did Bey’s ‘TAZ’ necessarily exist outside of economic mechanisms, it also dissolved the artist/audience distinction by demystifying the performer and democratizing art.⁵⁰ Contrary to the suggestion of Laing, Bey’s TAZ is not applicable to most festival events. There are also problematic inconsistencies between Bakhtin’s carnivalesque and Laing’s claims to a ‘carnivalesque dimension’ and an ‘impetus towards reversal’.⁵¹ As discussed at Section 2.3, Bakhtin refers to the celebratory inversion of accepted social norms and hierarchies; in his examination of medieval carnival, this was characterized by men dressing as women, the elevation of children to an authoritative status, and by the general mockery of the Church and of monarchs. The temporary decriminalization of drugs might to some extent be deemed a contemporary inversion of social rule, comparable to Bakhtin’s carnival, yet the ways in which music festivals actually reproduce systems of hierarchy – by placing the most expensive featured acts at the zenith of the celebration – is disregarded by this account. Here, Bey and Bakhtin are deployed in the analysis of festivals inclusive of those that are, arguably, quite far from their original conceptualizations. Citing Sue Vice, Laing depicts a fluid boundary between performers and audience,⁵² and yet this seems rather at odds with the realities of many outdoor festivals: featured acts remain as common foci, elevated upon stages with lighting shows and effects, all of which loom before crowds of tens (or hundreds) of thousands. Large screens are utilized for close-up images of the

⁴⁸ Frith, p. 99.

⁴⁹ Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 497, cited in McKay, *Glastonbury*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Bey, p. 40.

⁵¹ Laing, p. 7.

⁵² Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 187, in Laing, p. 7.

artists, manufacturing the artificial sense of intimacy similarly achieved in film,⁵³ while the physical elevation of stage-dwellers communicates to the audience their ethereal superiority. Arguably, events like this are more closely aligned to a theatre, rather than a carnival, production. They constitute a physical space that predisposes spectators to focus on a stage, in a way not dissimilar to that which is described by Gay McAuley, of the theatre auditorium.⁵⁴ It should also be noted that the physical distance that separates artist from audience is often greater at the concert-model festival than at the concert hall, as might be the size of the performance arena. McAuley's depiction of the actor-spectator relationship might be similarly applicable to the concert-model event, for despite their physical separation, there are 'complex flows of energy' that pass between them.⁵⁵ And yet, these proximities create a space demonstrable of the fact that the mystification of the artist, described by Botstein, is not exclusive to the classical setting.⁵⁶

The fact that music festivals are conducive to spectatorship, as demonstrated above, is erroneously de-emphasized when the creativity of the festival audience is uniformly magnified. Unpopular as the observation may be, it is the creative outputs of featured acts, not of the audience, that is central to the concert-model event. The apparent expressivism of the audience does not demonstrate the transcendence of behavioural regimens, but simply, a revised set in action. Despite a greater freedom of expression, the members remain subject to norms and expectations governed by the spatial and contextual setting. At the concert-model festival there remains a uniformity of participation implicit to its programming and spatial architecture, and to its concealment of production. Human labour is responsible for every aspect of its production, yet the *appearance* of the handmade is much removed from the visual setting of our exemplifying twins, Leeds and Reading Festival. In contrast to the events discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, food and drink vendors do not promote lengthy sociality away from the presentational performances. All aspects of event design reproduce an artist-centric event conducive to the continued reception of music in one or other of its

⁵³ Andrew Evans and Dr Glenn D. Wilson, *Fame, the Psychology of Stardom* (London: Satin Publications Ltd, 1999), p. 35.

⁵⁴ Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 275.

⁵⁵ McAuley, p. 247.

⁵⁶ Botstein, p. 480.

arena-sized tents and stages, while advertising, decor, staging and branding all resonate with large-scale and mechanistic, as opposed to individualized or handmade, production. Contrary to Botstein's claim that the audience 'creates their own event and sound',⁵⁷ these standardizing conditions create an overarching frame of celebration that implies spectatorship, despite both the expressivism of the audience, and the experiential nuances of individuals. Consequently, claims to an active audience are, in this context, inherently problematic.

3.4 Re-Evaluating Participation

Uncritical allusions to the determinism of the festivalgoer are conceptually descended both from the CCCS school of thought, and from the theoretical active audience 'meta-construct', which was already solidifying by the time Woodstock took place.⁵⁸ As argued by Biocca, audience passivity is recognized as a problematic concept in some quarters, yet this is often accompanied by an equally problematic reassertion that all audiences are active, as the purposive title of Rancière's *Emancipated Spectator* suggests. Biocca, however, goes some distance to illuminate how the enshrinement of the audience as active goes beyond the 'strident, if not sometimes hollow' claims regarding the 'radical individualism' of the '60s counterculture.⁵⁹ The desire to reinstall the individual with action arose not only from the inability to locate and measure the 'hypodermic'⁶⁰ effects of the so-called mass culture, but on a more profound level, sought to reinstate the classical liberal democratic citizen.⁶¹ This brings to light the politically loaded aspects of the active audience, the intentionality of which is equated with a particular type of freedom: choice. Media theory reinstalled the populace with control, yet its logic was problematic because it represented a narrow notion of freedom: 'this was a shopkeeper's citizen [...] patrolling the periphery of his or her

⁵⁷ Botstein, p. 483.

⁵⁸ Biocca, p. 71.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

consciousness with a vigilant consumerism'.⁶² Nevertheless, the choice and intentionality of consumer behaviour was used as evidence against the notion of the passive, cultivated audience.

It is therefore not difficult to understand why festival audiences have been declared 'actively engaged',⁶³ when the cerebral processes subject to watching television and reading newspapers had already been used to qualify the mass media audience as such. As Rancière states, 'the spectator is active, as the student or scientist: he observes, he selects, he compares, he interprets'.⁶⁴ And yet, *all* modes of engagement are problematically rendered active under such a premise. Biocca rightly points to the absurdity of cerebral intention as a signifier of 'activity'; he asks, should we be surprised that audience members rarely claim that they engage with the media for no reason?⁶⁵ Similarly, 'if the existence of passivity is to be defined by self-reports of unmotivated behaviour, should we be surprised by its absence?' Biocca justifiably highlights the questionable conflation of 'activity' with the simple act of thinking; this not only renders activity everything, and thus, nothing, it also renders the active audience unfalsifiable.⁶⁶ Consequently he offers up a dry, though valid witticism: 'for what – short of brain death – would render an individual a member of the passive audience?'⁶⁷

Despite the cogency of Biocca, his passivity/activity meta-constructs are firmly embedded in the discourses central to this study and therefore cannot, and should not, be dispensed with. However, interpretation and analysis must consider both the constructedness of these concepts and what the difference between them actually represents in the social milieu under investigation. Consequently, and following the conclusions of Biocca, interpretations of audience activity and passivity are replaced with an emphasis on the 'locus of control', via an examination of how far audiences directly influence event content.⁶⁸ This seems sensible, for, indeed, debates about audience activity usually mask issues of control. Arguments that label audiences passive, while erroneously implying a lack

⁶² Biocca, p. 57.

⁶³ Botstein, p. 483.

⁶⁴ Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator'.

⁶⁵ Biocca, p. 58.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Biocca, p. 61.

of intentionality and motivation on behalf of the social actor, actually problematize the audience's failure to exert influence over the medium or art form in question. Take the following claim by Stoeltje:

Festival actively engages the participants. It is this feature that distinguishes festival from those large-scale forms that may be observed from a distance or by television or those events in which the participants passively receive messages but have no *choice* in their roles [my emphasis].⁶⁹

One might elaborate where she does not: choice of role in a festival context could include that which contributes to production, influencing performances and other tangible features. Here, a useful definition of activity would not resort to subjective experience, but would instead relate to whether or not the audience exerts control over the medium in which they engage. Of the television and radio audience, Biocca posits the same: the debate regarding passivity and activity ought not depend upon a capacity for thought, 'rather, the question turns on whether the audience has active control over the structure of the information process'.⁷⁰

Equating, or even replacing, interpretations of activity with that of control better defines the nuanced modes of participation raised in this thesis, and falls naturally in line with the patterns of theatricality conceptually utilized throughout. Described at Section 2.7, the *paidian* and the *ludic* carnival types are defined according to the contrasting degree to which the audience is permitted to become a part of, and thus to control, the carnival production. According to Cremona, ludic carnival in Malta emphasizes ostentatious display and restricts audience participation to spectatorship.⁷¹ If we equate activity with control, it follows that there is a low degree of active participation in this context, for the audience exerts little or no influence in shaping, directly, the content and structure of the carnival. In Cremona's account, the *paidian* carnival dissolves ludic regimen through allowing both prescribed performers and a spontaneous audience to become theatrical. Theatricality at the *paidian* carnival extends to an interaction between

⁶⁹ Stoeltje, pp. 262–63.

⁷⁰ Biocca, p. 61.

⁷¹ Cremona, pp. 70–71.

the procession and audience, placing the latter closer to the performative core, and allowing audience members to influence the shape of the event and to shift between the role of spectator and performer. Audience expression is not sidelined by elaborate performances but forges the spectacle of the event itself. In this context, the fact of audience expression, as is deployed by Laing and Botstein in claims to an active audience, is less important than its role in claiming control over the carnival production.

The spectatorship and presentational performance mode that characterizes concert-model festivals point to a frame of celebration that, while permitting a subjective mind and an expressive body, adopts an organizational and spatial structure that restricts audience control. Comparable to the ludic carnival, this control is deployed to reproduce a performance-centric event that is largely independent of direct audience engagement. In summation, conceptualizing festival audiences as 'actively engaged' is unhelpful for a number of reasons, predominantly because the phrase is so generously applied in multiple contexts, as to render it meaningless.⁷² Bypassing the pitfalls inherent to the dichotomization of activity and passivity, later chapters employ the reasoning of Biocca and the participative modes forged by Cremona to provide, instead, a more plausible examination of audience behaviour. The following chapter now turns to a contemporary event that, in contrast to that examined here, exemplifies the theatrical participation generated by the *paidian* event.

⁷² Botstein, p. 483.

4. 'No Spectators' at Burning Man

4.1 Introduction

Burning Man isn't your usual festival, with big acts booked to play on massive stages. In fact, it's more of a city than a festival, wherein almost everything that happens is created entirely by its citizens, who are active participants in the event.¹

The above description, featured on the home page of the Burning Man website, alludes to the strange mixture of civic organization and audience-produced features that characterize the festival. Despite problematic conceptualizations of the active audience, discussed in the previous chapter, the celebration of the 'active participant' is here testament to the centrality of this ideal in the discourses produced by the event. Deploying the reasoning of Rancière, who identified the distinction between the passive and the active as a 'dramaturgy' of oppositions between alienation and self-possession, it is possible to interpret beyond what is stated here in black and white.² Revealing is the distinction between the 'usual festival' – which exemplifies the concert model, identified at Section 3.2 – and that which is 'created entirely by its citizens'. Here, an underlying subtext offers 'an allegory of inequality'; Burning Man is celebrated as an equalizer of producers and consumers, allowing its audience the capacity to create, while the concert-model event consequently becomes associated with the opposite.³ Juxtaposing the 'big acts' and 'massive stages' of the 'usual' festival against the participant-produced event problematizes both the concert-model star system and the supposed passivity of its audience.

The spatial, organizational and aesthetic dimensions of Burning Man (BM hereafter) all resonate with this critical position. Situated in a dry expanse of the

¹ *Burning Man* <<http://www.burningman.com/>> [accessed 24 October 2011].

² Jaques Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator'.

³ *Ibid.*

Nevada desert, the monolithic main stage of a conventional music festival is conspicuously absent; instead, convivial space is made up of a milieu of small tents, stages and geodesic structures littered in close proximity across the sand. Figure 5 is a simplified portrayal of the site's basic layout. Structures are arranged in a semicircular configuration, with a large open space in the centre home to the 'Man'; a towering effigy skilfully constructed. Longitude and latitude are replaced with 'times' on a 'clock'. Hundreds of features, lacking clear demarcations on the land aside from makeshift signage, are marked out on upon a clock-face map given to attendees as they enter. The white circle, directly underneath the symbol of the man, represents 'centre camp' – a nucleus of activity within the encampments and the only place on site where it is possible to purchase anything, though this is restricted to coffee and ice. On Figure 5, the avenues and streets marked out on the upper left reference 'The Body' – a previous theme, chosen for the millennial event.

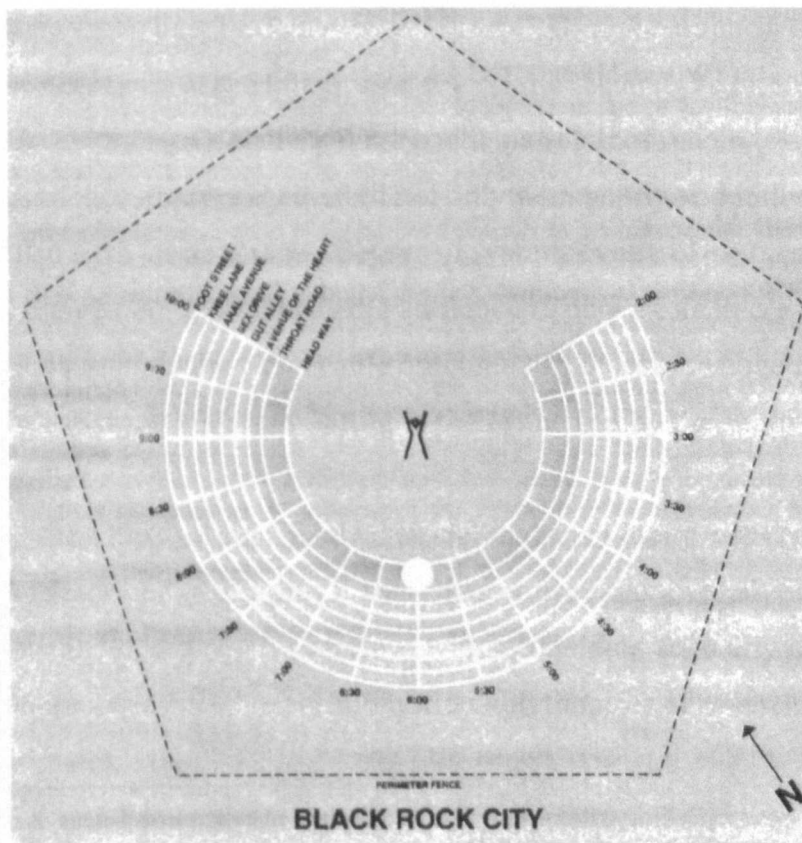


Figure 5: Burning Man City Plan

Image taken from John F. Sherry and Robert V. Kozinets, 'Comedy Of The Commons: Nomadic Spirituality And The Burning Man Festival', *Consumer Culture Theory, Research in Consumer Behaviour*, 11 (2007), 119–47 (p. 124).

Audience-sourced volunteers create the bulk of the structures at BM, which house thousands of activities, performances and entertainments. These take place over a week, alongside numerous art installations. Importantly, despite the fact that music reception is a core pastime for attendees at both BM and the concert-model event, the former intentionally omits the programming formula of the latter. It is not incidental that the abundance of music at BM unusually lacks promotional emphasis, but rather, this approach is crucial to the idealizing discourses that characterize the event. It is difficult to find any line-up information, and though BM might be patronized by well-known acts in music who sometimes choose to perform, this fact remains, in large part, a hidden aspect of the event.

The challenge to the star system here accompanies a more general rejection of *the spectator*. As the opening excerpt suggests, there is an attempt to replace the spectator, constructed as an alienated and subordinated social actor, with the active participant. Types of activity at BM can be unpacked via nuanced conceptions of the immersive, the relational, and the interactive,⁴ though they are united by an ideal of extreme participation that resonates with the logic of Biocca: audience activity is equated not only with bodily and individual expression, but also with an imperative degree of systemic control.⁵ A paidian mode of engagement, that allows the audience to play a role in creating the festival it consumes, is the observable outcome of a discourse engendered not only by the text-based artefacts relating to the event, but by the shape of its social and spatial milieu.

Illustrating a festival model that is, in many ways, antithetical to that which is described in Chapter 3, this chapter provides an analytic discussion of the BM event. Following an overview, which considers scholarly interpretations that emphasize social experimentation and theories of re-enchantment, Sections 4.5 to

⁴ As mentioned previously, the author's conceptualization of 'extreme participation' is brought about, in the festival context, by the programming of relational, immersive and interactive features. Though the aim of this study is not to rigidly delineate such overlapping concepts, some clarification here may be helpful. The author uses the term 'immersive' to emphasize environment in the scenic and theatrical shaping of contextual surroundings (for example, through the use of theme). 'Interactive' is employed to convey installations and performances that follow a controlled model of artist/audience dialogue, whereas 'relational' refers to performances and installations that allow for more spontaneous, de-authored contributions from the audience.

⁵ Biocca, p. 61.

4.7 document the 'No Spectators' idiom in action. Section 4.5 divides its synchronic praxes into two broad categories, performance and production, yet these fields should not be considered independent or rigidly defined aspects of the festival. Section 4.5.1 focuses on expressive theatricality and the re-configuration of the audience as performers, while Section 4.5.2 emphasizes voluntary systems of labour and the way in which social milieu is audience-produced: despite this delineation, these ought to be considered convergent phenomena.⁶

Analyses of the BM event are contextualized at Section 4.6 with an examination of the transnational 'Burner Diaspora'.⁷ As shall be seen, BM is widely considered an annual celebration, yet it has also forged an international network that allies a scattering of smaller, affiliated events across the globe, which are officially incorporated into a BM Network. An examination of the global reach of BM's 'No Spectators' idiom presented in Section 4.6 necessarily precludes the discussion of British, BM-inspired events, so that the cultural relationship between these two phenomena might be discerned via a process of logical comparison. As is later shown in Chapter 5, BM has influenced the programming and creative direction of a number of festivals that cannot claim any official connection to the BM organization. This chapter provides, then, the material necessary to tackle the questions and hypotheses central to this investigation: how far has BM influenced participation at music festivals in Britain? And, to what extent does the co-option of BM-inspired discourses and praxes, at SGP and beyond, de-radicalize their meaning? Drawing upon both the concert-model event previously discussed, and the BM event presented here, these issues are later unpacked using a case study examination of SGP, an analysis of boutique festival culture in Britain, and RTR 2010 as action research.

The material presented here is the outcome of a methodological approach to investigating BM, which can be revisited at Section 1.5.3. There, a discussion defended the utilization of existing scholarly material, despite the author attending the festival in September 2009. This visit was responsible for the course of the study, yet it did not constitute premeditated field research. Aside from sporadic

⁶ Volunteer roles could, for example, involve working in a fancy dress boutique or engaging in interactive performance.

⁷ 'Regionals Network History', *Burning Man*

<http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_history.html> [accessed 23 May 2011].

jottings, the researcher did not collect a large quantity of field notes and documentary evidence. As a consequence, direct observations from this visit are used secondarily to the evidence collected by scholars specializing in the analysis of this festival. It should also be noted that while the history of BM is briefly recounted here in Section 4.2, an excellent and detailed history can be found in Brian Doherty's *This is Burning Man: the Rise of a New American Underground*,⁸ and elsewhere. It is therefore not my intention to regurgitate previous histories, but to provide a discussion of the existing theoretical work that testifies to its participative ideal.

4.2 Black Rock City

As the name suggests, BM gathers annually around the colossal effigy of a 'man', which is ceremoniously burnt on the Saturday night of the celebration. With humble beginnings on a San Francisco beach, BM is a festival of performing and visual arts that has long been associated with a markedly creative audience. Roughly 50,000 adults today frequent the event. They are not barred from bringing children, though it is not generally considered a family friendly environment.⁹

Frequently referred to as 'Black Rock City' and 'the Playa', the prioritization of installation art in the allocation of funds at BM has been credited with creating 'more artistic expressions in more media per square foot than anywhere else on earth'.¹⁰ A denigration of spectators and the militant promotion of extreme participation are consistent with the ideals emphasized in scholarly analyses. These tendencies are attributable to a staunch performance ideology, yet Larry Harvey, BM's founder, rejects 'ideology' as an appropriate term – preferring to deploy 'principles' and 'ethos' in describing the socio-political underpinnings of the event.¹¹ It is without doubt that Harvey himself has, in large part, both instigated and refined the positions expounded by the event. A rejection of commodification

⁸ Brian Doherty, *This is Burning Man: the Rise of a New American Underground* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2004).

⁹ Not only is the physical environment challenging, but also parents will likely consider many of the entertainments unsuitable for children.

¹⁰ Doherty, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

and a celebration of participation are two such positions conspicuously detailed on the festival's website and reproduced via the co-operation of participants as they acclimatize to the ethos. Participants implement these principles with experiential and creative contributions: they create and interact with theme camps, installations and performance, they embellish their bodies with costume, and they donate to the festival through various forms of voluntary labour. BM's clarion call to reclaim performance does appear to succeed in its own context; boundaries between performers, artists, producers and consumers are confused, and spectacular display is spread across installations, vehicles, temporary dwellings and people.

In Doherty's history, Harvey reflects on the human tendency to mythologize moments of conception in order to enshrine them in cultural significance: 'they want first causes in a mystical sense, as if everything radically emanate[s] from some singular and unconditionally real event'.¹² Despite this introspection regarding the quasi-mystification of 'first causes', Harvey does reveal a deciding moment of unison between the few friends and family gathered at the first burn of a stylised wooden man on Baker Beach, in 1986. It would, nonetheless, be erroneous to reduce BM's history to this first gathering without crediting the influence of pre-existing happenings, artistic scenes and festive events of the Californian avant-garde. Harvey was influenced by intellectuals that he knew, and artists – in particular Mary Grauberger, who hosted art parties on the same beach as the so-called 'first burn', which ended in the torching of sculptures.¹³ Harvey attended these events and, according to Grauberger, was struck by the way that 'you could be free, and not have an institution, and create incredible art and burn it'.¹⁴ In 1986 Harvey, who was an 'under-employed' landscape gardener at the time, built an eight-foot wooden effigy of a man with a friend and carpenter Jerry James. This effigy was ceremoniously burnt with an attending audience of twenty.¹⁵ This detail, gleaned from the BM website in 2007 by Wendy Clupper, differs to the website's collectivized narrative that today replaces Harvey and

¹² Doherty, p. 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Wendy Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 39.

James with 'a group of friends'.¹⁶ It has been suggested that the effigy was first meant to represent the end of a relationship between Harvey and an unknown woman, though there is no 'official line' on this story, only speculation.¹⁷ The burn continued to take place annually with a crowd that grew slowly and steadily, along with media coverage and contributions from local artists. It remained small during its first three years, and by 1989, its crowd totalled only 300.¹⁸ By this time, the event had become a collaborative affair between Harvey and the Cacophony Society, which attempted to playfully disrupt daily routines through 'public outrageousness, street theatre, bizarre costuming, [and] public acts of revolution'.¹⁹ The group continues to exist today and, referencing a 'discordant' quality, could be considered akin to the poetic terrorism championed by Hakim Bey:

[The Cacophony Society is a] loosely-structured network of individuals, banded together – as our name suggests – by a common love of cultural noise: belief systems, aesthetics, and ways of living striking a note of discord against prevailing harmonies.²⁰

This relationship crystallized the aim to denaturalize participants from the 'prevailing harmonies' of the world outside, despite the retention of a light-hearted and comedic tone. Harvey's comments regarding the Society also allude to the fact the BM did not evolve into a participant-focused event over time but was such at its inception. Recollecting an illegal party that the Society dubbed 'The Atomic Café', Harvey describes an imaginatively themed scenario 'premised on the notion that a nuclear war had occurred'.²¹ As would grow characteristically strong of the later BM events, the animation of this theme by attendees was crucial: 'The idea with Cacophony was always that you were the entertainment. You make your own

¹⁶ 'Regionals Network History'.

¹⁷ Doherty, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁰ 'An Introduction to Cacophonous Concepts', *The Cacophony Society* <<http://www.cacophony.intro.html>> [accessed July 7 2010].

²¹ Larry Harvey, 'La Vie Bohème – a History of Burning Man', *Burning Man* (24 February 2000) <http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/la_vie.html> [accessed 9 July 2010].

show'.²² The centrality of the participant coincided with a relational approach to aesthetics that, as defined by Nicolas Bourriaud, took direct, human interactions as its 'theoretical horizon'.²³ From the outset, early BM events were consistent with the challenges to spectatorship found in the cultural spheres of both contemporary art and theatre. Harvey's creation of 'situations', like the relational art Bourriaud describes, legitimized unconventional spaces as galleries by collapsing the 'pseudo-artistic' notions of how art should be exhibited.²⁴ In the field of performing arts, this also paralleled the pursuit of a theatre 'where spectators will no longer be spectators, where they will [...] become active participants in collective performance instead of being passive viewers'.²⁵

That BM today is a unique cultural event is not a romantic assertion. The sprawl of aestheticized encampments, fashioning a surreal explosion of colour and music onto an otherwise detached and arid landscape, can be likened to a Salvador Dali painting made real. Many participants are based in California, while some travel from other American states and further afield. Irish and Scottish themed areas give the festival a distinct British presence. Expenditure on travelling to BM from such far-flung places can total thousands of pounds; a sizeable cost matched by the psychological and physical demands of desert life. A fundamentally unusual aspect of this annual celebration is its harsh, desert location. During the day, the heat rises to highs that are difficult to bear; likewise, the temperature drop at night is severe. It is generally assumed that the choice in venue is owing to the fact that it is the only area where the State police are willing to overlook the burning of vast art installations, and other legally questionable (and potentially dangerous) behaviour. That so many thousands are willing to live in these harsh conditions testifies to the considerable dedication and reverence attached to the freedom of experience that this venue permits.

Consistent with the festivals discussed in Section 2.4, BM and its organizing entity, Black Rock City LLC (BRCLLC), have had to negotiate a path between order and disorder. Most regulations and policy enforced by the organization emerge directly from the principles it enshrines. Nonetheless, BRCLLC has also had to

²² Ibid.

²³ Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Relational Aesthetics', in Bishop, pp. 160–71 (p. 160).

²⁴ Bourriaud, in Bishop, p. 160.

²⁵ Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator'.

compromise with the authoritative agencies and 'conservative elements' to which it is legally beholden.²⁶ Black Rock Land Management, a regional organization, and the US federal government, maintain the authority to control and protect the land. Allegra Fortunati reports, as do others, that law enforcement agencies regularly patrol the event.²⁷ It is likely that plain-clothes officers are frequent attendants, for police presence is not at all conspicuous. Government involvement was less stringent in the early years, but now authorities exert significant pressure on BRCLLC to comply with various regulations to ensure legitimacy and survival. The company has not only had to pour considerable finance into public relations in order to appease these agencies, but its efforts to accommodate them have invariably led to a transformation of the event.²⁸ This transformation has resulted in a smooth operation, which has, generally speaking, failed to extinguish a countercultural, new age reputation. Whereas the events discussed in Section 2.4 were often at the centre of an oppositional struggle between festivalgoers and the authorities, BM can be considered a successful integration of legal requirements, aesthetics and socio-political values. BM has, like a city, evolved a necessarily systemic, and in many ways predictable, 'skeleton', yet the audience-generated variation within this framework helps to ensure spontaneity and individuality on the level of experience.

The demographic make-up of BM participants has undoubtedly changed over time as it has grown into an event of global repute. Doherty references, perhaps, a younger BM when he claims that the event 'tiptoes a knife edge between two dominant alternative outlooks in American underground culture [...] roughly characterized as punk and hippie'.²⁹ By the 1990s, Joanne Northrup observed that she was 'surrounded by an astonishing amount of wealth [at Burning Man] owing to the economic boom of the late 1990s'.³⁰ Claiming that the event was no longer based on a majority of 'unemployed poets', she also realized that BM had become

²⁶ Allegra Fortunati, 'Utopia, Social Sculpture, and Burning Man', in Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen, eds., *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2005), pp. 151-70 (p. 157).

²⁷ Fortunati, p. 157.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Doherty, p. 169.

³⁰ Joanne Northrup, 'Kaleidoscopic Cortege, Art Cars at Burning Man, and Beyond', in Gilmore and Van Proyen, *Afterburn*: pp. 131-49 (p. 140).

an international event.³¹ I felt, on attending in 2009, that a middle- to upper-class, international crowd populated the event; there were affluent and educated attendants of a broad age range, which seemed rather at odds with media allusions to its neo-pagan, anarchic nature. It is conceivable that the media regularly distort and overstate the anarchic dimension of the event and its patrons, for in 2001 a survey found that information and computer technology was, alongside art, one of the two largest industries occupied by BM participants.³² The high-tech industries of California are likely to be responsible for this. Indeed, to mark their attendance at the event, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin used an illustration of BM's focal installation as the very first embellishment of their universally recognized logo.³³



Figure 6: Google Doodle

'Doodles', *Google* <<http://www.google.com/doodles/finder/1998/All%20doodles>> [accessed 8 January 2012]

That Brin and Page are regular attendants at BM is a fact widely reported. To the knowledge of the author, there are no interviews with the company's founders that detail their individual motivations to attend, or their experiences at the festival, though claims regarding BM's popularity with 'tech types' confirm a cultural connection between this festival and the workforce at Silicon Valley.³⁴

Beyond crude facts of age and occupation, the audience at BM is hard to pigeonhole. Some may come for what they perceive to be sexual liberation, others are more likely to be interested in the artistic and political appeal of the event; still

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fortunati, p. 160.

³³ 'Google Doodle History', *Google* <<http://www.google.com/doodle4google/history.html>> [accessed 26 May 2011].

³⁴ Chris Taylor, 'Talent Hunting in the Counterculture', *CNN Money* (2006) <http://money.cnn.com/2006/08/31/technology/BurningManTalent_futureboy.biz2/index.htm> [accessed 24 October 2011].

others may consider their attendance a spiritual act. It is difficult to pin down the commonalities that must underpin the audience of an event as irregular as BM. That many wear costumes supports the symmetry between subculture and style discussed in Section 2.6, yet the temporal nature of this activity undermines the ability to frame the audience accordingly. It might simply be the case that 'Burners' are driven to attend through an affiliation with the principles of the event.³⁵ Larry Harvey's reflection on intentionality could suggest that, given their diversity, attendees may be defined in terms of their membership in a temporary community:

This virtual community is demographically diverse. It is multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and represents a wide range of age groups. It is formed in the image of the great ecumenical world that surrounds us; a teeming population of uprooted individuals. In other words, this intentional community that we create from nothing, and that returns to nothing when we leave, has been 'liberated' from nearly every context of ordinary life.³⁶

Indeed, the hardship and expense endured by festivalgoers indicates a level of dedication that, despite the geographic disparateness of international attendees, suggests a neo-tribal identification with the event: it is the 'ambiences, feelings and emotions' that unite them in considering BM a worthwhile experience.³⁷ Motivations for attendance are broad, yet the valuing of BM as a kind of aesthetic or spiritual pilgrimage, that provides emotional sustenance during the rest of the year, is a recurring theme. This is supported by Katherine Chen's investigation of volunteer motivations, as one of her respondents states, 'Burning Man allows me to have the sanity to make it through the year [...] should that be taken away, [the job] wouldn't be worth it'.³⁸ Despite the experimental nature of BM, this comment demonstrates the applicability of the safety-valve theories discussed at Section 2.3; at least for this respondent, BM seems to compensate for the reality of their daily regime.

³⁵ *Burning Man* attendees frequently describe themselves as 'Burners'.

³⁶ Harvey, 'La Vie Bohème – a History of Burning Man'.

³⁷ Maffesoli, p. 11.

³⁸ Katherine K. Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 118.

The event and its patrons mediate respective values, offering, perhaps, some logical criteria on which to define the audience: this predominantly Californian group is liberal, eco-conscious, and not averse to socio-political discussion. It can be assumed that most of them would reject traditional two-party politics, though their values are more consistent with the left than with the right. Audience commonalities are analogous to the ethos that attracts them: they value art and act out the desire to aestheticize life. Despite the connection between BM and Silicon Valley, in this sense, the audience at BM coincides with what might be described as a 'bohemian' culture, i.e. one associated with a countercultural lifestyle and the artistic workers of the creative class.³⁹ The combination of bohemian, technical and international attendees demonstrate that a plurality of nationalities and occupations comprise the BM audience. Pinning down a common audience profile may be as fruitless as pinpointing an 'essential' nature of the festival. As Davis concedes, 'its diversity and contradictions undermine any generalizations you might be tempted to make'.⁴⁰ What is clear, nonetheless, is that this sequestered space has attracted attendees from widely divergent backgrounds, from anarchistic punks to some of the highest paid blue chip workers in the world. As the following sections testify, these attendees participate in creating a critical space that challenges the conventions of presentational performance and spectatorship found elsewhere in contemporary festival culture.

4.3 The Social Experiment

If carnival inverts the embedded features of the official culture, as is argued by Danow, one might infer that BM is distinctly carnivalesque.⁴¹ If utopianism denaturalizes the hegemonic reality, by 'imaginatively transcending [...] material

³⁹ The 'creative class' have been described as 'authors, designers, musicians and composers, actors and directors, craft-artists, painters, sculptors, artist printmakers, photographers, dancers, artists, performers and related workers' by Richard Florida, 'Bohemia and Economic Geography', *Journal of Economic Geography*, 2 (2002), 55–71 (p. 59), in Roberta Comunian, Alessandra Faiggion and Qian Cher Li, 'Unrewarded Careers in the Creative: the Strange Case of Bohemian Graduates', *Papers in Regional Science*, 2nd ser., 89 (2010), 389–411 (p. 390).

⁴⁰ Erik Davis, 'Beyond Belief, The Cults of Burning Man', in Gilmore and Van Proyen, *Afterburn*: pp. 15–40 (p. 15).

⁴¹ Danow, pp. 3–4.

limitations', one might also describe BM as a fleeting utopia.⁴² Indeed, the event is as potent in its critical discourse as it is in its aesthetic statement. The integration of idealism and event production as praxis, discussed at Section 2.5 in relation to *Nimbin* and the *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival*, is powerfully characteristic of BM. Championing a repertoire of slogans that includes 'De-Commodification', 'Radical Self Reliance', 'Radical Inclusion', 'Radical Self Expression', 'No Spectators' and 'Leave No Trace',⁴³ there is an obvious attempt to synthesize ideological tenets, programming and production into a comprehensively participative system. The avoidance of the term 'festival', coupled with emphases on the communitarian aspects of the event, point to its own positioning as a social experiment.

The use of the environmentally conscious mantra 'Leave No Trace' is a powerful example of this, though it is not a slogan unique to BM. The event's total refusal to manage the majority of festivalgoer rubbish (with the exception of human waste), and the conspicuous absence of dustbins for general use, *is* unique, and surprising: all theme camps and participants are obliged to haul their own waste back out from the desert and to a local waste-sorting site. Such an approach to site-wide waste management seems inconceivable elsewhere. The decrease in event costs that invariably results from such an action might invite cynical interpretations; indeed it is without doubt that the transfer of responsibility from organizers to participants is demonstrative of the audience's compliance with rules that are conducive to their own labour. What undermines subsequent interpretations of exploitation is the audience's willingness and support of the 'Leave No Trace' scheme – a fact suggestive of the power of an ethical stance, as Kate Oakley similarly found in her research on British festival workers, in invoking free labour and support.⁴⁴

Regarding the anti-commercial stance of BM, one might at first question how far this can be labelled irregular due to the fact that (as Chapter 2 made clear) many music festivals inherit the anti-commercial rhetoric of the 1960s counterculture, from which they emerged. And yet, a site-wide ban on commercial

⁴² Reedy, p. 178.

⁴³ Lee Gilmore, 'Of Ordeals and Operas: Reflexive Ritualizing at the Burning Man Festival', in Graham St John, ed., *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 211–26 (pp. 214–15).

⁴⁴ Kate Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living? Skills and Labour in the Festivals Economy', <<http://www.equalworks.co.uk/resources/contentfiles/3446.pdf>> [accessed 23 October 2011].

exchange, excluding the purchase of tea, coffee and ice from central camp, takes this 'rhetoric' to such an extreme that the applicability of the term is rather undermined. Although a commercial structure is necessitated by the financial and logistical implications of such an event, which at \$300 a ticket costs no meagre sum to attend, the near-total absence of monetary transactions on site radically alters the festival experience. Participants wander across large expanses of land without the valuable appendages that would usually adorn them by way of mobile phones and wallets, and thus the ever-present wariness of theft vanishes. Festival experience is no longer punctuated by purchases, and participants become detached from the material belongings that would, in the outside world, rarely leave their side. The site-wide absence of monetary transactions references what has long been considered the ethos of free festival culture, as discussed in Section 2.4. Hetherington, for example, claims that the term 'free festival' itself has always implied an alternative to the commercial event. He states:

Free festivals developed not only as a critique of the larger commercial festivals but also as a utopian model of alternative society, aiming to offer an ethos of freedom from constraints and an economy based on reciprocity and gift and around principles of mutual aid rather than money.⁴⁵

Interestingly, it is only the formal structure of the BRCLLC that prevents BM from coinciding with Hetherington's conceptualization. In the absence of commercial exchange, a gift economy similarly based on reciprocity has evolved. The festival programme lists many a 'happy hour' at different theme camps dispensing food and drink at no charge, and often the only belonging needed as one traverses the site, is a drink-refillable plastic beaker. De-commodification is, perhaps, the most prominent characteristic that contributes to the interpretation of BM as a carnivalesque social experiment. Describing the festival to those who have not witnessed it for themselves, it is the total and unapologetic rejection of commerce on site which always shocks and intrigues the listener.

Less glaring, though equally unconventional is the praxis that upholds the principle of immediacy. The task of maintaining an experience of free and

⁴⁵ Hetherington, p. 48.

uncontrolled spontaneity, while maintaining quality and fulfilling the requirements of government, insurers and stakeholders, is not unique to the BM. And yet, the difference between what BM explicitly attempts to *create*, and what regulatory organizations are conditioned to *impose*, is uniquely apparent. The socio-political stance of BM and its founder depicts the mediation of personal safety through regulatory bodies as symptomatic of a broad, systemic inducement of passivity over self-reliance. Again, Rancière's allegories of inequality are conspicuous here; while mediated safety is viewed as a control mechanism that incapacitates social actors, an escape from this system is considered emancipating through reconciling celebrants with control. Freedom from the predictable and deterministic world predicated by licensing laws and health and safety protocols is attempted in the creation of an unmediated space where participants are responsible for themselves, and where the control of personal safety is not outsourced to the BRCLLC, or to the law.

And yet, BM must comply with the legalities and regulations that are necessary to its own preservation. Clearing a path for immediacy through the employment of legal means, a disclaimer requires a signature from all participants on entry to the event. This disclaimer asserts the principle of immediacy to participants, it allows the organization to evade certain protocols and, crucially, it helps protect BRCLLC from harmful litigation. A disclaimer is also stated on the ticket, as Figure 7 indicates. Information on a more recent ticket for the 2007 event displays similar details and additionally states that assuming responsibility for the risks encountered at the event through purchase of a ticket 'release[s] Burning Man from any claim arising from this risk'.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ A copy of the full text can be found in Appendix A.1.

4.4 Re-enchantment

Detailed in Chapter 2, Picard and Robinson described ‘theatre plays, costume parties and pleasure gardens’ as attempts to re-clothe the world with meaning, following the forces of secularization and disenchantment that crept across the Renaissance world.⁴⁷ The ritualistic, spiritual and quasi-spiritual features observable at BM make similar interpretations impossible to disregard. Lee Gilmore, who completed her PhD on the festival in 2005, relates these features to a principal theme in her work. Gilmore recollects Bakhtin’s carnivalesque in the observation that certain practices, which could fall within a ‘spiritual’ interpretation, challenge both secular and religious norms.⁴⁸ This comparison is supported by the fact that these practices sometimes retain a comedic tone, while others, confusingly, are executed with solemnity. This inconsistency articulates a rather paradoxical aspect of the festival; notions of spirituality are vital to the celebration, yet the comprehensive expression of a spiritual monologue is manifestly avoided. BM offers exhaustive opportunities to engage in new age and spiritual practices, yet their coagulation into a meaningful whole is repeatedly undermined.

A plurality of inconsistent messages inevitably weakens the possible formation of a coherent doctrine, yet this is also moderated by the irreverent delivery of pseudo-spiritual performances and installations. BM artist Jim Mason testifies to the simultaneous suggestion and mockery of all things spiritual when he reveals that the ‘earnestness [...] at the core of BM’ must coexist with the fact that the festival ‘has always been a spin through jesting and farce and absurdism’.⁴⁹ Indeed, it is the ‘spiritual farce’ that forms the aesthetic horizon for Mason, in his own artistic contributions to BM.⁵⁰ Sarah Pike also analysed the paradoxical nature

⁴⁷ Dólumeua, cited in Picard and Robinson, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Lee Gilmore and Erik Davis, ‘Burning Man, Spiritual Hedonism, and the Meaning of Postmodern Religion’ a recorded discussion on *Expanding Mind Podcast* (14 June 2010) <<http://www.progressiveradionetwork.com/expanding-mind/2010/6/14/expanding-mind-061710.html>> [accessed 13 July 2010].

⁴⁹ Jim Mason, interviewed in Doherty, pp. 164–65.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of BM's dealings with spirituality and religion in the 1990s.⁵¹ Theatre performances and relational installations often comically inverted religious symbols and practices; frequent also was a presentation of Christian institutional religion as dogma, while Eastern religions would be referenced as authentic. She found that the inversion of religion, at times, carried with it a reassertion of new age values. This is best typified in her recollection of a 'confessional' box that was carved out in the shape of a nun. Inside the nun was a mirror, on which 'Be Your Own Messiah', was inscribed.⁵² As is shown in the following chapter, such features are not unique to BM, but have been co-opted by similarly positioned events in Britain. The mockery of spiritual earnestness exemplified here justifies Erik Davis' comments regarding the elusiveness of spirituality at BM:

There was a peculiar kind of spiritual and religious aspect of Burning Man but it was hard to locate. I mean some things were obvious, there were obvious ritual elements, back in the day there were even spiral dancers which is a classic form of pagan ritual, well known to Bay Area folks in those zones, but at the same time there was something deeper and more profound, but it was always very elusive, in fact in many ways the event and the participants resisted putting on a very religious or spiritual layer.⁵³

BM's social milieu contains multiple allusions to 'spirituality without religion',⁵⁴ and regularly executes rituals that resist the articulation of spiritual meaning. Indeed, there are two principal practices that regularly take place at BM which are, in many ways, the main instigators of spiritual and re-enchanting discourses. The burn of the wooden effigy, after which the festival is named, is a raucous and energetic display of fire and explosions, surrounded by decorated vehicles thumping with music. Despite an absence of specific meaning attached to the ritual, its repetition since the inception of the event has crystallized its centrality and importance at the celebration. The burn of a 'temple' on the last night is

⁵¹ Sarah M. Pike, 'Desert Goddesses and Apocalyptic Art, Making Sacred Space at Burning Man Festival', in Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy, eds, *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture* (Routledge: New York, 2001), pp. 155–97.

⁵² Pike, p. 162.

⁵³ 'Burning Man, Spiritual Hedonism, and the Meaning of Postmodern Religion', a discussion with Lee Gilmore, hosted by Erik Davis on the *Expanding Mind Podcast*.

⁵⁴ Lee Gilmore, 'Theater in a Crowded Fire: Spirituality, Ritualization and Cultural Performativity at the Burning Man Festival' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, 2005), pp. 38–79.

contrastingly solemn. Built afresh every year, the temple is an intricate, filigree-style structure designed by San Franciscan artist David Best; it is covered in emotive inscriptions left by participants, and houses photographs and shrines to lost pets and loved ones. For this reason the temple appears to symbolize death and loss, a deduction augmented by the silence of the crowd. My own observations support this interpretation; indeed, a solemn response was so integral to this ceremony that the audible conviviality of 'virgin' Burners was visibly frowned upon. The cultivated solemnity of veteran Burners powerfully suggested ritual over spectacle.

Strengthening the interpretations of Davis and Pike, the spatial location of BM has been placed as another indicator of spiritual meaning through its implication of ordeal. That newcomers worriedly anticipate life in the desert without the usual amenities of modern living has generated comparisons with Turner's concept of ritual pilgrimage, in which ordeal is characteristic.⁵⁵ Gilmore actually rejects the applicability of Turner here, claiming that BM is 'a para-urban environment that consciously recreates a familiar "civic" infrastructure'; and that the experience of ordeal is limited, therefore, by the fact that desert life during the festival is actually a decadent, luxuriant affair.⁵⁶ It is true that the festival offers up everything a person needs, and more – to recount a popular festival motto – 'the Playa provides'. The extreme ordeal that Gilmore uses to illustrate the comparative decadence of the BM festivalgoer does, however, miss the point that ordeal is relative, and for many of those who travel to the desert, attendance *does* constitute, quite possibly, an experience of real danger in a challenging natural environment. An overemphasis on ordeal would, however, be similarly mistaken in disregarding the pleasure-seeking motivations of so-called 'pilgrims'.⁵⁷ A willingness to travel afar and endure some inconvenience to attend an event centred on a ritualized burning is bound to produce some justifiable comparisons with pilgrimage, yet it is likely that hedonistic motivations outweigh the spiritual.

⁵⁵ My observations also support this analysis. Waiting for transportation to the festival from San Francisco with a group of festivalgoers, there was an atmosphere of excited nervousness that was, I felt, primarily to do with anticipating the heat of the desert and the relinquishing of showers and amenities.

⁵⁶ Gilmore, 'Of Ordeals and Operas: Reflexive Ritualizing at the Burning Man Festival', p. 216.

⁵⁷ 'Pilgrims' is also used as a term to describe *Burning Man* festivalgoers, although 'Burners' is used more frequently.

At BM, the plurality and contradiction of spiritual messages opens up semiotic space for the creation of new meanings. This playful yet simultaneously sincere approach to spiritual and quasi-spiritual practice is attributable to the festival's patchwork of ideologies, where 'all religions and traditions are up for grabs, and authenticity, authority, and purity are not at issue'.⁵⁸ Fortunati replicates the logic of St John when she reconceptualizes Foucault's 'heterotopia' in her analysis of BM; spirituality is 'simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted', instigating 'a wilful jumbling of our ordered and fragmented world'.⁵⁹ Traditional religious monologues are destroyed as new forms of ritual allude to a new and subjective spiritualism of the self. BM simultaneously disenchants and re-enchants, responding to the 'decay of American life today and envision[ing] a future that is rejuvenative as well as destructive'.⁶⁰ It would therefore be futile to pigeonhole BM with a single enchanting or disenchanting interpretation. Ritual abounds at BM, yet prioritizing the spiritual as an explanatory discourse rather sidelines democratization as one characteristic amongst many, as opposed to the organizing principle it actually represents. An example of this misperception is aptly demonstrated when Christopher Partridge confuses the participative tenet with spiritual pilgrimage:

All attendees are expected to participate [...] participants take this perception very seriously, even going so far as to understand their annual journey to the site in terms of pilgrimage and expecting transformation when they get there.⁶¹

Partridge conflates two distinct issues here. All the literature and experiential evidence points to the fact that it is the 'No Spectators' idiom that is central to the event, while spirituality and ritual represents one element in the 'shopping mall' of beliefs and practices on offer at BM. To conflate one with the other erroneously reduces the importance of participation and overemphasizes how far the spirituality is privileged there. Indeed, it is possible that this aspect of BM is one that has been generally overstated. Sherry and Kozinet's ethnographic study of BM

⁵⁸ Pike, p. 165.

⁵⁹ Fortunati, p. 159.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 172.

⁶¹ Partridge, p. 164.

leads them, like Partridge, to subscribe to a discourse of re-enchantment that contextualizes the festival within theories of the new age, neo-paganism, disestablishmentarianism and new religious movements.⁶² Referencing secularization as a point of departure, BM is represented as offering an antithesis to a meaningless existence, utilizing spiritual practices to support the rejection of a world where consumption is a dehumanizing 'existential ground for meaning'.⁶³ Similarly, Fortunati recalls John Moore's exploration of rave as a spiritual culture and points to similarly ritualistic phenomena at BM: 'drum collectives, hypnotic fire dancing, group rituals'.⁶⁴ Such a view must be balanced, however, with the touristic way that many participants actually experience BM. Overtones of spirituality are prominently characteristic, yet this observation must be tempered by the fact that reintegration into the 'default world' may render the experience meaningful at the time, but meaningless elsewhere – many participants could thus be weekend spiritualists.⁶⁵ Recollecting the insights found in Section 4.2, it is likely that a diversity of attitudes to spirituality characterize the crowd at BM. The fact that the festival produces a mixture of often contradicting messages relating to spirituality makes likely an audience of spiritualists, people open to spiritual ideas, and those entirely cynical towards all things religious.

4.5 Extreme Participation as Praxis

Set up by a BM participant, NoSpectators.com is an online community that gathers under a concise slogan that, in simple terms, 'is about *not* being a spectator'.⁶⁶ 'No Spectators' is a clarion call that recurs again and again, offering a clear demonstration of a discourse that has politicized spectatorship, by its conspicuous rejection. This stance is central to the festival's presentation as essentially distinct from the concert-model event:

⁶² Sherry and Kozinets, 'Comedy of the Commons: Nomadic Spirituality and the Burning Man Festival'.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁶⁴ Fortunati, p. 155.

⁶⁵ The 'default world' is festival vernacular used to describe the world outside of the festival.

⁶⁶ 'About', *No Spectators* <<http://nospectators.com/index.php?page=about>> [accessed 20 May 2011].

People new to Burning Man often assume that it's a regular 'festival' as they've come to know them, a mostly passive experience where everything is planned, orchestrated and pre-packaged by the event producers, and attendees just come and enjoy the show. In fact, the exact opposite is true [...] the people who attend Burning Man are no mere 'attendees', but rather are active participants in every sense of the word: they create the city, the interaction, the art, the performance and ultimately the 'experience'.⁶⁷

Here, the associations discussed in Chapter 3 are powerfully apparent: the cerebral actions that allow one to 'watch' are equated with passivity, while the celebrated mode of participation exerts control over the structure of the event. Following the overview presented here, Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 account for the breadth of audience control via two themes: theatrical behaviour and dress occupies the former section, while the latter concentrates on BRCLLC's unconventional use of volunteers.

The need to co-ordinate with a group the provision of food and drink for the duration of BM actually makes difficult the kind of easy attendance critiqued in the passage above. It is near impossible to attend BM without being part of a theme camp, tour group or community of some kind, which will likely involve a number of contributions, both creative and practical, which would not occur at a concert-model festival. Undoubtedly there are some who do not 'run' with the extreme participation implied by the 'No Spectators' ethos, though this would not be conducive to what is presented as the authentic experience. Since considerable expense is involved in attending, a refusal to participate in the way that is promoted by BM would make attendance a pointless and costly endeavour. This being the case, the majority of attendants arrive more than willing to dress up, give gifts and volunteer in various capacities.

As illustrated by Figure 7 in Section 4.3, Burners are exposed to the 'No Spectators' slogan before they arrive at the festival, for it is printed in conspicuous text on the ticket. Given the risks associated with the location it is highly likely that newcomers will have consulted the website to help organize their trip, where the

⁶⁷ 'Participate in Burning Man!', *Burning Man* <<http://www.burningman.com/participate/>> [accessed 20 May 2011].

slogan is also unavoidable. Participants are then confronted by the 'No Spectators' idiom in action, the moment they enter the Playa and encounter groups of fancy dressed 'greeters'. On my arrival there in 2009, the greeters forced the 'virgin Burners' to exit the coach as it waited in the entry queue, and submit to a mildly degrading but very humorous initiation procedure that involved rolling about on the desert floor in front of the veterans who remained on the bus. I was gently castigated for my comfortable, though distinctly plain attire, while other greeters shouted 'YOU are the performers!' intermittently. This was a friendly humiliation that rather reminded me of freshman initiations, a practice that was not only characteristic of the 'No Spectators' ethos, but also, perhaps, quintessentially American. Upon induction to the encampment, which was organized by a San Franciscan hostel and tour company, we were told that we were expected to participate in cooking and cleaning, despite having paid \$300 for their catering services. It soon became clear that the 'No Spectators' idiom extended to all possible areas, from the minutiae of individual dress to the site-wide gift economy.

For this reason, pigeonholing participation at BM as 'immersive', 'relational' or 'interactive' would fail to exemplify the catalogue of ways in which 'No Spectators' is realized, for each of these terms finds application in its social milieu. Every year, a different theme inspires related installations, fancy dress costumes and topics of debate. 'Evolution' and 'Metropolis' have both been used as thematic springboards for participant creativity, forming conceptual umbrellas for each event's activities in a way that can certainly be described as immersive. Following the aesthetic traditions outlined by Bishop, there are both authored and de-authored approaches to participatory features at BM.⁶⁸ Some performances, for example, are pre-scripted and involve participants only in the disruptive, interventionist sense recognized by Bishop, while others are collectively produced.⁶⁹ There are also a number of stationary sculptures, which only adhere to BM's ideal of participation through inviting physical touch. Many installations imply immediacy and action simply through 'doubling up' to serve a functional purpose. Traversing the site are 'art cars', which, as their name suggests, are as much art as they are forms of transport, with vehicles unrecognizable beneath

⁶⁸ Bishop, p. 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

transformative, elaborate decoration. The use of costume, theatre, the aestheticization of the functional and the invitation to interact, touch and climb into artworks, implies Bishop's 'paradigm' of physical involvement, and reverses the autonomy of the Dubordian spectacle – for while spectacle abounds at BM, nowhere are the fields of production detached from the audience.⁷⁰

The site-wide expectation to produce, interact and create, promotes what the author describes as 'extreme participation', transforming the 'No Spectators' ideal into *praxis*. As Bishop noted of relational art, the extreme participation at BM is distinctly, and unsurprisingly, social.⁷¹ Interactive performances, immersive themes and relational installations are transformed into objects of play. It is true that the 'No Spectators' idiom induces many high-skilled and serious contributions from volunteers engaging in technical, legal and administrative labour, as detailed in Section 4.5.2. And yet, the way in which the realization of this ethos creates an experiential space comparable to the adventure playground is confirmed by both its aesthetic qualities, and by the audience's behaviour within it.

4.5.1 The Performing Audience

Nowhere is the performing audience more evident than in the use of costume at BM, an activity that the canonical theories of play have limited to the domain of children – and, principally, girls.⁷² Turning this conceptualization of costume on its head, theatrical dress and costumes are common at BM, despite the impracticalities of the heat. Consequently, that carnival is a 'performative genre' conducive to popularized creativity is exemplified, most conspicuously, by this aspect of the BM event.⁷³ The emphasis on radical self-expression and the banishment of spectators democratizes the obligation to perform amongst all participants, though what exactly counts as performance is not always clear. It is likely that this is not accidental, for the organization does not promulgate any

⁷⁰ Bishop, p. 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷² Janine Fron, Tracy Fullerton, Jacquelyn Ford Morie and Celia Pearce, 'Playing Dress-Up: Costumes, Roleplay and Imagination', *Philosophy of Computer Games* (unpublished conference paper, 2007), p. 2.

⁷³ Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality', p. 474.

defined understanding of performance – only the trope that its interpretation and enactment is a collective responsibility.

Clupper acknowledges this semantic ambiguity when she claims that BM ‘does not resist utilizing performance as a descriptor in diverse ways’, in order to demonstrate an ‘ongoing philosophy of subjective meanings’.⁷⁴ A degree of nihilism is bound up in such pure subjectivism (if performance can mean anything to anyone, it can also mean nothing). Indeed, Clupper herself problematically bases her conceptualization of performativity at BM on Erving Goffman, who claimed that performance is ‘all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by [...] continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some effect on the observers’.⁷⁵ Resonating with the theoretical pitfalls of the active audience, this claim seems too broad and too steeped in the everyday to accurately depict the way in which audiences perform at BM – despite the intuitive logic of Clupper’s claims to a ‘performance culture’.⁷⁶

There are cogent arguments regarding the ‘performative’ aspects of everyday communication, yet what happens at BM is markedly distinct from these. At BM a democratization of performance will always guarantee spontaneity and unpredictability in terms of individual interpretations, yet participants perform in a tradition of event-specific ways, forming an ensemble of action that produces ‘theatricality and self-conscious displays’.⁷⁷ Some rehearsed and conspicuous features take the form of participant processions and interactive performances of music and theatre. There are some presentational performances, but many are either audience-based (as is the case, for example, for BM’s ritualized lamp-lighting procession) or have an interactive function built in. Illuminating is Gilmore’s description of an opera composed for BM, by Pepe Ozan.⁷⁸ Following liaisons with the BM organization prior to its execution, Ozan was required to write in more

⁷⁴ Clupper, ‘The Performance Culture of Burning Man’, p. 115.

⁷⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 22, in John MacAloon, ed., *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), p. 6.

⁷⁶ Clupper, ‘The Performance Culture of Burning Man’, p. 98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ Gilmore, ‘Of Ordeals and Operas’, pp. 220–21.

opportunities for the audience to become immersed in the performance as actors, rather than spectators.⁷⁹

From one perspective, it is the infectious theatricality, brought about through the physical blend of scripted artists with unscripted audience members that, like the paidian carnival, generates Clupper's culture of performance. Yet it is also arguable that the wearing of costume and unconventional dress generates a kind of theatrical posture, which transforms interactions and encounters into moments of performance. Sometimes participants adopt well-thought-out characters, and some embellish their clothes spontaneously. Subsuming costume under performance, as the BM discourse does, one might cogently claim that this activity represents the most democratized mode of extreme participation. I do not recall noticing this phenomenon in 2009, yet it has also been claimed that it is not uncommon for participants to take on 'Playa names' to complete their temporary alter ego, for the duration of the festival.⁸⁰ The reinvention of the self through Playa names and costumes is a simple and accessible way of maintaining the principle of 'No Spectators'. Elaborate costumes are not easily available to all, though there are fancy dress boutiques offering free clothing transformations, in line with its egalitarian ethos. Newcomers (struggling, perhaps, with getting to grips with life in the desert) are less acclimatized to the performance ideology, which is sometimes revealed through the absence of costume. It is also true that in the hottest hours of the day costume is often abandoned for the minimal and the comfortable. The event comes to life as the heat recedes at dusk, and at this time of day many costumes can be observed that are clearly the result of considerable pre-planning.

Dressing up at BM contributes to a surreal climate that mixes together voyeurism and exhibitionism. It is likely that the satisfaction stemming from the 'ingenuity and artistry that goes into creating one's persona' is a motivating factor, while voyeurism and display are popularized pastimes in the collective enjoyment of 'seeing and being seen'.⁸¹ In the absence of distinguished performers (that

⁷⁹ Gilmore, 'Of Ordeals and Operas', pp. 220–21.

⁸⁰ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 126; Fron *et al.*, p. 2.

⁸¹ Fron *et al.*, p. 2; Celia Pearce, 'Seeing and Being Seen: Presence and Play in Online Virtual Worlds', *Online, Offline and the Concept of Presence When Games and VR Collide* (unpublished conference paper, 2006), cited in Fron *et al.*, p. 14.

comprise the line-up at other festivals), costume offers a system by which ordinary participants can confer theatrical status on themselves. BM rejects the conventional performance hierarchy typical of the concert-model event, yet degrees of visual ostentation and complexity in costumes reveal an unspoken system of social distinction. Despite the provision of free costume boutiques, costume is variant and balanced by the impracticalities of the desert, which affects some more than others. Those with mobile homes are more able to transport elaborate costumes to the festival, whereas those without their own vehicle will likely prioritize essentials like food and water, over costume. As Gilmore noted, there is inequality in terms of access to the resources needed to create technologically large projects.⁸² Similarly, access to resources can determine the extent to which costume is employed, and as a result, the nature of participant performance. Depicting a system of differential status, Gilmore cites this as evidence for the fact that, to some extent, Burners 'inevitably replicate society's class structures'.⁸³

The following chapter bears witness to the fact that the use of costume by adults as a form of play is hardly a phenomenon unique to BM, and yet it is a cultural tendency that has received only a modest amount of attention and analysis. Janine Fron *et al.* maintain that 'dress-up play' has been largely ignored by the traditional play theorists, whose analysis begins with the observation that dressing up has been theoretically dismissed as an activity of small girls, while *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga's treatise on play culture, is 'primarily concerned with domains of play and culture dominated by males – sports, competition, warfare, legal and political structures'.⁸⁴ Some attention has been paid to the way in which clothing often subordinates functionality in favour of encoding particular meanings,⁸⁵ yet little has been done to interpret the playful utilization of costume at festivals in the West.

Lack of adequate and up-to-date analyses has encouraged contemporary BM scholars to look elsewhere for suitable theoretical applications. The flexibility

⁸² Gilmore, 'Of Ordeals and Operas', p. 218.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Fron *et al.*, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁵ Werner Enninger, 'Clothing', in Richard Bauman, ed., *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 217-24 (p. 219).

of identity enabled by costume and name-change has inspired applications of Turnerian liminality, for costume facilitates ‘potentially transformative and sublime experiences in the context of what might be viewed by outsiders as merely “entertainment”’.⁸⁶ Costume at BM most often takes light-hearted and playful forms, yet some choices in dress (or the choice *not* to get dressed, as the case may be) are interpretable as socio-political transgressions of gender stereotyping and social expectations of sexual behaviour. Festival literature indicates a liberal ethos that supports sexual freedom and experimentation. A significantly large portion of transgendered, bisexual and homosexual people attend, and various workshops and attractions at the festival also cater to those who practise sexual fetishes. As Chapter 5 shall demonstrate, this aspect of the festival has directly instigated the introduction of similar features in Britain. The sexualized dimensions of BM are sometimes exemplified via audience dress. BM is an accepting space that invites the visual challenges posed by costume:

Burning Man’s carnivalesque masking and costume are political because they give permission to drag queens and kings to cross the solid societal lines of gender, and it gives permission to sexualized participants to wear sex toys on their bodies in public.⁸⁷

Clupper here attempts to employ Bakhtin’s concept of inversion to claim that the reversal of social norms represented by this form of dress constitutes politicized costume, because there is a challenge to accepted behaviour. This may be overstating the extent to which meaningful comparison with Bakhtin’s work is possible: in the first instance, cross-dressing and costume in the medieval carnival temporarily reversed the ubiquitous conventions of the day. There was a playful swapping of gender ascriptions, which lasted only as long as the topsy-turvy interval would allow, before normative conditions were fully restored. Conversely, the gender dissolution evident through dress at BM is linked to more permanent groups and scenes outside the festival, which offer longer-term forums for socially transgressive behaviours. Assigning cross-dressing a political label in this context

⁸⁶ Fron *et al.*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Clupper, ‘The Performance Culture of Burning Man’, p. 90.

must also be tempered by the observation that BM is a safe haven and a form of escapism for like-minded people. It does not confront straight society with alternative values as would, for example, a gay and lesbian pride march through a city centre. What is claimed to be politically symbolic, then, may constitute also the sympathetic sharing of mutual socio-political concerns, which arguably ought to maintain some distinction from the social activism described by Clupper.

Not dissimilar to the reasoning employed by Botstein in his claims about the active audience, problematized in Chapter 3, is a recurring association between the performative and the expressive in the scholarship on BM:

[By] creating and participating with interactive art installations, theme camps, and inventive costuming, Burning Man participants may performatively express some 'inner vision' and thereby engage in a process of 'self-reflexivity' that reflects some inner aspect of themselves.⁸⁸

It is here assumed that expression is crucial to unlocking an otherwise suppressed part of the self, and thus, that catharsis is located in the 'becoming' of individuals. This assumption is also revealed when Clupper explains the difference between acting, which predicates fabrication, and performance art, which is interpreted as the invention of a new variation of the self.⁸⁹ In this sense, the participative mantra at BM furthers the new age celebration of self-expression by conflating its meaning with the tenets of performance and participation. This creates a version of self-expression that privileges flamboyancy, theatricality, individuality, decadence and creativity, as authentic. Conversely, inhibition, passivity and conformity are seen as inauthentic expressions, ideologically denigrated as the unfortunate result of a commercial world dependent on the cultivation of human failings.

The self-expression of individuals is idealized at BM, yet to a certain extent, costume etiquette reproduces a system of conformity. While it is true that the definition of performance is left open to participant interpretation, the limitations of BM's framework make only a narrow collection of expressive actions realistically achievable. These form a performance 'orthopraxis', a set of practices

⁸⁸ Gilmore, 'Theater in a Crowded Fire', p. 86.

⁸⁹ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 110

that are enshrined through festival-related websites, forums and literature, in positive affirmation of the 'No Spectators' ethos.⁹⁰ The reasoning located in the previous chapter, which argued that the 'active participation' broadly awarded to outdoor festivals wrongly de-emphasizes the regimen of behaviour they induce, must similarly be considered here; one might construct popular performance as evidence for a liberated audience, yet one must also pay credence to the fact that there is also *pressure* to perform. This throws into question whether performance *is* a form of self-expression at BM, or a tribalized characteristic that demands its own kind of conformity. As exemplified below, the use of costume perfectly highlights a problematic duality of performance as self-expression and conformity:

Burners both use costume and mask to impress and blend in. Some may want to stand out and use the mask or costume (or lack thereof) to draw attention as an individual, others want desperately to look normal amongst the freaks.⁹¹

Clupper depicts costume as a strategy for either drawing attention or blending in, which might be contested on the basis that for most participants, both functions are operating simultaneously. It may be the case that self-expression and conformity are not mutually exclusive utilizations of costume, despite their contrary connotations. Costume is an affirmation of the broader BM culture – while variations may serve to express the preferences and sentiments of the individual.

Using expression alone as a qualification for the active audience was critiqued in the previous chapter. Based on the evidence so far, it may, however, seem arguable that the systemic control necessary to usefully defining the audience as 'active' (as suggested at Section 3.4) is removed from the (albeit costumed) participants at BM. This would, however, only be supportable if the theatricality of the audience did not formulate the core performative 'fabric' of the event. Contrasting with Cremona's depiction of the ludic celebration, at BM the expression of the audience is not sidelined by ostentatious displays, as would occur there, but co-opts ostentation through utilizing costume. In the absence of emphasized performances on elevated stages, the expressive display of the

⁹⁰ Gilmore, 'Theater in a Crowded Fire: Spirituality', p. 91.

⁹¹ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 89.

audience on ground level is accentuated. It is also the case that audience contributions are not restricted to the expressive and the theatrical, for they exist within a system that allows them, as exemplified by the following discussion, to shape the event's spatiality and featured attractions.

4.5.2 Democratized Production

BM has been described both as a 'do-ocracy', and as an (often tense) combination of collectivist and bureaucratic practices.⁹² To the naked eye, the event certainly lends itself to an appearance of being 'one-hundred percent participant produced',⁹³ though BRCLLC comprises a structure typical of a festival organization, whereby a small team of waged employees deploy the labour of a much larger pool of transient, temporary and seasonal workers, inclusive of volunteers.⁹⁴ Two characteristics offer a sharp contrast to concert-model festivals; firstly, volunteering takes on socio-political dimensions through its enshrinement in the 'No Spectators' praxis, and, secondly, volunteers are also ticket buyers. The latter point is worth emphasizing: despite paying \$300 to attend BM, plus travel costs, there is an encouragement to undertake tasks that would normally be shouldered by the organization or by volunteers labouring in exchange for a free ticket.

Quantifying exactly how much voluntary labour is responsible for the creation of BM is a complex task. BM's website states that it takes 2,000 volunteers to 'build, run and clean up' the site – and while this figure makes up only a small percentage of the overall population, this categorization appears to exclude large areas of production. BM's in-house volunteer recruitment drives focus on practical areas of voluntary production; for example, box office sales, information desk and clean-up operations. Volunteers are able to work for the 'Burning Man Art Team', though in practical and administrative roles that do not include the creation of any installations. Contributions that do include the creation and execution of art

⁹² Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 42, p. 80.

⁹³ 'Glade Offers Fans the Chance to Create an Arena or Propose Site Art', *eFestivals* (2010) <<http://www.efestivals.co.uk/news/10/100308c.shtml>> [accessed 31 May 2010].

⁹⁴ Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 109.

installations, theme camps, mutant vehicles and live performances are not sub-headed under BM's volunteer recruitment drive, as these areas operate their own methods of application.⁹⁵ The number of voluntary labourers also involved in these areas is not published on the festival website. Fortunati, basing her figures on a 2001 audience survey of the event, claimed that 79% of total respondents had collaborated with other people in an organized camp or theme camp to share resources, 14% had undertaken volunteer work prior to the event, while 39% had undertaken volunteer work while at the event.⁹⁶ From these percentages it can be estimated, then, that BM today utilizes the labour of at least 19,500 attendants. That almost half of the total attending population volunteer constitutes a highly irregular ratio, despite the fact that most arts festivals have come to rely on a volunteer workforce.⁹⁷

It is the diversified, civic approach to production, rather than the narrow volunteer recruitment drives promoted by BM, which generate an atmosphere of collective production. Broadly speaking, the layout of the festival follows a prescribed pattern set to a 'well planned infrastructure and city plan', on which the celebration takes shape.⁹⁸ As illustrated in Section 4.1, an aerial view generates an impression of a clock face, yet the festival is experienced as a temporary community comprising an exhaustive patchwork of entertainments, where it is possible to find 'anything you'd find in a regular city – art museums, dance clubs, yoga studios – only in the middle of the desert'.⁹⁹ Careful site planning is balanced with a minutiae of individualized detail found in the participant-led theme camps and villages, which are each required to support the 'No Spectators' ethos through encouraging extreme participation. Imaginatively named, camps for the 2010 event included the 'LEtsGO Lounge' (a place to relive your childhood with your favourite plastic building blocks), 'Liminal Labs' (a Psycho-Geographic Society interactive mapping project) and the 'Love Puddle Playground' (with games

⁹⁵ This may be because these areas incorporate a mixture of volunteer labour and donations with labour and materials funded by BRCLLC.

⁹⁶ Fortunati, p. 159.

⁹⁷ Kate Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living? Skills and Labour in the Festivals Economy'.

⁹⁸ Wendy Clupper, 'Burning Man: Festival Culture in the United States – Festival Culture in a Global Perspective', in Temple Hauptfleisch *et al.*, *Festivalising! Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 221–241 (p. 229).

⁹⁹ Jay Michaelson, 'The Truth About Burning Man', *Huffington Post* (8 September 2009) <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-michaelson/the-truth-about-burning-m_b_279464.html> [Accessed 28 May 2010].

including four square, tether ball and dildo jousting).¹⁰⁰ The BM organization functions as a quality controller, undertaking the administrative and legal facilitation of theme camps, yet design and execution is undertaken by participants. Effectively, this strategy outsources creative production without forfeiting income: as the theme camp web pages testify, camp creators are, like everyone else, required to purchase their tickets.¹⁰¹

Art installations, theme camps and art cars are so diverse that their commonalities can get lost in the sense of disorientation; nonetheless it is possible to piece together, if not commonalities, artistic tendencies – which pertain to the fantastical, satirical, transformational and surreal. Continually referenced in festival texts is the fact that BM volunteers are largely responsible for the *aesthetic* shaping of festival space.¹⁰² For this reason, some privilege art in the interpretation of BM as a socio-political statement. This is justifiable, for BM challenges notions of authenticity in the art world; indeed, the way in which BRCLLC facilitates the production of BM by participants resonates with the role of a curator. Similarly implied by the performance ideology discussed in the previous section, a challenge to the elitist position of the ‘artist’ is made in the attempt to transform festivalgoers into theme camp, installation and art car creators. The organization’s role as curator is crucial to the diversified milieu of the festival and constitutes the realization of the founder’s own explicit aesthetic politics. Larry Harvey claims, for example, to focus on ‘redefining and expanding the notion of who “artists” are, and what their social role could be in the psychological and institutional context amidst which they and others work and live’.¹⁰³ Extending the concept of the artist to all participants, Harvey’s approach to aesthetics asserts an egalitarian principle, which stems from his own critical perception of a mediated, hierarchical and compartmentalized world.

As well as creative roles, participants are invited to work on functional operations, as technicians, co-ordinators and managers. BM’s extensive use of volunteers is unusual because it encompasses some highly skilled and professional

¹⁰⁰ ‘2010 Theme Camps and Villages’, *Burning Man*

<http://www.burningman.com/themecamps/10_camp_vill_1.html> [accessed 2 November 2011].

¹⁰¹ ‘Theme Camps’, *Burning Man* <<http://www.burningman.com/themecamps/>> [accessed 28 October 2011].

¹⁰² Pike, p. 164.

¹⁰³ Fortunati, p. 163.

work. Chen's investigation, for example, is demonstrative of the fact that volunteers have been made responsible for the drafting of legal documentation for the festival; in addition to the highly qualified people engaged in this task, technical and engineering teams are also comprised of volunteers.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere in the festival market volunteers are utilized only for low-skilled and low-risk work such as stewarding, though this is often necessitated by a level of volunteer unreliability from which BRCLLC is far from exempt. Indeed, difficulties motivating and retaining volunteers arguably undermines the extent to which the 'No Spectators' ideal is practically realized. On an organizational level, the use of voluntary labour is necessary to the continuation of the festival's characterizing features, yet a lack of obligation on the part of the volunteers in the absence of financial incentives does not guarantee high levels of commitment. Despite the enshrinement of volunteering as 'orthopraxis',¹⁰⁵ volunteers themselves can be problematically unreliable, and a diminishing of interest and 'no shows' are not uncommon. Chen presents, for example, a report of one co-ordinator that recruited 150 volunteers, only to find that none of them turned up to fulfil their required training.¹⁰⁶ This was further exacerbated by the fact that 'without the reinforcement of financial incentives', there was 'diminished authority to demand accountability and timeliness'.¹⁰⁷ Supported by the action research outcomes of Chapter 6, occurrences like this undermine the ability to actualize collective production, necessitating the traditional 'pyramid' structure of organization retained by the BRCLLC. One of the organization's remedial measures is to overcompensate for the numbers lost by multiplying the number recruited, and by reinforcing their responsibilities through improved communications.¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere, some practical tasks have had to evolve into entertaining theme camps in order to attract and to retain volunteers; the task of ice hauling, for example, after suffering from considerable numbers of absentees, began to incorporate theatrical qualities to make the work more attractive.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁰⁵ Gilmore, *Theater in a Crowded Fire*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ Katherine K. Chen, 'Incendiary Incentives: How the Burning Man Organization Motivates and Manages Volunteers', in Gilmore and Van Proyen, *Afterburn*: pp. 109–28 (p. 111).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁹ Chen, 'Incendiary Incentives', p. 122.

Chen also claims that volunteer unreliability often forces BM into a position where financial incentives are employed to 'induce recipients to more highly prioritize their contributions to the organization'.¹¹⁰ The operation required to create BM thus cannot succeed without the levels of commitment brought about through traditional incentives that are integral to the external systems of commodification the festival attempts to critique. This could be interpreted as a significant crack in BM's vision: despite the enshrinement of a space free of monetary transactions, it is largely the lack of money-for-work, stable exchanges that threatens the smooth running of the festival. It is, furthermore, precisely this situation that discourages conventional music festivals from depending on volunteers for high-risk, highly skilled and essential work such as security and sound engineering. These observations may, for some, compromise the image of the social experiment operating outside of commercial exchange. Nonetheless, remembering that it is ordinary, not ideal human beings that create BM ought to moderate this view. Event production via voluntary labour must allow the fact that BM is a *festival*, constituting for many, a cathartic unleashing of hedonistic energy. It is bound to be experienced as a 'time out' leisure activity, and crucially, as a break from work. With this in mind, it remains significant that roughly half of the ticket-buying population volunteers at all. The impracticalities of realizing BM's 'do-ocracy' also stem from the fact that the festival is inevitably beholden to the norms entrenched in its external social context. BM is, geographically speaking, a sequestered space, yet participants will invariably bring with them behaviours and assumptions conditioned by the world outside. It would be unrealistic, perhaps, to expect participants to abandon acting in relation to the principles of exchange that underpin their lives the remaining 360 days of the year.

So far, BRCLLC has been depicted as an organization geared towards the realization of an egalitarian ethos of participation, captured under their favoured slogan, 'No Spectators'. There is, of course, ample room for more cynical interpretations. As Oakley notes of the British festival industry, the discourses that emphasize the non-financial rewards of volunteering, particularly those emanating from the organizational core of the festival, constitute a form of rhetoric –

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

'soften[ing] the reality of what is often hard, unpaid or low paid work'.¹¹¹ That the impression of collective production masks, rather than erodes, the 'real' distinctions between 'festival organisers, traders, performers and volunteers', is a view worthy of consideration.¹¹² Indeed, Chen claims that questions regarding the morality of BM's organizational structure, have been voiced. Writing anonymously in the *New Mission News*, a critic of the festival hinted at the way in which maximized volunteer productivity helps maximize ticket sales.¹¹³ Stating that its founder '[takes] advantage of volunteer's desire for self-actualization', the article goes on to claim that 'Harvey has succeeded in convincing work-shy bohemians that toiling in the desert can somehow lead to personal fulfillment'.¹¹⁴ It is highly significant that the former organizer John Law, who helped found BM through his involvement in the Cacophony Society, later denigrated the event for profiting – allegedly, by \$8m a year through using the unpaid labour of the 'poor and less-employed'.¹¹⁵ With less affluent volunteers often donating long stretches of time to constructing the festival, while the rich 'dot com kids and hippies' make only weekend visits, Law claimed that BM subsidized the experience of the rich, via extensive contributions from the poor.

Drawing from this a conclusion that exploitation exists should be moderated, however, by the fact that BM does not enforce certain numbers of hours on their volunteers, and by the conviviality characteristic of the volunteer experience. Identifying key motivating factors for attendance, Chen's contact with volunteers found that 'gifted' labour was not only essential to the company but also constituted an experience treasured by the individual.¹¹⁶ Respondents cited the opportunity to work on creative projects, access to immediate feedback and a sense of purpose as key motivators to volunteer.¹¹⁷ Some privileged their work at BM to the extent that, when looking for work outside of the festival, they insisted on employment contracts that granted them time off for its duration. Others

¹¹¹ Kate Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living? Skills and Labour in the Festivals Economy'.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ The creative outputs of volunteers add value to the event, allowing it to offer a value-for-money package that is subsidized by their labour.

¹¹⁴ Silicon Satan (pseudonym), 'Burning Man: A vision of the future', *New Mission News* (1999), anonymous writer quoted in Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 47.

¹¹⁵ John Law, quoted in Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 48.

¹¹⁶ Chen, 'Incendiary Incentives', p. 110.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

claimed that if their employers refused to give them the necessary holiday, they would seek alternative employment.¹¹⁸

There will always be room for Law's view that exploitation at BM masquerades as personal fulfilment, yet it is also arguable that what occurs on the level of experience, is what is most significant. BM intimates – rather than manifests – a flat-structured organization, yet it is also true that idealizing discourses rarely culminate in perfect applications. It is arguable that festivals never constitute realized utopias; though BM promotes a social vision, this is beyond what can be realistically achieved and therefore suggests, rather than offers, a cohesive society without spectators. It is worth noting here Reedy's distinction between the fictional utopia and *utopianism*: the latter term describes not fixed places but practices that are 'motivated by longing for a better future'.¹¹⁹ BM does not act out finished and finite visions of utopia but offers instead dynamic utopianism engaged in an ongoing negotiation with the practices and values of its external environment. Given these observations, and the complexity of BRCLLC's use of labour, one might cogently question how far is it possible to argue that performance and production at BM is 'democratized'. Creative contributions to the event are widely divergent – one volunteer might spend months preparing a theme camp or creating a costume, whereas others might donate little in terms of actual labour – and yet, there is general consensus on the centrality of 'No Spectators' at BM, whatever the interpretation. Conspicuous denigrations of the 'spectator' have resulted in broad and diverse contributions from a theatrical crowd – the majority of which have either been involved in a theme camp, or have volunteered for the festival in another capacity. Despite the hierarchical structure of BM, this event offers a strong example of a festival where democratized production and extreme participation have combined to form a socio-political praxis.

¹¹⁸ Chen, 'Incendiary Incentives', pp. 110-11.

¹¹⁹ Reedy, p. 171.

4.6 The Burner Diaspora

Claims regarding the uniqueness of BM must consider the ‘scores of [...] spin-offs’ that comprise the BM Network.¹²⁰ Emphasis placed on the quintessential event in Nevada tends to sideline the enormity of the regional Network, which comprises BM-styled events that take place across the globe. An examination of this Network suggests that BM might be better defined not by the parameters of its secluded desert location, but as a social phenomenon with international reaches.

The official BM website claims that the Network emerged to address troublesome reinsertion into the ‘default’ world, often experienced by participants post-burn.¹²¹ An historical narrative describes a Burner diaspora of attendees who experienced difficulties ‘reintegrating into “normal” society after experiencing an event that had profoundly transformed them in so many ways’.¹²² The author’s direct observation of BM attests to the fact that reintegration is certainly problematized in popular discourses; a talk precisely on that subject was hosted there, with a panel discussion and contributions from the audience. How individual participants could spread the ethos of BM outside of its desert location was a leading question; that this ought to be done seemed, at least in the context observed, a point of assumed consensus.

The cultural colonization of BM is actively encouraged through the scheduling of talks that explore the vision of Larry Harvey. Sherry and Kozinets, after interviewing him at length, concluded that Harvey wished to ‘carry the lesson’ of the festival ‘to the level of a cultural revitalization movement’.¹²³ Avoiding the term ‘franchisements’, Harvey prefers to liken the Network to Freemasonry – a comparison that presumably omits its systemic exclusivity.¹²⁴ Today, the Network successfully connects up seven different countries, exceeding sixty ‘communities’ over four continents.¹²⁵ These events reproduce the culture of BM on a localized level – and since Network events happen sporadically (as

¹²⁰ Dan Gigler, ‘Frostburn: a Party, Concert, Art Show and Extreme Camping Adventure’, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (2010) <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10038/1033779-140.stm#ixzz1NAGbUU00>> [accessed 23 May 2011].

¹²¹ ‘Regionals Network History’.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Sherry and Kozinets, p. 137.

¹²⁴ Doherty, p. 263.

¹²⁵ ‘Regionals Network History’.

opposed to annually), it is comprised of year-round activity. Such being the case, it is interesting to revisit the discussions at Section 2.1 to 2.3, which placed festival as a necessarily annual and cyclical event, allowing participants a cathartic release before reinsertion into the hegemony of conventional social values. This activity might be interpreted as an international attempt at resisting this process, for there is an attempt to integrate the BM culture more permanently into everyday locales.

There is some ambiguity as to the exact number of international events that have been incorporated into the BM project. In 2007, Clupper cited seventy-five participating cities, ninety regional contacts and sixty-five events.¹²⁶ That a smaller listing of twenty-two events on the official website signals a reduction in number is less likely than an incomplete listing. Some events not listed on BM's website nonetheless advertise themselves conspicuously as proponents of the event's enshrined tenets. A *Wikipedia* listing details thirty-eight regional Burn events, yet it states that not all are officially affiliated with the BM organization.¹²⁷ A yearly fluctuating number of regional Burns has most likely resulted in these inconsistencies, though it is clear from the list of participating communities that the phenomenon has spread internationally. The country that houses the most regional activity is, unsurprisingly, the United States, as detailed by Figure 8. Following that, the highlighted sections on the global map demonstrate a far-reaching network, though one that is yet to incorporate the Middle East, Russia or South America.

¹²⁶ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', pp. 66–67, p. 69.

¹²⁷ Various Authors, 'List of Regional Burning Man Events', *Wikipedia*
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_regional_Burning_Man_events> [accessed 25 May 2011].

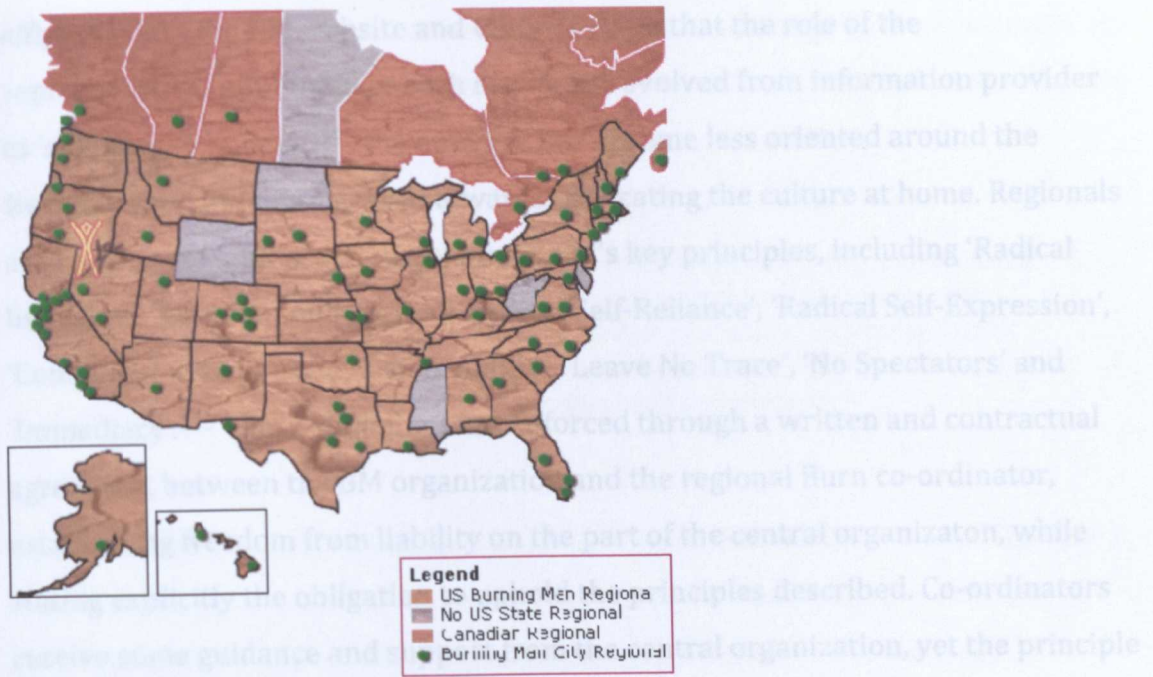


Figure 8: Burning Man Participating States

'Regional Network - North America', *Burning Man*

<http://regionals.burningman.com/na_index.html> [accessed 8 January 2012]

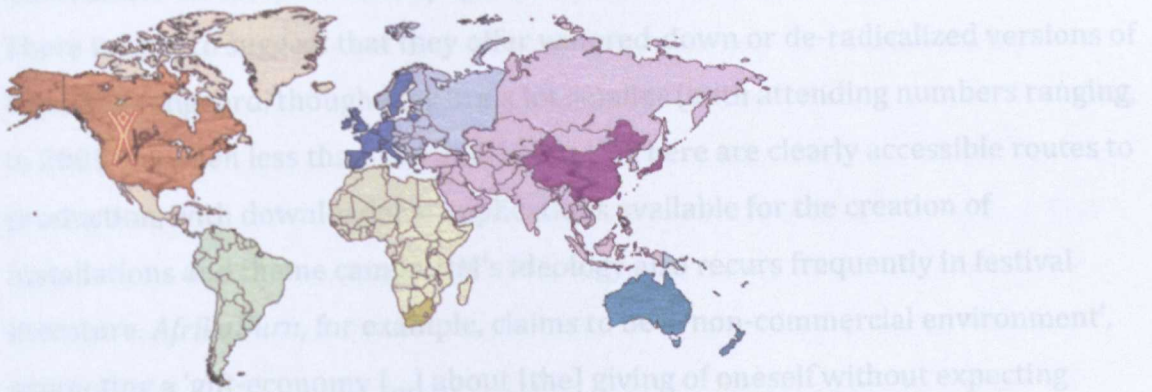


Figure 9: Burning Man Participating Countries

'Regional Network', *Burning Man* <<http://regionals.burningman.com/>> [accessed 8 January 2012]

NB: Participating countries are highlighted in the bolder colours.

There are nuanced accounts of how regional activity came about. Clupper claims that it was already taking place prior to the launch of the official BM Network in 2003. Regional events described as 'decompressions', she states, began to occur in the 1990s, which commonly included a celebration and the burning of a wooden

effigy.¹²⁸ Both the BM website and Clupper claim that the role of the representatives appointed to each region has evolved from information provider to 'community builder';¹²⁹ the network has become less oriented around the Nevada event and more geared towards replicating the culture at home. Regionals are required to 'affirm and disseminate' BM's key principles, including 'Radical Inclusion', 'De-commodification', 'Radical Self-Reliance', 'Radical Self-Expression', 'Communal Effort', 'Civic Responsibility', 'Leave No Trace', 'No Spectators' and 'Immediacy'.¹³⁰ These guidelines are enforced through a written and contractual agreement between the BM organization and the regional Burn co-ordinator, establishing freedom from liability on the part of the central organization, while stating explicitly the obligation to uphold the principles described. Co-ordinators receive some guidance and support from the central organization, yet the principle of self-reliance also translates to regional independence.¹³¹ The BM Network encourages adherence and uniformity insofar as the organising principles of the event go, whereas financial distribution, location and programming remain under the authority of regional representatives.

Of the regional Burns examined, the principles outlined above were clearly listed either on the main home page of the event, or conspicuously elsewhere. There is little to suggest that they offer watered-down or de-radicalized versions of Nevada's vanguard, though they are a lot smaller (with attending numbers ranging, in 2005, between less than 100 and 1000).¹³² There are clearly accessible routes to production, with downloadable applications available for the creation of installations and theme camps. BM's ideology also recurs frequently in festival literature. *AfrikaBurn*, for example, claims to be a 'non-commercial environment', promoting a 'gift-economy [...] about [the] giving of oneself without expecting anything in return', while Spain's *NoWhere* festival claims to be 'inspired by the Burning Man festival [...] a fuse to inspire creativity and participation [...] a blank

¹²⁸ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 70.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹³⁰ Sherry and Kozinets, p. 137.

¹³¹ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man', p. 67.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

canvas for people like you to make something out of nothing'.¹³³ 'No Spectators' is a pervasive slogan throughout these texts. Of this, the website of Arizona's Saguaro Man is an exemplar:

We are not a rave or rave-type event. We create community through creative interaction and a gift economy. We don't hire entertainment. You are the entertainment! Participation is mandatory—No spectators! Be yourself or be someone else! Saguaro Man is what the participants create within the customs and courtesies of a gift economy and radical self expression.¹³⁴

The spatial layout of the *Flipside* regional in Texas, with the 2011 theme 'Bad Idea', also demonstrates a similar approach to event design that fragments the use of space through democratized programming and an absence of main stage entertainment.¹³⁵ Events of the Network are not, however, as uniformly similar to BM as these observations may suggest; neither can it be assumed that what is true for the Nevada event is neatly transferable to its regional counterparts. Regional activity includes many events that do not burn effigies, and are less 'festivalesque'. Instead of operating within sequestered space, some events occupy the pubs and clubs of the urban environment. The question of whether the regionals succeed, as Harvey had hoped, in transforming rather than escaping the default world,¹³⁶ might indeed rest on these smaller and lower key events.

The regional Burns and related events are in their very nature, always alluding to something bigger, and rather more spectacular than themselves. The way in which these events are inevitably 'lesser versions' of Nevada's vanguard is perhaps responsible for Doherty's claim that in some senses, these events lack their own 'awe and inspiration'.¹³⁷ Adding to this, Doherty cites the absence of danger provided by the harsh Nevada desert as an obstacle to achieving the same kind of atmosphere of seclusion and experimentation. Given the ways in which the

¹³³ 'What is AfrikaBurn', *AfrikaBurn* <<http://www.afrikaburn.com/>> [accessed 25 May 2011]; 'What is NoWhere festival?', *About NoWhere* <<http://www.goingnowhere.org/en/whatisnowhere>> [accessed 23 May 2011].

¹³⁴ 'About Saguaro Man', *Saguaro Man* <<http://saguaroman.azburners.org/about-saguaroman.htm>> [accessed 20 May 2011].

¹³⁵ 'Theme Camp Zone Map 2011', *Flipside* <http://burningflipside.com/camp_map> [accessed 23 May 2011]. The Flipside site map can be found in Appendix A.3.

¹³⁶ Doherty, p. 268.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

desert location engenders a sense of risk, which induces high levels of commitment on the part of participants, discussed at Section 4.3, it is also arguable that the regional Burns do not provide the sense of pilgrimage characteristic of the Nevada event. Nonetheless, Sherry and Kozinets depict an undiminished transference of BM radicalism by crediting regional Burners with an ‘anti-structural spark’, pointing to a level of dedication not unlike that associated with religious communities.¹³⁸ Indeed, this is accentuated in their perspective of the regional Burns as predominantly grass-roots phenomena, largely unmediated by BRCLLC or the BM Network.

An inspection of the regional members’ pack reveals, however, some careful strategizing on the part of Harvey. Downloadable from the festival website, the pack includes a letter from the founder; a lengthy document which details the reasoning behind the BM Network’s formation.¹³⁹ It is clear from Harvey’s introduction that the letter was aimed at quelling the fears of those who considered the Network a form of franchising and an attempt to deliver ‘top down’ control on the spontaneous gatherings that were happening in its name – possibly instigated too, by the disparaging comments made by former BM manager John Law, as detailed in the previous section. Doherty has suggested that the Network was created out of the hope to generate extra income from these subsidiary events, yet Harvey claims, in this letter, to the contrary. He states that the Network intends not to utilize regional events in order to defer the costs incurred by Nevada’s BM; instead, he recommends that profits are returned to the community the regional event is serving. Despite the apparent altruism of this act, the BM Network does serve certain purposes beneficial to BRCLLC. As he suggests in his letter, it effectively demands that the co-option of BM adheres to certain criteria and prevents ‘co-opters’ from commercializing. The attempt to address issues of cultural property is exemplified by the fears expressed here:

As our movement spreads to include more people than will ever visit Black Rock City, we are going to need your help. Already, we see instances of

¹³⁸ Sherry and Kozinets, p. 133.

¹³⁹ Larry Harvey, ‘The Burning Man Network Cover Letter’, *Burning Man* <http://regionals.burningman.com/network_coverletter.html> [accessed 25 October 2011]. A copy of the full letter can be found in Appendix A.2.

exploitation on a local scale. Supposed 'Burning Man' parties are held, the proceeds from which go unaccounted for. Vending is allowed at some of these events, and people hold 'Burning Man' DJ dance parties that are indistinguishable from commercial entertainment. I don't wish to sound paranoid. I'm sure that many of these efforts are inspired by naive enthusiasm and are well intentioned. But, as the national cachet of Burning Man continues to increase, it takes very little imagination to foresee how the core values of our community could eventually be diluted and perverted in the larger world. Indeed, if even one group organizing a 'Burning Man' event does so unscrupulously or illegally, this could discredit and endanger the activities of every other group.

Harvey sums up the logic of his thinking when he later states that, rather than 'passively fret about being co-opted by consumerism', Burners ought to realize that '*we can co-opt it*'. By encouraging those events inspired by BM to officially incorporate, the organization has helped to protect its identity by allowing representatives to enter in on an agreement that impresses the cardinal tenets upon them. This has, so far, proved an effective strategy within the Network. Regional Burns have followed the example set in Nevada with a rejection of commerce, and have adopted the militant stance of 'No Spectators'. And yet, Fortunati demonstrates an astute level of perception when she predicts that the growing population and influence of the festival 'make it impossible for the event to remain outside of pan-capitalist society'.¹⁴⁰ Drawing parallels between the characteristics of BM and shifts within British festival culture, the next chapter demonstrates ample qualification for such a claim.

4.7 A Paidian Culture

In many ways, it makes little sense to speak of an 'audience' at BM, because the term is necessarily dependent on a distinction that separates viewers from an object of attention; whether that object is a piece of art, music or film. Despite an abundance of scheduled entertainments, a lack of spatial separations and an ethos of extreme participation dissolve conventional distinctions, generating a site-wide

¹⁴⁰ Fortunati, p. 163.

performance culture.¹⁴¹ Here, an idealized approach to event production directs ‘radical scepticism’ towards the distinctions maintained at the concert-model event, which become loaded with ideological significance.¹⁴²

Revisiting the patterns of theatricality theorized in Section 2.7, it is clear that Cremona’s paidian participation describes a context very distinct from BM, and while it is arguable that Clupper’s ‘performance culture’ applies to both celebrations, there are certain differences worth unpacking. For Cremona, paidian participation necessarily hinges upon an absence of ostentation, which makes performance accessible to audience members. BM operates rather differently – as the following excerpt bears witness, spectacle and elaborate display (particularly that which surrounds the burning of the man) are conspicuous elements at the event.

What was once a stark humanoid figure alive in the night sky is now elevated on increasingly elaborate platforms (initially devised primarily as a way to increase visibility for the ever larger crowds) and accentuated with increasingly professional and ostentatious pyrotechnic displays.¹⁴³

Concurrent is the claim that the ‘scale of the Man is intended to “dwarf you”, “humble you”, and to provide a conduit for a “great power that emerges and passes through the thronging pilgrims”’.¹⁴⁴ It is true that this emphasis on the Burn renders it comparable to the spectacle that unfolds on the main stage of the concert-model festival, and yet, a solid entrenchment of the ‘No Spectators’ ethos prevents the more participative aspects of the event from being sidelined for very long. The architecture of BM also moderates the centrality of these displays. Whereas elsewhere the dramatization of the artist is supported by enlarged stages, on which elevated spectacles unfold; the fragmentation of performance space into a diverse and ground-level cityscape at BM, achieves something like the reverse. Crucially, the audience at BM can be considered paidian because of their enactment of the ideal promulgated by Bey: the audience has ‘become the art that

¹⁴¹ Clupper, ‘The Performance Culture of Burning Man’.

¹⁴² Victor Turner, ‘Liminality and the Performative Genres’, p. 21.

¹⁴³ Gilmore, ‘Of Ordeals and Operas’, pp. 218–19.

¹⁴⁴ Larry Harvey, interviewed in Sherry and Kozinets, p. 135.

it experiences'.¹⁴⁵ Building upon Cremona's conceptualization, the paidian audience here appropriates not only theatrical production, but also a spectrum of practical, technical and administrative tasks. The difference between the extreme participation exemplified in this chapter, and that which is engendered by the concert-model event of Chapter 3, supports the claim that the broad description of festival audiences as 'active' offers an inadequate representation of festival cultures. The concert-model festival and BM can be considered manifestations of two oppositional approaches: the former implicitly supports a hierarchical model of performance, whereby the prioritization of profile performances de-emphasizes the creative contributions from the audience, whereas the latter offers an explicit inversion of this mechanism. In this sense, the concert-model event and BM parallel Cremona's ludic and paidian forms of carnival celebration.

It is arguable that the ludic approach to concert-model production cannot be described as 'ideological' in the same way as BM, because the concert-model event's organizer and audience do not explicitly engage in a critical discourse. The attempt to collectivize production exemplified by BM, however, coincides with calls for an 'art of participation' that are clearly allied to an egalitarian agenda.¹⁴⁶ The 'performance culture' at BM is aligned to the socio-political idealism of a relational approach to aesthetics in art; as Bishop states, there is a desire to create 'newly-emancipated subjects' who are 'empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation', while spontaneous and unpredictable outcomes are celebrated in a system of democratized control.¹⁴⁷ The existence of BRCLLC's hierarchy lies behind a powerful impression of non-hierarchical production and a 'collective elaboration of meaning'.¹⁴⁸ BM exemplifies, therefore, a translation of aesthetic rationales into festival praxes. This is not a phenomenon limited to BM, though it is, perhaps, the most extreme example. As the following chapter reveals, the transference of this ideal is also discernable within British festival culture.

¹⁴⁵ Bey, p. 161.

¹⁴⁶ Bishop, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Clupper, 'The Performance Culture of Burning Man'; Bishop, p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Bishop, p. 12.

5. 'No Spectators' and British Festival Culture

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the extreme participation idealized at Burning Man. With the rejection of the spectator at its centre, audiences there are encouraged to reclaim the control of their cultural milieu for the duration of the festival. Aligned with the conceptual tendencies outlined in Sections 2.7 and 3.3, Burning Man (hereafter BM) diagnoses 'passivity' as a modern malaise, while 'activity' is constructed as a cure. An ideological antithesis lies at the heart of this critique, for the latter state is equated with egalitarianism and empowerment, while the former is denigrated as symptomatic of an outside dystopia. Extreme participation is thus transformed into a mode of quasi-politicized action, emphasized by the militant repetition of enshrined principles, while discourses that prioritize 'temporary community' over the term 'festival' allow the event to take on the special status of the social experiment. Evidencing an event that has instigated cultural activity around the world, Section 4.6 examines the founder's attempts at incorporating related, regional events into an international Network in order to protect a set of doctrinal positions, which include 'De-commodification', 'Immediacy' and, of course, 'No Spectators'.

Utilizing the (albeit, often inconsistent) information available on the BM Network, one quantification of cultural impact could tabulate the number of regional events and the size of their respective audiences. This would, however, present an incomplete picture. Focusing on Britain, this chapter aims to provide a more penetrative analysis by exemplifying the reach of BM *outside* of the regional Burns that are officially recognized by its Network. As the discussion of early festivals at Beaulieu testified in Section 2.4, the 'imitative aspect' of British

jazz and jazz festivals in the 1950s and '60s has not been disregarded.¹ Together with the preceding chapter, the investigation of contemporary festivals here builds upon this historical analysis by illuminating a comparable process of cultural imitation, exchange and integration.

Two events occupy the mainstay of the investigations presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and yet they also reference a much broader mechanism of exchange. Evidence for the growth of extreme participation within British festival culture occupies three 'spheres', which are presented here, in and between Sections 5.2 to 5.4. The first sphere establishes the contemporary festival market and its socio-economic environment. Two fundamental aspects of this sphere are emphasized. Firstly, Section 5.2 examines the climactic circumstances that have accelerated the competitive programming of festivals. The decline of the recording industry, the rise in artist fees and the fierce competition resulting from an expanding number of festival events are presented as circumstances that have diversified programming and made necessary the audience-centric features conducive to the paidian mode of participation, detailed at Section 2.7. Following this wide contextualization, Section 5.2.1 presents an analysis of a new category of small-medium events described as *boutique*. Positioned as distinct from concert-model events, the boutique festival sector marks a shift from spectatorship to the extreme participation and 'experiential themes'² analogous to the BM event.

The second sphere of evidence comprises an in-depth analysis of Cambridgeshire's Secret Garden Party (hereafter SGP), an event which conspicuously adopts (and adapts) the participative mantra and collectivized approach of BM. Following a brief summary of SGP's promotional discourses and an introduction to its appropriation from BM, specific imitative milieu are addressed via three attributes, though (as was the case regarding BM) they are by no means isolated aspects of the event. The first, presented at Section 5.3.2, examines SGP's fragmentation of space and its leveling of spectacles, as the event takes on a curatorial function allied to the BM event. As examined in

¹ George McKay, "'Unsafe things like youth and jazz": Beaulieu Jazz Festivals (1956–61), and the origins of pop festival culture in Britain', in Andy Bennett, ed., *Remembering Woodstock* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 90–110 (p. 105).

² Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

Section 5.3.3, minutiae of diversified features also promote theatricality and play, resulting in a comparable erosion of artist/audience distinction. Addressing the question of de-radicalization, posited in Section 1.2, this evidence is utilized to evaluate how far the event collectivizes production; as Section 5.3.4 attests, the realization of 'No Spectators' is moderated by the strategic use of high-profile performances to garner press attention and sell tickets. Consequently the participative discourse is examined as a form of idealized positioning that, despite producing a broader posture of authenticity that rejects commoditization and sponsorship, is undermined by commercial necessity. SGP constitutes the cultural dilution feared by the founder of its desert counterpart, and yet, while de-radicalization is certainly an applicable concept to this transformation of ideology, the participative praxis does remain. On the level of experience, the utopian and egalitarian aspirations that shape the event, also effect a successful subordination of spectatorship.

The third sphere of evidence forms a discussion of other British events that might not openly credit the influence of BM, but have either appropriated aspects of its programming and spatial design, or have become 'BM-like' independently of conspicuous cultural exchange. An examination of the integration of similarly oriented milieu outside of SGP serves to illuminate the broader influence of 'No Spectators' and the generation of alternatives to the presentational festival model. However, appropriation is presented as transcending one-directional imitation, operating instead via an expanding network of ideas propelled by economic and demographic circumstances.

It is worth pointing out that, despite the capaciousness of this task, generalizations regarding uniform influences between events are not appropriate here. The boutique festival has entered the media's vernacular as a promotional label – but, despite the distillation of palpable characteristics presented in the following sections, these nonetheless lack consistency with some of the events that utilize the term. It is not the aim of this chapter, therefore, to describe a concrete 'genre' of festivals that promote and enshrine more direct modes of engagement; rather, it is to demonstrate the cultural shifts that have created a set of conditions conducive to extreme participation in Britain.

5.2 Industry Analysis

That the recession had instigated a downturn in British festival ticket sales was a claim that, in the summer of 2011, occupied radio shows, newspapers and industry publications. And yet, taking a wider perspective, it is clear that the music industry in Britain has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of outdoor music festivals, during the last fifteen years. The parents of today's average festivalgoer picked from only a handful of notable outdoor music events: namely Glastonbury, the Isle of Wight Festival, and the rock festivals at Reading and Leeds. They may have participated at a number of large unlicensed festivals in the '70s and '80s, including the large, politicized gatherings at Stonehenge and Windsor. Despite the conspicuousness of these events, they remained, however, a niche activity of countercultural youth; festivals were largely the provinces of hippies, new-agers and ravers.

Following the suppression of free festivals and rave, detailed in Section 2.4, they today constitute more clandestine, and usually smaller, scenes. The post-1999 dissolution of large-scale free festivals and the similarly timed explosion in the number of licensed outdoor events are strong indicators for the commercial legitimation of festival culture. Representing the 'lynchpin of marketing for many advertisers',³ festivals today are often supported by the income generated by sponsorship and brands, at the same time as maintaining a (arguably notional) connection to countercultural ideals. Particularly for the smaller-scale, festivals are in themselves no easy money-spinners, and yet, the fact that the festival industry has grown to some prosperity post-millennium is exemplified by the steady increase in capacities and the annual contribution of live music to the British economy.⁴

It is not unlikely that the government's much-feared Licensing Act 2003 actually eased the process of inaugurating a festival. This act brought in a simplified Temporary Events Notice for unlicensed events of 500 or fewer and

³ Nicola Clark, 'The Festival Experience', *Marketing* (8 September 2010), pp. 23–26.

⁴ Kevin Watson, Steve Jenner and Chris McCormick, '2009 UK Festival Market Report', a report compiled by *Virtual Festivals*, p. 1.

allowed organizers to legalize the temporary sale of alcohol and live music.⁵ Still utilized today, this notice is structured to inform the police and the council of an event, and requires strong justification from them for any objections.

Necessitating only two pages of form filling on the part of the festival organizer, that its simplicity is likely to have supported the launch of new festivals is deducible from their growth in number, despite the vehement criticism of the Act.⁶ Reducing licensing bureaucracy most likely boosted start-up activity and entrepreneurialism and, by 2008, an expanding sector of small to medium music festivals in Britain was reported.⁷ According to the Performing Rights Society (PRS), festivals in 2010 represented the largest growing segment of the music industry.⁸ Consumer expenditure on tickets to outdoor festivals now exceeds spending on tickets to stadium gigs; festivals were responsible for 19% of the £1.45bn spent on live music in 2009, while stadium events only occupied 11%.⁹ That year *Virtual Festivals*, a comprehensive online festival news and listings forum, estimated festivalgoer spending at £945m.¹⁰

Mintel's *Music Concerts and Festivals* report compares twelve listed festivals on *eFestivals* at the turn of the millennium with 530 in 2008.¹¹ It also accounts for a sustained increase in audiences across all genres of music – including classical, rock, jazz and pop – a phenomenon that has been fuelled by supply, rather than demand: it is the greater availability of venues and outdoor festivals that has expanded music audiences, rather than the reverse.¹² Claims that the number of British festivals has been reduced today to 400 logically coincide with the likely impact of the post-2008 recession, as illustrated in the figure overleaf.¹³ Nonetheless, as Oakley noted in her report on British festivals,

⁵ 'Part 5 Permitted Temporary Activities', *Licensing Act 2003*

<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/contents>> [accessed 28 May 2011].

⁶ See various criticisms of the Licensing Act 2003 in 'The UK Law and Music', *Keep Live Music* <<http://www.cledgriffin.fsnet.co.uk/indexmusic.html>> [accessed 28 May 2011].

⁷ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁸ Christina Eccles, 'More Money in Live Music than in Recordings', *The Main Event* (Issue 40, June 2010), p. 1.

⁹ Eccles, 'More Money in Live Music than in Recordings', p.1.

¹⁰ Watson, Jenner and McCormick, p.4.

¹¹ *eFestivals* is a popular source of information and discussion relating to music festivals <<http://www.efestivals.co.uk/>>.

¹² Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

¹³ Robert Ashton, 'Live: Festival Survey a Cause for Celebration', *Music Week* (12 June 2010), p. 1.

there are no definitive numbers, largely to do with the fact that exactly what counts as an outdoor festival remains undefined.¹⁴

In the UK, it is the plethora of boutique events that are responsible for the industry's growth, 'attracting much smaller audiences than their mass-marketed counterparts'.¹⁵ The Association of Independent Festival Organizers does not include even half of the festivals that could be described as independent and/or boutique, yet the economic contribution of its twenty-four member festivals in 2010 was calculated at £130m, while the average festivalgoer questioned in the association's annual survey spent a total of £346 each (including ticket).¹⁶

The true impact of the recession is unclear, for there are decidedly mixed reports on the subject. Indeed, commentary on the state of the industry had, until 2011, remained decidedly optimistic. For example, in 2010 journalists depicted an industry oddly exempt from the economic decline affecting other businesses. As stated by Nicola Clark: 'The position of music festivals at the heart of the UK summer appears to have been unaffected [by the recession]. Indeed, the enthusiasm shown for outdoor music events seems to be growing'.¹⁷ An industry report published that year, conducted by *Virtual Festivals*, also claimed that 'while total licensed capacity has fallen marginally, evidence suggests that actual attendance at UK festivals and average spend by attendees have both remained strong in 2009'.¹⁸ According to some commentators, the summer of 2011 finally saw British austerity negatively impact the festivals market. As stated in Chapter 3, following many consecutive years of immediate sellout shows, tickets to Leeds and Reading did not sell out on release.¹⁹ As one commentator for the *Guardian* noted, this was accompanied by Latitude's slow ticket sales.²⁰ Interestingly, it is these Festival-Republic-owned events that, in 2011, were reportedly suffering from the recession, while many independent events – including SGP, Kendal Calling, Boomtown and Beatherder – sold out.

¹⁴ Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living?'

¹⁵ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

¹⁶ Ashton, p. 1

¹⁷ Clark, 'The Festival Experience'.

¹⁸ Watson, Jenner and McCormick, p. 1.

¹⁹ Michaels, 'Michael Eavis: "Glastonbury is on its Way Out"'

²⁰ Michaels, 'Michael Eavis: "Glastonbury is on its Way Out"'

This inconsistency supports the claim that the recession has prompted a 'shakeout' of promoters that is typical of 'market maturity'.²¹ It is true that the last three years have seen a number of festival organizers blame the economic climate for the cancellation of their events. Both The Magic Loungeabout²² and the inaugural festival by the northern promoters Wax: On,²³ which was set to host a headline performance from Primal Scream in 2008, blamed the cancellation of their events on the withdrawal of 'investors', whom in both cases (and somewhat mysteriously) remained unnamed. It is not unlikely that the proclaimed circumstances provided a cover for an entirely different reason which lead to the cancellation of these events: poor ticket sales. Blaming the withdrawal of investors both absolved the promoters of guilt in the eyes of the ticket-buying public and avoided the damage to reputation that an admission of poor ticket sales would have inevitably incurred. Poor ticket sales for some are likely to be the consequence of improved ticket sales for others in a crowded market; competition appears to be a source of perpetual anxiety to festival organizers. The 'festival frenzy', as one organizer stated, has created 'brutal' competition and, he feared, 'there is not room for everyone in this business'.²⁴ This has been exacerbated by the entry of Europe into the 'festival orbit', with cheap package ticket and travel deals forming a new stream of competition for the British promoter.²⁵ European festivals have proliferated at a speed particularly high during the last five years, and as another organizer contends, 'we're now in the process of seeing how much this market can actually take'.²⁶ In all quarters, there appears to be a significant fear of industry saturation. As one interviewee put it, 'there are so many festivals popping up now and I'm thinking God... just don't do it'.²⁷ Industry reports have been quick to conclude that there is a 'saturation point in terms of supply', yet new events continue to crop up, as Oakley noted: 'Every year seems to bring a new clutch to the

²¹ Ashton, p. 1.

²² Christina Eccles, 'Investor pulls out of Festival', *The Main Event* (April 2010), p. 1.

²³ 'Wax: On Blamed on Credit Crunch', *Virtual Festivals*

<<http://www.virtualfestivals.com/latest/news/4785/-/WaxOn-cancellation-blamed-on-credit-crunch>> [16 February 2011].

²⁴ Unknown Author, 'Market Focus: Finland', *Audience* (December 2010), pp. 14-18.

²⁵ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

²⁶ 'Market Focus: Finland', *Audience*, p. 18.

²⁷ Comment made by Interviewee B. Please see Appendix B.2 for a breakdown of interview respondents.

festivals scene'.²⁸ Some succeed by establishing particular niches, such as *Beach Break Live*, a festival exclusive to students. As the organizer of Finland's *Pori Jazz* contended, as long as festivals are 'geared towards such specific genres that they are not in competition with each other',²⁹ there is room in the market for everyone. Problematically though, the audience of the boutique festival (that stands accused of driving saturation) typically enjoys a mixture of music genres and thus is not as easy to segment in the way that is suggested here.

Despite the broad commercialization exemplified above, some marked characteristics associated with the new age have been retained within contemporary festival culture. Given the increasing ecological concerns of the last decade and a half, it is unsurprising that there has been a 'general greening of the festival scene'.³⁰ Most festivals have established 'environmentally friendly themes' in order to 'ramp up their cool green credentials';³¹ others have been fully branded around environmental ethics, such as *Oxygen, 2000 Trees* and *Sunrise*, using green innovations such as solar-powered stages and compost toilets. An accreditation scheme entitled 'A Greener Festival' has also been introduced in order to reward, annually, those festivals that demonstrate rigorous environmental policies. A recent agreement between ten 'leading' UK festivals to lower their carbon footprints by 10% augments the process of 'greening' considered to characterize the festival market today.³²

What is also recognized as a recent and far-reaching change in British festivals is the age of their audiences, which appears to be rising in line with a preference for events that provide an alternative to the 'shantytown squalor, greasy noodles and the strewn sunburnt bodies of drug-addled revellers'.³³ This year, a total of 15,000 attendees over the age of fifty reportedly attended Glastonbury.³⁴ This population was, suggested the BBC, the aged hippy culture

²⁸ Watson, Jenner and McCormick, p. 1, Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living?'

²⁹ Watson, Jenner and McCormick, p. 17.

³⁰ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Ashton, p. 1.

³³ Ludovic Hunter-Tilney, 'The Changing Face of Rock Festivals', *Financial Times* (27 June 2009) <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e7689d4c-61de-11de-9e03-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1j9oKEENh>> [accessed 10 March 2010].

³⁴ BBC News item, 'Older People Flock to Glastonbury' <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-13898486>> [accessed 20 November 2011].

of the '70s.³⁵ The maturation of festival cultures can also be attributable to a number of broader social changes; demographically the number of forty-five to fifty-nine-year-olds was forecasted to rise by one million between 2008 and 2013, while the most steady and dramatic increase in population by age is in the over sixties.³⁶ It could be that the extension of average life span has instigated an 'upward shift' in what is considered adult behaviour.³⁷ An increasing number of adults and middle-aged attendees, combined with a slightly smaller number of teenagers, may be responsible for what has been met with skepticism from media quarters. Michael Eavis, the organizer of Glastonbury, was widely reported (with no small degree of incredulity) as having bemoaned the 'descent of the middle-aged' upon his event, though his actual words were in fact mild. 'People say we're getting middle class, which is stretching it a bit far' stated Eavis, 'but we're getting the thirty and forty year-olds in, which changes the character of it'.³⁸ As journalist Hunter-Tilney reports, 'for all its countercultural rhetoric, Glastonbury is no different. At bottom it recognises that festival demographics in the UK are, if not greying, then getting a paunch and a couple of kids'.³⁹ Eavis' apparent condemnation of the phenomenon is inconsistent with the programming at Glastonbury – which included, that year, Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young.⁴⁰

The inconsistency between Eavis' apparent desire for the return of a youthful audience and the angle of his main stage programming can be explained by fluctuations in the value of recordings and live performance; more specifically, by the impact of weakened record labels on festivals. In 'today's downloadable world',⁴¹ the failure of the recording industry to establish an adequate number of affordable profile artists to supply the burgeoning festival market has not only forced the shrewd festival organizer to invest in the non-musical attractions that form the focus of this research, but has also increased

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ 'National Population Projections, 2008-based', *Office for National Statistics* <<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdffdir/pproj1009.pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2011].

³⁷ David McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up', *David McWilliams* (3 September 2010) <<http://www.davidmcwilliams.ie/2006/09/03/the-boutique-generation-that-refuses-to-grow-up>> [accessed 2 February 2011].

³⁸ Hunter-Tilney, p. 13.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

the demand for bands whose reputations were forged well before the average festival attendee began purchasing music. The outdoor festival market, 'leading a new trend which has seen revenue generated from live music over-take the amount of money made from recordings' is increasingly the driving force behind the commercial trajectory of the music it programmes.⁴² This scenario has also bolstered the delivery of live music as nostalgia. The reunion of Blur (2009), The Libertines (2010) and Pulp (2010) was a commercially attractive option for the bands and their agents, given the large sums of money obtainable from the Isle of Wight Festival, Glastonbury, and Leeds and Reading Festival. The willingness amongst these promoters to pay what has been considered extortionate fees, despite the non-commercial motivations cited by each of these bands, ultimately provided the financial incentive for these reunions to take place in the first instance.⁴³ It is the hunt for profile acts amongst an inflated number of festival promoters that has helped to create a powerful demand for bands whose golden eras were thought to be behind them, resulting in 'the shortening of the feedback loop of a band breaking up, to a band reforming for a visit to the festival trough'.⁴⁴ The shortage of new profile artists coupled with the rise in the number of music festivals, as well as an ageing festival audience, has created the ideal commercial climate for the band reunion, across many genres of music.

Despite a majority of jubilant and nostalgic media responses to the reunion of bands including Blur and Pulp, the phenomenon has not been universally accepted as positive. It is arguable that performances from reformed bands, whether or not their commercial motivations are articulated, have become something quite different to their original incarnations. In the words of the *NME* writer Richard King: 'this is music as vintage – a weathered accessory to a boutique lifestyle'.⁴⁵ Such a phenomenon can be accused of cultivating, as quoted, 'a conservative streak in pop culture [...] a sense that the past is more

⁴² Eccles, 'More Money in Live Music than in Recordings', p. 1.

⁴³ Richard King and Sam Wolfson, 'Is Live Music being Ruined by Endless Reunions?', *Observer* (11 April 2010) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2010/apr/11/reunion-tours-ruining-rock-libertines>> [accessed May 23 2010].

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ King and Wolfson, 'Is Live Music being Ruined by Endless Reunions?'.

worth celebrating than the now'.⁴⁶ Anticipating The Libertines' reunion to play at Leeds and Reading for £1.5m in 2010, King scathingly described their set as a fake reproduction of their former selves, a 'download in human form'.⁴⁷ The perceived inauthenticity of reformed acts would be a relatively inoffensive phenomenon if King did not also contend that they are shutting out new profile acts, such as Vampire Weekend and Florence + the Machine, from headline performances at large-scale festivals.⁴⁸ Since the festival market has seen substantial growth in Europe as well as across the British provinces, it is not only reunited bands that are able to increase their fees. All acts are attempting to maximize their live performance fees because of the need to create a sustainable revenue stream, in the absence of sufficient profits from record sales. Reports agree that the increase of large-scale festivals in Europe has enabled international headliners to raise their fees and perform only for the highest bidders,⁴⁹ while substantial increases in fees demanded by much smaller profile acts has also been bemoaned by the industry.⁵⁰

Significant market conditions detailed in this section can be summarized in terms of market saturation, an increased risk of slow ticket sales due to audience austerity, rising artist fees and the limited availability of profile acts. Together, these factors form a climate whereby promoters, particularly those of small to medium events, cannot rely on line-ups to remain competitive. There are, therefore, significant commercial benefits to emphasizing extra-musical attractions. As the following sections suggest, BM has provided the industry with a demonstrative formula whereby brand loyalty is independent of profile acts, encouraging, in consequence, the programming of features aligned to its participative ideology.

5.2.1 The Boutique

⁴⁶ Tom Ewing, 'How to do Band Reunions', *Guardian* (11 November 2010) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/nov/11/how-to-do-band-reunions-pulp-take-that>> [accessed 18 February 2011].

⁴⁷ King and Wolfson, 'Is Live Music being Ruined by Endless Reunions?'

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 'Market Focus: Finland', *Audience*, p. 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

'Boutique' is a term that was first associated with independent shops, and then with hotels. With similar emphases on individuality, independence and the intimacy of smaller scales, it has also been appropriated for the purposes of distinguishing some music festivals from others. Promoted as 'compact, stylish and intimate', as described by the *Observer* in 2003, boutique events are defined via their distinction from the concert-model festivals presented in Chapter 3.⁵¹ As reported in 2008, this new sector of often cheaper alternatives is a 'significant movement' largely responsible for driving the 'huge growth' discussed in the previous section.⁵² Despite the corporate nature of some festivals described as boutique, this report also states that, 'as well as a rise in corporate involvement with festivals there is a developing counter-trend, namely the number of boutique festivals and back-to-roots, commerce free events'.⁵³ It is true that these descriptions make no allusions to the shifting modes of audience participation examined at Sections 5.3 and 5.4, yet in many ways, these qualities are consistent with the subordination of concert-model spectatorship at the centre of this investigation. Events that particularly exemplify this include SGP (discussed in the following section), Shambala, Glade, Standon Calling, Electric Picnic, Beatherder, Bestival and Boomtown, which are discussed at Section 5.4. Revisiting the arguments set out in the previous section, boutique festivals can be understood in terms of the challenging socio-economic environment in which they operate; the industry is one that is fiercely competitive, saturated and has to contend with a limited number of appropriate, well-known acts in music, many of whom out-price smaller events. These are conditions that have *made necessary* the deployment of 'experiential themes', audience-centric features and non-musical activities to remain competitive, aspects that are fast becoming characteristic of the boutique model.⁵⁴ Despite remaining categorized as a music festival, the boutique event scores points with

⁵¹ Robin Knight, Vikki Miller, Dee O'Connell, Lucy Siegle, Ian Tucker and Polly Vernon, 'A-Z of Summer (Part One)', the *Observer* (8 June 2003)

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2003/jun/08/ethicalliving1>> [accessed 20 November].

⁵² Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

its audience not only via the inclusion of musical acts but also via the promotion of extreme participation. Whether or not this can be allied to BM and thus interpreted as an ideologically loaded ensemble of action remains open to contention, and is discussed in Sections 5.3.4 and 5.4.

Festivals described as 'boutique' are principally a British phenomenon, although Georgia Seffrin was the first to theoretically apply a 'boutique' framework to a festival management model, in her research on Australian, government-funded events. Her investigation does not consider the British market and rather precedes the emergence of boutique festivals within it. Nonetheless, presenting a pertinent investigation of the emergence of boutique shops, she succeeds in distilling a number of attributes conducive to 'boutiqueness' that resonate with British boutique festivals. The desire to 'express oneself sartorially', and to identify with a likeminded aggregate of a distinguished culture, is credited with the production of the very first boutique retail outlets in the 1950s.⁵⁵ A simultaneous function of differentiation and assimilation is exemplified when Seffrin argues that the new boutique shops facilitated the expression of the individual and offered a means for group identification.⁵⁶ These shops addressed the need for adolescents to distinguish themselves stylistically, operating via a 'process of provision and consumption [...] enacted as a conversation between designer, retailer and customer'.⁵⁷ Prior to the 1950s, the clothing of young people was usually aligned to the culture of their parents in ways that would clearly denote class, coinciding with the general assumption that sons would follow the career paths of their fathers. Conventional providers of clothing maintained what Seffrin describes as the 'department-store' business model, which conducted a somewhat top-down system of supply. This operation functioned independently of any grass-roots creativity in the determination of style; prior to the boutiques, 'the couturier had determined what was tasteful, the garments were then purchased and flaunted by the wealthy, and a highly watered down cheap version was

⁵⁵ Georgia Seffrin, 'Emerging Trends in Contemporary Festival Practice, Exemplifying the Modern Festival through the Praxis of Boutique Festival Initiation and Management at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2006), p. 173.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

manufactured in mass versions for the rest of the population for sale in the department store'.⁵⁸ Described, here, is a systemic monologue of style that predated the fragmented and nuanced clothing industry that exists today. Seffrin suggests that the clothing and festival boutique models of production are inclined to succeed because they better supply cultural niches, and in many cases, are better able to judge and adapt to consumer preferences. Seffrin's interpretation crucially points to an erosion of producer and consumer roles; boutique shops emerged when consumers took on the role of producers, and importantly, sold to a target audience of which they were themselves part. Retailers and designers that were allied to their target audience in age, culture and demographic were better able to perceive their tastes. This proximity lent itself to a dialogic relationship between producer and consumer, 'sharing attitudes, values and practices with customers was an instrumental factor in the successful development of boutique culture'.⁵⁹ Seffrin goes on to apply this model to the organization of several art events in Australia, with the aim of similarly establishing a model of co-production based upon continuous and detailed consultation between producers and consumers.⁶⁰

This dialogic model of production is pertinent to the events central to this investigation, yet boutique festivals in the UK include a number of characteristics absent from Seffrin's conceptualization. Katrina Larkin, the founder of the annual Big Chill festival, not infrequently proclaims that her event was the first British boutique festival.⁶¹ If Larkin is to be believed, British boutique festivals were born in 1995, with the 'innovation, experimentation, creativity and escapism' she claims is unique to her brand.⁶² Given the invariable transformation of festivals over time, that a particular event might be cogently described as boutique during its early years, and later change so dramatically as to undermine the applicability of the term, is not inconceivable. Indeed, the Big Chill substantially increased in capacity and line-up profile since

⁵⁸ Seffrin, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Marnie Fogg, *Boutique: A 60s Cultural Phenomenon* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2003), p. 17, in Seffrin, p. 186.

⁶⁰ Seffrin, p. 8.

⁶¹ Katrina Larkin, quoted by unknown author, 'Festival', *Live UK* (December 2010), p. 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

its inception, and was, in 2009, purchased by the largest corporate festival owner, Festival Republic.⁶³

Despite frequent inconsistencies in the application of the term, a number of significant themes are identifiable. David McWilliams, in a perceptive article regarding the association of the term with widely variant products, draws into focus the distinguishing processes comparable to the taste markers of cultural capital identified in Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*.⁶⁴ Like the boutique festival, the boutique hotel is described as 'small, intimate and chichi [...] the *cultured punter's* alternative to an upmarket but generic worldwide chain, such as the Four Seasons or Ritz Carlton [my emphasis]'.⁶⁵ The boutique experience, he claims 'taps into the [...] need to be seen as unique and discerning'.⁶⁶ These comments, made in 2006, allude to the fundamental difference between boutique events and the handful of festivals that were attended by the parent generation: size. Notwithstanding likely growth in capacities over time, boutique festival audiences were estimated at 5000 in 2008.⁶⁷ Adopting a broad perspective, boutique events can be considered as a rejection of the 'bigger is better' philosophies that fuelled capacity growth at Glastonbury, the Isle of Wight Festival, and the Leeds and Reading Festival during the 1970s to 1990s.⁶⁸ Industry commentators recognize that the preference for intimate scales may be characteristic of the boutique ticket buyer.⁶⁹ It is a sea change of consumer feeling so significant that it is seen as responsible for the slow-down of interest in the once heavily oversubscribed Glastonbury festival. As Ben Turner of the Association of Independent Festivals stated:

⁶³ Alexandra Topping, 'Big Chill Sale sends Shiver through Festival Awards', *Guardian* (19 November 2009) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/nov/19/big-chill-festival-awards>> [accessed 20 November 2011].

⁶⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [1984], trans. Richard Nice (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up'.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁶⁸ Many boutique events promote the intimacy of the smaller-scale event, yet recent evidence suggests that this may not be clearly matched by conscious audience preference. The UK Festival Census completed by 1963 respondents conducted by *Virtual Festivals* found that, when asked about ideal festival size, the majority of respondents (27%) had no preference, though the total percentage of respondents who preferred festivals between 1000 and 15,000 was 25%. Nanette Brimble, 'UK Festival Census 2011', a report compiled by *Virtual Festivals*.

⁶⁹ Ben Turner, quoted by unknown author, 'It is time for festivals to help each other', *Music Week* (28 June 2008), p. 6.

The Glastonbury situation has surprised everybody. It has been the benchmark. It is an example for the establishment not to rest on their laurels. The market has changed. There is a shift of people wanting to be at more intimate events.⁷⁰

Far from being an inconsequential detail, reports regarding preferences for the smaller-scale augment the broader positioning of the boutique as superior, and alternative, to the 'mass-marketed counterparts' depicted in Chapter 3.⁷¹

The placement of these events in provincial areas has generated localized music scenes, as stated by Mintel: live music is 'no longer the preserve of towns and cities'.⁷² Contingent on spatial context, the determinism of place implicated by this supports Dowd *et al.*'s premise that festivals resemble local scenes.⁷³ In contrast to the cultural groupings based upon strong symmetries between style and music, as discussed at Section 2.6, it is arguable that audiences are motivated by basic geography over demarcated cultural membership; taking place regionally, the boutique event is a more convenient option for many festivalgoers. At the same time, some events within the sector frame specific music cultures, for there are now sizeable British festivals devoted solely to dub and reggae, to dance music, and even to the music of Latin America. More significant for this study, is the diversification that has occurred intra-event, a phenomenon that has been deduced from the broader festival market.⁷⁴ Aside from music, contemporary British festivals are programming noticeably more art installations, activities, homeopathies and non-musical performances.⁷⁵ It is true that the provision of ancillary attractions is no new phenomenon, and that the danger of over-reliance on named bands in both drawing and entertaining festivalgoers was reported in 1995.⁷⁶ Responses to this have not, however, been uniform. Music festivals have largely maintained act-centric approaches to

⁷⁰ Ben Turner, p. 6.

⁷¹ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Dowd *et al.*, 'Music Festivals as Scenes'.

⁷⁴ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Heather E. Bowen and Margaret J. Daniels, 'Does the Music Matter? Motivations for Attending a Music Festival', *Event Management*, 9 (1995), 155–64.

programming, yet ancillary attractions have flourished, particularly within the boutique sector. Events have not developed in isolation but rather are the outcome of cultural exchange. Though this study emphasizes the significance of BM to support this claim, it is worth noting that until boutique festivals proliferated, the programming of multiple arts alongside prominent names in music was conspicuously and successfully epitomized by Glastonbury, which has for many years described itself as a *Festival of Performing Arts*. It is certainly arguable that the contemporary boutique sector replicates the diversity of this event; indeed some events describable as boutique are directly aggregated from the festival. Glade, the first music festival devoted entirely to electronic music, began as an area of Glastonbury, as did the former eco-festival, the Big Green Gathering. It is likely that the influence of Glastonbury's diversified approach to production exceeds those events that retain a direct historical connection, because many music festivals are now expected to offer more than music. It is also arguable that diversification is not limited to boutique events but indicates a new paradigm in festival production, as McWilliams states, 'The modern rock festival prides itself on its cosmopolitan nature: organic food, theatre and literature tents, child friendliness, and proper sanitation'.⁷⁷ The development of consumer preferences has been so significant that Festival Republic, which also owns the concert-model events discussed in Section 3.2, launched its own boutique-styled festival, Latitude, in 2004. It is ironic that the same report that credits the boutique sector with providing 'commerce-free platform[s]' describes this corporate-owned event as the 'flag-bearer for the new [boutique] genre'.⁷⁸ Symptomatic of the now common 'multi-entertainment formats, where music is part of a broader repertoire of arts and/or leisure billings',⁷⁹ *Latitude* is a 'music and arts event [...] a diverse mix of art, comedy and cabaret'.⁸⁰ These qualities are the outcome of a pervading attitude that a line-up of acts is not enough. Competition has driven festival organizers to include standout elements in order to promote differentiation from the burgeoning number of

⁷⁷ Hunter-Tilney, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

events; an apt example of this would be the inclusion of the interactive thematic performance art installation, the 'Big Love Inflatable Church', pictured below.

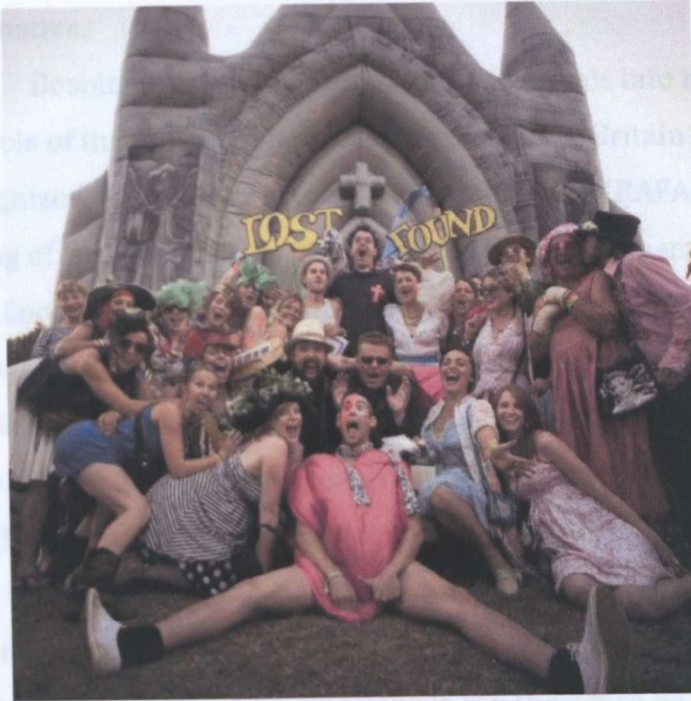


Figure 10: The Big Love Inflatable Church

Features like this tend to be independently run; they are also unlikely to offer their services to one event only, but rather, attempt to fill up their summer with a touring schedule of different festivals. As one interviewee stated:

There are only so many different contractors and tent designs, there are only so many stages, a festival can't be completely unique [...] that contractor is not unique to your festival. They are in events, and they will be going to dozens of other festivals whether you like it or not.⁸¹

The extent to which festivals borrow from each other and share contractors, not just in terms of basic infrastructure but also in terms of creative and non-musical programming, accelerates cultural exchange and increases the need for boutique festivals to reinvent themselves. This is intentionally embraced by some events, such as Standon Calling and SGP, for their emphasis on creative

⁸¹ Interviewee A.

themes rather increases expectations of reinvention, year upon year. Thematic reinvention is one aspect of production not exemplified by the concert model, which allows boutique events to successfully position themselves as an alternative.

Despite the development of music festivals into multiple-arts festivals, the role of these events in promoting the arts in Britain is not wholly recognized. The British Arts Festival Association (BAFA), which provides a listing of 'arts festivals' in the UK, appears to exclude many festivals that are not Arts Council funded, as 'competitive'.⁸² Such a classification may underestimate the extent to which the festival industry supports the arts, and rather disregards the contributions from for-profit festival organizations that are independent of government funding. Arts-heavy boutique festivals are largely excluded from the BAFA. Instead, they continue to be classified as music festivals insofar as they are included in the statistics compiled by the Association of Independent Festivals and *Virtual Festivals*, and compete for audiences on the principal music festival websites. Arts-heavy festivals can therefore be divided into the orthodox and unorthodox models: the orthodox tend to be council funded, more modest in size and in a town setting, while the unorthodox programme multiple arts on green-field sites, alongside music, and may remain largely absent from the 'official' arts festival listings.

Boutique festivals aim to supply that which is absent from their concert-model counterparts: intimacy, uniqueness and multiple arts. Consequently the bifurcation of the festival market into the concert and the boutique model (notwithstanding the many overlapping and mixed manifestations) is analogous to the development of boutiques within the hotel and retail industries, since the 1950s. Across all three industries, the impetus for the boutique product can be similarly interpreted in terms of consumer ambivalence towards notions of the 'mass-produced' and the 'standardized' product. The popular book *Fast Food Nation* and documentaries *Food Inc* and *Super Size Me*, all release during the last fifteen years, are not wholly reducible to a critique of the fast food industries

⁸² Keith Allen and Phyllida Shaw, 'Festivals Mean Business, the Shape of Arts Festivals in the UK - Summary', a report compiled by the *British Arts Festivals Association* (2000), p. 9.

based upon the quality of their products.⁸³ The rise of the organic and fair-trade markets indicates an increasingly discerning consumer base and a social system of distinction that falls along ethical lines. In both cases, a much more fundamental attitude of suspicion towards the outputs of factory-line models of production, divorced from the traditional and (possibly, romanticized) notions of 'proper' farming, is at work. Supporting this, these festivals attempt to revive a traditional spirit and allude to ethical living, and thus display similar attitudes by positioning themselves as the moral superior to the concert-model event.⁸⁴ Deploying discourses of authenticity that allude to independence, intimacy and ecology, they are able to benefit from the nostalgic mythologizing of pre-modern festival experience. There are, consequently, meaningful ways in which the boutique event resonates with those discussed in Section 2.2; as the festivals theorized by Lavenda, MacLeod, Picard and Robinson similarly show, boutique festival culture problematizes the concert-model event following the postmodern de-legitimation of the modern world view.

It would be an inaccurate simplification of matters to claim that these positionings are purely the result of cultural appropriation from the BM event. And yet, it is already possible to raise a number of meaningful consistencies. At BM, disillusionment is addressed by turning a problematized 'mass' on its head; despite its congregation of some 50,000 attendees, the civic construction discussed in Chapter 4 means that they rarely experience the event in a large crowd. In Britain, this sensibility is instead signified by a pronounced shift towards the intimate-sized event. As argued in the previous section, it is true that the growth of this sector has been fuelled by the supply side, and that a greater availability of events has generated its own demand. Nevertheless this should not undermine the significance of the shift towards the intimate, for the compliance of ticket buyers has been crucial to the success of the boutique model. Audiences have been successfully sold intimacy as the 'alternative' product. With this, festival participation has expanded to include many of the activities that are idealized as praxes at the BM event; there are burning

⁸³ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: What the all-American Meal is Doing to the World* (London: Penguin, 2002); Robert Kenner, dir., *Food Inc* (Magnolia Pictures, 2008); Morgan Spurlock, dir., *Super Size Me* (Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2004).

⁸⁴ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

spectacles, fancy dress themes, profusions of art and participative activities. Because of the low cost and added value generated by the inclusion of these features, it is arguable that British events have moved in this direction independently of transnational influences. This may be true in many cases, yet the following sections establish a catalogue of evidence to demonstrate a dynamic relationship between BM and British festival culture.

5.3 *Secret Garden Party*

You rocked Babylon to its foundations, with Gardener alter egos exploring the delights of raving, mud pit wrestling, food fighting, Burning and stage invading.⁸⁵

Had 'Gardener' been replaced with 'Burner', the above statement, taken from SGP's post-event newsletter, could have accurately described a festivalgoer's experience at BM. This festival's allegiance is referenced by the capitalized 'Burning' mid-sentence, while the actions stated indicate a distancing from spectatorship through the omission of profile bands. Consistent with BM, 'raving' is outweighed by emphases on forms of play that similarly imply Bishop's paradigm of physical involvement, a clear divergence from the musical connoisseurship of the concert-model event.⁸⁶ The attempt to transform idealized rhetoric into extreme participation, whether partially or wholly achieved, demonstrates how fundamentally this British festival has co-opted the characteristics of BM. How far its audience can be described as retaining the locus of control Biocca requires of the 'active audience', discussed in Chapter 3, is a question answerable only on understanding the nature of the relationship between SGP and BM; more specifically, on the establishment of how, and with what effects, the former has appropriated from the latter.

⁸⁵ 'Thank-you Gardeners...', *SGP Newsletter* (28 August 2009).

⁸⁶ Bishop, p. 11.

Following a small gathering of 1000, SGP was first organized by 'four friends' in 2004.⁸⁷ Like many British festivals during this time, the event maintained a steep trajectory of growth. By 2008 it was attracting 6000 attendees, which doubled the following year to 12,000.⁸⁸ SGP is today a 26,000-strong festival of performing arts in Cambridgeshire, held in the grounds of a stately home. Despite a quintessentially English countryside setting, amid a lake and wooded glades, an imitative quality is discernable on entry to the site. Similarly to BM, space is fragmented into small features, structures and installations, all of which are organized by a quantity of crews that blend into the crowd, generating thus an atmosphere of co-production. There is a main stage, yet this is not easy to locate at first, and is rather sidelined by the fragmentation of spectacles that configure a surreal, 'playground-like' space. If the audience at SGP can be described as theatrical, it is an inclination that is far from spontaneous but is rather a consequence of what is carefully endorsed in the promotional literature compiled by its organizing company, Secret Productions. BM's praxes of extreme participation are co-opted by SGP and provide the festival with an accentuated set of unique selling points. This is openly acknowledged in conversations with SGP's organizers, and though their festival was launched before they had experienced BM, SGP soon became imbued with discourses and practices borrowed from it. A visit made by the entire organizing team to BM, one year after the launch of their inaugural event, was a formative experience:

We went to burning man first in 2005. The bulk of the Garden Party went, after the Garden Party, it was a real eye-opener for most of them, its such a completely different format and they came back with loads of ideas, I mean the Garden Party's really changed as a shift towards that, you know very performance based, we had this whole action camp situation where we kind of you know, put small budgets to crews.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ 'Secret Garden Party Tickets', *Box Office* <<http://www.boxoffice.co.uk/Concert-Tickets/Festivals/Secret-Garden-Party-Tickets.aspx>> [accessed 20 November 2011]. NB: Most reports of the launch appear taken from the *Wikipedia* entry for SGP, which is likely to have been written by the organizers.

⁸⁸ Finbarr Bermingham, 'Secret Garden Party 2009', *The Skinny* (5 June 2009) <<http://www.theskinny.co.uk/article/45683-secret-garden-party-2009>> [3 February 2011].

⁸⁹ Interviewee A.

It is clear that cultural influence flows in a direction proceeding *from* BM to SGP, rather than operating via mutual exchange, yet the relationship between the two events remains somewhat confused in the latter's presentation to the ticket buyer. BM does not recognize SGP as an affiliate; nonetheless, SGP references BM frequently as its 'cousin'. On SGP's website, BM is described as the '*second* greatest gathering on earth [my emphasis]', and a claim is made that '[SGP's organizers] travel to Burning Man to spread the word'.⁹⁰ This is rather at odds with the evidence that suggests that it is the appropriation of ideas that forms the primary function of attendance. These small inconsistencies are not inconsequential, for they help diffuse an impression of SGP as a lesser version of BM; its presentation as superior is a sensible tactic that effectively de-emphasizes the extent to which it appears as an imitative event.

Section 5.2.1 discussed the ethical, 'back to roots' discourse of authenticity by which boutique festivals have cultivated a particular appeal allied to the positioning of boutique hotels and shops. Such discourses frequently make use of the terms 'independent', 'commerce-free' and 'alternative', and, certainly, all three of these claims are maintained by SGP. Of the boutiques, Mintel reported a 'commerce-free positioning', yet 'positioning' is certainly the operative word here: SGP is sustained via profits from bars, traders, merchandise and, of course, ticket sales. As discussed previously, 'independence' is another habitually used yet ill-defined concept, which is regularly deployed in the promotional literature of SGP, together with claims to a 'not for profit' status.⁹¹ These aspects are not infrequently mentioned by journalists with admiration, in their press coverage of the event.⁹² Descriptions of SGP as 'fiercely independent' must be moderated by the consideration that though SGP is not owned by a sizeable corporate entity, it is likely to have enjoyed something like the equivalent in terms of financial security and backing through the 'landed' family wealth of organizer Freddie Fellowes; indeed, the

⁹⁰ '300 Tickets Left', *SGP Newsletter* (10 July 2009); 'What is The Secret Garden Party', *At a Glance* <<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [accessed 27 January 2011].

⁹¹ 'The Secret Garden Party '10', *Efestivals* (20 July 2010) <<http://www.efestivals.co.uk/festivals/secretgarden/2010/>> [accessed 3 February 2011].

⁹² Was Yaqoob, 'The Best of the Fests', *Varsity* (28 June 2007) <<http://www.varsity.co.uk/arts/472>> [1 February 2011].

festival home at the Abbots Ripton Estate, near Huntingdon, is family owned. Exemplifying the old connections that McKay attributes to Britain in the '60s and '70s, between 'aristocratic privilege and pop music', 'private means and mass entertainment', it is likely that Fellowes (the son of the fourth Baron de Ramsey) has been granted the use of his father's land at either no or a reduced charge, and has had his entrepreneurial endeavours supported through access to a trust fund.⁹³ That the festival is hosted on the land of the organizer's family is information readily available in the public domain, though only if one actively seeks to find it, and there is no mention of this detail on the festival's Wikipedia listing, or on the official website. It is not only arguable that the commercial advantage the festival has enjoyed in the subsidy created by aristocratic wealth is rather at odds with popular connotations of independence, but also (and rather ironically), that it is this commercial advantage that has, to some degree, *enabled* the organizers to position themselves as not for profit and non-commercial. The financial advantages of housing the festival on family-owned land will have strengthened its independence and helped minimize the need for corporate sponsorship that may, in the eyes of the ticket buyer, be confused with corporate 'backing'. A scenario that sees capital enabling a notional rebellion against capital is a necessary contradiction that is, interestingly, common to these gatherings where the idealization of participation is taken to an extreme: BM is subsidized by the plentiful voluntary contributions of its audience, and thus in large part by the new money that flows from Silicon Valley, while SGP is likely subsidized by old money in the form of aristocratic land and funds. One subsidy is endowed by centuries-old, inherited wealth and another by the new economies of California, yet it is the similar availability of these sources that enables both festivals to partially opt out of collaboration with corporate brands, without decreasing quality in the areas of innovation that have led to the achievement of national and international status. Emphasis upon financial advantage should not unfairly de-emphasize the expertise of SGP's organizers; nevertheless it should be recognized as partly responsible for allowing them to create the highly competitive package that instigated the festival's exponential growth. This is supported on further consideration of

⁹³ McKay, "Unsafe things like youth and jazz", p. 92.

Secret Productions' company profile. SGP is its most well-established event, yet the company organizes a number of smaller events throughout the year, and in 2011 launched a new festival, Wilderness, as a joint venture with Mama Group, which is a multi-divisional company owned by HMV Group PLC.⁹⁴ Detailed further in Section 5.4, Secret Productions have, at the time of writing, recently gone into partnership to produce Glade, the electronic music festival, and have also inaugurated Escape to New York, a 'UK inspired' boutique festival.⁹⁵ Secret Productions is independent from corporate ownership, yet its collaboration with large companies and the development of its portfolio of events indicate a strategy of commercial growth. These new projects have all been subsequent to the success of SGP; it is deducible, therefore, that it is the BM-inspired, participative formula that has not only allowed this festival to succeed in a crowded market, but has generated the skills, contacts and finances necessary to launch and invest in other festivals.

5.3.1 Transatlantic Appropriation

It is true that SGP's reproduction of the 'No Spectators' ethos occurs through an idealization of participation, rather than through the explicit use of this slogan. Its discourses are nonetheless the outcome of transatlantic appropriation, and allow the event to situate itself amid the territory of the social experiment. As was similarly discernable of BM, this takes place through frequent descriptions of SGP as a *temporary community*, rather than a festival.⁹⁶ Hinting at emancipating power, its website states that this community is 'founded on participation [...] with the potential to change your life'.⁹⁷ Resonant of Rancière's allegories of inequality, participation is placed as a solution to the alienated, problematized spectator; in line with Bishop's evaluation of

⁹⁴ *Wilderness*, <<http://www.wildernessfestival.com/>> [accessed 29 May 2011].

⁹⁵ 'Glade Festival Chat to I Like Music', *I Like Music*

<http://www.ilikemusic.net/festival_news/Glade_Festival_Organiser_Interview_2011-13151> [accessed 29 May 2011]; 'UK Inspired Music Festival "Escape to New York" Announces Initial Lineup', *Britscene* (23 April 2011) <<http://www.britscene.com/2011/04/uk-inspired-music-festival-escaped-york-announces-initial-lineup/19533>> [accessed 14 November 2011].

⁹⁶ 'What is The Secret Garden Party', *At a Glance*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

participative art, the physical, theatrical and creative acts of the audience are aligned with an egalitarian principle that celebrates the democratization of production.⁹⁸ That Secret Productions offers a diffuse and co-opted version of BM's intransigence is evident in their wider roster of events; discussed in more detail in Section 5.4, their new festival projects idealize participation while omitting the radicalized doctrines of BM. Of the smaller events, the May 2010 newsletter listed three events in Brighton, Bristol and London in the run-up to the festival, and at each of these, this reconfiguration was similarly discernable.⁹⁹ Secret Productions regularly host a Christmas event that indirectly pays homage to BM: its UK audience might not be aware that SGP's description of their Christmas event as a 'decompression' is directly appropriated from an American counterpart. The 2009 London and Bristol events, entitled 'Who Wants to be a Gardenaire?', promoted SGP through its play on 'Garden' and typified the ethos of BM through focusing on a participative and humorous game, an orientation that is explicitly emphasized in their newsletter: 'remember this is about Participation, dress to impress, and keep your hat on'.¹⁰⁰ Fragmented space, immersive theatre and a diversity of attractions constituted their Brighton Fringe Festival – advertised as an 'arts-laden labyrinth' where participants could be 'led by our fauns down the secret tunnel into a 500 capacity venue hidden at the back', which featured 'acrobats, aerialists, live DJs, fire performance, karaoke rooms, secret rooms with fortune tellers and laser star shows, silly games, theatrics and performers'.¹⁰¹

These smaller events anticipate SGP, where cultural appropriation manifests itself in an even broader spectrum of ways. The climactic burn of BM is partially replicated with the annual burning of an art installation on a lake, situated at the heart of the festival. Annual themes, like those discussed in Section 4.5, also form the all-important aesthetic umbrellas under which costume, installations and performance may find inspiration; ticket buyers are encouraged to interpret them and organizers are expected to cultivate the appropriate setting. SGP appropriates BM's use of theme by bringing it to the

⁹⁸ Bishop, p. 11.

⁹⁹ 'Head Gardener's Event Diary', *SGP Newsletter* (21 May 2009).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

forefront of the celebration. Its prioritization is evident on perusing the 2010 event programme: on the front cover is the indicatively conspicuous heading '2010 Fact or Fiction'.¹⁰² Its 2011 theme, 'Origins and Frontiers', was similarly ambiguous enough to leave open plenty of room for artistic interpretation. Present in almost all references to the theme is an 'audience as animator' philosophy that takes the shape of a clarion call:

The Secret Garden Party is a frontier of creative freedom, a world of experiments and expression where anything goes. Its origin lies within you: there is a chemistry to the place and you need to be the catalyst for it to ignite.¹⁰³

The proclamation that the event will be exploring 'where we have come from and where we are going' also suggests opportunities for interpretation similar to BM's 2009 theme of evolution.¹⁰⁴ SGP's 2010 festival programme, published in the year I attended, was a thick compendium listing an extended schedule of activities. Individual art installations, workshops and family entertainments were promoted as equals to the music performances. There was at least the same quantity of DJs and bands programmed at SGP as would be included at another similarly sized music festival, yet the volume of non-musical features was extensive and their treatment in the programme naturally de-emphasized the music. Scheduled talks and debates, alongside thought-provoking quotations, evidenced a highbrow aspect of the event, alongside playful and infantile connotations generated by its illustrative style.

Like BM, there is a focus on participating in the arts through the inclusion of volunteer-led encampments. In 2011, these included the 'Bohemian Artist Studio', while 'Wot's a Curling?' and 'Banjax Banditos' offered fancy dress styling and makeovers.¹⁰⁵ In 2010, encampments were similarly situated around a 'centre camp'. Imitating its Nevada counterpart, this identically

¹⁰² '2010 Fact or Fiction', *Secret Garden Party Programme*.

¹⁰³ 'Art Boats and Vehicles', *Explore the Garden 2011*

<<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [accessed 28 January 2011].

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Action Camps', *Explore the Garden 2011*

<<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [28 January 2011].

labelled camp was open twenty-four hours a day serving beverages, with a stage that featured an eclectic mixture of performances. It is true that the BM centre camp was a lot larger, enabling it to also house art installations, yet the adoption of the same name and approach to programming the space demonstrated an attempt to recreate this distinguishing feature.

That the idealization of participation is not unique to SGP but is frequently characteristic of many community-oriented events is a justifiable claim. Nonetheless, SGP's allegiances demonstrate that the *type* of participation promoted there is the result of cultural appropriation. Indeed, whereas the sexualized elements of BM are entirely absent elsewhere in British festival culture, in 2010 SGP attempted a recreation of orgiastic space.



Figure 11: The Kissing Den

Author's Photograph.

This sexualized feature, together with an attempt to promote a gift culture, supports the argument that SGP attempts to generate BM's brand of festival participation. Without the extensive contributions from volunteers that BM enjoys, SGP is unable to step outside of the commercial transactions that BM succeeds in abandoning, in favour of a mass 'gift culture'. And yet, an attempt was made: on the Sunday of the 2009 event, an organized 'gifting' was

scheduled.¹⁰⁶ Prior to this event, it was promoted and ticket buyers were advised to prepare gifts to swap with each other. Similarly, there is evidence for an attempt at imitating BM's unique happy hours that provide participants with free bars. SGP's inclusion of free drinks at their 'Club Tropicana'¹⁰⁷ in 2011 was minor compared to BM's attempt to ensure that at any hour of the day, participants have access to free food and beverages. Nonetheless, the inclusion of gifting and free bars is interpretable as an attempt to add value to the event programme, by adopting BM-inspired features. And yet, a reliance on profits from bars and traders also prevents the transformation of these novelties from added-value features to site-wide praxes.

Secret Productions are not wholly responsible for reproducing the 'No Spectators' ethos, but can be credited more appropriately with amalgamating subsidiary groups that already share the same outlook. One interviewee was brought into the management circle primarily because his work, promoting a Bournemouth event, Fish Seeks Bicycle, was much in the same vein as both BM and SGP. These were carnivalesque indoor events: 'It was very interactive. People felt like they were really involved [...] the idea was to be doing creative, colourful, festivaesque events across the board'.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, another interviewee, responsible for providing the festival with a performance art group, presented collectivized performance as a solution to the 'reduced' role of the audience in the context of presentational performance:

It's not a show, it's not like hey, look at us. We're now on stage. We're going to do this, this and this. We're going to do this because we've practised it. The show is the punters. That's the ethos [...] the entertainment comes from the punters first and from us second. We just provide the commentary, and the ideas for the games. But the actual main entertainments, the laughs, come from these people doing really stupid things to each other.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ '300 Tickets Left', *SGP Newsletter* (10 July 2009).

¹⁰⁷ 'The Action Camps', *Explore the Garden 2011*.

¹⁰⁸ Interviewee A.

¹⁰⁹ Interviewee B.

That 'the show is the punters' indicates a view of participation that idealizes the audience as performers over observers. There is a rejection of presentational performance and rehearsed display, and a collapse of conventional distinction as 'the punters' are placed at the centre of 'the entertainment'. Recalling the cries of 'YOU are the entertainment, YOU are the performer' by the greeters at BM, its British counterpart is similarly emphatic in its propagandizing of what might be described as a form of extreme participation that appropriates, with partial but not total success, focus from presentational performances. A promoted metaphor that likens SGP to a canvas and the audience to its animating paint hardly recognizes the true impact of spatial setting in the determination of experience, in all its intricacy and complexity.¹¹⁰ This metaphor offers instead a doctrinal declaration of what *ought* to be the case: the audience as animator of art ideologically replaces the audience as observer of art.

5.3.2 Fragmented Foci

The diversified programming that has become a marked characteristic of British festivals, as reported in Section 5.2.1, has naturally lent itself to a fragmentation of audience focus. The concert-model festival remains artist-driven, yet elsewhere, no longer is audience attention directed at the action unfolding on a main stage. The alignment of this phenomenon with the broader shift towards 'cosmopolitan' programming ought to be recognized; nonetheless, the fragmentation of focus typical of the boutique festival reaches an extreme at SGP.¹¹¹ This approach precludes an entirely different spatial construction to that discussed in Chapter 3. For SGP and BM, ideal experience has become a necessarily fragmented one; as one interviewee suggested, attendees individualize their experience through multiple encounters:

¹¹⁰ 'Roll up, Roll up... 5 Sleeps to go...', *SGP Newsletter* (17 July 2009).

¹¹¹ McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up'.

I think a festival's got to have other things than just music. And make this whole experience with the punters, something that they're never going to forget [so they go] 'wow I saw this murdering psychopath, and then I had Kama Sutra, and then I saw Hot Chip live, got a lovely beautiful gourmet burger, and then finished off... mud wrestling'.

It is possible that, for an increasing number of festivalgoers, ideal experience has shifted from one principally of music, to one that includes a whole host of different practices that are 'festivalized' by the convivial frame. Section 5.4 provides a more detailed examination of how this shift relates to certain consistencies between BM and the broader boutique sector of events. Crucial for SGP, however, the fragmentation presented here is not only the result of a general move towards cultural diversity at festivals but is enhanced by the reproduction of the 'No Spectators' ethos.

The plethora of stalls, installations, performances and camps at SGP forge fragmented milieu united by the thematic and fantastical positioning of the event. The virtual portrayal of space as illustrated on its website is highly revealing of the way in which the festival is intended to act as a land of adventure: surreal and exciting, the profusion of attractions are set to be navigated by small groups of friends. The illustrated idealization of space is a fairly standard promotional technique; events such as Bestival, Kendal Calling and Beacons refrain from using photography for the main artwork on their respective website home pages, but instead prefer to use hyperreal illustrations that exaggerate desirable aspects – such as sunshine, nature, bright colours and music. Divorced from reality, organizers are also able to depict the ideal festival, without worldly restraint. This is a common practice, yet in 2011 SGP took the fantastical to an extreme, with a scene resonant of the floating mountains in the 2010 blockbuster film, *Avatar*.



Figure 12: Virtual Space

Screen shot of SGP's website home page <<http://uk.secretgardenparty.com/2011/sgp.php>> [accessed 28 January 2011].

The connotations of this imagery augment the claim that changes to festival culture correspond with an 'upward shift' in what counts as adult behaviour.¹¹² The similarities between the promotional presentation of theme parks and the presentation above became increasingly apparent as features were added to this illustration in stages, as the 2011 festival approached.

They may be ambiguous at best, yet themes offer inspiration for costumes (discussed, in detail, in the following section), and provide a general frame with which to contextualize art installations and non-musical performances. SGP is rich in installations; and it is arguable, therefore, that BM and SGP share the same critique of the 'white cube' of artistic dissemination favoured by the conventional world of high art. This is supported by various texts, as the SGP website states, 'the Burning Man Project showed us the way when it comes to installation art: free it from the gallery and make it as interactive as possible'.¹¹³ The use of art at SGP is such that a mere comparison to the gallery exhibition is insufficient, for the former actually constitutes what one might call a 'festivalized' version of the latter. SGP makes its appropriation of BM-style installation art transparent in the following statement:

¹¹² McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up'.

¹¹³ 'Art at SGP', *Explore the Garden 2011* <<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [accessed 28 January 2011].

The West Coast/Burning Man Connection – these artists are jumping over the pond to bring a little USA magic to the Garden this year, a collaboration we're proud to be part of.¹¹⁴

The promotion of visual installation art reconfigures the festival organizers as curators, who negotiate exhibits that may be showcased in other spaces. The way in which many installations function as touring pieces offers evidence for BM's influence beyond SGP, as discussed later in Section 5.4. I observed a piece entitled 'The Cubatron' at Ireland's Electric Picnic in 2008, and was not surprised to find that it was originally exhibited at BM, and was also displayed at SGP in 2010. In addition to the spread of BM art outside of its official network, there is the observable cross-pollination of styles that exceeds the relational paradigm. Reminiscent of the satirical treatment of Christianity, as described in Section 4.4, SGP's 'Cartoon Confessional Box' similarly suggested themes of the 'spiritual farce', that were used to interpret installations at BM.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, the international programming of the same artists and similarly styled art augments evidence for a transatlantic exchange that incorporates a broader nexus of events.

What is significantly apparent through the direct observation of SGP and the examination of its installation application procedures is how prominently interactivity is promoted. On the website, the advice offered to artists is revealing:

You need consider carefully how the piece will have an impact in this challenging festival context – its colours, its size, its location, its illumination and perhaps most importantly its interactive capacity [...] You need to encourage the audience to explore, interact and become part of the work. Touching, climbing, entering – are all encouraged.¹¹⁶

This installation policy demonstrates, once again, a reproduction of the paradigm of physical involvement that characterizes participative art outside of

¹¹⁴ *Secret Garden Party 2010 Programme*, p. 103.

¹¹⁵ Jim Mason, interviewed in Doherty, pp. 164–65.

¹¹⁶ 'Art Installations', *Secret Garden Party* <<http://uk.secretgardenparty.com/forms/art/>> [accessed 1 February 2011].

festival culture.¹¹⁷ In allowing the audience member a deterministic role in 'becom[ing] part of the work', there is an attempt to erode and confuse the traditional distinctions between spectators, artists, producers and consumers. Biocca's notion of producers and consumers as collaborators, in the creation of the cultural product, can be coherently applied here.¹¹⁸ A wholehearted attempt to mimic the democratized and interactive approach to spatial construction is also evident in the introduction of the 'art boat' at SGP. As argued in Chapter 4, art cars at BM are not only a signature feature of the event, but they also realize the 'No Spectators' doctrine; these are mobile pieces of art that were designed and created by audience members, encouraging audience participation on the level of production, and interactivity on the level of use. At BM, many of the art cars were very large trucks, housing bars, sound systems and small dance floors. To introduce these vehicles onto the Abbots Farm Estate may have been deemed impractical due to the dangers caused by space limitations and the potential damage to this delicate, agricultural land. Nonetheless, the art boat is a signature adaptation of the 'No Spectators' idiom that similarly attempts to subordinate functionality in the transformation of boats into immersive works of art. The encouragement to create art boats was conspicuously advertised on the SGP website:

Through the powers of Ebay, rowing boats can be purchased for amazingly cheap prices. We own seven in various shapes and sizes. We would like you all to bid and buy a few more. Then we want you to turn them into works of art. Don't worry, we have cash at the ready to help you along.¹¹⁹

Art cars at BM have been described as part of a subculture somewhat independent of the festival, though BM provides the 'ideal environment for art cars to reach new heights of formal expression'.¹²⁰ There were fewer than five observable art boats upon the site's lake at SGP 2010, yet an attempt to instigate the same culture is apparent. The criticisms that have viewed the creation of

¹¹⁷ Bishop, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Biocca, p. 61.

¹¹⁹ 'Art Boats and Vehicles', *Secret Garden Party*.

¹²⁰ Northrup, p. 131, p. 133.

such pieces through the lens of audience exploitation can be similarly applied to SGP's 'democratizing' policy: utilizing the audience's labour in this way creates unique selling points for what remains a commercial organization. Like BM, there are limited funds available, but creators are expected to share the burden of some costs themselves.

The introduction of 'action camps' is also palpable evidence of an attempt to appropriate the democratized structure of BM, which necessarily relies upon the free labour and creative energies of a large portion of its audience. Like the theme camps and art cars, SGP's action camps similarly contribute to the manifestation of the 'No Spectators' idiom by encouraging participation on the level of production, and interactivity on the level of use. There are proportionately far less action camps at SGP than there are theme camps at BM; nonetheless, alongside other non-music attractions, they are responsible for cultivating a brand loyalty partially dissociated from line-up considerations. Routes to the creation of SGP's heterotopia are made accessible to its audience; small grants are made available to groups for creating imaginatively themed areas, and one may deduce from the size and stipulations of their budgets, that such groups are sourced from established and prospective clientele. This stands to reason, for action camp grants are only awarded to cover expenses such as materials and travel expenses, and according to the application information, camp organizers must keep their encampment open for a minimum of six hours per day. The suggestion that volunteers can increase the likelihood of an art installation proposal being accepted by subsidizing some costs themselves is also included in the information on how to apply.¹²¹ What can be logically inferred is that though some costs are covered, the participants behind SGP's action camps willingly labour on a voluntary basis, and sometimes contribute their own funds to realizing projects. That there is a spectrum of motivations for doing this is probable. It is likely that the findings in Section 4.4.3 are similarly applicable here: participants donate labour and funds because it is considered to amount to an enjoyable exercise, and the outcomes

¹²¹ 'Art Installations', *Secret Garden Party*.

of these contributions together generate an atmosphere of collectivized production.

As was the case for BM, the experiential and the atmospheric nature of collectivized production should be emphasized here, because the majority of the major decision-making is reducible to a small nucleus of organizers. With this in mind, Oakley's observation that voluntary labour at the British festival masks rather than erodes the real distinctions between event producers is applicable; like BM, this culture of participation does rather sideline 'the reality of what is often hard, unpaid or low paid work'.¹²² Nonetheless, a comparison with civic space is also apt; a basic event design is forged by SGP, yet traders, artists and participants produce the minutiae of detail. Once the festival has accepted action camp proposals, their implementation is within the remit of applicants. This procedure makes the design and production of features accessible to willing volunteers while reproducing, through them, an emphasis on the importance of interactivity; action camps are not features to be observed, but promote extreme participation on the part of the audience. SGP's 'Dance Off' has become a regular feature that may bypass this system, yet it nevertheless offers an apt illustration. It consists of an elevated dance floor, decorated to look like a boxing ring, upon which participants compete with improvised dance routines in a space not larger than six metres squared. Made open to all festivalgoers, the activity has become a celebrated feature of the event, despite its modesty in scale and cost, successfully sidelining the exclusivity of the presentational performance tradition by providing something humorous and newsworthy, yet simple. So prominent did it become, that it was nominated for 'Best Festival Moment' in the 2009 UK Festival Awards alongside Jay Z's rendition of 'Wonderwall'. One interview respondent, the artist liaison for Standon Calling, emphasized the significance of such a nomination. She pointed out that it was irregular, for up until then, the 'Best Festival Moment' had been largely exclusive to staged music performances.¹²³ It was Jay Z who received the award, yet the fact that an audience-produced attraction was elevated to sit alongside one of Glastonbury's main stage acts in this category, was demonstrative of the

¹²² Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living?'.
¹²³ Interviewee C.

incorporation of audience action into what legitimately counts as peak performance.

SGP presents such a cosmopolitan abundance of stimulation that art installations, stages and action camps are not easily distinguishable. Consequently, the definition of art shifts to a more inclusive interpretation. Observing the event in 2010, the festival-frame assimilated traders, shelters, seating, installations, action camps and art boats, insofar as their inclusion within the same context rendered them all aesthetic objects of play – a phenomenon explored in greater depth, in the following section. Figures 14 and 15 testify to the way in which the boundaries between traders and installation art were, in the context of the festival, made indistinct. It is deducible that the structure on the left entered SGP through the procedures that admit art installations, while the structure on the right, as a trader selling tea and coffee, would have been processed via a different administrative channel. And yet, on the level of experience, there is little essential difference between them. Both perform a function, and both are conspicuously decorated, together contributing to the festival's aesthetic display.



Figures 13–14: Installations and Traders

Author's photographs.

The mixed placement of aestheticized objects confuses, then, the distinction between functionality and art. The identification of these features are not prefabricated by being placed in an 'installation area' or 'action camp area', but

appear haphazardly, which only augments the sense of individualized discovery. In contrast to the mechanized aspects of the concert-model event, discussed in Section 3.3, much of SGP's physical milieu is evidently mastered by hand. Wandering across the festival site, it is easy to be struck by the realization that extensive hours of labour, from many different groups of people, underpin its spatial construction. Presenting craft as art and demystifying the artist, the images below illustrate the way in which handmade and intricate items were strewn across the site.



Figure 15–16: The Mad Hatter's Tea Party

Author's photographs.

So far it has become clear that SGP and the concert-model event are dissociated festival models; while the latter places focus on a musical lineup of performances unfolding at an elevated and stationary point, the former, like the theme park, attempts to create an individualized sense of fluid adventure through breaking down the spatial orientation of focus into much smaller fragments. The shift from a single or small number of spatial foci, to a multiplicity of smaller and diversified elements, generates the variation that supports individualized over crowd experience. Depicting an A3 sign that was placed alongside the entrance to the event, Figure 17 exemplifies one of the many features SGP has borrowed from BM. It is true that a large proportion of festivalgoers would have passed it, yet it was small and discrete enough to be missed by many.



Figure 17: Experiences for the Few

Author's photograph.

Significantly, the outcome of this approach embodies the 'solution' to the problematized concert-model event. The inclusion of small details, to be experienced by a relatively small number of festivalgoers, inverts the 'mass' and uniform participation associated with the concert-model event. The individuated mode of engagement can be interpreted as a challenge to the domination of presentational performance in festival culture. The ways in which SGP can be considered a BM-inspired response to dissatisfactions with the mode of participation engendered by the concert model are tellingly present in the musings of one staff member. The comments below problematize crowd experience and the uniform 'looking', typical of what is described as the 'traditional festival':

I mean we've all been to nightclubs where it's all about the music and everybody's looking forward and it's a bit dark and you're in one room, you know, it's a bit stale. It's the usual format of clubbing and what not. At a traditional festival... you can fit this many people in this field, and you can fit that many people in that field, and if you feel that there's too much of a crowd surge for a certain event they'll close a segment, and all of that kind of penned in feeling brings a certain atmosphere and experience.

At the burn you don't have any of that you know, and okay there are certain events that will pull a crowd, but you will never, ever get a feeling like you are in a crowd... apart from the actual burn obviously, there's no big spectacles in terms of a headliner, that is in one place, looking forward at one thing, you know? Everything's very 360, you know, there's no like 'that's

the way to look, and there is the entertainment to entertain you, who is standing here'. That is the dynamic. Everything is 360.¹²⁴

A belief that the 'traditional festival' is a negative antithesis of BM is articulated through the use of two- and three-dimensionality in the distinguishing of two event types. Fragmented over mass experience is idealized as the respondent describes the way in which the focusing of crowd perception at a certain object attention is, with the exception of the two Burns, almost completely dispensed with at BM. The fact that all of the SGP management crew attend, and very likely support the event in the way exemplified above, demonstrates that the fragmentation of space at their event has come about through an ideal conceptualization of the '360 degree' model of production. The attempt to move away from crowd experience to individualized experience using a fragmented and 'micro' approach to spatial design also resonates with the broader brand positioning of the boutique in relation to 'mass marketed' products. The inclusion of multiple features allows festivalgoers to navigate different pathways through the festival – in ways that exceed watching performances that are uniformly delivered to the festival crowd.

SGP is marked, then, by a fragmented approach to spatial design, affected through implementing a range of application procedures by which members of the public are able to creatively contribute to the festival. It is worth remembering that action camps and art boats are less pervasive features at SGP than their equivalents at BM, and that the successful utilization of volunteers is less apparent in the 'behind the scenes' fields of production. However, the introduction of these schemes, and the centrality of participation in the events' discourses do indicate an alignment of politics between BM and SGP. Harnessing innovation and labour freely offered up, the event comes to be spatially and artistically shaped by a wide pool of creative contributors. SGP may not achieve the same proportion of volunteers as discussed of BM (in Section 4.5.2), yet the event does distribute some control to its audience, confusing the traditional role of the audience member as consumer. Once this occurs, the dynamic produced

¹²⁴ Interviewee A.

inverts the ‘total separation of artists from audience’ critically attributed to the concert-model event.¹²⁵

5.3.3 Theatricality and Play

As argued in the previous section, there is a fragmented, diversified and democratized approach to spatial construction at SGP. Employing the framework of Cremona, for whom the placement of carnival performers in close proximity to their audiences promotes performative interaction, this section provides a closer analysis of how SGP’s democratization of theatricality generates a mode of participation that can be similarly described as *paidian*. Implicit to the engineering of this environment is, as shall be shown, the notion of *reclaimed* performance. In many ways, this is achieved in the first instance by programming a quantity of non-musical performance art and, in line with the installations and encampments discussed in the previous section, by the adherence of these performances to the relational paradigm. As Kill and O’Grady have suggested, these performances can be conceptualized thus as *relational performances*.¹²⁶

SGP’s 2010 programme included three main theatre areas, the ‘Never Ever Land Theatre’, the ‘Artful Badger Woodland’ and the ‘Feast of Fools’ stage.¹²⁷ It is true that the theatre performances listed appear to have included a mixture of the presentational and participative, though the latter was underlined through various emphases on interactivity; theatre collective ‘Tax Deductible’, for example, were described as ‘an Imaginarium of interactive performance’.¹²⁸ ‘The Artful Badger’ was listed as theatre, yet evidence suggests that the categorization was loosely applied. The breadth of what was described as theatre lends itself to the blurring of distinction analogous to the other, coalescent occupiers of space – the traders, action camps and installations.

¹²⁵ Frith, p. 222.

¹²⁶ Rebekka Kill and Alice O’Grady, ‘Exploring Festival Performance as a State of Encounter’, *Beyond Text* <<http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/stateofencounter/index.php>> [accessed 20 November 2011].

¹²⁷ ‘Theatre and Performance’, *Secret Garden Party* <<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [accessed 28 January 2011].

¹²⁸ ‘Newsflash: Headliners Announced’, *SGP Newsletter* (25 February 2010).

Performance, party and play are elements that converge in this context, and it is arguable that through the creation of an 'anything goes' environment, the audience becomes de-inhibited. Drawing upon Turner's musings on the celebratory behaviour of crowds, this mixing up of performers and audience members created a certain atmospheric 'effervescence' that encourages theatrical participation.¹²⁹ There was a house band that provided a degree of focus to the area, yet it was this theatrical effervescence that was underlined by one reviewer:

Every time I enter the Artful Badgers stage, located in a pagan woodland hideaway, I find an ecstatic disregard for convention, with feral beauty contests, ancient badger theatre, and bands like Badger Badger and the Egg improvising and experimenting and whipping the crowd into one communal, whirling flash-mob.¹³⁰

Similarly, the 'Collo-Silly-Um', organized by theatre company, Bearded Kitten, blurred the distinctions between theatre and party, for this was essentially a disco area that was produced and complemented with performance. Significantly, the area was constructed so that the dancing audience faced each other, rather than towards a DJ booth or stage.

In addition to the areas listed above, theatrical performances could be found elsewhere. Commencing from the 'Feast of Fools' stage were two processions that were, through their emphasis on audience engagement, consistent with BM in adhering to the 'No Spectators' ethos. Their home at the 'Feast of Fools' recalled a celebration that once, for Bakhtin, occupied 'an important place in the life of medieval man'.¹³¹ Its use in this context referenced the carnivalesque and suggested a nostalgic attempt to revert back to the folk festival, also evident in the slogan for the area: 'One World! One Folk! One

¹²⁹ Victor Turner, *Celebration*, p. 16.

¹³⁰ Louis Weinstock, 'Festival Review: The Secret Garden Party', *Independent Music Magazine* (30 July 2010) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/music-magazine/festivals-2010/festival-review-the-secret-garden-party-2039367.html>> [accessed 1 February 2011].

¹³¹ Bakhtin, p. 5.

Love!’¹³² The two main processions included ‘The Firelighting Ceremony’, which is a clear appropriation of BM’s ‘Lamplighting Procession’, and the ‘Magnificent Party Party Parade’. Both processions are made up of audience members, rather than hired performers. Whereas BM deploys rehearsed performers in distinct costume, the former procession advertises a slightly more spontaneous variation, where audiences are invited to ‘join us in celebration’.¹³³ The ‘Magnificent Party Party Parade’ also encourages the audience to become part of the performance through its preparatory description and instructions:

What starts with ten Gardeners and finishes with two thousand, The Magnificent Party Party Parade brings the festival to a stand-still as it weaves its way around the lake and between the stages. Visit the mask creating, face painting, fancydress making Camps and then GET INVOLVED.¹³⁴

An appropriation of the ‘No Spectators’ doctrine manifests itself in this conspicuous attempt to provide an opportunity for the audience to reclaim performance. This procession typifies SGP’s organizing principle to an extreme for, unlike the others, it appears to lack a notable nucleus of scripted musicians or performers. What is significant is the fact that there is no invitation to watch, only a clarion call to participate.



¹³² ‘Feast of Fools’, *Secret Garden Party Programme*, p. 25.

¹³³ ‘Games Spectacles and Events’, *Secret Garden Party*

<<http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2010/html/>> [accessed 28 January 2011].

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Figure 18: Procession at SGP

What is demonstrable above is that the use of processions and immersive theatre produces festival experiences that do not necessarily peak with the reception of a particular music act, as is traditional of the outdoor festival, but with heightened moments of collectivity, where prescribed performers are either adhering to the participative ideal, or *in absentia*. The convivial mixture of theatrical crowds and interactive performance may be interpreted, following the work of Cremona, as an instigator of popular theatricality.

In line with the discussion presented in Section 4.5.1, the prominence of costume at SGP is also worthy of close examination. In a way not limited to SGP, but strongly characteristic of BM, fancy dress is perhaps the broadest type of theatrical display observable at the event. It is difficult to argue that this is wholly an audience-fueled activity, for fancy dress themes are heavily promoted by the event prior to its happening. Costume is both conspicuously promoted and realized through the inclusion of stalls and action camps dedicated to visual transformation. These opportunities are markedly abundant and galvanize further an attempt to encourage the participatory modes championed at BM. As deduced from the use of costume examined in Section 4.5.1, bodily displays have similarly become a method of earning status within an event-specific system of distinction. This is a claim augmented by SGP's promotion of the bespoke costume designers Pranksta, which sell clothes and run fashion shows at the event. This is a very expensive, London-based costumier that creates bespoke outfits that can cost thousands of pounds. Only a minority of festivalgoers would be willing to purchase costumes from this designer due to their expense, yet SGP's prominent endorsement of the company confers an elevated status upon those that do. In an environment that celebrates elaborate display, the inclusion of high-end costumery in Pranksta's fashion show is 'aspirational', and advertises specific avenues to extreme participation.



Figures 19–20: Stylized Dress at SGP

Emphases on display can be interpreted as a shift towards a play-oriented mode of participation, promoting behaviours that are conventionally associated with children. Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence for the ‘upward shift’ in what counts as adult behaviour is the fact that many features and action camps, comprising a large bulk of its space, actually double up as children’s activities.¹³⁵ There are provisions and activities specifically for children, yet SGP reminds its family festivalgoers that much of the ‘mainstream’ entertainment there is also suitable for children:

From starring in your own movie at Videopia to diving into the Junglerooms Ball Pool, the Action Camps provide activities that are as engaging for children as they are for adults (no surprise there). Be sure to explore them all.¹³⁶

Compared to BM, there is a restriction of sexual references and content, making the environment more conducive to families. As previously suggested, many activities are aimed at adults, rather than families or children, yet they are appealing to both. This coincides, perhaps, with McWilliams’ thesis: to argue that adults are becoming infantile would be mistaken; it is the stereotypes of adult behaviour that have shifted to make room for behaviours traditionally

¹³⁵ McWilliams, ‘The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up’.

¹³⁶ ‘Kids and Families’, *Secret Garden Party* <<http://uk.secretgardenparty.com/2011/html/>> [accessed 3 February 2011].

associated with children. An idyllic escape to a childlike state of uninhibited freedom pervades promotional literature and reviewer accounts of the event, with one stating: 'unaffected, unpretentious playfulness and frivolity is what makes the Secret Garden Party so edifying'.¹³⁷ These qualities also describe the tone of festival literature; incorporating a humorous quotation from A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, an SGP newsletter balances the intellectual quotes found elsewhere with one that echoes childhood nostalgia.¹³⁸ The imagery used in newsletters and programmes is also distinctly childlike in style, resembling that which might appear in an adventure storybook for children.

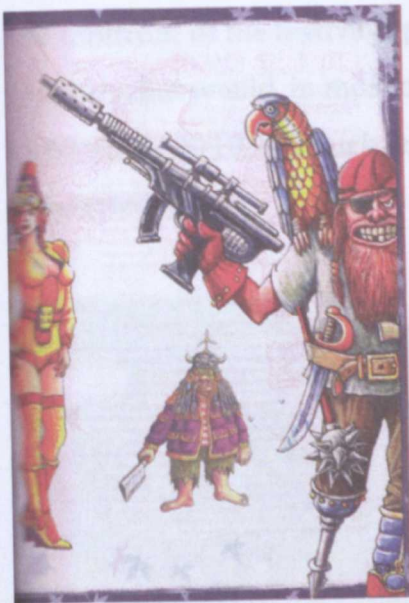


Figure 21: Programme Illustration

The other-worldliness of this media presentation, supported also by the website's virtual depiction of the idealized festival, is both childlike and 'bohemian-ized' through an interspersing of philosophical quotes amongst the pages. In addition, SGP frequently presents escapism as losing inhibitions:

The Secret Garden Party brings people together by removing all barriers – you will do things you never thought you had the nerve or bombast to do.

¹³⁷ Weinstock, 'Festival Review: The Secret Garden Party'.

¹³⁸ '300 Tickets Left', *SGP Newsletter* (10 July 2009).

We set a few rules and ask you to respect them. Then we ask you to let go and do as you wish.¹³⁹

Perhaps what might be considered symptomatic of SGP's rejection of politics, in favour of a resigned hedonism, is the following comment: 'death smiles at us all. All a man can do is smile back (and be a little bit silly)'.¹⁴⁰ The celebration of silliness is brought into being through the action camps and games which are presented as the all-important opportunities by which audience members can lose their inhibitions and experience the 'bombastic' moments championed in SGP literature. These experiences are brought to the forefront of the festival's programming, and there are numerous features that would, in most other scenarios, only appear for the benefit of children. In 2010, one such feature included a small petting zoo, as illustrated below.



Figure 22: Petting Zoo

Author's photograph.

Extreme participation is promoted via the programming of various childlike activities for adults; this is exemplified by features that include paint wars, 'group Howl' (at the full moon) and mud wrestling. Comments from the organizer of the mud-wrestling pit reinforce the convergence of play and performance when the terms 'game' and 'interactive performance' are used

¹³⁹ 'What is The Secret Garden Party', *At a Glance*.

¹⁴⁰ '300 Tickets Left', *SGP Newsletter* (10 July 2009).

almost interchangeably, in the discussions of this feature.¹⁴¹ Even activities that promote gambling are presented in a light-hearted format consistent with the childlike nostalgia that pervades the event. Through a comedic, satirical and light-hearted presentation, a level of innocence is retained:

Deep in the backstreets of a surreal and twisted dystopian city lies a shady and illicit gambling den where gardeners gamble away their last pennies on giant African snail racing. A sweaty, heaving competition. 6 snails, the snail-way track, choose your favorite, 3,2,1 BANG! They're off!¹⁴²

As discussed in Section 5.4, the employment of Bearded Kitten at the London-based festival Lovebox, and various other British boutique events, demonstrates that the playful activities inherited from BM also radiate through the broader festival culture. The illustration and text featured on Bearded Kitten's website celebrates a prolonged experience of childhood; set out like a cartoon, their aim is described as 'GET AS MANY PEOPLE HAVING FUN AS POSSIBLE'.¹⁴³ The positioning of these elements as mainstream attractions placed across the site, rather than in a fabricated children's area, is consistent with the 'playground-like' context discussed in Chapter 4, and suggests that in this experiential arena, the notions of what is acceptable adult behaviour are reinvented.

As discussed in the previous chapter, little academic attention has been paid to the adult use of costume and fancy dress in Western popular culture. As noted by Fron *et al.*, dressing up has been almost wholly neglected in the established research on play conducted by Huizinga and Callois.¹⁴⁴ This augments the notion that the costume observable at festivals today is evidence of a cultural shift that is contemporary, for it is logical that Huizinga's and Caillois' neglect was simply a product of the era in which they wrote. The material presented here and in Section 4.5.1, as well as Fron *et al.*'s problematizing of the existing literature on play, suggests that scholarship is yet

¹⁴¹ Interviewee B.

¹⁴² 'The Action Camps', *Secret Garden Party*.

¹⁴³ *Bearded Kitten* <<http://www.beardedkitten.com/>> [3 February 2011].

¹⁴⁴ Fron *et al.*, p. 2.

to 'catch up' with the theatrical audiences that have, only recently, become prominent within British music festival culture.

5.3.4 Presentational Performance

In his investigation of the colonial influence on Zimbabwe, Turino noted a bifurcation of musical celebration into the participatory, marked by 'people singing, dancing, clapping, ululating, accompanied by loud drumming and hosho' in a practice in which there were no artist/audience distinctions, and the presentational, whereby audiences became 'still, polite, quiet, attentive, and appreciative'.¹⁴⁵ It is true that the latter description is hardly applicable to the audience at SGP. Nonetheless, the presentational performance tradition remains a significant, if not a rather sidelined, aspect of the event. Consistent with the mechanisms described in Chapter 3, that drive both the Hollywood film and the concert-model industries, SGP is an event that retains the commercial use of stars as assets. So far, its examination has not deployed the word 'praxis' to describe the participative practices observable there, for despite its cultural alignment with the 'No Spectators' ethos, *unlike* BM, SGP has incorporated the performance conventions it opposes. Consequently this section presents evidence with which to examine how far the processes of cultural appropriation has effected a transformation of the 'No Spectators' ethos, into a de-radicalized mode of extra-spectatorship.

The strategic use of line-ups is evident on examining festival promotion, preview coverage of the event and from my interview discussion with a SGP employee. Previews are particularly telling artefacts; they are important devices for generating the kind of exposure that drives ticket sales, as they are published prior to the event. They are also the stuff of press releases and tend to be written by the festival or by their press company – offering these parties a uniquely free and unrestrained opportunity to select and present desired pieces of information, in a style likely to procure ticket sales. From my experience in

¹⁴⁵ Turino, p. 140.

disseminating festival press releases, content is edited surprisingly little at the point of publication. Due to the general practice of copy and pasting releases into website, magazine and blog articles, festival promoters have a surprisingly strong degree of control over this process. Contrastingly, while good reviews are important in terms of sustaining reputation and credibility, they are not used in the same strategic capacity as the preview. This is because they are published after the event and consequently do not have the same effect on exposure-generated ticket sales, and because the festival organization has little real control over the writings of independent journalists.

The controlled preview content of SGP illuminates, therefore, the strategic way in which profile acts are deployed. The 2010 pre-festival media coverage following SGP's line-up announcement, was almost entirely devoted to the promotion of the standout acts, as an article in the *Independent Music Magazine* exemplifies.¹⁴⁶ In addition to previews, most other, lengthier articles such as the review on *Spinner UK* devote a majority of coverage to the live acts, though this does not, as is later shown, seem to be matched by audience experience of the event.¹⁴⁷ Bearing in mind the likelihood that all preview material has come directly from SGP or their employees, the emphasis upon standout acts, however necessary to their commercial success, does rather throw into question how far the event can be credited with a 'No Spectators' ethos. Festival founder Freddie Fellowes is, by all accounts, formatively inspired by this doctrine, yet he deploys the commercial star system that his vanguard rejects. Providing another indicator of a festival-produced preview, its author *in absentia*, a *Virtual Festivals* article emphasizes comments from Fellowes during a BBC 6 Music interview, which focus entirely on the line-up:

It's really exciting this year, it has to be one of our most pant-wetingly exciting lineups so far. We've got the Gorillaz Sound System as our Saturday

¹⁴⁶ 'The Secret Garden Party Announces Lineup', *Independent Music Magazine* (26 February 2010) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/music-magazine/festivals-2010/the-secret-garden-party-announce-2010-line-up-1912042.html>> [accessed 1 February 2011].

¹⁴⁷ Jody Thompson, 'Mercury Rev Close Secret Garden Party after Four Days of Fun', *Spinner UK* <<http://www.spinnermusic.co.uk/2010/07/26/mercury-rev-secret-garden-party-festival-review/>> [accessed 1 February 2011].

night headliner, then my favourite cult band from my youth, Mercury Rev and Marina and the Diamonds who I think is number two in the album charts at the moment.¹⁴⁸

Regardless of SGP's authenticating discourses relating to 'independence' and 'not-for-profit' qualities, the selective appropriation of 'No Spectators' has allowed the festival to succeed commercially, through the successful cultivation of media interest. This is conspicuously reinforced by comments from an SGP-employed interviewee; during interview, the discontent caused by the decision to book Grace Jones in 2008 was related:

You know we had like Grace Jones [perform] the year before last, where we paid her fifty grand, which is like a huge chunk of a tiny boutique festival's budget. Which was a contentious issue, but it was done to put it on the map in terms of the music industry. You know, to get companies involved, to get Joe Bloggs music industry PR, you need those names to an extent, and you need them at a certain point in the event's evolution anyway.¹⁴⁹

It is not surprising that such a move was contentious because, to some extent, excessive spending on acts makes the realization of a participative ideal more difficult to achieve, in terms of the finances, media and audience attention absorbed by such an act. Nevertheless, SGP has successfully retained a brand formula that competes both via an emphasized programme of acts, and via its emphases on participative features. Exponential growth in SGP's capacity offers substantial proof that such a strategy has proven highly successful. Interestingly, the comments above suggest that booking profile performers offered the organization a strategy for commercial growth, rather than something that organizers actually felt was necessary to the quality of their production. SGP continues to emphasize a line-up of popular acts, and the fact that the profile of Grace Jones has not been matched since 2008 augments the claim that this

¹⁴⁸ 'Gorillaz Sound System and more for Secret Garden Party', *Virtual Festivals* (24 February 2010) <<http://www.virtualfestivals.com/latest/news/7311/-/Gorillaz-Sound-System-and-more-for-Secret-Garden-Party>> [accessed 1 February 2011].

¹⁴⁹ Interviewee A.

booking was used strategically, for the purposes of generating commercial awareness. This is a highly irregular programming trajectory for a festival experiencing upward growth. It is unusual for an increase in scale and popularity to correlate with the diminishing of profile acts, and offers perhaps the best evidence for an ethos of extra-spectatorship that blends together an ideal of participation with the partial subordination of the antithetical model, exemplified in Chapter 3. This combined approach is deployed in the courting of the media, representing again a key divergence from the media ambivalence characteristic of BM.

This oppositional mixture of spectatorship and its rejection is reinforced by evidence compiled by the Association of Independent Festivals, demonstrating that the audience at SGP spends less than half of its time watching bands.¹⁵⁰ This combination of elements was observable in 2010 – despite all the rhetoric against spectatorship, the festival moment that was best attended was a headline performance from Gorillaz Sound System. And yet, crowds were much more dispersed the rest of the time and, unlike most British festivals, the few opportunities for ‘mass’ reception seemed rather unpopular. What has resulted from SGP’s incorporation of spectatorship and its rejection was succinctly summarized by Louis Weinstock’s festival review: ‘the music line-up at Secret Garden Party feels like a sub-plot to the spontaneous creation and moments of mass participation that sprout up like beanstalks over the site’.¹⁵¹ The article goes on to imply that the best entertainment was to be found away from the stages:

Whilst the much anticipated headline act, Caravan Palace, deliver their hip-shuddering electro-swing with some gusto on the Saturday night, their performance lacks the recklessness found elsewhere. On Sunday afternoon, for example, just as the crowd is beginning to flag, the Bearded Kittens step onto the Great Stage and promptly fire hundreds of bags of fluorescent paint dust into the crowd, starting a mass paint fight. The result was spectacular,

¹⁵⁰ AIF chairman Alison Wenham claimed that 73.8% of the survey participants at SGP spent less than half of their time on live acts. This was reported by Gordon Masson, in ‘Cash tills ring at UK’s indie festivals’, *Music Week* (12 June 2010), p. 8.

¹⁵¹ Weinstock, ‘Festival Review: The Secret Garden Party’.

washing away any thoughts of the 9–5 in a fluorescent downpour, bringing with a huge smiles and a rainbow synergy to the crowd.¹⁵²

Tellingly, images taken of this moment, instead of images of headliners, have been used to represent the festival online. As illustrated on the left hand side of the image in Figure 23, they can be found as thumbnails for SGP's event listing on eFestivals, a major website dedicated to festivals coverage.



Figure 23: Audience-Centric Representation

The thumbnails on the left depict a paint fight erupting in a crowd at SGP. The screen shot is taken from eFestivals <<http://www.efestivals.co.uk/festivals/festivals.php>> [accessed 10 March 2011].

The moments of 'collective elaboration' that have come to represent SGP on media sites such as this coexist with the conventional promotion of acts.¹⁵³ Despite the festival's extensive cultural appropriation from an event that rejects the traditional line-up as hierarchical, it necessarily retains the traditional prioritization of performers for the purposes of commercial survival. As a result,

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Bishop, p. 12.

a duality of discourses and practices sees paidian participation converge with a conventional treatment of standout names. My interviewee's comments regarding the booking of Grace Jones illuminate the fact that, despite attempts to cultivate a performance culture similar to that characteristic of BM, the festival finds itself subject to the conventional motivating factors that govern audience attendance. The approaching saturation of the outdoor festival industry in Britain, as presented in Section 5.2, has created a highly competitive environment whereby SGP cannot allow the more act-centric events to appear superior, although the illustration in Figure 24 evidences the continuing significance of impressive headliners to most festivalgoers. As such, the presentational tradition of the concert-model event in Britain, remains crucial to ticket sales.

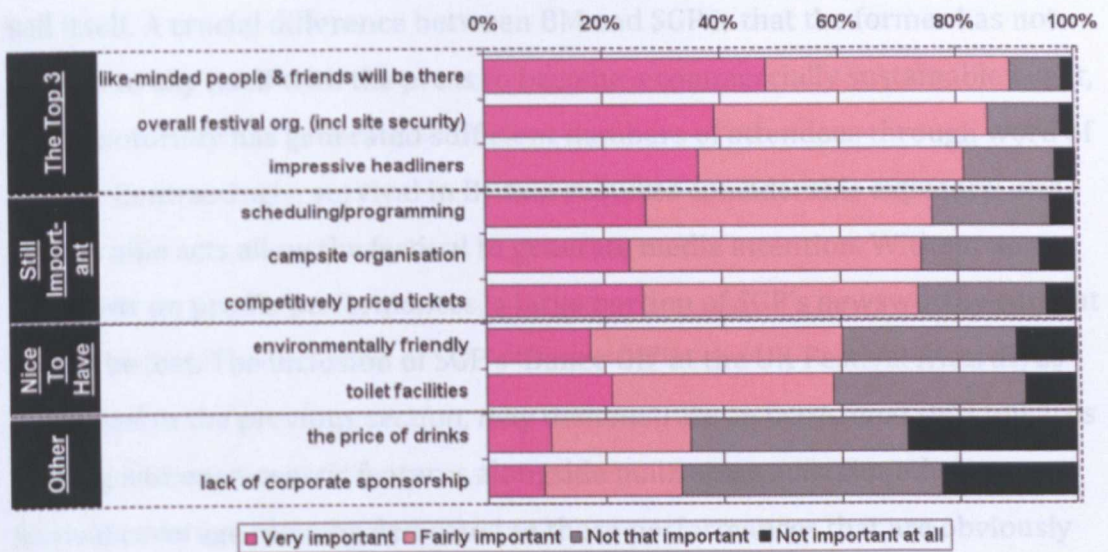


Figure 24: Motivating Factors

Virtual Festivals Annual Census 2009

It is true that SGP is, in many ways, a de-radicalized imitation of the events that are formally incorporated into the BM Network. Certainly, despite its generation of discourses that reject spectatorship, the *posture* of this doctrine is undermined by the presentational performance system it reproduces. However, it is also the case that SGP represents a necessary convergence of spectatorship and its rejection, for the socio-economic conditions that have allowed BM to

succeed are unique to the event. It makes logical sense that the cultural nuances generated by a country the size of the USA, with its simultaneously large population, will be more substantial than smaller countries. Since festival cultures rely on ticket sales, the size of the market is enormously significant. BM is a niche product; not only will the festival appeal to a certain type of person, but only a minority will have the surplus of time, finances and motivation needed to attend. Operating in the USA, BM is better able to establish a highly individual cultural event, accessible only to a nuanced minority, while achieving the substantial ticket sales necessary to produce and develop the event sustainably. Due to its British location, it is highly unlikely that SGP would be able to attract a similarly large crowd willing to pay over one hundred pounds for a music and arts festival without impressive headliners.

Overseas, the individuality of the BM product has largely allowed it to sell itself. A crucial difference between BM and SGP is that the former has not needed to ally itself with the press to become a commercially sustainable event, for its notoriety has generated sufficient numbers of attendees through word of mouth. Contrastingly, survival in Britain requires considerable exposure, and high profile acts allow the festival to generate media attention. Without an emphasis on profile performances, a large portion of SGP's newsworthy content would be lost. The inclusion of SGP's 'Dance Off' at the UK Festival Awards, as discussed in the previous section, may demonstrate an occasional shift towards valuing audience-centric features alongside main stage acts. Nonetheless, festival coverage remains dedicated to those performances that are obviously recognizable, and of interest to, the majority. It stands to reason that the most frequent media mentions of Glastonbury will emphasize their choice in headliners, for these are undoubtedly acts that the media's audience have watched on MTV or seen pictured in magazines. Such coverage not only presents a rather distorted view of the true festival experience, but also it perpetuates reliance on headliners in festival programmes. These restrictions result in SGP having to address the same top three motivating factors illustrated overleaf, as the promoter of the concert-model event.

However, what has occurred is a conceptual shift away from the centrality of the presentational performance in the festival experience, towards

an incorporation of paidian play, interaction and encounters.¹⁵⁴ As mentioned earlier, once the audience have responded to the employment of the star system and have felt sufficiently compelled to purchase their ticket, they spend, along with Camp Bestival, less than half of their time watching bands.¹⁵⁵ Dedicating no small portion of their press release advertising to the coverage of standout names in order to guarantee ticket sales, SGP also 'advertise themselves as being less about the bands'. It is true that the arguments above present strong evidence to affirm the hypothesis, levelled in Section 1.2, that the extra-spectatorship promoted at SGP is a de-radicalized version of BM's 'No Spectators' philosophy and praxis. Such a conclusion must, however, consider the fact that almost every contemporary music festival will appear de-radicalized, when juxtaposed with the uniquely sustained ideals of BM. There is no doubt that Secret Productions have, to a large extent, commercialized BM's model of production. And yet, as Section 4.5.2 underlined, that BM itself is organized by a profit-making company accused of selling exploitation as emancipation is also a moot point. Since this investigation is concerned primarily with participation, rather than with the authenticity of the anti-capitalist discourses presented by festival organizations, the conclusion that what occurs on the level of experience remains crucial can be similarly applied here. Evidence supports the conclusion that via a mechanism of cultural appropriation, SGP has reinvented festivalgoing through an idealization of extreme participation, and through a (albeit partially undermined) critique of the spectator. Despite its divorce from the repertoire of radicalized doctrines that mark BM, the championing of participant immersion and creativity retains an alignment with the aesthetic and ideological agenda of participative art. Reproducing a discourse that offers a rejection of sponsorship and commerce, SGP places itself within a Marxist tradition whereby alienation is resolved through the collective elaboration of meaning.¹⁵⁶ As detailed in Section 5.3, Secret Productions remain one of the few independent festival promoters that have resisted the impacts of the recession, following a trajectory of growth both in terms of SGP's capacity, and in terms of the introduction of new festival

¹⁵⁴ Cremona, p. 71, p. 76.

¹⁵⁵ Masson, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ Bishop, p. 12.

projects. Taking place within a crowded market desperate to add value to programmes of entertainment, this activity has contributed to the radiation of the 'No Spectators' ethos outside of SGP, and through a number of events within the boutique sector.

5.4 Beyond SGP: 'Life is Not a Spectator Sport'

The previous section examined an event that exists outside of the BM Network. Organized by an expanding, independent company, SGP is not required to uphold the principles discussed in Chapter 4. And yet, the cultural relationship between BM and SGP illuminates an aligned politics of participation. At both events, organizers fashion a surreal space with event themes, promoting contemporaneous audience display through costume; they programme performance spaces and art installations that, in line with the rationale of participative art, idealize physical and immersive involvement, and there is an attempt to democratize creative production. This transpires mainly by making available routes to the creation of themed encampments, installations, vehicles and boats, in a visible presentation of the audience-produced event. It is impossible to neatly transfer this assemblage of indicators to other events that may not be obviously mimetic in their co-option of discourses and praxes, and are each contingent upon a unique set of cultural, commercial and geographic factors. That is not to say, however, that similar themes are not significantly at work elsewhere; neither should the inability to generalize in a uniform manner undermine the possibility of locating a shift in what is constructed as ideal participation, within British festival culture.

So far, this chapter has provided evidence to support the hypothesis that the 'Burner Diaspora', discussed in Section 4.6, is not limited to the repertoire of regional Burns that fall within the BM Network. That SGP represents a clear attempt at building an independent, though allied culture of participation in the UK, is supported by ample data, yet the influence of 'No Spectators' does not end there. BM does not advertise itself, and is unknown to many. Nonetheless its status as cultural vanguard acts as a broadcast, cultivating similar attributes

within the British festivals scene. Appropriation outside of this festival is not always demonstrative of an entrenched politics that conspicuously reproduces an idealized discourse. This is probably because the need to integrate novelty is more powerful a force than any genuine sympathies with the politics of 'No Spectators'. Nonetheless, it is this necessity, coupled with the fact that the industry is disposed to a high degree of cross-pollination (and consequently, assimilation), which has allowed the 'No Spectators' ethos to advance in the UK. The industry saturation problematized in Section 5.2, coupled with ultimately limited audiences, has created a highly competitive environment where festivals must find the means, outside of their line-ups of music, to attract attention and to create memorable and unique experiences during the live event. Often, this entails booking a feature that has been showcased elsewhere. For example, festival promoters all over Britain, from the Isle of Wight's Bestival, to Scotland's RockNess, have deployed the 'Big Love Inflatable Church', as illustrated by Figure 10, to enhance event content and to procure media attention. Also fuelling the cross-pollination of festival programmes is the industry of contractors that has grown to meet the demands of the proliferating festival sector; the creators of successful audience-centric features are not likely to limit their activities to a single event, but will tour their project where possible.¹⁵⁷ As one interviewee suggested in Section 5.2.1, promoters have to accept the fact that creative features will also, like the stages, generators and PA equipment, appear elsewhere on the festival circuit. The localized scale and reach of the smaller festivals, which might attract audiences principally from two or three of its nearest cities, also means that cross-pollination can occur without too much damage to neighbouring competitors. Provided there is not too much overlap in terms of target audiences, festival promoters are able to minimize the commercial risks of borrowing and adapting creative novelties from each other.

¹⁵⁷ Examples of British, novelty features include 'Grannies Gaff', a colourful space that provides refreshments, interactive games and a crew dressed as OAPS, featuring at *Glade*, SGP and others; the 'Dance Off' (described in Section 5.3) features at SGP and *Boomtown*; 'Poo-topia' provides a luxury toilet and discoteque area for *Kendal Calling* and SGP; and Happy Slap provides makeup, performance and interactive games for both *Beatherder* and *Kendal Calling*.

A number of British festivals reproduce a discourse of participation less potent than that which is engendered by BM, which is nevertheless aligned with the same critique of spectatorship, and finds expression via the same set of indicators deduced via this chapter and Chapter 4. It seems logical to comment first upon a new festival launched by SGP's owner, Secret Productions. Launched on the Shinnecock Reservation in Southampton, New York, on 5 August 2011, *Escape to New York* epitomizes a BM-inspired discourse with emphases on interaction, participation and expression throughout its promotional texts. Particularly revealing, is a passage placed in the 'Manifesto' section featured on the event's website:

What makes a good party?
 What you do, not what you see
 Who you meet, not who you see
 What you make happen, not what you watch happen
 Life is not a spectator sport.¹⁵⁸

Discernable here are the 'allegories of inequality' Rancière illuminates, as discussed in Chapter 3; seeing is associated with passivity, while 'doing', 'meeting' and 'happening' are words that describe an elevated mode of festival engagement. There is also a partial rejection of concert-model spectatorship; like SGP, *Escape to New York* promotes a central line-up of acts, yet the second and third line of the event's manifesto implies a subordination of reception, and a prioritization of the participative encounter. Based upon the cultural relationship evidenced in this chapter, it is clear that the problematized spectatorship exemplified by the fifth line of the passage is an appropriated ideology from America's BM. Press coverage, however, depicts something like the reverse. Most likely utilizing information released by Secret Productions, articles present the project as an attempt to introduce a quintessentially 'British boutique party vibe' to the US; one article in the *Guardian* states that 'surrealism is Freddie Fellowes's signature stamp', expressing concern that this British

¹⁵⁸ 'Manifesto of the Party', *Escape to New York* <<http://www.escape2ny.com/manifesto>> [accessed 1 November 2011].

blueprint will be 'lost in translation', while another describes Escape to New York as a 'UK inspired music festival'.¹⁵⁹ Supporting an interpretation of cultural *exchange*, as opposed to one-directional appropriation, it is true that the British boutique market has probably influenced the emphasis on high-end camping and gourmet food at this event. Nonetheless, an idealizing discourse of participation dominates this brand in a style that is directly analogous to SGP and BM; it is arguable, therefore, that these media interpretations confuse the true directions of cultural influence exemplified by Escape to New York.

In Britain, a number of boutique festivals independent of Secret Productions are also demonstrative of BM's transatlantic reach. Most festivals prefer to present themselves as unique cultural forms, without obvious allegiances elsewhere, yet Glade has, like SGP, conspicuously introduced discourses and praxes borrowed from the BM event. Glade 2010 did not, in fact, take place – it was cancelled due to rising costs and slow ticket sales. Nonetheless, that year a scheme was introduced with explicit reference to the participant-produced approach observable at BM. In March 2010, a number of industry websites and publications quoted the following information that was no doubt disseminated to them via press release:

Nick Ladd, Glade Festival Creative Director said, 'We've been going to Burning Man for the last few years and the show there is 100% generated by the people that attend the festival. As a result, the creative diversity is mind boggling, so we are bringing a bit of that vibe to the UK to see what ideas people have got buried in the surrealist depths of their minds. We can't wait to see what people come up with!'¹⁶⁰

Following the founder's claim that 'we have always seen Glade as an interactive experience', the article goes on to detail a grant scheme available for audiences wishing to create an area or installation at the event.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Suzi Boyle, 'The Secret Garden Party Escapes to New York', *Guardian* (9 August 2011) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2011/aug/09/escape-to-new-york-music-festival>> [accessed 14 November 2011]; 'UK Inspired Music Festival "Escape to New York" Announces Initial Lineup', *Britscene* (23 April 2011) <<http://www.britscene.com/2011/04/uk-inspired-music-festival-escaped-york-announces-initial-lineup/19533>> [accessed 10 September 2011].

¹⁶⁰ 'Glade Offers Fans the Chance to Create an Arena or Propose Site Art', *eFestivals*.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Despite the cancellation of this event in the year these features were introduced, there was an attempt to introduce and promote the democratizing schemes examined in Section 4.5.2 and Section 5.3.2. It is also significant that in 2011, Secret Productions bought Glade. Consequently the realization of these schemes at Glade may yet occur, though it is likely that Secret Productions will be under some pressure to retain some brand distinction between the festival and SGP.

Whereas Glade had begun to incorporate a discourse of participation just prior to the financial challenges that led to its cancellation in 2010, elsewhere the same discourse is more broadly deployed in a way that is powerfully aligned to both BM and SGP. Taking place at a different, secret location every summer, Shambala is a festival that does not openly reference BM – though it is, as the below text makes clear, conspicuously oriented around a set of aligned ideals and unique selling points.

We welcome ideas from inspiring, innovative, ethical and silly artists, musicians, performers and traders. We love new venue ideas, site art, participatory projects, striking sculpture, traditional festival fun and strange goings on.¹⁶²

Alluding to reclaimed participation, the event's web page states that 'there are many ways to get involved with the People's Republic of Shambala'.¹⁶³ Elsewhere, decided resistance of the concert-model star system is apparent – according to one article, Shambala is the only notable festival that 'notoriously avoid[s] pre-announcing their entertainment line-up each year'.¹⁶⁴ This article erroneously singles out the lineup as the 'entertainment' – yet the participative features of the programme are openly advertised, and include processions, crazy golf and the 'wacky Olympics'. Significantly, this event refuses to divulge the line-up of music performances in its main advertising pre-event; some lineup information is disclosed to mailing list members, though the inclusion of

¹⁶² 'Applications', *Shambala* <<http://www.shambalafestival.org/applications/>> [accessed 1 May 2011].

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ 'Shambala Festival '10', *eFestivals* (24 August 2010) <<http://www.efestivals.co.uk/festivals/shambala/2010/>> [accessed 30 May 2011].

significant names is largely absent from promotion, despite a sizeable 10,000 capacity. This could be interpreted as a promotional tactic to help generate curiosity, coinciding with the conspicuous omission of the event's location. From another perspective, Shambala's refusal to deploy acts for promotional purposes as conspicuously as, for example, SGP, discourages audiences from basing their ticket purchase on those acts. Existing outside of the competitive sphere of events that all deploy an acts-as-assets approach to generating sales, *Shambala* achieves two things: firstly, they are able to programme cheaper music acts than those selected by their competitors, freeing up funding for alternative entertainment and for making awards to the audience in the form of small grants. And secondly, excluding stars from their main promotional advertising allows them to promote, with greater ease and effect, the participant as star.¹⁶⁵

5.4.1 Fashioning the Surreal

Clothing is a communicative genre.¹⁶⁶ If costume has become a marked aspect of British festival culture, as the evidence suggests, it is justifiable to claim that a trend has emerged in the 'signalling system' of festival participants.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, perhaps the most significant consistency between SGP and other music festivals in Britain is the attempt to fashion surreal, collectively performed space through the promotion of themes and costume. Use of theme varies between those that articulate ideas principally for costumes, and those that are deployed as an all-round frame for visual and promotional presentation. Perhaps the most

¹⁶⁵ *Shambala* has been, perhaps, the most conspicuous in its promotion of the 'participant star': an 'S Factor' competition was prominently displayed on its 2011 website, declaring; 'so, you wanna be a STAR? All you have to do is come to the S Factor and get your talents out!', 'The Social Club Proudly Presents... The S Factor', *Shambala* <<http://www.shambalafestival.org/applications/>> [accessed 31 May 2011].

Elsewhere, brands have also instigated activities to promote similarly themed products. To promote Sony Computer Entertainment's new computer game, a 'Cocktails and Dreams SingStar Bar' was constructed at *Glastonbury*, which allowed audiences to have their own 'SingStar moment' in specially designed booths (Clark, 'The Festival Experience') Also, Guitar Hero produced an area for *Leeds Festival* in 2009, where friends could perform songs through the game.

¹⁶⁶ Enninger, p. 218-19.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

prominent adoption of the first approach can be seen at Bestival. Curated by BBC Radio 1's Rob Da Bank, the Isle of Wight's Bestival was first categorized in 2004 as a 7000-capacity, small festival. The event remains at the same location, but rather relinquished its 'boutique' status when it reached a 30,000 capacity in 2007.¹⁶⁸ Since then it has entered the UK Festival Awards category as a 'major', and now attracts (at the time of writing) an audience of 40,000. Despite rapid growth, its emphasis on costume has led journalists to credit the event with a personalized, idiosyncratic status:

With its annual fancy dress theme leading to more than half of the sun-drenched crowd stumbling across the Isle of Wight's rolling hills dressed as pirates, wizards or superheroes, there is little danger of it succumbing to corporate anonymity anytime soon.¹⁶⁹

Past themes, including '20,000 Freaks Under the Sea' and 'Rock Stars and Divas', incites costume wearing en masse, and has become such a prominent aspect of the event that Bestival rather classifies itself as a fancy dress party. At Bestival, the focus on fancy dress collectivizes display and, occasionally, subordinates the promotion of profile acts. One NME.com article, for example, places the headline 'Bestival 2011 fancy dress theme announced' in text triple the size as that placed beneath it, as something of an afterthought: 'plus Public Enemy to appear at the bash'.¹⁷⁰

Elsewhere, a thematic approach has provided an aesthetic 'hook' on which to hang performance art, décor, installations and costume, in a way that coincides with SGP and BM. Such is the case at Standon Calling, which in 2010 adopted a 'Murder on the Standon Express' theme, and in 2011, 'Gods and Monsters'. Whereas themes have played a central role in the brand positioning of Standon Calling, SGP and Bestival for some years, a thematic approach was introduced in 2011 to Blissfields, after it had been running for a period of ten

¹⁶⁸ Ian Gittins, 'Bestival', *Guardian* (11 September 2007) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/sep/11/popandrock.festivals?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>> [accessed 1 June 2011].

¹⁶⁹ Gittins, 'Bestival'.

¹⁷⁰ 'Bestival 2011 Theme Announced', *NME.com* (3 March 2011) <<http://www.nme.com/news/public-enemy/55258>> [accessed 30 May].

years, and to Kendal Calling, after a period of six years. That this occurred late in their trajectories is further evidence for a recent cross-pollination of cultures. Demonstrably, a thematic approach was not considered essential to the Kendal Calling and Blissfields brand until it became popular elsewhere in the festivals market. Since the primary motivation of the festival is to succeed, like any other commercial operation, this only serves to underline the value added through the deployment of themes in the boutique sector.

Blissfields and Standon Calling, in particular, share with SGP and BM the broad emphasis on theme. Themes are not presented as small subplots to the main, star-studded entertainment; rather, they utilize aesthetic narratives to create an overarching, surreal dimension. On the website of Standon Calling, for example, the 2011 theme was categorized as a prominent feature next to the line-up and other information categories. Within this category, images and texts animate 'Gods and Monsters', which was accompanied by the image below.



Figure 25: Gods and Monsters

Thor Battering the Midgard Serpent (1790) by Henry Fuseli.

The 'Gods and Monsters' theme was used to generate a narrative in the loosest possible sense. A set of impressions alluding to the mythological are elaborated with enough ambiguity and scope to allow for diverse interpretations: 'dress

divine. Or as disgustingly as you can conceive'.¹⁷¹ Whereas SGP's 'Origins and Frontiers' theme coincided with BM's theme of 'Evolution', these references to the divine resonate with the religious interpretations made possible by BM's 2011 theme, 'Rites of Passage'. The way in which Standon Calling collaborates with the audience in the animation of 'Gods and Monsters' was evidenced by the transformation of the site:

The on-site nightclub is being transformed into The Monster's Lair [...] All sorts of monsters will be in attendance [...] We're constructing a giant obelisk in the middle of the festival, pagan symbols will adorn the stalls and stages, and altars to Gods and Goddesses will be scattered all over the place.¹⁷²

That these aesthetic impressions are consistent with the angling of choreographed features was evident on the event's website, which on the front page pictured two performers in angel and devil costume, advertising an appropriately themed interactive parade.¹⁷³



Figure 26: Thematic Approach

These artefacts demonstrate that Standon Calling does not rely on its audience to animate its theme; instead it takes an active role in constructing the visual

¹⁷¹ 'Gods and Monsters', *Standon Calling* <<http://www.standon-calling.com/2011/02/09/gods-monsters/>> [accessed 31 May 2011]. For the full 'Gods and Monsters' text, see Appendix B.1.

¹⁷² 'Gods and Monsters', *Standon Calling*.

¹⁷³ *Standon Calling* <<http://www.standon-calling.com/>> [accessed 1 June 2011].

stage and milieu that will facilitate a reciprocal performance of 'Gods and Monsters'. Significantly, in 2011 Blissfields similarly alluded to the surreal with their chosen theme, 'Out of this World'. Consistent with SGP, BM and Standon Calling, this theme was employed as an aesthetic frame: featured in a newsletter, 'it's only five weeks before the spaceships start arriving' and 'we're ready for blast off' are phrases that make reference to the theme in the building of anticipation.¹⁷⁴ The role of the audience as principal performers of the theme is also expressed:

In case you hadn't twigged yet our theme at Blissfields this year is 'Out of this World' so make sure you come dressed up on the Saturday evening to the traditional end of festival party in the Bradley Bubble [...] aliens, spacemen, cyberpunks, clones, body-snatchers, robots, superheroes, blobs, and mutants of all types will be welcome throughout the weekend!¹⁷⁵

It is worth re-emphasizing the point that Blissfields did not employ a theme in this way prior to 2009; the year which saw the introduction of 'Decades', a theme introduced to commemorate its tenth birthday. The new introduction of themes to a decade-old festival is a likely outcome of the successful cultivation of such practices at other music festivals, which has invariably influenced the direction of this event because of its competitive drive.

It is true that only a handful of festivals have been detailed above, and yet it is a point of some consensus that fancy dress is increasingly observable at UK festivals. This might owe, in one sense, to the suggestibility of festival crowds. Certainly one interviewee, who had worked in the industry for several years, saw the increase in fancy dress as a proliferating phenomenon.¹⁷⁶ Since there are no precise quantifications of this behaviour it is impossible to illuminate this shift with firm statistical evidence. Nonetheless it seems likely that dressing up at festivals has spiralled through viral adoption:

¹⁷⁴ 'Blissfields – the Highly Acclaimed Small Festival with Big Lineup and Affordable Tickets', *eFestivals Newsletter* (30 May 2011).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Interviewee B.

I think as it grows it makes other people, like one year there'll be a thousand people doing it and the following year there's be two thousand people doing it, because they saw the other thousand people doing it last year. I know that's massively part of it.¹⁷⁷

Despite reported growth in costume sales, it is an under-recognized phenomenon that costume wearing has become a popularized form of display at the festivals mentioned and beyond. According to industry sources, sales for fancy dress have steeply increased in recent years; one article cited an 'unprecedented level of business', while another has described the market as 'continually doing well', despite the recession.¹⁷⁸ An increase in using costume for events such as freshers week at universities, alongside traditional festivities such as Christmas and Halloween, are credited with this rise without mentioning the potential impact of summer festivals. This omission might neglect a key driver of sales; indeed, the performance of characters and the embellishment of dress through the use of costume has become a markedly noticeable attribute of many contemporary festival participants.

There are two ways in which costume relates to social distinction; as deduced from both BM and SGP, in the egalitarian context of festivals, theatrical display confers a kind of status onto the festivalgoer. Since festivalgoers leverage this distinction, this mechanism can be located on the side of demand. However, evidence suggests that different *types* of theme also reveal a broader mechanism of cultural distinction at work on an industry level. The particular thematic approach at SGP is, like that of BM, convoluted and ambiguous enough to inspire a spectrum of interpretations, allowing it to appear as an intellectual 'cut above' thematic approaches employed elsewhere. This is supported by one respondent's comparison between Bestival and SGP:

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ 'All Fancy Dress in the New 2011 Trend', *All Fancy Dress* (28 January 2011) <<http://uk.prweb.com/releases/2011/01/prweb4979944.htm>> [accessed 30 May 2011]; 'Starting A Fancy Dress Business', *Small Business Family Resources* <<http://www.small-business-family-resources.co.uk/starting-a-fancy-dress-business.html>> [accessed 30 May 2011].

Bestival does [theming] in quite a commercial way, where it's more, 'I'm going to hire a costume from down the road' kind of festival. Although lots of people make their own costumes which is great, but it's a little bit more commercial, with very sort of simple themes like 'Space', or 'underwater', which is great because everyone understands it and it's really accessible. Secret Garden party go for 'fact or fiction' or really weird revolutions [...] Themes. Which is more complicated but it's more intelligent.¹⁷⁹

Such an observation suggests that British festival culture, as a social phenomenon, supports the findings of Bourdieu by revealing an expanding and dynamic process of distinction also operating on the side of supply. The boutique event positions itself in terms of a rejection of the concert-model festival, though these comments suggest subsequent mechanisms of social distinction at play *within* the boutiques. The splitting off and proliferation of cultures produces relative nuances and levels of intensity – as evidenced by one description of Shambala as 'the *most* boutique-ey'.¹⁸⁰ Despite variation between events the increasing prominence of fancy dress, as the outcome of a collaboration of action between supply and demand, is apparent.

That a cross-pollination of practices between events fuelled by the mimetic nature of crowds solely accounts for the spread of costume at festivals may be an incomplete representation of affairs, for there are additional factors worthy of consideration. A number of drivers might account for this shift towards theatrical display, from counter-balancing the 'doom and gloom' of the recession, to the 'upward shift' in what counts as adult behaviour, as previously discussed.¹⁸¹ The latter point is particularly worth re-emphasizing. Costume, which (as examined in Section 4.5.1 and 5.3.3) has been theoretically relegated to the realm of children, is adopted by adults in a convivial context that engenders childlike play. This corresponds with changes to the festival demographic: as detailed in Section 5.2, boutique events have broadened their appeal to families, which has no doubt supported the promotion of costume as an activity that appeals to all ages.

¹⁷⁹ Interviewee B.

¹⁸⁰ Interviewee H.

¹⁸¹ 'All Fancy Dress in the New 2011 Trend'; McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up'.

It is also possible that costume coincides with the broad utilization of social networking sites, in emphasizing elaborate spaces and visual display. With ubiquitous use amongst the Western festivalgoer demographic, sociality is increasingly performed in the virtual world because users are provided with the opportunity to be seen within scenes. The publishing of identity online has increased the social value attached to the surface image; one such as that shown in Figure 27, for example, constitutes a type of virtual asset both for the festival organizer and festivalgoer. In this digitalized system of sociality, whereby most captured images will soon be shared, participants may be keener to optimize the theatricality of their appearance. Indeed, whereas the festivalgoers of the 1960s have been compared to vagrants,¹⁸² the post-millennial are supplied with make-up boutiques, hair-straightening salons and fancy dress parlours. Costume and display are not limited to the domain of direct experience, or even to the private photo album occasionally dusted off; today they perform extroversion more broadly and more permanently, through the virtual immortalization of images.



Figure 27: Performance Culture at Boomtown

¹⁸² Richmond Newspaper (1965), quoted in Michael Clarke, p. 23.

However tempting it might be to interpret this as a recent phenomenon unique to the milieu under investigation, stylized audience dress during festivities is not unusual. Traditionally, it offers a conspicuous way of marking an occasion as 'time out of time'.¹⁸³ There is, of course, a constellation of ways in which the costume of celebration is discernable within societies across the globe. It is, nonetheless, worth articulating a particular distinction between the costume wearing diffuse within British festival culture and the 'inverted' roles signified by dress, discussed in Section 2.3. The dress adopted by participants at the events described in this chapter do not 'invert', in the Bakhtinian sense, by creating direct oppositions to systemic social laws, but rather are prompted to play with the parameters of fantasy and reality by aptly ambiguous, thematic motifs. Cross-dressing remains prominent, yet this kind of inversion in part loses its carnivalesque, semiotic power because conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity are less polarized than those habitually reversed during the medieval carnival. It is arguable then, that social evolution reinvents symbolic inversion, for the reversal of clearly delineated social norms is replaced with a broader 'principle of juxtaposition' with the rational and material world.¹⁸⁴ As such, the costume wearing within British festival culture rather allies itself with Stoeltje's depiction of carnival costume:

[Carnival participants] draw upon both the familiar and the strange but distinctly transform the human inside into a message bearer – carrying information that may be supernatural, exotic, condensed, bizarre, or mysterious in nature.¹⁸⁵

As discussed in Section 2.7, Mesnil claimed that with the post-industrial disappearance of the 'self-centred, autonomous community', the 'decisional centres' for social organization became distant, and thus, undermined the potential for the symbolic rupture engendered by the traditional carnival form.¹⁸⁶ Considering the deployment of costume detailed here, one might

¹⁸³ Falassi, *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*.

¹⁸⁴ Stoeltje, p. 269.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 270.

¹⁸⁶ Mensil, p. 185.

instead suppose that rupture is not impossible. Rather, the fashioning of surreal space by the boutique festival offers a diversified and fragmented inversion, relative to the postmodern world outside.

5.4.2 Festival Milieu

Whether or not the diversification of programming discussed in Section 5.2 can be considered an outcome of the cultural impact of BM, must be moderated by the number of factors considered in this chapter. Nevertheless, though the articulated allegiances of Section 5.3 are not always clear elsewhere, similarly civic and diverse approaches to spatial construction are observable at Shambala, Boomtown, Beatherder, Electric Picnic, Bestival, Camp Bestival and others. Promotional illustrations of festival space are often more revealing than the spaces themselves. Analogous to SGP's virtual depiction, *Boomtown* deploys a similar imagery of hyperreal space.



Figure 28: Boomtown Fair

Screen shot of Boomtown's website home page <<http://www.boomtownfair.co.uk/>> [accessed 22 November 2011].

Like SGP, this image moves beyond reality. Encompassing a planet, the festival is depicted as another world entirely, alluding to a seclusion and detachment resonant of BM. Both SGP and Boomtown mix together elements of the real and the unreal; SGP's imagery (at Section 5.3) references the lake and greenery of

Electric Picnic, Bestival, The Big Chill, Shambala, Standon Calling and Kendal Calling. Electric Picnic's cultural relationship with BM finds expression particularly in this area; a focal stadium, hosting acts as notorious as the Sex Pistols, is accompanied by profusions of art installations – so many, in fact, that there is little demarcation between them.¹⁸⁸ Offering a clear demonstration of transatlantic cultural exchange, in 2008 Electric Picnic burnt a temple constructed by the San Franciscan David Best, who is widely viewed as BM's quintessential artist, as discussed in Chapter 4. In his contribution to Electric Picnic, Best adopted a similar, filigree-style wooden design regularly employed in the annual construction of temples for BM (see Figure 30).

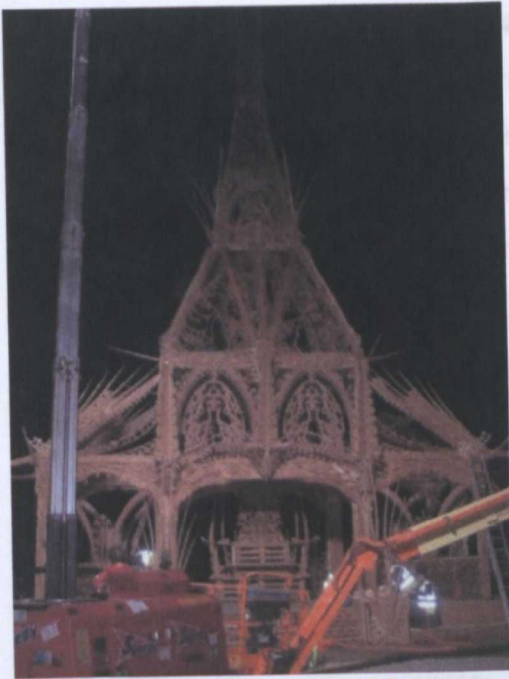


Figure 30: Burning Sculpture at Electric Picnic, Ireland.

Author's Photograph.

Subordinating functionality, this was a highly stylized art installation, and allied with the paradigm of physical involvement, also a dwelling.¹⁸⁹ This temple lacked the embellished shrines and photography of loved ones lost detailed in Section 4.4, though the audience was invited to write inscriptions on pieces of wood, and place them within the temple, prior to its burn on the final night.

¹⁸⁸ The author worked at *Electric Picnic* in 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Bishop, p. 11.

There is no doubt that this practice is interpretable as an imitative attempt to introduce a ritualistic and spectacular dimension to this Irish festival, yet the quasi-spiritual posture of this practice (also discussed in Section 4.4) was lost in translation; divorced from the idealized militancy of BM, Electric Picnic transformed the temple burn from ritual into novelty, offering an elaborate show that diffused the solemnity observed in the previous chapter.

The British music festivals that reproduce burning spectacles imitate the aesthetic style of BM; this practice has not only been co-opted by Electric Picnic, but also flavours the programmes at Green Man and SGP. There is also a significantly comparable blend of spectacle, art, architecture and functionality, observable within the extended festival industry. Appearing at various British festivals that include Glastonbury, Glade, Boomtown and Electric Picnic, the convergence of pyrotechnics and performance by the Bristol-based company Arcadia also exemplifies the aesthetics of BM. As depicted in Figure 31, Arcadia build immersive installations that function as performance spaces, eroding the distinction between conceptions of art, stage and performance in the formation of an integrated piece, purpose-built for the festival circuit. The art cars photographed in Figures 32–33 also reference a signature feature of BM, appearing at Glastonbury and Boomtown in 2011.



Figure 31: Arcadia Staging Installation

Figure 34: Craftitecture

Screen shot taken from the website of Electric Picnic <<http://electricpicnic.ie/craftitecture/>> (accessed 8 January 2012).



Figure 32–33: Arcadia Art Cars

These images testify to an evolving emphasis on spectacle and drama. The bizarre structure in Figure 31 is a stage, yet the creations of Arcadia are evidently distinct from the performance and performance spaces constructed by the concert-model event.

Further indicative of the incorporation of installation aesthetics with objects of functionality is the ‘Craftitecture’ scheme advertised by Electric Picnic in 2011. The scheme, it was claimed, ‘aim[ed] to highlight the synergies between the fields of architecture and craft’, and it is not insignificant that David Best’s temple is used to advertise it. Figure 34 demonstrates the placement of the image to the right of the text relating the scheme.

home | music | comedy & spoken word | arts & theatrics | body & soul | woods green | families | travel & bedding | food

Arts & Theatrics

Design a Pavilion for Electric Picnic 2011

ARCHITECTS and craftspeople have been invited to join forces in a unique design competition to build a pavilion for this year's Electric Picnic.

The competition, to mark Year of Craft 2011, is aimed at promoting creativity and collaboration between Ireland's top architects and craftspeople.

The call-out is for the design of a re-usable pavilion capable of seating up to 40 people that will house small, intimate events for Year of Craft 2011 during the Electric Picnic annual music and arts festival held in Stradbally, Co Laois.

The competition – run by the Crafts Council of Ireland and the Irish Architecture Foundation in association with Electric Picnic, GreenCrafts and Cultivate – aims to raise awareness and highlight the synergies between the fields of architecture and craft. The winning team must be an equal representation of architect and craftsperson, and the structure must inspire, excite and innovate.

Throughout history skilled craftspeople have worked closely with architects to create landmark buildings encapsulating exquisite design and attention to detail, and the competition is aimed at reinforcing this link.

10

Figure 34: Craftitecture

Screen shot taken from the website of *Electric Picnic* <<http://electricpicnic.ie/craftitecture>> [accessed 8 January 2012].

The promotion of 'Craftitecture', conspicuously placed alongside an installation created by BM's quintessential artist, may reveal a partial attempt to introduce a similar culture of democratized production of the kind examined in Sections 4.5.2, and 5.3. And yet, the festival remains somewhat divorced from the idealizing discourses that reverberate between SGP and BM. Indeed, that *Electric Picnic* has commercialized BM's aesthetic values is a claim supported by the creation of immersive art and performance spaces for the festival by corporations. In 2008, this included the 'Nokia Information Basket': an enormous, building-sized picnic basket housing a 'wonkaland', complete with a brown 'chocolate' river, DJ booth, mushroom stools and candy trees. Utilizing props from the *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* theatre production, this piece was one of the most prominent and impressive features of the festival. The visual branding of Nokia was extremely subtle and was restricted to a small, rosette style label affixed to the outer shell of the 'basket'. Managing to catch an interview with its creator, I was informed that Nokia had not only covered the huge cost of producing the area in its entirety, but had also paid *Electric Picnic* for their pitch at the event. Similarly, the 'O2 Blueroom' created a stunning piece of performance art that involved giant spheres, bubbles and blue light, while omitting any obvious association with the brand from the piece itself. These pieces of subtle experiential marketing, created with the financial backing of corporations as prolific as O2 and Nokia, mark a crucial divergence from the organizational structure of BM: in addition to the added value provided by the features themselves, extra funding flows into the festival from these companies, through their purchase of pitches. For BM, prominent installations must be funded, instead, either by the festival or by the artist, and no direct income results from their inclusion. It is possible to claim, therefore, that the relational aspects of *Electric Picnic* are commercialized through their divorce from BM's broader repertoire of principles, in particular, 'de-commodification' – yet they may remain, nevertheless, equally pertinent on the level of experience. It is possible to similarly apply this deduction more generally to the cross-pollinated milieu that exists beyond SGP; even when unattached to conspicuous ideals, they often contribute to the generation of a paidian mode of participation through the embodiment of an egalitarian function that subordinates

spectatorship. That such milieu retain, therefore, a practical alliance to the doctrines of BM, is a defensible claim.

5.4.3 'No Spectators' and Cultural Exchange

Deploying micro and macro perspectives, this chapter has illuminated the incorporation of extreme participation in contemporary British festival culture, and its embodiment of a politics that challenges the role of the spectator. When this is considered against the claims problematized in Chapter 3, it appears likely that scholarly attention to festivals has in the past utilized some rather generalized interpretations of the active audience. The encounters, performances, display and immersive spectacles falling under the author's conceptualization of 'extreme participation', form both direct and indirect allegiances to BM, which reverberate across the industry. It is true that much of this chapter has been devoted to examining the features and discourses directly borrowed from Nevada, in an imitative fashion. Nonetheless, the way in which circumstances unique to Britain have reconfigured these elements to form an entirely different festival model should not be disregarded.

It is not surprising that the cultural exchange of participative milieu occurs most conspicuously between the festivals described as boutique; inheriting the dialogic model of production outlined in Section 5.2.1, these milieux coincide with emphases on uniqueness, independence, luxury and the family-friendly. Their integration is, in many ways, the outcome of a synergy of socio-economic circumstances that have increased the necessity of cultural appropriation. The proliferation of licensed festivals between 1990 and 2010 promoted competitive programming, creating a demand that has helped grow an industry of creative crews and contributors. With a shortfall of affordable and appropriate acts in music, the added value generated through the diversified programme has become highly important and has encouraged the incorporation of increasingly elaborate and nuanced features – as the images of Arcadia in the previous section testify.

This investigation has illuminated the transatlantic influences at work within British festival culture, while considering also the coinciding forces on home soil. With diversified programmes that retain a concert-model system, line-ups of music continue to feature prominently, though they have not undermined the development of extreme participation and an increased emphasis upon the performing audience. With this crucial difference between BM and British festivals in mind, it is clear that the paidian milieu at the centre of this study is not the outcome of a linear flow of cultural influence. Despite the efforts to contain 'No Spectators' within the BM Network, detailed in Section 4.6; BM is a 'palette for certain art forms', attracting attendees (and organizers) from across the globe.¹⁹⁰ The discourses, praxes and features that germinate there travel through international festival cultures, where they combine with local environs. The international influence of BM must be considered, therefore, with respect to the ways in which the event also acts as a stimulus to activity taking place outside the official Network.

Despite the authenticating discourses of the boutique event, which allude to an independent and not-for-profit status, this activity does take place within a framework that relies upon the commercial transactions and the presentational system of performance that BM seeks to reject. Consequently the 'Burner Diaspora' can be conceptualized in terms of two spheres of operation; the regional Burns of the BM Network are located in a direct sphere, retaining a close allegiance to each principle expounded by the event, whereas the British, boutique events occupy an indirect sphere in which they reject the incompatible and appropriate only those milieux that offer commercial enhancement in a competitive industry. With regard to the points of enquiry set out in Section 1.2, the question of de-radicalization hinges upon a relativist premise. Relative to BM, SGP appears as a de-radicalized form; relative to other British festivals, SGP's schemes and principles maintain a posture of powerful idealism. Affirming Fortunati's hypothesis, SGP, and the other events described in this chapter, illustrate the predicted infusion of BM into 'pan-capitalist society'.¹⁹¹ There are many ways that this transference of practices can be interpreted

¹⁹⁰ Doherty, p. 177.

¹⁹¹ Fortunati, p. 163.

cynically, but this would rather undervalue the role of the audience in generating these cultures of participation. This investigation has paid sizeable attention to the appropriations, schemes, positionings and programmes instigated on the supply side, yet these must also be considered expressions of audience preference. Regardless of the success of BM, its features would not be introduced in Britain without the corresponding audience inclination to experience them. And since BM is unknown to the majority of this audience, it is the *features themselves*, and the modes of participation they imply, that are attractive: not their connection to BM. Allied with Walter Benjamin's evaluation of the letters page in a newspaper, mentioned at the outset of the investigation, ultimately these events are attractive because they allow consumers to influence, in a spectrum of direct ways, the content of their cultural product.

6. Raisetherooft

6.1 Introduction

Taken as a whole, the previous two chapters illuminate a transatlantic and cross-regional nexus of festivals allied with a participative ideal; one that is demonstrably embedded in the culture of Burning Man. In Britain, the 'No Spectators' ethos may be augmented by installations that encourage physical immersion within fragmented milieu, or articulated by democratizing schemes and the promotion of the participant star. With several significantly sized British festivals openly expressing their allegiance to Burning Man (BM hereafter), it is clear that its influence has exceeded the limitations of the BM Network, despite the efforts of founder Larry Harvey. Many features once unique to BM have become incorporated into festival programmes, as they struggle to maximize and retain ticket sales in a crowded market. This elementary drive explains much of the phenomena discussed in Chapter 5. Revisiting the arguments in Sections 2.7 and 3.4, this appropriation has generated a markedly paidian audience where a convivial erosion of performance distinction takes place.

It is also true that attributes of the ludic celebration, which (as discussed at Section 2.7) is ordered around the separation of artists from audiences within a presentational performance model, have not been dispensed with entirely. For almost all of the events discussed in Section 5.4, extreme participation coexists with a conventional treatment of performances, which are utilized as assets to procure ticket sales. This reconfiguration transforms the 'No Spectators' ethos of BM into extra-spectatorship, whereby music reception becomes one of a multiplicity of playful actions, spectacles, schemes and theatrical behaviours broadly characteristic of the boutique event. Utilizing the researcher's own festival for the research, it is this reconfiguration, and the tensions created by it, that are explored in this chapter. Reproducing a hybridity of attributes

comparable to those discussed in Chapter 5, the event manager's perspective is deployed to generate unique insights concerning *Raisetherooof 2010* (hereafter RTR), and its exemplifying processes and attributes. RTR also presented valuable opportunities to gain telling perspectives from event contributors that had played a role in diversifying other festivals.

It was the pre-existing synergy between RTR and the events central to this investigation, as argued in Section 1.5.5, which made possible this exercise in action research. Marketed as an indoor, boutique festival, the most significant difference between RTR and the case study events is the venue: RTR takes place in an urban, inner-city location.¹ Nonetheless the brand of the event is not dissimilar to SGP and, though far smaller, operates within a comparable market, attracting a similar profile of attendees. Reflecting on event production provided, therefore, fruitful insights into the politics of participation that are theorized in terms of the broader festival culture. In addition to bringing the dynamics of theatricality into closer view, this chapter examines the practical outcomes of democratized production, the tensions created by integrating presentational performances with such an approach, and the ways in which new festival cultures are shaped by the voluntary labour economy in Britain.

As mentioned briefly in Section 1.5.5, these outcomes followed the implementation of some practical optimizations, and several strategies for data collection. The methodologies of the latter are detailed in Section 1.5.8, yet some elaboration of the former is necessary. There were three areas of optimization; firstly, an extended area made possible the programming of more features typical of the case study events. Secondly, efforts to democratize production were made with a volunteer recruitment drive, and thirdly, in line with the events discussed in Section 5.4, a nationally acclaimed act was included on the billing. It is true that several incidental circumstances made these adaptations possible. The year 2010 marked five years of RTR in Leeds; this provided a rationale for physically extending the event beyond its usual format, and for including the higher profile act, *Dreadzone*.² As such these developments were

¹ Please view the *Raisetherooof* video in Appendix C.1 for a four-minute presentation utilizing footage from the 2009, 2010 and 2011 events.

² Despite the multiple bands and DJs that would regularly appear at RTR, for the seven years prior to the 2010 event, there were no nationally recognized acts included in the line-up.

not wholly motivated by the aims of the research, yet they produced revealing transformations that were nonetheless relevant.

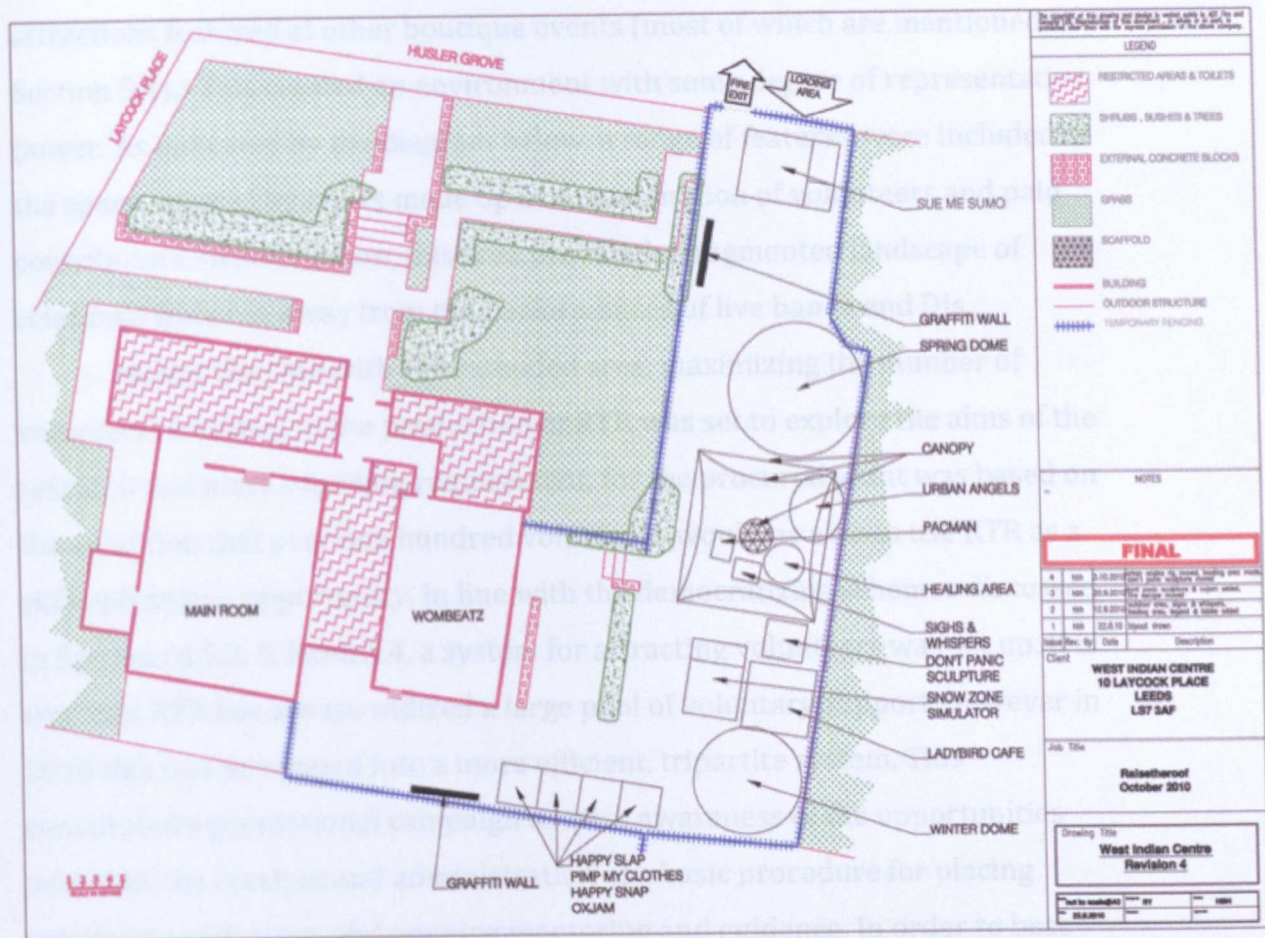


Figure 35: Outdoor Floor Plan, RTR 2010

Following several applications to different funding bodies, finance was secured for creating the temporary extension. This generated, as illustrated by the floor plan in Figure 35, extra space by fencing off a large car park to the right-hand side of the venue. Allowing RTR to spread across a larger area, the extension provided what was advertised as an 'immersive zone', featuring non-musical performances, art installations and chill out spaces.³ From an organizational perspective, this space represented commercial value; it enhanced audience experience, and provided a newsworthy addition to the basic programme. At the same time, the extension placed the event at closer proximity to the objects of this investigation, both in terms of content and arts-to-music ratio, making

³ The full advertisement can be found in Appendix C.5.

room for milieux consistent with the participative praxis characteristic of both BM and SGP. Physical interaction was, like the case study events, the paradigm on which a variety of features hinged; and importantly, the majority of these attractions featured at other boutique events (most of which are mentioned in Section 5.4).⁴ This created an environment with some degree of representative power. As indicated by the diagram below, a range of features were included in the space, created by crews made up of a combination of volunteers and paid contributors. In summation, this area provided a fragmented landscape of relational features, away from the performances of live bands and DJs.

As was the case with the extended area, maximizing the number of volunteers involved in the production of RTR was set to explore the aims of the research and meet a funding requirement, for the procured grant was based on the condition that over one hundred volunteers would be able to use RTR as a skills-providing opportunity. In line with the democratizing schemes discussed in Sections 4.5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, a system for attracting volunteers was set up. It is true that RTR has always utilized a large pool of voluntary support; however in 2010 this was developed into a more efficient, tripartite system. This constituted a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the opportunities available, the creation and administration of a basic procedure for placing volunteers with roles, and ongoing mentoring and guidance. In order to best match volunteers with areas suited to their interests and skills, a range of 'fields of production' were streamlined with tasks and activities for potential volunteers. This included marketing and publicity, arts and décor, technical production and performance.

The programming of Dreadzone, a live dub act, also constituted a development pertinent to the research focus. Prior to their booking, unsigned and local acts made up the entire programme. This was not an incidental aspect of the event, but was conspicuously idealized in two ways. Firstly, RTR was positioned as showcase of local creative outputs; it was intended to form a cultural representation of, as one review put it, 'the community of LS6 that

⁴ A breakdown of RTR participants and their connections with the broader cultural nexus of participative events can be found at Appendix C.2.

many of us hold dear'.⁵ Secondly, there was a 'no headliners' policy that sought to reject performance hierarchies of music by presenting a number of little-known, high-quality live acts without emphasizing any one in particular; namely, as equals. This was undertaken prior to my familiarity with the programming approach of BM, yet there was a strong degree of alignment in terms of the quasi-politicized rejection of the star system theorized in Chapter 3.⁶ RTR did promote the unsigned performers, yet the principle of cultivating audience loyalty independent of recognized names, prior to 2010, was central to both events. The booking of Dreadzone marked a key departure from this approach, reconfiguring RTR to resemble, more closely, SGP. In many ways, the researcher's own motivations behind this booking reinforced the analyses of SGP, in Section 5.3.4. RTR was successful prior to the Dreadzone booking because of the added value in scheduling a large selection of acts with the addition of extra features, décor and art installations for a very cheap entry price.⁷ Despite this, it was felt that the night could not grow and garner more attention, particularly in terms of press coverage, without a national booking. Coinciding with improvements in the artwork design, the booking induced frequent comments that the night had risen to occupy a different league, underlining the way in which the star system can shift emphasis and alter the prospects of an event. The introduction of this element provided the means to reflect directly on how the participative ideal and its corresponding milieu are affected, when an acclaimed act is introduced to the billing.

The account and analysis of RTR is, in this chapter, divided into four broad sections. The first, Section 6.2, reflects on the limitations of democratizing production. Section 6.3 discusses three categories regarding the creation of paidian space; Section 6.3.1 concentrates on specific installations, Section 6.3.2 looks at the theatricality of the audience and Section 6.3.3 examines the programming of particular types of audience-centric performance. Section 6.4

⁵ Quotation taken from a review by Duncan Evans in *Sandman Magazine*. Further press cuttings regarding *Raisetheroof* can be found at Appendix C.6.

⁶ As discussed in Chapter 1, the relationship between the researcher's event and the foci of this study precede its explicit articulation here. The centrality of participation that made RTR comparable to BM was characteristic in the early days of the event, in 2005.

⁷ Funded by The Scarman Trust and the European Social Fund, the first RTR events in Leeds were free. Tickets were then priced at five pounds upon moving to the Leeds West Indian Centre in 2007. Following the booking of Dreadzone, tickets were priced at fifteen pounds.

examines the tensions created by integrating presentational performance with a participative ideal, and Section 6.5 utilizes interviews with RTR participants to consider the role of the labour economy in shaping the British milieu analogous to BM.

6.2 Democratizing Production

Allied to the premise of Biocca, who conceptualized the active audience as one that exerts influence over the cultural products it consumes, Sections 4.5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 reveal conspicuous and varied attempts to transform festival spectators into the *creators* of spectacle.⁸ These emanate from legitimate companies that, behind the scenes, reproduce the conventional systems of hierarchy necessary to sustainable and profitable production. For each of these events, the result is a blend of collectivist and bureaucratic practices comparable to BM;⁹ of broad creative activity juxtaposed with small nuclei of organizational control. One of the key differences between the case study events is that, while over 50% of attendees at BM volunteer,¹⁰ they are still required to pay a substantial entrance fee, whereas labouring at a UK festival tends to be (at least) exchanged for a free ticket. Significantly, BM's deployment of voluntary labour extends to some highly specialized, technical work, whereas British festivals tend to limit volunteer involvement to creative or lower-skilled work. At RTR, it was not possible to charge volunteers for their tickets, and for various reasons that will become clearer as this section unfolds, the problematic integration of volunteers at RTR was comparable to the events discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.4.

As mentioned in the previous section, a tripartite system of volunteer recruitment included advertising, the streamlining of tasks, mentoring and support. The promotional phase of RTR began in the spring of 2010, and the opportunity to volunteer was made more explicit than in previous years. A campaign entitled 'Get Involved' was launched in March with a twofold aim:

⁸ Biocca, p. 61.

⁹ Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 80.

¹⁰ Fortunati, p. 159.

firstly it was intended to generate some initial interest in the event; and secondly, it aimed to make accessible fields of production by raising awareness of the opportunity to contribute. The 'Get Involved' campaign disseminated synergized multimedia, which included print (magazine advertising, press releases, flyers and posters) and online promotion (MySpace, Facebook and electronic mailing lists). Ten thousand flyers featuring the artwork below were printed and distributed throughout March and April.



Figure 36: Spring Promotion Flyer Front



Figure 37: Spring Promotion Flyer Back

Figures 36 and 37 depict the first promotional message associated with the event. As can be deduced from the simplicity of the flyer design, the exclusion of any programme details, with the exception of the date, venue and location,

enhanced the centrality of the message. This campaign was intended to open out fields of production at the first stages of organization, to instigate creative thinking and to act as a broadcast to attract those with preformed projects. It was hoped that this would generate suggestions from the public, which would then, depending on their suitability, materialize in the event's programming. Following the spring promotion, the invitation to volunteer was also included in the flyer designs that were used in the main printed publicity for the event, consisting of 45,000 printed flyers and posters.

Initially, this campaign culminated in a low level of volunteer retention, an outcome that supported the limitations of the democratized model, discussed at 4.5.2. An apt example was the pairing up of two volunteers to create a fanzine-like programme for the event. This was a task that had not been undertaken by the volunteers before but, rather, was agreed between the volunteers and the researcher after many enthusiastic emails back and forth. This conversation identified the desires and skills of the volunteers, after which the task was collaboratively decided upon. During the summer of 2010, both of these volunteers lost contact. This was not an isolated incident, but coincided with several other failed attempts to place volunteers. At this stage, the advertising, administration and mentoring undertaken to facilitate the recruitment process was not compensated by the benefits that volunteers brought to the event. Supporting the observations made in Section 4.5.2, without financial incentives, a lack of accountability encouraged a lack of commitment. Of course, had a far greater pool of volunteers been reached through the campaign, it is likely that the responses would have included a larger portion of dedicated participants. This supports the geographic contingency emphasized in Section 5.3.4; a democratized approach is niche and therefore requires a large pool of potential participants from which to attract sufficient numbers, for its realization.

There was better success with recruiting volunteers as the event neared, although there were few volunteers who were matched up with promotion and co-ordination roles. The advertising succeeded in attracting those who had already participated on the festival circuit, compared to a smaller number of individual volunteers without a preconceived project to contribute to the event.

The former category included a fire performance collective, 'Surefire Circus' and the creation of a bike-powered 'Pacman' game. Unsurprisingly perhaps, these contributors played a more significant role in shaping the event than those who 'chipped in' with other activities. This outcome supports the findings of the previous two chapters: the democratization at BM and SGP is most powerfully apparent in terms of the 'gifting' of creative features, which generate atmospheres of co-production. The idealizing discourses of participation reproduced by these events may be, therefore, less significant than the broad availability and willingness of volunteers to gift projects.

The initiative to move volunteers into streamlined areas of production largely failed with the exception of décor-making, which as a single activity received interest from the largest number of new volunteers.¹¹ The group ran weekly at different members' homes, and after it became clear that more space was needed, two sessions took place in a large studio. The décor sessions at members' homes attracted new members principally via existing social networks, yet the studio sessions succeeded in using publicity to attract new volunteers who had no prior connections to members of the group. This group opened up the shaping of RTR festival space to volunteers by creating a forum where ideas were both discussed and brought to life, but importantly, this was a social experience.¹² Reflecting on an early session (11 August 2010), the informality of the group was considered key. That the sessions were not restricted to RTR décor-making also contextualized the group as a wider creative activity rather than one principally exploited by a single event; non-RTR related projects, including a giant geometric snowflake and hand-painted exhibition flyers, were also undertaken by participants. Unexpectedly, several group members took over organizing the sessions during the last two weeks prior to the event, independently of the author. The studio sessions were

¹¹A previous housemate and the researcher founded the décor group in 2007. It grew into a regular activity that was available to friends, acquaintances and strangers that heard about the group 'on the grapevine'. It continues to phase in and out of existence depending on whether there is an upcoming gig or festival that members have decided to make décor for – during those times, meetings are held every week. Usually sessions are attended by between four to seven members and hosted in a member's home, which tends to be alternated amongst different members.

intended to be the final prior to the event, yet members took the responsibility of continuing them without invitation or request. Evidently, they felt that the smaller meetings in the lounges of members' houses were still an important happening in their social calendars, and there were several sessions at which I was absent. The disproportionate success of this activity both reinforces and deviates from the scholarship discussed at Section 4.5.2. Its social aspects support Chen's findings that volunteers at BM do not consider their contributions work in a traditional sense, but rather, life-enhancing experiences.¹³ In this respect, Oakley's suggestion that these aspects are utilized as a form of rhetoric for the purposes of masking the realities of hard labour is not supported here. Without denying the applicability of this interpretation to other areas of labour, this activity was neither arduous nor unpleasant; at least for this field of production, work was successfully transformed into leisure.

In many ways, this integration generated as many problems as it solved. The sociality of the décor group was paradoxically functional and dysfunctional: it appeared key to its continued success, yet the strength of the friendships formed within served to discourage new members from returning. At a studio session on the 11 September, there was a clear separation between what had developed as a core group of participants, and the new volunteers. There was some interaction, yet there seemed to be a clear pecking order. With the regular volunteers sharing experiences and anecdotes unfamiliar to the others, it is likely to have been a moderately threatening environment to the newcomers. Since volunteer retention depended on their satisfaction, it was the responsibility of the researcher to encourage positive interaction. Problematically, this duty of care rather conflicted with the practical needs of organizing the event: mentoring and accommodating new participants diverted the researcher from focusing on the tasks at hand. This scenario revealed two obstacles that a democratized approach may present to a festival organization: firstly, as previously acknowledged, the contributions of the volunteer might not always outweigh their cost to the organization; and secondly, encouraging a participatory culture can paradoxically permit insularity and the formation of volunteer cliques and hierarchies. As Chen noted, despite the establishment of

¹³ Chen, 'Incendiary Incentives', p. 110.

egalitarian principles at BM, there have been stages in its organization whereby recruitment through networking acted as a 'force of exclusion' and acted as a deterrent to other potential volunteers.¹⁴ Supporting this observation, despite attempts to make the newcomers feel at ease with the group regulars, who had become firm friends, the following session was badly attended across the board – and none of the newcomers repeated their visit. This marked a failure in the attempt to democratize; yet it actually allowed the researcher to complete tasks more quickly, without the extra necessity of looking after the group. As reflected in the research diary, a low degree of participation actually proved to be a better environment for the completion of monotonous and yet crucial tasks. The reflections below maintain that often, the practical needs of the event were better served in the absence of a collective praxis.

I felt relieved to have the space to work on my own preparing lengths of fabric and treating them with fireproofing spray. I got a lot of work done in the time I was there and I realized that it takes time and effort to play host at these gatherings. Their informality is great at attracting people, but this can compromise productivity [...] The nature of the tasks close to the event date were boring – this time it was ironing bunting, fabrics and spraying vast quantities of fabric with fireproofing spray that needed to be done – again necessity seems rather at odds with a fun, informal group.¹⁵

Despite the difficulties exemplified above, in the main, creative features donated to RTR substantially raised the quality of the event. It is likely that despite an absence of financial reward, the persons responsible did not see themselves as volunteers, but rather, as artists or project directors. In line with the rationale for participative art described by Bishop, there was a keenness to 'bring art closer to everyday life' by contributing installations to convivial spaces.¹⁶ Aligned to the egalitarian treatment of art at BM, conversations that transpired at one particular décor session implied a general cynicism towards the art institutions; voiced were criticisms regarding the constructed distinctions between art, craft and design. One participant claimed that universities

¹⁴ Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos*, p. 67.

¹⁵ Research diary entry, dated 5 October 2010.

¹⁶ Bishop, p. 10.

recommended superior students for fine art degrees, and the rest for design-orientated degrees. As she engaged others in her conversation, there was animosity towards what was argued to be the exclusion of craft and design from the definition of 'art' by the art academy. Dubious commercial influences that determine what is labeled 'art' were highlighted, and with this, a critique of the gallery system and contemporary art. In some ways, this conversation only made explicit what was a previously expressed attitude within the group. For the members of the group who actually cared about the 'art world', which certainly did not include everyone, there were often comments and discussions oriented around a general cynicism towards it. During one session, members expressed dissatisfaction with the way that institutions seemed to dictate artistic authenticity. These dissatisfactions resonated with the critique associated with Playa-art, as examined in Chapter 4: BM art is 'profoundly populist' and rejects the high and academic art systems as commercial and corrupt.¹⁷ It is possible, then, that the examination of diversified programmes, which in Section 5.2 and 5.2.1 emphasized the commercial drive to add value, must also consider perhaps a more general, conceptual widening of what counts as a legitimate space for art.

As this section attests, the outcome of democratizing production through the recruitment of volunteers was analogous to BM and SGP in a number of significant ways; the limitations of their involvement necessitated a conventional nucleus of organization, though the attractiveness of contributing creatively to the event resulted in a number of successful features and the continued success of the décor group. Ultimately, these outcomes affirm that an integration of audience creativity within a necessarily profit-making event model enhances its offerings, while generating a number of obstacles. The ease with which RTR attracted volunteers with particular proposals, rather than volunteers willing to be given any task, may be a particularly illuminating outcome deserving of greater attention: perhaps this voluntary sector largely accounts for the diversification utilized as evidence for a participative ideal, in the previous two chapters. This possibility is examined in greater depth at Section 6.5, before which an examination of paidian space is presented.

¹⁷ Northrup, p. 137.

6.3 Paidian Space

The implementation of the democratizing strategies outlined in the previous section created a fragmented arena comparable to the milieu examined in Section 5.3.2. This section provides an analysis of how the recruitment of volunteers contributed to a varied programme that coincided with audience theatricality to generate an atmosphere of co-production. Figure 35 shows the way in which RTR included a number of features in addition to the performances scheduled for the main stage. As the right-hand side of the ground plan shows, there were fifteen features placed outside in a spread of non-musical installations and activities. The event's theme was 'Myths and Legends', though the outside space was roughly divided into two areas based on seasons (spring and winter), with thematic décor placed accordingly. As had been the case at both BM and SGP, varied entertainments contributed to an atmosphere of co-production in two ways. Firstly it meant that there were a sizeable number of producers occupying the crowd at the live event, and secondly, the features encouraged 'production as participation' on the part of the ticket-buying audience.¹⁸ The outside area at RTR reinforced the argument, that an event's use of space can decrease the distinction between producers and consumers by implementing a relational praxis. Initial post-event reflections also emphasized the importance of its speakeasy nature. During the planning stage, the organizer of 'The Ladybird Project' had planned to place sound systems in each of the geodesic domes.¹⁹ In the end it was decided against, partly because it was felt that the area functioned better in the absence of music, better facilitating interpersonal communication. Significantly, these qualities each combined to create a space where the audience was not encouraged to shift their focus to a

¹⁸ For example, the 'Pimp My Clothes' stall allowed participants to embellish clothes, 'The Ladybird Project' encouraged participants to make dreamcatchers and animal masks, while the 'Sue Me' and 'Pacman' games were also participative. Please refer to Appendix C.1.1 for more details.

¹⁹ Geodesic domes are semicircular structures comprised of smaller geometric components. These are indicated on the ground plan at Figure 35 by the circles on the right of the drawing.

stage or a single performer. Against this backdrop, the theatricality of the audience was accentuated.



Figure 38: Inside the Winter Dome

This explains, in simple terms, how the spatial settings examined in the previous two chapters also accentuate the theatricality of the audience. When costume is worn, as illustrated by the images above, the surreal scenes away from the main performance foci serve as an alternative stage upon which the audience may perform. For these reasons, the outside area made possible a mode of participation comparable to Cremona's paidian, and crucially, supported her basic premise that audience engagement hinges upon the physical shaping of space. Particularly consistent with the milieu at SGP, the provision of space away from the main acts provided a climate that allowed audience members to reverberate between spectatorship and theatricality. The facilitation of this phenomenon by costume is examined in greater depth, in Section 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Installations

Not every feature included in the outside area at RTR is worthy of analysis. Some observations are, nonetheless, pertinent to the insights presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Significantly, during interview installation producers continually referenced the experiential in describing their aims, indicating that

audience encounter completed their installation, performance or feature.²⁰ The term 'interactivity', with its connotations of two separate entities engaging in a dialogic activity, was frequently replaced with looser terms, pointing to a prioritization of sharing and collaboration. During interview, the ability to provide relational experience over and above an experience of spectatorship was an idealized theme. It is true that this was a predictable outcome, since these contributions were programmed because of their relational capacity. However, it is significant that they explicitly articulated an allegiance to an ideal of participation. Supporting the analyses of SGP, the realization of 'No Spectators' via democratized space came about at RTR through an amalgamation of groups with shared sensibilities. One might expect the structural occupiers of event space to be the result of culturally disinterested, commercial exchanges, yet this was not the case: if RTR is representative, the creative producers of festival features similarly idealize the mode of participation enshrined by the organization.

Despite this shared outlook, it became clear that each installation actually emerged from the entirely different professional and academic backgrounds of their creators. This was not a result of the researcher's intent; diverse approaches were naturally the result of a varied programme. Most projects were not isolated but rather were attached to long-standing activities outside of the event. The 'Pimp My Clothes' stall, for example, was a touring stall run by the owner of an independent store in Leeds, 25 Spaces, which promotes the use of reclaimed materials in clothing design throughout the year. Similarly, the 'Madame Fantastiste' performance piece was spearheaded by an organization called The Urban Angel's Circus, which works with a range of corporate and arts events. 'Snow Zone', the snowboarding simulator installation, was brought to the event from an indoor ski slope in Castleford run by a large multi-regional company, Xscape. Consistent with the observations made in 5.3.2, despite the fact these features emerged from variant backgrounds, their inclusion within the space diffused aspects of distinction. It is true that this is, in part, a speculative observation. De-emphasized conceptual

²⁰ A breakdown of interviews can be found at Appendix B.2; RTR participants include Interviewees E-H.

nuance was nevertheless evident, particularly through the inclusion of ‘Sue Me Sumo’, a feature that can be described as both a game and a performance art installation. Following an earlier execution of this piece as part of a highbrow arts event on the same night, its contrasting reception at RTR underlined both the contingency of art and the power of festival space to transform art into play. The installation was originally intended as a piece of satire, in an effort to parody the legislative battles of a courtroom by recreating a wrestling match, complete with stretches of symbolic red tape. The participating public, both in the gallery space and at RTR, were permitted to wear large padded Sumo suits to engage in some playful wrestling. While the wrestling transpired, installation organizers handed out leaflets, articulating the socio-political message behind the feature. At RTR, the volunteer running the activity reported that people were only interested in the game-like quality of the activity and were not at all responsive to the flyers. It is possible to deduce from this that ‘Sue Me Sumo’ was transformed from the artistic medium its creator intended into a depoliticized form of play.

A de-emphasis of nuance was an issue that arose from the comments made by the creator of the bike-powered ‘Pacman’ installation, which was prominently featured in the outside area. This was a hand-built game that invited audience members to power a computer game by using a bicycle connected to a generator, which emerged from the creator’s interest in sustainable energy and the wish to educate potential users. This orientation was, however, somewhat compromised by the conviviality of the festival context:

To be honest, although we’re trying to push the sort of renewable energy thing, you know, what can a human generate [...] a lot of the people aren’t bothered about that and just are interested in the sort of novelty of [...] well, or that experience of sitting on a bike and playing a computer game. Probably no-one’s ever done that before in their lives, and it’s quite an interesting experience, it’s quite fun, and so I think it’s quite universal. And that, like at Raisetherooft, there was quite a range of people there, who were really enjoying it.²¹

²¹ Interviewee H.

The comments above suggest an outcome similar to 'Sue Me Sumo'; Interviewee H suggests that quasi-political messages are diffused in the convivial space of the festival, for an engagement with conceptual meaning is abandoned in favour of play. The highly diverse milieu characteristic of BM and SGP similarly effected a disappearance of demarcation between those features that did not exceed the realm of a game, and those that were intended to be art. At RTR their placement side by side supported jubilant, as opposed to contemplative, reception. There is consistency between this outcome and the milieu at BM and SGP; one piece of scholarship on diversified festival space is, however, rather contradicted. Of course, it must be conceded that St John's investigation of ConFest examines an event entirely different to those investigated here. This may explain his view that ConFest was comprised of a polyphonic and opposing mix of neo-tribal groups.²² Contrastingly, a homogenizing of the political, the aesthetic and the playful into the last categorization, rather weakened the competitive tensions between installations at RTR.

6.3.2 Audience Theatricality

Indicators for a performing audience have, at Sections 4.5.1 and 5.3.3, been presented both in terms of observable costume, and in terms of a theatrical 'effervescence' that comes about through mixing together and eroding the boundaries between performers and audience members.²³ For ease of reference, the former is discussed here and the latter is presented in relation to three performances, in Section 6.3.3.

Unlike BM, theme and costume at SGP were carefully promoted aspects of the event, disseminated through press releases and newsletters. Paidian participation at RTR was similarly induced.²⁴ In 2010, this was undertaken

²² St John, 'Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body'.

²³ Victor Turner, *Celebration*, p. 16.

²⁴ A thematic approach to RTR was introduced in 2008. Past themes have included 'Alice in Wonderland', 'Wonkaland', 'Twisted Ballroom' and 'Mermaids and Indians'. Supporting the

through various means of conspicuously presenting the audience member as star. Emphasis on costume was supported by a promotional strategy that included a campaign entitled 'Pimp My Head', an agreement with a local fancy dress shop and the dissemination of a press release focused entirely around theme and costume. Employing the comedic tones of BM and SGP, 'Pimp My Head' involved the researcher approaching participants at other festivals.²⁵ Most of the participants approached were targeted because they were already wearing fancy dress, though the researcher also carried an arsenal of costume items with which to dress (specifically the heads) of participants. They were asked to hold a flyer for RTR while posing for a photograph, after which they were told to look up the RTR Facebook page to find their photo.



Figure 39–40: The Participant Star

Author's photographs

This campaign engendered the participative ideal by placing the theatricality of the audience as focal. Each image was uploaded onto Facebook with a humorous caption, generating likes and comments on the images.²⁶ Many of those who were photographed anticipated seeing their image online, and as illustrated by Figure 41, several displayed their images as their profile pictures in the run up

notion of festival and festivalgoers as collaborators in popular theatricality, it was not until the introduction of these themes that the audience began attending the event in costume.

²⁵ The title of the campaign was inspired by the 'Pimp My Clothes' stall, which was brought to RTR (itself inspired by the *Pimp My Ride* programme on Sky TV).

²⁶ Some further examples are included at Appendix C.3.

to the event. Their profile images were viewable by the hundreds that made up their own lists of friends, giving the campaign a viral quality.



Figure 41: Scenes and Being Seen

Coinciding with the observations made in Section 5.4.1, the utilization of the above image by the participant demonstrates the role of the social network in allowing a participant to be seen within a scene. It was captured by the researcher at Leeds Festival, and then placed on the RTR Facebook page where the participant tagged it. As was discussed in relation to the image at Figure 27, the use of this picture suggests that the performance of theatricality investigated in this thesis may be accompanied by the performance of a 'theatricalized' self online.

Two further actions were implemented in order to galvanize the impression of the audience member as performer. One was the collaboration with a local costume outlet in creating an incentive to participate in fancy dress.²⁷ The outlet stocked tickets to RTR, which could be purchased without a

²⁷ This agreement was made on Wednesday 25 August with the manager of 'Best Kept Secret', the largest fancy dress shop in Leeds, which was also usefully situated in between the two residential areas most heavily populated by students and young people (Headingley and Hyde Park).

booking fee. This was intended to pull traffic into the shop, and the outlet also offered 10% off purchasing fancy dress items on the purchase of a ticket. The second action relates to the aforementioned press release. Prior to announcing the full musical lineup, a press release was compiled that focused solely on promoting the fancy dress aspect of the event, in a mock journalistic style, as illustrated by the excerpt below:

BIGGEST FANCY DRESS PARTY IN LEEDS

Leeds City Council is gearing up for what may be Leeds' biggest congregation of freaks on Friday the 8th of October. With a fully licensed extended area at Leeds West Indian Centre, Raisetheroof has asked the public to add to the entertainments by choosing a character that best represents their alter-ego. The festival's chosen theme, Myths and Legends, is hoped to induce imaginative costumes en masse. Attendance will automatically enter them into a competition to win lifetime VIP admission to Raisetheroof. Costume Master-general and Judge Miss Fleur Windebank commented; 'I'm going to be looking for a creative and original approach to looking ridiculous. We're expecting the standard to be very high'.²⁸

This release was dispatched to a list of press contacts, both local and national, with the intention of encouraging the reproduction of theatrical focus via the press coverage of the event. This release was also included on promotional stalls at both Moor Music Festival and Unity Day, and taped onto portable toilets across both festival sites. On the promotional stalls, the costume-orientated newsletter was available to pick up alongside a release that focused on the musical programming. Tellingly, it was the costume-orientated newsletter that was the most popular, and at Moor Music Festival, these ran out. This may have been down to its entertaining mock-journalistic style, yet it is equally possible that the popularity of this newsletter evidenced the fact that the audience had become a central attraction.

Indeed, the latter analysis is supported by the theatrical dress of attendees at RTR. Following an examination of footage and images taken from the live event, audience appearance can be divided into three categories.²⁹ The

²⁸ Roxanne Yeganegy, 'Biggest Fancy Dress Party in Leeds', *Raisetheroof Press Release* (20 June 2010).

²⁹ Supporting images can be found in Appendix C.4.

first category relates to standard clothing; there were sizeable number of attendees who wore ordinary, casual attire. When the crowd was photographed together, as pictured below, there were only a marginal number of costumed participants visible to the eye.



Figure 42: Crowd at Raising the Roof

The clothing of the first category included jeans, T-shirts and casual dresses that would be appropriate for attending most bars and venues. On closer inspection, however, there was a second category of dress that was somewhere in between full costume and ordinary clothing. Common was what may be described as a 'festivalized' embellishment of dress, which included flower wreaths placed in hair, glow bracelets and necklaces, glittery make-up, fake eyelashes, novelty hats and glasses, etc. This mode of dress incorporated stylized clothing and makeup over the specific and comprehensible costumes that denote the fabrication of a specific character. Despite a less ostentatious form, this category embodied a particular mode of display that would have been out of place in most city-centre clubbing and gig environments. It is likely that some of the 'festivalized' attendees had visited the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique' that was offering facial and hair transformations. Consistent with the case study events, theatricality was facilitated through the inclusion of specifically placed stalls and features.

The last kind of dress distinguishes from the first and second categories, those that did attend RTR in full, conspicuous costume. The ambiguity of the thematic approach succeeded in inviting a spectrum of interpretations, from fictional characters such as Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* and Rogue, a character from *X-Men*, to the seemingly ironic: possibly referencing 'Myths and Legends', one guest was dressed up as God. As the images in Appendix C.4 testify, there were many costumes that seemingly bore no relation to the event theme, and the same would occur in 2011 with 'The Twisted Ballroom'. Costumes were an audience response to the promotions outlined; yet variation within the theme and the success of the scheme itself was accountable to the audience. This again points to the collaborative relationship between festival organizer and festivalgoer; the responsive nature of the crowd may be therefore considered, following Biocca, as 'reactive' over 'active' participation.³⁰

The three categories of dress identified support the system of social distinction discussed in Section 4.5.1 and 5.3.3. This system was not leveraged by audience and organizer alone, but was reinforced by the emphases of other parties. For example, without much control over who came into the view of their cameras, the raw footage taken by the videographers at RTR 2010 depicts a crowd of participants mostly occupying the first and second category of dress. Contrastingly, through their selectivity, the images submitted by an enlisted team of photographers placed more emphasis on the third category of appearance. Underlining the way in which theatrical dress garners attention, costumed participants received more attention from photographers than those without costume. These observations can be usefully related to Cohen's description of the bifurcated audience, considered in Section 2.7.³¹ Significantly, Cohen recognized that an audience could split into performing participants and spectators. Indeed, RTR has supported this by demonstrating different intensities in participation and the audience's ability to generate their own spectators through visual display. Interestingly though, RTR housed a far more fluid bifurcation than Cohen's depiction; while Cohen described two distinct cultural groups, the audience at RTR was essentially *one* audience, able to move

³⁰ Biocca, p. 74.

³¹ Erik Cohen, p. 13.

between spectatorship and theatricality. As illustrated below, this flexibility was supported by the use of make-up services at the event.



Figure 43: Festivalized Style

Participants within the first category were able to move into the second category within the duration of the night. The image on the left depicts one male participant utilizing the transformative services of the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique'. The same participant is featured on the right with his make-up complete; this evidences the way in which the bifurcations of the audience at RTR were essentially dynamic.

In line with the analyses of BM and SGP, theatrical dress at RTR both supports and deviates from conceptualizations of the paidian participant, presented first in Section 2.7. Placing ostentation as characteristic of the ludic carnival, whereby visual display was a mark of separation between performers and audience, Cremona's paidian carnival depicted participative celebration as minimal in visual ostentation, and amateur in appearance and in nature. It is the latter point that actually allies the observations made here with the paidian representation; costume at RTR varied from the elaborate to the casually 'festivalized', yet it crucially remained an audience poise that did not visually articulate rigid, performance distinctions.

6.3.3 Participative Performances

The case study events supported a participative ideal through the programming of particular, and rather unconventional, types of performance. Allied to the 'paradigm of physical involvement'³² referenced throughout this study, these performances might be described as 'relational', 'interactive' or 'immersive'. Whichever nuanced conceptualization is favoured, the performances logically demand a mode of participation distinct from the spectatorship problematized by the event. BM, SGP and the events discussed in Section 5.4 maximize direct participation, through parades, theatre, games and flash-mobs. This section provides a micro perspective of three similarly positioned performances at RTR: 'The Human Doodle', 'The Heavenly Court of Madame Fantastique' and 'Honeydrum'.

The first of these was a simple ensemble created by the organizer of the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique'. The nature of this performance is expressed in the name; the piece consisted of two girls, enticing the audience to doodle all over their skin. Given the fluidity of movement between the categories of stylized of dress outlined in the previous section, together with the broad atmosphere of co-production, it is likely that the audience would not have known whether 'The Human Doodle' was a prescribed performance or simply the playful (if not rather extreme) behaviour of audience members.



Figure 44: The Human Doodle

³² Bishop, p. 11.

This uncertainty underlined *how* types of performance in this context break down the conventional distinctions between performers and non-performers: this was not only the result of direct interaction, but also transpired on the basic level of visual appearance. Augmenting an image of co-production, 'The Human Doodle' was simple; it was performed by young women and was therefore not obviously distinguishable from the theatrical outputs of members of the audience. It was precisely this ambiguity that heightened the impact of the piece. David Shearing's interpretation of audience incongruence resonates powerfully with this outcome.³³ He emphasizes the way in which performance can purposively confuse the audience member, and by doing so, heighten their attention; the cognitive disorientation caused by the performance triggers an attempt to work out how much of an event is part of a design or is an unplanned, spontaneous happening. This incongruent quality implicates many of the performances discussed in the previous chapters. For example, Standon Calling had scheduled an interactive performance art parade inspired by the 'Gods and Monsters' theme for 2011. Considering the attire of the audience, that will have likely consisted of some elaborate interpretations of the theme, it is likely that audience members would not have been able to easily decipher which individuals were the prescribed actors and which individuals were participating audience members. Contrary to the negative associations of the term 'incongruence', these performances are programmed because they are memorable and because conviviality arises from this confusion of roles.

There were two further performances at RTR that, though considerably distinct, intended to engage the audience in a performance. In addition to appearing at RTR, the 'Madame Fantisiste' piece, consisting of a small group of performers and a small, decorated aerial rig, was also taken to Kendal Calling and Bestival in 2010.³⁴ Pictured in Figure 45, the piece took place in the outside area at various intervals throughout the night. The thematic nature of the performance took the form of a semi-spontaneous mock search of an ephemeral and imaginary character, 'Madame Fantasiste', operating within a courtly scene

³³ 'Making Sense of Immersive Performance', paper presented by David Shearing at the University of Leeds (Monday 29 November).

³⁴ The piece was also part of an AHRC-funded collaborative research project for 'Beyond Text' by Alice O'Grady of the University of Leeds and Rebekkah Kill from Leeds Metropolitan University.

animated by scenographic elements and flamboyant costume. Often audience members were, wittingly or unwittingly, placed at the centre of the performance. If the performers had decided that the audience member might be 'Madame Fantasieste', they were asked to pass a test. This they would always fail, necessitating a new search.

The execution of the piece evidenced the way in which a participative praxis might be realized, in the first instance, via closing the proximal gap between performers and audience. This enabled spontaneous action on the part of the audience that fulfilled the 'relational' aims driving the performance.



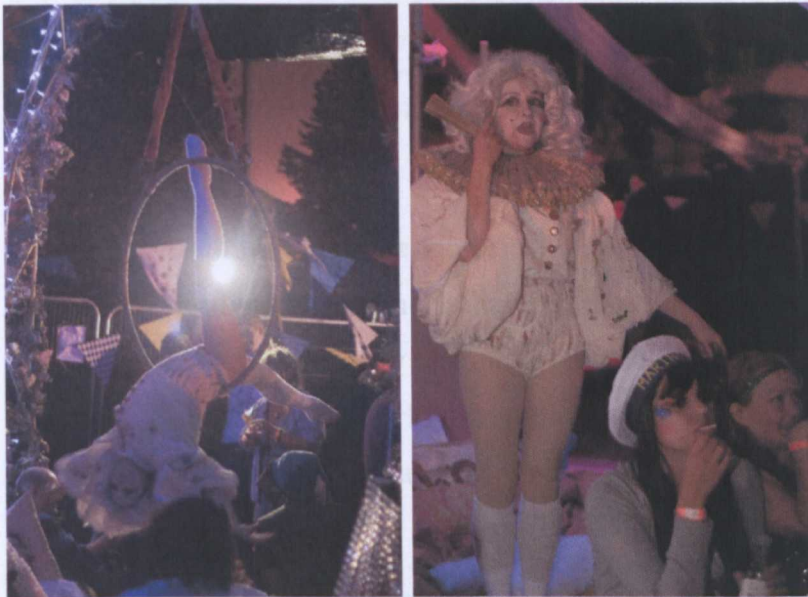
Figure 45: The Heavenly Court of Madame Fantasieste

Despite the inclusion of the aerial rig, which was intended to achieve visual impact because of its three-dimensionality and height, aerial performance was executed sparingly to reduce the presentational aspects of the piece. Such an adaptation was intended to induce a theatrical audience: that the full utilization of the rig would encourage spectatorship, and thus divert the performance away from its intended goal, limited its use. During my interview with a principal performer, these adjustments followed a conscious separation of aerial into presentational and participative models analogous to Turino's performance distinctions.³⁵ As suggested by the comments below, distance was seen as characteristic of the type of performance that the piece was positioned to invert.

³⁵ Turino, pp. 122–54.

If you think of circus, the aerialist is usually some pretty young skinny person who comes in, and they're all ethereal, and distant, a kind of angel in the sky [...] almost this kind of heavenly being. Almost slightly beyond human, and that's what a lot of circus is, because a lot of the skills, and I don't just mean aerial I mean trampolining and things like that, are beyond the normal human capacity, that's the whole idea of them.³⁶

In actuality, 'Madame Fantisiste' retained the spectacle and ephemeral nature of the performance described above, altering instead the role of the audience through the use of space. The visual separation of the performers from the audience, engendered by particularly ostentatious costume, was inverted by purposive interactions that were enabled by the blending of performance and audience space. Despite the expense and delicacy of the rig and costumes, participants were allowed to touch, lie and sit upon the aerial staging, in order to facilitate this communication. As illustrated by Figures 46–47, there was no physical crowd barrier demarcating performance space and audience space.



Figures 46–47: Proximal Performance

The image on the left evidences a number of participants comfortably sitting in and around the rig, and in close proximity to performers, even during the

³⁶ Interviewee G.

execution of aerial performances. Video footage of the same area evidences performative bifurcations comparable to those earlier discussed. Some audience members were engaged in theatrical interactions with the performers, while others would be photographing the entire scene at a distance. Allowing the audience to inhabit performance space made possible their incorporation into the semi-rehearsed happenings that transpired there. Audience members could play a role in the generation of theatrical scenes that were augmented by their own theatrical dress and expressions.³⁷ One performer described the audience at RTR as particularly prone to understanding the nature of these micro-performances and engaging with them in a convivial manner, providing several individual accounts:

At Raisetheroof one of the most amazing ones was talking to this woman for a while and suddenly we decided that she was dead, so we covered her up, and we held a funeral for her. And she was completely buying into this [...] she's buying into the idea of being the naughty corpse. She was the clown corpse, so occasionally she'd wave like this, and we'd go 'no! she's dead!' I mean, some really, really extraordinary things happened. And so the three or four of us were conspiring going 'do you think you're in heaven or in hell?' Then of course along comes this guy who's got this big, red devil mask on. And we're going 'come here', and we fixed it so that when we pulled the sheet back there's this devil in her face!³⁸

This anecdote illuminates the theatrical outputs that came about through intersecting audience costume, behaviour and the 'Madame Fantasieste' troupe. It also supports the necessity of spontaneity and flexibility over a scripted approach, as there was a marked deviation from the original performance theme. This spontaneity, argued Interviewee G, challenged the linearity of

³⁷ A particular example of the co-production of a theatrical ensemble was found on the live event footage, at 23:57. Notes taken of the scene are included here: *The aerial performer goes up onto the aerial hoop. Beneath her in very close proximity are costumed audience members – there is a moustached wench, an 'Alice in Wonderland' character with a man dressed as a rabbit. Alice sits while the rabbit and a girl dressed as a wench are lying down, all on the rig. The wench has her head lying on the curve of the rig. There are other non-costumed audience members sat on the rig and the majority of them don't move when the performer mounts the aerial. There is a man literally nestled in the curve of the rig, resting his head on the pillows. All of the sitters on the back of the rig are also nestled amongst the blankets. The image is sumptuous and surreal – the fancy dressed becomes a part of the dramatic scene.*

³⁸ Interviewee G.

narrative and text-based conceptions of performance. The unscripted incorporation of audience members was also conducive to the obscuring of roles not dissimilar to that effected by 'The Human Doodle'. Incongruous moments similarly arose from the inability to ascertain, in any concrete sense, how much of the theatrical assemblage was planned or spontaneous, and importantly, *who the prescribed performers were*. Such a moment is aptly illustrated in another account. Recalling the incorporation of one participant into a performance, who was dressed as Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, the following was stated:

We had one young woman who was so in to the whole idea of the fantasy she was so completely engaged with it that somebody that was watching thought that she was one of us but she couldn't work out why she was in a different costume. Because she was totally involved, to the extent that she was having a full on improvisation [with a performer]. Because the woman who came in was dressed as Alice [in Wonderland].³⁹

Interestingly, footage evidence revealed moments of performance incongruence independent of audience costume. At one recorded encounter, it was impossible for onlookers to determine whether the participation of a man in ordinary clothes was planned or unplanned. Two members of 'Madame Fantasieste' affix a beauty spot to him; as this happens, there are several camera flashes. It is the flashes of the camera, rather than the action itself, that gives this moment an appearance of performance. The role of the man, and how far this moment was staged, remained ambiguous to the spectators. It is true that an observation of this particular moment first-hand might have made clearer the role of this particular participant. Nonetheless, that an erosion of distinction was often the result of close performer-to-audience proximities and interactions is a supportable deduction. Indeed, the account of one participant's inability to determine whether another participant was a performer or an audience member suggests a cognitive attempt to order

³⁹ Interviewee G.

the theatrical scene by ascertaining the roles within it. As was similarly the case with the participant in the devil's mask, described by Interviewee G, costume provided a gateway by which audience members could pose as performers, while bemused spectators would attempt to delineate the actors involved. The inducement of such a condition on the part of the spectator was not incidental but central to 'Madame Fantasieste's *raison d'être*:

I think part of our reason for being is confusion. You know [...] you can see a million shows where you can walk in and you know exactly what you're supposed to do. You get your ticket, you transfer your wine from a glass into a plastic cup, you walk into the theatre and you sit down and you're really well behaved! You know, your job is to absorb. Yes to think, and be cerebral and make judgements on it. But you know your role is to go in there and to sit down and it'll go dark and you watch. And you know, like for instance, in opera, there's very very fixed points where you can clap. And you can't clap at any other point. Whereas with ours, a lot of the rules are broken. People will walk up and stand there, and they're waiting for something to happen. And I dare say there's a percentage of people who will walk off and go 'well that was a load of rubbish. They weren't very good'.⁴⁰

There are two underlying speculations deducible from the incongruence detailed above. Audience confusion evidenced a rejection of the 'horizons of expectation' induced by the traditional theatre setting.⁴¹ The performance also delivered new horizons that asserted intimacy as well as immediacy; significantly, 'Madame Fantasieste' privileged the micro over the macro audience experience. Performance was often confined to the audience members who were sitting on the rig; at times, it was completely individualized to the audience members who maintained interactions. Interviewee G revealed the motivating concept behind the piece when she claimed that the piece was, in her words 'an experience for the few'. Regarding the touring of the piece, she pointed out that out of a set of two hours, they could have a direct interaction with only six individuals.⁴² The rejection of presentational performance in favour of a micro model of interaction compromised, as discussed in the

⁴⁰ Interviewee G.

⁴¹ Kershaw, p. 24.

⁴² Interviewee G.

following section, its reach. Out of a crowd of almost 1000, fewer than 100 would have had the intimate and immediate experiences the piece afforded. The inclusion of 'Madame Fantasieste' does not uniformly represent what is taking place elsewhere; what can be deduced, nevertheless, is that where a participative ideal is central to a festival, there is a contemporaneous emphasis on the unique experience. The participative ideal also makes necessary the use of spontaneity in performance, over the use of a rehearsed script.⁴³ The flexibility of 'Madame Fantasieste' permitted adaptations based upon both the festival context and the responses of individual audience members. Evidently, engagement with an audience necessitates spontaneity because the audience forms an unpredictable and unscripted part of the interaction.

Revisiting again Turino's distinctions, spontaneity is here largely aligned with participative performance, whereas premeditation and rehearsal is aligned with presentational modes. Considering together the work of Cremona and Turino, despite the alignment of this performance with the 'paidian participative', in opposition to the 'ludic presentational', it retained a strong element of display, which rather points to a cross-pollination of the two polarities. Unlike the 'The Human Doodle', Figure 45 makes clear that a powerful element of display articulated the theatrical scene necessary to the piece. Without the scenographic forms, there would have been no dramatic assemblage with which to communicate the setting of the courtly search. Its ostentatious qualities were consistent with the 'materiality of place' that has been viewed as key to the immersive performance and to the audience's adoption of roles.⁴⁴ Cremona maintained that the spectacular costume of prescribed performers diminished audience theatricality,⁴⁵ yet this piece demonstrated that when participation is an articulated aim out the outset, it is possible to deploy visual splendour to actually facilitate the type of interaction desired, for it is moderated by the eradication of communicative and spatial distance between performer and audience. Ultimately, the encounters that this performance generated resonate powerfully with the varied and individualized

⁴³ Cremona, p. 71, p. 76.

⁴⁴ 'Researching Audience Experience in Immersive Theatre', paper presented by Joslin McKinney at the University of Leeds (22 November 2010).

⁴⁵ Cremona, p. 72.

moments made possible by the case study events. The 'Madame Fantasieste' piece suggests that when a participative ideal comes to be expressed through the programming of unconventional performance art, themes of spontaneity, 'experiences for the few', uniqueness, close proximities and audience-centrality emerge. Qualitatively opposite to the distance, uniformity, detachment and act-centrality examined in Chapter 3, it is clear that performances like this help realize the critical discourses reproduced by BM, SGP and the events discussed in Section 5.4.

The 'Honeydrum' performance differed to the previous executions as it was principally a performance of music and dance rather than what one might call 'performance art', consisting of a group of females dancing a 'folkloric Samba' to the rhythmic sounds of a percussion collective.⁴⁶ Unlike the previous two performances, 'Honeydrum' was rehearsed, though audience participation was an intentional element of the performance.



Figure 48: Folkloric Samba

Footage reveals performance dynamism as the piece shifted between alternate forms of delivery.⁴⁷ The percussion, which provided rhythmic backing for the dance, was led by a single conductor. In this sense a hierarchy of performance control was deducible. As illustrated by the base level of the triangle below,

⁴⁶ 'Honeydrum' is also a permanent percussion collective that has performed at *Raisetheroof* every year between 2007 and 2010.

⁴⁷ The 'Honeydrum' leaders were conscious of the importance of interactivity to the RTR brand, though this performance was arranged independently of me.

audience interaction was achieved on the lowest part of the performance hierarchy:

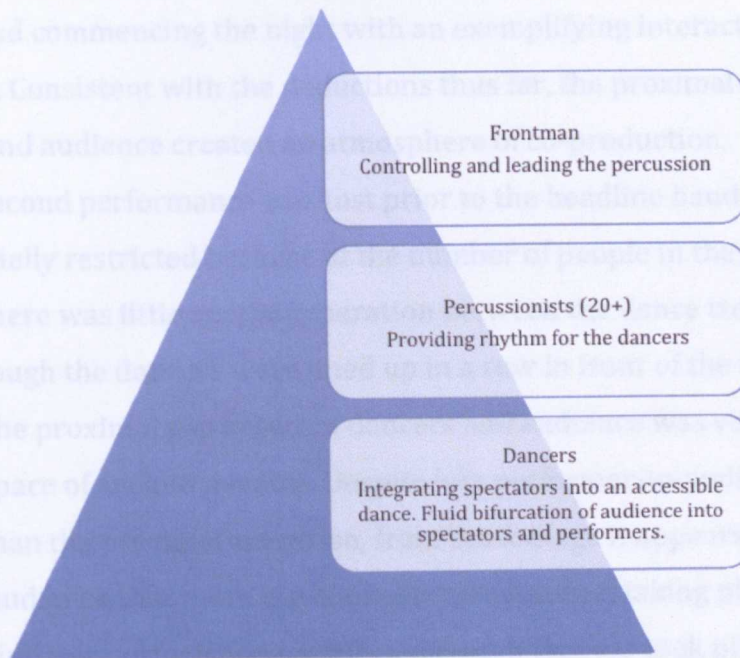


Figure 49: Honeydrum Performance Hierarchy

Two 'Honeydrum' performances were staged throughout the evening. During the first, executed at the beginning of the event, audience inhibitions appeared to dissolve through participating in the dance. Performed only a quarter of an hour after the doors opened, using the ample space of the dance floor, its pace was initially slow, but picked up as the room slowly filled. The pace of the dance gradually increased as the number of unscripted participants grew. Audience participation appeared to have been instigated by the event compère and an RTR volunteer; these members of the RTR production team, however, looked indistinguishable from audience members, and the video and images of this performance suggest that their initial participation prepared onlookers to join the dance. Once the pace had picked up, more audience members were absorbed into the dance, forming a concentric circle in the middle of the dance floor. Visible was a transformation of roles as the dance unfolded. Allied with the deployment of costume discussed in the previous section, this performance bifurcated the crowd into two fluid groupings of performers and observers. All-white costume differentiated the rehearsed dancers from the audience, though

spectator and performer roles were visibly confused when there were high levels of participation. Following comments from direct observers of the dance; it seems the case that the dance was principally significant in speedily lowering inhibitions and commencing the night with an exemplifying interactive performance. Consistent with the deductions thus far, the proximal mixing of performers and audience created an atmosphere of co-production.

The second performance was just prior to the headline band at midnight, and was spatially restricted because of the number of people in the room. This meant that there was little spatial separation between the dance troupe and the audience, though the dancers were lined up in a row in front of the stage, facing the crowd. The proximal gap between dancers and audience was very small, a fluctuating space of around a metre. Despite less performer-to-audience distinction than the previous execution, from the footage it appears relatively clear to the audience that there is a choreographed dance, taking place in front of them. During this performance, some audience members took photos of the dancers, while others mimicked their movements. At one point this movement ceased to resemble mimicking and instead looked like the dancers and audience were dancing with each other; their timing matched as they danced in unison. It is significant that it was the dancers, on the lowest level of the control hierarchy illustrated in Figure 49, who interacted directly with the audience. This intended element of the performance made necessary the amateur nature of the dance: interaction occurred at the lowest level of skill required, because it was at the level of audience access. Despite the existence of a sizeable portion of spectators unwilling to enter the dancing spectacle, preferring to watch from the outer sphere, the visibility of this access had some value in *qualifying* the performing audience, even if it did not induce universal participation.

This particular combination of dance, percussion and audience interaction was unique to RTR. The function, aesthetic and impact of 'Honeydrum' are, nonetheless, relevant to the case study events. As similarly deduced from the first two performances, the third supported the deduction that paidian participation does not require an abandonment of the presentational, within a performance. In fact, a degree of display and rehearsed posture must occur to garner attention in the first instance, which may be

augmented by the incongruent and participatory elements. Indeed, this deduction is true of the amalgamation of dance and percussion that forms SGP's 'Badger Badger Band'.⁴⁸ This live band makes the addition of theatre, dressing its dancers in animal costumes that interact on 'ground level' with audience members. The confusing blend of rehearsed performance and spontaneity creates memorable experiences and a conspicuous selling point for the festival. Revisiting the observations made in Chapter 4, this was highlighted in a journalistic review that credited the 'Badger Badger' area at SGP with an 'ecstatic disregard for convention [...] improvising and experimenting and whipping the crowd into one communal, whirling flash-mob'.⁴⁹ Similarly, the volunteers who were set the task of filming and editing the RTR footage into a promotional video featured, without direction from the researcher, the 'Honeydrum' performance most conspicuously. Despite the fact that all of the staged bands were better known, two (out of four) were omitted in favour of dedicating more coverage to this performance. The impact that performances like 'Honeydrum' and the 'Badger Badger Band' make on photographers, reviewers and videographers as well as audience members, suggests that the heightened awareness they create helps draw attention to a defining characteristic, which feeds into the festival's promotional presentation. Extrapolating these findings to the cultural cachet of boutique festivals, these performances offer something unconventional and consequently, enhance their competitive standing.

6.4 Balancing the Participative with the Presentational

Throughout Chapter 4, the examination of BM revealed a successful rejection of performance hierarchy; despite their abundance, bands and DJs were de-emphasized in favour of promoting the participant star. Despite a conspicuous and open cultural allegiance, the case study event discussed in Chapter 5 could

⁴⁸ The 'Badger Badger Band' can be considered a 'signature band' for SGP; not only do the band create an area of theatre at the event, but have also been booked to perform at other events organized by Secret Productions.

⁴⁹ Weinstock, 'Festival Review: The Secret Garden Party'.

not, due to the socio-economic conditions outlined in Section 5.3.4, dispense with the presentational system its vanguard rejects. Integrating a traditional treatment of programmed music with extreme participation is a result not uniformly reproduced elsewhere, though as Section 5.4 attests, this combination characterizes a significant number of British boutique festivals.

Using the insider perspective afforded by the researcher's position as festival organizer, this section examines the tensions created by balancing the participative with the presentational. The participative relates to both programmed features and the attempt to democratize production through volunteer recruitment, while the presentational refers more specifically to the booking and emphasized promotion of Dreadzone. As outlined at the outset of this chapter, and usefully for the research, the tensions between these aspects were particularly exacerbated in 2010; the mobilization of volunteers and the programming of participative features were maximized at the same time as the line-up of music which, for the first time in seven years, included a performance from an internationally known act. Whereas democratized production was detailed at length in Section 6.2, this booking requires some elaboration, for it was particularly significant in altering the focus of the event. Passing from a festival that emphasized all acts equally, to one that prioritized a particular performance, the transformation of RTR provided a unique insight into resulting responses from the audience, the media and other performers. As a reputable band, the cost of Dreadzone's performance was not insignificant. In order to maximize the return on this investment, the band was logically placed to garner attention in the promotional materials for the event. Figure 50 depicts the advertisement for the 2009 festival pictured on the right, and the 2010 advertisement pictured on the left. As the text sizes illustrate, there was a marked shift of emphasis onto the headline act.



Figure 50: Presentation of Acts

In addition to a number of stalls and installations, RTR always included a line-up of acts in music. As exemplified by the advertisement on the right, bands were featured with some prominence; there, Salsa Como Loco, Honeydrum and China Shop Bull are live acts listed in dark purple, while the non-musical features were listed in the smaller print. The departure from programming local and unsigned acts that were, as the image testifies, promoted more or less as equals, changed the nature of the event. Amongst friends and fans, there was a general feeling that this shift was an evolution, and it often seemed that Dreadzone dominated audience anticipation. The attention that this headliner brought to the event was reproduced by the other acts on the billing; unsurprisingly perhaps, each of them made a point of emphasizing the fact that they were supporting Dreadzone, in order to confer some of the headliner's status onto themselves.

The booking also attracted attention from new quarters, and provided the means by which RTR could be promoted more broadly. As demonstrated in Appendix C.6, the festival had succeeded in garnering a number of previews and reviews in regional publications since operating in the Leeds West Indian Centre. This coverage was, nonetheless, significantly dwarfed by attention from

the local radio stations, East Leeds FM and BBC Radio Leeds, in 2010. The inclusion of Dreadzone, as an act broadly recognizable to the target audience of dub, reggae and dance music fans, also created more promotional opportunity outside the festival's home in Leeds. Previously, distributing flyers at a festival in Sheffield, for example, or listing the event on a national music forum, would have been a pointless endeavour. The inclusion of Dreadzone pushed RTR into a broader market sphere whereby its potential audience was far larger and more disparate. That this made unnecessary the other aspects of the event would be an inaccurate deduction; it was the *combination* of Dreadzone with the non-musical programme that was, in the opinion of the researcher, responsible for the event selling out. This albeit somewhat intuitive observation supports the interpretation that SGP's co-opted praxes constitute 'added value'; as discussed in Section 5.3.4, the event omits a rejection of spectatorship in favour of a combination that achieves in both the presentational and the participative areas of appeal. SGP's integration reveals its positioning as a brand, it employs profile acts as a safety mechanism for ticket sales, at the same time as heavily promoting the participative ideal.

It would be inaccurate to state that prior to Dreadzone's performance, there were no climactic moments at RTR; most of the unsigned acts occupying the line-up had a significant local fan base that meant that a sizeable portion of audience attention was already directed at the live acts. It is also true that the broader familiarity of Dreadzone added something different to the atmosphere; whereas previous RTR events had refrained from billing any acts as 'supports' or 'headliners', with Dreadzone came an inevitable hierarchy reinforced by the behaviour of participants on the night. Unsurprisingly, their performance saw the majority of attendees squeeze into the main room with the photographers and videographers, who had similarly prioritized this performance. The added excitement, kudos and ticket sales that Dreadzone brought to the researcher's event underlined why almost every aspect of BM has been appropriated by British festival culture, apart from its treatment of acts. The booking propelled RTR into a more powerful category of events, which enjoyed greater levels of attention from the media and audience alike.

With the significant changes this brought to RTR came a number of pressures and tensions well worth elaborating, in terms of their impact on the realization of a democratized approach to production. Several incidents suggested that this approach is largely incompatible with a hierarchical treatment of acts. There was, for example, a serious objection to the Dreadzone booking from long-standing participants who had performed every year at the event since its move to Leeds West Indian Centre, in 2007.⁵⁰ Recollecting their words, they approached me with a number of objections that were oriented around a fear that RTR had grown too 'big'; they viewed the headline booking as responsible for inflating the ticket price, and crucially, claimed that RTR had changed from being 'multi-focal' to 'all about Dreadzone'. They argued that this change had brought with it a narrowing of audience focus and intent. According to these participants, most of the audience had only attended RTR because of Dreadzone, and thus, had little interest in its participative aspects.

Credence must be given to this valuable feedback; nonetheless, my own observations together with the available video footage and photographic evidence are not entirely consistent with this interpretation of events. As the extended area in Figure 35 makes clear, there were, in fact, more opportunities to participate in non-musical activities than had ever before appeared at RTR. Photographs attest to their widespread use. It was also the increase in both band profile and peripheral activities that had inflated the ticket price up to a cost of fifteen pounds, rather than the former alone. The cause for this discontent was most likely connected to the fact that the 'participative' had indeed *become peripheral*: this was not marked by any physical reductions or displacements of activities, but rather was signified by the ordering and presentation of promotional literature. There was an increase in non-musical features, yet Figure 50 demonstrates that the enlarged listing of Dreadzone dwarfed their presentation. Given these observations, it is likely that the perceived shift from a multi to a single-focus event came from its constructed image, rather than what actually transpired at the event itself. That their complaints were influenced by a hierarchical presentation of acts does not render them insignificant; indeed, their objection principally meant that the

⁵⁰ These participants shall remain anonymous.

inclusion of Dreadzone had undermined the way in which RTR had been idealized in the past. Supporting the observations made by Interviewee A regarding SGP, discussed at Section 5.3.4, such a treatment of acts can awkwardly moderate the 'No Spectators' ideal. Grace Jones was strategically booked to put SGP 'on the map', yet this was a controversial move within the SGP team. That this was due to reasons that coincide with some of the objections to booking Dreadzone at RTR seems likely.

The most basic and defining obstacle to achieving the combination of the presentational and participative relates principally to cost. Promoting both in the way exemplified here adds various financial pressures and, through this, risk. These aspects form a package that is costly and complex to produce; it relies on offering an experience of co-production and a genuine opportunity to co-produce, alongside expensive profile acts. Such a combination invariably damages ticket sales on several scores. Firstly, the programming of features and installations that adhere to a relational principle does not offer the promoter the value for money, safety-net mechanism that a music performance may of equal cost. For example, the cost of Dreadzone and 'Madame Fantasieste' was exactly the same; the former was a performance from a well-known band, and the latter, as discussed in the previous section, was an unconventional, interactive performance piece. The former generated value for money for the promoter: it was an experience for the many, providing an important ticket-selling feature for use in the promotion of the event. Conversely, 'Madame Fantasieste' was an experience for the few. Despite its similarity in cost, unlike Dreadzone, this performance existed on the margins of the celebration. Undoubtedly enhancing the profile of the event experience, its inclusion did not lend itself to the same promotional mechanisms that significantly generated ticket sales; 'Madame Fantasieste' compromised, therefore, bottom-line considerations. Despite only costing around 10% of the event's total budget, it was the equivalent of over one third of the event's total profit. Consequently had it been excluded from the programming, the end profit would have totalled one third more. The same cannot be similarly said for Dreadzone, because they *generated* ticket sales.

As a small, indoor festival, these budgetary proportions are unlikely to be identically matched elsewhere, yet the general point that performances such as 'Madame Fantasieste' can cost something similar to musical acts, without offering the festival the same degree of value for money, is broadly relevant. Supporting the observation made in Section 5.2 and 5.2.1, unconventional performances are generally added to festival programmes to create a competitive package; however, the outcomes of maximizing this at RTR underline the financial risks this also brings to the event. Despite the contribution such features make to event experience, Figure 24 illustrated that audiences still make their ticket purchases based on musical line-ups. To compromise the profile of the musical line-up in favour of high-end performance and art installations adds creative value, but presents a greater degree of risk. Such a scenario unpacks the selective co-option of praxes highlighted in this study: boutique events are competitively fragmenting the focus that was once concentrated upon the main stage, yet they maintain a reliance on expensive line-ups. Diversified programmes may add, therefore, a considerable financial burden on top of that already generated by the necessary, ticket-selling artists.

That a democratized approach also meant recruiting from would-be ticket buyers was an additional limitation to combining the participative with the presentational. As problematized in Section 6.2, time and resources were spent on facilitating volunteers, who were often unreliable. It is also true that *success* in mobilization also translated into very real losses at RTR; while the headline act was performing, the venue became full to capacity, and there was a long queue outside from the door to the road. I was required to declare the event sold out, and turn away some fifty guests, while roughly one quarter of the audience in the main room, principally comprised of volunteers, had not paid for a ticket. Consequently, non-essential performers, their guests and volunteers added up to an estimated £2,175 loss. The contingency of event capacity will determine the seriousness of this issue elsewhere, yet problematically for RTR, maximizing the proportion of volunteers to non-volunteers lowered the saleable capacity of the venue, which ultimately undermines commercial sustainability by eating into the profits. Since many of the volunteers were the producers of features and attractions, diversification

correlated with the proportion of volunteers: the more features included in the programme, the greater the reduction of saleable tickets. The volunteer-run features of course helped to *generate* ticket-sales, yet their participation also came at a cost. This tension supports the key difference between SGP and BM, delineated in Section 5.3.4. BM is unique in generating a culture of gifted labour from ticket-buying volunteers. More conventionally, volunteers at British festivals see their labour as a form of capital for exchange; if they co-produce an event, in return they expect a free ticket. This means that there will always be a strict limit to how far it is actually possible to engage a broad number of volunteers in production, before democratization begins to harm the event financially. If it requires, for example, 655 ticket buyers to break even, and the event must turn a profit in order to grow; with a capacity limited to 900, the number of volunteers must necessarily remain under 10% of the overall audience.

Such being the case, a democratized approach to festival production in Britain engages two participant categories within the broader frame of extreme participation theorized in this study. First, it is possible to discern the category of 'experiential consumers' responsible for purchasing tickets in large numbers, which is key to the commercial sustainability of the boutique event. These consumers engage in extreme participation on an informal and experiential level; for example, through costume and interactions with installations and performers. Secondly, potential consumers may be transformed into formalized producers by becoming the creators of installations, performances, theme camps and art boats. These participants are crucial to creating an atmosphere of co-production via the shaping of fragmented, diversified space; they are also crucial to facilitating unique and individuated experience for other festivalgoers. This democratized approach to festival organization engenders experiential co-production and tangible co-production; however, the number of participants engaged in the latter categorization must never outweigh the former. With this in mind, the key difference between BM and the BM-inspired relates to the difference between the systemic and the experiential; whereas the majority of BM attendees engage in volunteering and camp co-ordination, the majority of SGP and RTR attendees participate in an atmosphere of co-production confined

to the live event, and are somewhat detached from the labour on which it is based.

6.4 Beyond *Raisetheroo*f

Adopting a constructionist over an experiential framework, this study has not endeavoured to examine the participant view of the phenomena identified, in depth. However, by bringing together a number of festival contributors, RTR provided a unique opportunity to cross reference their experiences with the deductions made throughout this investigation. Making use of this opportunity to enhance the research findings, exploratory interviews with key participants were deployed, generating material with which to reflect upon the issues in question. Despite the inability to generalize too ambitiously from a small sample, the interviewees provided insights relevant to the broader industry, an outcome enhanced by their involvement with other boutique festivals. Indeed, the festivals at which interviewees had either worked or expressed a desire to work, confirmed the shape of the cultural nexus identified in Section 5.4. This is because key contributors at RTR maintained a preference for events that reproduced similar participative milieu; namely SGP and Shambala, though Kendal Calling, Glastonbury, Beatherder and Moor Music Festival were also mentioned. Tellingly, when the creator of the 'Pacman' game was asked where else he would like to take the installation, the response was:

Glastonbury, obviously. I went for the first time this summer and I had an amazing time. I heard positive and negative things about it, but it was great. I think this would be quite well received there. And Secret Garden Party, people would love it. I think I'm going to apply to them this year, cos that's what they're all about really, like that sort of interactive element, so [...] I think we probably be there next year, and Shambala and Bestival.⁵¹

⁵¹ Interviewee H.

For these contributors, RTR was positioned within a nexus of festivals that were grouped in terms of their emphasis on audience participation and, for this reason, bracketed the events they had attended, and wanted to attend. That interviewees gravitated towards a participative ideal was sometimes evidenced through direct comments, though this was also discernible simply because certain events were constructed as superior. Interview responses proved, then, a valuable source for illuminating the role of the festival workforce in enabling the cultural appropriation at the heart of this study. So far, supply-side incentives and co-opted practices have largely been depicted as responsible for the diversified festival programme; contrastingly the responses from these participants reinforce the significance of underlying social drivers relating to the availability and motivation of volunteers. In this section, the examination of festival contributors is broken into three inter-related parts: skill sets, preferences and gender.

All interviews revealed that contributions to RTR emerged from the academic and/or professional backgrounds of their creators. Project leaders also gathered similarly qualified participants to help them with their projects. Interviewee E from the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique', for example, claimed that she always tried to recruit face-painters who had at least a fine art degree in order to ensure a high level of skill. Touring the project at various events, including Kendal Calling and Beatherder as well as RTR, this participant viewed the project not in terms of the face-painting tradition that has been a long-standing feature of festivals and fêtes, but rather as something distinctly professionalized:

I think people even from the beginning have been impressed with the standard that Happy Slap is, even when they just get their face painted, they are always quite impressed. It's not your average facepainting stall, I think that's partly because most of the people involved are makeup artists. Not just people who like painting faces.⁵²

⁵² Interviewee E.

This project helped Interviewee E to experiment with the skills she had acquired from her Make-up and Prosthetics degree at the London School of Fashion, as well as acquire and practise new techniques that she was able to transfer to alternate contexts. Similarly, half of those involved in the 'Pimp My Clothes' project were studying related subjects, two of whom were studying sustainable fashion design at PhD level. Similarly, the creator of the environmentally conscious, bike-powered 'Pacman' game had completed a dissertation in environmental activism and carnival, while the performers of 'The Human Doodle' were trained actresses and members of a theatre company. As participants were all between the ages of 21 and 27, their projects acted as practical extensions of those skills and interests newly acquired in academic settings. The organizers of 'Madame Fantasieste' were not volunteers, yet comments made by Interviewee G maintained the relationship theorized here. Speaking broadly, this interviewee linked up the increase in circus skills at festivals to the increase in related training:

I think there's several factors, I think there are a lot more performers being trained. There are two main ones in Britain, that's Circa-media in Bristol and Circus Space in London. And Circus Space have massively increased their number of students, they do quite a lot of undergraduate stuff. And I think it's like with anything [...] it's then self-perpetuating. You know, the more aerialists there are, the more people see aerial, the more it becomes popular. So that's one strand of the regeneration of aerial activity.

It is true that a festival programme includes many commercial traders and established companies as well as the smaller projects run by volunteers. Nonetheless, the fact that the contributions of each interviewee emerged from long-term, academic orientations suggests that one driver of diversification relates to the numbers of people trained in particular disciplines, who are willing to take such projects to festivals, often as the recipients of a little or no fee at all. Kate Oakley, in her extensive report on festival volunteers in Britain, does not relate the diversification of degrees directly to the diversification of the festival programme, as is suggested here.⁵³ She does note, however, the

⁵³ Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living?'

important connection between the growth of education in the cultural industries and events management, and the willingness and availability of volunteers to put education into practice. Despite the increase in vocational training in the cultural industries, Oakley argues, there remains a 'culture of skepticism' regarding degrees amongst employers and consequent pressure on graduates to volunteer.⁵⁴ This emphasis on 'learning-via-working' legitimizes the 'long-term unpaid work' utilized by the British festivals economy.⁵⁵

A willingness to participate could also be connected to an excess of graduates and a lack of graduate jobs following the recession, which was certainly the case for one RTR interviewee. Describing her initial motivations in launching the project, she commented that 'it was a recession and stuff, and I couldn't get any work at my old job'.⁵⁶ Deductions regarding a relationship between the recession and the music festival programme must consider the 2008 Mintel Report, which suggests that diversification was occurring prior to the financial crisis.⁵⁷ Despite the costs often involved in volunteering, it is nonetheless likely that the post-2008 stall in the careers of many young people has generated numbers of individuals interested in volunteer work and the creation of projects to take to festivals. It is also likely that this includes current students as well as graduates, who have their summers free: art students, for example, may use festivals as a way of seeing academic interests materialize in practical projects. It is certainly the case that some festivals have purposively attempted to attract such students; as discussed in Section 5.4, art students were specifically targeted by Glade festival to formulate proposals for creating areas comparable to BM's theme camps. This initiative did aim to award grants, though it is unlikely that any wage would have been included. It may not be far-fetched to interpret, therefore, the artistic diversification of festivals as a 'using up' of excess skill created by a burgeoning number of students coupled to a shrinking number of jobs, and the systemic failure to employ the creative skills of graduates in Britain.

⁵⁴ Oakley, 'Better than Working for a Living?'

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Interviewee E.

⁵⁷ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

Evidence gleaned from interviews suggests that the desire to transform academic endeavours into practical applications is only one aspect of volunteer motivation. Interviews made clear that contributions to RTR were in no small part, a strategy for engaging with the event, as *fans*. All interviewees made clear that their contribution granted entrance to those events that they would otherwise have liked to attend as members of the ticket-buying audience. When one interviewee was asked how he selected which events to take his project to, he commented:

Well they're the ones that we think would like what we're doing, and that we would like to go to. Because there's some that might like what we're doing, but that we're not that bothered about going to. And because it's voluntary, because we do it voluntarily, like we weren't getting paid at Raisetheroof or at Bestival or at Shambala, we just did it in exchange for some tickets and some expenses. We go and do it at places where we want to go.⁵⁸

That consumers here double up as producers is analogous to Hetherington's description of free festival culture, discussed in Section 2.4, for performers were often unpaid members of the audience.⁵⁹ The motivation expressed above, if similarly applicable elsewhere, makes possible the claim that boutique events have 'outsourced' production to their fans; these features are not micro-managed by festival management but are designed and implemented by would-be audience members. They might be considered more appropriately, therefore, as audience expressions as opposed to commercial traders, which they are often stationed beside. This interpretation is supported by the interviews with other contributors, for they also considered their broad participation to incorporate both enjoyment and labour. The organizer of the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique', for example, valued the experience at RTR and at other festivals in terms of both pleasure and teambuilding:

We've had Happy Slap reunions from that weekend, because we had such a good time. And we brought all these people together, hardly anyone knew each other, and everyone got on so well and had such a good time [...] like

⁵⁸ Interviewee H.

⁵⁹ Hetherington, p. 61.

Surefire who come and do the circus with us, they are a professional company, they get paid to do a lot of jobs. Turns out they just really wanted to come to a festival and I think, well I know they had an amazing time, they loved it, and they loved having that chance to perform in front of all those people.⁶⁰

Boutique events are, therefore, characterised by the audiences they attract: fans significantly shape their spatial milieu. The festival as curatorial space might be a limited analogy when the true operations of the art gallery are considered, for gallery exhibits may transpire in contexts geographically and culturally detached from the social spheres of featured artists. Something entirely different appears to be occurring here. The evidence suggests a kind of mutual gravitation at play; the creators of relational installations are attracted to certain types of event, and certain types of events welcome and seek out relational installations, particularly those that are subsidized by voluntary labour. This mutual attraction is accelerated by the collaborations between festival and contributor, which negotiate a mutually beneficial exchange. Despite the often low, or complete absence of, pay, this collaboration meets organizational and individual needs, enabling it to take place with few economic incentives. This cultural phenomenon is, perhaps, owing to a social propensity to gather, or tribalize, with others sharing similar sensibilities. Maffesoli's account of neo-tribes, based around shared social and political attitudes, did not consider that neo-tribes may be plugged into broader spheres of shared understanding. That the contributors at RTR endured the travel and costs necessitated by contributing to boutique events not local to them, may suggest that such events represent the crystallization of cultures on an extended social plane.

This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that, at least for the respondents interviewed, making money was not at all prioritized. Despite the fact that a profit could have been made with various alterations to their projects, two interviewees stated that this would have undermined its aesthetic and experiential purpose, and they were therefore discouraged. As one respondent claimed, she could have imported cheap, mass-produced clothing to

⁶⁰ Interviewee E.

sell on her 'Pimp My Clothes' stall. Importantly for her, this would have been inconsistent with her interest in sustainable design and the participative objective of her project: she instead opted for embellishment that could be undertaken by the audience. Similarly, when the organizer of the 'Happy Slap Make-up Boutique' set up her project first as a conventional face-painting stall, her costs were much lower, which enabled her, occasionally, to make a profit.⁶¹ Due to a desire to experiment by combining interactive performance with a make-up service, she provides instead an enhanced project at greater cost to herself:

When I just do the stall on my own, and I'm just doing makeup, facepainting on people... I'll make more money or more profit [...] but that's not my passion. I never set out to do that, I never set out to do facepainting.⁶²

Despite the necessarily commercial structure of the boutique festival, features like this are independent projects motivated by extra-commercial interests. In this sense it is possible to argue that these activities ought to be added to the itinerary headed by 'DIY culture' in music, together with the independent practices of making music, releasing music, and hosting gigs and raves outside of the corporate realm of operations.

In relation to the third category considered in this section, the enrichment of research findings through participant interviews was supplemented by considering, more broadly, how gender imbalances in areas of production at RTR may also relate to productivity at the case study events. At RTR, areas of production were identified as all actions conducive to the specific creation of the event, excluding those who regularly work at the venue, such as security and venue staff. 'Production' is a term used here as an umbrella for all actions relating to areas of performance, technical engineering, build, installations and featured attractions. There were sixty-four men compared to fifty-eight women involved in these areas, demonstrating a marginal male

⁶¹ These contributors were volunteers at RTR, though their role does overlap with that of the 'trader' at other events, because they charge audience members to participate – however, due to the low profits involved, they are not generally charged for their pitches.

⁶² Interviewee E.

majority overall. Despite the near even balance of men and women, areas of production were sharply divided according to gender. As Figure 51 illustrates, men heavily dominated technical construction, with only three women to eighteen men. This most likely reflects the broader festival industry, with stage builders, managers, sound and lighting technicians almost exclusively male. These areas of labour are also oriented around the main stage; interestingly, men also dominated the main stage performances at RTR.⁶³ Despite a female compère and a female organizer, both Figures 51 and 53 make clear the fact that RTR's main stage was largely a male space, while its technical control was also maintained exclusively by men.

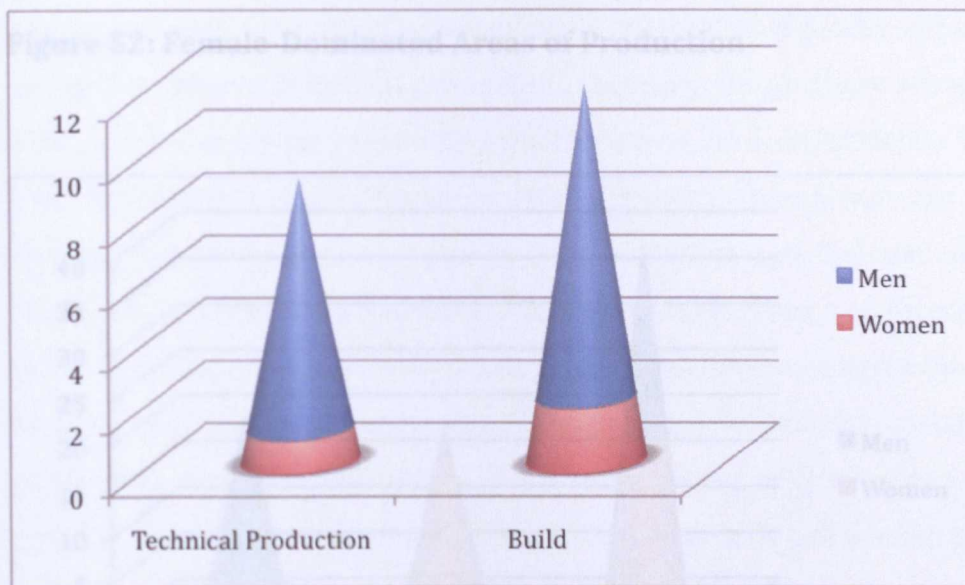


Figure 51: Male-Dominated Areas of Production

In addition to the main stage performances, these figures illuminate the fact that the technical and physically intensive operations were heavily male dominated, whereas the auxiliary actions (performance art and interactive installations) were either female dominated or mixed. It was the female-dominated

⁶³ There was an almost total male majority of main stage performers (i.e., band members), which was consistent with the line-up of previous years. It should be noted that this was the unintended outcome of booking those acts that were stylistically suited to the event; though the wide variety of acts hosted points to the fact that male domination was not the result of programming specific types of music, but rather was broadly characteristic of the acts available.

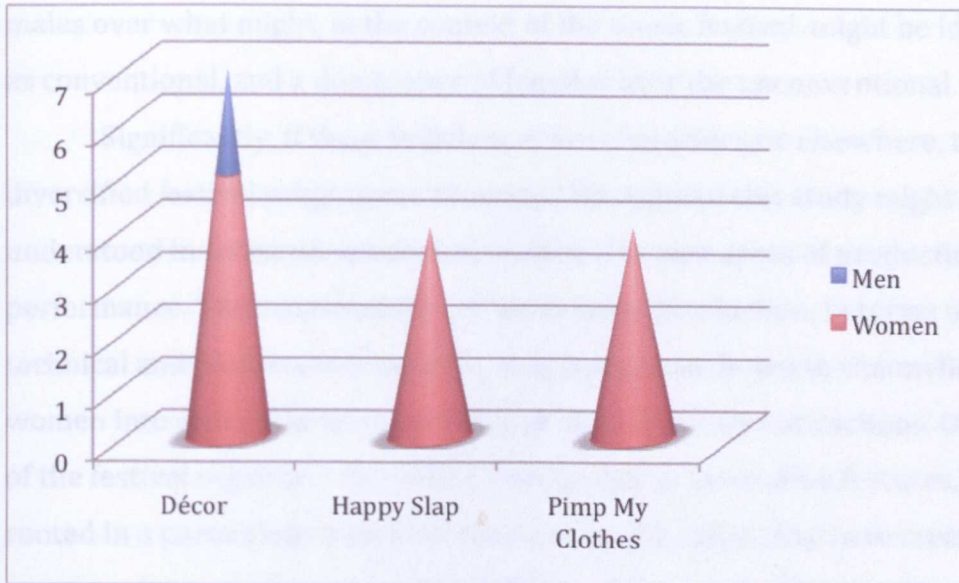


Figure 52: Female-Dominated Areas of Production

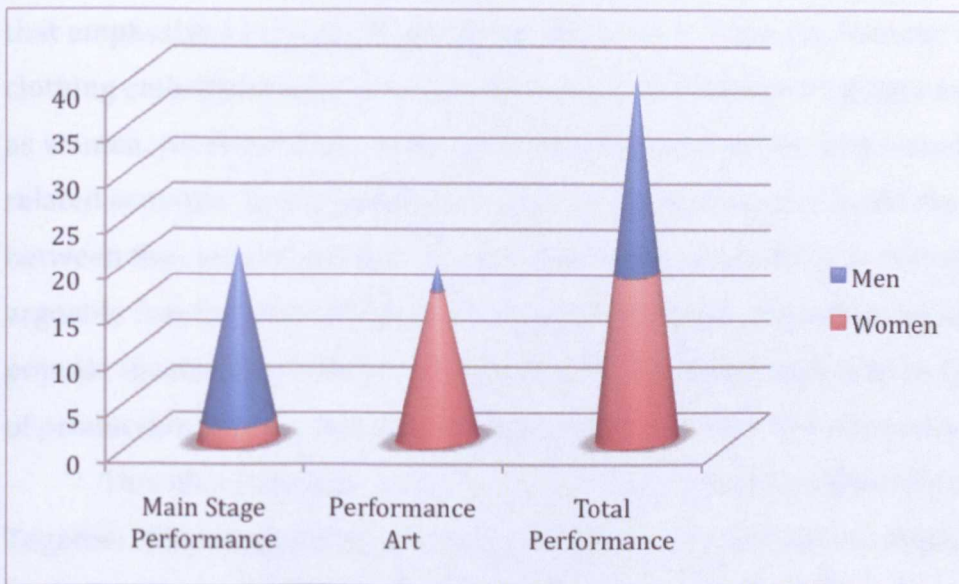


Figure 53: Gender and Performance

In addition to the main stage performances, these figures illuminate the fact that the technical and physically intensive operations were heavily male dominated, whereas the ancillary attractions (performance art and interactive installations) were either female dominated or mixed. It was the female-dominated performance that chiefly generated moments of performance incongruence at RTR, while male-dominated performance was largely presentational, occupying the focal stage. Therefore, it can be deduced that there was a clear dominance of

males over what might, in the context of the music festival, might be identified as conventional, and a dominance of females over the unconventional.

Significantly, if these imbalances are characteristic elsewhere, the diversified festival programme theorized throughout this study might be understood in terms of an influx of women into new areas of production and performance. The inaccessibility of 'main stage' production, in terms of both the technical and performance spheres, may have contributed to channelling women into areas related to ancillary performances and attractions. On the part of the festival organizer, the desire to programme innovative features, whether rooted in a participatory ideal or the need to add value, may have created more openings for women to participate. If this is the case, the theatricality that is the outcome of such programming articulates a redressing of gender imbalances within the spheres of festival production. Certainly, the ancillary attractions at RTR awarded some very feminine activities a new kind of credibility. The stalls that emphasized audience transformation through make-up, costume and clothing embellishments were run by women. Participants included men as well as women, yet these stalls celebrated feminine stereotypes, and reconfigured related activities as fashionably avant garde. Revisiting once again the contrast between the concert-model event and the boutique festival, it is certainly arguable that the diversification of the arts, relational programming and popular theatricality is not only connected to the entering of women into fields of production, but to a conceptual legitimization of feminine creativity.

This illumination is one of a number presented throughout this chapter. Together, they suggest that the appropriation of 'No Spectators' within British festival culture is both sustained and limited by a number of key factors. Section 6.2 maintained that utilizing volunteers in a democratized approach to production is limited by the expectations of British volunteers, despite their crucial additions to a festival's profile. Aligned with the case study events, allowing participants to contribute to an event with their own projects was largely responsible for creating an atmosphere of co-production at RTR, which confused the traditional distinctions between consumers, producers, audience and artists. This was also supported by the tactical promotion of the participant as star. As detailed in Section 6.3.2, audience response to this presentation

occupied three spheres that together articulated a fluid system of social distinction, supported by the emphases of third parties – particularly at RTR, by the festival photographers. Extreme participation was also encouraged by installations and performances; the festival acted as a homogenizing frame, which transformed features into objects of play, yet their relational capacity also enabled individuated and unique experience. By unpacking the tensions created by cross-festival appropriation, this chapter evaluates the coexistence of the participative and the presentational within boutique festival production. Despite the retention of the presentational, the extra-financial motivations of those who are behind shaping festival space also reveal a DIY culture that expresses the aesthetics of the audience.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Lost in Translation

This study has provided manifold evidence for the transatlantic influence of Burning Man in Britain. Excavating the discourses and practices used in the enshrinement of participation, as distinct from spectatorship, the identification of a cultural nexus of festivals inspired by Burning Man (BM hereafter) is a principal outcome to the research project. This should not imply that the politics identified in Chapter 4 is uniformly symptomatic of the events discussed in Chapters 5 and 6; indeed, how far the dominance of spectatorship in audience experience is assumed, rejected or resisted by each BM-inspired event, determines to a large extent its individual characteristics.

The sensitivity towards spectatorship evidenced here is, in many ways, analogous to the scholarly associations between spectatorship and the inauthentic; in Section 2.7, Mesnil, for example, associated passivity and observation with the commercialized event.¹ The same assumptions that exist in the realms of academic discourses are, in this study, revealed as intentionally constructed, contested and transformed into experiential praxis. The evidence presented here, therefore, makes possible the claim that the scholarly debate regarding spectatorship is contemporaneous to the politics of participation that has come to be influential in event design, programming and promotion within British festival culture. Such claims may erroneously imply that the issue of spectatorship is clearly articulated by the preferences and experiences of the festivalgoer. Indeed, while an experiential framework may be adopted for subsequent investigations, this suggestion cannot be concretely validated here. Nevertheless, in the absence of broadly collected participant responses, the growth of Secret Productions and the cross-festival appropriation of participative milieux, logically suggests that the democratized approach has

¹ Mesnil, p. 185.

'struck a chord' with thousands of British festivalgoers. How far this is driven by supply-side idealism or the need to add value remains contentious, yet the latter is, in the opinion of the researcher, a more likely explanation. The militancy of BM's 'No Spectators' idiom may indeed have been lost in translation, yet the paidian mode of engagement generated by its appropriated milieu still evidences an intriguing legacy.

At the outset of this study, how far BM's ideology of spectatorship was responsible for the extreme modes of participation at a number of festivals in Britain was identified as crucial to the investigation. Subsequently, the evidence put forth in Chapters 4 to 6 attempted to understand the influence of the 'No Spectators' idiom in terms of theatrical participation, the move towards diversified programmes to include relational features and installations, and the conspicuous emergence of democratizing schemes, at a selection of boutique festivals. Exemplifying a paradigmatic ideology, this study investigated BM as a keystone event and as a cultural vanguard, broadcasting innovations to the British festival organizer. Yet this study has also limited the extent to which a singular line of influence can be held responsible for the milieu investigated, given both the socio-economic factors identified in Section 5.2 and the underlying mechanics of distinction responsible for the emergence of the boutique event in Britain. The study confirms the hypothetical position of Section 1.2, which placed BM as an authorial model instrumental to the co-option of extreme participation, yet the exposure of broader, underlying drivers depicts a more complex picture of cultural production. Following the brief synthesis provided here, a chapter-by-chapter summary is presented below, prior to a discussion of a research legacy, the questions generated by this study and the potential augmentation of research findings with further investigations.

7.2 Sociocultural Synergy

Chapter 1 outlined the methodologies utilized in this study, which integrated observations, data collection, practice and ethnography within a constructionist research design. The theoretical 'scene setting' of Chapter 2 then excavates the

inter-disciplinary attempts to understand festival culture, revealing festivals as sites of utopian possibility, their temporal, experiential and immediate nature allowing them to offer visible demonstrations of ideologically loaded practices as *praxes*. Underpinning much of the discussion was a concern with the ways in which the festival form related to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. As the illuminating example of the festival of San Juan attested in Section 2.3, they can engender both by offering a legitimate front at the same time as allowing participants to engage in behaviour that might be politically resistive, or contrary to what would normally prevail outside of carnival time. In this sense, festival was presented as a liminal space with the power to effect a temporary transcendence of social structure. And yet, festivals may also reproduce social structure and division. As the work of Cremona, Turino and Mesnil makes clear, the presentational format of many festive events restricts audience participation to the role of the spectator.² Ultimately, this chapter evidenced the fact that there are few concrete rules when it comes to interpreting festival culture. Theorizing on the subject articulates only a domain of possibilities: forms of interpretation are, then, most usefully deployed in conjunction with a direct examination of the cultural form in question.

The audience engagement characteristic of the concert-model event established in Chapter 3 is powerfully implicated by the authenticating discourse later presented, insofar as it exemplifies the constructed 'inauthentic', and, therefore, that which the participative ideal rejects. Thus Chapter 3 lays groundwork for the analysis of BM and the BM-inspired by presenting what these cultural forms ultimately resist: the centrality and dominance of the presentational performance, the restriction of experiential diversity, and the exclusive use of the 'star formula' to sell tickets. Chapter 3 serves a dual purpose for providing an illustrative contrast to the modes of engagement observable in Chapters 4 to 6, and a critical review of the suitability of passivity and activity as concepts for interpreting the nature of festival participation. The examination of scholarship relating to 'traditional' festival forms uncovered some distinctions between modes of engagement according to degrees of spectatorship; yet the assumed 'active participation' of the modern pop/rock festival audience was

² Cremona, p. 74; Turino, p. 140; Mesnil, p. 185.

found to cloud the discussion, employing expressivism and subjectivity as universalized evidence for the audience that *creates*.³ Whereas indeed there is a greater degree of expression and bodily activity on the part of the concert-model attendee than, for example, somebody watching television, the activeness credited to both audiences is, as argued in Chapter 3, based upon a similar retreat into subjectivity. Equating the 'action' of the cerebrum with the 'active' audience reinstates the audience member with choice; problematically, though, this theoretical act renders all behaviour active, and the active audience unfalsifiable.⁴ This has more to do with re-establishing the rational choice of the democratic citizen, than usefully explaining the ways in which audiences engage.⁵ Despite the intentionality, choice and expressivism credited to the pop festival audience, Chapter 3 argues that the audience of the concert-model event is, generally speaking, separated from the fields of production that shape its content. This claim matters because using subjectivity and expressivism to qualify an active audience blunts the ability to distinguish modes of spectatorship (however expressive they might be) from the participation that allows festivalgoers to contribute to the fabric of an event in more direct, discernible ways.

It is arguable that the summation of this project supersedes the positions critiqued in Chapter 3, when issues of temporal and cultural contingency are considered. Taking an historical view, these positions are logically justifiable given the available examples upon which they are based, how these examples appear when compared with other platforms for music, and their prominence within the expressive revolution in the West. The industry of licensed pop and rock festivals in 1980s Britain, for example, contained within it far less, conspicuous variation than what has prompted the distinctions theorized in this study. Furthermore, the links between the free festival scene and licensed festivals in Britain naturally subsumed festival under the heading of 'the counterculture', the very term implying deterministic force. The expressivism, alternative lifestyles and oppositional atmospheres credited to the first, large-scale pop and rock festivals, particularly when compared with the more muted

³ Botstein, p. 483.

⁴ Biocca, p. 59.

⁵ Ibid.

arenas for the reception of music, constituted radical, defining features.⁶ The inference that festival audiences are essentially 'active' undoubtedly would have been an intuitive and logical one, emerging from an historical contingency that coincides with the conspicuous availability of certain festivals for analysis, and their role in accelerating the spread of alternative cultures. Building upon this school of thought, this study first allows us to see, from Chapters 3 to 6, that pop and rock festivals encourage some fundamentally different types of audience activity; and ultimately, that there is a difference between expressive-subjective action, and action that impacts, visibly and tangibly, on event space. Chapter 3 is, therefore, a crucial proviso for the claim that the festival industry in Britain now contains within it such divergent approaches to participation, as to necessitate a refreshed discussion of the role of the audience. As culture proliferates, so must scholarly interpretations correspondingly increase in sensitivity to its heterogeneity.

Prioritizing a mode of participation markedly distinct from that which is engendered by the concert-model event, Chapter 4 constitutes case study evidence for the argument outlined in Chapter 3: the 'active audience', loosely based upon the expressive-subjective, inadequately accounts for the audience at *both* Nevada's BM, and the concert-model event. Demonstrated in Chapter 4 is a mode of participation that exceeds the bounds of the expressive and plays a fundamental role in the shaping of festival space. The audience at BM is the animator of space through theatrical and expressive means, yet the physical build and production of the festival is also as collectivized as far as it is realistically achievable. This case study demonstrates more acutely that the cerebral creativity implied by the scholars critiqued in Chapter 3 is but one kind of action which is, in this case, encouraged alongside other strategies that specifically attempt to mobilize the audience to become conspicuous performers and producers. This evidence further augments the proposal that degrees of audience control can more usefully identify participatory types, made in the conclusions of Section 3.4.

⁶ As discussed in Chapter 3, Botstein, for example, contrasts the rock concert audience with the audience of the concert hall (p. 481).

Exemplifying the enshrinement of the extreme participant forms the fundamental project of Chapter 4. The way in which BM's founder, Larry Harvey, situates the event ideologically (despite his own avoidance of the term), and the militancy of the 'Five Principles' that emerge from this positioning, underlines the way in which a festival can be political not only for the campaign slogans that might confront external realities,⁷ but for the intra-event demonstrations of principle as praxis. BM is undoubtedly a unique event, yet its posture as a social experiment makes possible an interpretative alignment with the communitarian free festivals identified in Section 2.5, and can be considered a 'festivalized' articulation of the authenticating discourses found in Section 2.7; in this context, 'doing' is meaningful by virtue of its distinction from 'watching'. This orienting position credits voluntary contribution with a form of emancipation that is not confined to intra-event activity, but relates instead to a broader critique of external realities. Lacking cohesiveness, it does not articulate a conclusive, existential monologue. And yet, audience participation at BM expresses a pregnant socio-political critique, because it is constructed as that which is denied by the imposing limitations of the outside world.

It is important to add to these considerations the observation that the audience is crucially responsible for the aesthetics and *visual* display of the event. This politics of participation specifically attempts, therefore, to democratize the role of the *artist*, as well the elementary roles of the performer and producer. Explicitly stated by Harvey, and referenced in the scholarly analyses of the event, is the claim that such a move also rejects the art institution, by operating in such a way that is contrary to its qualifying and legitimizing systems. The similar, democratized aestheticization of space described in Chapters 5 and 6 can therefore be usefully interpreted as a lateral shift towards a production model that contradicts the logic of the art institution. This suggests that Bakhtin's carnivalesque, which sees the celebratory form as crucial to a social rejuvenation based upon its ability to mock and corrode institutions, is not an outdated notion but one that remains pertinent here – depending upon how far one might credit the influence of BM with this, arguably utopian, claim. Chapters 4 and 5 do not conclude with claims to social rejuvenation per se (with

⁷ As per, for example, the *Rock Against Racism* shows identified in Chapter 2.

all the romantic connotations such a phrase invites), yet they provide evidence for a transnational co-option, that has transported the politics of extreme participation far beyond the Nevada desert.

In Doherty's 2004 book, Larry Harvey allegedly stated that it was 'too soon' to grasp the influence of BM.⁸ Whereas the influence of BM outside its official networks has, since this statement, been an ambiguous and unelaborated aspect of the festival, Chapter 5 extends existing scholarship by illuminating clear examples of cultural appropriation in Britain. Section 5.2 discussed the contextual circumstances, which have synergized to create an optimal environment for the processes of appropriation later identified. Documenting the most prominent changes between 1995 and 2010, what is repeatedly reinforced by market reports and industry publications is the rapid expansion of the industry. Augmenting this observation, the perspectives in Sections 5.2 and 5.2.1 provide an academic sequel to the identification of the boutique festival, in the August 2008 Mintel Report that is frequently cited throughout this study. Taking a wide view of the commercial shifts and pressures within the industry as a whole, this report was geared towards a readership of industry professionals. Its findings, however, suggested that the idealizing politics at the centre of this study is interpretable not only in terms of an authorial influence of BM, but also in terms of a synergy of socio-economic circumstances that have accelerated cultural appropriation. The report demonstrated the fact that the proliferation of licensed festivals had created product diversity; crucial, was the identification of a new festival category, which had entered the media vernacular. Contradicting the 'bigger is better' philosophy accountable for the programming and scale of the high-profile rock and pop festivals, the small, boutique festivals were identified as significant competitors. With this categorization, the report identified a tendency towards authenticating discourses and a brand positioning aligned with the countercultural ideals of anti-commerce and independence. Also reported, was the broad development of the music festival into a multiple-arts platform. The non-academic nature of the report, which addressed a wide range of commercial issues, meant that these two shifts were not elaborated in any kind of depth. Resolving this scarcity of analysis, Chapter 5 fleshes out the points

⁸ Doherty, p. 265.

superficially raised by Mintel. Whereas previous literature identified festival utopianism in Britain as principally operating within the domain of Glastonbury and the communitarian formations of free festival culture, this investigation has provided a sociocultural analysis of the reproduction of quasi-utopian discourses by boutique events, as a sector that has been held as responsible for the steep growth in the broader industry. The idealization of participation has, for the events described, been added to a repertoire of claims to authenticity in a discourse that allows the boutique event to adopt a superior, utopian positioning. The diversification of the festival programme drawn from the report identified a key theme, which was interpreted as a boon to the appropriation of participative praxes, through creating a demand for unconventional and multiple-art forms and performances. The shift towards diversified programming in Britain was compared with the curatorial nature of BM, evidencing a move towards an approach to production reminiscent of the 'petri-dish' of aesthetic experimentation described in Chapter 4.⁹

Expanding on the boutique market sector identified by Mintel reveals that its emergence and success has been a necessary precursor to the appropriation at the focus of this study. It is probable that a certain, inherent consistency between the boutique and the BM model has naturally lent itself to the co-option of discourses and praxes. As Section 5.2.1 reveals, the boutique event has succeeded by appealing to concepts strongly comparable to the boutique retail outlets and the boutique hotel industry. As is the case with these parallel sectors, the boutique festival communicates distinction and uniqueness; one of the ways in which this is actually achievable in practice is by increasing participation and by diversifying programming, because this will naturally produce experiential variation. Underneath its presentation the boutique festival is generally commercial, yet it is also part of an industry sector that engenders a rejection of the perceived 'mass' and alienated commodity; offering a form of cultural capital that is, as a festival experience, significantly positioned in terms of what it rejects, as well as the programme it provides. Augmenting the logic of Bourdieu, these events distinguish themselves from the 'festival establishment', by marketing the boutique festival as an alternative for the discerning consumer.

⁹ Northrup, p. 133, p. 146.

Consequently, those festivals that were previously associated with a youthful counterculture, are reconstructed as mass produced, anonymous and establishmentarian. Despite the impossibility of creating rigid definitions for the 'boutique festival', its entry into the media vernacular makes visible the system of distinction operating within music festival culture. The impact of this may be as significant as eventually rendering some festivals obsolete; in July 2011 the Guardian reported Michael Eavis remarking that 'Glastonbury is on its way out', while Leeds and Reading Festival were reported to have only sold 60% of the available tickets, just one month prior to the 2011 event.¹⁰

In addition to the promotion of the boutique event as an intimate alternative, Section 5.2.1 maintains that allusions to counter-hegemony,¹¹ 'occulture', and the discourses and practices oriented around environmental issues, are firmly established in this sector.¹² This would suggest that such discourses do not operate only within the domains of certain events, such as Glastonbury and Womad, but are instead part and parcel of what the average festivalgoer expects from their weekend break. These circumstances have naturally encouraged the adoption of a festival model that departs from that which is described in Chapter 3; as such, the extent to which BM can be fully held responsible for the idealization of participation must be limited by recognizing the broad reproductions of an authenticating discourse and the parallel shift towards 'experiential themes' reported in 2008.¹³ The installations, democratizing schemes and encouragement of paidian participation that fall under the 'experiential' umbrella have all been presented as evidence for a co-opted approach to festival production. This is certainly true of SGP, yet how far

¹⁰ Michaels, 'Michael Eavis: "Glastonbury is on its Way Out"'.
¹¹ The promotional discourse of Glade, for example, frequently describes a 'strong aversion to all things corporate and mainstream and with a great love of all things alternative, underground and interesting'. Note the way in which they do not claim to *be* non-commercial, only to maintain an *aversion* to the 'corporate'. This way, the festival can engage in commercial activity (such as profiting from bars and ticket sales) while maintaining what has been described as a 'free party ethos' by rejecting other types of commercial activity (such as accepting funding from brand sponsors). While Glade maintains stronger associations with the free party scene than other boutique festivals, alluding to the alternative and the non-commercial in the way outlined above is frequently characteristic. See *Glade Music Festival*, <http://www.solarnavigator.net/music/glade_alternative_music_festival_berkshire.htm> [accessed 8 July 2011].
¹² For good examples, see the Sunrise Summer Solstice Celebration and The Croissant Neuf Summer Party.
¹³ Mintel Report, *Music Concerts and Festivals*, August 2008.

these features can be universalized as evidence of a broader participative *ideal*, must consider also the force of competitive pressure. As Sections 5.2 and 5.2.1 maintain, the drive to stand out from, as well as keep up with, the crowded market, has triggered the introduction of creative and extra-musical ways to draw and capture the audience. The contextualizing exercise in Chapter 5 also recognizes the role of Glastonbury in making popular the diverse programme of festival entertainment; despite the occasional reports regarding slow ticket sales in recent years, it is likely that the oversubscription more commonly enjoyed by the festival has fuelled demand for the 'mini Glastonbury' experience. From a macro perspective, such considerations generate a view of extreme participation as a synergy of audience preference, systems of distinction, cultural appropriation and specific socio-economic circumstances.

An investigation of specific, BM-inspired events in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 considers more directly, the meaningful connections between BM and specific festivals in Britain. The antecedent question of the research project, which asked how far the idealizing politics of BM has been co-opted in Britain, is addressed with an in-depth focus upon the connections between BM and SGP, at Section 5.3. This exercise, which was largely informed by material in the public domain, demonstrated clearly the ways in which SGP has adopted, and transformed, the 'No Spectators' ethos of BM. The number of ways this is evidenced are not repeated in detail here, though they may be summarized to include the conspicuous promotion of schemes oriented towards the democratization of production, the fragmentation of festival space into an otherworldly collection of relational and immersive installations and performances, and a contemporaneous emphasis upon theme and costume. The audience at this event is, like that of BM, aligned with the Biocan revision of the 'active audience', which is defined according to the ability to control content. And yet, Chapter 5 does not confirm the idealizing discourses of its case study as valid, by supporting claims to the authentic. Neither does the chapter claim that emphasis on costume and thematic approaches automatically count as a more deterministic, expressive or autonomous audience. This is because, as discussed in relation to BM in Section 4.5.1, there is a certain amount of pressure to perform in this way; particularly at SGP, costume wearing has become an intra-

event etiquette within a system of social distinction. These phenomena are better understood as attributes of SGP's particular celebratory frame, which reproduces a system of discourse that, generally speaking, influences both the kind of festivalgoers attracted to such an event, and the ways in which they engage. Within this system, display marks the development of an intra-event social norm.

Each of the features described above relate to SGP's general enshrinement of participation, albeit in a way less militant than BM. The appropriation of the 'No Spectators' ethos and contemporaneous milieu is a cultural transference marked, then, by de-radicalization. The case study investigation in Chapter 5 demonstrates, in clear terms, how the appropriation of 'No Spectators' by SGP forces this precept to sit alongside an orthodox system that prioritizes the presentational performance. SGP, in all its attempts to recreate BM, cannot help but dilute its meaning as a consequence of finding necessary the promotion of specific music acts, and thus, reproduces the performance hierarchy that BM rejects.

Paradoxically, SGP's reconfiguration of 'No Spectators' has created a successful festival built upon a high-risk business model that is remarkably stretched. The alignment of SGP's non-musical programming with BM substantially raises costs without lessening the cost of artists by similarly rejecting their use as commercial assets. Whereas BM replaces funding an expensive line-up of recognized acts with the funding of multiple-art forms, SGP's brand relies on providing both, as described in Section 5.3.4. Because this event (and many of those mentioned in Section 5.4) utilizes both the participative and the presentational forms as promotional assets, it is likely that their organizational task is highly complex and their breakeven point is much higher than would be the case if only one of these aspects were delivered. As far as the organizers are concerned, the difficulty inherent in such a model may be, as Interviewee A has suggested, a moot point: SGP must compete in both of these areas, because the brand depends upon their mutual achievement. It is therefore possible to claim that the 'No Spectators' idiom has been incorporated merely to add value to a business model inclusive of a fundamental element of spectatorship, which, due to essential differences between the socio-economic

environments of BM and SGP, cannot be abandoned. Both SGP and BM are, then, characterized by their negotiation with external elements, reinforcing Martin *et al.*'s premise that the environmental context is must be included any interpretation of the theatrical event.¹⁴ Whereas the socio-economic circumstances highlighted in Section 5.3.4 make possible BM's sequestered, highly democratized model, the need to compete commercially impacts the programming and presentation of SGP, with far greater force. This ought not undermine the clear attempt to deviate from spectatorship as the dominant mode of performance, exemplified by the latter. For this reason, that BM offers a rejection of the star system, whereas SGP is merely conducive to its resistance, is a logical claim.

Section 5.4 provides evidence for the fact that BM has not only unwittingly broadcast a politics of participation outside its official international Network, but has also influenced British festivals beyond the one that claims an allegiance most conspicuously (SGP). It is true that an idealizing discourse of participation is not neatly generalizable to all the events mentioned in this section. However, it is evidently the case that such a discourse is particularly characteristic of Shambala, Glade and the new festivals brought about by *Secret Productions* in 2011. Each of these events, and several of those mentioned in Section 5.4 that are not mentioned here, employ a comparable discourse to varying degrees. At each, there is an attempt to maximize the extra-musical experience of their audiences; this attempt is not a 'behind the scenes' shift, but is often lauded in the promotional fabric of their presentation, and bears witness to the conspicuous idealization of participation. It is clear, then, that there exists a cultural nexus of festivals that borrow from BM; some openly credit this influence (such as SGP and Glade), while others do not articulate an open allegiance, despite their appropriation of powerfully comparable milieux. It is also worth considering the fact that SGP's success as an award-winning festival means that the diversity, thematic approach and aesthetic richness it models invariably 'ups the ante' for the industry as a whole.¹⁵ Such a scenario is responsible, then, for creating an impetus for other, similarly positioned festivals

¹⁴ Martin *et al.*, *Theatrical Events*, p.100.

¹⁵ SGP won the Best Small Festival Award in 2005 and 2008.

(such as Blissfields and Standon Calling) to incorporate similar aspects in order to remain equally competitive. As argued previously, the creation of a more commercially attractive package is the fundamental incentive for the appropriation of these features. Consequently, whether or not the influence is direct or indirect, the success of this co-option must also count as evidence for a formula that meets consumer demand. There must be, therefore, a readiness and willingness to experience the BM-inspired, on the part of the ticket-buying audience.

It also is important to remember that the British appropriation of 'No Spectators' has occurred within the cultural realm of the *music*, as opposed to the 'arts' festival industry, despite the apparent convergence of these two forms in the examples discussed. It is certainly the case that the content of the festivals examined in Chapter 5 qualifies them as festivals of art, yet they are deeply embedded in the music, as opposed to the art, scene. Furthermore, the inclusion of SGP and the events of Section 5.4 in the conferences and awards ceremonies relating to the music festival industry, demonstrate the centrality of their position within this sector. In terms of the organization of industries, the British events examined in this study are categorized alongside the concert-model festivals and not, despite the multiplicity of arts hosted, with the traditional art spaces of exhibitions, galleries and arts festivals. This is further evidenced by the online communities and promotional mechanisms these events deploy; Virtual Festivals and eFestivals, for example, are crucial to awareness-raising and community-building, and despite the breadth and diversity of the events included on these sites, coverage is oriented around a core of music performances. The British, BM-inspired festivals remain very much embedded within a 'music festival' categorization. Indeed, despite the discourses that resist spectatorship, what results is not at all an actual rejection of music. The enjoyment of particular bands and DJs remain orienting foci within these celebrations, and the finding that SGP's audience spend less than half of their time watching bands, may not be applicable to other events (including Shambala, Glade and Standon Calling, for example). What has significantly changed, however, is the exclusivity of music; inverting the centrality of the artist at the concert-model event, music is placed alongside various foci that pertain to the

immersive, the relational, the immediate and the intimate, while avenues to production are conspicuously held open.

Considering the earlier positions discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, although Botstein presents the participation implied by the rock and classical performance as antithetical, this study demonstrates a more complex picture. Interestingly, Chapter 5 depicts a bifurcation of festival participation that is comparable to Cremona's reassertion of the *paidian*, following the domination of the ludic, in carnival cultures (discussed in Section 2.7). Boutique events, particularly the selection discussed in this study, are certainly interpretable as evidence for a similar cultural pattern at play. Indeed, the politics of participation revealed in this study provides a catalogue of evidence supporting the underlying premises of her work. What has proven particularly transferable from her investigation is the way in which degrees of display, spatial proximity and interaction between performers and participants relate to the dynamics of audience theatricality. As previously argued, the collaboration between organization and audience could not occur without audience willingness towards a mode of participation that is theatrical and able to influence event content. If these modes of participation are at play in Britain, as this study has attempted to show, it is possible to draw a conclusion analogous to the conclusions of Cremona: collectivized performance has a tendency to reassert itself as an alternative to the spectatorship demanded by the ludic event, within celebratory cultures.

Reflections on the organization of my own festival in Chapter 6, generated a number of insights regarding the practicalities of democratizing festival production, closer perspectives on the mechanics of audience theatricality, relational features, and a number of findings relating to the volunteer labour economy responsible for implementing diversified festival programmes in Britain. Reflecting on a comparable attempt at optimizing the participative while incorporating the presentational, a number of limitations presented themselves, yet they did not diminish the blur between producers and consumers and the audience theatricality that was discernable at the event. Supporting the findings of Chapter 5: democratized activity mostly related to the live event experience, while other areas of production remained necessarily centralized. Boutique

events such as this sell, therefore, *paidian experiences* that are not, for all the reasons outlined in Sections 6.2 and 6.4, necessarily evidence for a comparable degree of systemic audience labour as that which underpins the BM event, despite their similar promotion of democratizing schemes. These observations ought not undermine the fact that extreme participation allows the boutique event to distinguish itself from the concert-model event of Chapter 3. Indeed, the egalitarian connotations of the participative discourse and its expression within the social milieu of these events remains powerful, though the extent to which they might be ascribed the status of the social experiment, as was applied to BM in Section 4.3, is rather undermined.

Whereas Chapters 4 and 5 assumed the immersive and interactive nature of programmed performances at SGP and BM, based largely upon how they were marketed and the accounts of others, Chapter 6 takes a closer view of typifying examples that featured at RTR, examining in closer perspective the relationships between theatricality, spontaneity and audience/performer proximities. Emerging from this project, the significance of incongruence was common to each nuanced realization of the participative praxis, and was similarly characteristic of the events described in Chapter 5. The convivial confusion that arises from the dissolution of recognized boundaries might be considered, then, a characterizing product of the boutique movement.

In addition to providing the means to reflect upon performance, the inclusion of a range of installations at RTR underlined their role in encouraging extreme participation. Deviating from the work of St John, whose depiction of intra-event diversity was based upon neo-tribal competition and tension, here the celebratory 'frame' rendered each feature conducive to play, as the reception of the Sumo game in Section 6.3.1 revealed. This finding was consistent with the speculations of Chapter 5: diversity results in the venue-like forum of activity comparable to BM, yet features are also operating within a homogenizing frame in terms of how they are met by the audience. Considering the playful clambering upon sculptures that is permitted at BM, this observation does not, in fact, deviate from the presentation of features at BM but falls in line with it: diversity

in both cases does not necessarily induce a noticeably diverse response.¹⁶ Items that may invite observation in a gallery here invite playful and convivial engagement; as cultural forms, then, the boutique event might be defined as a gallery that abandons the cerebral connoisseurship of art for playful participation. This supports the significant thread running throughout the study, regarding the 'upward shift' in what counts as adult behaviour.¹⁷

The introduction of a profile act to the billing, which had since 2004 previously included unknown bands, produced tensions in certain quarters; an outcome similarly acknowledged by the SGP representative in Chapter 5, with regard to the addition of Grace Jones to the lineup in 2008. At RTR 2010 there was a far greater number of stalls and participative features in the outside area, yet two participants who had been involved in RTR for several years, claimed that Dreadzone absorbed all of the audience's attention and prevented it from being the 'multi-focal' event it once was. Supporting again the dynamics set forth by Cremona is the notion that the benefits brought to a festival by headline presentational performances amounts to a trade-off that inevitably undermines the prominence of other performances and features. As discussed in Section 6.4, these participants told me that 'all anyone wanted to do was watch Dreadzone'; and it is likely that this adapted billing did, to some extent, influence audience engagement through directing attention away from peripheral features, to a pinnacle performance on the main stage. Despite the objections to this, including a profile name in music at what was essentially a music event with art (as opposed to a strictly 'arts' event) was also crucial to the development of RTR and underlined, with greater force, the reason why SGP can only partially adopt the 'No Spectators' ethos. Without the social, geographic and economic environment able to produce enough ticket buyers that are not dependent on notable lineups, festivals must rely on the orthodox promotion of the artist-centric model in order to safeguard ticket sales. It is possible then, that the socio-economic environment in Britain constitutes an unbeatable barrier to the successful co-option of BM's politics of participation.

¹⁶ There are some exceptions – the temple burn described in Section 4.4, Chapter 4, for example, produces a sombre response. However, this response is an etiquette that has to be culturally acquired by participants.

¹⁷ McWilliams, 'The Boutique Generation that Refuses to Grow Up'.

That the realization of the participative ideal is governed by economic considerations is also supported by the findings of Chapter 6; there is commercial sense in promoting the paidian without actually maximizing the extent to which the audience contributes to production, because it is impossible to mobilize volunteers without waiving their ticket fee. Chapter 6 underlines the way in which voluntary involvement creates subsidized attractions that add value, yet a proportionately large number of volunteers is costly in ways that can be particularly harmful to limited capacity events. Extreme participation was promoted through a diversified programme that supported the interactive praxis identified in Chapters 4 and 5; yet, as Section 6.4 maintains, it was necessary to limit democratizing schemes due to their impact on the number of saleable tickets.

The final section in Chapter 6, Section 6.5, deployed a selection of participant data and perspectives in order to reflect on both the research questions, and findings. Building upon Oakley's investigation of festival volunteering in Britain, the persons responsible for executing the diverse programmes discussed throughout this study, created projects to practically realize interests previously formed through academic experiences. Relating these findings to the diversification of training in the arts and events management, and to the high unemployment rate in Britain (particularly amongst the young), this study suggests that the appropriation of BM's fragmented, curatorial model has been made possible by the excess of graduate skill and the shortfall of graduate employment. While this finding would suggest volunteering is primarily a route to acquiring skills, it was significant that each interviewee also considered themselves festival fans. Following this it stands to reason that, to some extents at least, the events discussed are co-produced by festivalgoers and festival organizers. Without the systemic militancy of 'No Spectators', this suggests that the boutique event nevertheless articulates the creativity of its audience, in line with BM's participative ideal. With unique access to the complete data relating to gender and areas of production at RTR, this chapter also revealed that the main stage and its construction was a male-dominated arena, while the peripheral entertainments and relational features were either female dominated or mixed. Recognizing the limitations of

extrapolating from a single sample, the conspicuous contrast between gender roles at RTR suggests, all the same, that the drive to diversify has opened up more opportunities for women to shift from the position of festival consumer to festival producer.

7.3 Further Research

This study employed a 'deep slice' investigation of three festivals, including the researchers own event as action research. The extreme participation at the focus of the study was contextualized with evidence for its operation within a cultural nexus of events, and with an examination of the economic drivers responsible for its co-option. The methodologies employed here therefore used micro and macro perspectives to reveal the cultural relationship central to the investigation. The illumination of this relationship has, however, generated a number of further questions. Taking a broad view, how far the transformation of 'No Spectators' is a quintessentially British phenomenon is yet to be decided, for the potential impact of BM on other festival cultures remains unknown. This study has theorized a transatlantic, linear connection, with influence flowing principally from America to Britain; and yet, if similar influences are at play in Europe, for example, the phenomena identified may have much wider ramifications than those theorized here. Other questions relate to the validation of premises; this study has discussed David Best's participation at Electric Picnic to exemplify the de-radicalization of BM's praxes, yet neither this artist's perspective, nor the perspective of the organizers of this festival inform the study. Similarly, the theoretical positions regarding the deployment of BM-inspired features to add value now require feedback from more industry professionals than those utilized here. Prominent figures in the festival industry, Rob Da Bank (Bestival), Katrina Larkin (The Big Chill), Melvin Benn (Leeds Festival) and Freddie Fellowes (SGP/Escape to New York), and indeed, Larry Harvey himself, are key figures who would be most likely to disseminate important feedback regarding the issues raised in this investigation.

As an exploratory project, this study revealed phenomena deductively; theorizing largely on meanings communicated via promotion and programming, supported with a range of images, industry evidence and a limited number of insider perspectives. This approach was necessary to locating and examining the relationship between BM and boutique festival culture, as a previously unexamined area of scholarship. Further studies would, however, enrich this vein of scholarship by taking up a more systematic approach of the phenomena identified. One way in which this may be done is by employing a research sample that lies in between the micro and macro perspectives adopted here. Using the events that were flagged up in 5.4, a constructionist methodology could be applied to each event in order to achieve a greater comparability in event data, with the addition of organizer interviews. This would no doubt achieve an increased understanding of how the phenomena identified can be interpreted in terms of a supply-side participative ideal, or in terms of the commercial drivers outlined in Section 5.2 and 5.2.1. Building upon the issues raised in this study, such an approach would also support the issues raised here with a greater quantity of evidence with which to interrogate the authorial influence of BM on British festival culture.

For reasons outlined in Chapter 1, an attempt at comprehensively capturing audience experience was not made; nonetheless, incidents throughout the research project have made evident the benefit of adopting an experiential framework to explore how audience experience coincides with the participative ideal. It was felt at the outset that relying on participants to address the research question would have provided an inadequate interpretation of the ideologies at work. However, a number of conversations with festivalgoers outside of the intended research project suggested that the questioning of attendees on their experiences might help determine how far the programming of participative milieux affects the social actors involved. This was supported by one anecdote, in particular. On arrival at Lancashire's Beatherder on the Sunday night of the event, the researcher encountered a couple that had been at the festival for almost four days. In response to asking them whether they had enjoyed themselves, the only specific event they recalled, with animation, was their involvement in an incident that had left them mystified. With a strong emphasis

on immersive art installations, in 2011 Beatherder had built a small promenade of tiny, stylized shops in the woods that lay at the centre of the site, one of which included an Oxfam bookshop. While the couple was in the bookshop, an 'organized robbery' (in their words) appeared to take place: they could not, however, work out whether or not the robbery was a staged performance. It is important to note that their confusion was not of an anxious kind; it was related as a *humorously* mysterious, peak experience. Given the evidence presented in this study, which demonstrates a move towards generating moments of performance incongruence through various means, it is not unlikely that this incident was indeed staged and that this couple were unwittingly immersed in a performance purposely designed to induce their confusion. Incorporating insights from social and consumer psychology, a systematic investigation of encounters such as this might reveal how far these are emphasized in comparison to the performances of bands and DJs, in the festivalgoer experience. A comparison of audience responses would help reveal how far a resistance of spectatorship translates into the experiential realm, helping to gauge how far the politics of participation co-opted by these events has actually been successful in promoting audience-centric encounters and diverting attention from the traditional pinnacles of the music festival experience. Section 6.5 also puts forth a number of speculations that could be usefully developed through further research. Links between the diversification of festival programming and the diversification of university degrees and training in the cultural industries, as well as issues connected to gender could also be further explored through adopting a broader sample of participants. Such an investigation would provide a fuller account of the synergizing circumstances responsible for the milieu central to this investigation.

7.4 The Nexus

In summation, this study documents the relationship between *Burning Man* and British festival culture, exploring the emergence of a transatlantic politics of participation. Supported by in-depth case studies, the transformation of 'No

Spectators' into extra-spectatorship is maintained as a principal outcome of cultural appropriation. Engaging these findings with the broader industry, the research also considers a wider process of exchange. Sketching the shape of what is described as a 'cultural nexus' within the boutique festivals categorization, the study has examined participation at Bestival, Shambala, Boomtown, Beatherder, Electric Picnic and Standon Calling, alongside SGP, whose audiences well exceed 100,000 festivalgoers. Cataloguing their allegiances to Burning Man, the findings of this investigation reveal that this interrelated selection of events has approached the design of festival space, programming and production in ways that are significantly allied to the politics of Burning Man; this is largely an obscure event for those 'in the know', yet its industry status as cultural vanguard acts as a broadcast, cultivating similar attributes elsewhere. Appropriation within this nexus is not always demonstrative of an entrenched politics of participation, because the need to integrate novelty is more powerful a force than any genuine sympathies with the 'No Spectators' philosophy. Nevertheless, it is this necessity, coupled with the industry disposition towards high degrees of cross-pollination, which is emphasized as responsible for the advancement of a participatory ethos in Britain. Consequently the influence of Burning Man is reconceptualized as operating within two spheres: the regional Burns of the Burning Man Network are located within a direct sphere, retaining a close allegiance to each principle expounded by the event; whereas the events that occupy the nexus described, share an indirect sphere of influence, appropriating only those milieux that offer commercial enhancement in a competitive industry. This might suggest the de-radicalization of 'No Spectators', yet this question rests with a relativist premise: compared with Burning Man, SGP resembles a de-radicalized form; held against other British festivals, its schemes and principles maintain a posture of powerful idealism. In either case, the varied forms of evidence presented throughout this study ultimately support the hypothesis that the international reach of BM and its politics are not limited to the Burning Man Network, but have significantly shaped festival cultures in Britain.

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Appendix A

A.2 Letter from Larry Harvey

Burning Man

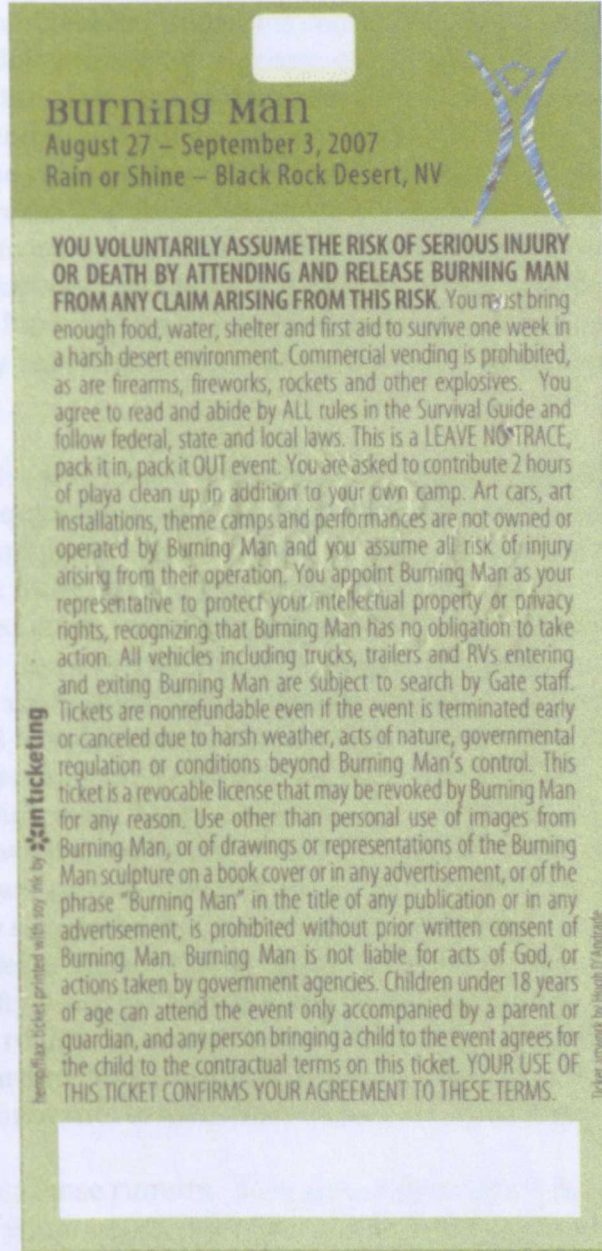
Dear Regional Contact,

A.1 2007 Ticket Disclaimer

Contained in this pocket you'll find a letter from Larry Harvey and Steven Raspa, both of whom have worked hard with Marion Goodwin to bring you this event. You will also find a Letter of Intent, which describes the assistance that we intend to provide. The document describes the Burning Man Network, which translates all of this information into simple statements. My hope is that this fits.

The obvious question is: why? The culture has happened and it's radical-self reliance, so we can recreate aspects of the event in an organized structure, as opposed to the spontaneous process of Burning Man. Sometimes, it's not clear what participants have: who is in charge of parking lot or a shop, the "BMorg" or any other activity. Others have franchises on the stock market, which would be a packaged product. It's the reverse of what Burning Man is: we are afraid that someone

It's pretty easy to see how the culture of talk a lot of us have. It is "too big", that it's natural they would be. They've never left to be organized, commodified. But we know that far wide of the mark, they want that the Burning Man organization designs to control or oppress the experience. My many colleagues



A.2 Letter from Larry Harvey

Dear Regional Contact,

Contained in this packet you'll find a brief introductory letter from Andie Grace and Steven Raspa, both of whom I think you know. They have been working very hard with Marian Goodell and myself to create our Regional Network Program. You will also find a Letter of Understanding that describes the various kinds of assistance that we intend to provide to you as a Regional Contact. A second document describes the role and the responsibilities of Regional Contacts within the Burning Man Network. The third document is a legal agreement that translates all of this into an actual contract. I'll talk about the contract near the end of this letter. The last document is a Statement of Principles that attempts to capture aspects of the Burning Man ethos, the basic spirit of our culture, in a few simple statements. My task here is to explain the greater picture into which all of this fits.

The obvious question is: why form a network at all? The dissemination of our culture has happened quite naturally. Burning Man is about spontaneity and radical-self reliance, and people all across the country have taken the initiative to recreate aspects of the Burning Man experience in their regions. Why impose an organized structure, especially one that involves contracts, upon this spontaneous process? Since I wrote my open letter (available on the Blackrockcity.org extranet), lively debate has sprung up on this subject. Sometimes, it's incited people's fears. It's like those nightmares some participants have: when they arrive at Burning Man it's being held in a K-Mart parking lot or a shopping mall. There are those who are afraid that the "org" or the "BMorg" or (my favorite) the "Borg" intends to impose some form of cultural imperialism: a top-down system designed to rigidly control the content of local activities. Others have suggested that we're trying to establish profit-based franchises on the model of McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Chicken. Presumably, this would involve hefty licensing fees and cookie cutter replicas of a pre-packaged product. In reality, of course, these people have simply imagined the *reverse* of what Burning Man means to them and imputed a bad motive. They are afraid that someone wants to take what they most value away from them.

It's pretty easy to rebut these rumors. This sort of cynicism is not unlike the kind of talk a lot of us hear when people who have never been to the event assert that it is "too big", that it has "sold out" and "gone commercial". I guess it's only natural they would think so. They reason from experience. Nearly everything they ever felt to be authentic that succeeded in the larger world became commodified. But *you* have experienced the event firsthand and know just how far wide of the mark their fears have led them. Likewise, when people imagine that the Burning Man organization — the Project, as we call it — harbors sinister designs to control or oppress our community, this too flies in the face of experience. My many colleagues and I have worked for years to create Burning

Man — the very event that has spawned so much independence and initiative. If it were our intention to suppress these values, we would have acted on this motive long ago. Having said that the increasing size of Burning Man has not corrupted the event, I think it's only fair to assume that we, the organizers who have nurtured it, have also managed to resist corruption. Start by reading the enclosed Statement of Principles. It represents ideas that have become a way of life for us.

The third principle in this list of core values will begin to explain one of our key reasons for wanting to form the Regional Network. It states, "In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, and advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist substituting consumption for participatory experience." This is precisely what the Burning Man Project has endeavored to do since the founding of Black Rock City. We have refused commercial sponsorship. We have instituted a ban on vending. In the world outside of the event, we have prevented entrepreneurs from branding their goods with Burning Man's name, its image and its logo. We have sued and succeeded in stopping the sale of pornographic videos exploiting participants, and we have halted MTV in its tracks. We have refrained from selling trinkets and branded goods in the mass market. Among those products that we do sell via our Internet Marketplace, we have chosen to offer goods that are content rich; 'Occulture bearing' items such as books and videos that produce a context that expresses our community's values. In addition to these measures, we have also adopted open accounting. Every year we publish a financial report that states our annual income and describes our spending. We have succeeded, in other words, in keeping Burning Man from being commodified — extracted from its context in immediate experience and marketed to the world as merely an image, a style, a product whose governing purpose is profit. I think we've proven that when a cultural movement increases in scale it needn't sell out or passively allow itself to be consumed by market forces.

Now, however, as our community begins to grow even larger, we face new challenges. Burning Man is currently known in the media as a weeklong event in the Nevada desert, but it will soon become a bigger story. As regional activities proliferate, the culture we have all evolved will increasingly affect the mainstream of American life. This, I fervently believe, is a very good thing. Rather than passively fret about being co-opted by consumerism, I think it's time we realize *we can co-opt it*. In order to succeed at this, we must work together. Until now, the Burning Man Project has been able to combat the grosser depredations of those economic interests that have sought to exploit us. This is why, as stated in the Regional Contact Description, we have trademarked the words "Burning Man", "Decompression", "Flambé Lounge" and "Black Rock City".

However, as our movement spreads to include more people than will ever visit Black Rock City, we are going to need your help. Already, we see instances of exploitation on a local scale. Supposed "Burning Man" parties are held, the proceeds from which go unaccounted for. Vending is allowed at some of these events, and people hold "Burning Man" DJ dance parties that are

indistinguishable from commercial entertainment. I don't wish to sound paranoid. I'm sure that many of these efforts are inspired by naive enthusiasm and are well-intentioned. But, as the national cachet of Burning Man continues to increase, it takes very little imagination to foresee how the core values of our community could eventually be diluted and perverted in the larger world. Indeed, if even one group organizing a "Burning Man" event does so unscrupulously or illegally, this could discredit and endanger the activities of every other group.

This is why it is important that you, as an official Regional Contact in our Network, be ready to act as a leader. What is needed are Regional Contacts who are willing to help ensure that the core values of our culture are respected. Your primary role as a Regional Contact is to promote communication and facilitate interaction within your community. We do not expect you to become a policeman or undertake legal action — but it is in your power as a representative of the Network to monitor events that happen locally. The Regional Contact Role Description states, "An event that wishes to be designated an 'Official' regional gathering may be designated so only if the RC is actively involved — especially as concerns proceeds gained from charging an admission fee. Funds from such events should be routed to the benefit of the local community and the community at large." The Burning Man Project has no intention of suppressing the many hundreds of small gatherings and fundraisers that participants stage annually to defray the cost of their efforts in the desert. These are community-building activities. Nor do we necessarily mind if organizers of larger-scaled events defray some of the costs they personally incur in producing an event. But we do believe that any large event that is held in our name and publicized through our Network should honor our ethos. Any such event should benefit our community, be lawfully constituted, produce real social interaction, avoid commodification and practice some form of open accounting.

Let me also plainly state here that the Project has no designs on proceeds gained from such events. Unless our staff members are asked to aid in organizing an event — and this has happened recently in the case of large-scale events in Los Angeles and New York City — the Project will not levy fees on such activities: we will not use our licensing rights to parasitize locally initiated efforts. We've trademarked "Burning Man" in order to protect the integrity of our culture, not discourage its dissemination. We will, however, encourage donations to the Regional Program and the Black Rock Arts Foundation. This is a critical moment of trust for all of us. The gifts that you and others give to aid us in our organizing efforts will help to generate a greater Burning Man community.

Indeed, the most significant reason for banding together is that the whole of Burning Man as constituted by a network will be much stronger and more creative than its separate parts. The Burning Man Project can use its centralized resources to provide regional groups with valuable services and tools, as outlined in the Regional Contact Role Description. Among these are the Regional Discussion List and our Regional Extranet. Though still in its infancy, the Extranet holds extraordinary promise. In my hometown of San Francisco, and during my travels across the country, I have visited many art studios. Some of

these facilities form colonies, places where artists can collaborate, sharing tools and information. The Extranet will form just such an environment for community organizers as they work together to solve problems.

The Letter of Understanding also mentions, "access to a variety of helpful information from Burning Man staff members." Our Project has evolved over a period of almost 18 years. During this time we have dealt with many of the challenges that you and other groups in your area may eventually encounter. Our regional communities range from very modest groups that meet in member's homes to much larger groups that organize ambitious gatherings and programs. Having passed through several stages of development, starting with a handful of participants on a beach, we are familiar with the kinds of problems groups may face at every phase of their development. The Project's Regional Coordinators can advise you and put you in touch with other Project staff members who understand consensus decision-making and have gained a special expertise in their fields.

The Project will also create fundraising programs. We are now ready to launch the long-promised "Burning Man Film Festival in a Box". This and similar programs will allow you to raise money, and proceeds can be apportioned between you, as a Regional Contact and the organizer of such an event, and the Regional Program. The rationale for doing this is very simple. Currently, revenues produced by our desert event are funding all of our efforts aimed at creating the Network. Whenever a staff member labors to produce new software, administers our Extranet, consults with a Regional Contact or travels to regional gatherings, his or her efforts are funded by event-generated dollars. However, as our Regional Program grows, we foresee that we will no longer be able to afford a double mission. The fundraising tools we are creating will begin to defray a part of these extra costs.

Likewise, as the responsibilities of Regional Contacts increase, many of you will confront a very similar dilemma. How will it be possible to fulfill your duties in your local community and within the greater Network, while attempting, simultaneously, to earn a living? Income earned from organizing a Regional Program fundraising event can begin to help you accomplish both of these goals. As a full-time organizer of Burning Man, I am necessarily paid a salary. As a part-time organizer within the Network, you can also qualify, if you so choose, to receive a monetary return for your efforts. As with those items that we currently sell through our Internet Marketplace, the content of projects such as the Film Festival in a Box will be 'culture bearing'. It will embody and communicate the values of the Burning Man community. No commercial sponsorships will be allowed. All that is required of you is direct participation. What you do with your share of any proceeds earned from your involvement in such programs is entirely up to you. You may contribute it back to our Regional Program or donate it to local projects within your community. But, if you are among those who cannot afford to accomplish more as a Regional Contact, we hope that this will help you to better achieve your mission.

This portrait of our Network, however, is only half of the picture. The Black Rock

Arts Foundation forms the other half. It has been founded with the intent of promoting interactive art in public environments. We envision this as working in tandem with the Burning Man Network. The Foundation is specifically dedicated to funding art and educational efforts created by participant groups throughout the country. Regional Contacts who significantly aid in organizing such activities may also be eligible to receive grants for this purpose. This is funding that is independent of the grants the Project gives to artists who create work at the Burning Man event. As a Regional Contact, you will be automatically enrolled as a "Regional" Foundation member. This means that you'll receive reports of the Foundation's activities, but, more importantly, it means that you may be eligible to serve on its Grant Advisory Committee. This committee will be responsible for advising the Foundation about regional needs and local initiatives. Its membership will be apportioned geographically. In our present plan, which we can discuss in our upcoming online Regional question and answer session, members of the Network would be grouped by geographic area. These areas would correspond to members' ability to conveniently gather and meet face-to-face. This is how a culture is best generated. In particular, it is our aim to encourage larger and more evolved Regional Contact groups to serve as mentors and advisors to smaller groups. For our part, we will also endeavor, whenever it is possible, to send Burning Man Project representatives to these gatherings. The purpose is to nurture personal relationships that unite people across the entire spectrum of our Network, and it is from these groups that representative Regional Contacts will be selected to serve on the Foundation's Grant Advisory Committee. By this means, we hope to ensure that aid dispersed by the Foundation will go where it's most needed and that it will be fairly distributed to large and small groups alike.

Another aspect of this program will make it possible for interactive art to move across the country. Increasingly, the Project is supporting art at the event that is designed to be conveniently transportable. Todd Dworman's large-scale "Labyrinth", which stood before the Great Temple of the Man in 2003, is a good example. It can be rolled up, compactly stored and readily installed in any space that's large enough to accommodate it. Charlie Smith's "Nausts" — large metal perambulators designed to artfully house fire — are another example. The Foundation has already provided money so that one of these pieces can be transported between regions. In addition, we are sure that many local works that might not ever make it to the desert will emerge amid the regions. These, too, could eventually become part of a circuit of artwork that passes through communities. We envision this swelling to a continuous flow as the achievements of each inspire all.

The Black Rock Arts Foundation is still in its formative stages. However, we have distributed a modest number of art grants during the last two years, and recently, at the end of 2003, we received a grant from another non-profit, the Rex Foundation. In December of 2003, the Black Rock Arts Foundation received a donation of more than \$6,200, all of the profit from a Seattle Decompression event! It came complete with an enormous thank you card signed by the event's organizers. In addition, during the course of last year, articles on the art of Burning Man have appeared in a number of prestigious art publications. Using

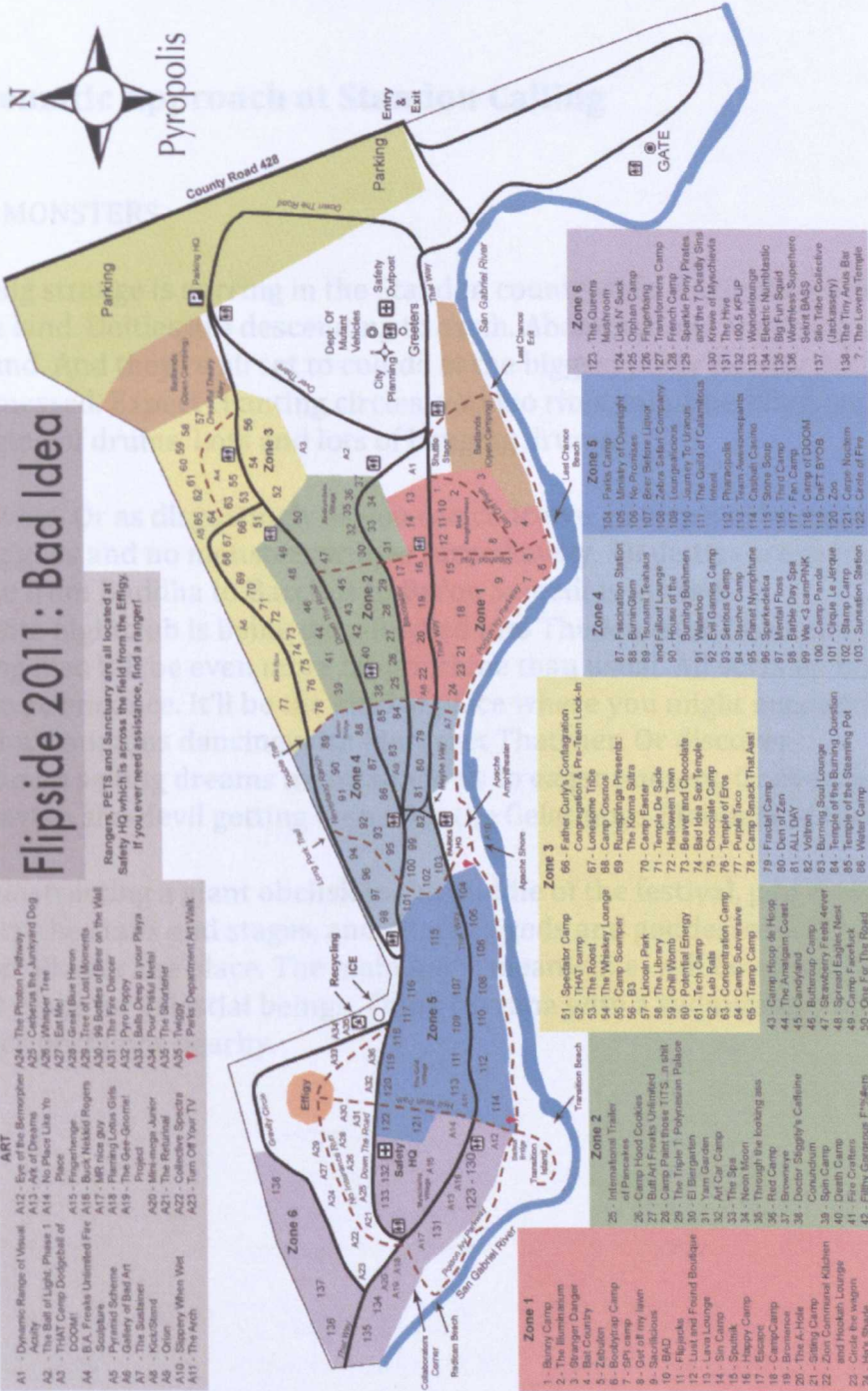
this newly acquired status, we hope to seek more widespread contributions, as well as larger individual donations, to the Foundation's programs. I will personally work to achieve this, and I hope that all of you, as leaders in your community, will join me in this effort. I believe that when local communities witness what is possible, participants will come forward to offer many different kinds of assistance.

Lastly, let me comment on the contract that is contained in Schedule B of this package. It is meant to accomplish several things. It protects all information that a Regional Contact might acquire through working with the Network from being exploited for personal or commercial use. It makes clear that as an affiliated member of the Network you are not an employee of Burning Man and assume independent responsibility for your actions. As part of our assistance to you, we are ready to advise you and others concerning ways to obtain insurance for events and activities, and we will assist those groups who are interested in becoming a Limited Liability Company, like the Burning Man Project. We'll also work in many other ways to help and guide you in your mission, but, in the spirit of radical self-reliance, we cannot assume liability for actions that we do not directly control. The language used in this particular document is necessarily couched in legal parlance, and I will admit that when I read a sentence stating, "Regional Contact agrees to indemnify Burning Man and its successors, agents, employees, insurers and representatives, of and from any all liability, claims, demands, damages, punitive damages, disputes, suits, actions, claims for relief and causes of action, arising out of or relating to Regional activities"-- it seems like a lot to swallow. Legal contracts, by their nature, are designed to account for every possible contingency that might arise in our litigious society, but if you read this text slowly and carefully, I think you'll find that it contains no hidden snares.

What I have tried to describe to you in this letter is a vision of how our culture can sustain itself upon a larger scale. I believe the Network we propose holds very close to the Burning Man ethos. It does not dictate the content of "radical self-expression" — *that* can only come from you and other members of your community. It does not exploit you economically or infringe upon your freedom or the freedom of others to create and organize. But it does protect the way of life that Burning Man has come to represent. In the spirit of collaboration and communal effort that lies at the heart of Burning Man, the Network will allow us all to use our gifts to give an even greater gift to the world. Marian, Andie, Steven and myself look forward to discussing both the Burning Man Network and the Black Rock Arts Foundation with all of you at the upcoming online Regional question and answer session, and I hope to meet and greet each one of you in First Camp at Burning Man in 2004.

Sincerely, Larry Harvey

A.3 Flipside 2011: Regional Burn



Flipside 2011: Bad Idea

Rangers, PETS and Sanctuaries are all located at Safety HQ which is across the field from the Effigy. If you ever need assistance, find a ranger!

- ART**
- A1 - Dynamic Range of Views
 - A12 - Eye of the Storm
 - A13 - The Phoenix Pathway
 - A14 - The Bat of Light
 - A15 - Phase 1
 - A16 - No Place Like Yr Place
 - A17 - Whiskey Time
 - A18 - Eat Me!
 - A19 - Great Blue Heron
 - A20 - Tree of Lum! (Mountains)
 - A21 - Tree of Lum! (Mountains)
 - A22 - Tree of Lum! (Mountains)
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 - A100 - Tree of Lum! (Mountains)

- Zone 1**
 - 1 - Bunny Camp
 - 2 - The Illuminum
 - 3 - Stranger Danger
 - 4 - Bad Country
 - 5 - Red Camp
 - 6 - Red Camp
 - 7 - SPY camp
 - 8 - Get off my lawn
 - 9 - Sacrifices
 - 10 - BAD
 - 11 - The A-Hole
 - 12 - The A-Hole
 - 13 - Lava Lounge
 - 14 - Sin Camp
 - 15 - Spunk
 - 16 - Happy Camp
 - 17 - Clasic
 - 18 - Red Camp
 - 19 - Bonanza
 - 20 - The A-Hole
 - 21 - Sling Camp
 - 22 - Zon Commune Kitchen and Soukai Lounge
 - 23 - Camp of the Moon
 - 24 - Heck Shide
- Zone 2**
 - 25 - International Trailer
 - 26 - Camp Hood Cookies
 - 27 - Bull-A-Fire! Utilized
 - 28 - The Camp of the Moon
 - 29 - The Camp of the Moon
 - 30 - El Brigraton
 - 31 - Yam Garden
 - 32 - Art Car Camp
 - 33 - The Spis
 - 34 - Neon Moon
 - 35 - Red Camp
 - 36 - Red Camp
 - 37 - Brooney
 - 38 - Doctor Sluggly's Culline Conundrum
 - 39 - Spin Camp
 - 40 - Death Camp
 - 41 - Camp of the Moon
 - 42 - Fishy Gargantuan F*ckers
- Zone 3**
 - 51 - Spectator Camp
 - 52 - THAT camp
 - 53 - The Whiskey Lounge
 - 54 - The Whiskey Lounge
 - 55 - Camp Scampur
 - 56 - Camp Scampur
 - 57 - Looop Park
 - 58 - The Library
 - 59 - Chili Worm
 - 60 - Paleolithic Energy
 - 61 - Tech Camp
 - 62 - Tech Camp
 - 63 - Camp Subnervae
 - 64 - Camp Subnervae
 - 65 - Tramp Camp
 - 66 - Father Oulry's Conflagration Congregation & Pre-Teen Lock-In
 - 67 - Lonesome Tibe
 - 68 - Camp Conson
 - 69 - Pumping Presents
 - 70 - Camp Easter
 - 71 - Temple De Sade
 - 72 - Haloween Town
 - 73 - Beaver and Chocolate
 - 74 - Bad Idea Sex Temple
 - 75 - Temple of Etern
 - 76 - Temple of Etern
 - 77 - Temple of Etern
 - 78 - Camp Smack That Ass!
 - 79 - Fractal Camp
 - 80 - Den of Zin
 - 81 - ALL DAY
 - 82 - Wilten
 - 83 - Wilten
 - 84 - Temple of the Burning Question
 - 85 - Temple of the Steaming Pot
 - 86 - Water Camp
- Zone 4**
 - 87 - Facination Station
 - 88 - Facination Station
 - 89 - Facination Station
 - 90 - House of the
 - 91 - Walenoo Camp
 - 92 - Walenoo Camp
 - 93 - Walenoo Camp
 - 94 - Walenoo Camp
 - 95 - Planet Nymphthune
 - 96 - Sparkedeka
 - 97 - Mental Flons
 - 98 - Bubble Day Spa
 - 99 - Camp Panda
 - 100 - Camp Panda
 - 101 - Cirque La Jergie
 - 102 - Cirque La Jergie
 - 103 - Sunsetation Station
- Zone 5**
 - 104 - Felix Camp
 - 105 - Ministry of Oversight
 - 106 - Ministry of Oversight
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Appendix B

The Boutique Festival

B.1 Thematic Approach at Standon Calling

GODS & MONSTERS

Something strange is stirring in the Standon countryside. Ancients are starting to walk the land. Deities are descending to earth. Abominations are rising up from the ground. And they're all set to collide at the biggest party Hertfordshire has ever witnessed. Expect chanting circles, voodoo rites, mind-bending potions and the banging of drums. Lots and lots of banging drums.

Dress divine. Or as disgustingly as you can conceive. In terms of imagination, anything goes and no monsters will be turned away. All deities are welcome and everyone from Buddha to Bacchus to Baron Samedi is invited.

The on-site nightclub is being transformed into The Monster's Lair and we're extending it so it'll be even more labyrinthine than usual. All sorts of monsters will be in attendance. It'll be the kind of place where you might encounter one of Cthulhu's minions dancing with Margaret Thatcher. Or discover the Sandman selling dreams in the shadows to eager punters. Or even spot a Scandinavian she-devil getting it on with the Gelatinous Blobbehind the decks.

We're constructing a giant obelisk in the middle of the festival, pagan symbols will adorn the stalls and stages, and altars to gods and goddesses will be scattered all over the place. The main lawn, meanwhile, will be something of a chill-out place for celestial beings. Think Nirvana with a swimming pool and some nice portaloos nearby.

B.2 Interviewee Breakdown

Interviewee	Role	Notes
A	Member of the Creative Production Team at SGP	Background in events promotion; former organizer of an indoor festival event in Bournemouth with focus on audience participation.
B	Organizer and performer for Bearded Kitten	Bearded Kitten is a performance collective that appears at SGP, Lovebox, and various events in the UK.
C	Artist Liaison for Standon Calling	Interviewee C had travelled to Burning Man in order to gather inspiration for feeding into Standon Calling.
D	Manager for the 'Nokia Information Basket', Electric Picnic 2008	The 'Nokia Information Basket' was an experiential, interactive marketing installation built specially for Electric Picnic.
E	Creator of Happy Slap	Interviewee also runs a make-up and performance space at Kendal Calling and Raisetherooft.
F	Creator of Pimp My Clothes	Pimp My Clothes runs workshops based around the embellishment of clothes at festivals.
G	Performer and Creator of the Heavenly Court of Madame Fantasieste	Interviewee G had also performed at previous RTR events, for four years consecutively.
H	Creator and co-ordinator of Bicycle Powered Pacman	Interviewee had also taken installation to Bestival and Shambala.

Appendix C

Raisetheroof

C.1 Raisetheroof Video CD

C.2 Contributor Breakdown

Feature	Nature of Activity	Participation at Other Festivals
The Happy Slap Make-up Boutique	Group of performers and make-up artists. Make-up services included face paints with fake eyelashes and glitter, with hair styling available. At RTR, performance was restricted to 'The Human Doodle' – see Chapter 6.	Outside RTR, Happy Slap is taken to Kendal Calling and Beatherder. At the former, the project is much extended – the crew occupies a small dance tent with DJs, which also hosts a range of performance art and interactive games, with make-up services available throughout the day. The Happy Slap team are currently trying to book more boutique festivals to take the project to.
The Ladybird Project	Group of performers, artists and workshop organizers. At RTR, The Ladybird Project housed a café and workshop space.	This project is taken to a number of British boutique festivals each summer, including SGP, Sunrise, Beacons and Waveform.
Pimp My Clothes	Stall offering clothing embellishments and workshops.	This stall has previously appeared at SGP, Beatherder, Kendal Calling and various other small community events.
The Heavenly Court of Madame Fantasieste	Immersive performance with aerial.	As part of a research project, this performance was taken to Bestival, Kendal Calling and Cactus (Belgium).
Snow Zone	Snowboarding simulator, owned by an indoor ski slope company.	The same company has also provided a snow slope feature/game for Kendal Calling, in 2009.
Surefire Circus	A collective of fire and poi performers	This collective have participated at a number of outdoor festivals, including Glastonbury and Kendal Calling.
Sue Me	A game created by community organization	Together for Peace does not participate significantly on

	Together for Peace, consisting of giant wrestling suits, a makeshift fighting arena and some printed media about 'red tape' in the courtroom.	the outdoor festival circuit, though they run networking and activist events in Leeds.
Pacman	A computer game powered by a bicycle connected to a cycle-powered generator.	This installation had been taken to Shambala and Bestival, and was (at the time of interview) intended to go to Glastonbury and SGP.

C.4 Festival Dress CD

C.3 The Participant Star



'Saved by the Bell'



'Looking fly – but where's his eye?' 'Not only have I seen the light – I AM the light'

C.4 Festival Dress CD

C.5 2010 Advert *Press Cuttings**Leeds Guide*

RAISE THE ROOF
2010

THE ALL-SEASONS CELEBRATION OF MYTHS AND LEGENDS

FRIDAY 8TH OCTOBER 9PM-5AM

LIVE BANDS AND DJs
POWERED BY HIGH PRESSURE SOUND SYSTEM

DREADZONE
(FULL BAND)

EAST PARK REGGAE COLLECTIVE
(8 PIECE LIVE REGGAE BAND)

MIDDLEMAN
(SYNTH-LADEN POP)

THE SUNSHINE UNDERGROUND
(DJ SET)

CHINA SHOP BULL **EXODUS** **HONEYDRUM**
(TWISTED HIP HOP AND SKA-PUNK) (20-PIECE SAMBA PERCUSSION BAND)

DJs PLAYING: 2-TONE, ROCKSTEADY, SKA, REGGAE, JUNGLE, BREAKS, DRUM AND BASS & DUBSTEP
PLUS MUCH MORE

FANCY DRESS THEME: MYTHS AND LEGENDS
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CHECK OUT MYSPACE.COM/RAISE THE ROOF EVENTS
PROJECTRAISE THE ROOF.WORDPRESS.COM

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OVER THE PHONE ON 0113 2436743. MORE TICKETS AVAILABLE ON THE DOOR

LEEDS WEST INDIAN CENTRE 10, LAYCOCK PLACE, LEEDS LS7 3AJ

C.6 Raisetheroof Press Cuttings

The Yorkshire Post

Leeds Guide

RECOMMENDED NIGHTLIFE

Fri 16 Sep

Eclectic LIMN Freshers PARTY
A Nation of Shopkeepers, 25-37
Cookridge Street, Leeds, LS2 3AG,
0113 203 1831 • 9pm • Free • In
association with Leeds College of
Art and Game Time, LIMN present
live visuals, Southern-fried hip-hop,
chicken, crunk, Kool-Aid, R&B and
much more.

Sat 17 Sep

Club Nights: Beat Street Seabrick
Avenue, Marston Jones, Leeds, LS2 7ET
0113 244 4248 • 9pm-2am • Free
• Genre: Funk, Soul, Reggae & Skat •
The block party sound of 70s New
York reached together with the best
of the new school soul, funk, disco and
reggae.

Wed 21 Sep



Dance & Electronica Four Tet DJ
Set Wixx 2A Call Lane, Leeds, LS1
6DN, 0113 234 0980 • 1pm-4am •
£5-10 • Four Tet, aka Kieran Hebden,
has just mixed the latest installment
of the renowned FabricLive CD series,
in which he showcases his diverse
musical taste interspersed with field
recordings of the London nightclub
itself. This is a rare chance to catch a
modern legend DJing in the intimate
surroundings of Wixx.

Fri 23 Sep



Dance & Electronica Subdub
KDX, New Crown Gate, Leeds, LS11
3NF, 0113 2740076 • 10pm-3am •
£15 (£11) • Two rooms of club reg-
gae, drum'n'bass and dancehall at this
legendary Leeds night. Here The
Disciples with Russ D and Dubkasm
with Solo Banton all on the Irston
Steppas Soundsystem. Room two
hosts Benny Page, Ramarc, Marcus
Visionary, Exordis, Steppa, Earthpipe,
MCs Toan Piper, Ramis, Rafta &
Talisman all on the Sweetpotato
Sound System.

Rock & Indie: Club Madchester
The Well, Joseph Well, Chorley Lane,
Leeds, LS3 1AB, 0113 244 0474 • 8pm
• £3 (£10) • The Toxic Stone Roses and
Ozzyas play in a night dedicated to the
music of Manchester, featuring two
of the UK's best Madchester tribute
bands.

Fri 7 Oct

Eclectic Raisetheroof 2011
West Indian Centre, Laycock Place,
Chapelwade, Leeds, LS7 3JA, 0113 262
9496 • 9pm-5am • £15, plus book-
ing fee • Extravagant festival night
at the West Indian Centre, with the
Dub Pistols full band, Utah Saints,
Slamboree, Dexter Dextrous and the
Fingersmiths. The Soul Circle Gang,
Salsa Como Loco. Plus DJ sets from
Wombatz.

FOR MORE EVENT LISTINGS, VISIT
www.leedsguide.co.uk

Interview Roxanne Yeganegy

This issue we speak to Roxanne Yeganegy, the woman behind Raisetheroof festival, which is taking place at Leeds West Indian Centre on 7th October



Tell us about some of the musical acts playing at Raisetheroof this year.

This year we have a ram-packed lineup of live bands and DJs which are all Leeds acts bar our headliner, Dub Pistols. Dub Pistols are a seven piece outfit on Rob Da Bank's label Sunday Best, and will make a perfect addition to the supports which include a neo-Balkan circus band called Slamboree, a hillbilly outfit Dexter Dextrous and the Fingersmiths, the latin group Salsa Como Loco and the funk and Afro-beat group, the Soul Circle Gang. Joining them are the Utah Saints - who we're really excited about - and there will be DJ sets from various local acts. Our backroom is once again hosted by Wombatz, a local Leeds collective that aim to encourage women in DJing and producing electronic music. They will be pumping out dubstep, jungle, breaks and drum'n'bass.

What other entertainment will there be?

Probably too much to list here! Oriented around our decadent, ballroom theme, there will be a performance art piece by Floorspace, art installations from various folks, a lucky dip for Oxfam, a healing area, a cupcake stall and loads more.

The event has been called otherworldly and surreal in the past - how is this achieved and how will it be done this year?

We programme unwitting perform-

ances that keep people guessing - last year a performance piece entitled The Heavenly Court of Madame Fantastice, a joint project by performance academics from Leeds University and Leeds Met, kept people bemused for hours. We also work closely with a company called Umbrella Visuals whose clients include Glastonbury, Latitude and Kendal Calling. A lot of the otherworldliness comes from the way they transform the event with their hand-made installations.

Is there a typical Raisetheroof crowd?

Funnyly enough, there seems to be far more girls at my night than the other nights at the venue. The whole package seems to be attractive to the ladies, and perhaps the female-only DJ room is encouraging. Plenty of boys too though, just not the same (ahem) 'sausage fest' often seen elsewhere with ravey events! We have never once had any aggro at Raisetheroof and we have been running nights in Leeds for over five years - I think all the silly hat-wearing must diffuse any bad vibes!

Why choose Leeds West Indian Centre for the venue?

I was attracted to the venue for a number of reasons; its heritage as the home of Subdub made it a good spot for filling a niche by providing similar music but with a live focus. It might sound cheesy but I also get satisfaction from promoting music that is cultur-

ally connected to the community that use the venue on a day to day basis. What not many people know, is that the money made on the bar at the centre is actually fed directly back into the community centre in really positive ways. For example, profits from events like Raisetheroof help them to subsidise the venue for use by community groups that work with children and vulnerable people.

What makes Raisetheroof a festival, rather than just another nightlife event?

We have always described ourselves as a festival and have never really considered the fact that we operate indoors as a reason for not doing so. I have been going to festivals since I was 15, my PhD research is on festival culture and I have also worked at a lot of festivals throughout my 20s. I guess I try and bring the 'carnavalesque' indoors by creating something extravagant, but also by making it participatory and allowing people in the area to get more involved than they would at a clubnight, whether by creating art for the event or by transforming themselves into the art through crazy costumes.

7 October, Leeds West Indian Centre, 10 Laycock Place, LS7 3AJ, 0113 262 949, 9pm-5am, £16.50-£17
SJT/B

MUSIC TOP 5

1 Raise The Roof Festival: Raise The Roof doesn't just organise a few bands and declare it a 'festival' – they go all out. Decorations, stalls and a great atmosphere. *Leeds West Indian Centre, Oct 10. 0113 262 9496.*

2 The Paddingtons: Around about the time Yorkshire indie-pop acts became flavour of the

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Raise The Roof Autumn Festival

Blasting The West Indian Centre's ceiling off should be a doddle for the performers at Raise The Roof this evening. The autumnal party is



inviting music lovers of all persuasions to frolic to drum'n'bass, dub, ska and electro, performed by a variety of local bands and DJs. Drumming collective Honeydrum and dancers kick-start the night with an energetic opening ceremony. Then spine-tingling nu-jazz outfit Tarentum (pictured), electropop quartet Rochelle, hotly tipped Leeds boys Middleman, and live drum'n'bass producers Scassa Monakee and Gentleman's Dub Club chill and thrill with ambient and stomping songs. Manitou Collective, DJ Steppa and Lowlife will be blasting out drum'n'bass and breaks in the main room, and Moonstomp Sound System commandeers room two with 2Tone, reggae and dub. AT

Tonight, The West Indian Centre, 10 Laycock Place, Chapeltown, Leeds, 9pm to 4am, £7, £6 before 10pm, £5 adv. Tel: 0113 216 0207. www.myspace.com/raisetherooevents

tunes from his labels.

Tel: 01904 620602.

www.freakin.org.uk

■ **Raise The Roof Autumn Festival 2008**, held at The West Indian Centre in Leeds tomorrow, has a pirates and mermaids theme. The indoor event features live performances from Leeds acts Breaking The Illusion, Kid iD, Rochelle, Alpha Drive and Honeydrum, and beats, basslines and blinding grooves will be blasted out by High Pressure Sound System and Moonstomp Sound System.

Tel: 0113 243 6743.

www.myspace.com/raisetherooevents

www.myspace.com/raisetherooevents

■ **On Saturday, The Dirty Disco** at the Mezz Club

Metro

metro
life

Arts & Entertainment

**The Best Place...
To Dive Down The Rabbit Hole**

In the same week that Heston Blumenthal created a bonkers Alice in Wonderland-themed feast in his new Channel 4 show, Leeds gathering raisetherooof is also taking inspiration from Lewis Carroll's trippy adventure. Tonight, the DIY party is throwing the raisetherooof Spring Festival Of Light And Sound, featuring roots, reggae and dub DJs and live performances from Bongo Chillii with The Root One Band, Honeydrum, Salsa Como Loco and other local artists. Side attractions include an outdoor Mad Hatter's Tea Party, aerialists from the Urban Angels Circus (pictured) and magical transformations by Aunt Fanny's Fancy Dress Shop and the Pretty In Punk Boudoir. AT

Tonight, The West Indian Centre, 10 Laycock Place, Chapeltown, Leeds, 9pm to 5am, £12, £10 before 10pm, £7 adv. Tel: 07917 606734. www.myspace.com/raisetherooofevents



No-TiTLE Music Magazine



RAISETHEROOOF

Critically acclaimed by the NME, Sandman Magazine and The Yorkshire Post, the 'multimedia festival' raisetherooof is set to take place on Friday the 6th of March at Leeds West Indian Centre.

In celebration of the dawn of Spring, the festival will combine a 'Psychedelic Circus' and a surrealist 'Alice in Wonderland' theme, complete with an outdoor Mad Hatters Tea Party. The Queen's Tarts, a performance art collective from Leeds Metropolitan University, will delight with a Magic Shuffle and Hunt The White Rabbit festival game, whilst the DirtyFitGrannies read palms and the Urban Angels Circus acts amuse and inspire.

Budding artists will be pleased to know that a full range of 'inter-activities', from Rite a Riddle drawing boards to Fritspray Virtual Graffiti, will be available. The musical lineup includes Bongo Chillii and the Root One Band, China Shop Bull (the former Fulibulbus), beatboxing trio Crew 82, Salsa Como Loco, Honeydrum, Speculum, Kidkanevil, Exodus, DJM, High Pressure and Moonstomp. **Advance tickets for raisetherooof are now on sale from Jumbo and Crash Records, at £7 (+bf).**

BIG THUMBS UP