

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/84893>

**Copyright and reuse:**

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it.

Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk)

**Culture is a Weapon:  
Popular Music, Protest and Opposition to  
Apartheid in Britain**

David Toulson



A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in History

University of Warwick

Department of History

January 2016

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
‘A rock concert with a cause’.....	1
Come Together.....	7
Methodology.....	13
Research Questions and Structure.....	22
<b>1)“Culture is a weapon that we can use against the apartheid regime”.....</b>	<b>25</b>
The Cultural Boycott and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.....	25
‘The Times They Are A Changing’.....	34
‘Culture is a weapon of struggle’.....	47
Rock Against Racism.....	54
‘We need less airy fairy freedom music and more action.’.....	72
<b>2) ‘The Myth of Fingerprints’.....</b>	<b>80</b>
World Music From Above and Below.....	80
African music in Britain.....	89
‘Local Music From Out There’.....	95
‘This is all around the world’.....	102
<b>3) “The guys with the guitars don't stand a chance”.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Paul Simon's <i>Graceland</i> as a Product of Apartheid.....	105
“Every generation throws a hero up the pop charts”.....	110
South African Music.....	112
“Culture Flows Like Water”.....	121

All Around the World.....	128
Collaborators.....	130
Apartheid context.....	136
‘Think hard please’.....	144
‘A Global Pop Masterpiece’.....	148
<b>4) “Today Brent South, Tomorrow Soweto”.....</b>	<b>152</b>
‘The protest music par excellence’.....	152
‘War Ina Babylon’.....	157
Reggae in Britain.....	166
‘London’s Burning’.....	176
Reggae in South Africa.....	186
‘Why Must the Youth Fight Against Themselves?’.....	188
Labour of Love.....	194
Beyond The 16 <sup>th</sup> Parallel.....	211
<b>5) ‘The Biggest Political Pop Show in History’.....</b>	<b>213</b>
Concerts as Political Events.....	213
The Pre-History of the Political Concert.....	215
The ‘Activist’ Concert.....	221
Charity Concerts.....	228
Rock Against the Tories.....	237
1988 Mandela Concert.....	252
The Last Political Concert.....	258
<b>6) Epilogue: ‘Worker’s Playtime’.....</b>	<b>264</b>
“Mixing pop and Politics/They ask me what the use is”.....	264
‘Da Struggle Kontinues’.....	274
Things Can Only Get Better.....	278
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>281</b>

‘History had vindicated the AAM’.....284  
‘By the Strength of our Common Endeavour’ .....288  
The Role of Popular Music.....293  
Come Together (reprise).....299  
**Bibliography**.....307

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors Dan Branch and Roger Fagge for their good humour and even better advice.

I would also like to thank my long suffering family and friends for their support throughout the course of the last three and a half years.

## Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between popular politics and popular music through the context of the international campaign against apartheid South Africa. In particular the thesis focuses on the ways in which the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, arguably the best organised and best established anti-apartheid solidarity organisation, interacted with popular music. This was a relationship that had been well established by the AAM's attempts to enforce a wide ranging cultural boycott against South Africa. Growing challenges to the status and the logic of the boycott throughout the period, demonstrate well the shifting nature of popular politics.

This link between popular music and protest against apartheid would also be embraced by musicians outside of the traditional constituencies of groups such as the AAM. In particular the growing market for reggae and what would later be termed world music demonstrated a wider interest for the subject beyond traditional activist circles. In both these genres the themes of pan-Africanism and anti-apartheid solidarity played an important role in the imagery and packaging of many artists. Yet the distance between these musicians and fans and established campaigning groups could also be a source of conflict. This was an issue that is highlighted best by the controversy surrounding Paul Simon's 1987 *Graceland* album.

This desire to use popular music as a campaigning tool in and of itself would later also be embraced by campaigns such as the AAM. In particular this manifested itself in a number of increasingly high profile awareness raising concerts including a 1990 concert at Wembley Stadium. Yet the complex negotiations and politics of the event also revealed something of the limitations of the relationship between popular music and popular politics and the extent to which more nuanced messages could be lost in a larger spectacle.





# Introduction

## **‘A rock concert with a cause’**

The appearance of Nelson Mandela on the stage of Wembley Stadium on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1990, encapsulated the growing sense of optimism about the future. On the same stage that had hosted *Live Aid* and concerts by huge acts such as the Rolling Stones, Queen and Michael Jackson, Mandela made something of an unlikely headliner. Yet the rapturous response he received from the crowd of 75,000 inside the stadium, made Mandela the undoubted star of the concert. In a front page story on the day following the concert, the *Independent* went as far as to claim that ‘Not even Soweto gave Nelson Mandela the volume of noise that greeted him when he stepped on to a Wembley Stadium platform last night’.<sup>1</sup> The concert dubbed, *An International Tribute for a Free South Africa*, marked Mandela’s first visit to Britain since his release from Pollsmoor prison in South Africa just over two months previously. Significantly, this was a visit to Britain that included no formal meeting with the British government. Instead it would be a visit underlined by Mandela’s speech to the crowds at Wembley in which he gave thanks to those involved in the international campaign against apartheid, noting that.

We are here today because for almost three decades you sustained a campaign for the unconditional release of all South African political prisoners. We are here because you took the humane decision that you could not ignore the inhumanity represented by the apartheid system.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Richard Dowden and David Lister, ‘Ecstatic Crowd Hails Mandela at Wembley’, *Independent*, 17 April 1990.

<sup>2</sup>Nelson Mandela, ‘Speech to Wembley Stadium’, 16 April 1990.

That this was a statement made at the close of a pop concert, speaks volumes about the way in which popular music had played a key role in the wider campaign against apartheid.

The event was viewed by some as a bizarre juxtaposition of the glamour of popular music and the reality of the long and often arduous campaign against apartheid. Meeting Mandela in Zimbabwe shortly after the Wembley concert, the BBC DJ, Andy Kershaw offered the almost apologetic observation that, ‘You spend twenty-seven years in prison, and they let you out and give you a Simple Minds concert, eh?’<sup>3</sup> What the 1990 Mandela concert at Wembley demonstrates is just how much the relationship between popular music and politics had shifted over the course of the long campaign against apartheid. Whereas the previous decade had seen many musicians become involved with politics both globally and closer to home, Mandela’s first visit to Britain seemingly reversed that trend, taking politics to the realm of popular music.

Viewed in isolation or even alongside the earlier 1988 *Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute* concert, also held at Wembley and broadcast across the world, appear to be outliers. The 1990 concert at Wembley would be described by the Independent as an ‘intoxicating combination of a rock concert with a cause’.<sup>4</sup> In this approach it was not alone, Dylan Jones has argued that the two Mandela concerts, along with other popular music campaigning events, were cast in the mould of *Live Aid* and a model of ‘event pop’ that saw the value of popular music as a campaigning tool.<sup>5</sup> Yet even alongside other massive popular music campaigns

---

<sup>3</sup> Andy Kershaw, *No Off Switch: An Autobiography* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2011), p.254.

<sup>4</sup> Dowden and Lister, ‘Ecstatic Crowd Hails Mandela at Wembley’.

<sup>5</sup> Dylan Jones, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade* (London: Preface, 2013), pp.375-376.

such as *Live Aid*, the 1990 Mandela Concert and its predecessor appeared to be out of step with the direction and messaging of other events.

The 1990 Mandela Concert also demonstrated well the way in which popular political campaigning had changed in Britain over the duration of the long campaign against apartheid. In Britain, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, in common with many other campaigning organisations, had begun life hosting large public meetings, lobbying parliament and occasionally leading centralised campaigns.<sup>6</sup> By 1990 the AAM had evolved into a much less centralised organisation with a focus on creative grassroots organising. The Mandela concert at Wembley in 1990 and its predecessor in 1988 represented the fruition of the ambitions to be a ‘people’s movement’ capable of informing educating and eventually even leading the debate of anti-apartheid in Britain. In this way the cause of anti-apartheid mirrored the progress of a variety of different campaigns, many of which it shared members with. By 1990 a well organised media spectacle such as the Mandela Concert was increasingly regarded as an appropriate means of political campaigning.

This can be seen by the fact that Mandela’s speech from the stage in 1990, in many ways the centrepiece of the concert, was overtly political, with a call for the continuation of sanctions and an implicit criticism of the Thatcher government, in the way that no speaker or performer at *Live Aid* could have been. In a stadium crowd that contained Jesse Jackson, Neil Kinnock and David Steel, where members of the Thatcher government were conspicuous in their absence, the political connotations of the concert were clear. In contrast, Bob Geldof had invited Prince Charles and Princess Diana to sit in the audience at *Live Aid* and let it be known

---

<sup>6</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005), p.443.

that the concert organisers had reached an ‘amicable agreement’ with the government around tax arrangements for the event.<sup>7</sup> By being built around a distinct and clear political viewpoint the Mandela concerts represented something much different. While *Live Aid* strove to be apolitical, the Mandela concerts used the colours and symbols of the African National Congress to decorate the stage. Never before or since would such an explicitly political concert achieve such prominence.

Far from simply being an explicitly political manifestation of the same spirit which had generated *Live Aid*, the 1988 and 1990 Mandela concerts were the product of a much longer history of attempts to use popular music as a weapon in the fight against apartheid. In Britain, popular music had been seen as part of the wider campaign against apartheid since the very beginning of campaigns such as the Boycott Movement and its successor the AAM. As early as 1954 Trevor Huddleston, later President of the AAM, had called for popular music to be part of a wider cultural boycott, as both a financial and cultural attack on the apartheid state.<sup>8</sup> This musical boycott, soon supported by most major performance unions in Britain and the western world and later codified by a UN Resolution, would become a central part of popular music campaigns against apartheid.

In addition to being part of the wider boycott campaign, popular music also increasingly played a major part in framing the debate around the issue of apartheid and many even attempted to use it to the raise consciousness of audiences and galvanise campaigns against the apartheid regime. Throughout the decades of the long campaign against apartheid, many felt that popular music itself could function

---

<sup>7</sup> Bob Geldof and Paul Valley, *Is That It?* (New York: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987), pp.394-396.

<sup>8</sup> Bodleian Library, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AAM National Committee, ‘Cultural Boycott: Revised Statement’, 11 December 1982.

as a weapon against apartheid. From the 1980s onwards the ANC in exile, guided by the maxim ‘culture is a weapon of struggle’, supported a number of initiatives that used music as a campaigning tool against apartheid.<sup>9</sup> This was mirrored by efforts of international solidarity groups such as the AAM in Britain who also organised similar popular music campaigns against apartheid ‘to counter South African Propaganda’.<sup>10</sup> For some the very existence of popular music criticising apartheid helped to ‘keep the flame of anti-apartheid solidarity alive’.<sup>11</sup> For others, popular music represented a space whereby alternatives to apartheid could be envisioned and constructed. It was in the spirit of all these objectives and aspirations that the two Mandela concerts at Wembley were shaped and organised.

However, the use of popular music as a campaigning tool was also open to much debate. The boycott itself often proved controversial, with some opponents claiming that by travelling to perform in South Africa they could take a stronger stand, in a mirror of arguments about the merits of constructive engagement with the apartheid state that were made by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in Britain and America. The drive to attract international artists to perform in Sun City, a lavish entertainment complex in the nominally independent Bantustan of Bophuthatswana, saw bands such as Queen, Status Quo and Black Sabbath break the boycott. However, it also encouraged groups such as AAA and generated other campaigns such as the American based Artists United Against Apartheid. An even greater division would arise from the decision of Paul Simon to partially record his 1986 album *Graceland* in South Africa. Alongside the rise of what would later be

---

<sup>9</sup> Shirli Gilbert, ‘Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Struggle Against Apartheid’, *Journal of South African Studies*, 33:2 (2007), pp.421-422.

<sup>10</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AMM, ‘Briefing on Cultural Boycott’, 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson Mandela, ‘Steve Biko: Address at the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Steve Biko’s death, East London, 1997’, in Kader Asmal, David Kidester, Wilmot James (eds.), *Nelson Mandela In His Own Words: From Freedom to the Future* (London: Abacus, 2006), p.453.

known as world music, *Graceland* was hailed by some as an expression of anti-apartheid solidarity. Yet the album and world music more generally were also open to accusations of patronising and sometimes even exploiting their source material. This argument also raises the question of the limits of popular music to affect change or influence political views. As with the boycott and other campaigns that sought to harness popular music, there remained concern and doubt about how political messages could be transmitted through a commercial entertainment medium.

It is in these competing visions and aspirations for the role of popular music that we can see reflections on the wider debates about both the campaign against apartheid and also political engagement more generally. The changing nature and political make up of organisations such as the AAM throughout the period contributed to the way in which the organisation as a whole interacted with popular music as a vehicle for campaigning. In turn this altering political landscape also affected the way in which musicians who wished to use their music as a political instrument interacted with campaigning and political groups. The story of how popular music came to assume such a privileged position in the campaign against apartheid is one that demonstrates well the shifting nature of popular politics in Britain and the rest of the world. In particular it encapsulates a wider political story about the decline of the traditional social democratic left amid the successful challenges to the post war consensus. The combination of Mandela and a concert bill consisting of some of the most famous contemporary musicians would have seemed an unlikely concept in the early days of the Boycott Movement. That by 1990 the appearance of Mandela on stage at Wembley appeared so natural, spoke of an entirely changed political context.

## Come Together

The AAM throughout its long campaign saw not only changes in political narratives, but also to patterns of activism. Even more importantly this period also saw the increasing prominence of popular culture in informing political campaigns and shaping the wider debates. The AAM were also a clear example of a campaign which sought to embrace and utilise the skills and enthusiasm of its grassroots members. As the former member and historian of the AAM, Roger Fieldhouse, has acknowledged, the AAM was constructed with the conscious goal of being a ‘people’s movement’, which encouraged localised grassroots activism over parliamentary lobbying.<sup>12</sup> Although the AAM could occasionally be accused of falling short of this ambition, it helped to create an organisational philosophy that embraced the participation and enthusiasm of those the AAM attracted. This thesis will seek to understand just what role popular music played not only in the campaigning of organised groups such as the AAM but also in the wider public consciousness.

The AAM’s form of popular politics developed a unique link with popular music. Some of this was simply generational. Those likely to become involved with AAM, in particular younger activists, would have been increasingly aware of popular music. Importantly popular music appeared to take on an important role in shaping identities. Simon Frith has argued that during the 1960s popular music came to occupy a position of unequalled importance in the lives of young people.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Eric Hobsbawm directly linked the emergence of young people as a

---

<sup>12</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.476.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Frith, *The Sociology of Rock* (London: Constable, 1979), pp.37-39.



unique social group with the prosperity of record labels ‘selling rock music’.<sup>14</sup>

Crucially popular music, often through virtue of association with youth, was also increasingly associated with radical politics.

The relationship between politics and popular music is complex and difficult to define. Many have seen music as having an un-paralleled ability to reach and affect its audience. Addressing the crowd at the opening of the 1972 Wattstax music festival, the civil rights leader Jesse Jackson affirmed his belief that popular music could unite and empower the crowd, stating that; ‘We are together, we are unified, and all in accord, Because together we got power’.<sup>15</sup> It is this notion of power through unity, one crowd hearing one song as a universal affirmation of ideas or identity that has arguably been key to appeal of popular music as a potentially radical medium. As the South African musician Johnny Clegg, who would find himself at the centre of debates around the boycott, argued, popular music had a powerful ability to reach listeners on an instinctive and ‘emotional’ level.<sup>16</sup>

Aside from the desire of some to see popular music as an inherently radical medium, popular music is important because of the unique position it came to have as a cultural phenomenon in the twentieth century. Hobsbawm, went as far as to claim that ‘the decisive development of the late twentieth-century culture, [is] the rise of a revolutionary popular entertainment industry geared towards the mass market’.<sup>17</sup> Focusing on the particular impact of popular music, Hobsbawm notes that music represents the most obvious example of the ‘widespread syncretism’ of

---

<sup>14</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London, Abacus, 2004), p.324.

<sup>15</sup> *Wattstax*. (Dir: Mel Stuart, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Robin Denselow, *When The Music’s Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.199.

<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, p.509.

popular culture in the latter half of the twentieth-century.<sup>18</sup> Hobsbawm argued that key to this is popular music's,

assimilation of various elements, black American, white country-and-western, Latin American, and recently even African and Indian Cultures. In a word, everything. A combination of all different musical traditions is travelling around the world. Global popular culture is the product of this readiness to mix different elements coming from different parts of the world. High culture does not share this propelling force...Even if you love Mozart, you will undoubtedly be familiar with rock music, and you will have heard and possibly enjoyed it.<sup>19</sup>

It is this ability of popular music, as a global force, to cross boundaries and mix cultures which makes it a truly unique cultural force. Perhaps even more importantly though is that popular music is a successful commercial phenomenon. At the peak of the music industries' success at the end of the twentieth century, global music sales totalled \$38.5 billion annually.<sup>20</sup> These extraordinary sales demonstrate just how popular music constituted the best-selling cultural artefact of the twentieth century.

Despite this commercial success, popular music was also perceived by many as a political medium. As Denselow has argued the potential of popular music to transgress societal boundaries of race, gender and sexuality made it extremely controversial with many observers.<sup>21</sup> Popular music could also rely on traditional interpretations of the subversive power of music as a form for political discourse. In both Britain and America the emergence of 'protest songs' in the 1950s and 1960s symbolised the first concerted attempt of musicians to embrace popular music as a political medium. For a new generation of activists the

---

<sup>18</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The New Century: In Conversation with Antonio Polito* (London: Abacus, 2003), p.122.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

<sup>20</sup> Louis Barfe, *Where Have All The Good Times Gone: The Rise and Fall of the Record Industry* (London: Atlantic, 2004), p.323.

<sup>21</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.1-3.

emergence of these ‘protest songs’ seemed to go hand in hand with their own experiences of political engagement.

However the phrase ‘protest songs’ can be viewed as somewhat problematic, many of those labelled protest singers, such as Bob Dylan, have often rejected the categorisation. Talking about the label of ‘protest songs’, the journalist Dorian Lynskey neatly states, ‘If it is a box, then it is a huge one, full of holes’.<sup>22</sup> Yet even with such a broad and ill-defined category, the important feature is that through protest, even in its broadest sense, music has a clear link to politics. The song ‘We Shall Overcome’, is arguably the best example of how a popular song can act as a means of transmitting a political message. ‘We Shall Overcome’ also highlights well, how protest songs can obtain a universality, transmitting across locations and causes and creating a sense of international solidarity. This can be seen in the way ‘We Shall Overcome’ originated as a gospel song and then gained popularity as both a pro-union song in 1930s America and later as a civil rights anthem in the 1960s, before being used by protest movements around the world.<sup>23</sup> For example, the song came to be used by anti-apartheid campaigners in South Africa. In 1966 Robert F. Kennedy, at the time Senator for New York and a noted campaigner against apartheid, led South African activists in the singing of ‘We Shall Overcome’ on a tour of South Africa.<sup>24</sup> More poignantly, the white anti-apartheid campaigner John Harris sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ on the gallows prior to his execution by the South African government.<sup>25</sup> What this shows is the unique position that music has had historically to act as a political medium. First, music’s

---

<sup>22</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.xii.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Sharr Murray, *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and Post-War Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p.17.

<sup>24</sup> Evan Thomas, *Robert Kennedy: His Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), p.322.

<sup>25</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.64.

powerful links with progressive and radical politics often help consolidate and strengthen grass roots political movements. Second and more importantly though, is the ability of songs to cross national and cultural boundaries, helping to engender an international sense of resistance to injustice.

‘We Shall Overcome’ is also an important example of how protest songs can function as a commercial entity. In its recorded form by artists such as Peter Seeger or Joan Baez, ‘We Shall Overcome’, and other folk-based protest songs, were afforded a much greater reach than the hymns and broadside ballads that influenced them. The focus is upon popular music, by which is meant a whole range of modern music genres, from blues and jazz to reggae and hip hop and all in between, that were made for commercial profit.<sup>26</sup> It is the development of popular music as we understand it today, in Hobsbawm’s words, as a ‘revolutionary popular entertainment industry’, which enabled music to have the potency and the reach that we have come to associate with it.

This in part because popular music, has long been constructed with mass appeal in mind. As Donald Clarke has argued popular music which had been perceived by many as ‘the ‘trash’ of the ‘common people’ surpassed classical music and opera, both forms which were considered an ‘upper-class preserve’.<sup>27</sup> This has given popular music and popular culture a democratic nature, allowing the most popular songs dominance through virtue of their popularity as expressed through sales and cultural penetration. As Richard Middleton has argued, ‘Contesting articulations of musical practice could as a rule now arise only at the

---

<sup>26</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.75-95.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Clarke, *The Rise and Fall of Popular Music* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp.18-19.

level of consumption.<sup>28</sup> Advances in technology which effectively democratised the means of music production and wider social changes following the Second World War, particularly the emergence of youth culture and the relative prosperity of most of the western world would continue to drive popular music's development and adoption of tropes of 'freedom', 'authenticity' and rebellion'.<sup>29</sup>

However, many have called into question whether popular music is able to express political ideas and ideologies. Whilst songwriters have always been willing to write political songs, there has long been a dismissal of popular music as too crude to be able to convey the complexity of political theory. Theodore Adorno argued that popular music, like all modern popular culture, was, due to its mass production, incapable of transmitting progressive political ideas and ultimately limited to only producing 'silly love songs'.<sup>30</sup> The sociologist Bill Rolston argued that popular music is geared toward expressing 'more transitory, less articulate forms of rebellion' and as such encounters difficulties when addressing 'politically articulate conflicts'.<sup>31</sup> However this Marxian analysis, that the music industry as a business is ideologically opposed to progressive political messages, fails to properly address the fact that political popular music exists. Even if this music is censored and the writers alien to the conditions they are singing about, the fact that song writers chose to write and perform songs about apartheid in South Africa suggests some level of political engagement.

---

<sup>28</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2000), p.14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> Theodore Adorno, 'On Popular Music', in Simon Frith and A. Godwin (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.256-267.

<sup>31</sup> Bill Rolston, '“This is Not a Rebel Song”: The Irish Conflict and Popular Music', *Race and Class*, 42 (2001), p.54.

## Methodology

Writing about the interplay between popular music and popular politics in the long campaign against apartheid in Britain requires a variety of sources and approaches.

At heart this thesis is an examination of the way in which popular music, as a part of an emerging ‘revolutionary popular entertainment industry’, could impact upon and coincide with the changing face of popular politics in post-war Britain.

Although this is an area which has traditionally received little attention from academic historians, increasing numbers of those working in the field of

Contemporary British History have sought to engage with popular music as a source base for understanding social change in post war Britain. Most notably Lucy Robinson has written about the impact and interpretation of charity singles in post war Britain and the Red Wedge campaign.<sup>32</sup> Reflecting on the wider issues generated by the latter Robinson has argued that;

The relationship between politics and popular culture in the 1980s is generally seen in terms of censorship or in terms of media policy, or through the lens of promotional culture configured as PR or ‘spin’, or the artificiality of politicians’ engagement with music events like Red Wedge.<sup>33</sup>

Robinson’s call for ‘popular culture to be taken seriously’ as a phenomenon, mirrors the approach taken in this thesis, specifically that ‘mediated cultural representations of politics’ can act as ‘historical sources in their own right’.<sup>34</sup> Other historians of modern Britain have also considered the impact of popular music in the shaping of British cultural and political life in passing. Richard Weight’s

*Patriots: National Identity in Britain 1940-2000* uses a wide range of sources from

---

<sup>32</sup> Lucy Robinson, ‘Putting the Charity Back Into Charity Singles: Charity Singles in Britain 1984–1995’, *Contemporary British History*, 26 (2012), pp. 405–425.

<sup>33</sup> Lucy Robinson, ‘“Sometimes I like to stay in and watch TV...” Kinnock’s Labour Party and Media Culture’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), p.357.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

a number of facets of popular culture to illustrate changes in British social life, particularly with regards to changing ideas about gender and race in Britain.

In terms of the wider political context of this project, I rely on a variety of secondary material. In terms of the specific context of the struggle against apartheid in Britain, little has been written examining the subject in great deal. Particularly useful are Håkan Thörn's *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of Global Civil Society*, Rob Skinner's *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid* and Roger Fieldhouse's *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain, 1959-1994*, which help to explain the wider context of the anti-apartheid movement and the particular organisational histories which shaped popular music campaigns against apartheid. These above texts touch briefly upon the cultural boycott and attempts to use popular culture as a campaigning tool, but appear somewhat dismissive of the overall value of such campaigns. As a former member of the AAM, Fieldhouse's history is particularly useful as a guide to the unique way in which AAM operated.

I will also cover secondary material about other contemporary British organisations, particularly those who shared a similar space to the AAM on the broad left. With overlapping interests, membership of the AAM often crossed over with a number of different campaigns and organisation. Martin Pugh's history of the Labour Party *Speak for Britain* is a particularly good overview of the changing patterns of left wing activism in Britain and the way in which overarching ideological shifts directed wider campaigns inside and outside of that party. As a supplement to this, Michael Crick's *The March of Militant* offers a wider overview of both the titular group and others on the far left and their interactions with not only the Labour Party but with campaigns such as the AAM.

In terms of primary material I use the records and materials of a number of anti-apartheid groups, humanitarian interest groups such as Amnesty International and labour movement organisations such as trade unions. Of primary importance are the archives of the AAM held by the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. As the leading anti-apartheid group in Britain, the AAM enjoyed strong links with the ANC in exile in Britain and was unmatched in its organisational size and the diversity of its campaigns against apartheid. Its archive, although occasionally reflecting the group's idiosyncrasies, has a great deal of material relating to all aspects of both the cultural boycott and also the organisation of the popular music focused sub group AAA. In addition to the physical archive, the AAM is now also represented by a digital archive, which collects select items from the physical archive alongside a number of new materials. Most prominent among recent additions to its holdings are a number of new oral histories with key individuals. In addition to this I also use material from the ANC's online archive which include not only contemporary memorandums on the subject of the cultural boycott and political popular music campaigns, but also retrospective papers on the subjects given at conferences both during and after the campaign against apartheid.

I also look at material related to campaigns from trade unions on South Africa and established human rights organisations such as Amnesty, much of which is held at Warwick University's Modern Record Centre. I hope to capture something of the context of the political debate in established campaigning organisations. In this way I am able to illustrate a contrast between these groups and the newer anti-apartheid groups. Many trade unions not only formally supported the AAM through generous donations to the organisation, but also commissioned independent research on South Africa. Furthermore, these trade



unions were also some of the most consistent supporters and provider of funds for the various anti-apartheid concerts of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In addition to this I also engage with a number of memoirs and diaries from both leading political figures and activists which help to show the wider arguments that political popular music campaigns engaged with. Although rarely directly applicable to the wider theme of politics and popular music, they can show other dimensions of the debates. For example Barbara Castle's *Diaries* go into great detail about the arguments over economic sanctions against South Africa throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Similarly, Peter Hain's memoirs which chart his journey from anti-apartheid activist to Labour MP contain lengthy passages about the growing use of direct action to enforce the sporting boycott. Although neither account directly references the role of popular music, they help to sketch out the wider debates around boycotts and political action against South Africa. I also use a number of memoirs by musicians and music industry figures. Although these carry similar issues as with political memoirs, they can display a remarkably honesty. For example Bob Geldof's 1986 memoir *Is That It?* makes a number of unguarded remarks about the political context of *Live Aid* which help to make his intentions clearer than many of his subsequent statements on the event.

Writing about popular music in particular comes with a number of unique challenges in terms of approach. I use a number of songs and recordings throughout as a primary source in order to illustrate the way in which musicians and their audiences understanding of apartheid and support for anti-apartheid campaigns and groups. These range from easy to obtain releases from internationally successful groups and artists such as Miriam Makeba, Harry Belafonte, Peter Gabriel and Ladysmith Black Mambazo to more obscure musicians such as Johnny Clegg,

Malombo and The Redskins, whose recordings can be harder to find due to lack of initial commercial success. The analysis of musical sources mainly considers the lyrics of each song in terms of what feelings or associations they may have evoked in different audiences. In terms of the musical content and form of the songs, I do not intend to analyse the music of each song in a technical way. Although I make reference to some concepts such as rhythm and instrumentation, I do so only to make points that would be fairly obvious to people, like myself, with little or no formal musical training. This approach seeks to analyse the music on an obvious and explicit level in the same way that most listeners would have interpreted and engaged with the recordings. This mirrors the approach taken by Charlie Gillett, who incidentally played a significant role in the promotion of world music, whose writing on popular music focuses heavily upon the role of the audience in interpreting song texts.<sup>35</sup>

This recognises that the meaning of a song is not just derived from the intention of the songwriter but also by the interpretation of the listener.<sup>36</sup> As Frith has shown, the meaning of songs, obscured by allegory and metaphor is the result of a negotiation between songwriter and listener. Importantly this negotiation of meaning in a song's lyrics is often not just held within the lyrics but also within the context of the songs performance. As Frith argued 'the issue in lyrical analysis is not words, but words in performance'.<sup>37</sup> In the case of South Africa, where state censorship served to limit the ability of musicians to openly criticise apartheid, this coding of a message in lyrics could often be unpicked by listeners, who would understand references and allusions. There is also what Frith called 'lyrical drift',

---

<sup>35</sup> Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of The City: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, pp.163-170.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

whereby lyrics can obtain a radically different meaning when the words are seized as slogans in a manner seemingly unintended by the songwriter.<sup>38</sup> For example the chant of ‘We don’t need no education’, which was taken from Pink Floyd’s ‘Another Brick in the Wall’, was used by black South African’s protesting against attempts to make Afrikaans the language of instruction in schools.<sup>39</sup>

For this reason, I also support my analysis of songs and recordings by engaging with contemporary criticisms of them from music journalists in publications in order to gain a sense of contemporary reception and understanding of the source material. This relies heavily on the British music press such as the *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Q*, who provided a consistent commentary on popular music often with links to current events and editorials which linked music to contemporary political debates. These publications also enjoyed high circulation, with hundreds of thousands of copies of various publications regularly being sold for most of the period.<sup>40</sup> At certain times different titles even took distinct political lines, such as the *NME*’s enthusiastic support of Labour in the mid-1980s. During the 1980s even fairly uncontroversial titles such as *Smash Hits*, primarily aimed at a younger audience, devoted articles to current political issues and even interviewed political figures such as Ken Livingstone and Margaret Thatcher. Increasingly, since the 1990s these sources have been supplemented by high profile features and reviews and commentaries on popular music in newspapers such as *The Times*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian*.

In addition to these press sources I also consider the large amount of material both academic and general on popular music and particular musicians or

---

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.165-167.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.165.

<sup>40</sup> Pat Long, *The History of the NME: High Times and Low Lives* (London: Portico, 2012), pp.14-148.

groups. As noted above, very few have written directly about the relationship between popular music and popular politics. Many of those who have written on the subject have come from the popular market. The *Guardian* journalist Robin Denselow's 1990 book *When The Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* gives a comprehensive overview of the links between popular music and popular politics in Britain and America, acknowledging the interlinking nature of many different political popular music campaigns. Particularly of note is that the second edition of the book ends with a triumphant reflection on the 1990 Mandela concert at Wembley. In a similar vein Dorian Lynskey's *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs*, which builds on Denselow's approach, combining close examination of a number of songs with a commentary on their immediate context.

Also useful are a number of genre specific studies such as Lloyd Bradley's work on reggae and Black British Music, which gives a good indication of the micro-politics and everyday interactions which informed the dynamics of wider campaigns. In addition to this, the work of a number of highly regarded music journalists such as Robert Christgau, Jon Savage and Simon Reynolds, are used to further show the way in which popular music interacted with its wider political context. This is particularly clear in Jon Savage's work where punk is linked with the breakdown of the post war consensus and social cohesion in 1970s Britain.

In addition to these popular texts on popular music I also supplement my secondary reading with a number of academic sources which offer commentaries on popular music and the popular culture associated with it. Of key importance is the work of the sociologist Simon Frith such as *Performing Rites* and *Sound Affects* which both go into great detail about the social significance of popular music and the ways in which it became embedded as part of youth culture. Frith also makes

some clear links between music and social movements.<sup>41</sup> In addition to these more general considerations of popular music, I also engage with a variety of material, mainly from a musicologists and ethno-musicologists, which discusses the specific issues surrounding world music. The work of musicologists such as Steven Feld, White and Taylor has detailed many of the ongoing issues and criticisms which have dogged world music.<sup>42</sup> Also essential are accounts of music making in South Africa such as David B. Coplan's *In Township Tonight* and Rob Allingham's extensive work on the history of Gallo, South Africa's biggest record label. Particularly useful in this mould is *Sound of Africa* by Louise Meintjes who uses an account of the recording one *mbaqanga* album in the early 1990s to tease out and illuminate some of the long running tensions and sites of conflict within South African music.<sup>43</sup>

This thesis examines the role of popular music in the campaign against apartheid. Whilst Denselow, Firth and Lynskey have offered overviews of the way in which popular music has interacted with a number of political campaigns, I focus primarily on the interaction between popular music and anti-apartheid campaign groups. By doing so I am able to present a much clearer picture of the relationship between popular music and popular politics in one campaign. However I also believe that the use of popular music in the campaign against apartheid, as the longest running and most successful example, is also representative of broader trends in many other political popular music campaigns. For this reason I examine a number of other contemporary political popular music campaigns such as Red

---

<sup>41</sup> Frith, *The Sociology of Rock*, pp.37-47.

<sup>42</sup> See the following for a fairly comprehensive overview of the controversy and long running debate generated by world music

Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (London: Routledge, 1997)

<sup>43</sup> Louise Meintjes, *Sound of Africa: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

Wedge and Live Aid, to show the ways in which they interacted, impacted and differed from campaigns against apartheid. In this way I show that throughout this period popular music had the potential to function as a site of political action. A fact that was grasped by many musicians and music fans who consciously sought to use popular music to support anti-apartheid campaigns. Many of these figures became heavily involved in campaigns against apartheid and even took organisational roles within campaign. This level of involvement is neglected by accounts which try and take a broad overview of the relations between popular music and popular politics. These tend to emphasise the way in which musicians move through a variety of campaigns without giving a sense of the real level of commitment given by some musicians.

This thesis also considers the way in which musicians and their audiences interacted with established campaign groups such as the AAM, trade unions and left political parties in Britain and further afield. This helps to show the disputes and tensions at the heart of political popular music campaigns such as AAA. This could be easily overlooked by a broader overview. For example the debates around the cultural boycott, exposed the way in which the AAM and AAA felt able to dictate to South African musicians how they should campaign against apartheid.

Finally this thesis will consider popular music and its links with popular politics within the framework of a campaign which spanned the golden age of both social democratic politics and the music industry. The progress of the campaign against apartheid was against a backdrop of change for the political left. Popular music played a key role in tracking these wider political change, often providing a running commentary. The changing political landscape also affected the way in which popular music interacted with campaigns such as the AAM and AAA. The

early importance of the boycott campaign showed the influence of a more traditional trade union led form of organising. In contrast later projects such as the Wembley Concerts demonstrated a growing awareness of how the campaign against apartheid could draw upon audiences from beyond its traditional base

## **Research questions and structure**

This thesis will be built around a number of key questions about the relationship between popular music and anti-apartheid campaigning. Firstly it will be seeking to assess the extent to which popular music was able to impact on anti-apartheid campaigning of groups such as the AAM. Secondly to what extent popular music campaigns such as the boycott or high profile concerts were successful or an effective tool for building political movements in Britain. I will also reflect on the similarities and differences between anti-apartheid and other contemporary political campaigns, many of which shared members with groups such as the AAM. In this way we can examine the extent to which the AAM's interaction with popular music mirrored or differed from other attempts to utilise music as a campaign tool. In this way I will also be able to address the question of the extent to which formal political groups and popular could collaborate effectively. This will also help to the wider progression of left wing politics in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century.

This thesis will examine the above research questions through a number of interconnecting case studies that show the variety of interactions between popular music and popular politics in the anti-apartheid campaign. In this way I hope to capture just how wide and varied musical interactions with anti-apartheid campaigning and activism more widely were. In addition to this the case studies

will also consider the ways in which these interactions succeeded in bridging the gaps between popular culture and popular politics.

I will begin with an examination of the history of the campaign to enforce a musical boycott of South Africa. Championed by the AAM in Britain, the musical boycott of South Africa was the longest running and most consistent example of a popular music campaign against apartheid. However its progress not only showed the tensions and contradictions inherent in the strategy, but also exposed differences in the approaches and beliefs of the different campaigning groups involved.

This will be contrasted in the second chapter which is an overview of the ways in which world music as an emerging trend reflected a growing awareness of the issue of apartheid. Notably this was an arena largely outside of traditional left political circles, which was often critical of campaigns such as the boycott. In this way we can see a popular music reaction to anti-apartheid campaigning that came from outside of traditional political campaigning organisations such as the AAM.

This will be expanded on in the third chapter where I will use the album *Graceland* as an example of the tensions between two different approaches to anti-apartheid solidarity. The level of debate and controversy surrounding the album's recording and release provide the clearest example of the way in which the campaign for a musical boycott could divide opinion even between those already involved with anti-apartheid campaigning.

In the fourth chapter the focus will shift to the role played by reggae in articulating anti-apartheid sentiments and wider ideas of global black solidarity. In this way I will examine a political space that, while broadly allied with more



traditional political movements such, was not always directly connected to the mainstream of groups such as the AAM.

In the fifth chapter I will reflect upon the way in which various groups sought to use concerts and concert tours as spaces for political campaigning and how this fed into anti-apartheid campaigning. The differences in opinion about what popular music could achieve was played out in a number of different ways throughout the duration of the campaign against apartheid. In this way the chapter will revisit material and themes from the previous chapters, particularly with regards to running tensions between different visions of left wing politics in Britain.

# **1)“Culture is a weapon that we can use against the apartheid regime”**

## **The Cultural Boycott and the Anti-Apartheid Movement**

By the beginning of the 1980s, popular music had long been seen as part of the wider international campaign against apartheid in South Africa. For the overwhelming majority of this period music, in conjunction with other cultural endeavours, was conceived as something to be withheld from the apartheid regime. From the earliest days of the international campaign against apartheid, the 'cultural boycott' had been promoted as a key tactic in the campaign to isolate South Africa. In a 1954 letter to the *Observer*, Trevor Huddleston, who was then serving as an Anglican priest in South Africa, argued:

those who believe racialism to be sinful or wrong should refuse any engagement to act, to perform as a musical artist or ballet dancer- in short engage in any contracts which would provide entertainment for only one section of the community.<sup>44</sup>

However whilst the cultural boycott outlined by Huddleston still placed heavy emphasis on the economic ramifications of the actions, it also outlined less quantifiable effects of the cultural boycott. For example, Huddleston argued that a cultural boycott should replicate the 'deprivation and frustration' faced by black South Africans and would eventually lead to apartheid's downfall.<sup>45</sup> Whilst other boycotts were designed to attack the finances of the apartheid regime, the cultural and sporting boycotts had within them a unique desire to provoke an emotional response.

---

<sup>44</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AAM National Committee, 'Cultural Boycott: Revised Statement', 11 December 1982.

<sup>45</sup> MSS.AAM.1463, AAM National Committee, 'Cultural Boycott: Revised Statement'.

Huddleston, who would later become an Archbishop for Mauritius, and the president of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement throughout the 1980s, had a long connection with popular music. He began his career in the church working as a priest in Sophiatown, the black township which was at the heart of the black South African Jazz scene of the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>46</sup> In his role Huddleston met and encouraged future musicians such as Hugh Masekela and Jonas Gwanga, both of whom would later be forced into exile.<sup>47</sup> As Bishop of Stepney, Huddleston continued to support young musicians. For example, he gave a tape recorder to a young Gary Kemp to encourage Kemp's nascent song writing.<sup>48</sup> Kemp would later perform with Spandau Ballet at anti-apartheid concerts. Clearly Huddleston, who was at the very heart of the British campaign against apartheid, had an appreciation of music, which went beyond seeing it as a means to apply economic pressure on South Africa and understood how music could be used to oppose apartheid. However, the enacting of the cultural boycott focused the role of music as an economic agent. This was in line with the wider boycott campaign that was being spearheaded in Britain by the AAM.

In this chapter I will trace the evolution of both the long running campaign to promote and enforce a musical boycott of South Africa and the political context that shaped its development. In particular the way in which the campaign for a musical boycott became distinct from other similar boycott campaigns. In this way I will show how campaign groups such as the AAM were influenced by shifts in British political and cultural life. This in turn led both to the diversification of

---

<sup>46</sup> David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp.170-223.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213.

<sup>48</sup> This has been well documented in a number of press profiles of both Huddleston and Kemp/Spandau Ballet, one of the most illuminating takes can be found on the recent Spandau Ballet retrospective film *Soul Boys of The Western World* where Kemp talks at length about the impact of knowing Huddleston. *Soul Boys of The Western World* (Dir. George Hencken, 2014).

methods of campaigning and a changing belief in what popular music could achieve as a tool for political activism. Yet the evolution of an increasingly participatory strategy, which saw music as a political tool in itself and not simply an economic product, also highlighted tensions and disagreements. The AAM and other campaigners in Britain would later champion a strict interpretation of the cultural boycott to the point at which they came into conflict with not only musicians but also elements of the ANC itself. Therefore the story of the musical boycott, the longest running and possibly most successful cultural boycott of South Africa offers an ideal case study of the way in which music came to a position of prominence within a number of anti-apartheid campaigns.

To understand the origins of the musical boycott and indeed the wider cultural boycott it is important to first consider the context of the British AAM. The AAM was founded in 1959 in response to ANC President Albert Luthuli's call for an international boycott of South Africa in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre.<sup>49</sup> This was the culmination of the growing calls for a boycott of South Africa within Britain that had also welcomed Huddleston's 1954 letter to the *Observer*. As the anti-apartheid activist and South African émigré Peter Hain later argued, the emergence of the AAM was the result of the coming together of a variety of concerned interest groups who had pioneered small scale boycotts of goods such as South African fruit.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the groups that formed the AAM represented a large coalition of political opinions from established groups on the political left such as the Trade Union Congress, the Labour Party, the Liberal Party and Communist Party of Great Britain. They were joined by newer protest and advocacy groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Christian

---

<sup>49</sup> MSS.AAM.1463, AAM National Committee, 'Cultural Boycott: Revised Statement'.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country: The Struggle for the New South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), p.45.

Action.<sup>51</sup> In addition, a variety of organisations representing Southern African émigrés in Britain and a variety of left liberal church groups joined the movement.<sup>52</sup>

Despite these varying backgrounds, the constituent members of the AAM soon coalesced around the tactic of boycotting South Africa. Indeed, the predominance of this tactic had meant that group had identified itself as The Boycott Movement before adopting the AAM title in the March of 1960.<sup>53</sup> AAM would institutionalise this approach with a wide range of boycott campaigns, ranging from a campaign to stop British government selling military equipment to South Africa to grassroots boycotts of South African goods, which some estimated represented a drop of almost £2 Million in money spent on South African goods from January to April 1960.<sup>54</sup>

Whilst these boycotts emphasised the financial harm done to South Africa, other campaigns, considered the ways in which boycotts could have wider reaching effects. Assessing the potential impact of the boycott of UK tours by South African sports teams, Hain argued,

sport might have seemed an unusual choice for political protest, at best peripheral and at worst eccentric. But this was misunderstanding the whole white South African psyche. Whites were sports mad... international sport gripped the white nation as nothing else-and more importantly granted them the international credibility and legitimacy they craved as the evil reality of apartheid began to be exposed by horrors such as Sharpeville.<sup>55</sup>

This mirrored a statement on the musical boycott in a 1986 AAM discussion paper on the role of music in the wider cultural boycott which noted that;

---

<sup>51</sup> An interesting parallel between AAM and some of the other newer protest groups of the 1950s and 1960s can be found in the work of Ben Pimlott. In particular see, Ben Pimlott, 'Trade Unions and the Second Coming of CND', in Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London: Longman, 1982), pp.215-218.

<sup>52</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005), pp.4-10.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country*, pp.45-46

It is important not to underestimate the impact on white South Africa, especially on young people of this form of isolation. The fact that no musician of any significance is now prepared to perform in South Africa is a telling message to white South Africa of the extent to its international isolation.<sup>56</sup>

This shows the ways in which the cultural boycott was not envisioned simply as a tool to economically harm South Africa, but also conceived a way to harm South Africa culturally through isolation. In addition to this Hain's campaigns to enforce the sporting boycott also emphasised the necessity of direct action to disrupt events and to draw attention to the issue.<sup>57</sup>

Whilst many would come to see the musical boycott of South Africa in a similar light, the campaign bore more resemblance to more conventional boycotts in its early years. Firstly it was a campaign that closely followed established boycott tactics with a variety of technical and performance unions in Britain, such as the British Musicians Union, the actors union Equity and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, who all passed motions at their conferences in the 1960s and 1970s forbidding their members from working in South Africa.<sup>58</sup> As a result the policy of the British MU, one of the first pass a motion supporting the cultural boycott at their conference in 1961, unequivocally stated that 'members should not perform in South Africa as long as apartheid exists'.<sup>59</sup> It could be argued that this reflected the way in which popular music occupied a much different space to other cultural mediums such as sport. Whilst sport had the power, in Hain's words, to affect the Afrikaner 'psyche', popular

---

<sup>56</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AAM, 'The Cultural Boycott and the Freedom Struggle in South Africa' (September, 1986), p.9.

<sup>57</sup> Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country*, p.51.

<sup>58</sup> ANC, 'Some important developments in the movement for a Cultural Boycott against South Africa' (23 November 1983), < <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=6869&t=Boycotts> (11 September 2015).

<sup>59</sup> ANC, 'Some important developments in the movement for a Cultural Boycott against South Africa'

music remained a niche concern viewed with great suspicion by Pretoria.<sup>60</sup> As Charles Hamm has shown, the Afrikaner press was particularly vicious about popular music, expressing concern that rock music might promote amongst other things, 'inter-racial dancing'.<sup>61</sup> Importantly what this meant is that unlike sport, there was little chance of South African musical acts travelling to perform in Britain, reinforcing the emphasis on an economic boycott.

In one sense the first two decades of the British musical boycott of South Africa were something of a remarkable success. The AAM's archives show that whilst issues surrounding the performances of plays and the distribution of British films remained problematic and could be unpopular with individual directors, playwrights and studios, the number of British groups entering South Africa was minimal.<sup>62</sup> This could be attributed to two distinct factors. Firstly the relative strength of the British MU and its ability to financially penalise through blacklisting any members breaking its policy of boycotting South Africa and secondly the individual conscience of groups such as The Beatles and the Rolling Stones who both turned down highly lucrative offers to play in South Africa in the 1960s.<sup>63</sup> The Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards had even tried, ultimately unsuccessfully, to persuade the American group The Byrds to abandon a planned tour of South Africa in 1968.<sup>64</sup> What this demonstrates is the growing political awareness of the leading popular music groups of the 1960s

---

<sup>60</sup> Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country*, p.45.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', *Popular Music*, 5 (1985), p.163.

<sup>62</sup> The most high profile breaking of the musical boycott during the 1960s, certainly in terms of the amount of time AAM devoted to it, came from the decision of the Welsh Eisteddford to send Welsh vocal choirs to tour South Africa.

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS. AAM.1462, Wales AAM, 'Eisteddford Press Clippings' (January 1970).

<sup>63</sup> MSS.AAM.1463, AAM, 'The Cultural Boycott and the Freedom Struggle in South Africa', pp.9-10.

<sup>64</sup> Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.58.

to consider the wider political ramifications of their actions. Though this was a process that would be accelerated by popular cultures leading role in protest against the Vietnam War, there was also a generational dimension with younger groups willing to take a stand on societal issues. For example from the outset of their first American tour, The Beatles made it clear that they would not play concerts in segregated venues.<sup>65</sup> This in itself spoke of a generational change in the attitudes of musicians and popular music culture more widely. For musicians and performers of the previous generation, any attempt to link popular music and politics seemed particularly outlandish. When questioned in the late 1970s about his frequent trips to perform in South Africa, Cliff Richard asserted that the wider politics of apartheid had, ‘...nothing to do with me. That’s got to do with economics or something. But why are we talking about politics? It’s an abstract thing that hangs over countries and has no meaning. I’d rather talk about God’.<sup>66</sup> What this shows is that the decision not to play in South Africa by various bands from the early 1960s onwards, was increasingly the result of a conscious decision based on a moral stand. This was informed by the growing sense that there was a place and perhaps even a duty for popular music to inform political debates.

Additionally it is also important to consider how the British MU was able to practically enforce its policy of not playing in South Africa. For smaller groups, or for musicians who primarily earned money as members of backing bands or playing in orchestras, the lure of the financial reward for playing in South Africa could arguably be much greater than for the biggest groups. Yet the threat of being fined by the union and the prospect of being effectively blacklisted from venues

---

<sup>65</sup> Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Vintage, 2005), pp.9-10.

<sup>66</sup> Muff Anderson, *Music in the Mix: The Story of South African Popular Music* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), p.48.



and studios in Britain, meant that the majority of jobbing musicians were wary of breaking the boycott. It is worth remembering that even well into the late 1970s the British MU played a key role in what music was played on radio. Throughout the 1970s the British MU effectively dictated how many hours of pre-recorded music could be played across the then four national radio stations through ‘needle time’ settlements, preferring that its members be paid full union rate for recording specific sessions.<sup>67</sup> Although the union’s increasingly reactionary practices, such as unpopular strikes and their farcical 1982 attempt to ban synthesizers, alienated many erstwhile supporters, the MU retained the power to penalise artists.<sup>68</sup> Notably, many of those who did break the cultural boycott of South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s were not members of the British MU. Artists such as Cliff Richard, Tom Jones and Dusty Springfield were members of either the American Musicians Union, which did not at that time have a formal boycott policy, or, by virtue of being a solo singer, a member of the apolitical Variety performers union.<sup>69</sup>

The focus of the AAM on enforcing the cultural boycott in the 1960s and 1970s effectively meant that the early cultural campaign against apartheid was often focussed on responding to the specific practical issue of the boycott rather than seeking to use music to raise awareness of apartheid in South Africa. With the exception of helping to organise and promote a handful of small folk events in London. In many ways this arguably reflects the wider lack of musical material about the situation in South Africa. In spite of the international condemnation of South Africa over events such as the Sharpeville massacre, popular music condemning apartheid remained a rarity. In Britain, the folk singers Ewan MacColl,

---

<sup>67</sup> Alwy W. Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis: Britain in the 1970s* (London, 2008), pp.83-84.

<sup>68</sup> Musician’s Union, ‘The Musician’s Union: A Social History, 1981-1990 (2013). <[http://www.muhistory.com/?page\\_id=206](http://www.muhistory.com/?page_id=206)> (11 September 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1460, Musician’s Union, ‘South Africa-Policy of Apartheid, History of Musician’s Union Action’ (December, 1964), p.4.

who had turned out for the majority of the concerts that had been organised by the AAM, and Bert Jansch provided the two most notable songs about apartheid with 1960's 'The Ballad of Sharpeville' and 1965's 'Anti-Apartheid' respectively.<sup>70</sup> Yet both of these songs and the few others on the subject of apartheid, were released as album tracks by artists regarded as niche interests.

What this demonstrates is that initially the AAM, supported by unions such as the British MU and Equity, primarily saw the role of music, and culture more generally, in the campaign against apartheid in terms of a tool to isolate South Africa. In part this was because, as Christabel Gurney has argued, the idea of boycotting as a tactic was at the very foundation of the AAM.<sup>71</sup> Indeed it is worth keeping in mind that the very foundation of the AAM, born as the Boycott Movement, was through boycott campaigns.<sup>72</sup> More importantly though was that this was a position that the AAM shared with the ANC in exile in London. In 1974 Oliver Tambo wrote to the AAM to re-affirm that 'the cultural boycott is a valuable part of the wider struggle' and congratulating the AAM for the contribution made so far to isolate South Africa.<sup>73</sup> What this letter also suggests is the way in which the campaigning and methods of the AAM were becoming increasingly tied to those of the ANC in exile. As Gurney argued by the end of the 1960s, 'the only path the AAM could follow if it was to act in solidarity with what was essentially a

---

<sup>70</sup> Ewan MacColl, 'The Ballad of Sharpeville', *Saturday Night at the Bull and Mouth*, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger (Blackthorne Records, BR 1055, 1977) [LP Album]. Bert Jansch, 'Anti Apartheid', *It Don't Bother Me*, 1965, Bert Jansch (Transatlantic, TRA 132, 1965) [LP Album].

<sup>71</sup> Christabel Gurney, 'The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement' (1999). <[http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British Anti-Apartheid Movement](http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British%20Anti-Apartheid%20Movement)> (11 September 2015).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1461, O.R. Tambo, 'Statement on the Cultural Boycott of South Africa', April, 1974.

national liberation struggle.’ which in effect meant increasing deference to the ANC line.<sup>74</sup>

### **‘The Times They Are A Changing’**

The AAM’s move towards greater integration with the ANC was also aided by the way in which politics and campaigning more generally changed throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s. On university campuses across Britain a generation of young people began to enter radical politics through a variety of student organisations. These groups were often fiercely internationalist in outlook, seeing common cause in protesting against American involvement in Vietnam, British involvement in Northern Ireland or indeed against apartheid South Africa. The sociologist Paul Gilroy has talked about how he felt able to support the Provisional IRA, because Northern Ireland was ‘no different’ from South Africa and that the two situations were part of a ‘romantic’ envisioning of a worldwide struggle against oppression in any form.<sup>75</sup> This was a process that could also be seen in the growing politicisation of musicians and popular music culture. Groups like The Beatles and Rolling Stones, who had already refused to tour South Africa on principal, would be cast increasingly, accurately or not as radical figures.<sup>76</sup>

This sense of a ‘worldwide struggle’ was also aided by the way in which Britain’s role in the world had rapidly changed following the end of the Second World War. The dismantling of the British Empire and subsequent arrivals of migrants from the new Commonwealth, would have a profound effect on British

---

<sup>74</sup> Gurney, ‘The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement’.

<sup>75</sup> Dave Haslam, *Young Hearts Run Free: The Real Story of the 1970s* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), pp.98-100.

<sup>76</sup> This is best evidenced in the way that revolutionary groups seek to claim bands such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones as fellow travelers and recruit their members. In particular Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group spent a great deal of time trying to groom John Lennon. Peter Doggett, *There’s A Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of ‘60s Counter-Culture* (London: Cannongate, 2007), pp.400-403.

political culture at all levels. Richard Weight has suggested that the ‘decline of Britain’s imperial identity in the mid-to late 1950s was so pronounced that the government became seriously agitated about it’.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore this changing identity was also reflected in changes to the post war education system which moved away from traditional narratives of Britain’s imperial history, with teaching itself increasingly considered a ‘left/liberal profession’.<sup>78</sup> By the 1960s ‘symbols of the imperial past increasingly appeared as matter of satire or comedy’.<sup>79</sup> As Bill Schwarz has argued, the history of the British Empire was increasingly conceived as something ‘to run from’.<sup>80</sup> This was a cultural shift that would be keenly felt among the first generation of British activists to operate in an increasingly post-colonial Britain. As Gurney has argued these changes had a direct impact on the progress and orientation of the AAM throughout its long campaign. In particular Gurney suggests that the growing cultural diversity and the issues raised by migration to Britain reinforced to increase the sense of injustice that apartheid generated.<sup>81</sup>

This could also be seen in the way that the AAM and other anti-apartheid campaigns began to develop shift in focus. In the early 1960s growth in individual membership of the AAM was driven largely by the emergence of a new layer of student activists.<sup>82</sup> It was also in this period that people such as Mike Terry, who would become the Executive Secretary of the AAM in 1975, and Jerry Dammers,

---

<sup>77</sup> Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London, Macmillan, 2002), p.290.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.292.

<sup>79</sup> Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1: The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.8.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Christabel Gurney, ‘The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s Difficult Decade’, in Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), p.229.

<sup>82</sup> Student membership even appeared to at times inflate a general decline in individual membership Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.61.

who would spearhead Artists Against Apartheid and write the protest single 'Nelson Mandela', would first come into contact with anti-apartheid campaigns. Even more importantly though, some already involved in anti-apartheid protest, such as Peter Hain, who had arrived as an exile in Britain in 1966, had begun to recognise the value of more direct campaigning against apartheid in Britain. This arguably reflected the ways in which the political landscape had dramatically changed throughout the course of the 1960s.

In Britain, the election of a Labour government in 1964 had a mixed impact on the development of the AAM. Prior to the election victory, the Labour Party had happily thrown its weight behind the AAM at both grass roots and leadership level. In addition to the involvement of many ordinary Labour members in local AAM committees and boycott campaigns, many leading figures in the party such as Barbara Castle and the then leader Hugh Gaitskell were frequent speakers at anti-apartheid rallies and events.<sup>83</sup> From 1962, Castle, then a high profile member of the Shadow Cabinet, became President of the AAM, becoming one of the group's most vocal advocates.<sup>84</sup> As a result of this involvement, motions condemning apartheid were passed by the National Executive Committee in 1962 and at Labour's Annual Conference in 1963.<sup>85</sup> For many this raised expectations that the Labour victory in 1964 would represent a distinct change in British relations with South Africa.

However despite the party's longstanding public opposition to apartheid in opposition, in government Labour, led by Harold Wilson since the sudden death of Gaitskell in 1963, found itself constrained by a number of factors. Most notably, Wilson's government found itself locked into agreements reached by the previous Conservative government, which had negotiated contracts to continue selling arms

---

<sup>83</sup> Gurney, 'The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement'.

<sup>84</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.57.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

to South Africa.<sup>86</sup> Although Wilson's government introduced an arms embargo, which prevented any new contracts, it deliberately excluded these pre-negotiated arms deals from the embargo. The fact that some of these were long term contracts which ran well into the 1970s, was a cause of great concern to the AAM.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Wilson's government demonstrated no real desire to break economic ties with South Africa, with some even pushing for greater trade and cooperation with South Africa.<sup>88</sup> Following the economic troubles of the late 1960s some Cabinet Ministers even suggested alterations to the arms embargo to stimulate the British economy. In his memoirs, Denis Healey, the Secretary for Defence throughout the first Wilson government recalled that 'in the difficult economic situation following devaluation [of Sterling]' the argument for accepting a South African application for naval weapons appeared an attractive prospect to many including Wilson.<sup>89</sup> Although Healey and other supporters of this move including Tony Crosland, George Brown and Jim Callaghan asserted that naval weapons could not be used to enforce apartheid and that embargos on supplying aircraft and spare parts for existing military hardware should remain, the move was controversial enough to ensure a rupture in the Cabinet, which eventually blocked the move and maintained the embargo.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the outcome, this episode displayed well the way in which Labour in power struggled to channel the radicalism of its support for anti-apartheid during opposition in the face of economic crisis. As Healey would later reflect the episode showed a 'gross insensitivity to the hatred of apartheid in both my party and in the

---

<sup>86</sup> Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries: 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p.xv.

<sup>87</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.79.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>89</sup> Denis Healey, *Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p.335.

<sup>90</sup> Healey, *Time of My Life*, pp.335-336.

Commonwealth'.<sup>91</sup> However, Healey was not the only figure to moderate his position on boycotting South Africa. Throughout the 1960s, there was a distinct cooling off in relations between leading figures in the Labour government and the AAM. Talking about her involvement in an AAM fundraising event in March 1965, Castle, who remained President of the AAM and a stalwart supporter, noted in her diary that 'apparently Number 10 [Wilson] doesn't like this very much and other ministers have refused' to attend AAM events.<sup>92</sup>

Yet the reality of the complicated political situation even led solid supporters of the AAM such as Castle to reflect on the difficulty of taking action against South Africa. Entries from Castle's diaries, shows a growing acknowledgement of the difficulties of trying to legislate to oppose the apartheid regime. In particular an entry in Castle's diary from 23rd March 1965, recounting a conversation with the MP Dingle Foot and his diplomat brother Hugh, brothers of future leader Michael, sums up well the growing impasse;

[Hugh Foot] ...said he accepted the economic sanctions against South Africa were ruled by our own economic position ... He therefore wanted something positive with which he could go the rounds of the Commonwealth/African countries persuading them not to embarrass us in the Security Council by pressing for a mandatory resolution and so forcing us to veto it. His idea was a rather incoherent one of a big British Government scheme to train refugees from South Africa and, as far as I could gather, any other Africans who wanted to come. Dingle pointed out that the only training refugees would be interested in would be subversive activity, thus backing my point. I told Hugh that the real question was whether the British government was prepared to do anything to embarrass SA. I thought they were not. If so, such an educational scheme, with its provocative implications, was just not on. There were many other things we could do, short of sanctions, e.g. the ending of commonwealth preferences and SA's share of the sugar agreement: the sort of proposals made by the British Council of Churches. I said I had never been in favour of unilateral sanctions against SA.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.336.

<sup>92</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries*, pp.19-20.

<sup>93</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries*, p.22

What this entry arguably shows is the way in which the pessimistic realities of government made the idealism of opposition impractical. Most importantly the acknowledgement that Britain's 'economic position' ruled out any large scale banning of trade with South Africa and in Castle's confession that she had 'never been in favour of unilateral sanctions'.

In many ways this impasse over South Africa and the scaling back of radicalism mirrored a number of other contemporary issues where Wilson's government found itself at the mercy of circumstance and the worsening nature of international politics. Most notably in the government's unwillingness to condemn American involvement in the Vietnam War, an issue even championed by members of Wilson's cabinet.<sup>94</sup> However as with South Africa, the realpolitik of the situation deemed any political opposition to American actions impossible.

This sense of disillusionment with Labour in government was reinforced by a number of youth led protests in Britain, in particular those against America's war in Vietnam. This was a radicalism that was also increasingly reflected by popular music, which appeared increasingly confident about discussing political issues. The sociologist Simon Frith has argued that by 1967 and 1968 popular music had become established in western culture as politically progressive and that even more importantly musicians were expected to be more than just 'entertainers'.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, musicians such as Bob Dylan, were increasingly subjected to attempts to read revolutionary meanings into their music.<sup>96</sup> Songs such as 'Blowing in the Wind' and 'The Times They Are A-Changing', which had already been interpreted as protest songs in the mould of Woody Guthrie at the time of their

---

<sup>94</sup> Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain: A New History of The Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011), p.336.

<sup>95</sup> Simon Frith, 'Rock and the Politics of Memory', *Social Text*, 9/10 (1984), pp.60-61.

<sup>96</sup> Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On*, pp.24-26.



original release, would go on to amass new meanings throughout the 1960s. In South Africa Dylan's music was even briefly banned after it had been revealed that Dylan was a favourite of John Harris a white South African, and family friend of the Hain's, who was executed for his part in a bombing in 1964.<sup>97</sup>

This belief in the subversive and radical potential of popular music was reflected in an increasing desire to write political or at least politicised music. In Britain, releases such as The Rolling Stones' 'Street Fighting Man', which was interpreted by many as a direct comment on the riot that followed an anti-Vietnam demonstration outside the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square in 1968, in particular were heralded as a sign of change in the direction of popular music.<sup>98</sup> The Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger had been at the demonstration and was happy to tell the press about his reflections on what he saw as a 'fantastic change period'.<sup>99</sup>

Arguably it was this sense of change, which really marked this new wave of youth and student unrest, which also signalled a profound realignment in the British left. Whilst Labour may have been criticised for its moderation, established groups to its left, were equally unattractive to many. Most notably the Communist Party of Great Britain, the largest and most successful left of Labour group, was tarnished by the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, which had depleted its membership and assured that the CPGB would be forever tied in public perception with the authoritarianism of the Soviet Union. Even an attempt to target young people through popular culture, buoyed by the transient support of The Who's Pete Townshend, largely fell on deaf ears.<sup>100</sup> Into this void steeped a

---

<sup>97</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.112.

<sup>98</sup> Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On*, p.170.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>100</sup> Johnny Rogan, *Ray Davies: A Complicated Life* (London: The Bodley Head, 2015), p.78.

number of far left groups, particularly those associated with Trotskyism, who were unsullied by association with the Soviet Union. Reflecting on his decision to join a Trotskyite group, the Socialist Workers Party, over a decade later, the comedian Mark Steel, summed up the appeal of such groups as an alternative to the CPGB, was that they asserted that ‘It *was* possible to be a socialist and not support Russia.’<sup>101</sup>

It was these Trotskyite groups such as Steel’s SWP, then named the International Socialists, the Socialist Labour League and the Militant Tendency, who capitalised on much of this emerging radicalism. Frith has argued that this swing to Trotskyism in Britain represented an ‘obvious migration’ in the path of those radicalised by the disillusionment of the late 1960s and equally a reaction to the failure of a radical youth movement, led by a radical popular music to bring about change.<sup>102</sup> By the late 1960s, these groups, inter-related by ideology, a long history of sectarian squabbles and co-existence as entryist sects within the post war Labour Party, were well placed to capture a newly emerging radical constituency.<sup>103</sup>

Crucially though, this was a factor that these emerging Trotskyite groups well understood. This was in many ways in keeping with the accepted practices of such groups. The small successes that these groups had prior to the late 1960s had often been based around subverting Labour Party youth sections.<sup>104</sup> However rather than being a cynical move, these groups appeared to recognise the importance of harnessing both the energy of young people and even more importantly the potency of youth culture. Many of these groups utilised popular music as a recruiting tool for young members. In Coventry, members of Militant based at Lanchester

---

<sup>101</sup> Mark Steel, *Reasons To Be Cheerful: From Punk to New Labour Through the Eyes of a Dedicated Troublemaker* (London: Scribner, 2001), p.16.

<sup>102</sup> Frith, ‘Rock and the Politics of Memory’, p.61.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Crick, *The March of Militant* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

Polytechnic, organised discos for the local Labour Party Young Socialists as a means of recruiting.<sup>105</sup> Through these discos the group even recruited the resident disc jockey, Dave Nellist, who was later the Labour MP for Coventry South East and one of three Militant supporters elected to Parliament in the 1980s.<sup>106</sup>

However whilst the spectre of these growing far left groups calling for revolution lingered on the political margins, a majority still favoured a more moderate approach. This is a division that can even be seen in contemporary popular music. Whilst The Rolling Stones ‘Street Fighting Man’, flirted with revolutionary imagery, the mainstream was arguably better represented by The Beatles ‘Revolution’ single, which mocked the far left.<sup>107</sup> This space, to the left of Labour yet to the right of the emerging Trotskyite groups, was quickly filled by the emergence of the Young Liberals, the youth section of the Liberal Party from 1966.<sup>108</sup> The Young Liberals quickly assumed the voice of the 60s student generation, calling for US withdrawal from Vietnam and for Britain to leave NATO amongst other radical propositions.<sup>109</sup> In the words of one early recruit, Peter Hain, whose parents had been members of the South African Liberal Party, the Young Liberals were ‘then a vibrant, irreverent force for radicalism’.<sup>110</sup> For Hain, the Liberals were in direct contrast to the Labour Party in government marked by an ‘abject timidity’ on issues relating to Southern Africa.<sup>111</sup>

As a member of the Young Liberals, Hain would come to national prominence as a leading figure in a series of demonstrations and protest against tours by South African sports teams in Britain, protests that often involved direct,

---

<sup>105</sup> David Toulson Interviewing Darrall Cozens at Warwick University, 12 June 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head*, pp.283-285.

<sup>108</sup> Alwyn Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (London: Arum, 2009), p.95.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Hain, *Outside In* (London: Biteback, 2012), p.45.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.45.

but non-violent actions in the mirror of other international protests.<sup>112</sup> What this clearly showed is the way in which the emerging radicalism of the late 1960s directly interacted with the established tactic of the boycott and reinvigorated established groups such as the AAM who had seen setbacks in their calls for official boycotts.

Finally, this radicalism even infected the Labour Party, particularly after the 1970 election defeat. Reflecting on the changes to the rank and file of the party following this defeat Healey later recalled the changes in the profile of Labour members and activists;

In 1952 my Party was dominated by trade unionist from local manufacturing industry... In 1970 they were giving way to active young men and women from the public services... Many of these younger radicals from the expanding middle class found it hard to accept the Labour Party's attitudes and policies as a package. They saw no reason why, for example, because they believed in helping the underprivileged, they should support the nationalisation of industry or oppose the Common Market. The seventies saw the rise of single issue organisations... Many of these organisations took members away from the Labour Party. Others encouraged their supporters to join the Labour Party, but only in order to capture it for their own purposes.<sup>113</sup>

Though Healey remained fairly dismissive, of what he and others would later term as the 'rainbow coalition' of support on the left, it was these new layers of radical groups and causes which would re-energise and revitalise the AAM and the cultural boycott. Furthermore whilst Healey ascribed a degree of cynicism about new radicals joining Labour Party for short term goals, it is important to consider how the participation of these young radicals facilitated a cross fertilisation of both methods and causes. Conversely, it could also help to revitalise established groups, with an influx of enthusiastic young members.

---

<sup>112</sup> Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country*, pp.48-49.

<sup>113</sup> Healey, *Time of My Life*, p.352.

Arguably, this can be clearly seen in the path taken by Mike Terry, who came into radical student politics as an anti-racism campaigner, and has described how he came to be involved in the anti-apartheid struggle by a ‘twist of fate’, after being elected to the National Union of Students International Policy Group in 1970.<sup>114</sup> It was in this position that Terry was responsible for helping to build ‘a new relationship... between the NUS and the AAM as well as with the ANC’.<sup>115</sup> In effect this meant that the NUS, like the AAM before it began to follow the lead of ANC in its campaigning activities, such as the long running boycott of Barclays.<sup>116</sup>

This can be further seen in the way that the newly radicalised NUS reacted to the split in the South African student movement in the early 1970s. The official National Union of South African Students, which was dominated by well-meaning white liberals found themselves opposed by the South African Students Organisation a much more militant group, heavily influenced and led by members of the Black Consciousness Movement such as Steve Biko.<sup>117</sup> Terry later claimed that this made relations between the NUS and NUSAS ‘a little complex’, as the NUS, in Terry’s words would not, ‘maintain a relationship with NUSAS... at the expense of its links with the ANC’.<sup>118</sup> In this sense the NUS was not unusual, in the words of Gurney the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement, ‘tested’ groups such as the AAM’s ‘political maturity’.<sup>119</sup>

However, whilst the groups such as the AAM and NUS were becoming increasingly close to the ANC in exile throughout the 1970s, it is important to also take account of how events within South Africa, often beyond the ANC’s control,

---

<sup>114</sup> Mike Terry, ‘Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign’ (1999). <<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=45>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Donald Woods, *Biko* (London, 1987), p.33.

<sup>118</sup> Terry, ‘Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign’.

<sup>119</sup> Gurney, ‘The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s Difficult Decade’, p.230.

were also shaping the direction of the cultural campaign against apartheid. In particular the work of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa represented a new emphasis on black cultural renewal and non-violence rather than boycotts, formal political participation and armed struggle.<sup>120</sup> The growth of Black Consciousness as a broad movement, illustrates just how the struggle against apartheid was becoming increasingly framed as a cultural struggle. This was made even clearer by Black Consciousness's efforts to become involved with the South African music scene, funding musicians and producers, as well as supporting groups such as the Johannesburg Jazz Appreciation Society and the Black Music Foundation in the late 1970s.<sup>121</sup> Black Consciousness was also responsible for the founding of the Federated Union of Black Artists, which styled itself as a black musicians union and played an important role in encouraging the mbaqanga revival of the early 1970s.<sup>122</sup> A few acts, such as the jazz band Malombo led by the guitarist Philip Tabane, were even directly linked with the Black Consciousness Movement. Some of Malombo's earliest concerts were sponsored by the organisation and the group also played a number of concerts for front organisations such as SASO.<sup>123</sup> Two members of Malombo would go on to join the ANC linked musical group Jabula.<sup>124</sup> What this shows is that there was increasingly a shift in emphasis where music could be increasingly seen as a viable mode of protest.

The long term impact of this can be seen in the way that musicians around the world, often with no link to formal anti-apartheid campaigns, increasingly used their music to criticise apartheid in South Africa. In 1976, the American musicians Gil Scott-Herron and Brian Jackson, released the album *From South Africa to*

---

<sup>120</sup> Woods, *Biko*, pp.39-40.

<sup>121</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p.201.

<sup>122</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, pp.45-59.

<sup>123</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p.245-246.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p.252.

*South Carolina*, which included the single ‘Johannesburg’, which became many music fans introduction to the situation in South Africa.<sup>125</sup> That groups such as the AAM were unprepared for this shift to a cultural campaign beyond boycotts can be seen in the way that they remained slow to recognise the potential of such contributions. Over a year after the album and singles release, a then junior staff member, Chris Childs, wrote to Scott-Heron, sending the musician a copy of the AAM’s latest annual report and asking in extremely vague terms whether Scott-Heron would be able to ‘do a concert for us’.<sup>126</sup> This approach demonstrates a degree of naivety about the workings of the music industry, as generally it would be expected that any attempts to organise concerts would be arranged via artist’s management and/or record company, rather than a letter addressed to the musician themselves. This would later become something of a running theme as the AAM struggled to navigate the music industry. On this occasion the AAM simply received a generic press release from Scott-Heron’s record label Arista, which to all intents and purpose was a dismissal of the AAM’s request.<sup>127</sup>

### **‘Culture is a weapon of struggle’**

In spite of the AAM’s trouble of navigating the music industry and engaging with the newly emerging layer of groups influenced by the Soweto uprising and the murder of Steve Biko, events in the early 1980s played towards the groups established tactic of boycotting South Africa. The issue of the cultural boycott first returned to prominence when the United Nations General Assembly passed

---

<sup>125</sup> Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, *Johannesburg*, Gil Scott-Heron (Arista, ARISTA 23, 1976) [7” single].

<sup>126</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1461, Margaret Lsing to Gil Scott Heron, 1 March 1976.

<sup>127</sup> On this occasion the AAM simply received a generic press release from Scott-Heron’s record label Arista, which to all intents and purpose was a dismissal of the AAM’s request. Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1461, Namjac Records to AAM, 6 April 1976.

Resolution 35/206, which made the cultural boycott, first called for by Huddleston in 1954, official UN policy.<sup>128</sup> As a result of this the UN began to annually publish a register of those who had travelled to South Africa to perform. The AAM both enthusiastically printed the UN list in issues of its monthly paper *Anti-Apartheid News* and also sent the compilers of the register detailed information on any musician or entertainer who dared to travel to South Africa.<sup>129</sup> Denselow has argued, that the resolution and appearance of the UN register ‘suddenly forced’ apartheid on the ‘pop agenda’, elevating the campaign and creating a greater campaign than had existed previously.<sup>130</sup>

However the cultural boycott would move even higher up the agenda with the controversy generated by a series of concerts by British artists such as Rod Stewart, Shirley Bassey and Queen at the Sun City Superbowl venue throughout the early 1980s. Sun City had been built in the supposedly ‘independent homeland’ of Bophuthatswana, and many who were booked to play were assured that it was completely independent from South Africa and as a result not covered by the cultural boycott.<sup>131</sup> As the Bantustans had not been recognised by any other country and had been specifically condemned in the same UN Resolution which had affirmed the cultural boycott, this was a clear lie. An internal AAM briefing note from 1984 argued the motive of the South African government was to break the ‘cultural isolation’ and to represent the arrival of international groups as approval of South Africa.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 35/206*, ‘Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa’ (1980). <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/35/a35r206e.pdf>> (8 October 2013)

<sup>129</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1464, AAM ‘British Singers, Musicians and Other Artists who entered South Africa or Namibia in 1982’, December 1982.

<sup>130</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, p.187.

<sup>131</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Cate Clark to Queen, 26 July 1984.

<sup>132</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Tom Jones Press Clippings, 13 September 1983.



For those well versed in the politics of music inside South Africa, the very existence of Sun City and the drive to attract western artists there, spoke to the way in which attempts to culturally isolate South Africa had succeeded. Speaking to Barry Hoskyns in a March 1984 interview for the *NME* Masekela argued that Sun City was inspired as a ‘propaganda’ exercise that ignored ‘indigenous talent while paying millions of dollars to overseas artists’.<sup>133</sup> That the South African government put so much effort into attracting high profile international musicians both confirmed the AAM’s suspicions and appeared to vindicate the tactic of the cultural boycott.

The emergence of Sun City and its challenge to the boycott therefore required an escalation of the cultural boycott campaign. Immediately a letter writing campaign began with the AAM writing directly to all of the groups that had agreed to play concerts at Sun City. The content of the letters varied little between artists, usually using the same stock quotes from South African based campaigners and the musician Eddy Amoo, a member of the band The Real Thing who had been ‘disgusted’ by what they saw during a residency at Sun City.<sup>134</sup> Although the letters still tended towards dense economic arguments against apartheid, they also displayed a greater awareness of the music industry than previous efforts, such as the attempted correspondence with Scott-Heron. The letters also suggest that a greater degree of research had been done by the AAM’s staff. For instance, in the letter sent to the group Queen, references are made to the groups past activities and

---

<sup>133</sup> Barry Hoskyns, ‘Hugh Masekela, Blazing in the Bush’, *NME*, 31 March 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/hugh-masekela-blazing-in-the-bush>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>134</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Cate Clark, Cate Clark to Queen, 26 July 1984, p.2.

in particular the bands participation in ‘a benefit concert for the people of Kampuchea’.<sup>135</sup>

This new letter writing campaign also varied in a few other important ways. Firstly letters to individual acts and their management became not one off events but often the beginning of long and persistent campaigns which aimed to force the offending musicians into contrition. For example a whole series of letters to Shirley Bassey and Tom Jones, which often ended with threats to picket British concerts, were responsible for both eventually apologising for their trips to Sun City.<sup>136</sup> Perhaps even more importantly was the way in which the organisation of the AAM had continued to develop and expand. Specifically the presence of strong local AAM groups, in cities and regions such as Sheffield, Tyneside and Wales, meant that campaigning was increasingly a practical and provincial affair. For example, the Tyneside AAM group pro-actively picketed and leafleted a number of concerts by boycott breakers, such as David Essex and Leo Sayer.<sup>137</sup> Meanwhile the local AAM group in Sheffield made a high profile protest against the appearance of Cliff Richard, a frequent and unrepentant boycott breaker, at an evangelical conference.<sup>138</sup> This new boycott campaign, driven by people such as Terry and others who had been schooled in the radical student politics of the early 1970s, represented not just a revival of the boycott of the 1960s but also a renewal of many of the ideas that had lay at its heart originally.

---

<sup>135</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Cate Clark, Cate Clark to Queen, 26 July 1984, p.2.

<sup>136</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Tom Jones Press Clippings, 13 September 1983.

<sup>137</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Tyneside Anti-Apartheid Movement, ‘Say No Leo’/‘Don’t Entertain Apartheid’ campaign materials, 1987.

<sup>138</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Sheffield AAM ‘Cliff Richard and South Africa’, 27 June 1985.

Furthermore, the AAM's internal briefings from this period also demonstrate the way in which the emphasis and methods behind campaigning were beginning to change within the organisation. Increasingly discussion documents on the cultural boycott noted sentiments such as 'culture is a weapon that we can use against the apartheid regime'.<sup>139</sup> Specifically the conclusion of a 1984 report on the success of the cultural boycott concludes;

Although from time to time the issue of the cultural boycott becomes a matter of considerable interest and debate, much more consistent work needs to be done by the AAM and its supporters in the cultural field. In particular there is a great need for educational work... to counter South African Propoganda [sic].<sup>140</sup>

Significantly the document concludes with news that there was 'discussions on forming a 'performers against apartheid' group... to publicise and support the freedom struggle.'<sup>141</sup>

In many ways this decision to actively participate in the production and promotion of explicitly anti-apartheid music represents a turning point in the strategy of the AAM. This is in turn reflected by the ways in which the boycott campaign had escalated beyond the petitioning of general secretaries of performers and associated technical unions to the increasing use of localised grass roots direct action. We can therefore see that by the early 1980s, the approach that had guided the AAM up until this point, to support the 'national liberation struggle', through boycotting and putting pressure on campaigning groups, Trade Unions and politicians, was increasingly seen as not fit for purpose in and of itself and was increasingly augmented or even replaced by more active campaigning.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AMM, 'Briefing on Cultural Boycott', 1984.

<sup>140</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AMM, 'Briefing on Cultural Boycott', 1984.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Gurney, 'The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement'.

In many ways the AAM's move towards harnessing music and culture more generally, as a means of facilitating protest against apartheid, reflected similar developments in many other protest organisations. Influenced by the work of the Black Consciousness Movement and the proliferation of protest songs during the Soweto uprising, the ANC itself also began the 1980s keen to make use of music as a means of protesting apartheid.<sup>143</sup> Under the newly adopted slogan of 'culture is a weapon of struggle', the ANC undertook a variety of different musical projects, from the promotion and growth of their banned Radio Freedom service, where songs inspired by Soweto began to feature prominently amongst the usual anti-government broadcasts, and even more obviously in the use of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, a touring musical group which sought to promote and raise funds for the ANC.<sup>144</sup> In the main these schemes proved to be broadly successful at increasing support for the ANC both within South Africa and internationally.

Broadcasting on shortwave from a number of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) training camps throughout Southern Africa, Radio Freedom, gained a loyal following amongst the urban black youth within South Africa throughout the 1980s.<sup>145</sup> In the 2002 documentary *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*, multiple interviewees suggest that listening to Radio Freedom, often secretly, led to them becoming radicalised and in some instances joining MK.<sup>146</sup> Internationally, the Amandla Cultural Ensemble effectively became the 'popular ambassadors for the ANC' with extensive tours of Europe and even a small degree of chart success

---

<sup>143</sup> Shirli Gilbert, 'Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Struggle Against Apartheid', *Journal of South African Studies* (33:2), 2007, p.422.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.421-422.

<sup>145</sup> *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Dir. Lee Hirsch, 2002).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

in Sweden and the Soviet Union.<sup>147</sup> Led by the exiled musician Jonas Gwangwa, the former pupil of Archbishop Huddleston, who had achieved cult success in 1960s America, Amandla mixed traditional South African music and dancing, with worked up interpretations of current South African protest songs and even original compositions by Gwangwa, who brought a musical sophistication to a group mostly consisting of MK recruits.<sup>148</sup> In fact the group's use of styles such as the pennywhistle led *kwela* and *mbaqanga*, the 'African jazz' style that had emerged out of the townships in the 1950s, arguably prefigured the stylistic footprint of world music projects such as Paul Simon's *Graceland*.

The arrival of the Amandla group in Britain for a 1985 tour, an arrangement that had required a herculean amount of planning and negotiation, was met by rave reviews. Reviewing the first night of the tour in the *New Musical Express*, Bob Flynn praised the 'purity and freshness of the music' and noted that 'if there are some blatantly political moments then they are justified and needed. This is an oppressed culture attacking one of the most obscene political situations on the planet'.<sup>149</sup>

Yet the question that is raised from this is, if the Amandla Cultural Ensemble was such a success and received so much contemporary coverage, then why has the group been largely ignored by both critics and musicologists in the years that have ensued. Despite being one of the first groups to have performed in styles such as *kwela*, *mbaqanga* and *isicathimiya*, in the west, styles which would

---

<sup>147</sup> The minutes of the AAM committee that arranged for Amandla to tour Britain in 1987 reveal that there was an attempt to record a single and album during the trip for release in Britain. However due to time constraints and Jonas Gwangwa's objection to the sound quality of the initial recordings the project was abandoned

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1470, IDAF, 'Minutes of the Amandla Committee', Friday 22 November, 1985.

<sup>148</sup> Gilbert, 'Singing Against Apartheid', pp.432-433.

<sup>149</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1470, AMM, Press Cuttings Amandla Tour, November 1986.

later be key components of world music, Amandla have never been fully discussed by musicologists such as Steven Feld, Timothy D. Taylor or Bob W. White. Even the 2002 documentary of the same name, fails to explicitly discuss the work of the group, failing to differentiate the group by name from the wider cultural strategy of the ANC.<sup>150</sup> In one of the only extended discussion of the role of Amandla, Shirli Gilbert has suggested that by the end of the 1980s, the Amandla project was out of step with the approach of the ANC towards cultural work, which was moving towards envisioning a new South Africa and away from the narratives of struggle.<sup>151</sup> Tied to the strict party political line and wider strategy of the ANC, the Amandla group found itself both unable to take advantage of the growing interest in world music and constrained by the strictures of its tightly defined role. For this reason, Amandla were never able to grow from acting almost exclusively as a ‘showpiece’ for the ANC.<sup>152</sup>

## Rock Against Racism

However if the example of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble shows the limitations of attempting to link popular music with a clearly defined political programme, there are other contemporary examples where popular music enjoyed a better relationship with political campaigns. The most obvious examples being the way in which the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism used popular music to campaign against the far right National Front who had enjoyed a growing level of support in UK elections throughout the mid-1970s. Unlike previous attempts to use

---

<sup>150</sup> The majority of the film is given over to the discussion of wider social issues with the musical focus being on the Sophiatown era, with the suggestion that the music that followed was the spiritual heir to the Township Jive sound established in the 1950s  
*Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*.

<sup>151</sup> Gilbert, ‘Singing Against Apartheid’, pp.440-441.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.440-441.

popular music as a platform for political debate, the ANL and RAR, who often organised events together, envisioned their role as educating not only the audience but sympathetic musicians as well. This approach meant that popular music was seen not just as an adjunct to campaigning but as a fundamental part of the campaign itself, as a means of creating dialogue rather than simply delivering a message.

This can be seen in the way that RAR concerts not only raised money to finance traditional campaigning, but also raised money to buy equipment for musicians, such as the reggae group Misty in Roots, who had had their instruments wrecked by NF activists after a concert in Southall.<sup>153</sup> By using music so prominently in their campaigning to both educate and agitate their audience, the ANL and RAR arguably pioneered the approach that would later be adopted by the AAM.

There is of course a question about the extent to which this fairly loose and often chaotic campaign was successful in reaching and influencing the youth vote. In terms of getting people to come to concerts, the ANL and RAR were certainly able consistently drew large numbers of music fans to events.<sup>154</sup> One 1978 free concert held in London's Victoria Park, headlined by Tom Robinson and The Clash, attracted 80,000 music fans.<sup>155</sup> This was four times as many as the number that the ANL and RAR had hoped and planned for.<sup>156</sup> The extent to which such large public events had a real and material impact on politics in general or on the fortunes of the far right, which did dramatically fall by the 1979 General Election, is something of a moot point. Alwyn Turner has argued that the intervention of the ANL and RAR

---

<sup>153</sup> Pat Gilbert, *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of the Clash* (London, 2005), p.236.

<sup>154</sup> Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.150.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

had meant that the NF and the far right more generally had 'failed to make the breakthrough it was threatening', precisely due to the work of the ANL and RAR.<sup>157</sup> Others have suggested that the decline in the fortunes of the NF at the ballot box was caused more by a combination of violent infighting within the NF and Margaret Thatcher's willingness to use the language of the far right on immigration to bring potential NF voters back to the Conservative Party.<sup>158</sup>

Regardless of whether they succeeded or failed, the ANL and RAR also represented the development of some of the more radical streams of thought that had developed on the far left in the late 1960s. In particular the high profile participation of the SWP, demonstrated the ways in which the youth orientated Trotskyite groups of the late 1960s had flowered into an active movement. However it is also worth remembering the way in which ANL and RAR were conceived as broad left projects, with its steering group containing prominent Labour MP's such as Neil Kinnock and activists such as Peter Hain, then amid his transition from the Liberals to the Labour Party.<sup>159</sup> In many ways this represented a unique coming together of the different strands of youth activism that had emerged from the disillusionment of the late 1960s. Importantly though was the central position of popular music in both campaigns which also shows the ways in which the politicisation of popular music in the 1960s had continued to develop in the 1970s.

It could be argued that the very existence of a musical anti-racist campaigns such as RAR in itself demonstrates something of a leftward shift in the political

---

<sup>157</sup> Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p.237.

<sup>158</sup> In particular Thatcher made reference to Britain being "swamped" by migrants during a Granada TV interview. David Widgery, one of the ANL and RAR's key spokesmen used an *NME* interview prior to the General Election in 1979, to suggest that Thatcher's opposition to immigration was essentially the same as the NF's

Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: postpunk: 1978-1984* (London, 2006), p.123.

<sup>159</sup> Hain, *Outside In*, pp.118-120.



consciousness of musicians in the late 1970s. Certainly the emergence of these campaigns speaks to contemporary concerns about the way in which popular music could be a vehicle for a reactionary right wing messages. The RAR campaign against racism was itself was a direct response to a bizarre outburst from Eric Clapton at a 1976 concert in Birmingham, where the guitarist declared that 'Enoch's right' and spoke in favour of forced repatriation in order to 'keep Britain white'.<sup>160</sup> Whilst this was an extreme example of the way in which popular music could co-exist with the far right it fed into established fears about the reactionary nature of popular music and culture more generally. In an article entitled 'What is Racism?' in the RAR paper *Temporary Hoarding*, David Widgery, one of the founders of RAR wrote,

Racism is as British as Biggles and Baked Beans. You grow up anti-black, with the golliwogs in the jam, the Black and White Minstrels on TV and the CSE dumbo history at school... Most of the time British racialism is veiled behind false smiles, charming coppers and considerate charities.<sup>161</sup>

Here we can see the clear concern that racism and reactionary politics more widely were firmly encoded in British society.

The notion that popular music, and in particular rock music as associated with groups such as Led Zeppelin or the Rolling Stones, could also act as a platform for these reactionary right and even far right ideas, was an idea that appeared to have growing traction in popular music magazines such as the *NME*

---

<sup>160</sup> What Clapton exactly said is a matter of some conjecture, many insist that Clapton used a string of racial epithets such as 'wog' and 'nigger". However, it is absolutely clear that Clapton did express support for Enoch Powell. This is a position that he, to some extent, still holds. As recently as 2004 Clapton, promoting an album of Robert Johnson covers, told a reporter for the Scotsman that Powell was "outrageously brave and misunderstood"

Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.139.

Anon, 'A Sentimental Journey', *Scotsman*, 11 April 2004, <

<http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on/music/a-sentimental-journey-1-1392490> (11 September 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Modern Records Center (Hereafter MRC), The Papers of Richard Kuper (International Socialist Group / Socialist Workers Party), MSS.250/1/2/9, 'Controversy: Punk- Progressive or Proto Fascist', *International Discussion Bulletin* (November, 1977), p.21.

and the *Melody Maker* throughout the mid to late 1970s.<sup>162</sup> A fairly typical feature from an August 1979 issue of the *New Musical Express* ridicules Jimmy Page, the guitarist from, what the writer Chris Salecwicz calls one of 'the old superfart bands', Led Zeppelin, for voting Conservative.<sup>163</sup> In the pages of Britain's music press, there was a sense of growing distance between groups and their fans, characterised as an affront to the supposed radical and egalitarian nature of popular music. In a 1976 profile of punk for the *NME*, Caroline Coon argued that;

Millionaire rock stars are no longer part of the brotherly rock fraternity that helped create them in the first place. Rock was meant to be a joyous celebration; the inability to see the stars or to play the music of those you can see is making a whole generation of rock fans feel depressingly inadequate.<sup>164</sup>

In contrast the popular music press were happy to portray the newly emerging punk groups as a much more ideological endeavour. Publications such as the *NME* appeared to show a great deal of faith in pronouncements such as that by Joe Strummer of The Clash, who in one 1976 *NME* feature declared that his band was; '... anti-fascist, we're anti-violence, we're anti-racist and we're pro-creative. We're against ignorance'.<sup>165</sup> This narrative, which explicitly painted punk as a panacea to the 'elitist pretensions' of the mainstream, would become increasingly popular interpretation of punk, which continues to have currency to this day.<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London, 1991), pp.242-243.

<sup>163</sup> Christ Salecwicz, 'Led Zeppelin: Smiling Men With Bad Reputations', *NME*, 4 August 1979. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/led-zeppelin-smiling-men-with-bad-reputations>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>164</sup> Caroline Coon, 'Punk Rock Rebels Against the System', *Melody Maker*, 7 August 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/punk-rock-rebels-against-the-system>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>165</sup> Miles, 'The Clash: Eighteen Flight Rock', *NME*, 11 December 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-clash-eighteen-flight-rock>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>166</sup> This can be seen best in the documentary films of Julien Temple, particularly his biopic of Joe Strummer, which sought to place The Clash front man carefully in a clear political context *Joe Strummer: The Future is Unwritten* (Dir: Julien Temple, 2007).

However, the reality of the situation paints a somewhat more complicated picture. Speaking in 1999, The Clash's Joe Strummer acknowledged the limitations of The Clash's political stance by acknowledging, semi seriously, that the band were primarily

guitar-playing drug addicts... there was no way we were gonna put the Rizlas away and start marching up and down... I'd like to think The Clash were revolutionaries, but we loved a bit of posing as well. "Where's the hair gel? We can't start the revolution 'til someone finds the hair gel!" And I mean that!<sup>167</sup>

Aside from the limits of some bands to contemplate a revolution without hair gel, or indeed one that required something more than posing, punk also presented other issues. In particular, the way in which punk, was happy to co-opt far right imagery such as the swastika and other Nazi insignia, often for childish shock value, concerned many of those involved with setting up RAR and ANL such as Widgery. An internal SWP discussion paper from the November of 1977 devoted three pages to a discussion on the political nature of punk. For one member, punk was a 'cult of violence' that could only inevitably lead 'to an acceptance of social repression'.<sup>168</sup>

Others saw the way in which punk acted as a reaction against the failing post war consensus. Punk was in essence neither left nor right, expressing as much, if not more suspicion of the left establishment as it did the right. Indeed the politics of many punk groups was often incredibly hard to pin down. Malcolm McLaren, the man responsible for putting the Sex Pistols together, had by his own admission sought to construct the group along the lines of an anarchic, Situationist influenced critique of consumerism and the post war consensus.<sup>169</sup> Some certainly used this

---

<sup>167</sup> Charles Shaar Murray, *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and Post War Pop* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p.14.

<sup>168</sup> MRC, The Papers of Richard Kuper (International Socialist Group / Socialist Workers Party), MSS.250/1/2/9, 'Controversy: Punk- Progressive or Proto Fascist', p.21.

<sup>169</sup> Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp.58-59.

argument to explain punk's early fascination with the imagery of Nazi Germany. Shane MacGowan, an early punk convert and later the frontman of the Pogues has suggested that the adoption of such controversial imagery stemmed from a desire to shock his parents' generation for shock value and confront their politics.<sup>170</sup>

However, The Sex Pistol's lead singer John Lydon, christened Rotten by McLaren, would later consistently dismiss all attempts to regard the Sex Pistols as a political statement or even a particularly political group.<sup>171</sup> In interview with Robin Denselow, Lydon would assert that 'We weren't anarchists, just wallies! I suppose Malcolm's idea of the Sex Pistols was a Labour Party version of the Bay City Rollers...'<sup>172</sup> In spite of Lydon's refusal to conform easily to any political template, it is easy to infer a sense of frustration with Britain in the 1970s from much of Lydon's lyrics for the Sex Pistols. In particular the declaration that there was 'No future in England's dreaming', from 'God Save The Queen', appeared to articulate a sense of hopelessness.<sup>173</sup> In concert, John Lydon would often introduce the song 'Liar' with a dedication to the then Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan, a somewhat symbolic swipe at the man who seemed to encapsulate the decline of the post war consensus.<sup>174</sup>

Conversely though some punk groups appeared to embrace the end of the post war consensus. Ian Curtis, the lead singer of Joy Division, a band who certainly appeared to revel in references to Nazi Germany such as their own name, was an open Conservative voter, who happily bragged that he had tricked a Liberal

---

<sup>170</sup> Victoria Mary Clarke and Shane MacGowan, *a Drink with Shane MacGowan* (London: Pan, 2002), pp.150-153.

<sup>171</sup> John Lydon, Keith Zimmerman and Kent Zimmerman, *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (London: Plexus, 1994), pp.125-126.

<sup>172</sup> Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.145.

<sup>173</sup> Paul Cook, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock, Johnny Rotten, *God Save the Queen*, Sex Pistols (Virgin, VS 181, 1977) [7" Single].

<sup>174</sup> *The Filth and The Fury* (Dir. Julien Temple, 2000).

candidate into giving him a lift to the polling station to vote Conservative in 1979.<sup>175</sup> A more interesting example of the way in which popular music reflected the changing political landscape in Britain can be seen in career of The Jam and their frontman Paul Weller. Weller and The Jam had initially stood out after having told a number of interviewers in the *NME* and punk fanzines such as *Sniffing Glue* that they planned to vote Conservative at the next election.<sup>176</sup> The band even devoted one entire song, 'Time For Truth', on their 1977 debut album *In The City*, to a somewhat two dimensional character assassination of the Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan. Yet whilst Lydon's inchoate anger at Callaghan appeared to stem from frustration, Weller's criticism of 'Uncle Jimmy' appeared to be fundamentally right wing, decrying;

What ever happened to the great empire?/  
You bastards have turned it into manure.<sup>177</sup>

The Jam's right wing credentials were seemingly bolstered by some voices in the music press who saw the band's use of the Union Jack as a stage decoration as inherently conservative and potentially worrying. Writing a review of a concert in *Sounds* in 1977 Jon Savage noted that

Looking hard at what they project/are on stage, the way it's presented, it becomes clear (no matter what they might say in "interviews") that they are deeply conservative, if not reactionary... but are they so unaware of its more sinister connotations in the year of the National Front media blitz? Of course. In these restricting times, though, any such chauvinism on a mass level, delivered so authoritatively/frontally, can only be dangerous in the long run, and I'm sure they are not unaware of that...<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>175</sup> Deborah Curtis, *Touching From a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.35.

<sup>176</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.149.

<sup>177</sup> Paul Weller, 'Time For Truth', *In The City*, The Jam (Polydor, 2383 447, 1977) [LP Album].

<sup>178</sup> Jon Savage, 'The Jam, London Hammersmith Odeon', *Sounds*, 31 December 1977.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-l7ondon-hammersmith-odeon>> (11 September 2015).

Such criticism did appear to affect the bands willingness to discuss politics in future interviews. By the time of a November 1979 interview with Paul Morley, Weller, renounced any intention of talking about politics at all. Instead he stated that; 'I'm not coming out with my theories on world politics, because I don't think it's very important. It's not up to me to say. I'm not a spokesman or anything like that.'<sup>179</sup> Similarly the bands musical output appeared to take a distinct leftward turn. The Jam's fourth album *Setting Sons*, released in the same month as the Morley interview, had a number of songs based around themes of class and anti-war sentiments.<sup>180</sup> In particular, the scabrous ode to class war 'The Eton Rifles' and the 1980 non-album single 'Going Underground', which appeared to advocate nuclear disarmament, seemed to indicate just how far the band had travelled.<sup>181</sup>

Later Weller, who would become directly involved in a number of left wing music campaigns, including concerts for AAM, would explain that his earlier declarations of support for the Conservative Party had been; 'dreamt up by a press officer, saying, 'well, The Clash are left wing, The Pistols are for anarchy, why don't you back the Tories or the Queen, just for an angle?'.<sup>182</sup> Yet regardless of the truth behind this excuse, the shift in the bands output, which would be continued in Weller's activism following The Jam, arguably mirrored much wider themes being played out in popular music. Particularly the sense of dissatisfaction with the failing post war consensus. As Mark Steel would later reflect about Weller's pledge

---

<sup>179</sup> Paul Morley, 'The Jam: The Revolution Will Start When Paul Weller Has Supped His Pint'. *NME*, 3 November 1979. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-the-revolution-will-start-when-paul-weller-has-supped-his-pint>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>180</sup> Tony Stewart, 'The Jam: Setting Sons (Polydor)', *NME*, 10 November 1979. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-issetting-sonsi-polydor>> (11 September 2015).

<sup>181</sup> Paul Weller, *Eton Rifles*, The Jam (Polydor, POSP 83, 2059 176, 1979) [7" Single].

Paul Weller, *Going Underground*, The Jam (Polydor, POSP 113, 2141 232, 1980) [7" Single].

<sup>182</sup> Neil McCormick, 'Paul Weller: Some of my Best Friends are Tories', *Telegraph*, 5 May 2010. <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/neilmccormick/100008022/paul-weller-some-of-my-best-friends-are-tories/>> (11 September 2015).

to vote for Margaret Thatcher in the 1979 General Election, 'it would have seemed even more bizarre' if punk groups had told crowds to vote Labour.<sup>183</sup>

However whilst punk reflected a kick against the politics of the post war consensus, its evocation of a culture of 'DIY' music and an egalitarian culture, where anybody could be a musician, chimed well with the youth campaigns of groups on the fringes of the political left. In response to the above judgement that punk was by nature reactionary, another member of the SWP suggested that punk represented a blank canvas onto which causes like anti-racism were able to inject a radical political agenda.<sup>184</sup> Mark Steel, who joined the SWP after attending the 1978 ANL carnival in Victoria Park, typified RAR as representing 'a new form of politics... a youthful vibrant movement' which transformed punk into a genuine 'opposition movement'.<sup>185</sup> That RAR, assisted by the ANL could translate this energy and enthusiasm into a prolonged musical campaign arguably demonstrates the ways in which both a renewed sense of radicalism had re-entered popular music and that political groups were becoming increasingly comfortable with using popular music as not just a means to grow membership but also as a propaganda tool in itself. Whilst Trotskyite groups in the late 1960s had used popular music and associated culture passively to aid recruitment, this new turn emphasised the importance of music as a radical medium.

This can be clearly seen in the way that even beyond RAR, which wound itself up in 1981, radical politics came to be increasingly common current in popular music. Fuelled by what Simon Reynolds has called 'a diffuse left wing academic culture' which embraced 'a sort of ideological pick 'n' mix... Blending

---

<sup>183</sup> Steel, *Reasons To Be Cheerful*, p.12.

<sup>184</sup> MRC, The Papers of Richard Kuper (International Socialist Group / Socialist Workers Party), MSS.250/1/2/9, 'Controversy: Punk- Progressive or Proto Fascist, pp.22-23.

<sup>185</sup> Steel, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, p.14.

often incompatible systems of thought', provincial cities such as Coventry, Leeds and Sheffield, spawned a host of bands who were keen to promote their own political viewpoint.<sup>186</sup> In Coventry, the very deliberate merging of punk and reggae by groups such as The Specials and The Selecter on the *2-Tone* record label, was presented as a stand against racism in itself.<sup>187</sup> In this climate, groups such as The Specials and the Birmingham based reggae band Steel Pulse, themselves veterans of many of RAR's concerts and tours, naturally found themselves coming into contact with the AAM.

This is perfectly illustrated by the attendance of the head of the *2-Tone* label, Jerry Dammers, at the July 1983 *African Sounds Festival in Celebration of Nelson Mandela's Birthday* concert. The event was a twelve hour long music-festival, organised in part by the AAM, and headlined by the South African exile Hugh Masekela, whose sister Barbara then played a key role in shaping the ANC's cultural strategy.<sup>188</sup> Later Dammers would tell the music journalist Dorian Lynskey that despite his involvement in previous anti-apartheid campaigns, particularly against South African sports tours, he had no idea who Nelson Mandela was before the 'African Sounds Festival'.<sup>189</sup> However Dammers, inspired by both the event and by the AAM literature he received at it, was to go on to write and record one of the most remarkable and long living musical condemnation of apartheid, the 1984 single 'Nelson Mandela'.<sup>190</sup> With its simple and easy sing refrain of 'Free Nelson

---

<sup>186</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, p.111.

<sup>187</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.152-153.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190.

<sup>189</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.493.

<sup>190</sup> The song was released in Britain and Europe as 'Nelson Mandela', though it is more commonly known by the title given on its American release 'Free Nelson Mandela'.



Mandela', deliberately aping the female harmonies of South African music, the song was to become a staple of anti-apartheid rallies from London to Soweto.<sup>191</sup>

More than anything, it is the emergence of the 'Nelson Mandela' single in 1984 which seems to have had the greatest impact on the AAM's own cultural strategy. It is certainly clear from the AAM's internal briefing notes and correspondence that throughout 1984 the potential of music as an active campaigning tool caught the imagination of the AAM staff. In one of the many letters sent by the AAM to the UN Centre Against Apartheid in January 1984, Cate Clark, one of the AAM's senior organisers, devoted a lengthy paragraph to praising the song and noted that 'it had the immense potential for publicising the Free Mandela Campaign'.<sup>192</sup> This reference to the 'Free Mandela Campaign' in Clark's letter also demonstrates the way in which the AAM's cultural strategy was once again falling behind the ANC's own thinking on the future of anti-apartheid campaigning.

By 1980, Oliver Tambo, the exiled president of the ANC, came to the conclusion that by 'centring the campaign on a single figure' and consistently calling for the release of Mandela, the ANC could gain vital publicity for its anti-apartheid work.<sup>193</sup> As Mike Terry later recalled, the focus on Mandela was twofold, firstly it 'was helping to unlock the doors of South Africa's political prisons.', but also that; 'the campaign's major purpose was to help put the ANC centre stage of the liberation struggle.'<sup>194</sup> Yet whilst the AAM's enthusiasm was slowly being transformed into plans for a 'performers against apartheid' group, others were also

---

<sup>191</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.190.

<sup>192</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1462, Cate Clarke to the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid, January 1984.

<sup>193</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 2001), p.602.

<sup>194</sup> Terry, 'Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign'.

realising the potential of a popular music led campaign against apartheid in South Africa.

In particular the example of the American musical pressure group Artists United Against Apartheid provides a fascinating parallel with the AAM's own efforts to harness popular music. Formed by 'Little Steven' Van Zandt, guitarist with Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, in 1985, AUAA focussed their campaign on raising awareness of the artistic boycott. In particular AUAA focused on the growing issue of those breaking the boycott by performing at the Sun City entertainment complex.

Built around the 'Sun City' single, an ensemble project featuring a multitude of different artists, AUAA unleashed a wide ranging multimedia project, with not only a full album but also documentaries and books complimenting the single. The projects tie-in book, *Sun City By Artists United Against Apartheid: The Making of the Record* illustrates well the way in which AUAA differed from the contemporary efforts of the AAM. Combining a series of brief extracts from UN literature and American press reports on apartheid with a somewhat overlong account of the album's recording, the book reveals the way in which AUAA reflected a different political context to AAM. Throughout its different platforms the AUAA project, made conscious links between South Africa and the ongoing struggle for civil rights in America. This was in many ways in keeping with the established patterns of anti-apartheid activism in America. As Rob Skinner has acknowledged the prominence of domestic conflict and debate about racial segregation meant that 'opposition to apartheid was aligned with, but also

subordinate to the Civil Rights Movement'.<sup>195</sup> Van Zandt would later tell Denselow that the 'Sun City' single was designed to also 'focus attention on the continuing problem of racism in the USA', by including a diverse array of musicians and styles.<sup>196</sup> The point was made even clearer in the promotional video where footage of events in South Africa played alongside footage of police attacking demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>197</sup>

In contrast the AAM's perspective on campaigning against apartheid remained primarily tied to a sense of duty to the ANC. Throughout its existence the AAM had direct links with the ANC, and by the 1980s even shared an office with the ANC on London's Charlotte Street. By the beginning of the 1970s it had become commonplace for some activists to describe the AAM in Britain as 'the cornerstone of the AAM's fourth pillar'.<sup>198</sup> In contrast the AUAA remained aloof to both AAM and the ANC in favour of a much broader version of anti-apartheid activism, overseen by the UN. This can be seen in Dave Marsh's companion book to the AUAA project which whilst making numerous references to the UN fails to mention the ANC or indeed even Nelson Mandela in any depth until the final pages of the book.<sup>199</sup> This sense of distance can be further gleaned in the significant lack of meaningful correspondence between AUAA and the AAM.<sup>200</sup> Although AUAA shared the notion of popular music as a forum for education and dialogue with

<sup>195</sup> Rob Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c.1919-1964* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.198.

<sup>196</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.189.

<sup>197</sup> Dave Marsh, *Sun City By Artists United Against Apartheid: The Making of the Record* (New York: Penguin, 1985), p.19.

<sup>198</sup> Colin Bundy, 'National Liberation and International Solidarity: Anatomy of a Special Relationship', in Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), p.213.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.

<sup>200</sup> Of the few pieces of material sent between AUAA and the AAM/ANC, the most interesting is a memorandum on proposed changes to the cultural boycott written by Van Zandt in July 1989, which welcomes proposals for a selective boycott. This again demonstrates the differences between AUAA and the AAM in Britain.

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1461, Little Steven to African National Congress, 26 July 1989.

AAM, the emphasis and presentation of the project was distinctly different. Whilst AAM cultivated a directly political approach, which emphasised its links with the ANC, AUAA appeared to appeal to a broader sense of fighting a universal injustice. Furthermore whilst AAM adopted the rough and ready DIY aesthetic of the ANL and RAR concerts, AUAA made up mainly of already famous musicians took its cue from campaigns such as USA For Africa's 'We Are the World' single and 1985s Live Aid concerts.<sup>201</sup>

When the AAM finally organised its own 'performers against apartheid group' in 1986, two years after first committing to it and a year after the AUAA campaign, it represented a distinctly different approach. Led by Dammers and Dali Tambo, the son of the ANC president who also acted as the manager of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, the group, christened Artists Against Apartheid were presented as 'a new musical pressure group'.<sup>202</sup> Whereas Van Zandt's group had simply told listeners that 'I ain't gonna play Sun City', AAA aimed to take practical steps to further the boycott.<sup>203</sup> In their first press release for AAA, Dammers and Tambo outlined a four point plan of practical actions, ranging from the perennial emphasis on the cultural boycott to commitments to use the 'creative community' to grow support for the AAM.<sup>204</sup> In marked contrast to the AUAA's use of vague and patronising declarations about the 'victims' of apartheid, the tone of the AAA's press releases with their frequent uses of expressions such as 'solidarity' and calls for musicians to 'involve themselves in struggle' bore a marked resemblance to the

---

<sup>201</sup> Marsh, *Sun City By Artists United Against Apartheid*, pp.90-95.

<sup>202</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.504.

<sup>203</sup> Steve Van Zandt, *Sun City*, Artists United Against Apartheid (Manhattan Records, 1A 006-20 0927 7, 006-20 0927 7 1985) [7" Single].

<sup>204</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1474, Artists Against Apartheid, 15 April 1986.

language of the British labour movement which it was to an extent rooted.<sup>205</sup> Far from perceiving itself as part of a loosely defined liberal stand against apartheid, the language of the AAA's pronouncements and memoranda makes it clear that the group had a well-defined sense of where they fitted into the anti-apartheid struggle. Just as the architects of the boycott strategy had stressed deference to the 'national liberation struggle', AAA again affirmed that their efforts were meant as a 'complement to the struggle of the people of South Africa'.<sup>206</sup>

Furthermore whereas AUAA appeared to be taking its cues from Live Aid, AAA's outlook was clearly derived from its strong organic links to Trade Unions and left wing politics in general. The declaration signed by all artists wishing to join AAA also denounced 'the Thatcher government' for not supporting economic sanctions against South Africa.<sup>207</sup> Whilst the 'Sun City' single had indeed explicitly criticised the Reaganite policy of 'constructive engagement', it appeared to suggest that the policy represented the failure of 'quiet diplomacy' rather than the outright collusion implied by many AAA statements.<sup>208</sup> In this sense AAA happily positioned itself and its opposition to apartheid as part of a wider oppositional left wing struggle.

As almost a matter of course many of the musicians who signed up to AAA were also actively involved in other political music campaigns, such as concerts for CND, benefits for striking miners and even Red Wedge, the Labour Party's, somewhat ill fated, attempt to use popular music to engage the youth vote.<sup>209</sup> This was in part a fair reflection of a post ANL/RAR consensus that popular music could

---

<sup>205</sup> MSS.AAM.1474, Artists Against Apartheid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1474, Artists Against Apartheid, 'Artist Declaration', 15 April 1986.

<sup>208</sup> Van Zandt, *Sun City*.

<sup>209</sup> John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), pp.151-153.

be mobilised as a radical left wing medium and to this end it could have value as a campaigning tool. This was reflected clearly in a developing left wing world view that could be seen expressed by many journalists at the *NME* and *Melody Maker*. This new broad left consensus in the popular music press was certainly noticed by those who found themselves on the wrong side of the new line. The Conservative leaning music journalist Dylan Jones would later describe this as being typical of a contemporary cultural polarisation, noting that;

During the eighties, much like the seventies, you weren't allowed to be on the other side of the political divide. Being the most divisive Prime Minister in living memory mad Margaret Thatcher the most visible manifestation of right wing authority the so-called counter-culture had ever had, at least in Britain. To the British she was that generations Nixon, a wall on which to project all of society's evils.<sup>210</sup>

During this period the *NME*, then the biggest selling music weekly, even took the unprecedented step of putting the Labour leader Neil Kinnock on its front cover twice, firstly in 1985 and also on the issue on sale during the week of the 1987 election.<sup>211</sup>

The choice of Kinnock is itself illustrative of the particular broad-left consensus which was at the heart of projects such as AAA and AAM more generally and also shared by a sympathetic music press and popular culture more widely. Kinnock represented a reforming mainstream left, associated with the populist radicalism of ANL and RAR, yet safe from the perceived excesses of the far left. It is worth noting that the sympathetic music press were quick to self-police this broad left consensus, spurning any band openly identifying with the left

---

<sup>210</sup> Dylan Jones, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade* (London: Preface, 2013), p.62.

<sup>211</sup> This gives Kinnock the distinction of being one of only three politicians to have appeared on the cover and the only one to have more than one cover. The other two politicians being Tony Blair, who was attacked in a 1998 editorial, and Ken Livingstone during his campaign for London Mayor in the year 2000

Pat Long, *The History of the NME: High Times and Low Lives* (London: Portico, 2012), pp.152-153.

outside of this broad left Kinnockite consensus. For example The Redskins, who were openly affiliated to the SWP, received constant negative press and even outright ridicule, precisely for this tangible link to the far left. In a review of a Redskins concert in the *Melody Maker* from December 1985, Simon Reynolds argued that;

The Redskins don't reach me because Chris Dean [the groups lead singer] isn't a poet, he can't make the mechanisms of power breathe, he can't engage any emotions apart from determination. He is a journalist, telling us mostly what we know already, and telling it badly... This benefit for anti-apartheid raised money and feelings of solidarity, and I wouldn't trespass on those feelings. But I like my pleasures to be a little less self-confirming.<sup>212</sup>

A feature on the Redskins by Jack Barron in *Sounds* published in January 1986, shortly after the anti-apartheid tour mentioned in the Reynolds article, appeared to poke fun at the band, particularly on the issue of the lead singer Chris Dean having gone to a 'public school for two years on a scholarship till he finished his O-levels' and that the singer appeared 'a trifle embarrassed about this'.<sup>213</sup> Indeed the charge made at the beginning of the feature that Dean is an 'ex-public schoolboy with a mortgage and the reputation of being a bull-headed arrogant sod', appears to suggest a charge of hypocrisy, naivety and general unpleasantness.<sup>214</sup> Elsewhere, Barron balances a fair hearing of the group's politics, with descriptions of their delivery as being variously a '20 minute tirade' and 'whinging'.<sup>215</sup> When the Redskins and the SWP are contrasted by Barron with Red Wedge and Labour, it is a subtly unkind verdict, noting that the SWP 'hardly have a monopoly on such agit-

---

<sup>212</sup> Simon Reynolds, 'The Redskins: Central Polytechnic, London' in Simon Reynolds, *Bring the Noise: 20 Years of Writing about Hip Rock and Hip Hop* (London, 2007), p.9.

<sup>213</sup> Jack Barron, 'The Redskins: Acne in the UK', *Sounds*, 18 January 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-redskins-acne-in-the-uk>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

prop methods’, whilst challenging the group as to whether the SWP was opportunist in its choice of causes.<sup>216</sup>

Even more evident though was a policing and moderating of artists who not formally affiliated with any group, stepped outside of the agreed consensus. The use of the phrase ‘white nigger’ in the song ‘Oliver’s Army’ by Elvis Costello, earned a scathing review from the journalist Julie Dunn in the *NME*, who accused Costello of aiming to ‘get a rave review in the ("Ain't nothing but a") Socialist Worker's Party rag.’<sup>217</sup>

This distinct political context not only separated the aims and methods of AAA from AUAA but also from some ANC endeavours such as the Amandla Cultural Ensemble. Although AAA effectively shared staff and personnel with Amandla, most notably in Dali Tambo, they were governed by wildly different philosophies. Amandla had been envisaged as a ‘show piece’ for the vitality and resilience of both black South African culture and of the liberation movement, in the form of the ANC.<sup>218</sup> Amandla’s performances and musical output was shaped directly through an ANC appointed ‘political commissar’ Ndonga Khuze, whereas no such arrangement existed with AAA.<sup>219</sup> In fact the relative paucity of songs directly about South Africa from those involved with AAA is in itself striking. For example the headliners of the first major AAM event at the Royal Albert Hall, The Smiths, had no material which addressed any issues connected to apartheid South Africa.<sup>220</sup> In fact Dammers would later complain that being so involved in AAA

---

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Julie Duran, ‘‘Oliver’s Army’ Elvis Costello’, *NME*, 3 February 1979. <[http://www.elviscostello.info/wiki/index.php/New\\_Musical\\_Express\\_February\\_3\\_1979](http://www.elviscostello.info/wiki/index.php/New_Musical_Express_February_3_1979)> (7 November 2015).

<sup>218</sup> Gilbert, ‘Singing Against Apartheid’, p.432.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1474, poster for AAA concert, 14 November 1986.



had prevented him from actually being able to make music of his own.<sup>221</sup> Arguably this was again symptomatic of the AAA, and the AAM before it, who has always insisted that all work was to ‘complement the struggle of the South African people’, rather than to lead it. In essence it was a strategy which mixed the notion of musicians and groups as activists, pioneered by the ANL and RAR campaigns of the late 1970s with the AAM’s well established aim of supporting the ANC by pushing for the complete isolation of South Africa. Talking at the launch of AAA in April 1986 Dammers declared that; ‘If there was no music, no films, and no TV from the west, apartheid wouldn’t last more than a few months’.<sup>222</sup>

**‘We need less airy fairy freedom music and more action.’**

Ironically it was to be exactly this championing of the cultural boycott, almost to the level of an inviolable article of faith, which would generate disagreements between the AAM and ANC. This insistence on enforcing a total boycott, would also come to be a point of strain between the musicians and the AAA. In particular, the AAA’s stipulation that, in addition to not playing in South Africa, musicians involved in the group should have a clause inserted into their contract that prevented the sale of their music in South Africa, was a sticking point. Although all of those who signed up to AAA were happy to agree not to visit South Africa, Dammers and Tambo found it much harder to convince musicians to block the sale of their music in South Africa. Dammers would later complain to Denselow that some of the musicians connected with AAA were self-important enough to believe

---

<sup>221</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, pp.506-507.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.504.

that ‘their revolutionary music will help the struggle’.<sup>223</sup> For Dammers the solution was simple ‘We need less airy fairy freedom music and more action.’<sup>224</sup>

Yet when the AAA did spring into action it often found itself completely out of step with the prevailing opinion, both with the wider public and also some of its own membership. The decision to actively picket Paul Simon’s UK tour of *Graceland* resulted in numerous letters from local activists who opposed the idea, many of whom also argued that the album well complemented the goal of supporting South African culture.<sup>225</sup> However it was the debacle that occurred over the status of the South African musician Johnny Clegg which would really demonstrate the problems and tensions generated by strictly adhering to a policy of a total musical boycott.

As a South African national, Clegg was officially prohibited from touring Britain by the ruling of the British MU, who outstripped even AAA in their absolute loyalty to the cultural boycott. A 1983 tour of Britain by Clegg’s then band Juluka, a mixed race duo group who performed expressly anti-apartheid material, was hampered by the Musicians Union refusing to support the shows.<sup>226</sup> The eventual compromise, prompted by the Department of Employment, allowing work permits in spite of the British MU’s opposition, saw all the money earned by Clegg for the shows in Britain donated to anti-apartheid causes.<sup>227</sup> In a flyer distributed shortly after the tour, at the 1983 *African Sounds Festival*, the same

---

<sup>223</sup> Jerry Dammers cited in Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.193.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, letters to the Anti-Apartheid Movement re Paul Simon, 1987.

<sup>226</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, p.199.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

event that had radicalised Dammers, the MU fiercely denounced Juluka's tour of Britain.<sup>228</sup>

Embarrassed by Clegg's defiance of the boycott and ability to circumnavigate the ban, the British MU with the assistance of the AAM and AAA would work to effectively blacklist Clegg. A 1987 tour of Clegg's new band Savuka, again opposed by the British MU, saw Clegg expelled from the Union.<sup>229</sup> Correspondence between the British MU and the AAM shows that the British MU went to great lengths to denigrate Clegg, compiling a lengthy character assassination as justification of both Clegg's expulsion and unsuitability as an anti-apartheid figure.<sup>230</sup> Ultimately this meant that Clegg was to be conspicuously absent from the line up of the 1988 *Nelson Mandela Birthday 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute* at Wembley.

That Clegg was 'missing' from the concert was something that drew remarks and outright criticism even from some of AAA's most supportive friends in the media. It was left to only to sources such as the *Morning Star*, the paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain, to continue to call Clegg 'cheerfully bland' and castigate him for breaking solidarity with the boycott.<sup>231</sup> Even in supportive publications such as the *NME*, which continued to report positively on AAA and AAM generally as a matter of course, the idea of a 'selective boycott', that would allow Clegg and similar 'progressive' South African artists to tour in Britain became a popular theme in editorials and in letters.<sup>232</sup> In the pages of music magazines such as the *NME* and *Melody Maker* the attempts to blacklist Clegg,

---

<sup>228</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.206. Musicians Union, 'Juluka: The Facts', 1983.

<sup>229</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.201.

<sup>230</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1474, Musicians Union to Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'Johnny Clegg', June 1988.

<sup>231</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Press Clippings, 1987-1988.

<sup>232</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Press Clippings, 1987-1988.

described in one 1987 *NME* editorial on the cultural boycott as having an ‘exemplary’ record of opposing apartheid, caused much division and controversy.<sup>233</sup> Alongside the ongoing debate about Simon’s *Graceland*, this period saw the beginning of a fracture in the broad left consensus in the music press that had benefitted AAM and AAA greatly in the preceding years

Whilst the AAM and the British MU became increasingly belligerent in response to any challenge to the idea of a ‘selective boycott’ the ANC itself began to modify its own position. Grateful of the publicity that had been generated by initiatives such as AUAA and AAA and mindful of the way in which criticising Clegg and Simon had alienated some supporters, the ANC began to make moves towards a ‘selective boycott’ and away from a ‘total boycott’. This shift can be clearly seen in a series of resolutions from May 1987 on the cultural boycott passed by the United Democratic Front, an umbrella group of opposition forces in South Africa, that was in practice dominated by the ANC. Whilst reaffirming ‘the campaign for the isolation of the apartheid regime’ the resolutions also goes on to state;

The campaign for international isolation of the regime and its supporting forces is not the same as calling for the isolation of the South African people and their organisations...

A tour would not be affected by this campaign [the cultural boycott] if:  
 It is supported by the democratic movement in South Africa  
 It is approved by overseas solidarity groups  
 It contributes to the national democratic struggle and the building of the future south Africa.<sup>234</sup>

In effect this sought to make a clear distinction between ‘progressive’ musicians such as Clegg, who had happily played concerts to raise funds for the UDF inside

---

<sup>233</sup> Terry Staunton and Mark Sinker, ‘Paul Simon: The Boy in the Boycott’, *NME*, 4 April 1987. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-the-boy-in-the-boycott>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>234</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, United Democratic Front, ‘Resolutions on the Cultural and Academic Boycott’, 30 May 1987.

South Africa and non-political musicians.<sup>235</sup> This approach was also mirrored by the ANC who began to use the term ‘cultural workers’ to cover all of those who they approved for touring outside of South Africa. At its 1987 *Culture in Another South Africa* conference in Amsterdam, the ANC trumpeted that;

there has developed a vibrant people's music, rooted in South African realities and steeped in democratic values, in opposition to the racist music associated with the apartheid regime.<sup>236</sup>

This arguably demonstrated a willingness to move to a new phase of cultural campaigning that moved beyond the notion of ‘culture is a weapon of struggle’. As Gilbert has argued, from 1987 onward the debate emanating from the ANC inside of South Africa centred on notions of how culture could be used as a means of creating a new democratic South Africa.

This was a move that the AAM struggled to comprehend and in many ways failed to ever really reconcile. From 1987 to 1992, when the British MU finally lifted the boycott, internal documents show that the AAM found itself increasingly at odds with the ANC’s growing ‘cultural workers’ strategy. One document simply dismisses the calls for a selective boycott as the work of ‘currents within the UDF/ANC’ as if to suggest that any moves to a cultural boycott represented a fringe opinion rather than that of the growing majority.<sup>237</sup> The document goes on to suggest that the majority of those calling for the imposition of the selective boycott were ‘those occupying an intermediate terrain between oppressed people and the regime’ particularly singling out ‘white academics’, and South African record

---

<sup>235</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.199-201.

<sup>236</sup> Jonas Gwanga, and Fulco van Aurich, ‘The Melody of Freedom: A Reflection on Music’ in Campschreur, Willem and Divendal, Joost (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa* (London: Zed, 1989), p.146.

<sup>237</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, Mike Terry, ‘The Academic and Cultural Boycotts: A Memorandum From the Anti Apartheid Movement’, 9 February 1987.

labels with financial interests in selling records overseas.<sup>238</sup> However from the correspondence it is clear that even among ANC members exiled in Britain there was by 1988 an ever increasing enthusiasm for a selective boycott from leading ANC officials.<sup>239</sup> Increasingly though the AAM renewed its focus onto the economic argument for total boycott, emphasising the potential ‘detrimental effect on black workers’ and that a selective boycott would eventually help the apartheid regime to argue for ‘selective economic sanctions’.<sup>240</sup> Whereas the ANC was moving to a position whereby musicians in the guise of ‘cultural workers’ were seen as having an intrinsic value in and of themselves as ambassadors for anti-apartheid, AAM remained completely wedded to the idea of a total boycott above and beyond all other strategies.

Although the debate about the boycott strategy would continue right up until the lifting of the boycott in 1992, in many ways the issue was practically settled by the events surrounding the 1990 *International Tribute for a Free South Africa* at Wembley Stadium. Whilst the 1988 *Mandela Birthday 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute* had been the high water mark for AAA and their own brand of political popular music, then the 1990 concert represented a completely different affair. Points of controversy that dogged the planning of the 1988 concerts, such as the inclusion of Clegg and any other South African artists, were resolved with the British MU being pressured into accepting Clegg by the ANC.<sup>241</sup> Furthermore the exiled musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba who had, partly as a result of having toured with Simon on his *Graceland* tour, played only a minor role in the

---

<sup>238</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, Terry, ‘The Academic and Cultural Boycotts’.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.285.

1988 concert, were elevated to privileged positions on the bill.<sup>242</sup> Conspicuously absent from the proceedings though, with the exception of Dammers who led an ensemble performance of 'Nelson Mandela' were AAA, which had in effect ceased to function as their view on the boycott had been increasingly undermined and that many of those involved.<sup>243</sup>

Conversely though, the success of the concerts could be seen as a vindication of the spirit and aims of the boycott. The cultural boycott in the spirit of Huddleston's 1954 letter to the *Observer* had largely been a success and had in part culturally isolated and generated 'deprivation and frustration' within South Africa. It could also be argued that the real success of the cultural boycott and the musical boycott in particular was in the way that it was able to adapt within the dramatically changing political landscape, finding relevance among different generations of activists. A campaign that began with Union motions and conference resolutions in the 1950s and 1960s was able to transition seamlessly to the grass roots direct action of the late 1960s and early 1970s to finally being the ideological centre of a campaign to raise awareness and inspire solidarity action in the late 1970s and 1980s. Particularly in this last phase we can see the ways in which the boycott, even in the faces of challenges to its internal logic, could act as a means to draw together oppositional forces and force debate onto the public agenda. It is this ability to force public debate about apartheid and draw activists into solidarity work which is possibly the greatest legacy of the cultural boycott. In his assessment of the success of the AAM, the former member Roger Fieldhouse concluded that;

All the long, often frustrating anti-apartheid campaigning, sustained over many years when it appeared to be having little affect, made society and politicians more prepared for the final push when the right time

---

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.284.

<sup>243</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.506.

arrived...that was the AAM's primary achievement, rather than bringing about any specific policy changes or government action.<sup>244</sup>

In this the cultural boycott had played a major part. Despite the attending debates and disputes surrounding the selective boycott, it was the logic of the cultural boycott that would drive the organisation of the two Mandela concerts at Wembley.

---

<sup>244</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, pp.481-482.



## 2) 'The Myth of Fingerprints'

### **World Music From Above and Below**

It was the myth of fingerprints,  
I've seen them all and man,  
They're all the same.<sup>245</sup>

Whilst the legacy of the cultural boycott demonstrated the ways in which popular music and politics could mix explicitly, there is a further story about the wider links between popular music and opposition to apartheid. This could be seen by the growing popularity of world music. Whilst not always overtly political, the contemporary rise of world music, throughout the 1980s provides a fascinating counterpoint to events such as the ongoing debate about the cultural boycott. With much of the genre originating or inspired by Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular, world music was often consciously viewed within the context of global debates about apartheid. This was reinforced by the fact that some musicians and songs made direct references to apartheid. Crucially though the rise of world music also helps to illustrate some of the wider issues in the relationship between popular music and the campaign against apartheid and popular politics more generally. Whilst the boycott represented the focused efforts of a coordinated and distinctly political campaign, it is through looking at the contemporary interest in world music that we can begin to see the wider story of the link between opposition to apartheid and popular music.

---

<sup>245</sup> Paul Simon, 'All Around The World or the Myth of Fingerprints', *Graceland*, Paul Simon (Warner Brothers Records, 7599-25447-2, 1986) [LP Album].

In this chapter I will examine the links both explicit and implicit between world music as a growing phenomenon and the context of growing awareness and unease about apartheid in South Africa. In this way we can see a contrast with the established campaign for the musical boycott, formed and shaped by committed activists and audience that whilst sympathetic and increasingly knowledgeable of the issue of apartheid South Africa were not as necessarily bound to tactics such as the total boycott of all music from South Africa or musicians entering South Africa. By focusing on the growth of interest in world music it is possible to show a counterpoint to the established position of groups such as the AAM's interaction with popular music.

World music itself was in part a product of apartheid. As many commentators such as Robin Denselow and Robert Christgau acknowledged, it was world music's proximity to the context of apartheid that made it an attractive proposition to many music fans. A 1984 profile of Hugh Masekela by Barry Hoskyns for the *NME* noted that 'At a time when Western attention is once more turned on the evil and cunning of the South African government, it couldn't be more appropriate that we have begun to hear the bright strains of South African music.'<sup>246</sup>

Certainly this can be seen in the privileged position which South African musicians and music enjoyed. Many of the first successful world music albums and artists, such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela were South African. Artists such as Sting and Peter Gabriel evoked South Africa in

---

<sup>246</sup> Barry Hoskyns, 'Hugh Masekela, Blazing in the Bush', *NME*, 31 March 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/hugh-masekela-blazing-in-the-bush>> (11 September 2015).

their music to convey a sense of struggle.<sup>247</sup> As the early world music enthusiast and DJ Andy Kershaw has acknowledged, world music was in part enabled by the emergence of British record labels importing and compiling collections of ‘South African Township jive and Zimbabwean guitar-driven pop’, both of which arrived from a context of political struggle familiar to listeners from news reports.<sup>248</sup> This could be seen in the way in which this music was packaged by British record labels. *Virgin*’s early world music releases were packaged with the imprint of ‘Front Line’ on the disc labels alongside the image of black fist clenched gripping barbed wire.<sup>249</sup> For these listeners, world music provided a platform from which they could consider the issue of apartheid from outside of the party political structures of organisations such as the AAM, ANC and the UN Centre Against Apartheid.

Yet as the controversy surrounding Johnny Clegg’s attempts to tour outside of South Africa and the lingering arguments over Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album demonstrated, the context of the cultural boycott, not to mention ongoing debates within the various organisations about the boycott, complicated the existence of world music. Strictly speaking, all music made within South Africa in this period was still subject to the cultural boycott no matter how progressive the artist was presumed to be. Even with the ANC internationally and the UDF within South Africa increasingly moving towards offering support to those deemed to be progressive ‘cultural workers’, the lingering debate about the cultural boycott saw many groups such as the British AAM take a hardline stance.

---

<sup>247</sup> In particular see Peter Gabriel’s ‘Biko’ which uses a number of African musical tropes to evoke struggle

Peter Gabriel, *Biko*, Peter Gabriel (Charisma, CB 370, 1980) [7” Single].

<sup>248</sup> Andy Kershaw, *No Off Switch: An Autobiography* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2011), p.204.

<sup>249</sup> For example see The Twinkle Brothers 1978 single ‘Free Africa’

Norman Grant and Ralston Grant, ‘Free Africa’, The Twinkle Brothers (Front Line Records, FLS 104, 1978). [7” Single].

Furthermore, the extent to which any of this new world music could be considered as inherently 'anti-apartheid' was also a matter of some controversy. For the AAM, the argument in favour of a total boycott hinged upon the organisation's firm belief that sales of South African music could still generate financial benefit for and legitimise the apartheid regime. In a leaflet given to those attending Paul Simon's London concerts the AAM made this point clear when they argued that;

Now Botha's regime is feeling the squeeze of international isolation, it tries to use culture as a wedge to divide its opponents abroad. At the same time big record companies that have always flouted the cultural boycott seek to cash in on the growing popularity of African music and all things 'anti-apartheid'. In these conditions the cultural boycott must be defended and sustained with greater consistency than ever.<sup>250</sup>

Again we can see the AAM and other groups' insistence on the cultural boycott being guided by a belief in boycott as a mostly economic rather than strictly cultural action. In the same way that Dammers bemoaned the insistence of some UK musicians that their music had 'revolutionary potential', this was a cultural boycott that was focused mainly on the economic ramifications of not buying consumer goods from South Africa. This is a position made even clearer in the final line of the AAM leaflet issued at the Paul Simon concert, 'You might like the music, but there are more important issues'.<sup>251</sup>

For advocates of world music, the question of South Africa and the cultural boycott was one of great soul searching. Writing in *Africa Beat*, one of the first UK publications dedicated to world music, in 1987 John Harlow, the magazine's editor outlined his own confusion and misgivings stating that;

---

<sup>250</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.1463, AAM, 'Paul Simon and the Anti-Apartheid Cultural Boycott What Is The Problem' leaflet, April 1987.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

I have always tried to avoid the question of the boycott of South African music. It's not just cowardice. It's simply that I don't know what to think. And with the arguments again raging with the success of the rather plastic Paul Simon album-Should this leading light of the American anti-apartheid movement have recorded in the heart of the beast, no matter what wages he paid to the musicians that undoubtedly needed and deserved them- I still don't feel any the wiser.<sup>252</sup>

Interestingly, after acknowledging that popular music could be a 'positive political force', Harlow also acknowledged that the South African music industry was deeply economically exploitative, noting that;

The trouble is that *Gallo Records* [South Africa's largest record company] seem to end up making money off the music in the most devious and unexpected ways...They may ignore and starve Township Jive, but somewhere along the line, you can be sure that they will make money out of it.<sup>253</sup>

In this way Harlow, though not consciously echoed one of the key concerns of the AAM and AAA. However unlike Dammers and the AAM, Harlow expresses some belief in the ability of popular music to bring about change within South Africa, noting that even most exiles such as Masekela and Makeba and politically radical musicians such as Nigeria's Fela Kuti, allowed their music to be sold within the apartheid state.<sup>254</sup> This raise an interesting questions about the extent to which groups such as the British AAM and AAA felt they had the authority to enforce a cultural boycott over South African musicians, which was did not necessarily reflect the views of South African artists.

For others, this very idea that hearing 'radical' music, in the words of Kuti, 'could only be for the good of the people', proved to be the most attractive element of this newly emerging world music.<sup>255</sup> It was argued that by simply giving a platform and a market place for black South African musicians and black South

---

<sup>252</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.1462, John Harlow, 'Editorial', *Africa Beat*, 1987, p.3.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

African styles, world music, in its content alone provided a clear counterpoint to the growing cultural tensions within South Africa. Interestingly, Harlow refers to Simon as a ‘leading light of the American anti-apartheid movement’, a title that belies the fact that Simon, despite his well-established liberal credentials, never had any formal association with an anti-apartheid campaign.<sup>256</sup> This demonstrates the extent to which many were willing to consider any positive musical interaction with South Africa as inherently anti-apartheid. In a review of *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto*, one of the first readily available and successful compilations of South African music outside of its home country, Robert Christgau music critic with the *Village Voice* commended the collection, because to him it seemed to run contrary to ‘apartheid’s determination to deny blacks not just a reasonable living but a meaningful identity’.<sup>257</sup>

Throughout the same issue of *Africa Beat* as Harlow’s editorial, there are countless examples of attempts to make the same link between world music and resistance to apartheid. An advert for the record label *Earthworks*, one of the earliest established world music distributors and labels, here credited as ‘the originator of world beat’, makes their belief in the connection between world music and anti-apartheid clear, using the tagline ‘Beat Against Botha’.<sup>258</sup> The strongest defence of popular music as a ‘positive political force’ comes from an article written by Trevor Herman, a key proponent of world music, which argued that it was ‘perverse to boycott [the] black SA music scene’ when it provided an example

---

<sup>256</sup> Simon had publicly supported the Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern in the run up to the 1972 US election, which gifted him in the eyes many as a stalwart Liberal. A belief that had obviously carried over to the period in which *Graceland* was recorded. Peter Doggett, *There’s a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of ‘60s Counter Culture* (London: Cannongate, 2007), pp.504-505.

<sup>257</sup> Robert Christgau, ‘The Indestructible Beat of Sowetwo’. *Village Voice*, 1986, <[http://www.robertchristgau.com/get\\_album.php?id=648](http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_album.php?id=648)> (25 September 2015).

<sup>258</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.1462, Trevor Herman, ‘Sowetwo and all that Jive’, *Africa Beat*, 1987, p.30.

of culture which was by its very nature in opposition to apartheid.<sup>259</sup> Notably, Herman's argument explicitly refuted the established economic argument used by the ANC, the AAM and all those in favour of a total cultural boycott. Herman instead argued that the economic benefit of black popular music to the South African government was in essence negligible, with it 'not being big an enough an industry to touch the government or the state of the Rand'.<sup>260</sup> Furthermore, Herman argued that large South African record companies like *Gallo* devoted the majority of funding to 'white rock', with desultory budgets spent on black music.<sup>261</sup> This is certainly borne out by comparison of the figures spent on different kinds of music in South Africa. For example, in 1980 the two biggest record labels in South Africa, *EMI South Africa* and *Gallo*, spent an average of 100,000 Rand on retaining and promoting American and European artists whilst *EMI South Africa* spent only 2,000 Rand producing and promoting *Raising the Family*, an album by the South African mbaqanga star Steve Kekana.<sup>262</sup> Though the high sales of an album such as Kekana's would increase the profit margins of labels such as *Gallo*. Vindicating Harlow's assertion that South African record labels would be sure to make money from black South African music in 'devious and unexpected ways'.

Herman's argument instead focused on the cultural value of township jive, or *mbaqanga* as it was often referred to, as an artistic medium that survived 'in spite of the apartheid regime.'<sup>263</sup> This in many ways mirrored the position which many exiled South African musicians, even those aligned formerly or otherwise

---

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Jonas Gwanga, and Fulco van Aurich, 'The Melody of Freedom: A Reflection on Music' in Campschreur, Willem and Divendal, Joost (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa* (London: Zed, 1989), p.155.

<sup>263</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.1462, Trevor Herman, 'Sowetwo and all that Jive', *Africa Beat*, 1987, p.30.

with the ANC, had begun to take on the cultural boycott. In Hoskyn's 1984 profile for the *NME*, Masekela had argued that

The boycott presents a very difficult situation for me. Nobody really gives a shit about South Africa so long as they're making money out of it. I mean, there's a cultural boycott, but Shell is in South Africa, BP is in South Africa, Ford, Nissan, and Toyota are in South Africa...I could go on forever. Every company in the world is in South Africa... It bores me to even talk about it, because I know really that it makes no difference.<sup>264</sup>

Although Masekela's fatalistic attitude towards the boycott does not completely line up with Herman's, it does demonstrate the extent to which the economic argument that underlined the cultural boycott had come to be seen as irrelevant by some of those heavily associated with anti-apartheid campaigns. Furthermore Masekela's stance also raises questions about the legitimacy of the total cultural boycott. Particularly a boycott being organised and enforced by white British musicians. Addressing that point specifically Masekela argued 'Why should the pressure be on artists alone, just because of their high visibility? I say a stand should be made, but made by everybody...Speaking for myself... I wouldn't go to South Africa, but I don't expect everyone to feel like me'.<sup>265</sup>

Rather Masekela appeared to acknowledge that as long as a variety of other multinational corporations took advantage of South Africa, its own musicians should be able to profit from their work. This was supported by a growing sense both inside and outside South Africa that that South Africans musicians and audiences could be empowered both culturally and financially through sales of world music albums. In direct contradiction to the economic focus of groups such as the AAM, many believed that popular music in itself would be able to affect change. For example, Herman used his *Africa Beat* article to argue that

---

<sup>264</sup> Hoskyns, 'Hugh Masekela, Blazing in the Bush'.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.



*mbaqanga*'s revolutionary potential was suppressed by a lack of financial support and promotion both inside and outside of South Africa, concluding that *mbaqanga* as a form in itself, had the 'potential to change the world'.<sup>266</sup>

This belief, naïve or otherwise, in what Harlow had regarded as the potential for popular music to act as a 'positive political force' reflected the developing debate about the role of culture and popular music more specifically throughout the mid to late 1980s. In many ways, the statements of Harlow and Herman were not particularly different from those made by established anti-apartheid groups. At the 1987, ANC convened, *Culture in Another South Africa* conference, one resolution read that, 'there has developed a vibrant people's music, rooted in South African realities and steeped in democratic values, in opposition to the racist music associated with the apartheid regime'.<sup>267</sup> At the same conference, Basil Coetzee an ANC aligned musician and contemporary of Abdullah Ibrahim confidently predicted that,

I think a lot of musicians are becoming aware of themselves culturally. They have become aware because of the political events, because of the system. This growth of political consciousness gives musicians new freedom, a freedom to play what they want to.<sup>268</sup>

What this clearly shows is a growing consensus, also demonstrated by the growing importance given to events such as the 1988 *Mandela Birthday Tribute*, in the ability of popular music to enact political change.

World music as an expression of black South African popular music, was clearly a beneficiary of this new optimism about the potential of popular music as a 'positive political force'. For an emerging musical trend, world music enjoyed shocking instant success. Compilation albums, compiled by Herman amongst

---

<sup>266</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.1462, Trevor Herman, 'Sowetwo and all that Jive', *Africa Beat*, 1987, p.30.

<sup>267</sup> Gwanga and van Aurich, 'The Melody of Freedom', p.157.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

others, and releases by individual artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, sold in astonishingly high numbers.<sup>269</sup> In fact, the sheer success of world music, which had in less than a decade of existence generated a market share comparable to other established genres such as jazz and classical music, in itself highlights the way in which world music represented a genuinely popular musical trend.

### **African music in Britain**

However the sudden growth in interest in South African music via the birth and growth of world music in the 1980s obscured the ways in which South African and African music in general had long existed as niche interests in Britain. The cultural historian Veit Erlmann has argued that the foundations of world music lay in the emergence of a global culture in the late nineteenth century, rather than any short term musical trends.<sup>270</sup> Specifically, Erlmann points towards tours by Zulu choirs in Britain and America in the latter decades of the nineteenth century as evidence of this long history and crucially draws direct comparison with later tours by Ladysmith Black Mambazo.<sup>271</sup> For Erlmann both examples demonstrated the existence and expression of a ‘rampant global culture’, which drove the cross fertilisation and development of popular music in general.<sup>272</sup>

This idea of a ‘rampant global culture’ and the long roots of popular music is also supported by many musicologists such as Denis-Constant Martin, who has argued that the legacy of slavery is a key component of most ‘popular or mass

---

<sup>269</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.11.

<sup>270</sup> Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.4.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.169-170.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

music’, around the world.<sup>273</sup> In particular Martin highlights the participation of slaves in religious music through choirs facilitated the blending of English Methodist musical conventions such as chord progressions and religious imagery and language with African vocal harmonies and rhythms as well as the blending of European and African instruments.<sup>274</sup>

This variety of influences and reliance on cultural cross fertilisation would play a key role in crafting South African music, both inside and outside of South Africa. As Christopher Ballantine has argued this cross-fertilisation is at the very heart of South African music, which he characterises as ‘a fusion ... of traditional styles with imported ones, wrought by people of colour out of the long, bitter experience of colonisation and exploitation.’<sup>275</sup> In Britain, the presence of South African exiles, both as musicians and advocates, helped to drive further musical cross fertilisation, as those escaping apartheid interacted with existing popular music styles.

This was particularly true in London, whereby the meeting of a large number of different cultural traditions and norms allowed exiles and émigrés to tap into a series of established networks. As the centre of the British Empire, London had enjoyed a long history of attracting and assimilating music from the periphery of the empire. As well demonstrated by Erlmann’s example of the presence of touring Zulu choirs in the nineteenth century.<sup>276</sup> Such cultural crossovers continued into the early twentieth century with the appearance of African musicians,

---

<sup>273</sup> Denis-Constant Martin, ‘The Musical Heritage of Slavery: From Creolization to “World Music”’, Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), p.17.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>275</sup> Christopher Ballantine, ‘A Brief History of South African Popular Music’, *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), p.306.

<sup>276</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, p.165-166.

including the Gold Coast Police Band playing in the high life style at the coronation of George VI.<sup>277</sup> Even more importantly though was that London provided a space to help grow radical politics and culture. In his history of black music in London, Lloyd Bradley has argued that between the 1920s and 1940s, London had a long established role in nurturing a ‘black intelligentsia’, in which music played a key role.<sup>278</sup> This disparate grouping, including ‘African and West Indian students, professionals and political dissidents’ were able to meet and exchange political and cultural ideas. This meant that by the time of the arrival of exiles from South Africa following the emergence of the apartheid state in 1948 and particularly after the repression that followed the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 there was already an established black subculture, which embraced the musical forms bought by newly arrived South African musicians. In London, South African exiles found themselves able to interact and engage in what Bradley termed, ‘cultural intercourse’, performing in a number of settings from performances of African music to other black forms such as jazz, calypso and big band.<sup>279</sup>

It was in this post-Sharpeville period that high profile exiles such as Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Abdullah Ibrahim first came to Britain.<sup>280</sup> Musically the way had been prepared for these South African musicians by the success of the ‘jazz musical’, *King Kong*, which premiered in London’s West End in 1961.<sup>281</sup> The musical, billed to London theatre-goers as the ‘first all-African Opera’, introduced many in Britain to the musical styles that had thrived in the South African townships during the 1950s and created demand and interest in the likes of Makeba

---

<sup>277</sup> John Collins, *African Pop Routes: The Inside Rhythms of Africa* (Slough: Foulsham, 1985), p.87.

<sup>278</sup> Lloyd Bradley, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2013), p.26.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>280</sup> Muff Anderson, *Music in the Mix: The Story of South African Popular Music* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), pp.119-120.

<sup>281</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.102.

and Masekela, who had performed in the original South African production of *King Kong*.<sup>282</sup> In a 1985 interview with the South African journalist Muff Anderson, *King Kong*'s promoter Ian Bernhardt assessed that the real value of the show was that,

it gave people the opportunity of going to work in England for a year. It launched a 100 careers and really elevated the whole black performing arts scene onto a new level. Other black composers benefitted because of Matshikiza's [*King Kong*'s writer] success.<sup>283</sup>

Despite its commercial success, many who saw *King Kong* in London during its year long tour, were keen to view it primarily as a political piece. One review by Robert Muller, fairly typical of the critical reaction in Britain, was scathing in its condemnation of the musical,

Politically, *King Kong* is about as dynamic as a bag of laundry. Everything, including the gangsterism and the social misery has been agreeably prettified... South Africa House can keep calm. We are told nothing about Johannesburg life that is likely to rouse us to anger. We are just being entertained by a slick American-type song and dance musical... A full blooded entertainment this may be, but a whistle and a wiggle are no match for the policy of apartheid. One swallow of black and white collaboration doesn't make a summer of South Africa's bleak shame.<sup>284</sup>

What this clearly shows is the way in which early on South African music is linked inexorably to the disputed political context of apartheid. Many of those who left *King Kong* disappointed had come in the hope of seeing a reflection of their own interpretations of life under apartheid. As David B. Coplan has argued that *King Kong* was 'damned, ironically, by the white play-goers, who had expected an "African" (traditional) display'.<sup>285</sup>

---

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.34.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.216.

This linking of ‘traditional’ South African music with notions of righteous struggle was by the early 1960s, already something of a well-established trope. For example these processes can clearly be seen in the evolution of the song ‘The Lion Sleeps Tonight’.<sup>286</sup> The song, which began as the 1939 Soloman Linda composition ‘Mbube’, itself based on the traditional music form of the same name, was adopted by western groups from Pete Seeger’s political folk group The Weavers to pop groups such as The Tokens, found several distinct meanings grafted onto the song. The Weavers interpretation, ‘Wimoweh’, was chosen by Seeger because he wrongly perceived the lion in the original title to be a metaphor for Zulu resistance and rebirth, whereas Linda has stated that it was simply a more prosaic and literal story about a lion.<sup>287</sup>

Whilst contemporary critics had savaged it for lack of explicit political content, the legacy of *King Kong* was that it had provided a platform in Britain for both music made by exiles and those still in South Africa. Furthermore, whilst many of the most famous South African exiles such as Makeba, Masekela and Ibrahim would move on from Britain to America and other sympathetic locales, there remained in Britain an appreciation of South African music. This was aided in part by a number of smaller South African acts who had sought and received refuge in Britain, embraced enthusiastically by groups such as the AAM.<sup>288</sup>

In effect, this linking of exiled bands served to further the link that many British anti-apartheid activists had constructed mentally between South African music and a sense of struggle. Furthermore, by virtue of being invasively monitored by members of South Africa’s Bureau of State Security, many London

---

<sup>286</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, pp.258-259.

<sup>287</sup> Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp.165-167.

<sup>288</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.102.

based South African groups such as The Blue Notes, a multi-racial jazz based group, would be pushed into an ever closer relationship with the AAM.<sup>289</sup>

The 1970s saw an increased interest in African music in Britain, with venues such as The Africa Centre in London and record shops specialising in singles and albums imported from Africa.<sup>290</sup> In many ways, this increased interest in African music was linked to the way in which African music was perceived as becoming distinctly more political.

Particularly noticeable was the growth in interest in ideas of pan-Africanism and international black solidarity in this newly emerging black music. Possibly the best example of this can be seen in the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) held in Nigeria in 1977, which brought together black musicians from across the world, including Makeba, Wonder, the South African saxophonist Dudu Pukuwana and the Jamaican reggae pioneer Sunn-Ra.<sup>291</sup> The festival intended to foster and advance the sense of international black solidarity. As its organisers would later claim,

FESTAC 77 was an unprecedented confluence in human history. The African and Black world organised it for their own people, providing them opportunities for self-realisation, discovering a sense of the past, and preparing for the future... The merging of the ways had enriched and inspired thousands of people.<sup>292</sup>

What this clearly shows is that despite much in the way of overt political messages in the music of black musicians, the idea of music as a uniting factor and a weapon for cultural liberation certainly survived and grew during the 1970s.

---

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., pp.104-105.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p.160.

<sup>291</sup> Collins, *African Pop Roots*, p.85.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

In Britain, this helped to reinforce the link between South African music and ideas of political struggle, in the minds of many listeners. Throughout the 1970s, this link became ever more explicit with the imagery used to sell South African music increasingly reflecting the desire to see the link between South African music and struggle. The 1979 BBC documentary *Rhythms of Resistance*, which contained the first British television appearance of a number of musicians including Johnny Clegg, Malombo and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.<sup>293</sup>

### **‘Local Music From Out There’**

The emergence of world music in this context of concern about apartheid did much to reinforce the idea that world music was a genre which reflected a sense of struggle and also a sense of authenticity. However it is important to outline the ways in which world music itself was created amongst a series of contradictions. In many ways it is this wide ranging debate and criticism about the sincerity of world music as a whole, which makes it unique among musical genres. It is important to point out that there is even a degree of confusion and uncertainty as to what actually constituted world music. The magazine *fRoots*, previously titled *Folk Roots* and often considered the key journal for world music, defines the category broadly with its tagline ‘the local music from out there’.<sup>294</sup> In this way, world music could be broadly interpreted as folk music from around the world. In an interview with Robin Denselow, the editor of *fRoots*, Ian Anderson, expands on the magazine's tagline and defined world music artists as those who ‘use elements of their own tradition, and a knowledge of that, to write their own songs, and then mix

---

<sup>293</sup> *Beats of The Heart: Rhythm of Resistance* (dir: Jeremy Marre, 1979).

<sup>294</sup> fRoots, Homepage, 2013. <<http://www.frootsmag.com/homepage.html>> (7 November 2015).



up local traditional instruments with modern ones'.<sup>295</sup> Yet even then what is 'local music from out there' is hotly debated. For instance, there is controversy over whether genres such as reggae, considered as a Jamaican folk music, or even English or American folk music should be included within the category of world music. What is certain though, is that world music, despite its sometimes-loose definition, exists as a successful and lucrative category for the marketing and sale of non-western music.

Formally speaking, world music emerged formally as a genre in 1987 as part of a marketing campaign conceived by a handful of independent record labels to promote non-western music, which had already been sold under a variety of labels such as ethnic or world-beat.<sup>296</sup> These meetings, sometimes referred to as the 'Empress of Russia meetings', named after the pub where the meetings took place, had the simple aim of raising awareness of non-western music amongst music fans. As the DJ Charlie Gillett later told the journalist Robin Denselow, the group's 'very simple, small ambition' was to collect together music from around the world which did not fit into other categories or may get lost amongst other artists.<sup>297</sup> The commercial intentions of the group are clearly confirmed by the records of the meetings. The draft agenda for the first meeting focused exclusively on the ways in which the group could target new customers interested in 'international pop' via record-store promotions and advertising.<sup>298</sup> In an opening statement to the first meeting, held on the 29th of June 1987 at the Empress of

---

<sup>295</sup> Robin Denselow, 'We Created World Music', *Guardian*, 29th June 2004.  
<<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/jun/29/popandrock1>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> fRoots, 'International Pop Label Meeting Agenda', 29 April 1987.  
<[http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world\\_music\\_history/minutes/page02.html](http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world_music_history/minutes/page02.html)> (25 September 2015).

Russia, Roger Armstrong, who with Ben Mandelson had called the meeting, stated that;

...the main problem in selling our kind of material lay with the U.K. retail outlets and specifically the fact that they did not know how to rack it coherently. This discouraged them from stocking the material in any depth and made it more difficult for the record buyers to become acquainted with our catalogues. The initial purpose of the meeting was to encourage the retail trade via various concerted efforts...<sup>299</sup>

This is underlined by an assertion later captured in the same minutes that ‘the longer term aim of establishing ‘World Music’ as the generic term for this kind of music’ was secondary to ‘the short term commercial aim of promoting ‘World Music’’.<sup>300</sup>

Furthermore, the remainder of the meeting was dominated by a discussion of ‘five possible sales devices’ and the recognition of the fact that the participating parties were also operating as commercial ‘rivals’.<sup>301</sup> Only briefly at the very end of the meeting was there any mention of the concerns or needs of the artists whose music the group endeavored to promote and sell, with representatives from Channel 4 and WOMAD raising issues with non-western artists access to media.<sup>302</sup> This shows that from the outset there was a recognition of the ways in which world music was constructed as a commercial entity with a ready-made customer base.

This sense that world music is little more than a marketing term is central to much of the criticism of world music as a genre. The musicologist Timothy D. Taylor has argued that at its worst, world music represents a form of ‘cultural imperialism’ which rests on an unrealistic fetishisation of ‘authenticity’, which

---

<sup>299</sup> fRoots, ‘Minutes Of Meeting Between The Various ‘World Music’ Record Companies And Interested Parties’, 29 June 1987. [http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world\\_music\\_history/minutes/page03.html](http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world_music_history/minutes/page03.html) (25 September 2015).

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

often comes at the cost of accurately reflecting non-western music.<sup>303</sup> Even those who have been associated with world music, such as the avant-garde musician and former front-man of Talking Heads, David Byrne, have denounced the genre as inherently dismissive of other cultures and ‘a way of relegating this "thing" into the realm of something exotic...because exotica is beautiful but irrelevant’.<sup>304</sup> One of Byrne’s biggest criticisms is that rather than representing a coherent stylistic label, world music instead acts as ‘a name for a bin in the record store signifying stuff that doesn't belong anywhere else in the store.’<sup>305</sup> From this, perspective world music is seen as a catch all term that seeks to confine all non-western music not by musical content but rather by geographical origin.

As Bob W. White neatly summarises, the problem with world music as most see it is that it is ‘a hodge-podge of non-western music with no concern for the formal or historical characteristics of the genre’.<sup>306</sup> The term ‘world music’ was settled upon, during the first meeting, as a deliberately broad category in order to encapsulate as many groups of artists and styles as possible. As Anderson later reflected, the term world music was chosen for this campaign ‘to make sure that the term didn't exclude things.’<sup>307</sup> Yet it is precisely the fact that world music is such a broad category which has attracted so much criticism.

For musicologists such as Taylor, White and Steven Feld, it is world music’s origin as a commercial category which explains some of the fundamental problems with world music as a genre. For White world music represents an

---

<sup>303</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, ‘World Music Today’, in Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.172-173.

<sup>304</sup> David Byrne ‘I Hate World Music’, 1999  
<[http://www.davidbyrne.com/news/press/articles/I\\_hate\\_world\\_music\\_1999.php](http://www.davidbyrne.com/news/press/articles/I_hate_world_music_1999.php)> (25 September 2015).

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Bob W. White, ‘Introduction: Rethinking Globalization Through Music’, in Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), p.3.

<sup>307</sup> Denselow, ‘We Created World Music’.

unfulfilled promise which gives the listener the ‘impression’ of ‘vast realms of cultural and political possibilities’ while only managing to deliver ‘a soundtrack to globalization’. In this sense the very idea of world music itself is at fault.

Yet what these, often valid, criticisms of the foundations of world music also miss is the extent to which interest in non-western music had been steadily growing in the decade prior to the Empress of Russia meetings. If world music as a category had not formally existed before 1987, it had been a long time in the making. The commercial success of Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album, Peter Gabriel’s WOMAD festival, the crossover success of non-western music like reggae in the 1970s, and the cult status afforded to African musicians such as Fela Kuti and Miriam Makeba prior to that, demonstrated there was an audience for non-western music in the America and Europe. As Gillett even acknowledges, part of the drive behind the 1987 meetings was to capitalise on the success of *Graceland* and to meet the growing consumer interest for African music that had occurred as a result.<sup>308</sup>

Feld in particular is scathing in his assessment of world music, arguing that far from being a ‘benign’ and neutral designation, world music is ‘a label of industrial origin’ which reduces the music to ‘sound as ethnic commodities.’<sup>309</sup> He also argued that one of the side effects of world music’s reliance on the marketplace is that it generates a sort of ‘schizophrenia’ whereby world music’s tendency to produce a reductive and essentialist vision of non-western music is presented as an anti-essentialist and celebratory project.<sup>310</sup> To demonstrate this principle, Feld uses the example of the 1981 album *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*,

---

<sup>308</sup> Denselow, ‘We Created World Music’.

<sup>309</sup> Steven Feld, ‘*My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*: “World Music” and the Commodification of Religious Experience’, in Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington, 2012), p.40.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

which was a collaboration between David Byrne and the avant-garde producer Brian Eno, which made use of field recordings and other found sounds and was later hailed as an important influence on world music.<sup>311</sup>

Feld argued that the cutting and pasting of different elements from multiple different cultures, such as American radio evangelists, field recordings of Islamic prayer and African American spirituals, stripped the recording of their original context and produced a distorted and inaccurate view of the material.<sup>312</sup> In particular Feld highlighted the track ‘Qu’ran’, which transformed a recitation of Islamic verses into a ‘techno dance’ song.<sup>313</sup> In removing the recitation from its original context and transforming it into a piece of dance music, the western musicians, Byrne and Eno, consciously or unconsciously, ignored the cultural objection to using recitations from the Qu’ran in a musical context.<sup>314</sup> In practice, ‘Qu’ran’ so drastically altered the context of the original recording to the extent that the song could be considered offensive, and potentially even blasphemous, to those who had been recorded in the original piece.<sup>315</sup> This was later reflected by the decision to remove the song from all subsequent reissues of the album, in the face of protests about the song and the wider context of the outcry that met Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*.<sup>316</sup> In many ways the example of ‘Qu’ran’ illustrates well some of the wider problems with world music as a genre and category for music. Most importantly the problem with what Feld called the ‘schizophrenic detachment’ of the music from its original context.<sup>317</sup> In the case of the album *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, Feld argued that Byrne and Eno used the musical source

---

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., pp.42-44.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p.42.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., pp.41-42.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., pp.44-45.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p.49.

material, i.e. the field recordings, as a way of constructing their own vision of spirituality and non-western life that was alien to the realities of the origins of the multiple different sources used.<sup>318</sup> In Feld's view world music's reductive nature represents a form of cultural imperialism that relegates non-western music as an exotic, yet inferior, other to western popular music.

Regardless of whether these accusations of appropriation and cultural imperialism were accurate or indeed fair, what the emergence of world music demonstrates well is the sheer contrast in the approach of its enthusiasts and of political activist groups such as AAM. Whilst AAM agonised over the extent to which culture could be used as a tool to fight apartheid, bound by an economically driven understanding of apartheid, those who pioneered world music appeared keen to seek a new context whereby world music could itself be a signifier of a post-apartheid world. AAM guided by an instinctive adherence to the boycott and Dammer's wariness of 'airy fairy revolution music', appeared unwilling to grasp any initiatives to embrace South African culture other than those sanctioned by the ANC, such as the Amandla Cultural Ensemble.

Though, in the tradition of Rock Against Racism, AAM would come to see the importance of music as a tool to educate and agitate, it was never entirely comfortable accepting the idea that music in itself could be a tool for political change. Furthermore whilst AAM and its subgroup AAA had by the 1980s had gained some proficiency in communicating with western musicians, there still appeared to be a reticence to communicate with any South African artists not affiliated with the ANC and adhering to the letter of the cultural boycott. For the pioneers of world music, unburdened with an entrenched commitment to the

---

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., pp.49-50.

cultural boycott and with their own networks of South African musicians, producers and labels keen to be heard on the international stage, it must have appeared much easier to interact with South African music.

### **‘This is all around the world’**

What all of this highlights is that world music as a genre rested upon a contradiction, whereby the quest for a musical and spiritual authenticity comes into direct conflict with the desire to mediate and adapt the original source material to suit commercial tastes. In essence world music rests upon a notion of cultural collaboration that is presented as ‘the best of all worlds’.<sup>319</sup> This is in itself guided by the desire to prove and support the idea of music as a constant and universal language which can bridge gaps between cultures ‘all around the world’.<sup>320</sup>

However, this desire for an all-inclusive and all-embracing universalist hybridity was complicated by the proximity to apartheid of much of the source material. In the context of the long international campaign against apartheid, this contradiction between authenticity and mediation, that forms such an integral part of world music, was given a distinctly political dimension. This in turn drove much contemporary debate about the extent to which world music could be a ‘positive political force’.

Musicologists such as Feld and Taylor argue that the dominance of western conventions and emphasis on accommodation and hybridity in South African recording studios represent a latent cultural imperialism.<sup>321</sup> Taylor in particular has argued that the tendency of western musicians and musical conventions to ‘override their lesser-known non-western partners’ is the key stumbling block to

---

<sup>319</sup> Bob W. White, ‘The Promise of World Music: Strategies for Non-Essentialist Listening’, in Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington, 2012), p.195.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>321</sup> Taylor, ‘World Music Today’, pp.176-181.

the creation of a 'truly collaborative world music'.<sup>322</sup> However the reality of the situation is somewhat more complicated. As Meintjes has shown, the musicians and producers involved are often full aware of the contradictions inherent in making the music and even understand the fundamentally unfair nature of the music industry.<sup>323</sup>

Indeed in the case of South Africa, musicians often rationalised exploitation by international record labels as preferable to the privations of apartheid.<sup>324</sup> In spite of any compromise made to international taste, musical success was still highly regarded. Despite the claims of Hamm and the official memory of the AAM, the musicians who had played on *Graceland* such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo and the Soweto based group Stimela were mostly met with praise rather than condemnation for their part in the making of the album.<sup>325</sup>

Ultimately, though the assimilation and collaboration in world music, are at times somewhat problematic, they do also help to illuminate some of the wider issues that drive world music. In many ways it effectively validates Erlmann's notion of world music as a facet of the 'global imagination', the impact of world music is not felt only in cosmopolitan western coffee shops but also amongst musicians and audiences in South Africa.<sup>326</sup> Although world music's contradictions might not support the universalist notion that 'They're all the same', it does demonstrate its ability to provoke interaction and debate.

Whilst the debates about world music as a genre would continue long past the ending of apartheid, the release of Paul Simon's *Graceland* album in 1987 and

---

<sup>322</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, p.193.

<sup>323</sup> Louise Meintjes, *Sound Of Africa: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p.229.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>325</sup> Robin Denselow, *When The Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London, 1990), p.194.

<sup>326</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* (Oxford, 1999), pp.264-267.



the subsequent touring of the album would crystallise the debates about the relationship between world music and apartheid.

### **3)“The guys with the guitars don't stand a chance”**

#### **Paul Simon's *Graceland* as a Product of Apartheid**

Often heralded by critics as the first ‘global pop masterpiece’, *Graceland* did more than any other single project to effectively take non-western music into the mainstream.<sup>327</sup> Recorded in part inside South Africa and featuring contributions from a number of South African musicians, *Graceland* accelerated the public interest in South African music. The DJ Charlie Gillet, who helped the pioneer and promote world music, would later tell the journalist Robin Denselow, the album had ‘burst everything wide open’ and ‘created an interest in South African music’ amongst music fans in the west, who were keen to hear more.<sup>328</sup> The real and lasting impact of *Graceland* was not in the way it set the trend for musical experimentation, or helped to create the market for world music, but in the wider debate it opened up about the relationship between popular music and politics.

What *Graceland* clearly showed is that, despite all the efforts of Simon to avoid becoming involved, popular music connected to South Africa would be seen by many through the wider context of apartheid. As Simon himself would later articulate, there was a sense that *Graceland* was caught in the crossfire between competing interests.<sup>329</sup> Chiefly, Simon drew strong criticism from groups such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement for recording in South Africa, an action that the AAM and others argued broke the terms of the cultural boycott. For others,

---

<sup>327</sup> Jody Rosen, ‘When World Music Became Universal’, *Rolling Stone*, 21 June 2012, p.79.

<sup>328</sup> Robin Denselow, ‘We Created World Music’ (2004).

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2004/jun/29/popandrock1>> (10 February 2013).

<sup>329</sup> *Under African Skies* (Dir: Joe Berlinger, 2012).

including the South African musicians who contributed to the album, the debate would centre on Simon's intentions and motives for recording the album. For some commentators such as the musicologist Charles Hamm, Simon had appropriated the music of another people's struggle for his own financial gain. Others such as Hugh Masekela who would later offer his support to Simon and *Graceland* by participating in the album's world tour and applauding Simon's efforts to give a voice to South African music.

In this chapter I will explore directly the way in which *Graceland* and the controversy generated by the album bridged the gap between the formal political and informal cultural reactions to apartheid. More than any other project the high profile nature of *Graceland* brought into sharp focus the issues surrounding the ongoing debates over maintaining the musical boycott of South Africa. By recording in South Africa, Simon not only forced the issue of the boycott but also wider debates about the way in which popular music and culture could act as a universal force for good and progressive change. Specifically debates around the issue of musical collaboration contrasted greatly with the established relationships of political organisations such as the AAM and ANC. Finally changes to critical interpretations of the album demonstrate well the way in which the wider debate around apartheid and the legacy of anti-apartheid protest could be reshaped to fit a newer more liberal and less politically distinct context.

First and foremost *Graceland* represented another chapter in the continuing debate about the extent of the cultural boycott and whether 'progressive elements' should be afforded exemptions from the boycott. By the time of *Graceland's* release in 1986 this was already a developing debate within groups such as the

AAM in Britain and internationally within the ANC itself.<sup>330</sup> Due in large part to its commercial and critical success, *Graceland* would do much to focus and build this debate over the extent of the cultural boycott. Whilst the controversy over other perceived violations of the cultural boycott, such as Johnny Clegg's attempts to tour outside South Africa, had divided opinion, particularly with regards to ordinary members of groups such as the AAM, it would be even further polarized by *Graceland*. For many sympathetic to the aims of the AAM and its sub-group Artists Against Apartheid, *Graceland* appeared to exist in a moral grey area. Concerns from members about Simon's infringing of the boycott was countered by the belief of some members that Simon was acting as an advocate for black South African culture in the face of apartheid repression.

For those willing to give Simon the benefit of the doubt, the later involvement of veteran critics of apartheid and exiled South African musicians, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba in the album's tour and the decision to hold a high profile concert in Zimbabwe, appeared to be justification of this faith in Simon's motives and intentions. However the official position of the AAM remained highly critical of Simon. AAM would even go to the extent of organising high profile pickets outside of Simon's UK concerts.

This came to be a source of great confusion and consternation with many grassroots members of the AAM, who had embraced *Graceland* as an anti-apartheid statement. Fairly typical is the following letter from, Deepak Shah an anti-apartheid activist, confused by the AAM's 'attempts to 'Blacklist'' Simon;

I am a keen Anti-Apartheid activist. However I think there is something seriously wrong with the ANC Cultural boycott, if it affects an artist who went to South Africa to record with black South Africans, and placed

---

<sup>330</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, Mike Terry, 'The Academic and Cultural Boycotts: A Memorandum From the Anti-Apartheid Movement', 9 February 1987.

African songs, music, and rhythms, as well [as] artists, at the top of pop music charts all over the world. Paul Simon's *Graceland* has helped many young people all over the western world see that there is in fact a strong and beautiful musical tradition across Africa as a whole.

Also with the inclusion of songs such as 'Boy in the Bubble', 'Homeless', and 'Under African Skies' there is a feeling of Anti-Apartheid protest.<sup>331</sup>

In addition to praising Simon for offering an equal platform to the South African musicians, Shah also noted that he was 'appalled' that AAM were to picket Simon's 'large multi-racial concerts'.<sup>332</sup> Furthermore Shah also suggested that 'the cultural boycott is liable to become a farse [sic]', if it continued to penalise progressive musicians such as Simon.<sup>333</sup>

What this shows is that more than any previous incident, it was the reaction from ordinary members of the AAM to *Graceland* that posed the most questions about the validity of the cultural boycott. Whilst this debate was already well established within the global anti-apartheid community, particularly with regards to the ANC's growing appreciation of musicians deemed progressive 'cultural workers', the issues surrounding *Graceland* opened debate within anti-apartheid groups about exactly what an anti-apartheid statement would look or sound like.

This led to a great degree of soul searching from both individual activists and some anti-apartheid groups. The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement's response to calls from the British AAM for protests against Simon's 1987 concerts in Dublin is particularly illustrative of this confusion. In the letter, the IAAM admit to not having made a statement on Simon's forthcoming visit to Ireland and outline their own misgiving on condemning Simon outright. Key to the IAAM's reticence was their stated belief that 'we need to remember the boycott is a weapon, not a

---

<sup>331</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Deepak Shah, 'Letter to AAM', 4 April 1987.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

principle in itself'.<sup>334</sup> With this we can see again how the tactic of boycotting long upheld by the British AAM as an article of faith did not easily transfer to other political contexts. In the letter, the IAAM also declared that they had not yet made up their mind on the matter of Simon and *Graceland*, again highlighting the way in which their grassroots members had embraced the album.

Tellingly the letter presents only one reason to formally boycott and condemn Simon, his recording in South Africa, whilst listing a number of reasons why any action against Simon might become counterproductive.<sup>335</sup> Interestingly one of the IAAM's main reasons for failing to condemn Simon, was that, 'Many young people who identify with the struggle in SA, including politically aware people, have been buying this album, thinking it is a good thing'.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore the letter mirrored the misgivings evident in Deepak Shah's letter, recognising that,

The fact that Masekela and Makeba are now appearing with him on his tour is going to double the confusion that now exists. If, by going ahead with the boycott, we are going to alienate people who should be on our side, and cause divisions, it may not be worth the effort<sup>337</sup>

Although the letter also demonstrated similar misgivings about Simon and *Graceland* to the British AAM, noting in particular that to 'record black music is not of itself going to help dismantle apartheid', the tone of the letter is on the whole conciliatory towards Simon.<sup>338</sup> Indeed the IAAM letter avoided committing to any public action or statement on *Graceland*, other than to write to Simon to ask him to publicly pledge to never return to South Africa.<sup>339</sup>

---

<sup>334</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'Letter to AAM', 12<sup>th</sup> February 1987.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'Letter to AAM', 12<sup>th</sup> February 1987.

<sup>339</sup> A post script added to the letter shortly before being sent to the British AAM acknowledged that the Irish AAM would send a press release to the Irish press regarding Simon but would not pursue a campaign against Simon's concerts in Ireland.

## “Every generation throws a hero up the pop charts”

On its release in 1986, *Graceland*, was both an immediate critical and commercial success, obtaining high sales and positive reviews across the world.<sup>340</sup> Writing in the leading American music paper, *Rolling Stone*, the reviewer Rob Tannenbaum praised the album as ‘lovely, daring and accomplished’.<sup>341</sup> Despite alluding to ‘colonial appropriation’, the reviewer Penny Reel, writing in Britain’s *NME*, reached a similar conclusion, praising the album’s ‘lovely... soundscapes’ and ‘essential prettiness’.<sup>342</sup> Writing in the *Village Voice*, the influential music critic, Robert Christgau, a self-confessed ‘aspiring aficionado of the township groove’, applauded *Graceland*’s authenticity, declaring that; ‘this is a real umbaqanga[sic] album: the rhythms and licks and colors that define the style can’t go unchanged in this alien context, but I swear they remain undiluted.’<sup>343</sup>

Even more importantly though, *Graceland* was also an undoubted instant commercial success. In terms of popular music sales in the 1980s, the album’s sales were only surpassed by high profile releases by the likes of Michael Jackson and Madonna.<sup>344</sup> In South Africa itself the album went ‘triple platinum’, selling in excess of 300,000 copies, within a year of its release.<sup>345</sup> What is even more

---

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, ‘Letter to AAM’, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1987.

<sup>340</sup> Robin Denselow, ‘Paul Simon’s *Graceland*: The Acclaim and the Outrage’, 9 April 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/apr/19/paul-simon-graceland-acclaim-outrage>> (10 March 2013)

<sup>341</sup> Charles Hamm, ‘Graceland Revisited’, *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), p.299.

<sup>342</sup> Penny Reel, ‘Paul Simon: *Graceland*’, *NME*, 13 September 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-igracelandi>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>343</sup> Robert Christgau, ‘South Africa Romance’, *Village Voice*, 23 September 1986. <<http://www.robertchristgau.com/xg/rock/simon-86.php>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>344</sup> Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.169.

<sup>345</sup> Exactly who was buying *Graceland* in South Africa is hard to ascertain. Charles Hamm has suggested, due to its higher pricing than most releases by black South Africans and its ubiquity on white South African radio stations that *Graceland* was mostly consumed by white South Africans. Though Hamm also admits that ‘there is no way to break down sales between white and black consumers’.

remarkable is that, as many contemporary commentators had acknowledged, prior to the release of *Graceland*, Simon was regarded as something of a ‘has-been, a run-of-the-mill singer-songwriter who had a few great moments in the hazy, halcyon days of Greenwich Village and ‘Scarborough Fair’.<sup>346</sup> In the words of Terry Staunton and Mark Sinker writing in the *NME*, Simon’s sojourn to South Africa had provided a; ‘new inspiration, new motivation — a creative kiss of life and a cultural kick up the ass.’<sup>347</sup> For many, critics and commentators such as those above it was clear that, Simon’s use of South African music and musicians was the defining characteristic of the *Graceland* album, and was what endeared it to so many listeners. Moreover it was the South African element that would give the *Graceland* album and Simon’s tours of the album an unintentional yet unmistakable political dimension

It was the use of the various South African musical forms and tropes used by Simon on *Graceland*, which led many to equate the album as a political statement. In the absence of any overt political statement in the lyrical content of *Graceland*, it was left to the musical content to provide, what Deepak Shah had called, a ‘feeling of Anti-Apartheid protest’ in his letter to AAM. Through *Graceland*, South African musical forms such as *mbaqanga*, a form of jazz popular in the townships, *kwela*, centred on the pennywhistle, and *isicathimiya*, a form of traditional Zulu choral music, became familiar to western audiences. Following the album’s success key collaborators such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo and those who had supported Simon on tour such as Makeba and Masekela, achieved high

---

Hamm, ‘*Graceland* Revisited’, p.299.

<sup>346</sup> Terry Staunton and Mark Sinker, ‘Paul Simon: The Boy in the Boycott’, *NME*, 4 April 1987. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-the-boy-in-the-boycott>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*



sales of their own recordings.<sup>348</sup> This in turn provided a platform for South African music styles such as *isicathimiya* and *mbaqanga* respectively, which had previously had something of a minor cult following among critics such as Christgau.

In particular, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, first seen by British audiences performing in townships in the 1978 BBC documentary *Rhythms of Resistance*, achieved an almost astonishing level of success.<sup>349</sup> Since *Graceland*, the group has not only won multiple Grammy awards, including one for the 1987, Simon produced and major label released, *Shaka Zulu*, but have become so ubiquitous as to have become a signifier for South African and even African music as a whole. The music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo is so synonymous with the imagined sound of Africa that their releases continue to reach wide audiences. A 1998 'best of' compilation, *The Best of Ladysmith Black Mambazo - The Star and the Wiseman*, went triple platinum, following the use of the title track in a series of adverts for Heinz.<sup>350</sup> That just over ten years after the release of *Graceland*, the music of a South African Zulu vocal group would be considered an appropriate way to sell baked beans, represented the extreme ways in which *Graceland* has helped create a lasting market for South African music.

## South African Music

What this clearly demonstrates is that musical genres, in the context of South Africa, were not only politically fluid, shifting depending on context and audience, but more importantly that music could be assumed to be inherently political. The work of Leeroy Vail and Landeg White has suggested that this was part of a long

---

<sup>348</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.11.

<sup>349</sup> *On Tiptoe: The Music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo* (Dir: Eric Simonson, 2000).

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

held convention across southern Africa whereby music was an accepted form for conducting political debate and that there was a tradition that ‘power may be openly criticised’ in songs.<sup>351</sup> Using the example of Mozambique, Vail and White have shown how music was used to comment on Portuguese colonial rule and how the role of music and the messages in songs helps to produce a picture of African colonial relations that went beyond one of either ‘collaboration’ or ‘resistance’.<sup>352</sup> In this framework we can see how music and different genres could serve as tools for commenting on current events and providing a highly contemporary point of view.

This was particularly clear in apartheid South Africa where particular musical forms took on a heightened political significance. Importantly music itself was regarded as a key indicator of cultural and racial difference and was increasingly built into the very foundations of apartheid and its guiding doctrine of ‘separate development’.<sup>353</sup> It was the apartheid state in South Africa that did so much to demarcate a black African culture by promoting culturally specific programming on the South African Broadcasting Corporations. The SABC effectively ensured that, ‘each person would have easy access to a state controlled radio service in their own language, dedicated to ‘mould[ing] his intellect and his way of life’ by stressing the ‘separateness and distinctiveness of his cultural

---

<sup>351</sup>Leroy Vail and Landeg White, ‘Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique’, *The American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), p.887.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p.888.

<sup>353</sup> Anne Schumann, ‘The Beat That Beat Apartheid: The Role of Music in Resistance Against Apartheid in South Africa’, *Vienna Journal of African Studies*, 14 (2008), p.19.

development.’<sup>354</sup> By 1960, the SABC had established seven different radio services, with a service dedicated to each of the major African languages.<sup>355</sup>

For Hamm, this state control of the distribution of popular culture was a key component of the ideological foundations of apartheid.<sup>356</sup> This was reflected in the way in which the National Party seized upon public broadcasting as an ideal means of reinforcing apartheid. As the SABC’s annual report for 1952 clearly stated; ‘The SABC has a dual purpose... in the first place to provide the Native with entertainment ... and secondly to contribute towards the education of the Bantu’.<sup>357</sup> Most importantly though, from 1949 the new ‘native’ re-diffusion services on the SABC began to play more music than news content, reflecting the importance placed on music, as a marker of racial difference.<sup>358</sup>

However, at the same time we can also see how music broadcast on the radio was not simply a means of propagating apartheid propaganda but could also be a means of giving a voice to communities. The music played by the SABC on these diffusion services, was not simply just what the programmers believed to be culturally appropriate but also reflected the music that was popular in the townships. To this end, black American jazz made up a high proportion of the music broadcast on Radio Bantu in its early days.<sup>359</sup> The SABC were also reluctant

---

<sup>354</sup> Charles Hamm, ‘‘The Constant Companion of Man’’: Seperate Development, Radio Bantu and Music’, *Popular Music*, 10 (1991), p.169.

<sup>355</sup> Christopher Ballantine, ‘A Brief History of South African Popular Music’, *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), p.308.

<sup>356</sup> Hamm, ‘‘The Constant Companion of Man’’, pp.147-148.

<sup>357</sup> South African Broadcasting Corporation, *Annual Report 1952* (Johannesburg, 1952), p.36. cited in Hamm, ‘‘The Constant Companion of Man’’, pp.147-148.

<sup>358</sup> Hamm, ‘‘The Constant Companion of Man’’, p. 150.

<sup>359</sup> SABC, *Annual Report 1952*, p.36.

to play other styles such as American rock 'n' roll music which it deemed a 'primitive music'.<sup>360</sup>

Whilst the SABC were happy to play a limited amount of music made by black South African musicians, there was a preference towards archiving traditional music and a reluctance to play many recordings in any of the new styles emerging from working class black areas.<sup>361</sup> These new styles such as *marabi* and later *mbaqanga*, which were built on elements of popular western styles such as jazz and blues, were often deemed to be not African enough by the SABC and as a result were rarely broadcast.<sup>362</sup> Interestingly a similar attitude appears to have been adopted at different times by groups such as the ANC who sought to downplay the influence of western music in the cultural struggle against apartheid.<sup>363</sup> In a paper written for the ANC affiliated conference, *Culture in Another South Africa*, Jonas Gwanga and Fulco van Aurich focused upon genres such as *marabi* which drew more heavily on African musical traditions than genres such as the penny whistle led *kwela* and the mass produced *msakzo* music.<sup>364</sup> However the reality is that it was exactly these genres such as *kwela*, *msakzo* and *mbaqanga* that would be key

---

<sup>360</sup> Charles Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', *Popular Music*, 5 (1985), p.160.

<sup>361</sup> David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp.90-112.

<sup>362</sup> Hamm, 'The Constant Companion of Man', p. 163.

<sup>363</sup> Jonas Gwanga, and Fulco van Aurich, 'The Melody of Freedom: A Reflection on Music' in Campschreur, Willem and Divendal, Joost (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa* (London: Zed, 1989), pp.147-152.

<sup>364</sup> In particular *msakzo* (meaning broadcast music) has received a somewhat unfair volume of criticism from commentators such as Hamm who have suggested the genres largely apolitical lyrical content make it unworthy of serious consideration. However the work of Louise Meintjes has emphasised the way in which *msakzo* was largely created as a label of derision that did not necessarily reflect the complex nature of negotiations between musicians, record labels and censors. This is something we can see further evidenced of in the *Rhythms of Resistance* documentary, whereby it is made clear that even the most outwardly inoffensive black South African groups could fall foul of the censors keen to subdue any musical subversion Louise Meintjes, *Sound Of Africa: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.34-35.

*Beats of The Heart: Rhythm of Resistance* (dir: Jeremy Marre, 1979).

influences on *Graceland*. This again demonstrates the way in which popular music could escape attempts by political groups to serve either one purpose or another.

*Graceland* was instead cast in a well-established tradition among South African musicians to cross musical boundaries. The incorporation of western musical styles and forms such as jazz and blues helped to shape *kwela* and *mbaqanga*, which in turn was reshaped in their music on *Graceland*. This cross cultural collaboration demonstrated radical potential of popular music. Particularly in its ability to represent a rejection of the doctrine of ‘separate development’, which stressed the cultural incompatibility of different races.

Christopher Ballantine has argued that this was a fundamental part of South African music generally. That South African ‘music is a fusion - vital, creative, ever changing - of traditional styles with imported ones, wrought by people of colour out of the long, bitter experience of colonisation and exploitation.’<sup>365</sup> It is worth noting that western music had a lengthy history within South Africa, with records showing that European performers in ‘blackface’ were putting on minstrel shows in Cape Town as early as 1848.<sup>366</sup> By 1880s there were groups of African minstrels travelling South Africa performing spirituals, inspired by the growing numbers of African American groups that made fairly regular tours of South Africa.<sup>367</sup> In the early twentieth century this appreciation of African American music, grew to incorporate newer musical forms such as the music coming from songwriters working in Tin Pan Alley, which was often adopted by South African musicians.<sup>368</sup>

---

<sup>365</sup> Ballantine, ‘A Brief History of South African Popular Music’, p.306.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid..

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., pp.306-307.

The music that would fuel so much of this fusion in South Africa was undoubtedly jazz. On the most basic cultural level, jazz had been long established as a popular music in urban black areas where it had built on the popularity of other American music forms from spirituals onwards.<sup>369</sup> Jazz appears to have had an even stronger link with the urban black population in South Africa who identified with black American musicians. David B. Coplan has suggested that jazz became so popular in South Africa because of the deep historical parallels between the lives of black American musicians and black South African listeners.<sup>370</sup> Black American jazz musicians also represented aspirational figures for black South Africans as ‘symbols of what black people could achieve in a white-dominated world’.<sup>371</sup>

The growth in the popularity of jazz is also notable because of jazz’s strong radical associations, particularly the emphasis on racial and social equality.<sup>372</sup> Also as Ballantine and many others have argued, jazz was fundamentally international in its outlook.<sup>373</sup> This affinity with black American culture can be clearly seen in the popular black press such as the magazine *Drum*, which took particular interest in ‘anything involving American blacks’.<sup>374</sup> *Drum*, along with other black publications such as *Zonk* and *Hi-Note!*, frequently featured articles on black American jazz musicians alongside pieces on the racial tensions in America.<sup>375</sup> *Drum* in particular embraced this philosophy of music as both a liberating force and a way to imagine a new South Africa free from apartheid. In the 1989 documentary film *Have You Seen Drum Recently*, the magazine *Drum* is described as ‘a world within a world... inside a loony apartheid landscape’ stressing how in

---

<sup>369</sup> Hamm, ‘The Constant Companion of Man’, p. 164.

<sup>370</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight*, pp.122-123.

<sup>371</sup> Ballantine, ‘A Brief History of South African Popular Music’, p.307.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.308-309.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p.309.

<sup>374</sup> Hamm, ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll in a Very Strange Society’, p.165.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.165-166.

the townships of the 1950s this alternative jazz culture represented an escape from the harsh reality of apartheid.<sup>376</sup>

It is also important to note that this proliferation of black South African music was carried by the creation of a supportive music industry. Alongside magazines such as *Drum*, *Hi-Note!* and *Zonk*, the growth of the availability of cheap 78 rpm singles and battery powered turntables helped to make home-grown South African music available to all.<sup>377</sup> This in turn led to the emergence of black South African recording artists, who went on to enjoy significant and lasting careers both inside South Africa and sometimes in exile. This was a category that not only included Simon's future collaborators Makeba and Masekela, but also Gwanga, the future leader of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, who all recorded high numbers of cheaply produced 78 rpm singles, which were being bought in 'unprecedented quantity' by South Africa's non-white population.<sup>378</sup> David Fine, a white South African who worked for the black label *Trutone* in the 1950s, argued that the black singles market came to be an important 'economic entity' that the government was happy to encourage.<sup>379</sup> Although the white population still constituted the largest part of the popular music market within South Africa, the presence of a successful 78 rpm singles market speaks volumes about how black music in South Africa represented a viable economic interest.<sup>380</sup> Musically it was this period that *Graceland* would recall the most with a number of songs on the album taking inspiration from these South African musical traditions established in the 1940s and 1950s.

---

<sup>376</sup> *Have You Seen Drum Recently* (Dir. Jurgen Schadeburg, 1989).

<sup>377</sup> Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', p.164.

Louis Barfe, *Where Have All The Good Times Gone? : The Rise and Fall of the Record Industry* (London: Atlantic, 2004), p.173.

<sup>378</sup> Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', p.164.

<sup>379</sup> Barfe, *Where Have All the Good Times Gone*, pp.173-174.

<sup>380</sup> Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', p.160.

This revived black South African music scene would soon take on more political connotations. For hard-line supporters of apartheid this new music appeared to encourage degeneracy and evils such as ‘inter-racial dancing’.<sup>381</sup> The late 1950’s saw heightened tensions between those living in the townships and the security services with musicians coming in for ‘continual police harassment’.<sup>382</sup> This increase in tensions reflects a distinct political turn in the content of the music made in the latter half of the 1950s. This rise in politically conscious music reflects both the rise of this New Africanism and also a response to increasingly repressive apartheid regime. In particular the *Group Areas Act* of 1950, which effectively forced the breakup of mixed race neighbourhoods, such as Sophiatown, causing disruption of the ‘vibrant’ musical communities that had formed in these neighbourhoods.<sup>383</sup> Allen argues that due to the work of the ANC ‘to increase its support base, the mass of ordinary township people became politically conscious and active during the 1950s and, in turn, the commercial viability of politically orientated recordings increased considerably.’<sup>384</sup>

Popular music was also quickly embraced by those opposed to apartheid. In this period the ANC began to use music to recruit members and spread its message, a tactic that had been long established by the Trade Unions in South Africa, who had long established choirs.<sup>385</sup> However many such as the white South African music journalist Muff Anderson have argued that these engagements with popular music were behind developments in township music and instead rested on a

---

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., p.163.

<sup>382</sup> Schumann, ‘The Beat That Beat Apartheid, p.22.

<sup>383</sup> Ballantine, ‘A Brief History of South African Popular Music’, p.308.

<sup>384</sup> Lara Allen, ‘Commerce, Politics, Musical Hybridity: Vocalising Black South African Identity during the 1950s’, *Ethnomusicology*, 47 (2003), p.234.

<sup>385</sup> Christopher Ballantine, ‘Music and Emancipation: The Social Role of Black Jazz and Vaudeville in South Africa between the 1920s and the Early 1940s’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17 (1991), pp.141-144.



nostalgia which encouraged people to look back to a ‘mythical past’ whilst ignoring the ‘aspirations of the working class’.<sup>386</sup>

This was in direct contrast to the growth of the popular protest music that began to emerge from the townships in the 1950s. Recordings on labels such as *Trutone* and *Troubadour*, by artists such as Dorothy Masuka, Mary Thobei and Mabel Mafuya, took the approach of singing ‘the latest news’, not as an overtly political act but as a reflection of everyday problems.<sup>387</sup> Makeba articulated this point of view well when she argued that “people say I sing politics, but what I sing is not politics, it is the truth”.<sup>388</sup> This approach can be seen in the wealth of songs encouraging bus strikes or protesting against the pass laws, which criticised the everyday symptoms of apartheid as a means of confronting the wider issue of apartheid.<sup>389</sup>

Another key development in South African popular music in the 1950s was the increased use of allegory, metaphor and coded messages in songs to outwit the censors. For example, Mabel Mafuya’s, ‘Udumo Lwamaphoysia’ (‘A Strong Police Force’), was used to warn people in township bars of approaching policemen. An even clearer example can be found in Nancy Jacobs ‘Meadowlands’ which was a coded lament for the forced removal of black South Africans from Sophiatown according to the *Group Areas Act* of 1950.<sup>390</sup> With its cheerful melody and

---

<sup>386</sup> Muff Anderson, *Music in the Mix: The Story of South African Popular Music* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), p.18.

<sup>387</sup> Allen, ‘Commerce, Politics, Musical Hybridity’, p.234.

<sup>388</sup> Miriam Makeba cited in Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-ye: A Celebration of African Music* (Enfield: Da Capo, 1991), p.192.

<sup>389</sup> Allen, ‘Commerce, Politics, Musical Hybridity’, p.236.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p.235.

sarcastic lyrics, ‘Meadowlands’ escaped censorship because the Directorate of Publications and security forces simply thought ‘it was a nice song’.<sup>391</sup>

Both of these conventions, of singing the latest news and of use of metaphor can be found on *Graceland*. In particular the first song on the album ‘The Boy in the Bubble’ begins with an allusion to a roadside bombing.<sup>392</sup> Although it is never explicitly stated that Simon is narrating a South African scene, the prominent use of the South African accordion jive style in the song, alongside later mentions of ‘desserts’ and ‘jungles’ help to create the impression. More importantly though the lyrics form and presentation evoke a news report, again reflecting conventions on reporting the news in South African popular music. In terms of metaphor and allegory there are a number of occasions whereby the ambiguity of the lyrics on songs such as ‘Homeless’ and ‘Under African Skies’ could allow listeners to hear an anti-apartheid message. Certainly this is how many of the ordinary members who defended Simon in letters to the AAM saw the album. More importantly though, was that whether consciously or not the inclusion of these elements show the way in which key elements of South African popular music were reflected on *Graceland*.

## “Culture Flows Like Water”

In many ways *Graceland* is a fitting tribute to this long history of cultural collaboration in South African music, albeit an inversion of the process that had fuelled the jazz fans of Sophiatown. It is the theme of cultural collaboration that lies at the heart of *Graceland*. As Louise Meintjes has argued, *Graceland* is centred

---

<sup>391</sup> *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (dir: Lee Hirsch, 2002).

<sup>392</sup> Forere Motloheloa and Paul Simon, ‘The Boy in the Bubble’, *Graceland*, Paul Simon (Warner Bros. Records, 7599-25447-2, 1986) [LP Album].

on the idea of collaboration, both musical and cultural, a theme which can be seen in both the album's lyrics and in the ways in which the various African musical styles are mixed with more conventional western styles.<sup>393</sup> The notion that these different musical styles, from South African *mbaqanga* and *kwela*, West African *highlife* and Cajun *zydeco* music, with more conventional western styles such as folk and pop, can be easily mixed helps to support the notion that music represents a 'universal language'.<sup>394</sup>

A similar approach, where musical styles are mixed in order to suggest unity can be found in many other recordings. Indeed this could even be seen prominently in the few protest songs made by musicians aligned to anti-apartheid organisation. The Special AKA's 'Nelson Mandela', was deliberately built around an African style instrumental piece. Similarly the protest single 'Sun City' by the American musical campaign Artists United Against Apartheid, deliberately mixed elements of jazz, rock and hip hop, in an effort to express cultural unity and confront racism in America.<sup>395</sup> Yet what distinguishes these two attempts from *Graceland*, is that in both 'Nelson Mandela' and 'Sun City' the mixing of musical genres is secondary to the presence of a clear political message.

In contrast to this, *Graceland* used African musical signifiers primarily for their aesthetic value and as evidence of the notion that music can function as a value free 'universal language'. This is an idea that is supported by Simon's liner notes for the album where he recalls his first impression of *mbaqanga* music was that it was 'vaguely like '50's rock 'n' roll... simple three chord pop hits... familiar

---

<sup>393</sup> Louise Meintjes, 'Paul Simon's *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning', *Ethnomusicology*, 34 (1990), p.37.

<sup>394</sup> Bob W. White, 'The Promise of World Music: Strategies for Non-Essentialist Listening', in Bob W. White (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington, 2012), p.191.

<sup>395</sup> Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London, 1990), p.189.

and foreign sounding at the same time.’.<sup>396</sup> In subsequent interviews Simon went even further suggesting that ‘the whole world responds to rhythm’ demonstrating a clear belief in the idea that music represents a universal experience, regardless of the origin and divorced from any wider political context.<sup>397</sup> As Feld and White have argued, the promotion of this idea of music as a universal language which celebrated the ‘genius of the human spirit’, is a key hallmark of *Graceland* and the world music releases that followed it.<sup>398</sup> As White shows, the language of ‘harmony’, ‘shared experience’ and the celebration of different cultures are key discourses in world music, which can be seen in the liner notes of releases and promotional material for *Graceland*.<sup>399</sup>

Even more importantly it was a notion that would be invoked repeatedly by those who defended Simon. Deepak Shah’s letter in defence of Simon to the AAM stressed the way in which ‘*Graceland* has helped many young people all over the western world see that there is in fact a strong and beautiful musical tradition across Africa as a whole’ and had praised Simon’s engagement with it.<sup>400</sup> Furthermore, Penny Reel’s review of *Graceland* for the *NME* praised Simon for ‘successfully’ linking South African and American music.<sup>401</sup>

Despite Simon’s language of harmony and universalism appearing to place him firmly in familiar territory to many who associated themselves with anti-apartheid campaigns, Simon’s own motives appeared to some to be much more quixotic. Specifically, Simon’s clear disconnect from the prevalent left wing

---

<sup>396</sup> Paul Simon, *Graceland Liner Notes* (London: Warner Brothers, 1986).

<sup>397</sup> Jesse Kornbluth, *Graceland 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reissue Liner Notes* (London: Warner Brothers, 2012), p.4.

<sup>398</sup> White, ‘The Promise of World Music: Strategies for Non-Essentialist Listening’, pp.190-191.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.192-193.

<sup>400</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Deepak Shah, ‘Letter to AAM’, 4 April 1987.

<sup>401</sup> Reel, ‘Paul Simon: *Graceland*’.

politics of the majority of musicians involved in anti-apartheid campaigns raises important questions about the motivation for making *Graceland*. The most obvious point is that Simon claimed at the time to have approached the making of the album in a completely apolitical fashion. This can be seen clearly in the constant assertions in press conferences that Simon was ‘with the musicians’ against ‘the guys with guns’.<sup>402</sup> This constructed dichotomy illustrates well the way in which Simon had found himself a participant in the debate over the cultural boycott without a great deal of knowledge of its intricacies.

Clearly some musicians had found it easy to work alongside what Simon termed ‘the guys with guns’. Members of AAA had even been willing to make concessions on selling their music within South Africa precisely because they believed it was the right thing to do to support the ANC. Indeed it is reasonable to believe that even some of those ordinary members who argued for a selective boycott and had suggested some clemency for Simon, would have found the distinction simplistic.<sup>403</sup> If Simon had a political motive for recording *Graceland* then it was not one that could be mapped onto the established landscape of anti-apartheid groups or activism. Veit Erlmann argued that *Graceland* represented a different political heritage, being one of the first cultural projects that ‘engaged with the apartheid regime from an explicitly liberal stance’.<sup>404</sup>

Some indication of Simon’s intentions can be found in the original press release for the album. In the press release, Simon stated clearly that;

“My hope was that people would be interested in listening to this type of music, and that it would have a significant impact on popular music

---

<sup>402</sup> Denselow, ‘Paul Simon’s *Graceland*: The Acclaim and the Outrage’.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, p.170.

today”... “Graceland is African music as surely as it is American music. But more importantly it is Human music, a celebration of the family of man.”<sup>405</sup>

The recurring themes evoked in this statement and throughout the rest of the press release are those of collaboration and of exploration.

Desire for the latter is given as the main reason for the genesis of the record, with the press release noting that, ‘Mr. Simon... first travelled to South Africa in February 1985 in order to acquire first-hand knowledge of the diverse groups and musicians who were essentially unknown outside of their own rigid boundaries’.<sup>406</sup>

This is a version of events that was echoed by Simon in both the liner notes for *Graceland* and the 2012 documentary film *Under African Skies*. In the film Simon claimed that being given a copy of a bootleg cassette copy of the South African compilation *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits Volume II*, the idea of travelling to South Africa became an ‘irresistible adventure’.<sup>407</sup> What is noticeable though, is that throughout accounts of the making of the album, the process is explained and understood as an exploration on the terms of Simon. The telling admission that Simon wished to bring together ‘serious minded American musicians and Third World performers’, illustrates well some of the perceptions of the relationship between Simon and his South African collaborators on the album.<sup>408</sup> There is something of a dichotomy between the sophisticated western craftsman, the master of an art form and an undefined and indistinct third world figure who simply performs rather than creates.

In this way Simon was following a well-established path in interactions between western and non-western musicians. The musicologist Timothy D. Taylor

---

<sup>405</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Paul Simon Music, ‘Paul Simon and Black South Africans Introduce Breakthrough New Album’, August 1986, p.1.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> *Under African Skies*.

<sup>408</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Paul Simon Music, ‘Paul Simon and Black South Africans Introduce Breakthrough New Album’, August 1986, p.1.

has argued extensively that the role of western musicians in projects such as *Graceland* is not that of an equal collaborator but rather as an intermediary figure or a sonic ‘explorer’, interpreting the music on behalf of the western audience.<sup>409</sup> As a result Taylor argued that western musicians have participated in creating a strict distinction between their music, governed by copyright and publishing laws and non-western music which is portrayed as a ‘natural culture’.<sup>410</sup>

That the role of the western intermediary is valued above and beyond that of the indigenous musicians can be seen clearly in the way in which credit for the world music projects were apportioned. Taylor uses the example of a 1985 album *The Rhythmattest* by Stewart Copeland, formerly drummer with The Police, which credited only Copeland and the two most famous African musicians on the album by name, often reducing other participants to tribal name only.<sup>411</sup> Taylor and Feld have argued that this marginalization of non-western collaborators in world music projects, is in itself indicative of the unequal economic relations at the heart of world music.<sup>412</sup> Therefore it could again be argued that the engagement of these musicians with non-western music in these early recordings often presented a tokenistic and a shallow representation of the source material guided primarily by the egos of the musicians overseeing the project. As Charles Hamm has argued western musicians often appeared happy to adopt and adapt the ‘sounds and rhythms of various ethnic music... in order give rhythmic punch’ to their music.<sup>413</sup>

In this way we can see a clear distinction between Simon and those who had consciously committed to using their status as musicians to challenge apartheid. The identity of groups like AAA, modelled on its parent organisation the AAM,

---

<sup>409</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, pp.28-30.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.173-174.

<sup>413</sup> Charles Hamm, ‘*Graceland Revisited*’, p.303.

had committed itself to a strategy of acting ‘in solidarity’ with the ANC, who they regarded, almost uncritically, as the official voice of the ‘national liberation struggle’.<sup>414</sup> This meant a focus on practical actions, such as the boycott and fundraising concerts as an expression of solidarity.

This was a distinction that was centred on different perspectives on the nature of culture in the context of apartheid. For the majority of anti-apartheid groups in America and Europe, the intellectual content of cultural works was seen as secondary to their potential economic value. As Shirli Gilbert has argued, this reflected the ANC’s own divided feelings about the usefulness of culture as ‘a weapon of struggle’.<sup>415</sup> In contrast, Simon represented a belief that culture represented a global and essentially apolitical project. At one press conference Simon explained his decision to use South African musical styles by asserting that “culture flows like water... It isn’t something that can just be cut off”.<sup>416</sup> This imagining of culture as a natural and free flowing stream is in many ways indicative of the approach of world music as a whole. As Timothy D. Taylor has argued, this represented a prevailing narrative of music as a ‘natural’ pursuit above and beyond national boundaries.<sup>417</sup> This in itself was in direct conflict to the line taken by anti-apartheid groups and anti-apartheid activists, who argued about the ways in which culture had been disrupted by apartheid. However as Erlmann has argued Simon’s approach on *Graceland* could be seen as an anti-apartheid statement that mediated ‘the more strident tonalities’ of established campaigns

---

<sup>414</sup> Christabel Gurney, ‘The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement’ (1999). <[http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British Anti-Apartheid Movement](http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British+Anti-Apartheid+Movement)> (11 September 2015).

<sup>415</sup> Shirli Gilbert, ‘Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Struggle Against Apartheid’, *Journal of South African Studies*, 33 (2007), p.422.

<sup>416</sup> Paul Simon cited in Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music*, p.22.

<sup>417</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, p.22.



against apartheid through a ‘cross cultural dialogue’ that rested on the ‘hazy feeling of some universal ecumene of human rights and free enterprise’.<sup>418</sup>

## **All Around the World**

This sense of universality is made even clearer in the lyrical content of *Graceland*, where one of the most common themes is that of shared experience. The lyrics of Simon’s ‘All Around The World or The Myth of Fingerprints’ mixed both Western and African references in order to suggest a commonality of experience. On ‘All Around The World...’, the lyrics evoke locations from California to Army bases in the Indian Ocean and “black pit towns”, before declaring that the people are “all the same”.<sup>419</sup> The constant association made throughout the album’s lyrics tie the notions of universality to the imagery of primitive truth and spiritual renewal. As one American reviewer writing in *Spin* noted on the album’s release, ‘*Graceland* is a pilgrimage... it is a state of mind that borders on heaven at the intersection of the road to enlightenment and the road to ruin.’<sup>420</sup>

It is this idea of a pilgrimage that is frequently evoked throughout the album. This is most obvious on the album’s title track, which quite literally describes a pilgrimage made by Simon to Elvis Presley’s former home, where ‘all will be received’.<sup>421</sup> A similar theme can be seen on ‘Under African Skies’, which takes the form of a travelogue with Simon, searching for the ‘roots of rhythm’.<sup>422</sup> The linking of the African figure of Joseph with a verse about Linda Ronstadt’s memories of religious music as a child in Tucson, Arizona, suggests music as a

---

<sup>418</sup> Earlmann, *Music Modernity and the Global Imagination*, pp.169-170.

<sup>419</sup> Paul Simon, ‘All Around The World or the Myth of Fingerprints’, *Graceland*, Paul Simon (Warner Bros. Records, 7599-25447-2, 1986) [LP Album]

<sup>420</sup> Glenn O’Brien, ‘Paul Simon: *Graceland* (Warner Brothers), *Spin*, November 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-graceland-warner-bros>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>421</sup> Paul Simon, ‘Graceland’, *Graceland*, 1986, Warner Brothers.

<sup>422</sup> *Under African Skies*.

primitive truth and universal language.<sup>423</sup> Even more important though is the suggestion that Africa is ‘where the roots of rhythm remain’ and from that point a sense of spiritual rebirth

By the time *Graceland* was released, this conflation of African signifiers as an expression of pure and primitive truth was well established. The previous example of the evolution of the song ‘The Lion Sleeps Tonight’, which saw Western artists impose new radical interpretations of the song, serves as a powerful example.<sup>424</sup> Where Simon and *Graceland* differ from these earlier experiments with African music is in the way that rather than construct a meaning on top of the source material, Simon placed his own personal experience at the very forefront. As a feature in *The Times* would argue, *Graceland* was primarily an album about ‘the condition of life in America’.<sup>425</sup> In a review in the UK music weekly *Sounds*, the journalist Jack Barron was somewhat crueller, arguing that lyrically the album gave no insight deeper than that of a ‘glimpse [into] the preoccupations of a middle-aged American man – loneliness, obesity, and failed relationships’.<sup>426</sup>

Probably the clearest example of this mixing of sounds and lyrical themes can be found on the most successful single from the album, ‘You Can Call Me Al’.<sup>427</sup> Described by Simon in the liner notes as ‘a kind of South African funk/dance groove’, the song actually combines a number of different musical textures from early 1970s style *mbaqanga*, *isicathimiya* style backing vocals and a pennywhistle solo derived from the *kwela* style. As Meintjes has argued ‘You Can

---

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, pp.258-259.

<sup>425</sup> Alan Franks, ‘It’s Paul, but you can call him Al’, *The Times*, 21 March, 1987, pg. 37.

<sup>426</sup> Jack Barron, ‘Paul Simon: Graceland’ *Sounds*, 6 September 1986.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-igracelandi-warner-brothers->> (25 September 2015).

<sup>427</sup> Louise Meintjes, ‘Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, South Africa and the Mediation of Musical Meaning’, *Ethnomusicology*, 34 (1990), p.43.

Call Me Al' is in essence 'packed with layers of signs', with each stylistic element implying its own unique meaning and context.<sup>428</sup> Importantly though these musical styles, acting as signs, in their combination on the song in turn help to construct a new set of meanings, divorced from the original.<sup>429</sup> Yet despite 'You Can Call Me Al' essentially being a meditation on being middle aged and what Simon called his 'worst fears', it also demonstrated well Simon's belief in collaboration as a political act in itself. As Simon would later explain in an obituary for Mandela, 'the music of the *Graceland* album represented a unified black South African culture, even though it came from many different tribal heritages... people of different ethnic origins coexisted under the boot of a racist South African government. *Graceland* was united by the joy of shared music and the sorrow of apartheid.'<sup>430</sup>

## Collaborators

It is this assertion that is particularly revealing about the way in which Simon interacted with his South African collaborators. Yet it is also his choice of collaborators which speaks volumes about Simon's understanding, or more often lack of, of the wider issues concerning apartheid. Perhaps the most important point is that with the exception of the Boyoyo Boys, who Simon was familiar with from the *Accordion Jive Hits Volume II* bootleg tape which inspired the album, and Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the musicians were chosen by South African music industry insiders who had agreed to aid Simon.<sup>431</sup> Key amongst them was Hilton Rosenthal who was head of the black music division of Gramophone Recordings,

---

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>430</sup> Paul Simon, 'Remembering Days of Miracle and Wonder: Paul Simon on Mandela's Role in *Graceland*', *New York Times*, 13 December 2013.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/14/arts/music/paul-simon-on-mandelas-role-in-graceland.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>431</sup> *Under African Skies*.

the South African arm of Simon's label CBS.<sup>432</sup> Rosenthal had some level of liberal credibility inside South Africa, having been instrumental in signing and promoting Johnny Clegg from the late 1970s onwards.<sup>433</sup> It was through Rosenthal and his network of black producers that the South African musicians that played on *Graceland* were assembled.<sup>434</sup>

One of the most striking choices made by Rosenthal for both the South African recording sessions and the later world tour were members of the band Stimela. At the time one of the most popular groups in South Africa with young urban Zulu listeners, Stimela had cultivated a tough militaristic image and happily talked to sympathetic journalists about how they stood for 'black upliftment'.<sup>435</sup> Bandleader Ray Phiri, who played many of the guitar parts on *Graceland*, had been a friend of Steve Biko and was heavily influenced by the legacy of Black Consciousness.<sup>436</sup> Filling the void left by the imprisonment and exile of many key members of the ANC in the early 1970s, The Black Consciousness Movement had represented something of a distinct departure from the ANC, with an emphasis on black cultural renewal and non-violence rather than political participation and armed struggle.<sup>437</sup> Importantly Black Consciousness had made efforts to become involved with the South African music scene, funding musicians and producers, as well as supporting groups such as the Johannesburg Jazz Appreciation Society and the Black Music Foundation in the late 1970s.<sup>438</sup> Phiri and Stimela were very much

---

<sup>432</sup> Due to the controversy of trading in South Africa, many record labels obscured their involvement by having their South African subsidiaries change their names. For example EMI reacted to pressure to stop operating inside apartheid South Africa by establishing a new subsidiary, *CCP Records*, inside South Africa.

Meintjes, *Sound Of Africa*, p.78.

<sup>433</sup> *Under African Skies*.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> Simon, 'Remembering Days of Miracle and Wonder'.

<sup>437</sup> Donald Woods, *Biko* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp.39-40.

<sup>438</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p.201.

built in this model, with a strong belief in the ability of culture having its own intrinsic value rather than subscribing to the ANC and boycott movements view of music as a primarily economic concern. Certainly this partly explains Phiri's unwillingness to simply agree to demands from ANC figures to leave the *Graceland* tour and return to South Africa.<sup>439</sup>

If Stimela represented a radical influence on the recording of *Graceland* then they were effectively balanced by the involvement of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, who had a, not always accurate, reputation as a much more culturally conservative group. Interestingly though, like Stimela, the music and image of Ladysmith Black Mambazo also addressed themes of black power. A press release from the early 1980s, prior to the group's appearance on *Graceland*, proclaimed that the groups success made them; 'messiahs restoring national pride in a shattered heritage.'<sup>440</sup> In fact the band's name itself could be read as an oblique reference to black power, with its combination of Ladysmith Black, an affirmation of their identity with *mambazo*, a Zulu word for axe, denoting strength and martial identity.<sup>441</sup> This was in part confirmed by the group's leader Joseph Shabalala who in 1981 told the South African journalist Muff Anderson that "We are black, and an axe is sharp and strong".<sup>442</sup>

However Ladysmith Black Mambazo were also followed by the suggestion that they somehow represented a culturally conservative voice. This was by the time of *Graceland's* release a well-established trope. The genres most closely associated with Ladysmith Black Mambazo, *mbube* and *isicathimiya*, had come to

---

<sup>439</sup> *Under African Skies*.

<sup>440</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.126.

<sup>441</sup> Charles Hamm, *Putting Popular Music in its Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.143.

<sup>442</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.126.

be regarded as a fundamentally conservative and nostalgic.<sup>443</sup> In a review of their 1984 album *Induku Zethu*, Christgau suggested, despite admitting he did not know the Zulu language, that the album's lyrics 'probably serve culturally conservative values'.<sup>444</sup> This appeared to be based on his understanding that 'South African vocal ensembles', did not represent a progressive form.<sup>445</sup> Similarly Anderson's profile of the group from the early 1980s asserted that the group were dangerously apolitical, socially conservative and motivated by material gain.<sup>446</sup> Simon would later suggest that Miriam Makeba, Xhosa by birth, refused to talk to members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, precisely because of these political associations.<sup>447</sup> Furthermore Charles Hamm has gone as far as inferring that the group had effectively collaborated with apartheid. Noting that that the group 'benefitted handsomely from collaboration with the SABC and South Africa's internal domestic recording industry'.<sup>448</sup> For Hamm and others seeking to condemn *Graceland* as having had 'nothing to do with the ongoing struggle for liberation', the involvement of Ladysmith Black Mambazo seemingly confirms the conservative nature of *Graceland*.

Yet the truth about the politics of Ladysmith Black Mambazo is somewhat more complicated than Christgau, an American national who admitted to only a cursory understanding of Zulu culture, Anderson, a white South African liberal preoccupied with finding explicit political meaning in popular music, or Hamm, an American musicologist, have asserted. The truth about the political value of

---

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., pp.126-127.

<sup>444</sup> Robert Christgau, 'Ladysmith Black Mambazo', *Village Voice*, 9 March 2003. <[http://www.robertchristgau.com/get\\_artist.php?name=Ladysmith+Black+Mambazo](http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_artist.php?name=Ladysmith+Black+Mambazo)> (25 September 2015).

<sup>445</sup> Christgau, 'Ladysmith Black Mambazo'.

<sup>446</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.126.

<sup>447</sup> Simon, 'Remembering Days of Miracle and Wonder'.

<sup>448</sup> Hamm, 'Graceland Revisited', p.300.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo's contribution to *Graceland* rested less on the ways in which the group may or may not have represented the complexities of internal South African politics and more in the way in which audiences were able to infer a political meaning. Reflecting on the reaction of western audiences to the role of Ladysmith Black Mambazo on *Graceland*, Erlmann suggested that the group appeared to represent 'the tremendous energy and determination of a nation reclaiming political and social equity' and in that way 'embodied everything that was essential about South Africa's black oppressed masses'.<sup>449</sup>

Whilst Hamm's assertion that it was hard to imagine that Ladysmith Black Mambazo's success had 'any positive impact on the struggle for black liberation' is something of a moot point, it is fair to suggest that the group's contribution resonated with many grass roots members of group such as AAM. It was the contribution of the group on songs such as 'Homeless' which Shah had singled out as creating a 'feeling of Anti-Apartheid protest'. The same song would be singled out in Jack Barron's review of *Graceland* as the only example of an 'overt' commentary on apartheid.<sup>450</sup> In his analysis of 'Homeless', Erlmann suggests that the actual meaning of the Zulu sections are more 'prosaic' than some commentators had credited.<sup>451</sup> Yet what the reception given to 'Homeless' as potentially being a site of anti-apartheid protest, in spite of any clear lyrical indication, shows the way in which the form of songs on *Graceland* could be conceived as inherently political.

This again reinforces the way in which *Graceland* engaged, whether knowingly or not, with traditional South African conventions on mixing popular music and popular politics. Specifically the tendency of some songwriters to avoid

---

<sup>449</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, p.169.

<sup>450</sup> Barron, 'Paul Simon: Graceland'.

<sup>451</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination*, p.227

being overtly political to avoid censorship or banning. Defending the lack of political messages in Ladysmith Black Mambazo's music, Shabalala told Anderson in 1981 that staying away from politics allowed the group to be heard on the radio and to avoid censorship.<sup>452</sup>

Whilst Anderson and Hamm have argued that this willingness to please censors was akin to a degree of collaboration with apartheid, the reality of the negotiation of political meaning in popular music was more complex.<sup>453</sup> As even some of the white producers who produced the popular *isicathimiya*, *mbaqanga* and *mbube* hits of the 1970s and 1980s noted, these forms could still carry subversive ideas through metaphor.<sup>454</sup> For other musicians, the process of making music for the radio was in itself led in itself to greater political awareness and activism. Johnny Clegg would later suggest that he had begun his career relatively unaware of the wider politics of apartheid, only to have his musical output increasingly defined by political events.<sup>455</sup>

What this clearly shows is that musical genres and forms themselves could be encoded with a political meaning far more powerful than the lyrical content. As Erlmann shows, *isicathimiya* had strong roots in the trade union movement of the early twentieth century and as such had retained an association with radical politics.<sup>456</sup> Furthermore drawing upon the work of J.C. Scott, Taylor makes a strong argument that the humanity expressed in music by groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo is in itself a form of resistance.<sup>457</sup> In particular Taylor argued that the very act of recording music in African styles 'constituted a triumph over

---

<sup>452</sup> Anderson, *Music in the Mix*, p.126

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., pp.87-88.

<sup>455</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, pp.176-178.

<sup>456</sup> Veit Erlmann, "'The Past Is Far and the Future is Far": Power and Performance Among Zulu Migrant Workers', *American Ethnologist*, 19,(1992), pp.688-700.

<sup>457</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, pp.78-82.



apartheid' by helping those, who may not have recourse to armed resistance give voice to their identity.<sup>458</sup> Certainly this was an idea seized upon by some western critics such as the *Village Voice's* music critic Christgau, who saw the existence of South African *mbaqanga* as evidence of 'unimaginable vitality, complexity and high spirits' which effectively contradicted the dogma of apartheid.<sup>459</sup>

This was a point of view that was also shared by one of Simon's most ardent defenders, Hugh Masekela, who viewed *Graceland* as an opportunity to reconnect with South African music after being in exile for over two decades.<sup>460</sup> The enthusiastic participation of Masekela in the *Graceland* world tour, alongside his ex-wife Miriam Makeba, served to further confuse and confound many of the issues surrounding *Graceland*. This effectively led to the bizarre spectacle of Dammers along with Billy Bragg, Paul Weller and other leading members of AAA picketing and protesting against Paul Simon's concert at the Royal Albert Hall, where Masekela played the song 'Bring Him Back Home', which called for the release of Mandela.<sup>461</sup>

## **Apartheid context**

It is this debate and controversy that followed the release of *Graceland* which illustrates best the tensions between popular music and established political campaigns. By challenging the established tactic of the boycott, Simon unwittingly opened up questions about the ways in which popular music should be independent from any specific political campaign. For many such as Dammers and the AAA, this flew in the face of ideas of using popular music as a campaigning tool. This

---

<sup>458</sup> Taylor, *Global Pop*, pp.81-82.

<sup>459</sup> Christgau, 'South Africa Romance'.

<sup>460</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.197.

<sup>461</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.506.

tension could particularly be seen in the British music press, which greeted *Graceland* with mixed responses, many of which emphasised the role of the wider political debate in shaping their opinions. Publications such as the *NME*, which had been particularly supportive of the ANC, allowing journalists to refuse their material being reprinted in South Africa, and by extension the AAM, were particularly conflicted.<sup>462</sup>

Even some of those who expressed an appreciation of the lyrical and musical content of the album found themselves profoundly uneasy about Simon's decision to record in South Africa. Barron's review in *Sounds* gave a somewhat muted response to the album, almost entirely because of his unease with the underlying controversy.<sup>463</sup> Most importantly Barron argued that by recording in South Africa, Simon had 'taken himself beyond the borders of the civilised world to that disgraceland', whilst noting that the lack of almost any lyrical engagement with the political situation within South Africa was 'the records ultimate failing'.<sup>464</sup> Whilst Barron was willing to concede 'that on this LP, there are three of the most marvellous melodies I have ever heard', as a reviewer Barron keeps coming back to question of whether *Graceland* was simply 'a rich man's indulgence and a folly of naive politics'.<sup>465</sup> Even more telling is Barron's final judgement that 'the reverberations and repercussions of this album will live with Paul Simon long after this review has turned into yesterday's news'.<sup>466</sup>

That the reviewer's appreciation of the album could be so guided by the underlying politics of the album's production, demonstrates well the way in which

---

<sup>462</sup> Pat Long, *The History of the NME : High Times and Low Lives at the World's Most Famous Music Magazine* (London: Portico, 2012), pp.165-166.

<sup>463</sup> Barron, 'Paul Simon: Graceland'.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

some critics felt the need to view the album primarily as a political rather than a musical act. Indeed one of the few areas in which Barron praised Simon was for crediting the South African musicians fairly.<sup>467</sup> Furthermore, that the reviewer consciously calls to mind ‘the reverberations and repercussions of this album’, suggests not only a familiarity with the issues raised by *Graceland*, but also an awareness of the fact it was part of a larger ongoing debate about resistance apartheid. Specifically with regards to the great deal of debate about the cultural boycott inside and outside of official anti-apartheid groups in the west. In this way, *Graceland* represented, not only an important foundation of the world music boom that was to follow but also, a means by which larger debates about resistance to apartheid were called into the open. As an editorial in the *NME* reflected, many of the reviews of and the reporting on *Graceland* had ‘reflected a widespread confusion about the nature and purpose of the Cultural Boycott, and how it affects not just Simon, but artists within South Africa itself.’<sup>468</sup>

It could be argued that much of the controversy and debate generated by *Graceland* was not intended by Simon. Certainly Simon’s reaction to the controversy and criticism belies his limited understanding of the wider politics of apartheid in South Africa. Public statements made by Simon during promotional activity for *Graceland*, certainly speak volumes about just how unclear Simon was on the wider issues surrounding the cultural boycott. When questioned by Robin Denselow about breaking the boycott at a launch party for the album held in London on the 26th August 1986, Simon denied that he had broken the boycott at all.<sup>469</sup> Simon argued that by recording rather than playing a concert in South Africa, he had not broken the letter of the United Nations *Resolution 35/206*, which

---

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Staunton and Sinker, ‘Paul Simon: The Boy in the Boycott’.

<sup>469</sup> Denselow, ‘Paul Simon’s *Graceland*: The Acclaim and the Outrage’.

codified and enforced the cultural boycott.<sup>470</sup> Indeed it was this defence which led to Paul Simon successfully being removed from the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid's register of boycott breakers at the start of 1987.<sup>471</sup>

However, it was this seemingly trivial distinction over the nature of performance that further infuriated enthusiastic supporters of the cultural boycott such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and their musical sub group Artists Against Apartheid.<sup>472</sup> An open letter to Paul Simon from AAA from the March of 1987 rejected the sincerity of Simon's previous statements on the boycott, pressing for a further 'complete and heartfelt public apology to the United Nations General Assembly'.<sup>473</sup> Furthermore the letter goes on to ridicule Simon's repeated insistence that he had not performed in South Africa, stating that;

We would like to draw your attention to the Oxford Dictionary definition of the word "perform", which includes "to sing or play". As musicians we are all aware that a performance in a studio may potentially reach a larger audience than a live performance.<sup>474</sup>

The letter also makes clear the belief of the AAA that following *Graceland*, the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid had reviewed its position to make clear that the cultural boycott covered 'all cultural activities'.<sup>475</sup>

That the letter from the AAA to Simon puts so much stress on enforcing a total cultural boycott is in itself illustrative of the ways in which *Graceland* had

---

<sup>470</sup> The wording of *Resolution 35/206* itself is extremely vague simply urging 'writers, artists, musicians and other personalities to boycott South Africa', what this boycott entailed is never fully outlined. However the Resolution's praise of groups such as AAM and AAA, would have given comfort to the traditional understanding of the cultural boycott. United Nations, *Resolution 35/206*, 1980, p.33.

<<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/35/a35r206e.pdf>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>471</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473 Paul Simon, 'Letter to United Nations', 29 January 1987.

<sup>472</sup> AAM's indignation can be seen in asides made in a report back on Simon's London press conference.

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, AAM, 'Notes Taken at Paul Simon Press Conference, ICA, London', 30 January 1987.

<sup>473</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Artists Against Apartheid, 'An Open Letter to Paul Simon', 25 March 1987.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

helped to fuel the ongoing debate about the extent of the cultural boycott. Although the boycott had finally been enshrined by the UN in the passing of Resolution 35/206 in 1981, there remained a degree of confusion on the extent of the cultural boycott.<sup>476</sup> In particular, the growing calls for a selective boycott that allowed a platform for ‘progressive’ South African musicians to perform in Europe. This was received badly by the AAM in Britain and their sub-group AAA, who, especially in the case of the AAM, had a long history of championing the tactic of boycotting, as an essential economic sanction against the apartheid regime.

This view that, the boycott was to be enforced regardless of whether the politics of certain artists was progressive, was voiced continuously to the press by musicians involved with AAA. A feature on *Graceland* in an issue of the NME from January 1987, makes this commitment clear with statements from musicians led by Dammers, openly comparing apartheid to Nazism, on the importance of the total boycott to the AAA.<sup>477</sup> In the same article, Mark Pringle and Heather Small, then of the soul band Hot House, stated that even ‘the solution of giving bands royalties to the ANC while the Record Company rakes in their share from South African sales is no solution at all’.<sup>478</sup>

This is particularly illuminating as it shows the persisting belief in the economic value of the cultural boycott, above any cultural impact. However as Håkan Thörn has argued, this was an argument that was increasingly out of step with some of those within the ANC and especially those still inside of South Africa

---

<sup>476</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, Mike Terry, ‘The Academic and Cultural Boycotts: A Memorandum From the Anti Apartheid Movement’, 9 February 1987.

<sup>477</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, ‘Paul Simon Press Clippings: *NME*’, January 1987.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

in the Mass Democratic Movement and United Democratic Front, who saw the benefit of using music as a means of offering cultural opposition to apartheid.<sup>479</sup>

The arrival of *Graceland*, albeit almost unconsciously, amidst this debate had a number of unforeseen and unintended consequences, which subsequently shaped responses to the album. Most notably, there was a short period of confusion in early 1987, where some had been led to believe, aided by a series of disingenuous statements from Simon, that the recording of *Graceland* had been condoned or excused by the ANC.<sup>480</sup> Although the ANC soon made its position clear, supported by statements from the AAA, this confusion effectively bought the debate about the effectiveness of a total boycott into the mainstream. Staunton and Sinker's March 1987 editorial in the *NME* on the controversy surrounding *Graceland*, devoted a surprising amount of column inches to the discussion of the debate over introducing a selective boycott.<sup>481</sup> In fact despite the numerous protestations of Dali Tambo, son of ANC president Oliver and joint head of AAA, the editorial still suggested that;

At present the ANC is debating its own policy, not with a view to reversing their position, but to meet the need for clarification and flexibility in response to the changing situation within South Africa.<sup>482</sup>

That the *NME* could ever serve as a forum for the increasingly existential debates over the cultural boycott inside the wider anti-apartheid movement is in itself a testament to the way in which *Graceland* had pushed the public debate about the role of culture in opposition to apartheid forward.

---

<sup>479</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.63-64.

<sup>480</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, AAM, 'Notes Taken at Paul Simon Press Conference, ICA, London', 30 January 1987.

<sup>481</sup> Staunton and Sinker, 'Paul Simon: The Boy in the Boycott'.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

The issue that caused the most controversy was that Simon simply did not automatically recognise the authority of any groups such as the AAM, AAA or the ANC. In the same 1986 London press conference where he had first defended his decision to record in South Africa, Simon had also talked about his caution over mixing popular music politics.<sup>483</sup> When pushed to answer whether he had asked for permission to record in South Africa, Simon stated that;

Personally, I feel I'm with the musicians, I'm with the artists. I didn't ask the permission of the ANC. I didn't ask permission of Buthelezi, or Desmond Tutu, or the Pretoria government. And to tell you the truth, I have a feeling that when there are radical transfers of power on either the left or the right, the artists always get screwed. The guys with the guns say, 'This is important', and the guys with guitars don't have a chance.<sup>484</sup>

In actual fact, Simon had sought the opinion of the veteran American anti-apartheid campaigner Harry Belafonte, who had urged Simon to contact the ANC.<sup>485</sup> At another press conference held in London in January, ostensibly to publicise his apology to the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, 1987, Simon had remained bullish on the question of whether he had asked for permission, stating that, 'in my twenty years of recording, I never made a public announcement of what I was going to do or ask[ed] for a referendum as to whether I should continue with some artistic idea.'<sup>486</sup> In the 2012 documentary *Under African Skies*, Simon explained his unwillingness to seek the approval of the ANC, offered the somewhat childish analogy to Dali Tambo that he felt that having to ask for permission to record in South Africa was, '... like your dad, you know, when your dad says don't

---

<sup>483</sup> Denselow, 'Paul Simon's *Graceland*: The Acclaim and the Outrage'.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> *Under African Skies*.

<sup>486</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, AAM, 'Notes Taken at Paul Simon Press Conference, ICA, London', 30 January 1987.

take the car, but you really have a date that you really want to go on, and you take the car anyway”.<sup>487</sup>

What this all demonstrates is the way in which Simon was fundamentally disconnected from and did not identify with the radical anti-apartheid stance taken by many other musicians such as Dammers and even Belafonte. Simon appeared instead to understand events in South Africa from a distinctly more liberal standpoint, which valued music on a purely artistic level and strived to avoid mixing it with politics. As Barron had argued in his review of *Graceland*, Simon’s approach to music was as a ‘cultural Elastoplast’, able to transcend any temporal issues.<sup>488</sup> Prior to *Graceland*, Simon had turned down the opportunity to appear on Steve Van Zandt’s Sun City project because of his discomfort at Van Zandt’s plan to name and shame those who had played Sun City in the song.<sup>489</sup> Interestingly Van Zandt, has claimed that when he later challenged Simon about *Graceland* at a party, Simon had argued that ‘my friend Henry Kissinger’ had told him Nelson Mandela was a communist.<sup>490</sup>

This anecdote, alongside Simon’s labelling of the overthrowing apartheid in South Africa as a ‘radical transfer of power’, are both telling in the way that they suggest Simon’s discomfort with an anti-apartheid campaign which if not explicitly left wing was more often than not left of centre. These again confirm Erlmann’s

---

<sup>487</sup> *Under African Skies*.

<sup>488</sup> Barron, ‘Paul Simon: *Graceland*’.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>490</sup> Following Mandela’s death the SACP revealed that ‘At his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then underground South African Communist Party, but was also a member of our Party’s Central Committee’ whether or not Kissinger was aware of this fact it is hard to say.

Alex Mashilo, ‘Nelson Mandela was a member of our CC at the time of his arrest - SACP’, 6 December 2013, < <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/party/nelson-mandela-was-a-member-of-our-cc-at-the-time-> (7 November 2013).

Sean Jacobs ‘When Steven Van Zandt convinced AZAPO to take Paul Simon off a hit list and what Paul Simon really thought of Nelson Mandela’, *Africa is a Country*, 26 January 2014, < <http://africasacountry.com/when-steven-van-zandt-convicted-azapo-to-take-paul-simon-off-a-hit-list-and-what-paul-simon-really-thought-of-nelson-mandela/> (25 September 2015).



judgement that politically *Graceland* represented an ‘explicitly liberal’ take on anti-apartheid themes and ideas.

### **‘Think hard please’**

More than anything the presence of Masekela and Makeba as participants in Simon’s tour for *Graceland* did much to further complicate the way in which the boycott campaign in Britain and elsewhere interacted with the fallout from *Graceland*. For many the presence of Masekela and Makeba, who as exiles both had a long history of publically criticising apartheid, appeared to be an endorsement of the *Graceland* project. Furthermore, as Denselow argued, the fact that Masekela’s Sister Barbara headed the ANC’s cultural wing, helped to provide not only further confusion about the ANC’s position, but also some degree of respectability for Simon.<sup>491</sup> Even more importantly though, the participation of Masekela and Makeba in the *Graceland* tour helped to inject a distinct political edge to the concerts. The inclusion of a number of explicitly anti-apartheid songs by Makeba and Masekela as well as an ensemble performance of ‘N’Kosi Sikeleli iAfrika’, helped to dramatically shift the content of the concerts and transform them into explicitly political events.

Indeed in the wake of these concerts many, like Deepak Shah, who were sympathetic to the AAM in Britain were moved to profess Simon’s innocence. A further letter sent to the AAM by a South African émigré who chose to remain anonymous, following the statement of the AAM’s intention to picket Simon is particularly illuminating;

Many of us in England are very upset about [the boycott]. It is important that we always fight the real enemy and perhaps not our friends who perhaps make mistakes sometimes. We all make mistakes. Paul Simon says he will not go again to South Africa. He worked with black people and he

---

<sup>491</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.197.

helped them. He is not our enemy. He is a friend who made a mistake... By trying to stop him and perhaps the others, we are hurting the voice of musicians in South Africa. I believe in the boycott... Can our friends in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the ANC not be so unbending? We must not do the work of the Boers for them. They will be happy to see white and perhaps even black people, protest Simon and the others. And because Simon has said he will not go again and because Masekela and Makeba are known to support our people in South Africa, perhaps the picket will be a failure and Anti-Apartheid and the ANC will lose friends in England... The cultural boycott cannot be like the boycott of food and oil and a bank. Many artists are our friends and can help to make the voice of our people in South Africa heard. Are you in London quite sure you speak for black people in South Africa in every one of your cultural boycotts? Please friends, Simon is not the enemy. The Boers are... Please do not do Botha's work for him, even if you think you are doing the opposite. Think hard please.<sup>492</sup>

Particularly interesting is the writer's questioning of whether the AAM in Britain could be 'quite sure' it spoke for the 'black people of South Africa' in enforcing the cultural boycott. The spectacle of white British musicians such as Dammers, Bragg and Weller picketing a concert which included explicitly anti-apartheid songs performed by black South Africans who were both veteran campaigners against apartheid raised questions amongst ordinary members of AAM about the value of an inflexible total cultural boycott. Furthermore, the fact that the AAM believed that they had the ability to inform Masekela and Makeba, who had both been forced into exile from South Africa, how to resist and fight apartheid demonstrates a degree of unawareness that they had previously attributed to Simon.

What these letters from AAM supporters, alongside the contribution from the IAAM, demonstrated well the ways in which *Graceland* had forced a discussion of the legitimacy of the cultural boycott and also of the compatibility of popular music and political campaigns. The issues generated by *Graceland*, made clear, as the above writer made also emphasised, that the cultural boycott could not function in the same way more straightforward economic boycotts of products or

---

<sup>492</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1473, Anon, 'Letter to AAM', 23 February 1987.

organisations such as banks. The growing belief that ‘Many artists are our friends and can help to make the voice of our people in South Africa heard’ expressed in the letter, was one that came to grow in stature in the second half of the 1980s. Certainly it would be later well reflected in the debates about moving to a selective boycott. Even more importantly though it also illustrates the way in which the membership of anti-apartheid groups and those associated with the wider cause, were coming to similar conclusions about the extent of the cultural boycott.

Perhaps the ultimate testament to the success of *Graceland* can be found in the way in which those who had opposed the album with such fervour came to accommodate the value of, if not the whole project, elements of the album. Although Dammers and the majority of the leadership of the AAM in the UK would never have endorsed the project, there is a sense that, in light of the ongoing debate on cultural workers others would have embraced *Graceland* as good publicity for the liberation movement. Dali Tambo was heard to have complained at the time; ‘If Paul Simon had come to us and discussed this, then none of this shit would have happened’.<sup>493</sup> Certainly, there is a clear sense that if Simon had sought to co-operate fully with the ANC, or even to simply consult with the ANC, then *Graceland* could have been released without the controversy that followed.

In fact many of the hallmarks of *Graceland* were adopted for the 1988 Harry Belafonte album *Paradise in Gazankulu*.<sup>494</sup> The album, which was endorsed by the leadership of the ANC and AAA, was presented as a politicised response to *Graceland*.<sup>495</sup> In reality it was so close to Simon’s work that Hamm would later call it a ‘direct imitation’.<sup>496</sup> *Paradise in Gazankulu* like *Graceland*, featured

---

<sup>493</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.506.

<sup>494</sup> Hamm, ‘*Graceland Revisited*’, p.302.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid,

Belafonte singing over *mbaqanga* style backing tracks recorded by popular South African performers such as Steve Kekana, West Nkosi and Brenda Fassie.<sup>497</sup>

Essentially the only way the two albums differed was that Belafonte did not personally record in South Africa and that the lyrics on Belafonte's album were directly political and voiced support for the ANC.<sup>498</sup> Interestingly the project was even curated by Hilton Rosenthal, who had helped introduce Simon to many of the musicians who played on *Graceland* and who continued to have a hand in the career of Johnny Clegg.<sup>499</sup>

Yet whilst Simon had limited credentials as a liberal figure, Belafonte enjoyed a solid reputation as a civil rights activist in America and longstanding anti-apartheid campaigner.<sup>500</sup> Indeed it was Belafonte who had led calls for the cultural and sporting boycott of South Africa in America as early as the late 1960s.<sup>501</sup> Belafonte had also had a long association with South African music, having collaborated with Makeba on an album, *An Evening With Belafonte/Makeba*, which included a number of anti-apartheid protest songs.<sup>502</sup> Furthermore Belafonte had also supported exiled South African musicians, going as far as to support Masekela's application for a US passport.<sup>503</sup> Indeed it was Belafonte who Simon had initially canvassed, and ignored, on the opinion of the ANC prior to beginning the recording of *Graceland*.

Fittingly, considering Belafonte's record, *Paradise in Gazankulu* contained a number of songs such as 'Amandla' which were explicitly political in their lyrics

---

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., pp.302-303.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., pp.302-303.

<sup>500</sup> The range and depth of Belafonte's activism is well covered in the 2011 documentary *Sing Your Soul*

*Sing Your Soul* (Dir: Susane Rostock, 2011).

<sup>501</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.45-46.

<sup>502</sup> *An Evening With Belafonte/Makeba*, Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba (RCA Victor, LPM-3420, 1965) [LP Album].

<sup>503</sup> Barron, 'Paul Simon: Graceland'.

and offered clear support for the ANC.<sup>504</sup> However it is interesting to note that many of the other songs on *Paradise in Gazankulu* shared the same themes of universalism as *Graceland*. ‘Global Carnival’, the lyrics of which were mainly written by the folk singer Jake Holmes, is an assertion of music as a universal language comparable to a number of songs on *Graceland* such as ‘Under African Skies’.<sup>505</sup> In this way *Paradise in Gazankulu* demonstrates well the way in which *Graceland* had helped to shift the boundaries of the role of culture in the fight against apartheid.

### ‘A Global Pop Masterpiece’

In a 1989 reflection on the impact of *Graceland*, Charles Hamm argued that the mountains of commentary that met the release of the album were ‘largely innocent of historical perspective’.<sup>506</sup> In many ways, the passing years have only reinforced this statement, with the album’s continued success and popularity further blurring and obscuring the heated debates of 1986 and 1987. Throughout the years that followed, press features about Simon have seemingly vindicated Simon’s actions and talked up as ‘vindicated advertisement for black South African culture’.<sup>507</sup> A fairly typical article, from the November 2000 issue of the British monthly music magazine *Mojo*, a magazine marketed towards middle aged and older aficionados, defended *Graceland* on the lines that;

the swift removal of Simon from the UN blacklist and the gratitude of the musicians themselves (it sold over 4 million copies) seems to have absolved

---

<sup>504</sup> Jake Holmes and D. Zuma, ‘Amandla’, *Paradise in Gazankulu*, Harry Belafonte (EMI, CDP-7-46971-2, 1988) [LP Album].

<sup>505</sup> Jake Holmes and Alistair Coakley, ‘Global Carnival’, *Paradise in Gazankulu*, Harry Belafonte (EMI, CDP-7-46971-2, 1988) [LP Album].

<sup>506</sup> Hamm, ‘Graceland Revisited’, p.299.

<sup>507</sup> Chris Ingham, ‘Paul Simon: Life after The Capeman’, *MOJO*, November 2000, <  
<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-life-after-ithe-capemani> (25 September 2015).

him of any ethical wrongdoing. The music itself is virtually beyond reproach.<sup>508</sup>

That the ‘swift removal of Simon from the UN blacklist’ was considered such an important mitigating factor in Simon’s favour, speaks volumes about the way in which the debate about *Graceland* has become ever more divorced from any meaningful historical context. The removal of Simon from the blacklist had been a largely controversial measure, with the AAM and AAA incensed that Simon had been allowed to get away on what they saw as a technicality. Furthermore, the assertion of the importance of the ‘gratitude of the musicians themselves’, is also somewhat problematic. First, this is somewhat of an asinine statement, what musician would not be grateful of a share of the royalties from an album which had sold so many copies. Secondly and more importantly though, there is the question of what real impact was made on the lives of the musicians who participated. Hamm has argued that in effect, *Graceland* did little more than increase the bank balances of those who had already enjoyed a great deal of success inside South Africa.<sup>509</sup> More importantly though, the success of the album in South Africa, was even touted by some as a vindication of apartheid and ‘constructive engagement’.<sup>510</sup>

This uncritical whitewashing of *Graceland* peaked with the commentary which surrounded the ‘25<sup>th</sup> anniversary’ re-master and reissue of the album in 2012. Particularly bizarre were the new liner notes which accompanied the re-issue by the journalist Jesse Kornbluth, which went as far as suggesting that breaking the boycott was a ‘brave decision’ on the part of Simon.<sup>511</sup> Even more telling is the documentary *Under African Skies*, which accompanied the reissue of the album,

---

<sup>508</sup> Ingham, ‘Paul Simon: Life after The Capeman’.

<sup>509</sup> Hamm, ‘Graceland Revisited’, p.302.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Kornbluth, *Graceland 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reissue Liner Notes*.

which seeks to further validate Simon's actions. Framed by a conversation between Simon and Dali Tambo and punctuated by supportive interviews from African American celebrities such as Quincy Jones, Oprah Winfrey and Harry Belafonte, *Under African Skies* does much to suggest that any controversy was justified in the name of the artistic merits of *Graceland*. Interestingly Steve Van Zandt, who remains highly critical of Simon, withdrew his contribution to the documentary because the director had "edited the hell out of it to some little statement where I'm saying something positive about Paul".<sup>512</sup> More than anything else this demonstrates the immense efforts that have been deployed to further divorce *Graceland*, from any critical commentary. Furthermore as Van Zandt has argued the final apology from Simon to Dali Tambo, that Simon was "sorry if I made it inconvenient for you." perfectly encapsulates the sincere belief of Simon that his actions were completely justified.

In many ways *Graceland* and its legacy represents something of a weather vane for the way in which the cultural campaign against apartheid was to develop and grow in the decades following. The album's emphasis on the commonality of experience between listeners, regardless of whether they were American, British or South African and celebration of the coming together of cultural forms and identities can be seen reflected in much of the discourse about post-apartheid South Africa. This is a vision which is distinctly non-political, emphasising the primacy of art over politics. In one of the final scenes for *Under African Skies*, Simon expresses pride in being 'personally invited' by Nelson Mandela to tour South Africa.<sup>513</sup> In many ways this footage of Simon shaking hands with a man he had previously believed to be a 'communist', shows the way in which *Graceland* fitted

---

<sup>512</sup> Jacobs 'When Steven Van Zandt convinced AZAPO to take Paul Simon off a hit list and what Paul Simon really thought of Nelson Mandela'.

<sup>513</sup> *Under African Skies*.

comfortably into a post-apartheid narrative of reconstruction, with Mandela as an omnipresent liberal superhero.



## **4) “Today Brent South, Tomorrow Soweto”:**

### **‘The protest music par excellence’**

By the mid-1980s Simon’s *Graceland* and the emergence of world music in general dominated much of the discussion about ways in which popular music could oppose apartheid. However, there were other developments that suggested a much wider field of musical opposition to apartheid. In addition to its championing of the boycott, groups such as Artists Against Apartheid and Artists United Against Apartheid, alongside other politically sympathetic musical campaigns, had long encouraged the growth of those willing to explicitly protest against apartheid in song. Yet whilst these new political popular music campaigns began to form around established groups, other musicians had long used their music as a site of political protest. In Britain and even further afield opposition to apartheid had been increasingly represented by those playing and aligning themselves with reggae.

In this chapter I will explore the ways in which popular music and apartheid protest collided in an arena distinct from either the boycott campaign or the growing prominence of world music. The high profile and long running interventions by reggae musicians and fans into anti-apartheid protest and politics more generally demonstrated a markedly different political tradition. This was a political tradition that was contrary to both the established western social democratic milieu of the groups such as the AAM or the loose liberal universalism around world music and projects such as *Graceland*. Reggae’s roots in Jamaica made it an inherently political genre, with strong connections with themes of pan-Africanism and black solidarity. Importantly these debates would also translate to Britain whereby reggae became a tool for expressing Black British identity as an opposition to racism and as a tool for empowerment. Finally I will show the way in

which these debates about identity came to be increasingly represented by more mainstream political movements and impacted upon the popular music campaign against apartheid.

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's reggae was the soundtrack to the global movement against apartheid. More than any other genre, reggae embraced the imagery of resistance to apartheid as a key theme and political touchstone, with many of its leading musicians explicitly referencing South Africa in their recordings. This was in keeping with the heavily political nature of reggae generally. As the British reggae poet Linton Kwesi Johnson would argue, by the 1980's reggae had become 'the protest music par excellence in the modern field, a continuation of a style that dates back to slavery day with modern influences'.<sup>514</sup>

Some of the most prominent reggae artists were not just potent political actors but also enjoyed a great deal of commercial success.<sup>515</sup> Reggae had also, by the mid-1980s, garnered a genuine worldwide audience, with fans across North America, Europe, throughout Africa and further afield.<sup>516</sup> More importantly, Reggae was also one of the first genre from outside of the first world to attain genuine widespread popularity inside it. Indeed much of the contemporary critical commentary on the subject focussed on the idea of reggae as a 'third world music'.<sup>517</sup> Talking about the success of Bob Marley, undoubtedly reggae's biggest ever star, Robin Denselow labelled Marley as 'the first Third World musician to

---

<sup>514</sup> Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp.127-128.

<sup>515</sup> To this day, Reggae's market share is comparable to other sizeable niche genres such as blues, country, folk and jazz. This can be seen in the British Phonographic Industry's figures for UK album sales, British Phonographic Industry, 'BPI Yearbook 2014', 2015.

<[https://www.bpi.co.uk/assets/files/Sales%20by%20Type\\_2014.pdf](https://www.bpi.co.uk/assets/files/Sales%20by%20Type_2014.pdf) (7 November 2015).

<sup>516</sup> Lloyd Bradley, *Reggae: The Story of Jamaican Music* (London: BBC Worldwide, 2002), p.7.

<sup>517</sup> James A. Winders, 'Reggae, Rastafarians and Revolution', in Chris Potash (Ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music From Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp.17-18.

attain superstar status in the west'<sup>518</sup> Yet whilst this speaks volumes about the perceptions of reggae and Jamaica more widely it also reflects the way in which the idea of the 'third world' and more specifically Africa, were key tropes in reggae.

This was due to the centrality of both its Jamaican roots and the imagery and beliefs of Rastafarianism to reggae. Many of reggae's leading stars and personalities such as Marley and Lee 'Scratch' Perry were practicing Rastafarians, whilst the imagery of Rastafarianism became synonymous with reggae. It was Rastafarianism, a millenarian religious movement based loosely around the teachings of the Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey, which fuelled much of reggae's interest in matters of social justice. In particular, Rastafarianism stressed the importance of protesting against racial discrimination and the overthrowing of western imperialism, characterised as 'Babylon'.<sup>519</sup> Anita M. Waters has argued that the increasing entry of reggae into Jamaican political life throughout the late 1960s was due to Rastafarianism ability to fill the political 'void' where anti-colonialism had failed to develop as in other post-colonial societies.<sup>520</sup> In addition to this, Rastafarianism also embraced an Afrocentric worldview, which championed Pan-Africanism, national liberation and even a literal return 'back to Africa'.<sup>521</sup>

This desire for international black solidarity was demonstrated clearly in songs such as the Twinkle Brothers 'Free Africa' which called for listeners to 'Help your black brothers, fighting for liberation'.<sup>522</sup> An even more obvious example can be found in Marley's 'Buffalo Soldier' which uses the example of black soldiers

---

<sup>518</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.xiii.

<sup>519</sup> John Collins, *African Pop Routes: The Inside Rhythms of Africa* (Slough: Foulsham, 1985), p.91.

<sup>520</sup> Anita M. Waters, *Race Class, And Political Symbols: Rastafati and Reggae in Jamaican Politics* (Oxford: Transaction, 1985), p.83.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Norman Grant and Ralston Grant, 'Free Africa', The Twinkle Brothers (Front Line Records, FLS 104, 1978) [7" Single].

fighting for America as an example of black exploitation before stating ‘If you know your history, Then you would know where you are coming from’.<sup>523</sup>

Throughout his career Marley used his music as a platform for both his Rastafarian beliefs and to express his politics. The journalist Horace Campbell argued that belief in and ‘the slogans of Pan-African unity... were an essential part of his [Marley’s] outlook’.<sup>524</sup>

In common with anti-apartheid groups in America and Europe and indeed the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, reggae performers enthusiastically embraced groups such as the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).<sup>525</sup> This can be seen in the title track of Tapper Zukie’s 1976 album *M.P.L.A.*, which had advised ‘natty dreads’ to go ‘on a holiday’ and fight with the MPLA.<sup>526</sup> This theme is also clearly evident in songs such as ‘War’ off of Marley’s 1976 album *Rastaman Vibration*, where Marley, paraphrasing a speech given by Haile Selassie to the United Nations in 1963, called for removing ‘the ignoble and unhappy regimes’ in Angola and Mozambique, whilst referring to apartheid in South Africa as ‘sub-human bondage’.<sup>527</sup> Furthermore, Marley concludes the song with the assertion that “We Africans will fight”, showing a clear personal identification with the notion of a united African and by extension black struggle. In linking events in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa and with Marley self-identifying as African, ‘War’, demonstrated, not only an affinity with Haile Selassie’s original speech, but also a

<sup>523</sup> Bob Marley and King Sporty, ‘Buffalo Soldier’, Bob Marley (Island Records, 12IS 108, 1983) [12” Single].

<sup>524</sup> Horace Campbell, ‘Marley in Zimbabwe’, in Chris Potash (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), p. 49.

<sup>525</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp.496-497.

<sup>526</sup> Tapper Zukie, ‘M.P.L.A.’, *M.P.L.A.*, Tapper Zukie (Front Line Records, FL 1006, 1978) [LP Album].

<sup>527</sup> Bob Marley, ‘War’, *Rastaman Vibration*, Bob Marley (Island, ILPS 9383, 1976) [LP Album].

clear political vision, which embraced both international black solidarity and pan-Africanism.

An even more clear commitment to international black solidarity and pan-Africanism can be seen in Marley's vocal support for Zimbabwean independence. In 1979 Marley had released the song 'Zimbabwe' as a single, offering clear support for Zimbabwean independence in its closing call of 'Africans a-liberate Zimbabwe'.<sup>528</sup> Released in Britain with a sleeve featuring a picture of Robert Mugabe, the leader of the Zimbabwean African National Union, and the slogan 'Majority Rules OK', 'Zimbabwe' represented one of the strongest and most direct political statements released by Marley. Less than a year later this support for Zimbabwe even extended to Marley personally paying £100,000 to ensure his and the Wailers appearance at the 1980 Zimbabwe Independence Celebration concert in Harare.<sup>529</sup> That Marley was prepared to bankroll his appearance at the Zimbabwe Independence celebrations demonstrated the ways in which his support surpassed the level of abstract slogans.

The championing of pan-Africanism and criticism of apartheid was not solely the preserve of Marley, but rather a recurring theme in reggae. Peter Tosh's 1977 album *Equal Rights* demonstrates this clearly, with its titles tracks call for 'equal rights' across the world, mentioning Palestine, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Jamaica.<sup>530</sup> Even more explicit though was the song 'Apartheid', with its chorus of

We got to fight,  
We got to fight,

---

<sup>528</sup> Bob Marley, 'Zimbabwe', Bob Marley (Island Records, WIP 659, 1979) [7" Single].

<sup>529</sup> Chris Salewicz, *Bob Marley: The Untold Story* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), p.366.

<sup>530</sup> Peter Tosh, 'Equal Rights', *Equal Rights*, Peter Tosh (Virgin, V 2081, 1977) [LP Album].

We got to fight,  
Against apartheid<sup>531</sup>

The song also criticises the South African government for a litany of crimes, including exploiting South Africa's mineral wealth, not providing services for black people and murdering black children. Most striking though is just how highly Tosh seeks to identify with black people living in South Africa. Repeated constantly is the line 'You're in a me land' whilst Tosh also states that 'Africa's for black man'<sup>532</sup> What this shows clearly is the way that the biggest performers of reggae had wholeheartedly and enthusiastically embraced the anti-apartheid struggle as part of a worldwide struggle for black equality, in their music.

### **'War Ina Babylon'**

This highly politicised music was made even more potent by the way in which reggae had very real foundations as a political music in its native Jamaica. Despite the genre's reliance on the archaic imagery and mysticism of the Old Testament and heavy associations with its home country, reggae is in many ways a much more modern and global phenomenon. Indeed whilst many have tried to typify reggae as Jamaican folk music, its actual roots betray the influence of popular music from around the globe.<sup>533</sup> As Denselow has argued reggae, certainly in its infancy, actually supplanted Jamaican folk music forms like mento, which had grown from slave songs.<sup>534</sup> Whilst some of these folk influences remained and would re-emerge as reggae developed, the genesis of the genre was much more driven by the arrival of other global popular music styles arriving in Jamaica in the first half of the twentieth century.

---

<sup>531</sup> Peter Tosh, 'Apartheid', *Equal Rights*, Peter Tosh (Virgin, V 2081, 1977) [LP Album].

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> Kenneth Bilby, From 'Jamaica', in Chris Potash (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp.29-31.

<sup>534</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.125.

In particular, many have argued that the influence of rhythm and blues from New Orleans, which had been extremely popular in Jamaica from the 1940s onwards, was key in the development of reggae.<sup>535</sup> Certainly some of the stylistic hallmarks of reggae, such as rhythms and vocal styles, can be traced to the legacy of New Orleans rhythm and blues. Writing retrospectively in 1975 for the *Record Mirror* Kevin Allen argued that,

Listen to Fats Domino's 1959 recording of 'Be My Guest' and you can hear in the New Orleans-style shuffle rhythm the roots of ska which became blue-beat, which became rock steady, which in turn evolved into the reggae we know today.<sup>536</sup>

Writing for *Record Mirror* in May 1969, Charlie Gillett, who would later do so much to popularise world music, went even further and called 'reggay [sic]' the 'son of R&B', emphasising similarities in instrumentation and arrangement of recordings from New Orleans.<sup>537</sup> The sound and imagery of rhythm and blues and indeed its very existence as a successful medium for black musicians, struck a chord with Jamaican music fans. The production of Jamaican approximations of these rhythm and blues standards was accompanied by the emergence of sound systems, which began to emerge in the period prior to independence.<sup>538</sup>

By Jamaican independence in 1962, sound systems and the reggae, at this point commonly called ska, played at these gatherings had attained an important place in Jamaican society. Edward Seaga, the Member of Parliament for Kingston West and future Prime Minister of Jamaica, had previously been a record producer and the founder of West Indies Record Limited, had done much to promote and

---

<sup>535</sup> Kevin Allen, 'Reggae', *Record Mirror*, 27 September 1975.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/reggae>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> Charlie Gillett, 'Reggay: Son of R&B', *Record Mirror*, 10 May 1969.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/reggay-son-of-r--b>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>538</sup> Allen, 'Reggae'.

pioneer Jamaican music.<sup>539</sup> As Denselow has argued, Seaga, ‘was one of the first people on the island to realise that local music had commercial potential’ and a ‘canny businessman’, responsible for providing a high profile platform for reggae.<sup>540</sup> Indeed Seaga has continued to maintain a keen interest in Jamaican music. In 2012 Seaga was responsible for the release of a compilation entitled *Reggae Golden Jubilee - Origins of Jamaican Popular Music*, a four CD box set of Jamaican music, for which he had spent sixteen years compiling the songs on the collection and the sixty four pages of detailed liner notes.<sup>541</sup>

However it was Seaga’s appointment to the Jamaican Cabinet as the Minister of Development and Welfare in 1962, which really helped to shape the political landscape of Jamaican popular music. As Minister of Development, Seaga again demonstrated his belief in the commercial potential of Jamaican popular music by making it a key part of strategies to promote Jamaica abroad. Revealingly Seaga would characterise Jamaican popular music as the nation’s finest export ‘since rum and bananas’.<sup>542</sup>

Yet Seaga’s choice of which musicians represented Jamaica on the world’s stage, would generate lasting controversy. In particular the choice of musicians to send to the 1964 World’s Fair in New York sparked outrage from a number of Jamaican musicians, who accused Seaga of favouring musicians who were more commercial and not representative of the wider and developing scene in Jamaica.<sup>543</sup> The singer Jimmy Cliff, one of those actually chosen by Seaga to perform, would

---

<sup>539</sup> Verena Reckord, ‘Reggae, Rastafarianism and Cultural Identity’, in Chris Potash (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), p.7.

<sup>540</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, p.125.

<sup>541</sup> Anon., ‘VP Records to launch Seaga’s ‘Origins of Jamaican Music’, *Jamaica Observer*, 25 September 2012. <[http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/entertainment/VP-to-launch-Seaga-s-music\\_12605714](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/entertainment/VP-to-launch-Seaga-s-music_12605714)> (7 November 2015).

<sup>542</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.317.

<sup>543</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, p.126.



later tell Denselow that ‘if he wanted to promote the music, he should have got the people who were creating it... Seaga wanted uptown guys who looked good, but he should have had people from the roots’.<sup>544</sup>

Seaga, a member of the centre right Jamaica Labour Party government, was believed to have shown undue favour to safer more middle class musicians. The bands that had been spurned by Seaga such as Kingston’s The Skatalites and The Wailing Wailers, were popular with working class audiences but did not quite chime with the ‘uptown’ respectable image that Seaga desired. Furthermore members of many of these groups identified themselves as Rastafarians, a position even further out of step with Seaga’s vision of Jamaican music. This development would later be categorised by some as the emergence of roots reggae, a variation of reggae which championed the rural rather than urban and the mystic rather than material. Denselow has argued that roots reggae in effect harkened back to earlier Jamaican music and folk traditions, such as mento and burro, which lionised outlaws and gangsters.<sup>545</sup> In contrast, Seaga had demonstrated an affinity with the ska subgenre, which through its conscious adoption of elements of American soul and rhythm and blues, spoke to a more aspirational urban lifestyle.<sup>546</sup>

From this point onwards much of the grassroots of Jamaican popular music would define themselves against these attitudes and position itself as distinctly anti-establishment. At the same time, many of those favoured by Seaga, including increasing numbers of those in Seaga’s West Kingston constituency, developed a long term loyalty to Seaga and the JLP.<sup>547</sup> As time passed this was a loyalty that would be expressed in increasingly violent terms. In his biography of Bob Marley,

---

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>546</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.317.

<sup>547</sup> Reckord, ‘Reggae, Rastafarianism and Cultural Identity’, pp.6-7.

the former NME journalist Chris Salewicz argued that this represented the beginning of an ‘unhealthy symbiosis... Political parties began to adopt the gangs who served as protection for sound systems’.<sup>548</sup> In his constituency of Western Kingston, Seaga remained keen to bolster his position by funding free concerts and recordings by, mostly non Rastafarian, local musicians.<sup>549</sup> As Denselow has argued, it was exactly these actions and attitude which would ‘provoke the first of the rows between musicians and politicians that have continued in Jamaica ever since’.<sup>550</sup>

This division which festered throughout the 1960s would finally be expressed by the intervention of musicians in the 1972 Jamaican general election. By 1972 the centre left People’s National Party had gained vocal support from the leading lights of the Jamaican reggae scene. Although Rastafarians had in the main abstained from Jamaican political life throughout the 1960s, many appeared to now feel an affinity for the PNP and their programme which advocated the redistribution of wealth. This was aided by the perceived disdain of the ruling JLP for Rastafarianism. Furthermore the PNP’s charismatic leader Michael Manley held a special appeal to many Rastafarians, having been given a ‘Rod of Correction’ from the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie during the latter’s state visit to Jamaica in 1968.<sup>551</sup> This approval from the man who most Rastafarians believed to be a living god, particularly helped to grow support for Manley and the PNP amongst Jamaica’s working class Rastafarian communities. This was also aided by a growing interest in Rastafarianism in these urban working class areas, which began

---

<sup>548</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.187

<sup>549</sup> Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, pp.83-84.

<sup>550</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, p.126.

<sup>551</sup> These events alongside a discussion of their impact can be seen in the 2012 documentary film *Marley* (Dir: Kevin Macdonald, 2012).

to become increasingly linked to Black Nationalism in the public consciousness.<sup>552</sup> This was a link that Manley was happy to cultivate, consciously using the Old Testament imagery of Rastafarianism in speeches, comparing himself to Joshua, the conqueror of Canaan and successor to Moses.<sup>553</sup> Manley would even go as far as to make the 'Rod of Correction' gifted to him by Haile Selassie a key part of the imagery of the PNP's election campaign, using it as a prop at rallies.<sup>554</sup>

These overtures to Rastafarianism were received enthusiastically by many reggae musicians who happily involved themselves in the PNP's election campaign in the run up to 1972. Bob Marley, the lead singer of The Wailers, who had been snubbed by Seaga in a previous incarnation as The Wailing Wailers, spent 1971 touring Jamaica with Manley, providing what Denslow later called 'a Rasta version of Red Wedge'.<sup>555</sup> Marley's contribution was matched by other reggae stars including the other members of The Wailers, Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh, as well as other prominent figures such as Max Romeo and Clancy Eccles.<sup>556</sup> In something of a contrast to the latter Red Wedge campaign, Manley's 'PNP Bandwagon' managed to be successful as both a musical and political event, helping to grow support for the PNP.<sup>557</sup> Notably the intervention of musicians was felt to be such a threat to the JLP's chances of re-election that the government took measures to ban some of the more explicitly political reggae offerings.<sup>558</sup>

Despite these punitive measures, the JLP were unable to counter the momentum built by Manley and the PNP who won the 1972 election comfortably.

---

<sup>552</sup>Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, p.106.

<sup>553</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.315.

<sup>554</sup> There would even be attempts by JLP aligned gangs to steal the Rod from Manley, causing a long running and surreal dispute after Seaga claimed to then own it.

Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, pp.111-112.

<sup>555</sup> Denslow, *When the Music's Over*, p.128.

<sup>556</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.315.

<sup>557</sup> Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, p.130.

<sup>558</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.315.

Waters has suggested that culturally the impact of the election campaign was the linking of race, class and Rastafarianism.<sup>559</sup> For the reggae musicians who had given the PNP their support, this heralded another change in the direction of their music. Now the language of reggae, infused with the apocalyptic imagery of Rastafarianism, was not simply an abstract invocation of anti-establishment sentiment, but now a means to comment on current events. By becoming involved with the 1972 election, reggae and its proponents had been forced to consider the realpolitik at the heart of their demands to ‘chant down Babylon’.<sup>560</sup>

In the years that followed the election, reggae continued to act as a channel for political and social commentary, seeking to hold the PNP government to account. This led to a string of increasingly critical songs such as Bob Marley’s ‘Them Belly Full (But We Hungry), as the PNP government struggled, in common with centre left governments across the world, to rise to the challenge of growing poverty and inequality. In addition to this, many Rastafarians who had supported Manley and the PNP were also disappointed to find that their vague hopes of the government legalising Marijuana or helping Rastafarians to ‘return to Africa’, had failed to materialise. Both of which were grievances which continued to be referenced in the music of reggae’s leading stars. Bunny Wailer would later claim that his support for Manley and the PNP had been predicated entirely on the promise that Manley would ‘free up the herb’.<sup>561</sup> This was an issue championed by many, including another of the original Wailers Peter Tosh, whose 1975 debut solo

---

<sup>559</sup> Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, p.137.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., p.190.

single, 'Legalise It', made a heavy handed plea for the legalisation of Marijuana.<sup>562</sup>

The single was swiftly banned by the government for its troubles.<sup>563</sup>

However, in many ways these concerns about the shortcomings of the Manley government were soon outstripped by the far more pressing issue of violence on the streets of Jamaica. Following the 1972 election the nation had become increasingly polarised, with the JLP, now led by Edward Seaga, seemingly encouraging the increasing violence on the streets.<sup>564</sup> This polarisation even existed on an official level with the Police seemingly acting in favour of the JLP and the Jamaica Defence Force remaining loyal to the PNP.<sup>565</sup> This meant that far from seeking to contain and calm the violence on the streets, the police and military instead contributed to the growing carnage on the streets of Jamaica. For many there was increasingly little to distinguish between the forces of the state and gangsters. As Junior Murvin glibly noted on his 1976 single 'Police and Thieves', 'all the peace makers turn war officers'.<sup>566</sup>

Amongst the turmoil of the increasingly violent election campaign, the apocalyptic and millenarian language of Rastafarianism appeared to become ever more appropriate. Predictions of an impending 'Armageddon Time' and the belief that judgement day was coming 'When the Two Sevens Clash' in 1977, spoke of the way in which hope had been replaced a growing sense of dread in reggae.<sup>567</sup>

Whilst many had stayed loyal, yet critical, to the PNP, reggae musicians reacted to the 1976 election with a great deal more introspection. Bob Marley now a bona fide

---

<sup>562</sup> Peter Tosh, 'Legalise It', Peter Tosh (Intel Diplo, PT-177-A, 1975) [7" Single].

<sup>563</sup> Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, pp.231-235.

<sup>564</sup> Waters, *Race, Class, And Political Symbols*, pp.144-147.

<sup>565</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.327.

<sup>566</sup> Junior Murvin and Lee 'Scratch' Perry, *Police and Thieves*, Junior Murvin (Island Records, WIP 6539, 1976) [7" Single].

<sup>567</sup> Willi Williams, *Armageddon Time*, Willi Williams (Coxsone Records, 1012, 1980) [7" Single]. Joseph Hill, 'Two Sevens Clash', *Two Sevens Clash*, Culture (Lightning Records, LIC 1, 1978) [LP Album].

international star, offered only the most subtle support to Manley and the PNP, though he still found himself the target of death threats from those aligned to the JLP.<sup>568</sup> Following an assassination attempt, Marley gradually disassociated himself from party politics in Jamaica. At the point at which he was becoming increasingly vocal about international politics, Marley became increasingly divorced from the difficult realities of politics in Jamaica. In interview he would later protest to Denselow that 'I'm a Rastaman not a politician'.<sup>569</sup> Marley would later signal his exit from party politics with his celebrated 1978 'Peace Concert' where he brought both Manley and Seaga together on stage, in an effort to end gang violence in Jamaica.<sup>570</sup> The prevailing mood among musicians can be seen best on Max Romeo's 1976 single 'War Ina Babylon', which chronicled the divisions and the violence affecting Jamaica. In contrast to Romeo's 1972 song 'Let The Power Fall', which had been used by the PNP during the 1972 election, 'War Ina Babylon' rejected 'sipple', or slippery, politics in favour of the pure unadulterated prophecies of Marcus Garvey.<sup>571</sup>

In effect, reggae in Jamaica, unsatisfied by its brief association with party politics, had come full circle. Following the 1976 election, reggae retreated to wider political concerns, black liberation and the millenarian imagery of Rastafarianism. By 1980 the coalition that had propelled Manley and the PNP into government to a reggae soundtrack had fractured so much as to allow Edward Seaga and the JLP an electoral victory. As Dorian Lynskey has argued, the path of reggae in Jamaica had in many ways 'mirrored those of Manley's government: a burst of optimism, a phase of fiery drama, and then a grim, exhausted battle for

---

<sup>568</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.131.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.338.

<sup>571</sup> Max Romeo and Lee 'Scratch Perry', 'War Ina Babylon', *War Ina Babylon*, Max Romeo and The Upsetters (Mango, 539 392-1, 1976) [LP Album].

survival<sup>572</sup>. Yet whilst the apocalyptic roots reggae of the 1970s looked increasingly outmoded in 1980s Jamaica, its legacy would go on to shape protest music, in sometimes unexpected ways, throughout the world for the remainder of the twentieth century.

## Reggae in Britain

If reggae was already well established as a musical language of protest in its native Jamaica, then it was in Britain where reggae would take on a whole new significance. In the most part due to growing tensions in British society about race relations, reggae was soon to become the soundtrack to what Dorian Lynskey has called ‘Britain’s belated equivalent to civil rights and Vietnam’.<sup>573</sup> Stripped of much of its original Jamaican context and repositioned by black and white fans in Britain, reggae took on new meanings. This in turn would help it to become an even more global and politicised music.

By the beginning of the 1970s, reggae had already gained something of a cult following in Britain. Fuelled in part by immigration from the West Indies throughout the 1960s, reggae, particularly in ska’s up-tempo form had crept into the British musical landscape.<sup>574</sup> As Lloyd Bradley has argued, reggae soon became ‘black London’s soundtrack of choice’, with British sound systems emerging throughout the capital and beyond.<sup>575</sup> To meet the needs of these sound systems small independent record labels like Benny and Mrs King’s R&B Records and

---

<sup>572</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.316.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p.383.

<sup>574</sup> Michael deKonigh and Marc Griffiths, *Tighten Up: The History of Reggae in the UK* (London: Sanctuary, 2003), pp.11-16.

<sup>575</sup> Lloyd Bradley, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2013), p.213.

Melodisc started importing reggae recordings from Jamaica.<sup>576</sup> These early DIY labels became so influential that the name of Melodiscs reggae imprint Blue Beat, would even become synonymous with reggae, often used as a synonym for the genre by music fans.<sup>577</sup>

Yet whilst these recordings were fast becoming cult favourites, reggae was also demonstrating its commercial potential. As early as 1964, the Jamaican teenager Millie Small had gotten to number two in the British charts with ‘My Boy Lollipop’.<sup>578</sup> A glowing feature by Peter Jones in the April 4 1964 issue of the *Record Mirror* which argued that Millie ‘could easily prove the biggest wee bundle of talent to hit the pop-scene in ages’ demonstrated the extent to which reggae was initially welcomed by many music critics and fans in Britain.<sup>579</sup> The *Record Mirror* feature also betrayed a fascination in the exoticism and otherness of Jamaican music with multiple references to ‘VOODOO!’ and ‘witch doctors’ in the article.<sup>580</sup>

By 1968, even The Beatles had given a nod to ska, with the Paul McCartney penned ‘Ob La Di, Ob La Da’ appearing on their eponymous sixth album, also known as *The White Album*.<sup>581</sup> The release of *The White Album* would coincide with the first pressing of Desmond Dekker’s ‘The Israelite’, which by the April of 1969 had become the first reggae number one in Britain.<sup>582</sup> Following the success of Desmond Dekker, reggae entered a high point in the British charts with a

---

<sup>576</sup> Allen, ‘Reggae’.

<sup>577</sup> deKonigh and Griffiths, *Tighten Up*, p.15..

<sup>578</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.217.

<sup>579</sup> Peter Jones, ‘Millie: A Blue Beat Bombshell’, *Record Mirror*, 4 April 1964.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/millie-a-blue-beat-bombshell>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> John Lennon and Paul McCartney, ‘Ob La Di, Ob La Da’, *The Beatles*, The Beatles (Apple Records, PCS 7067/8, 1968) [LP Album].

<sup>582</sup> Allen, ‘Reggae’.



succession of hits from artists such as Nicky Thomas, Jimmy Cliff, Bob and Marcia, Dandy Livingstone, The Harry J All-Stars amongst many others.<sup>583</sup>

Ironically, reggae in this period would come to be most associated with the skinhead subculture, which by the late 1970s was to be synonymous with racist violence in Britain. Skinhead had started out as a working class variation on mod fashion, replacing the flamboyance of Chelsea boots and feathered haircuts with Doc Marten boots and close shaved heads. As Allen argued in 1975;

The skinhead cult was predominantly working class kids in direct rebellion to long haired predominantly middle class hippies, and their mind-bending acid rock, and the "outcast" immigrant music was something with which they felt they could identify.<sup>584</sup>

Alwyn W. Turner has described the skinhead subculture as ‘the nihilistic antithesis to the idealism of the late 1960s.’<sup>585</sup> Interestingly, it was a fashion style, like the music it was connected to, which owed a great deal to the ‘rude-boy’ style of many of the newly arriving immigrants from Jamaica. However the link between skinheads and the Jamaican culture it aped, would slowly be soured as the end of the 1960s brought an upturn in racial tensions in Britain. At the same time skinhead was, in the words of Turner ‘mutated into something far nastier’.<sup>586</sup> Skinheads soon became not only synonymous with violence in general, but also heavily associated with Enoch Powell’s calls for forced repatriation of non-white people living in Britain. In 1970, the *Daily Mirror* carried a front page story on the association between Powell and the skinheads with the headline ‘We Guard Enoch, Says

---

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?: Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum, 2009), p.60.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., p.62.

Skinheads' Even more concerning though was the spectre of racist violence, with the expression 'paki bashing' entering the public lexicon.<sup>587</sup>

Consequently by the beginning of the 1970s reggae held little attraction with young black people in Britain, who instead were more likely to embrace black soul and R&B from America.<sup>588</sup> As Bradley has noted, the first wave of ska fell from favour quickly with little in the way of a 'sustained impact'.<sup>589</sup> Many of the musicians who would later find fame in British reggae groups, spent their formative years playing in funk and soul groups.<sup>590</sup> In addition to this, despite its high point in 1969, reggae, in part due to its association with skinheads, fell out of critical favour. As Allen argued, reggae became derided by the press as overly simplistic and 'mindless music'.<sup>591</sup> As early as 1969 Charlie Gillett had dismissed the success of Desmond Dekker and the Aces 'The Israelites', by calling into question the musical quality of the record and ultimately stating that 'Desmond Dekker is fated to be remembered (or forgotten) as a freak novelty singer'.<sup>592</sup> The charge that reggae was an infantile novelty was also helped by the risqué nature of some of the emerging music. Most notably, Max Romeo, prior to his radical hits of the late 1970s, drew the consternation of many critics with his 1969 single 'Wet Dream'.<sup>593</sup>

---

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>588</sup> Dave Haslam, *Young Hearts Run Free: The Real Story of the 1970s* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.159.

<sup>589</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.217.

<sup>590</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: postpunk 1978-1984* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p.284.

<sup>591</sup> Allen, 'Reggae'.

<sup>592</sup> Gillett, 'Reggay: Son of R&B'.

<sup>593</sup> David Griffiths, 'Max Romeo: This Is The Record That Will Give The BBC Troubles — If It Reaches The Top...', *Record Mirror*, 21 June 1969.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/max-romeo-this-is-the-record-that-will-give-the-bbc-troubles--if-it-reaches-the-top>> (7 November 2015).

Yet in an echo of the development of reggae in its native Jamaica, the emergence of a more socially aware and politically charged roots reggae, would alter perceptions. In conversation with the writer and former DJ Dave Haslam, the sociologist Paul Gilroy later argued that;

Reggae was skinhead music, so we'd been avoiding it and despising it, but we began to get a different sense of it really, and we began to get a sense that reggae itself was changing and it began to pick up a more Rasta influence.<sup>594</sup>

Here we can see that just as in Jamaica itself, it is the emergence of roots reggae driven by, what Gilroy called, a 'Rasta influence', that revitalised the fortunes of reggae in Britain in the early to mid-1970s.

Paradoxically this was not a growth, aided by the grassroots, as in Jamaica, but instead driven to a large extent by the commercial endeavours of one record label, *Island*. Formed in 1959, by the Jamaican born Chris Blackwell, *Island Records*, began as one of the many labels importing and licensing Jamaican reggae for the British chart, in conjunction with Philips.<sup>595</sup> Notably, Blackwell had produced and masterminded the release of 'My Boy Lollipop' by Millie, whom he also managed, in 1964.<sup>596</sup> By the beginning of the 1970s, *Island* was successful enough, in part driven by the success of two of Blackwell's non-reggae signings, The Spencer Davis Group and Traffic, to be able to break away from Phillips.<sup>597</sup> Following his success with the aforementioned rock groups, Blackwell became convinced that the same formula which had made these rock albums so successful could be applied to reggae.<sup>598</sup> In particular, Blackwell saw a link between the

---

<sup>594</sup> Haslam, *Young Hearts Run Free*, p.159.

<sup>595</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.206.

<sup>596</sup> Louis Barfe, *Where Have All the Good Times Gone? The Rise and Fall of the Record Industry* (London: Atlantic, 2004), p.260.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>598</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.207.

emerging figure of the rebel in rock music and reggae's focus on 'rude-boys' and gangsters.<sup>599</sup>

The first beneficiary of this philosophy would be Jimmy Cliff, whom Blackwell groomed to reflect rock sensibilities. This can be seen most clearly in Blackwell's support for the film project *The Harder They Come*, which starred Cliff as the gangster Ivanhoe Martin and traced the protagonist's journey from rural Jamaica to the Kingston reggae scene.<sup>600</sup> After a long gestation the film was finally released in 1972, becoming something of an immediate cult classic.<sup>601</sup> Reviewing the film for the *NME* John Pidgeon stated that 'quite simply... one of the best films to be released for some time'.<sup>602</sup> Even more interestingly though, is the way in which Pidgeon's review considers the use of reggae throughout the film, noting that;

The constant presence of reggae throughout the film identifies it clearly as the music of a down-trodden, oppressed people; it is as characteristic an expression of suffering as the blues in Mississippi or Chicago.<sup>603</sup>

Here we can see the way in which the film marked a transition in the stock of reggae in the eyes of critics and music fans, from juvenile novelty to a bona fide 'expression of suffering'. As Chris Salewicz has argued, the film and accompanying soundtrack, completely reversed the fortunes of reggae in Britain, stating that, 'after being the unfashionable music of skinhead football thugs... it was now *de rigueur* at fashionable London dinner parties'.<sup>604</sup> Reviewing the soundtrack album in *Let It Rock*, the previously dismissive Charlie Gillett was even

---

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> *The Harder They Come* (Dir: Perry Henzell, 1972).

<sup>601</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.203.

<sup>602</sup> John Pidgeon, 'The Harder They Come (dir. Perry Henzell)', *NME*, 22 July 1972.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-harder-they-come-dir-perry-henzell>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.205.

forced to admit an appreciation of the album.<sup>605</sup> Even more importantly though the gritty realism of *The Harder They Come* also chimed with black British fans like Gilroy who appreciated the ‘rasta influence’ and radical politics of the film.<sup>606</sup>

The crossover success of the film was further underlined by success of the film's soundtrack album, which signalled an important shift in the presentation of reggae in Britain. Previously a medium that relied mostly on the sale of singles, *The Harder They Come* soundtrack album marked the entry of reggae into the album market, a territory previously dominated by rock music.<sup>607</sup> Whilst Cliff would shortly leave *Island*, due in part to his scepticism of Blackwell's belief that reggae could be marketed in the same way as rock, he was swiftly replaced by Bob Marley, signed by *Island* just over a week after Cliff's departure.<sup>608</sup>

In Marley, Blackwell saw his opportunity to harness the imagery of righteous rebellion which had fuelled the success of *The Harder They Come*. Of his signing of Marley, Blackwell would later tell Salewicz that;

He came in right at the time when in my head there was this idea that this rebel type of character could really emerge. And that I could break such an artist. I was dealing with rock music, which was really rebel music. I felt that would really be the way to break Jamaican music. But you needed somebody who could be that image. When Bob walked in, he really was that image, the real one that Jimmy had created in the movie.<sup>609</sup>

This in itself raises interesting questions about the ways in which Blackwell played a role in mediating and guiding the presentation of Marley and his music and indeed of reggae more generally. Certainly, Blackwell appreciated the importance

---

<sup>605</sup> Charlie Gillett, ‘Various Artists: The Harder They Come’, *Let It Rock*, October 1972. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/various-artists-ithe-harder-they-comei>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>606</sup> Haslam, *Young Hearts Run Free*, p.159.

<sup>607</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.207.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.,pp.207-208.

of building Marley's rebel image. As part of his publicity campaign, Blackwell convinced Richard Williams, then associate editor of *Melody Maker* to interview and profile Marley during the recording of *Catch A Fire*, Marley and The Wailers first release for Island, in Jamaica.<sup>610</sup> The resulting profile by Williams is a glowing endorsement which outlines Marley's rebel credentials and heaps praise on *Catch A Fire*.<sup>611</sup> Williams goes as far to state that *Catch A Fire* is 'the most important Reggae record ever made — its equivalent of Sly's *Dance To The Music*, or Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*.'<sup>612</sup> This comparison to *Dance To The Music* and *What's Going On* is particularly significant as both of those albums had already attained their own reputation as political statements and also as landmark recordings by African American musicians.<sup>613</sup>

Yet what Williams's profile neglects to mention is the way in which the released version of *Catch A Fire* represented a careful and considered mediation of Marley's roots reggae through the marketing sensibilities of Blackwell. Though the majority of the album was recorded by Marley and The Wailers in Jamaica, the album was to undergo extensive remixing and overdubbing in Island's studio in Basing Street London.<sup>614</sup> Williams, who was later to become Island's head of A&R, later described the purpose of remixing *Catch A Fire* in London as being to 'edit and sweeten'.<sup>615</sup> Furthermore Williams also argued that, 'The sweetening on that record was terribly important, because there's absolutely no doubt that Blackwell was attempting to make it... not more palatable, but more attractive to

---

<sup>610</sup> Ibid., p.212.

<sup>611</sup> Richard Williams, 'Bob Marley: The First Genius of Reggae?', *Melody Maker*, 24 February 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-marley-the-first-genius-of-reggae>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, pp.199-201.

<sup>614</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.213.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

the ears of progressive rock fans.’<sup>616</sup> This concession to the sensibilities of fans of rock music can be heard clearly with the addition of overdubbed keyboards and guitar parts from two American session players, John ‘Rabbit’ Bundrick and Wayne Perkins respectively.<sup>617</sup> Both additions represented distinct departures from the accepted roots reggae template. Most remarkably the guitar parts played by Perkins, who claimed at the time to be completely unfamiliar with reggae.<sup>618</sup> Furthermore the mix supervised by Blackwell represented something of a departure of Marley’s bass heavy previous recordings.<sup>619</sup>

Without a doubt these additions represented something of a departure for Marley and reggae. This was certainly noted by some critics and fans. Charlie Gillett’s review for the American music paper *Creem*, conveniently forgets his previous negativity about the genre and criticises *Catch A Fire* for being inauthentic, noting that, ‘Reggae is a deep beat and melodies you can't forget, where *Catch a Fire* is a soft beat and guitar solos you heard before and were glad to have forgotten.’<sup>620</sup> Writing in the underground paper *International Times*, Penny Reel was also highly critical of the album’s sonic mediation, mocking the production and marketing of the album, stating that ‘I expect to see *Catch a Fire* amongst those record collections where Eddie Cochran and someone or the other's 'Golden Decade' are included....’<sup>621</sup> For these critics, this mediation of the original

---

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., pp.213-214.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., p.214.

<sup>619</sup> Williams, ‘Bob Marley: The First Genius of Reggae?’.

<sup>620</sup> Charlie Gillett, ‘Bob Marley & The Wailers: *Catch a Fire* (Island)’, *Creem*, May 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-marley--the-wailers-icatch-a-fire-island>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>621</sup> Penny Reel, ‘The Wailers: *Catch a Fire* (Island)’, *International Times*, 31 May 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-wailers-catch-a-fire-island>> (7 November 2015).

roots-reggae sound to a more commercial sound, geared towards western listeners, represented a negation of the purity of the original form.<sup>622</sup>

However, it is important to consider how much this mediation of the original roots reggae sound also represented a collaborative process. Many of those who attended the London sessions of *Catch A Fire* have stressed the way in which Marley and the rest of The Wailers were as keen as Blackwell to add new elements to their music.<sup>623</sup> Furthermore, regardless of any changes to the sound, it is clear that there were no similar attempts to remix or overdub the lyrical content of the album. Indeed the radical politics expressed in the lyrics of many of the songs on *Catch A Fire*, ensured that the album resonated with young black people in Britain, keen to imbibe the radical politics ‘rasta influence’ they discerned. Even Penny Reel’s review in *International Times* praised the album’s lyrical content, going as far as to call it ‘a saving grace’.<sup>624</sup>

Ultimately, this mediation of Marley and his music throughout the making of *Catch A Fire*, represented a success on many levels. Firstly Blackwell had achieved just what he had set out to do, *Catch A Fire* was an instant critical success, which proved that reggae could be packaged and sold in the same way as rock music. More importantly though the participation of Marley had shown that the radical politics of Jamaica, influenced heavily by Rastafarianism, could resonate with a British audience. Yet the success of *Catch A Fire* and the albums that followed also shifted Marley, who becoming a genuinely international artist, away from Jamaica and towards an international focus. Whilst this move focussed

---

<sup>622</sup> An interesting counterpoint to *Catch A Fire* can be found in the reception given to Burning Spear’s *Marcus Garvey* album, where the Island mix of the album was widely criticised by critics and fans already familiar with the original version de Konigh and Griffiths, *Tighten Up!*, p.176.

<sup>623</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, pp.215-216.

<sup>624</sup> Reel, ‘The Wailers: Catch a Fire (Island)’.



Marley's interest in Pan-Africanism it also distanced him from events in Jamaica. Yet in spite of Marley's conscious withdrawal from formal Jamaican politics in the late 1970s, save a few deliberately apolitical interventions, Marley was to remain stylistically and politically influential to much of the reggae that followed in his wake. Fittingly, though somewhat bizarrely, it would be one of those inspired by Marley's crossover reggae, who would be inadvertently responsible for reigniting political reggae in Britain.

### **'London's Burning'**

It is one of the great ironies of the history of British popular music that the first musical campaign against racism began in response to an artist that not only owed his entire career to black American bluesmen, but had also reached number one in the charts in the UK and the USA in 1974 with a cover of Marley's 1973 single 'I Shot The Sherriff'.<sup>625</sup> By the mid-1970s Eric Clapton had become something of a museum piece. Reviewing Clapton's 1970s output, Charles Sharr Murray typified the guitarist as 'a mild-mannered crooner whose work draws on the most easily assimilable aspects of reggae, country music and downhome r&b.'<sup>626</sup> However Clapton's incoherent statements in favour of Enoch Powell during his 1976 concert in Birmingham would do much to generate a new wave of political popular music campaigns.

Due to this outburst, Clapton, a hero of 1960s counter culture, became considered by many, in the words of Murray, as 'the drunken shithead'<sup>627</sup> Yet Clapton's outburst would have far deeper ramifications, with many concerned that

---

<sup>625</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.233.

<sup>626</sup> Charles Shaar Murray, 'Eric Clapton: *Timepieces*', *NME*, 29 May 1982.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/eric-clapton-itimepiecesi>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*

it was a sign of the way in which popular music could be used to transmit far right messages and propaganda. As Denselow has argued the real impact of Clapton's endorsement of Powell was the way in which it made clear that popular music could provide a platform to deliver political messages.<sup>628</sup> Clapton's rant also chimed with fears about widespread racism in British society. Indeed, whilst many reacted with horror to the incident in Birmingham, some journalists were happy to indulge Clapton's views. Writing in *Sounds*, Barbara Charone made light of Clapton's outburst as 'the Enoch Powell escapade', before suggesting that 'Arabs' had prompted Clapton to speak in favour of Powell.<sup>629</sup>

This fear of the effects of racism and racial tensions in British society was further magnified by concern about the rise of the far right National Front in Britain. Interestingly the far right in Britain also appeared to realise the potential of popular music as a propaganda medium. In 1979 the British National Party's youth publication *Young Nationalist* complained 'Disco and its melting pot pseudo-philosophy must be fought or Britain's streets will be full of black worshipping soul boys.'<sup>630</sup>

Whilst much of the popular memory and literature concerning ANL and RAR has focussed on the role of punk music, the reality was that reggae and black British music in general, played a key role in driving this new musical militancy. As Linton Kwesi Johnson would tell Denselow, 'It wouldn't surprise me if the move towards socially orientated lyricism in popular songs wasn't a direct

---

<sup>628</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.139.

<sup>629</sup> Barbara Charone, 'Eric Clapton: Farther On Up The Road', *Sounds*, 9 October 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/eric-clapton-farther-on-up-the-road>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>630</sup> Cited in Haslam, *Young Hearts Run Free*, p.156.

influence of reggae'.<sup>631</sup> Indeed many white punk groups adopted, explicitly or in part, elements of reggae, as part of their language of protest. In essence punk and reggae shared much common ground in late 1970s, they were both regarded as 'underground' music styles and the preserve of 'the great dispossessed', they both shared a DIY aesthetic, utilising independent record labels and both styles had an anti-establishment outlook and radical politics.<sup>632</sup>

The imagery of the politicised reggae of Jamaica began to bleed into British reggae and punk. By the late 1970s, the 'Rasta influence' detected by Gilroy in *The Harder They Come* and *Catch A Fire*, would be magnified by the adoption of the language of the most militant Jamaican reggae. Songs such as The Sex Pistols 'Anarchy in the UK' and The Clash's 'White Riot' and 'London's Burning', could be viewed as kindred spirits of Max Romeo's 'War Ina' Babylon', tapping into a shared sense of frustration anomie and most importantly imagery. The mention of the MPLA in 'Anarchy in the UK' suggests both awareness and an affinity with the global scope of reggae. The Northern Irish punk group Stiff Little Fingers took this association even further with a cover of Marley's 'Johnny Was', which transported a tale of a man murdered amidst violence in Kingston to Ulster.<sup>633</sup>

However this link between punk and reggae was even further illuminated by a series of even clearer nods to reggae. The most obvious example of this can be seen on The Clash's cover of Junior Murvin's 'Police and Thieves', on their eponymous debut. This cover transported the song from its original context as a reflection of the gang violence in Kingston to a meditation on the threat of violence

---

<sup>631</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.142.

<sup>632</sup> de Konigh and Griffiths, *Tighten Up*, p.180.

<sup>633</sup> Roland Link, *Kicking Up a Racket: The Story of Stiff Little Fingers 1977-1983* (London: Appletree Press, 2009), p.86.

on the streets of Britain.<sup>634</sup> The band's decision to co-opt elements of reggae also demonstrates nicely the synchronicity between the two genres. With the majority of the band having grown up alongside London's West Indian community, there was, in the words of Pat Gilbert, a 'passionate and genuine' identification with West Indian culture and music.<sup>635</sup> The band's name itself is in part an allusion to the Rastafarian belief that 1977, 'when the two sevens clashed', would bring the apocalyptic visions of Marcus Garvey.<sup>636</sup> As a result the band went to great lengths to ensure they gave a faithful and respectful take on 'Police and Thieves'.<sup>637</sup> Elsewhere The Clash covered other reggae standards such as 'Armageddon Time' and namechecked Ivan, the hero of *The Harder They Come* on 'The Guns of Brixton'.<sup>638</sup> Members of the band would even travel to Jamaica on a 'writing trip', also visiting Black Ark Studio, which had played an important role in the founding of roots reggae.<sup>639</sup> The band had also previously recorded with Black Ark's owner Lee 'Scratch' Perry, who incidentally had co-written and produced the original version of 'Police and Thieves'.<sup>640</sup> What this demonstrates is that there was a clear desire among white punk groups to tap into what they perceived as the revolutionary spirit of reggae.

The participation of Perry, also speaks to the way in which reggae was in turn influenced by punk. By 1977, Marley had memorialised this affinity between the genres with the song 'Punky Reggae Party', which placed 'The Clash, The

---

<sup>634</sup> Pat Gilbert, *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of The Clash* (London: Aurum, 2005), pp.146-147.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134.

<sup>638</sup> In particular see 'Guns of Brixton' from the group's third album *London Calling* which contains a number of references to key tropes in reggae alongside references to *The Harder They Come* Paul Simonon, 'Guns of Brixton', *London Calling*, The Clash (CBS, CBS CLASH 3, 1979) [LP Album].

<sup>639</sup> Gilbert, *Passion is a Fashion*, p.165.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

Damned, The Jam' alongside The Wailers and Toots and the Maytals.<sup>641</sup> This affinity was to be made even more concrete with the participation of both reggae and punk bands in the RAR campaign. Notably at high profile events such as the 1978 *Rock Against Racism Carnival* in Victoria Park, London, where the Birmingham reggae group Steel Pulse were acknowledged as one of the highlights of the day.<sup>642</sup> For British reggae groups the impetus to become involved with RAR was even greater than white punk groups, as Britain's black communities faced direct intimidation from National Front marches and campaigns.<sup>643</sup> Reggae, with its assertion of black identity, would come to be seen as a cultural weapon against the threat of racist violence. At one march through Lewisham in 1977, Dave Widgery from RAR, claimed to have seen 'an Afro-Caribbean women who had been watching from the top floor of her home, hoisted these hi-fi speakers on to her windowsill. It was playing Bob Marley 'Get Up Stand Up'<sup>644</sup>

By the mid-1970s British reggae had already had something of a resurgence, in part due to the success of Bob Marley and other Jamaican artists. The marketing and selling of reggae was also became a peculiarly British affair. By 1976 *Island*, buoyed by the success of Marley, and Richard Branson's *Virgin Records* had dominated the reggae market, spending vast amounts on licensing

---

<sup>641</sup> Bob Marley, 'Punky Reggae Party', *Jamming*, Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, 12 WIP 6410, 19770 [12" Single]).

The story behind this song and the enduring link between punk and reggae has been written about in some detail by the musician and academic Vivien Goldman in a 2014 blog for the *Guardian* Vivien Goldman, 'Culture Clash: Bob Marley, Joe Strummer and the Punky Reggae Party', *Guardian*, 19 September 2014., <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2014/sep/19/clash-bob-marley-joe-strummer-punky-reggae-party>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>642</sup> Chris Salewicz, 'Rock Against Racism Carnival: Victoria Park, Hackney, London' *NME*, 6 May 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/rock-against-racism-carnival-victoria-park-hackney-london>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>643</sup> Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London: Macmillan, 2002), pp.537-539.:

<sup>644</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.386.

Jamaican music for the international market.<sup>645</sup> This rehabilitation of the reputation of reggae, clearing away the remaining critical prejudices that had surrounded the first wave of ska, also helped to give rise to a new generation of British reggae artists and groups.

As British reggae grew, its reliance on the radical roots reggae from Jamaica began to be replaced by a homespun variation reflecting more British concerns. This new generation of black British reggae musicians, who had grown up as influenced by the black American stars of Motown and Stax on *Top of the Pops* as much as their parents record collections, fundamentally reshaped reggae.<sup>646</sup> It was a form reggae that owed more to London and Birmingham than it did to Kingston.<sup>647</sup> In the words of Bradley, it was effectively reggae in Britain, ‘turning in on itself’, reflecting wider concerns and sensibilities divorced from roots reggae Biblically loaded radicalism.<sup>648</sup>

For some this turn away from the political content of roots reggae, like the polishing and remixing of The Wailers, represented a capitulation to mainstream western sensibilities.<sup>649</sup> Certainly many contemporaries sought to make a clear distinction between roots reggae and this newly emerging British variant, often referred to as lovers’ rock. The Clash’s ‘(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais’ recounted band leader Joe Strummer’s disappointment about going to a reggae festival and being confronted by ‘UK Pop reggae, with backing band sound system’ and bemoaning the fact that ‘Onstage they ain't got no roots rock rebel’<sup>650</sup> Yet

---

<sup>645</sup> de Konigh and Griffiths, *Tighten Up!*, p.175.

<sup>646</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, pp.218-219.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, p.221.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, p.218.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>650</sup> Joe Strummer and Mick Jones (*White Man*) *In Hammersmith Palais*, The Clash (CBS, S CBS 6383, 1978) [7" Single].

despite this derision for lack of any political content, the very emergence of lovers' rock, itself speaks to deeper political issues. Lover's rock was a consciously global sound which was fundamentally outward looking embracing the style of black American music as much as it did the stylistic hallmarks of reggae. Even more importantly it was a music that affirmed a distinct black British identity in the face of resistance from the racist elements in British society. As early as 1970 reggae had been able to deliver positive and aspirational messages about black achievement in Britain, such as Bob and Marcia's 'Young, Gifted and Black', which in some ways laid some of the stylistic foundations of lovers' rock.<sup>651</sup> A reggae re-working of a Nina Simone standard, 'Young, Gifted and Black', though not explicitly political, represented the way in which reggae in Britain could act as a powerful political vehicle. This was a point not lost on the group's male vocalist, Bob Andy who in a 1970 interview with the NME, described his political motivation for recording and releasing 'Young, Gifted and Black';

I guess the young ones will dance to the record without giving much thought to the words, but perhaps a few days later, they might click and then they'll listen and maybe pick up the message.

I want people to listen to the lyrics because they do make an important statement. Singing is the way I can do my bit for the advancement of black people, although I would go as far as I had to, providing it remained within the law.

A lot of black musicians are saying their mind on record now, because we are a major power with the kids as far as music goes.

They'll listen to us, what we have to say, whereas they don't watch television and they don't trust politicians.<sup>652</sup>

---

<sup>651</sup> Nina Simone and Weldon Irvine, *Young, Gifted and Black*, Bob and Marcia (Harry J Records, HJ 6605, 1970) [7" Single].

<sup>652</sup> Alan Smith, 'Bob and Marcia: 'Why Marry? Our Way's Okay' says Bob Smiling While Marcia Frowns', *NME*, 21 March 1970. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-and-marcia-why-marry-our-ways-okay-says-bob-smiling-while-marcia-frowns>> (7 November 2015).

By posing reggae, and music more generally, as an alternative means to ‘television’ and ‘politicians’, a medium to deliver a political ‘message’, Andy demonstrated clearly the way in which reggae could act as a radical force. That ‘Young, Gifted and Black’ was able to reach the top five of Britain’s singles chart also demonstrated the large audience for music with radical messages or even associations. It is also notable that, in the same way Marley would later appeal to black unity, ‘Young, Gifted and Black’ and other singles made no distinctions about national identity. This was made even clearer with home grown British reggae that reached beyond those of Jamaican and even West Indian descent and appealed to the wider black British community, drawing in people of African descent, and acting as a unifying force.<sup>653</sup> Though lovers’ rock did not confront attacks from the National Front or the wider racism in British society, its existence was to become a source of unity and pride, which demonstrated a cultural resistance to these factors.

This desire to create unity was expressed even more explicitly by another British variant on reggae. The very deliberate merging of punk and reggae by groups such as The Specials and The Selecter on the *Two-Tone* record label, was presented as a stand against racism in itself.<sup>654</sup> Whilst lovers’ rock had expressed black unity by embracing all those willing to flock to it, two tone went a step further by making unity a key part of the genres identity. Pioneered by the *Two-Tone* record label, a small independent label run by The Specials’ Jerry Dammers from his Coventry flat, two tone took the sound of the ska hits of the late 1960s and added a new layer of social realism. Dammers, formally an art student, reinforced

---

<sup>653</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.246.

<sup>654</sup> Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, pp.152-153.



the message of unity at the heart of *Two-Tone* with the labels distinctive graphic design which placed black and white checks in harmony.<sup>655</sup>

Furthermore, the choice of ska itself was illustrative of the wider aims of those involved with *Two-Tone*. Dammers had originally conceived The Specials as a ‘punk reggae’ group in the mould of The Clash, but settled on ska, due in part to the bands reticence about the religious elements of roots reggae.<sup>656</sup> Though critically discredited and tarred by association with skinheads, ska had survived in Britain, thanks mostly to *Trojan* records, which maintained a steady flow of ska records to the remaining faithful such as Dammers in Coventry.<sup>657</sup> When mod re-emerged in the mid-1970s, aided by release of The Who’s *Quadrophenia*, ska also received something of a rehabilitation. Crucially though, ska, through virtue of its lively and up-tempo nature was not only more in tune with the emerging punk scene. Even more importantly though this revived ska was accessible, populist and above all, in the words of Reynolds, ska was ‘danceable’.<sup>658</sup> This meant that this new wave of ska was fundamentally populist, built for dance floors and working class audiences. This was a characteristic readily identified in the 1981 documentary *Dance Craze* which chronicled many two tone bands in a live setting, emphasising the reactions of the audience.<sup>659</sup> If this new wave of ska had any guiding manifesto then it could be summed up simply in the slogan of one band Madness, who sold t-shirts emblazoned with, ‘Fuck Art, Let’s Dance’.<sup>660</sup>

---

<sup>655</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.389.

<sup>656</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, pp.285-286.

<sup>657</sup> Paul Williams, *You’re Wondering Now: The Specials, from Conception to Reunion* (London: Cherry Red, 2009), p.12.

<sup>658</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, p.281.

<sup>659</sup> *Dance Craze* (Dir: Joe Massot, 1981).

<sup>660</sup> Horace Panter, *Ska’d For Life: A Personal Journey with The Specials* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2007), p.108.

However behind this deliberate lack of sonic sophistication and populism, was a lyrical social realism that reflected the changing political landscape in Britain. Simon Reynolds would later argue that The Specials first album captured the spirit and feel of sixties social-realist films.<sup>661</sup> In the same way that The Clash had repositioned ‘Police and Thieves’ as a commentary on violence in Britain, The Specials covers of ska material such as Dandy Livingstone’s ‘Message To You Rudy’, functioned in a similar way. In The Specials version ‘Rudy’ is no longer obviously a Jamaican ‘rude-boy’ or even necessarily black, but is instead represented as a fairly generic youth figure.<sup>662</sup> The Specials’ bass player Horace Panter would later explain in his memoir that the band made a conscious attempt to co-opt and reshape the ‘rude-boy’ label for their fans.<sup>663</sup> This was even reflected in Dammers distinctive co-opting of the ‘rude-boy’ as a mascot for the *Two-Tone* label.<sup>664</sup> The label’s mascot, christened Walt Jabsco had an air of racially ambiguity, being neither obviously white nor black. In this way the iconography used by *Two-Tone* effectively suggested the unity of black and white youth through fashion and music.

This process of continually reshaping context is even more obvious on The Specials first number one single ‘Too Much Too Young’, which was based around Lloyd Charmers’ ‘Birth Control’.<sup>665</sup> Whilst Charmers original composition was a juvenile meditation on sex and birth control in the mould of Max Romeo’s ‘Wet Dream’, replete with the requisite single entendre, ‘Too Much Too Young’ spoke to

---

<sup>661</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, p.283.

<sup>662</sup> Dandy Livingstone, *A Message To, You Rudy*, The Specials Featuring Rico (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT5, 1979) [7” Single].

<sup>663</sup> Panter, *Ska’d For Life*, p.81.

<sup>664</sup> Two-Tone Records, ‘The 2-Tone Label’, 2010. <<http://2-tone.info/articles/label.html>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>665</sup> Jerry Dammers and Lloyd Chalmers, ‘Too Much Too Young’, Too Much Too Young (*The Specials Live!*), The Specials Featuring Rico (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT7, 1980) [7” EP].

a distinctly contemporary British context. Amid the songs kitchen-sink narrative of a teenage girl's life being curtailed by unplanned pregnancy were a number of indicators of the way in which Britain was changing. The venomous assertion that the resulting child was 'just another burden on the welfare state' seemingly echoing the decaying post war consensus, which was soon to be dismantled by Margaret Thatcher's incoming Conservative government.<sup>666</sup>

This social realism and gritty street-level politics would eventually reach beyond parochial fascinations, into an increasingly international outlook. In many ways for the punk and reggae artists who made a virtue of making politically aware music, it was a logical conclusion to perform songs about global events and movements. A hint of this new direction can be seen in The Clash's decision to record a demo of a song called 'Where You Gonna Go (Soweto)', during preliminary sessions for their 1979 album *London Calling*.<sup>667</sup> The song a cover of the Nigerian reggae star Sonny Okosun's 1977 song 'Fire in Soweto', documented the 1976 uprisings in Soweto. Although The Clash's version would not see release until twenty five years after the album's release, its very existence speaks volumes about the relationship between music and politics and the ways in which reggae in Britain had again come full circle.

## Reggae in South Africa

The very existence of 'Fire In Soweto' shows the truly global dimensions of reggae by the late 1970s. Unsurprisingly for a music rooted in a Pan-Africanist view of the world, reggae had 'crossed back over to Africa' with relative ease throughout the

---

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Sonny Okosun, 'Where you Gonna Go (Soweto)', *London Calling: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, The Clash (Columbia, 517928 3, 2004) [CD Album].

1970s, in part fuelled by African tours from Jamaican reggae stars such as Peter Tosh.<sup>668</sup> Throughout the continent a number of reggae groups emerged, with many such as Nigeria's Sonny Okosun and Ivory Coast's Alpha Blondy even achieving international success.

Within South Africa itself the global outlook of reggae, meant that it was eagerly adapted and adopted by many in South Africa who appreciated the efforts of Marley, Tosh and many others to promote pan-Africanism and the anti-apartheid movement. Although the SABC was extremely reluctant to play reggae music, like jazz and soul before it, reggae became extraordinarily popular in the townships.<sup>669</sup> As Coplan noted in the mid-1980s, reggae and other international styles became so popular within South Africa because,

African record shops have great influence on sales, and once word gets out about a politically meaningful recording... it will sell thousands of copies... Explicitly political foreign styles like the reggae of Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh also sell well in the townships. Musical cries for justice, recognition and social action from black American performers... became anthems for township youth.<sup>670</sup>

Reggae's seemingly African identity and radical politics made it attractive to many South African musicians. Like jazz before it, reggae offered South African musicians, inspiration, a source of successful black role models and most importantly a sense that they belonged to a wider struggle beyond South Africa.

Crucially, its inclusive nature meant that, like jazz before it, reggae was readily co-opted by South African musicians from the mid-1970s onwards. As John Collins noted in 1985, Reggae had an 'immense impact' on the South African

---

<sup>668</sup> Salewicz, *Bob Marley*, p.369.

<sup>669</sup> David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp.193-195.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*, p.195.

music spawning many enthusiastic imitators.<sup>671</sup> Many found the journey from township jazz styles such as *mbaqanga* to reggae was a logical one which involved wholeheartedly embracing Rastafarianism.<sup>672</sup> In this way the Pan-Africanism that had long been championed by reggae musicians found a powerful echo, particularly among the generation who had embraced the cultural politics of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement.<sup>673</sup> As with reggae artists throughout Africa, some of these South African reggae musicians, such as Lucky Dube, were even able to find international acclaim and success.

### **‘Why Must the Youth Fight Against Themselves?’**

Whilst reggae became increasingly popular inside of the South African townships it was making unexpected turns in its traditional homelands. In Jamaica, the golden age of roots reggae symbolically came to an end with the death of Bob Marley in 1981. Whilst Marley's passing was an occasion of overt civic unity in Jamaica, with both Seaga and Manley amongst the mourners, the events of the 1980 election in Jamaica had splintered the Jamaican reggae scene.<sup>674</sup> The 1980 election saw a massive increase in violence, with over 900 murdered, a fourfold increase on the 1976 election, with many musicians caught in the crossfire.<sup>675</sup> Even those not directly affected by violence were seemingly drained by events. By 1978, Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, who had done more than any other to shape reggae in Jamaica, prepared for the dawning of the 1980s, with what many have argued was a breakdown.<sup>676</sup> There was even a longstanding rumour that Perry set fire to his own

---

<sup>671</sup> John Collins, *African Pop Roots*, p.93.

<sup>672</sup> Hugh Masekela, *Freedom Sounds*, BBC Radio 4, 21 June 2010.

<sup>673</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, pp.196-197.

<sup>674</sup> Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.xiii.

<sup>675</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.331.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p.332.

Black Ark Studio in a fit of rage.<sup>677</sup> Though Perry would later claim this breakdown was a ruse designed to drive away people he found a nuisance, the episode nicely sums up the ways in which reggae was seemingly exhausted in its homeland.

Particularly interesting is the suggestion of many that this was in many ways driven by Perry's frustration with Rastafarianism. Max Romeo would later tell Lynskey that Perry made a special effort to ward off Rastafarians by attaching both rotting pork and a sign reading 'I am a Batty Man [homosexual]' to his car.<sup>678</sup>

Furthermore as Lynskey has argued, after over a decade, roots reggae itself was exhausted, with audiences and musicians naturally drifting away.<sup>679</sup> Notably one of Marley's final songs 'Redemption Song', took a form much closer to a folk protest song than roots reggae, appearing to signal the way in which the genres innovators and leaders were prepared to move on to different styles.<sup>680</sup> In a final strange development, the void left by the decline of roots reggae was increasingly filled by a glut of reggae records made by British groups, as the distinctly less political British lovers' rock crossed over to Jamaica.<sup>681</sup>

---

<sup>677</sup> The events of this period remain extremely unclear. David Katz's biography of Perry, *People Funny Boy*, has argued that it is extremely hard to get to the truth of many stories of Perry's behavior in this period. Referring directly to the notion that Perry set fire to Black Ark, Katz notes 'Perry himself has given conflicting accounts of the fire, and despite him claiming responsibility for it most of the time, we are unlikely to be ever certain of its true origins'. Other sources have been more willing to give Perry the benefit of the doubt. On the Frequently Asked Question section of his 'official unofficial' fan-site the fire is blamed on electrical faults. However the fact that the same section also contains questions such as 'Did Lee Perry take LSD and then go nuts?' and 'Why does Lee Perry act so crazy?' is a testament to the way in which Perry's behaviour in this period led people to believe that he had suffered a nervous breakdown.

David Katz, *People Funny Boy: The Genius of Lee Scratch Perry* (Edinburgh : Payback Press, 2000), pp.355-356.

Eternal Thunder, 'Lee Perry F.A.Q (Frequently Asked Questions)', 2005.

<<http://www.upsetter.net/scratch/faq.htm#5>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>678</sup> Lynskey, 33 *Revolutions Per Minute*, p.332.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> Bob Marley, *Redemption Song*, Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, WIP 6653, 1980) [7" Single].

<sup>681</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, pp.246-247.

Meanwhile in Britain itself, reggae was developing in equally strange ways. As punk mutated into post-punk many of the stylistic hallmarks of reggae, including heavy bass lines and cavernous echo, would be co-opted by newly emerging groups. Most notably this can be seen in John Lydon's post Sex Pistols band Public Image Ltd. Lydon, a self-confessed reggae connoisseur, had spent time following the break-up of The Sex Pistols, in Jamaica 'talent spotting' reggae artists for Virgin.<sup>682</sup> PiL, formed after Lydon's return to the UK, subtly embraced many reggae hallmarks, most notably in the prominent bass lines played by John Wardle, who acknowledged his debt to reggae with the stage name Jah Wobble.<sup>683</sup>

Even more marked was the change in The Specials, whose second album *More Specials* owed more sonically to soundtrack albums and mood music than it did ska. Reactions to the album were mixed, with many confused about such an abrupt change in direction.<sup>684</sup> Even largely positive reviews seemed bemused by just how much The Specials had changed. Writing in the NME, Vivien Goldman noted,

Musically, the Specials have done a double back-flip. Fans expecting more frenetic ska re-runs will do a treble-flip when they hear the conglomerate of Zhivago-esque movie soundtracks and other much-maligned music's the Specials have re-validated. Their energy has become more sensual, too, less St Vitus's dance, more mellow hip-grind.<sup>685</sup>

Subsequent reviews and reappraisals of the album would be less generous about the albums radical departure. Reviewing the CD reissue of *More Specials* for *Q* in 1989, Bradley argued that the album had failed to stand 'the test of time' and noted

---

<sup>682</sup> John Lydon, Keith Zimmerman and Kent Zimmerman, *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (London: Plexus, 1994), pp.272-277.

<sup>683</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, pp.7-8.

<sup>684</sup> Simon Reynolds, 'The Specials: Reissues', *Uncut*, May 2002, <  
<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-reissues> (7 November 2015).

<sup>685</sup> Vivien Goldman, 'The Specials: *More Specials*', *NME*, 20 September 1980, <  
<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-imore-specialsi> (7 November 2015).

the ‘thin’ and ‘empty’ sound of the album.<sup>686</sup> Furthermore, Bradley also noted the way in which the ‘agitprop’ present throughout the first album, dominated *More Specials*, rendering it less relatable than the street level politics of *The Specials*.

It would be this seriousness that contributed to break up of the band shortly after the release of the album. Driven by, an increasingly dictatorial, Dammers, *More Specials* tackled a range of difficult subjects such as consumerism, menial employment and powerlessness in the face of a coming apocalypse.<sup>687</sup> If the first album had documented the dying embers of the post war consensus, then *More Specials* spoke to the uncertainty of the newly emerging Thatcherite 1980s.

In the wake of the album half of the members The Specials left to form the distinctly more light hearted and straightforward Fun Boy Three.<sup>688</sup> Meanwhile Dammers next project, under the guise of The Special AKA, would be the logical conclusion of the process of radicalisation that had begun with *The Specials*. Containing songs that were in some cases, lyrically, little more than slogans, the resulting album, *In The Studio* was a challenging listen. Yet despite what Cynthia Rose in the NME called ‘undue dips into polemicism’, the album was also praised for its diverse musical content as an embodiment of ‘multiracial and multicultural Britain.’<sup>689</sup> Crucially, *In The Studio* also contained the single ‘Nelson Mandela’, which would spark even more musical protests against apartheid.

---

<sup>686</sup> Lloyd Bradley, ‘The Specials: *More Specials* (2-Tone)’, *Q*, July 1989, <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-imore-specialsi-2-tone>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>687</sup> In particular the album track ‘Man at C&A’ details the dread of facing impending nuclear war over which it was impossible to exert any influence over. Terry Hall and Jerry Dammers, ‘Man at C&A’, *More Specials*, The Specials (Two-Tone Records, CHR TT 5003, 1980) [LP Album].

<sup>688</sup> Williams, *You’re Wondering Now*, pp.121-124.

<sup>689</sup> Cynthia Rose, ‘The Special AKA: In the Studio (2 Tone)’, *NME*, 4 August 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-special-aka-iin-the-studioi-2-tone>> (7 November 2015).



However it would be the original line up of The Specials last standalone single 'Ghost Town' which spoke more to the way in which black politics in Britain was changing under the Thatcher led Conservative government. In this new political climate, industrial cities like The Specials hometown of Coventry, which had been 'boomtowns' for the majority of the post war era, faced sharp decline, with rising unemployment and declining job opportunities for young people. For those living with the consequences of the dramatic shift away from the post war consensus, the change was marked. As Dammers would later tell Paul Williams, it was as if 'Margaret Thatcher had apparently gone mad; she was closing down all the industries, throwing millions of people on the dole'.<sup>690</sup> Even more apparent though was the way in which the desire to create racial unity, spearheaded by groups like The Specials and campaigns like RAR was being undermined by the new Thatcherite consensus. Although the National Front had seen its advance halted, with less than one per cent of the vote in the 1979 election, other political figures were still happy to voice disquiet over multiracial Britain. Thatcher's comment in a television interview in the run up to the election in 1979 'that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped', set the tone for the way in which race relations would be cast in Britain during the 1980s.<sup>691</sup>

Following the Conservative victory in 1979, the Thatcher government's emphasis on law and order became a particular site of conflict with ethnic minority communities in Britain. In particular the increased use of the so called 'sus laws', which gave the police the power to stop and search anyone appearing suspicious, became a particular bone of contention.<sup>692</sup> Although the 'sus law' had been used by

---

<sup>690</sup> Williams, *You're Wondering Now*, p.105.

<sup>691</sup> *World in Action*, Granada, 27 January 1978.

<sup>692</sup> Weight, *Patriots*, p.571.

the police throughout the 1970s, effectively reviving section four of the 1824 *Vagrancy Act*, the emerging political landscape of the 1980s focussed discontent around the issue. That the police were using the ‘sus law’ and other policing measures to directly target young people from ethnic minority backgrounds was made abundantly clear by the decision of the Metropolitan Police in London to name their anti-burglary campaign of April and May 1981, Operation Swamp, harking directly back to Thatcher’s comments.<sup>693</sup>

Operation Swamp, where almost a thousand people were stopped and searched by the police, would even lead to a direct kick back with an outbreak of violence and looting in Brixton on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1981.<sup>694</sup> Similar reactionary policing led to outbreaks of violence and rioting throughout the country, notably in Toxteth in Liverpool and Handsworth in Birmingham. It was this sense of despondency and alienation which fed perfectly into The Specials ‘Ghost Town’, which fittingly got to number one in the UK singles chart in the July of 1981 as rioting spread throughout Britain.

Furthermore in addition to the aggravation caused by the Thatcher government’s law and order policies, there was also a rise in racist violence as far right groups exploited the emerging divisions in British society. In Coventry, in common with many other British cities, there appeared to be a rise in racist violence. In response to the changing mood in his hometown, Dammers would argue ‘Racism has crept back’ into Coventry.<sup>695</sup> In an interesting parallel to his statement on Thatcherism, Dammers would argue that Coventry had ‘gone mad’ with far right groups such as the National Front and British Movement actively

---

<sup>693</sup> Williams, *You’re Wondering Now*, p.191.

<sup>694</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.396.

<sup>695</sup> Williams, *You’re Wondering Now*, p.108.

campaigning in the city centre.<sup>696</sup> In the April of 1981 a 19-year old Asian student named Satnam Gill was stabbed to death in a racially motivated attack in the city centre.<sup>697</sup> The unity that *Two-Tone* had attempted to engender seemed distinctly out of step in the changing 1980s, where the optimism of RAR was cowed by an increasing fear of violence. This spectre of violence can be seen throughout the lyrics of ‘Ghost Town’ itself, with the images of ‘people getting angry and ‘too much fighting on the dance floor’.<sup>698</sup> A concert organised by The Specials to raise funds for the family of Satnam Gill in Coventry, coincidentally on the same day ‘Ghost Town’ was released, was met with a counter demonstration from the far right.<sup>699</sup> Whereas the previous Labour government was happy, in the main to be associated as fellow travellers of RAR, the Thatcher government appeared to some people as fellow travellers of the far right. This was an impression not aided by the statements about rioting by some Conservative MPs who revealed deep seated prejudices, with some such as Michael Brown calling for a complete end to immigration as a solution to urban unrest.<sup>700</sup>

## Labour of Love

In this political landscape many black community activists found themselves drifting towards the Labour Party as a means of combating the Conservative government.<sup>701</sup> This entry of a new generation of determined young black activists into the Labour Party would mark not only a distinct shift in black politics in Britain but also the way in which left wing politics as a whole was reacting to a

---

<sup>696</sup> David Toulson Interviewing Darrall Cozens at Warwick University, 12 June 2014.

<sup>697</sup> Williams, *You’re Wondering Now*, p.108.

<sup>698</sup> Jerry Dammers, *Ghost Town*, The Specials (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT 17, 1981) [7” Single].

<sup>699</sup> Williams, *You’re Wondering Now*, p.108.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>701</sup> Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable, 2010), p.90.

changing political landscape. Prior to the entry of these new black activists into the Labour Party in the early 1980s, ethnic minority communities had traditionally interacted with the party on a local level through self-appointed community leaders.<sup>702</sup> In marked contrast these new young black activists took it upon themselves to attend and participate in Labour Party meetings.

This political shift was also reflected by a growing sense of urgency and even militancy in black British music. The Birmingham based *Two-Tone* group The Beat's 1982 single 'Stand Down Margaret', demonstrated well the way in which popular music could be overtly political in the new Thatcherite consensus.<sup>703</sup> Fittingly the songs royalties would be donated to CND.<sup>704</sup>

This was a change that was even more marked in the rise of a new British reggae, aided by its association with campaigns by the ANL and RAR and the success of *Two-Tone* and the ska revival of the late 1970s. Whilst lovers' rock and other less political reggae acts still continued to flourish and thrive in the charts, this new militantly political and distinctly British reggae was increasingly encroaching upon the UK charts. Asked about the fortunes of British reggae in 1978, Linton Kwesi Johnson had confidently predicted that, 'British reggae is just coming into its own. It couldn't happen before, but it will happen more and more now'.<sup>705</sup>

---

<sup>702</sup> Andy McSmith, *Faces of Labour: The Inside Story: Your Guide to Labour Old and New* (London: Verso, 1997), p.230.

<sup>703</sup> Dave Wakeling, *Stand Down Margaret*, The Beat (Go- Feet Records, FEET 3, 1980) [7" Single].

<sup>704</sup> Anonymous, 'Stand Down Margaret', Uncut, April 2013.

<<http://www.uncut.co.uk/features/stand-down-margaret-23780>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>705</sup> Vivien Goldman, 'Linton Kwesi Johnson: Poet Of The Roots', *Sounds*, 2 September 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/linton-kwesi-johnson-poet-of-the-roots>> (7 November 2015).

As Johnson had alluded, this new wave of British reggae groups represented the culmination of a much longer push to improve the fortunes of British reggae that had started around the time of ANL and RAR's utilisation and promotion of the genre. Though the genre and its British adherents had by the late 1970s a dedicated following, there had also been a sense that reggae had met a glass ceiling and was effectively being contained by institutional prejudice within the music industry. This was a case well made in a 1976 article in *Melody Maker* by Caroline Coon, who would later briefly manage The Clash, which reflected that although the British reggae scene was by 1976 'healthier than ever', it was still largely excluded from mainstream radio.<sup>706</sup> Reflecting on the experience of those who had acted as pluggers, those charged with promoting artists and single to radio stations, for reggae labels or artists, Coon argued that there was a, 'feeling of hopelessness among black pluggers, because it has little to do with music and much to do with the colour of skin.'<sup>707</sup> Specifically Coon quotes a plugger for Virgin named Yvonne Claude who argued that;

The producers say reggae is very difficult to programme. They say it's a minority music. But to me it's not a minority music! There's no two ways about it: during the daytime they are definitely not interested. Most of the producers hate it, so they don't play it. It's as if they were frightened of it.<sup>708</sup>

Reflecting on the grass roots of British reggae, Coon saw similar prejudices impacting on the ability of British reggae bands to reach any audience at all. In

---

<sup>706</sup> Caroline Coon, 'British Reggae: Prejudiced Vibrations', *Melody Maker*, 9 October 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/british-reggae-prejudiced-vibrations>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

particular many concert promoters appeared uneasy with what they called ‘the culture’ of reggae, namely as it appeared to attract the attention of the police.<sup>709</sup>

However, Coon’s article was also keen to praise the vitality and ‘political awareness’ of many of Britain’s nascent reggae bands. Whether consciously or not, Coon and the reggae fans and musicians interviewed in the piece seemingly echo many of the sentiments about reggae and politics that Bob and Marcia’s, Bob Andy had in his 1970 *NME* interview. Namely that reggae could act as a potent vehicle for generating self-pride and identity for black Britons.<sup>710</sup> Carl Levy, the keyboard player of one group, The Cimarons told Coon that, ‘Reggae is now a social necessity for black people in England.’<sup>711</sup> Furthermore, two fans, identified only as ‘Tony and Bruce, both 20, from Shepherds Bush’ told Coon, ‘We’ve been listening to reggae a long time. If you believe in roots and deep black music then that’s the music for you. Reggae music is helping us. It keeps us as one.’<sup>712</sup>

This sentiment, that by the late 1970s reggae played a key role in unifying and empowering black British musicians, is made even more powerful when viewed in the context of the ongoing ANL and RAR campaigns, of which reggae groups had played a key role. Aside from the benefits of participating in ANL and RAR events already mentioned, these concerts also had a key role in opening the doors of previously wary venues to reggae groups. It was on the back of RAR tours that groups such as The Cimarons and Aswad, both profiled in Coon’s 1976 *Melody Maker* piece, would come to greater prominence.<sup>713</sup> This in turn appears to have

---

<sup>709</sup> Ibid.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> Vivien Goldman, ‘Jah Punk: New Wave Digs Reggae’, *Sounds*, 3 September 1977. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/jah-punk-new-wave-digs-reggae>> (7 November 2015).

encouraged even greater numbers, both black and white, to engage with reggae. In a distinctly more optimistic piece than Coon's 1976 *Melody Maker* article, Vivien Goldman wrote in a September 1977 editorial for *Sounds* that;

New young reggae bands are springing up as exuberantly as punk bands, and more and more bands are trying to break down the traditional dividing lines between black turf and white turf. Not to try and imitate each other, just to get a hit off the other's energy. For most of the reggae bands, it's a way of getting the great white record-buying majority to hear their music, for most of the punk bands it's a buzz to be around the musical energy that gives them a lot of inspiration.<sup>714</sup>

Yet whilst Goldman and other music journalists were drawn to the idea of a musical and ideological punk and reggae love in, what Goldman had termed 'Jah Punk', the reality of the relationship was somewhat more complicated. Reggae bands touring with punk groups could sometimes face outright hostility from audiences. Steel Pulse, later acknowledged by many journalists and fans as one of the best acts of the 1978 *Rock Against Racism Carnival*, found themselves subjected to racist taunting and a shower of beer cans whilst supporting The Stranglers in April of 1978.<sup>715</sup> Similarly, Aswad found themselves ejected from a support slot for Eddie and the Hotrods, due in part to audience hostility.<sup>716</sup> To many fans drawn in by the amphetamine charge rush of punk, there was possibly no greater contrast than groups such as Steel Pulse and Aswad whose music rested much more on a keen sense of melody and a propulsive groove.

This not only demonstrates well the limitations of assuming that punk and reggae were kindred spirits, but also points to the way in which British reggae, though bought to prominence by association with punk, was fiercely independent

---

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

<sup>715</sup> Peter Silvertson, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham', *Sounds*, 22 April 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/steel-pulse-no-jah-babble-in-a-birmingham>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>716</sup> Goldman, 'Jah Punk: New Wave Digs Reggae'.

of it. Indeed it is important to consider that there was a degree of indifference and even amusement between British reggae groups and fans and the punk groups who adopted them. Selwyn Brown, Steel Pulse's keyboard player even went as far as to suggest that many black fans were uneasy about the group's brief association with punk, "so-called friends in Handsworth thought, they said we'd sold out. Our black following disappeared. We were a black punk band at that time."<sup>717</sup> Carl Levy from The Cimarons, further articulated the 'one-way traffic' of the relationship between punk and reggae well in Goldman's 1976 'Jah Punk' editorial, when he noted that punk;

Freezes the mind, when it hits you. It's suddenly being exposed to total volume all the time. Reggae's more orientated around the bottom, the bass, it's closer to the ground. Punk music is toppier. That's why there's no way you could get that screechy kind of volume in reggae.<sup>718</sup>

This clearly articulated belief in the key stylistic differences between punk and reggae, shows the true distinction for many of the bands associated with this emerging politically conscious British reggae. Whilst punk and variations such as *Two-Tone*, a reggae variant crafted in the image of punk, were much more at home with the up-tempo bounce of ska, the music of Aswad, Steel Pulse and The Cimarons recalled the stripped back sound of Jamaican roots-rock reggae.

It was in this mould, as the heirs to Jamaica's roots rock heroes, that many of the bands explicitly cast themselves. The cover to Steel Pulse's 1978 album *Handsworth Revolution*, forewent the slick urban modernism of *Two-Tone* and the Specials graphic design, in favour of a juxtaposition of tropical third world foliage with the decaying tower blocks and urban landscape of Handsworth in Birmingham. Produced by Karl Pitterson, who had engineered albums by Bob

---

<sup>717</sup> Silvertown, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham'.

<sup>718</sup> Goldman, 'Jah Punk: New Wave Digs Reggae'.



Marley, *Handsworth Revolution* was cast by Steel Pulse deliberately as a spiritual successor to Marley's mid 1970s albums. In an interview in an April 1978 issue of *Sounds* the group told Peter Silverton that roots reggae was "Where the drive came from really".<sup>719</sup> Specifically Brown, Steel Pulse's keyboard player recalled the importance of, "hearing music like Bob Marley's *Catch A Fire* and *Burnin'*. At that time it was unheard of for reggae to sound like that. It wasn't really the words and the time. When you got into the music, you got into the words later."<sup>720</sup>

This musical evocation of the potency of roots reggae, as opposed to the up-tempo ska of The Specials or the populist touch of lovers' rock, also extended to the political messages contained within the lyrics of these groups. In common with its cover, the songs on *Handsworth Revolution* did much to capture the roots reggae aesthetic of Marley and Lee 'Scratch' Perry in their lyrical content. Bradley has even gone as far as to suggest that Steel Pulse, captured the dynamics and lyrical lexicon of roots reggae, in a way that surpassed even Bob Marley.<sup>721</sup> As with Marley and the Wailers and other contemporaries, discussions of distinctly contemporary issues such as racism in modern Britain were clothed in an appeal to an established Rastafarian ideological framework, with appeals to global black unity and the historical weight of slavery. This can be seen most clearly on one of *Handsworth Revolution's* stand out tracks, 'Ku Klux Klan', which opted to discuss racist violence as a global phenomenon rather than a parochial issue.<sup>722</sup> Even more importantly the final verses command that; 'Blackman do unto the Klan/As they would do to you', displayed a militancy closer to Marley's 'Get Up, Stand Up' than any offering by a punk or *Two-Tone* group.

---

<sup>719</sup> Silverton, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham'.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Bradley, *Sounds Like London*, p.230.

<sup>722</sup> David Hinds, *Ku Klux Klan*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, WIP 6428, 1978) [7" Single].

Crucially though, this militancy and international focus was not limited to reflecting the issues in Britain, but as with Marley and Jamaican roots reggae before it, groups like Steel Pulse became increasingly international in outlook. Most importantly Steel Pulse's second album, *Tribute to the Martyrs*, contained a song entitled 'Biko's Kindred Lament'. This song, a searing lament to the injustices surrounding Biko's death, demonstrated not only a mature understanding of the wider situation, but also a clear and emphatic identification with the plight of South Africa. The lyrics repeated insistence that 'Biko died in chains, moaned for you' and appeals to 'brothers, sisters', effectively transformed Biko from a martyr for South Africa into a figure of greater significance for black unity.<sup>723</sup> The group even go as far as to equate Biko with 'Moses', recalling roots reggae's fascination with Biblical imagery and allegory.<sup>724</sup> This is in marked contrast to Peter Gabriel's take on Biko in the song of the same name released the following year in 1980, which offered a far more distant and less immediate portrait of Biko. Similarly, this international outlook was also present on, 'Jah Pickney-RAR', also from *Tribute to the Martyrs*, which explicitly linked the National Front with apartheid.<sup>725</sup>

Yet despite this clear evocation of international black solidarity, Steel Pulse and other British reggae groups still also reflected a uniquely British political context. As with *Two-Tone*, British reggae was increasingly constructed against a rapidly changing political context following the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979. Reflecting on Steel Pulse, Silverton reflected that the importance of British reggae was that it came, 'directly from and about

---

<sup>723</sup> David Hinds, 'Biko's Kindred Lament', *Tribute to the Martyrs*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, ILPS 9568, 1979) [LP Album].

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

<sup>725</sup> David Hinds, 'Jah Pickney-RAR', *Tribute to the Martyrs*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, ILPS 9568, 1979) [LP Album].

their own experiences, bypassing the distorting mirror of any messianic notions of a sunny, smiling homeland in the sun.<sup>726</sup> As with *Two-Tone*, British roots reggae was deeply provincial reflecting an outlook from Britain's emerging 'Ghost Towns', far divorced from any optimistic notions of a positive Britain revolving around a swinging London. In the same way that *Two-Tone* sought to embody the shift away from the post war consensus in Coventry, British roots reggae also sought to reflect life in cities that were increasingly left behind by Thatcherism. This was an even more obvious approach to many British reggae groups, who having been the victims of discrimination from the music industry and wider society throughout the 1970s, had found themselves retreating back to their home communities. The profiles of Steel Pulse in the September 1977 'Jah Punk' issue of *Sounds* had made clear their provincial identity by mentioning that the group came from Birmingham.<sup>727</sup> This was an identity that Steel Pulse themselves were keen to promote. The cover and very name of their debut album, *Handsworth Revolution*, an assertion of pride in their home community. This was a sentiment that Selwyn Brown, the groups keyboard player, and Michael Riley, the groups vocalist, would make clear in Silverton's 1978 interview for *Sounds*;

**Michael:** "Well it's not like what all the reports say about it like it's dark and crowded and they've chopped all the tree down so we can't swing in them and you can't walk down the road 'cos you'll get mugged and you can't go out at night (if you're white) 'cos you'll stick out like a sore thumb. All those rumours just ain't true. Go there yourself and see. You asked me about it like it was a thousand miles away. It's only Birmingham."

**Selwyn:** "We feel comfortable there because there's a spirit down there, a sort of community spirit which we can't really find anywhere else. We'd like to see youth in Handsworth – all over as a matter of fact – we'd like to see

---

<sup>726</sup> Silverton, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham'.

<sup>727</sup> Vivien Goldman, 'Jah Punk: The Black New Wave', *Sounds*, 10 September 1977. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/jah-punk-the-black-new-wave>> (7 November 2015).

'em get together. But we're gonna start from our own home and the place we feel most at home at in Britain is Handsworth."

**Michael:** "It's been given such a bad name. We're trying to clean the name up, put it on the map as somewhere people, decent people live. Give people there – and by this I mean the youth – something to go for. It's like say I wasn't in a band and group came from Handsworth and they called their record 'Handsworth Revolution', it would make me feel good and give me something to aim for. We called the album that because it talks about the black man and his situation."<sup>728</sup>

That by the end of 1981, Handsworth, along with Brixton and Toxteth would become synonymous with the wave of inner city violence in Britain, speaks volumes for the way in which roots reggae spoke for the changing political context in cities such as Birmingham.

It was in this increasingly charged context that a number of community activists, took steps to formally engage with British politics. For many this was a distinct change in direction, having previously shown great scepticism about politics in Britain. In 1978 Linton Kwesi Johnson had told Goldman that, 'I couldn't vote for the Labour Party, it could never be the vehicle for the furtherance of the struggle of black people in this country'.<sup>729</sup> Yet whilst Johnson was to remain sceptical and somewhat aloof, many others made an effort to make their voices heard within the party. By the 1983 general election, this participation was evident in the greater emphasis placed on racial equality issues in the manifesto, with commitments to;

To encourage equality and reduce discrimination, we will greatly expand funding to ethnic minority projects. We will also encourage local authorities... to provide for greater ethnic minority participation. We will also:

-Stimulate a wide range of positive action programmes to ensure that ethnic minorities receive a fair deal - in employment, education, housing and

<sup>728</sup> Silverton, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham'.

<sup>729</sup> Goldman, 'Linton Kwesi Johnson: Poet Of The Roots'.

social services: and encourage the keeping of ethnic records, in order to assess the needs of ethnic minorities and take steps to meet them.

-Launch a major public education initiative aimed at eliminating prejudice.

-Strengthen the existing Race Relations Act - in particular, to enable us to deal more effectively with racist literature, speeches and marches; and to remove the exception for seamen recruited abroad.

-Appoint a senior minister to lead the offensive against racial inequality.<sup>730</sup>

Yet these commitments, which placed racial equality as part of a wider 'rainbow coalition' of radical interests, only represented the beginning of a series of wider changes.<sup>731</sup> In local government, Labour authorities such as the Greater London Council implemented a series of radical legislation meant to increase the participation of ethnic minority communities in politics.<sup>732</sup> The GLC even went to great lengths to subsidise and organise a number of concerts by radical reggae groups.<sup>733</sup> Even more crucially though, by 1984, local authorities such as the GLC had a number of high profile black councillors, such as Diane Abbot, Paul Boateng and Bernie Grant.<sup>734</sup>

It would be these high profile figures that would lead the campaign to create 'Black Sections' within the Labour Party, officially affiliated bodies which sought to encourage black members to participate in the Party.<sup>735</sup> Crucially these groups would then have a constitutionally enshrined right to representation on the general management committees of Constituency Labour Parties, giving a powerful

---

<sup>730</sup> By way of comparison, the 1979 manifesto simply made commitment to education programmes and repealing the 'Sus law', whilst the manifesto for the October 1974 election discussed 'racial discrimination' as a foreign policy issue.

<sup>731</sup> McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*, p.97.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> John Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates: The 'Jobs for Change' Festivals', in Maureen Mackintosh and Hilary Wainwright (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The politics of Local Economics* (London: Verso, 1987), p.388.

<sup>734</sup> McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p.231.

<sup>735</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum, 2010), p.169.

platform to black members.<sup>736</sup> This followed the pattern set by the establishing of women's sections in the 1970s, which had granted the same rights to those bodies.<sup>737</sup> However the emergence of calls for 'Black Sections', were met with much more resistance, due in part to the proponents of the sections use of the language of identity politics.<sup>738</sup> Indeed in an era of much infighting and ideological soul searching for Labour, the question of 'Black Sections' was soon to unite unlikely sections of the party, mystified as the very purpose of Black Sections. After initially appearing to be open to the idea of 'Black Sections', Neil Kinnock, the newly elected Labour leader, came out as against in 1984. Crucially it appears to have been the issue of identity, or 'racial definition', which appears to have been a sticking point.<sup>739</sup> A meeting on the subject with Diane Abbot and another prominent advocate Sharon Atkin ended in acrimony after Kinnock proved unable to grasp that the groups would rely on members self-defining as black.<sup>740</sup>

Amongst the rank and file there was a similar discomfort with the notion of 'Black Sections'. On the hard left, the call for 'Black Sections' were denounced as a distraction from the class struggle. Eric Heffer a leading voice of the hard left and then chair of Labour's National Executive Committee voiced his opposition to 'Black Sections' on this basis, as soon as it was floated by a then open minded Kinnock in a 1984 meeting.<sup>741</sup> At subsequent NEC meetings, the protest against the 'Black Sections' was led on the pavements outside the meetings by the Trotskyist entryist group the Militant Tendency.<sup>742</sup> Militant's opposition to 'Black Sections' would be long lived and particularly marked in Liverpool, where the group had

---

<sup>736</sup> McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p.231.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

<sup>738</sup> Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!*, p.169.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p.231.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., p.232.

managed to take control of much of the local Labour Party. Deputy Leader of Liverpool Council and Militant member Derek Hatton would blame the calls for 'Black Sections' as being from 'middle class intellectuals' who were indifferent to 'real issues'.<sup>743</sup> Subsequently, this position of official disinterest and downright suspicion was applied by the Militant controlled council in Liverpool, to all its interaction with black community groups in the city. An attitude made painfully clear by the 'Sam Bond affair', whereby the council appointed a black member of Militant from London as Race Relations Officer at the expense of more suitable non-aligned local candidates.<sup>744</sup>

However opposition also came from the traditional right and centre of the party who were just as suspicious of the intentions of those calling for 'Black Sections'. Following the 1987 election, Labour's deputy leader Roy Hattersley argued that the 'Black Sections' had actually acted as 'a vehicle for promoting the parliamentary ambitions of metropolitan, middle class professionals'.<sup>745</sup> Yet Hattersley's opposition was also founded on a faith in the more traditional methods of interacting with ethnic minority communities, traditionally employed by local Labour parties. As McSmith has argued, Hattersley's opposition initially came after being lobbied by Asian community leaders who feared losing influence.<sup>746</sup> Indeed there does appear to have been a significant number of ethnic minority Labour members who were equally mystified by calls for 'Black Sections'.<sup>747</sup> At the 1985

---

<sup>743</sup> Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!*, pp.156-157.

<sup>744</sup> Peter Kilfoyle, *Left Behind: Lesson's From Labour's Heartland* (London: Politico's, 2000), pp.132-134.

<sup>745</sup> Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!*, p.170.

<sup>746</sup> McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*, p.91.

<sup>747</sup> McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p.234.

Labour Conference a motion supporting the establishment of 'Black Sections' was easily defeated, demonstrating the unease about 'Black Sections'.<sup>748</sup>

Importantly though this unease was mirrored throughout many other left of centre organisations who also felt out of step with identity politics. In a mirror of the way in which Labour had traditionally operated, the Anti-Apartheid Movement also happily harnessed the power and influence of community leaders and community groups as a means of engaging with ethnic minority communities.<sup>749</sup> This was a way of working that many grass roots supporters of AAM contrasted positively with the potential pitfalls of working with designated 'Black Sections' or other single issue groups. In particular, as Fieldhouse has shown, experience of working alongside far left groups in anti-racism campaigns in the late 1970s had left many members with suspicious of the motives of 'single issue groups'.<sup>750</sup> Conversely many of these new political groups also harboured suspicions that the AAM was 'made up of middle class, white racists talking about apartheid in a far off country but doing nothing to confront racism nearer home'.<sup>751</sup> However, as with the Labour Party, the debate was not always as clear as a case of young black activists fighting an entrenched white establishment. A letter and press release from the record label CSA on behalf of the reggae musician and poet Milton Smalling offering AAM some of the proceeds from the sales of his recording 'Fighting Spirit' includes a biography making clear Smalling's distrust of 'Black Sections' as a socialist and Labour member.<sup>752</sup>

---

<sup>748</sup> Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice*, p.170.

<sup>749</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005), pp.347-348.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, p.347.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, p.348.

<sup>752</sup> Bodleian Library, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1461, CSA Press Office, 'Milton Smalling 'Fighting Spirit'', 1983.



However, it was at this point that the platform and level of support afforded to smaller and radical artists like Smalling began to decrease as the music industry itself was rapidly changing in the new political context. Most notably, the influence of smaller independent labels, who had long championed radical music and had even enjoyed up to 40 per cent of the market share, went into sharp decline as the 1980s went on.<sup>753</sup> By the end of the decade, *Island*, the label that had first bought roots reggae and Bob Marley to Britain, before supporting groups such as Steel Pulse, would be sold to PolyGram for \$272 million.<sup>754</sup> After almost two decades of high-level support to some of the most radical and challenging groups and genres, the idiosyncrasy of labels like *Island*, *Rough Trade* and *Stiff*, all key promoters of British reggae all but disappeared from British popular music. With increasing interference and even indifference from major labels, the golden age of British roots reggae slowly ground to a halt.

The greatest example of British reggae's direction of travel can be found through examining the career of UB40. A group of multi-racial reggae fanatics, UB40, like Steel Pulse, had firm roots in Birmingham. Furthermore, their musical output had combined the provincialism, social realism and international outlook of other British roots reggae acts, such as Steel Pulse, Aswad and The Cimarons. The group's name, taken after the form used to sign on for unemployment benefit, was a direct nod to the growing issue of unemployment in provincial urban towns such as Birmingham.<sup>755</sup> A theme further repeated in the name of the band's debut album, *Signing Off*. The album itself contained a number of explicitly political songs, such

---

<sup>753</sup> Graham Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London : Atlantic Books, 2013), p.298.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid.

<sup>755</sup> Weight, *Patriots*, p.716.

as 'Burden of Shame' which addressed British imperialism and 'Food For Thought' and 'King' a tribute to Martin Luther King.

However the success that followed the band's fourth album *Labour of Love*, released in 1983, saw a shift in the groups output. A crowd pleasing collection of covers, which sold in much greater numbers than any previous release and even produced a number one single with their version of Neil Diamond's 'Red, Red Wine'. The success following *Labour of Love* seemed to mark determined shift in the group. This could be seen both in their recorded output, which on the whole became much tamer and less political, and also in the bands public statements, which belied an increasing ambivalence about any sort of political participation. In a December 1986 interview and profile with Sean O'Hagan in the NME, the group's public stance was described as 'we're not into politics anymore, we're only into making loads of money'.<sup>756</sup> In the interview, the bands drummer Jimmy Brown was extremely dismissive about using popular music for politics, arguing that;

We're actually more in tune with our fans than when we started off cos we've grown up. We're not naive anymore. Why should we inflict our politics on anyone? We're just a bunch of tossers from Birmingham. Why should people expect us or any other pop group to be holders of great political insight? Our fans don't. People are more aware, politically, now than they were 10 year ago when it was all the rage to be avowedly socialist. More aware cos now they know they can't change the world.<sup>757</sup>

This was a sentiment echoed by the band's saxophonist Brian Travers, whose assessment of the bands earlier political stance was equally scathing,

---

<sup>756</sup> Sean O'Hagan, 'UB40: Salt Of The Earth', *NME*, 8 December 1986.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/ub40-salt-of-the-earth>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

We used to go to every huge rally and rock against racism but kids today say 'Sod that lot of boring Lefties. We'll wait till they're in the rally and rob their cars'. There's a much healthier attitude among kids today.<sup>758</sup>

The interview even ends with Jimmy Brown confidently declaring that;

Now, I don't even vote. I wouldn't vote Labour cos, basically, I think socialism is more restrictive than capitalism. For me, personally, both in terms of artistic and personal freedoms, capitalism is better.<sup>759</sup>

Though these were not necessarily points of view shared by every member of UB40, the group would later take part in the *Nelson Mandela 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute*, they do point to a wider shift. What the above quotes show is the decline of a sense of idealism in favour of a much more cynical mind-set. Furthermore it also demonstrates the way in which reggae, formally a distinctly radical genre, could gradually become a pale facsimile of itself. Far from predicting the coming 'Armageddon Times', members of one of the largest reggae bands in the world now vocally championed capitalism.

Politically, a similar shift could be seen among community campaigns within the Labour Party, which took an increasingly pragmatic approach to reach their goals. Despite the unease of some at the very proposition and the fact that they were never officially recognised within the Labour Party, the legacy of the debate over 'Black Sections' would serve as a marker for the way in which black politics in Britain would develop. In the short term, it would lead to the election of four of its strongest proponents, Diane Abbot, Paul Boateng, Bernie Grant and Keith Vaz, at the 1987 General Election. However, the longer term impact can be seen in the way the campaign for the 'Black Sections' had reshaped debates about identity. In his victory speech, Paul Boateng would make a clear allusion to

---

<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

apartheid declaring, ‘Today Brent South, tomorrow Soweto!’<sup>760</sup> In this way we can see the return of a more global black consciousness which replaced the mysticism of reggae with hard-nosed real politik.

## **Beyond The 16<sup>th</sup> Parallel**

In many ways the election of these four MPs in 1987 signalled the end of an era of relative optimism about the struggle for black liberation. The debate over ‘Black Sections’ and the political context that had birthed it had demonstrated some of the fundamental contradictions in traditional methods of campaigning. A similar process can be seen in the popular music that took up the cause of anti-apartheid. In the 1976 song ‘War’ Bob Marley had confidently declared ‘we know we shall win’, yet by the late 1980s the certainty of a genre, which had long opposed apartheid, seemed out of step with the uncertainty of the era. Despite the increased attention on events in South Africa, there was a great sense of pessimism about the fight against apartheid from some quarters. Particularly those who felt shut out by the increasingly slick international anti-apartheid campaign.

The vacuum that followed was soon to be followed by hip hop, which replaced the optimism and assuredness of reggae with cynicism and militancy. In Britain a London hip hop collective B.R.O.T.H.E.R. Movement, summarised this sea change nicely with the 1989 single ‘Beyond the 16<sup>th</sup> Parallel’. The song addressed the continuing issue of apartheid in South Africa as an affront to global black identity. Fittingly, the last lines of the song come in the form of a monologue from one of those elected to Parliament in 1987, Bernie Grant who intones;

---

<sup>760</sup> Colin Brown, ‘Today Brent South, Tomorrow Soweto: Africa Lures Boateng’, *Independent*, 3 August 2012.

As Black people we must smash the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel, as people we must unite and smash the racist South African government and free South Africa and Namibia. The ANC and SWAPO will win. AMANDLA!<sup>761</sup>

---

<sup>761</sup> B.R.O.T.H.E.R. Movement, *Beyond the 16<sup>th</sup> Parallell*, B.R.O.T.H.E.R. Movement (4<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, 12 BRW 139, 1989) [12" Single].

## **5) 'The Biggest Political Pop Show in History'**

### **Concerts as Political Events**

Whilst the story of the cultural boycott, debates around the ethics of world music and the radical politics associated with reggae have in many ways become a footnote to the wider story of anti-apartheid protest, the legacy of anti-apartheid concerts arguably made a much longer lasting impression. Events such as the two Mandela tribute concerts held at Wembley in 1988 and 1990 have retained a place in popular culture, in a marked contrast to the way in which the bitter arguments about Paul Simon's *Graceland* or tours by Johnny Clegg have faded into relative obscurity. Whilst the boycott was in practice a fairly austere and often controversial affair, that had focussed increasingly on the economic impact of the music industry, the spectacle of massive concerts provided a much more straightforward arena for popular music to engage with politics. Yet despite the lack of obvious political controversy, many of these concerts and events still offer a fascinating case study of the ways in which politics and popular music could interact with one another.

In this chapter I will explore the ways in which efforts were made to transform concerts into political spaces whereby anti-apartheid solidarity could be expressed and further action plotted. In this way we can see the ways in which the more active and participatory campaigning that had been embraced by groups such as the AAM since the early 1970s translated into a project larger than the initial boycott campaign. This is a debate that can be seen acted out in a number of

concerts and events throughout the duration of the wider campaign whereby the role and position of popular music was in constant negotiation. The move from events designed for those already involved with political campaigns and groups to internationally broadcasted concerts designed to educate and inform audiences mirrored ongoing debates about the uses of popular music as a campaigning tool. This in itself created a dialogue about how large an event could become before it lost its political message.

The 1988 *Nelson Mandela Birthday 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute* represented a unique coming together of popular music and politics at what was arguably the height of interest in the campaign against apartheid. Writing in 1990, the journalist Robin Denselow, who had compered the BBC's coverage of the event, went as far as to call the concert 'the biggest political pop show in history'.<sup>762</sup> Broadcast in its entirety on the BBC and over sixty other major television networks around the world, the concert attracted a worldwide audience of approximately 600 million viewers.<sup>763</sup> Bringing together high profile, high selling acts such as Dire Straits, Sting and Peter Gabriel, the concert represented how popular music held the potential to not only transmit a radical political message but also to take that radical message to a mass audience.

In the weeks and months that followed the Mandela concert, interest in the Anti-Apartheid Movement peaked, that resulted in the membership of the group trebling by the end of the year.<sup>764</sup> For many in the AAM the 1988 Mandela concert signalled a distinct turning point in the global campaign against apartheid. In a

---

<sup>762</sup> Robin Denselow, *When The Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.274.

<sup>763</sup> Peter Elman, 'Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute' (2013). <<http://tonyhollingsworth.com/?q=content/nelson-mandela-70th-birthday-tribute>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>764</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1474, Artists Against Apartheid, 'Pop Goes Apartheid', *Mandela: A Celebration*, 1994, p.9.

letter to the concerts promoter and organiser Tony Hollingsworth, Mike Terry, the executive secretary of the AAM would later claim that the concert ‘played a decisive role’ in the eventual freeing of Mandela.<sup>765</sup> Regardless of the extent to which this statement was an exaggeration, the sentiment reveals something of the extent to which the publicity generated by the concert was regarded by the AAM.

## **The Pre-History of the Political Concert**

Yet what makes the 1988 Mandela concert particularly interesting is the way in which it represented a shift in how the AAM interacted with concerts as tools for campaigning. Despite the popular focus on 1988 and 1990 Mandela concerts there was a long history of attempts by the AAM and other groups such as the International Defence and Aid Fund to use concerts as a space to grow awareness of apartheid in South Africa and support for those against it. As early as 1963, the AAM had helped to organise small scale folk concerts in London as a way to ‘help the people of South Africa in their struggle for fundamental human rights’.<sup>766</sup> Yet these concerts also demonstrated the same limited ambition and foresight which had affected the early days of the boycott campaign.<sup>767</sup> The programme for a July 1963 concert titled *We Sing Freedom* makes absolutely no mention of the ways in which music could be used as a political tool.<sup>768</sup> In fact there is only scant reference to the cultural boycott itself and even then only to the contemporary pressure on

---

<sup>765</sup> Elman, ‘Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute’.

<sup>766</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1460, ‘*We Sing of Freedom*’, July 1963, p.2.

<sup>767</sup> As seen in the first chapter, the early boycott campaign simply assumed that the dominance of performers unions such as Equity and the Musicians Union through the closed shop would be enough to stop any musicians from touring South Africa.

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.1463, AAM National Committee, ‘Cultural Boycott: Revised Statement’, 11 December 1982.

<sup>768</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1460, ‘*We Sing of Freedom*’, July 1963, p.3.



playwrights to ban their plays from being performed in South Africa.<sup>769</sup> Even the biographies of the musicians involved, such as Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, neglected to go into any detail about the musicians well known left wing sympathies, or any anti-apartheid activities they had taken part in. Throughout the programme there is a sense of the AAM preaching to the converted. Interestingly, an AAM membership form from the back page of the programme implores readers to ‘Help us recruit new members’, suggesting that the organisers appeared to believe most in the audience would already be members.<sup>770</sup>

The programme for a 1965 concert entitled *Strange Fruit* at the same venue, St Pancras Town Hall, contains a five page essay on ‘Folksong and Social Protest’ by Karl Dallas, then editor of *Folk Music* magazine, makes only an oblique and passing reference to music and apartheid.<sup>771</sup> Instead the essay focuses more on the legacy of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, before making barely concealed and frankly bizarre sectarian jibes at more successful folk singers such as Bob Dylan who ‘find favour currently with music publishers, record companies, disc jockeys and broadcasting authorities.’<sup>772</sup> Dallas continues his criticism of popular musicians by stating that;

The generalised protest song, so far from being better than nothing, can in fact be worse than nothing, in that it suffuses the listener in an area of comfy self-righteousness which is the very opposite of action. We belong to the goodies you can tell yourself, because the answer is blowing in the wind and the times they are a changin’<sup>773</sup>

This appeal to only pure folk as a legitimate means of political dialogue shows the distinct limitation of these early anti-apartheid concerts, pitched as they were, almost exclusively to an already existing and seemingly sealed circle of already

---

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>771</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1460, ‘*Strange Fruit*’, May 1965.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., p.8

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

sympathetic members or fellow travellers of the AAM. This can be further seen in the choice of musicians, almost exclusively artists signed to the niche folk label *Topic*, which had its roots in the Worker's Music Association; an offshoot of the Communist Party of Great Britain.<sup>774</sup> In the eyes of many in the music industry, *Topic* was regarded as 'that little red label' and, apart from modest sales of imported material by Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, the label generally performed poorly in terms of sales.<sup>775</sup>

Although by the early 1960s *Topic*'s commercial fortunes had improved and its formal links with the Worker's Music Association had been severed, the label's reputation as a niche concern remained strong. In particular its designation as 'that little red label' continued to hold sway with many and in some respects was well justified. Despite losing formal ties to the Communist Party, *Topic* soon became associated with a variety of newly emerging left wing campaigns such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, keeping the label's ethos firmly on the political left.<sup>776</sup>

This association can be seen even more clearly in many of the artists signed to *Topic*. Fairly typical was Ewan MacColl, one of *Topic*'s leading artists. MacColl a card carrying member of the CPGB till the late 1960s, who was once described as a 'austere, doctrinaire and even frightening figure' by a close friend, had written and recorded songs such as 'The Ballad of Ho Chi Minh' and even more remarkably, 'The Ballad of Stalin'.<sup>777</sup> Other *Topic* artists such as Vanessa Redgrave, who recorded one of the earliest anti-apartheid protest songs, 'Hanging on a Tree'

---

<sup>774</sup> Tim Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture* (London: Sage, 2013), p.40.

<sup>775</sup> Anon, 'Topic Records: Celebrating Over 70 Years' (2009).

<<http://www.topicrecords.co.uk/celebrating-over-70-years/>> (20 January 2014).

<sup>776</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.39.

<sup>777</sup> Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.26.

in 1963, was on the far left of the Labour Party, and would later go on to join and be a leading member of the Trotskyite, Worker's Revolutionary Party in the 1970s.<sup>778</sup> But even more importantly was the way in which *Topic*, led in part by the attitudes of artists like MacColl and Redgrave, was distinctly anti-populist, and sought to decisively distance itself from the popular music boom of the early 1960s. MacColl in particular was scathing about popular music, describing popular music as 'politically suspect' and singling out Bob Dylan in particular as 'puerile'.<sup>779</sup>

The unwillingness of these musicians, and indeed their fans, to sacrifice artistic purity by reaching out to more popular musical acts, shows the limitations of these early anti-apartheid concerts. In particular the denigration of popular musicians with some level of political consciousness, such as Dylan, as too mainstream demonstrates their desire to actively limit their own appeal. Those intimately involved with folk music in Britain, such as *Topic*, were simply not convinced of popular music's ability or willingness to communicate serious political message. This corresponds to Simon Frith's argument that British folk music constructed a discourse around notions of 'cultural necessity', which sought to link performance with everyday life, and notions of 'truth' and 'purity'.<sup>780</sup> Furthermore, as Tim Wall has argued, the British folk tradition as embraced by *Topic* and other British folk labels represented a desire to construct a cultural alternative to modern capitalism.<sup>781</sup> The sociologist Niall MacKinnon's study of the British folk scene argued that for those who associated with folk music, folk

---

<sup>778</sup> Vanessa Redgrave, 'Hanging on a Tree' (2008).  
<<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5670&t=The>> (20 January 2014).

<sup>779</sup> Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, pp.27-28.

<sup>780</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.39-40.

<sup>781</sup> Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture*, p.39.

performances, such as the anti-apartheid concerts, represented a conscious attempt to counter the 'glamour' of mainstream popular music.<sup>782</sup> This can be seen most clearly in the conventions of performance in folk clubs which blurred the lines between performer and audience by actively encouraging audience participation.<sup>783</sup> In many ways this practice mirrors the way in which groups like the AAM in the same period, also failed to reach beyond their core constituency, relying instead on traditional tactics such as rallies and the boycott campaign, which mainly drew on those already involved with campaigning.<sup>784</sup>

Yet this was an approach that was deeply out of step with the prevailing winds of youth culture. By the mid-1960s folk appeared to be an outdated and ossified form divorced from the promise of glamour and optimism of the prevailing popular music in Britain. Newly emerging pop stars were as suspicious and as dismissive of British folk musicians as folk musicians had been of artists such as Dylan. One loyal Dylan fan, John Lennon, would describe Britain's folk scene as the home of 'people with fruity voices trying to keep alive something old and dead' before declaring that, 'today's folk song is rock and roll'.<sup>785</sup> Whilst his comment was probably intended as no more than a deliberately inflammatory throwaway line, it does speak to the way in which British folk was increasingly divorced from the prevailing youth culture in Britain. In the era of the 'white heat' of a technological revolution, tales of 'Captain Swing' and 'Ned Ludd' held little resonance. This was a truth that would be well grasped by many newer emerging causes in the second half of the 1960s, campaigns against nuclear weapons, the war

---

<sup>782</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), p.112.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>784</sup> Mike Terry, 'Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign', 1996.

<<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=45>> (22 January 2014).

<sup>785</sup> John Lennon cited in Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.514.

in Vietnam and reactions to the events of 1968, would be sound tracked by rock and roll groups.

Crucially popular music was increasingly something that politically minded young people came to associate themselves with, particularly after the radicalisation of students following 1968. In his memoirs, Ken Livingstone recalled the importance of popular music by the late 1960s, noting that:

What had impact on most young people in fact were bands such as Love and Cream. We argued about the meaning of Beatles compositions and Dylan's lyrics and the songs of Jacques Brel as sung by Scott Walker.<sup>786</sup>

This quote demonstrates how much popular music had seized ground that folk music had traditionally believed itself to occupy. Yet crucially popular music also had a populist feel and tone beyond the grasp of folk. If folk aimed to replace capitalism with a return to a pastoral and Arcadian past, popular music appeared to offer a different solution: a transformation to something much more modern and glamorous. Symbolically, one of the campaigns best associated with folk music, the CND, dwindled in membership and seemed to terminally decline throughout the 1960s. Overshadowed to a large extent by events in Vietnam and also a temporary sense of calm following the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the 1963 *Partial Test Ban Treaty*, CND appeared to be increasingly irrelevant.<sup>787</sup> The same sense of fatigue and redundancy seemed to envelope the British folk scene, as it found itself increasingly facing inward. As a result of this, folk music in Britain appeared to retreat from the frontline of political activity, with some even embracing a somewhat reactionary worldview, divorced from the radicalism of *Topic* and the Worker's Music Association.

---

<sup>786</sup> Ken Livingstone, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p.81.

<sup>787</sup> Ben Pimlott, 'Trade Unions and the Second Coming of CND', in Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London: Longman, 1982), p.218.

In its place British folk revivalism appeared to embrace a degree of conservatism in form and content.<sup>788</sup> Instead of producing a modern industrial folk music in the model of Woody Guthrie, British folk fell back on the antiquated imagery of nineteenth century protest. As Simon Frith later argued, ‘Conventions in lyrics became increasingly literary’, with little space allowed for direct reflection on contemporary events.<sup>789</sup> As Wall has pointed out this was a phenomenon not only in Britain but also in America where the language of protest in folk was ‘eclipsed by the popularity of more personal songs’.<sup>790</sup> This served to push remaining folk radical such as MacColl and Leon Rosselson further to the margins of popular culture where their cynicism about the reactionary nature of popular music served to make even limited musical interventions against apartheid such as *We Sing of Freedom* and *Strange Fruit* impossible.

### **The ‘Activist’ Concert**

In many ways, the 1988 *Mandela Birthday Concert* at Wembley could not have been more different from these austere early folk concerts. The 1988 concert was designed by its organisers, Hollingsworth and Jerry Dammers, to be as populist as possible. The concert embraced the exact glamour that previous AAM concerts had explicitly shunned, and held much more in common with the traditions of popular music. This arguably reflected the ways in which groups such as the AAM and the IDAF had, from the mid-1970s onwards, also began to reach out to the wider public in a new ways.<sup>791</sup> The AAM’s promotion of a series of campaigns centred on the figure of Mandela in the early 1980s was designed to capture the imagination of

---

<sup>788</sup> The late 1960s and early 1970s would see a folk revival dominated by distinctly non-political groups such as Fairport Convention.

<sup>789</sup> Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable, 1983), p.31.

<sup>790</sup> Wall, *Studying Popular Music Culture*, p.40.

<sup>791</sup> Terry, ‘Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign’

as many as possible.<sup>792</sup> This move towards more creative campaigns that encouraged mass participation represented something of a departure away from the AAM's reliance on boycotts and letter writing campaigns.

The *Mandela Birthday Concert* represented the logical conclusion of all of the efforts to reach out to as large an audience as possible. As Hollingsworth would later freely admit 'the largest acts in the world' were 'needed if broadcasters from around the world would sign up to the project'.<sup>793</sup> This was something that Hollingsworth and Dammers had already realised in their own pioneering mix of popular music and political campaigning.<sup>794</sup> Although AAA retained the AAMs focus on the boycott as the ultimate weapon against the apartheid regime, they had also made efforts to use popular music as a means of reaching wider audiences.<sup>795</sup> Under Dammers guidance, AAA, capitalising on the success of 'Nelson Mandela', had put on concerts across Britain with the support of high profile indie bands such as The Fall and The Smiths.<sup>796</sup>

Dammer's radical DIY approach to using music for political campaigning was matched nicely by Hollingsworth extensive experience of organising large left leaning concerts. By the time of the Mandela concert, Hollingsworth had already made a name for himself by being prominently involved with a variety of high profile campaigning concerts, including concerts for CND, helping in part to organise the Glastonbury Festival from 1981 to 1987, and the Greater London

---

<sup>792</sup> Ibid.

<sup>793</sup> Elman, 'Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute'.

<sup>794</sup> Michael Goldberg, 'Special AKA: New Band, Old Causes', *Rolling Stone* (November 1984). <[http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/special-aka-new-band-old-cause#.Uvzjt\\_1\\_uwU](http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/special-aka-new-band-old-cause#.Uvzjt_1_uwU)> (9 July 2015).

<sup>795</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1474, Jerry Dammers, 'Artists Against Apartheid', 1986.

<sup>796</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM-1474, 'Artists Against Apartheid Present: The Smiths and The Fall, Live in Concert for the Anti Apartheid Movement', 1986.

Council.<sup>797</sup> It is Hollingsworth's work with the GLC in particular, organising and managing a variety of large concerts for the authority, which helped to shape his distinct approach to using concerts as campaigning events.<sup>798</sup> In many ways, the use of concerts as political events by the GLC is indicative of the way in which popular music's engagement with politics had changed. Whereas the 1960s anti-apartheid folk concerts had seemingly sought to appeal to a closed circle of already aware folk fans, there was a growing belief from some musicians and politicians of the ability of popular music to reach out to the unconverted.

Inspired in part by the legacy of concerts organised by the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism, a new generation of political leaders on the Labour left readily embraced all opportunities to engage with popular music. In many ways this was also a reflection of the emergence of the first generation of politicians who had grown up with popular music. As the music manager Peter Jenner, who amongst others, managed Billy Bragg in the early 1980s, would neatly summarise, this was the first generation of politicians for whom popular music was 'not the devil or some ghastly aberration of capitalism'.<sup>799</sup> Neil Kinnock, who would become leader of the Labour Party following the 1983 General Election defeat, had even been a member of the Gene Vincent fan club.<sup>800</sup> Billy Bragg, who would become something of a poster boy for popular left wing protest music, would later tell the journalist John Harris that this generational change helped to build strong links between popular music and politics. Indeed Kinnock had been an enthusiastic

---

<sup>797</sup> Peter Elman, 'Tony Hollingsworth: A Summary Biography' (2005).

<<http://tonyhollingsworth.com/?q=content/tony-hollingsworths-biography>> (23 January 2014).

<sup>798</sup> Ibid.

<sup>799</sup> John Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates: The 'Jobs for Change' Festivals', in Maureen Mackintosh and Hilary Wainwright (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics* (London: Verso, 1987), p.388.

<sup>800</sup> John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and The Demise of English Rock* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), p.151.



supporter of Rock Against Racism and would later drive the Red Wedge initiative, happily posing with Bragg for pictures for the *NME*.<sup>801</sup>

Also crucial was the involvement of Ken Livingstone, who had emerged as leader of the GLC in 1981. More than any other figure, Livingstone grasped the potential of the concert as a political statement, providing a platform for a variety of highly politicised concerts. The GLC, which Norman Tebbit would describe in 1984 as 'typical of [the] new modern divisive socialism', was in many ways the standard bearer for a number of Labour local authorities, which saw themselves as the front line in the fight against the Thatcher government.<sup>802</sup>

In terms of popular music and indeed culture more generally, the GLC in effect aimed to promote a radical and inclusive people's culture in opposition to what they perceived as the 'elite' culture championed by the Thatcher government.<sup>803</sup> There was a conscious effort to break with traditional provision for "elite' minority arts that in general were only consumed by the middle classes'.<sup>804</sup> Instead, there was a conscious effort to accommodate music from different cultures. In the words of Livingstone, the intention was to draw 'all the alternative forces together'.<sup>805</sup>

This saw the GLC not only embracing mainstream youth culture, but also making sincere attempts to interact with the culture of black and ethnic minority groups in the capital. This approach, forming a broad coalition of opposition against the government, could even be seen in the way that the council handled its day to day business. A former GLC employee, John Hoyland, has talked about how

---

<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

<sup>802</sup> Cited in Maureen Mackintosh and Hilary Wainwright (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics* (London: Verso, 1987), p.ix.

<sup>803</sup> Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates', pp.395-396.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid., p.395.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid., p.387.

inside County Hall, 'the visiting dignitaries and officials of former times were replaced by a cross section of Londoners, ranging from punks and rastas at one end to parties of Bangladeshi old age pensioners at the other'.<sup>806</sup> This specific mentioning of the mixing of 'punks and rastas' in itself indicative of the way in which the GLC sought to mobilise youth culture, echoing the spiritual alliance between punk and reggae suggested by Rock Against Racism and styles such as ska and two-tone. Furthermore, the rejection and, seemingly de-facto, expulsion of 'dignitaries and officials', also shows the extent of the ideological commitment to reject an 'elite' culture. This point was clearly and explicitly extended to the booking of artists for GLC events. Hollingsworth has recalled being told by the GLC to find 'something different that represents our view of the world', when looking to book acts.<sup>807</sup> Similarly, Hollingsworth has also recalled the way in which the line-up of the 1985 *Jobs for Change* festival was carefully constructed 'to be in itself... totally representative of a multi-ethnic policy'.<sup>808</sup> It was effectively, as Hoyland would later affectionately label it, 'reggae on the rates'.<sup>809</sup>

However what makes the GLC so different is the sheer ambition and scale of its interaction with popular music. Whereas many major Labour authorities, such as Coventry, Liverpool and Sheffield put money into subsidising rehearsal rooms, recording and occasional concerts, the GLC, with substantially more capital to invest, were able to organise on a much bigger scale.<sup>810</sup> As Denselow has argued, the GLC, who spent somewhere between £3 and £4 million on their largest concerts, effectively became one of the 'most powerful booking agents in the

---

<sup>806</sup> Ibid., p.386.

<sup>807</sup> Elman, 'Tony Hollingsworth: A Summary Biography'.

<sup>808</sup> Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates', p.383.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid, p.370.

<sup>810</sup> Sheffield City Council for example limited itself to subsidising the hourly rates of practice rooms Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again* (London, 2006), p.111.

world'.<sup>811</sup> In turn these events altered the way in which politics and music interacted. Livingstone's desire to draw 'all the alternative forces together', was predicated on the idea that, regardless of whether it was apolitical or not, popular music represented a 'progressive voice', which would 'play a major role' in building consciousness amongst those who attended.<sup>812</sup> Whilst the anti-apartheid folk concerts of the 1960s had also, to a certain extent, aimed to do this, specifically by recruiting to AAM, the GLC concerts took a much more open approach. Whilst the 1960s folk concerts had relied on a closed circle of politically like-minded musicians from the *Topic* label, the GLC mixed overtly political musicians such as Bragg, with less obviously political, if not sympathetic, acts such as Madness or The Smiths.<sup>813</sup>

Key to this was the involvement of Hollingsworth who, through organising concerts for the GLC, began to develop his own distinct ideas about the way in which political concerts could increase their reach. In particular, Hollingsworth became committed to the idea that the tone and tenor of campaigning concerts should be 'positive rather than negative' and that 'the message would work best if the atmosphere was "happy" and "celebratory" rather than "angry"'.<sup>814</sup> In addition to this, Hollingsworth also saw the value in growing the audience of the concerts in order to reach more people. This can be seen clearly in the way that the 1984 and 1985 *Jobs for Change* festivals were organised as huge events, drawing crowds of 150,000 and 250,000 respectively.<sup>815</sup> Interestingly this also marked a point of departure between Hollingsworth and others who had helped organise concerts for the GLC. Dick Muskett, effectively Hollingsworth's manager, would later tell

---

<sup>811</sup>Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.227.

<sup>812</sup>Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates', p.387.

<sup>813</sup>Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.227-228.

<sup>814</sup>Elman, 'Tony Hollingsworth: A Summary Biography'.

<sup>815</sup>Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, pp.227-228.

Hoyland that the GLC had turned down the chance to book Bruce Springsteen, because;

If we'd had Springsteen, or somebody of that stature, we'd have lost everything. You wouldn't have had quarter of a million or half a million, you'd have had two million there, and it really would have been unworkable. In fact, a lot of the bands we put on are bands that are almost pub bands... It's not going to be enormous surging crowds that are unpleasant to be in. It's going to be a day when you can sit down on the grass and have a picnic... That's probably much better than doing it with mega-stars. Let the mega-stars go to Wembley.<sup>816</sup>

In the event that is exactly what Hollingsworth would do with the Mandela concerts, rejecting Dammers requests to simply play a free concert on Clapham Common, a repeat of a previous AAA concert in 1986 which had drawn 250,000 music fans.<sup>817</sup> The 1986 concert, entitled *Forward to Freedom*, had been a fairly traditional activist concert. The line-up consisted of many of those such as Big Audio Dynamite, Billy Bragg and the Communards who were already well established as sympathetic to a variety of left causes.<sup>818</sup> Indeed much of the promotional material for the event had emphasised the political aspects of the event, paying greater attention to the march and rally preceding the concert. The AAM's official poster for the event was dominated by the word 'March' above a picture of Mandela, whilst the concert merited only a brief mention at the bottom of the poster.<sup>819</sup> Though a successful event by any measure the *Forward to Freedom* concert, like the GLC concerts exposed the limits of the ambitions and the pull of the traditional activist concert model. Hollingsworth's ambition for a future anti-apartheid concert would seek to reverse the relationship between popular music and

---

<sup>816</sup> Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates', p.377.

<sup>817</sup> Elman, 'Nelson Mandela 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute'.

<sup>818</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.2227, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'Festival for Freedom', 28 June 1986.

<sup>819</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.2512/1, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'March for Freedom in Namibia and South Africa' Poster, June 1986.

popular politics by embracing the potential of music as means of expressing a positive message.

In this way Hollingsworth, along with Dammers, confronted the notion that the political message and value of a concert might be diluted or weakened by the presence of 'glamour' or 'mega-stars'. In some ways this was a logical next step from the way in which concerts by the ANL, RAR and the GLC had reached out to evangelise their causes beyond the narrow confines of already converted activists. However, this leap from Clapham Common to Wembley Stadium was also symbolic of a desire to move into the political and cultural mainstream.

## **Charity Concerts**

Whilst the GLC concerts represented the ability of popular music to act as a herald for a certain form of municipal socialism, the ambition of Hollingsworth to reach such a large audience arguably reflected the influence of other contemporary large music events. Specifically the presentation and scope of the 1988 Mandela concert arguably owed a great deal to the legacy and impact of 1985's *Live Aid* concert. The choice of Wembley Stadium as a venue, the utilisation of the most famous and most popular musicians over the most politically sympathetic and the desire to broadcast the concert globally, all show a stylistic debt to *Live Aid*.

Yet this homage to the organisation of *Live Aid* once again raised the issue of whether the political message of a concert could be diluted or even completely ameliorated. *Live Aid* in particular represents such a problematic model for political concerts, because its organisers explicitly dodged any attempts to make *Live Aid* political. Bob Geldof, the chief organiser and cheerleader for *Live Aid*, went to great lengths, both at the time and ever since, to ensure to all who would listen that

*Live Aid* was a humanitarian rather than a political venture, and that 'famine is above politics'.<sup>820</sup>

Geldof and *Live Aid's* refusal to deal with the political causes and wider context of the famine in Ethiopia was marked by the events focus on financial aid, with viewers simply being asked to raise money for the victims of the famine. This is underlined by the way in which the most popular folk tale surrounding *Live Aid* revolves around Bob Geldof's supposedly uttering 'give us your fucking money' live on air.<sup>821</sup> Although Geldof did not say the line as commonly remembered in the popular imagination, the persistence of the story arguably illustrates the way in which the collective memory of *Live Aid* focused upon the events ultimate goal as raising money as an end in itself.

Indeed it is this factor that has shaped much of the criticism of *Live Aid* both at the time and retrospectively. Writing in 2010, the journalist and former Labour Party press officer, Andy McSmith argued that *Live Aid* was symbolic of the shortcomings of seemingly politically conscious popular music in the 1980s more generally.<sup>822</sup> For McSmith, *Live Aid* demonstrated the way in which mainstream popular music was better suited to less controversial or explicitly political campaigns. Whilst concerts to support the GLC or the miners' strike could be divisive the majority of people it was much easier to 'be against letting African children starve'.<sup>823</sup> That Norman Tebbit, seen by many as on the far right of Thatcher's cabinet, could praise the *Live Aid* campaign at a conference of the British Phonographic Institution as a 'triumph of international marketing', shows the way in which *Live Aid* had made the debate about poverty and inequality safe

---

<sup>820</sup>Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.244.

<sup>821</sup> Dylan Jones, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade* (London: Preface, 2013), pp.76-81.

<sup>822</sup> Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable, 2010), p.185.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid*, p.184.

for the political right.<sup>824</sup> In contrast, at the same time Tebbit was vocal, as he remains today, in his denunciation of a strategy of economic sanctions against South Africa which AAA and Dammers used their campaigns to advocate for.<sup>825</sup>

Further evidence of *Live Aid's* uneasy relationship with politics can be seen in the musicians and groups who featured at the event. Most notable was that with the exception of Paul Weller and Elvis Costello, few of the artists involved in *Live Aid* had been involved in any of the other left wing musical campaigns.<sup>826</sup> Andy Kershaw, who presented part of the BBC's coverage of *Live Aid*, dismissed the line up in his autobiography as 'another parade of the same old rock aristocracy'.<sup>827</sup> In fact the entire project drew a large degree of condemnation and criticism from musicians considered to be on the political left, many of whom would later support AAA. For example, Kershaw, who had happily championed Billy Bragg on Radio 1, was a somewhat unwilling participant. Others were much more vocal and verbally violent in their objection. Billy Bragg called into question the sincerity of *Live Aid* by labelling the event 'ego's for Ethiopia'.<sup>828</sup> Speaking about the single which effectively started the *Live Aid* campaign, 'Do They Know it's Christmas', Morrissey, frontman of The Smiths was even more scathing, telling *Time Out* magazine in 1985;

Band Aid was diabolical. Or to say that I think Bob Geldof is a nauseating character. Many people find that very unsettling, but I'll say it as loud as anyone wants me to. In the first instance the record itself was absolutely tuneless. One can have great concern for the people of Ethiopia, but it's another thing to inflict daily torture on the people of Great Britain. It was an awful record considering the mass of talent involved. And it wasn't done

---

<sup>824</sup> Neal Ullestad, 'Subversive Effects of Live Aid and 'Sun City'', *Popular Music*, 6 (1987), p.68.

<sup>825</sup> BBC, 'Nelson Mandela death: Tories 'right on South Africa'', *BBC*, 6 December 2013. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25266180>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>826</sup> Jones, *The Eighties*, p.74.

<sup>827</sup> Andy Kershaw, *No Off Switch: An Autobiography* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2011), p.169.

<sup>828</sup> McSmith, *No Such Thing As Society*, p.182.

shyly it was the most self-righteous platform ever in the history of popular music.<sup>829</sup>

Although Morrissey's judgement was somewhat severe, and certainly in keeping with a man who had the year before publicly expressed disappointment over the Provisional IRA's failure to kill Margaret Thatcher in the Brighton bombings, it does point to the way in which *Live Aid* drew disdain from those already, consciously or unconsciously, involved in using music as a political form. Indeed McSmith has gone as far as to suggest that Geldof was guilty of a degree of ignorance about the extent of politically aware popular music.<sup>830</sup> Certainly the assertion in Geldof's memoir that 'people in bands wanted to do something, become involved and active again' completely ignores almost a decades worth of politically charged musical campaigns from ANL and RAR onwards.<sup>831</sup>

Furthermore, Geldof was also criticised for the distinct lack of black artists involved with *Live Aid*. Whilst the likes of the GLC embraced not only ethnic minority performers but also gave space for the performance of styles from around the world, *Live Aid* seemed to gather a sea of pale, stale and somewhat reactionary musicians. Geldof's rather poor defence was that, 'there aren't any world famous million selling reggae bands'.<sup>832</sup> Whilst this was indeed the case, the lack of black artists performing at *Live Aid* remains striking. Whilst Michael Jackson, then hitting the peak of his career and Stevie Wonder were conspicuous in their absence, there was room in the line up for the likes of Adam Ant or indeed even Geldof's

---

<sup>829</sup> Simon Garfield, 'This Charming Man: No Sex, No Drugs, No Rock 'N' Roll and Definitely No Royalty', *Time Out*, 1985.

<sup>830</sup> McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*, p.174

<sup>831</sup> Bob Geldof and Paul Valley, *Is That It?* (New York: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987), p.218.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.219-220.



band The Boomtown Rats, whose careers were in a state of terminal decline.<sup>833</sup> Even more telling is that a number of high profile African American musicians, including Jackson, Wonder and Lionel Richie, were absent from either leg of *Live Aid*. Especially as all of them had been so involved with USA for Africa, the American equivalent to Band Aid.<sup>834</sup> Subsequently, Harvey Goldsmith, the promoter who helped Geldof organise the concert, has claimed that Stevie Wonder, well known for his political campaigning, turned down the chance to perform at *Live Aid* because of fears that he would be 'he token black on the show'.<sup>835</sup> That Goldsmith and Geldof have continued to blame black artists for not being willing to take part, once again highlights the extent to which *Live Aid* appears to have been organised in something of a bubble of ignorance about the wider appetite for political popular music.

Furthermore, whilst the mostly white line up was in itself perceived as patronising, the choice of some of the bands which did appear raises even more questions. In particular, the presence of Queen, often regarded as one of the highlights of *Live Aid*, less than a year after they had broken the cultural boycott by playing a series of concerts at Sun City, further underlines the degree of political illiteracy that surrounded Live Aid. Although Queen had apologised and accepted, under some duress, the fine from the Musicians' Union, members of the group remained unrepentant. Guitarist, Brian May told *Q* magazine in 1991; 'I'm sure a lot of people still feel we're fascist pigs because of it. Sorry, there's nothing I can do

---

<sup>833</sup> The Boomtown Rats had not had a hit since 1982 when the single 'House on Fire' Reached number 24 in the UK charts. Even the fairly supportive Dylan Jones, acknowledged that 'the only way [Geldof] could rationalise the bands appearance was by playing the hits.'

Jones, *The Eighties*, p.81.

<sup>834</sup> Daniel Brogan, 'Live Aid: A Guide To Concert To Be Heard Around World', Chicago Tribune, July 12 1985. <[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-07-12/entertainment/8502150153\\_1\\_live-aid-wls-band-aid/2](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-07-12/entertainment/8502150153_1_live-aid-wls-band-aid/2)> (9 July 2015).

<sup>835</sup> Geldof and Valley, *Is That It?*, p.280..

about that. We have totally clear consciences.’.<sup>836</sup> May also underlined his ignorance with his insistence that Queen’s trip to South Africa would;

be doing more to achieve the end of apartheid by going than by staying away. Sun City was the only place in South Africa then where a colour bar wasn't operating. The audiences were mixed, the hotel we stayed in was mixed. We were able to speak against apartheid in interviews and play with black musicians in Soweto.<sup>837</sup>

Interestingly two of the other groups who played *Live Aid*, Status Quo, who had taken the opening slot at *Live Aid* and Black Sabbath, who played the American section of *Live Aid* in Philadelphia, would also go on to break the boycott by playing concerts at Sun City in 1987. In his memoirs, Black Sabbath’s guitarist Tony Iommi would recall that he was enticed to play in South Africa by the fact that the promoters were happy to buy him a Rolls-Royce to secure the booking.<sup>838</sup> By Iommi’s own admission, playing in South Africa was conceived as just ‘another gig’, by Black Sabbath and their management.<sup>839</sup> Explaining his motivations beyond acquiring luxury cars, Iommi argued that he was guilty of a degree of ignorance:

The promoter was black and we were playing to audiences just like everywhere else, black and white. They’d never seen us and we did a couple of great shows. To me it was just another gig. Why not branch out? I never thought about the political side of it. I was blind to all that, I didn’t really know how bad it was. I just thought, I’m a musician and I want to play and get my music around wherever I can.<sup>840</sup>

A similar defence was used by Status Quo, who on return from a series of concerts at Sun City told British journalists that;

The group was satisfied that progress had been made towards equality for blacks in Sun City before they decided to appear and they don’t believe in

---

<sup>836</sup> Phil Sutcliffe, ‘Brian May: Happy and Glorious’, *Q*, March 1991.  
<<http://www.deaky.net/rain/q91E.html>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.

<sup>838</sup> Tony Iommi and T.J. Lammers, *Iron Man: My Journey Through Heaven and Hell with Black Sabbath* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), p.264.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid., p.265.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

sanctions. They bought a minibus for a local children's charity out of their earnings and will be donating all of the royalties from the sale of their records in South Africa to a home for mentally handicapped children.<sup>841</sup>

In the face of threats of picketing, boycotting and even blacklisting, not to mention being placed on the United Nations register of artists who had broken the cultural boycott of South Africa, both Sabbath and Quo belatedly apologised for their trips.<sup>842</sup> Sabbath in particular were forced to make a gruelling public apology in the face of campaigning, which forced promoters in Hungary and the Netherlands to cancel concerts.<sup>843</sup> Although only the most churlish opponents of these groups could dare to suggest that these bands were actively supporting the apartheid regime, these displays of political naivety and arguably outright greed, with groups happily pocketing enormous fees for playing Sun City, contrasts greatly with the activist tradition within popular music that stretched from the folk concerts of the 1960s through ANL and RAR to the GLC's concerts. Instead what we see is groups having an increased faith in both their individual experiences and the power of individual acts of philanthropy to ameliorate greater evils.

In this way, *Live Aid* was most at odds with the approach of the GLC. Whilst the GLC's concerts aimed to harness 'all the alternative forces' as a manifestation of the radical politics of the council, *Live Aid* represented a very different political philosophy. As the likes of McSmith and Alwyn W. Turner have both pointed out, the event's emphasis on personal charity and refusal to politicise the issue of famine reflected the contemporary debates on welfare prompted by the

---

<sup>841</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM 1467, Press Clippings, 'Quo Facing a Ban', 1987.

<sup>842</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM 1467, Karen Talbot, 'Black Sabbath and Status Quo to pay the price for collaboration with Apartheid South Africa', 11 November 1987.

<sup>843</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM 1467, Press Clippings, 'Sabs Say Sorry for Sun City', 1987.

Thatcher government's attempt to roll back the welfare state.<sup>844</sup> Lucy Robinson has argued that *Live Aid's* promotion of philanthropy and charitable giving as a solution in itself was 'in many ways the perfect popular cultural form for Thatcher's Britain'.<sup>845</sup> In particular, the role of glamorous and successful musicians as individual philanthropists was seemingly a, 're-enactment of Victorian tradition of philanthropy' and a potent challenge to the collective identity at the heart of the image of the post war welfare state.<sup>846</sup> This belief in the primacy of the individual, which Stuart Hall memorably labelled 'authoritarian populism', or indeed that 'there was no such thing as society', guided not only the economic policy but also shaped the intellectual and moral dimensions of Thatcherism.<sup>847</sup> This return to 'Victorian' ideas of charitable giving by the prosperous few rather than the safety net of the state was at the very heart of the Thatcherite political project in Britain, was not only seen as an economic measure but also as a moral measure. Thatcher herself was keen to explicitly link herself and her political philosophy to this idea of a return to 'Victorian' individualism. When asked in a 1983 television interview whether her policies were 'approval of what I would call Victorian values ', Thatcher happily answered;

Oh exactly. Very much so. Those were the values when our country became great, but not only did our country become great internationally, also so much advance was made in this country. Colossal advance, as people prospered themselves so they gave great voluntary things to the State. So many of the schools we replace now were voluntary schools, so many of the hospitals we replace were hospitals given by this great benefaction feeling that we have in Britain, even some of the prisons, the Town Halls. As our

---

<sup>844</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013), p.248-249.

<sup>845</sup> Lucy Robinson, 'Putting the Charity Back into Charity Singles: Charity Singles in Britain 1984-1995', *Contemporary British History*, 26 (2012), p.407.

<sup>846</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>847</sup> Stuart, Hall, 'Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop et al', *New Left Review*, 151 (1985), p.119.

people prospered, so they used their independence and initiative to prosper others, not compulsion by the State.<sup>848</sup>

Geldof's refusal to use the campaign to ask about the political reasons for the famine in Ethiopia and insistence on simply providing financial support fit perfectly into this notion of the duty and ability of prosperous individuals to enrich others through charity. In sharp contrast, many of the groups who fitted most comfortably into the tradition of left wing activist concerts used their music to criticise this ideological return to 'Victorian' style philanthropy. Possibly the most explicit example of this is The Housemartins 1985 anti-charity single 'Flag Day', which rubbished charity as a 'jumble sale for the poor' and fundamentally 'a waste of time'.<sup>849</sup>

In this way we can see the areas in which *Live Aid* does not belong to the radical political tradition of ANL, RAR and GLC concerts, but rather to an entirely different pre-Thatcherite and indeed anti-Thatcherite political context. For Tom Robinson, a veteran of ANL and RAR, *Live Aid* 'was less a re-imagined Woodstock or Rock Against festival' and more like 'a parish council run by the 'great men''.<sup>850</sup> Yet even more fundamentally, the failure of the 'great men' to discuss or even bring into question the politics of *Live Aid*, highlights the distinct limitations of huge concerts as an arena for political debate. Regardless of whether the artists taking part in *Live Aid* were consciously pro-Thatcherite or not, the nuances of their own, or even the events, world view were steamrolled by a series of simplistic slogans such as 'feed the world'. Even those who's politics leaned closer to the activist tradition of the ANL and RAR found themselves unable to make a dissenting left

---

<sup>848</sup> Margaret Thatcher, 'TV Interview for London Weekend Television', *Weekend World*, 16 January 1983. <<http://www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=105087>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>849</sup> Paul Heaton, Stan Cullimore, Ted Key, *Flag Day*, The Housemartins (Go! Discs, GOD7, 1985) [7" Single].

<sup>850</sup> Robinson, 'Putting the Charity Back into Charity Singles', p.407.

wing message cut through the general spectacle of *Live Aid*. As Neal Ullestead had argued in 1987 *Live Aid*, had existed 'quite solidly within the structural limits of its hegemonic framework', effectively strangling any dissenting political views.<sup>851</sup>

Only in the pages of the Irish music magazine *Hot Press* were U2 to be found meekly expressing the belief that poverty could be irradiated by governments ceasing to spend money on nuclear weapons.<sup>852</sup> Generally speaking criticisms and questions about *Live Aid* were limited to those musicians and musical institutions not involved. In this respect we can also see something of a validation of those in the GLC who had rejected the opportunity to book Springsteen amid fears that the overarching political message would be damaged by the sheer size of the event. The example of *Live Aid* is that of a political concert which at best is completely devoid of politics and at worst represented the capability of popular music to be an expression of the prevailing sense of 'popular authoritarianism'. Without even necessarily meaning to, the *Live Aid* campaign confronted the possibility of using a huge musical event as an arena for politics by producing an event that directly contrasts to the activist concert tradition that was being embraced by left wing musical campaigns.

## **Rock Against the Tories**

Though *Live Aid* represented an attempt to harness music as a means of providing financial charity, which Clement Atlee had called 'a cold grey loveless thing' and which The Housemartins had latterly termed a 'waste of time', the notion of the concert as a tool for activists retained currency well into the 1980s. By the time of *Live Aid*, this notion, perhaps the greatest legacy of the ANL and RAR, that popular

---

<sup>851</sup> Neal Ullestead, 'Subversive Effects of Live Aid and 'Sun City'', *Popular Music*, 6 (1987), p.68.

<sup>852</sup> U2 interview cited in Colm Regan, 'Live Aid: A Challenge to the "Experts"?' *Tro'caire Development Review* (1986), p.70.

music could not only be a medium for radical messages but could also act as part of an independent radical campaign in itself, had been well established. Following RAR, which had in many ways ceased to function following the 1979 General Election, many left wing campaigns and bodies such as CND, the 1984 Miners' Strike, the GLC and most obviously AAM's own AAA, had continued to show great faith in the ability of popular music to act as both a campaigning tool and as a means to actively educate and inform audiences. By the mid-1980s, the intention of figures such as Livingstone to draw 'all the alternative forces together' appeared to have produced a radical consensus around the need to use popular music to oppose Thatcherism. As Billy Bragg, a leading figure in this consensus would retrospectively identify,

We all kept meeting at benefit gigs for Nicaragua or whatever. The same faces kept showing up, like Jimmy Somerville, Weller, Tom Robinson – and we all shared similar ideals. Those were the darkest days of the Thatcherite '80s, as well. There was a feeling that something had to be done.<sup>853</sup>

This feeling that 'something had to be done', would eventually constitute itself in the Red Wedge campaign, which in many ways represented the ultimate coming together of political music and party politics in Britain, a feat that had seemed previously unachievable and, arguably mostly through the experience of Red Wedge, is yet to have been repeated by any party in subsequent British elections.

Red Wedge was in many ways the logical conclusion of both over half a decade of political popular music campaigns in Britain and the highly polarised nature of British society following the ending of the post war consensus. To many in the Labour Party, such as Kinnock and Livingstone, who had form through both involvement in ANL/RAR concerts and the GLC, the prospect of engaging with

---

<sup>853</sup> Johnny Black, 'Red Wedge', *Q* March 1996.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/red-wedge>> (9 July 2015).

popular music in the style of those previous campaigns seemed obvious. Talking to *Smash Hits*, a music journal aimed at a younger audience than either the *NME* or *Melody Maker*, Kinnock had emphasised Red Wedge's collaborative nature, noting that;

We're not interested in using performers just to add razzmatazz to politics. That is not what we want and Billy and the boys would not let us get away with it. The people involved in Red Wedge are serious about their politics and they want to make sure that Labour listens to young people and responds to what they say.<sup>854</sup>

In a, fairly typically, more outspoken statement, Livingstone appeared to express genuine excitement for the project;

This is a break through. We've never had pop music in politics which is part of the reason why the Labour Party has been dead from the neck up. What I hope is that if you bring youth into politics those politics will change. The question is, why should politics be boring? The answer is because most politicians are boring. That's what these people are here to change.<sup>855</sup>

What these statements reveal is the way in which a wide range of sometimes conflicting ideas and aspiration had been loaded onto the Red Wedge project. It was to be a 'serious' political event, yet it would avoid being 'boring'. It would avoid 'razmatazz', yet 'Billy and the boys' were clearly meant to inject a sense of glamour into Labour politics. It was under these contradictions that Red Wedge would play out and provide the best case study of the limits of the political popular music campaign.

These contradictions also demonstrated the extremely difficult political context which Red Wedge was born into. Though both supportive of the campaign, the different approaches and points of view of Kinnock and Livingstone were symbolic of the wider divides in the Labour Party. Under Kinnock's leadership,

---

<sup>854</sup> William Shaw, 'Red Wedge', *Smash Hits*, 12 February 1986.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/red-wedge-2>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>855</sup> Ibid.



Labour had embarked on a lengthy and often painful process of modernisation.<sup>856</sup> Stylistically, this involved a smartening up of Labour's image and presentation, symbolised best by the adoption of the rose as Labour's main emblem.<sup>857</sup> The appointment of Peter Mandelson, a former producer for London Weekend Television, as Director of Communications, also ensured a new emphasis on presentation and message discipline.<sup>858</sup> Under Mandelson Labour's communications department came to be regarded as a 'ruthlessly efficient propaganda machine'.<sup>859</sup> Red Wedge fit perfectly into this new presentational emphasis. As Kinnock would later identify, the project was 'essential to identify the Labour Party with freshness fun and modern ideas and attitudes when it had been seen as stale outdated and out of touch'.<sup>860</sup> In addition to Red Wedge, this new direction also led to a series of increasingly glitzy party political broadcasts and high profile events. This was an approach whole heartedly supported by Kinnock, who would be the sole focus of one broadcast directed by the director of *Chariots of Fire*, Hugh Hudson, commonly known as 'Kinnock: The Movie'.<sup>861</sup>

However the process of modernisation also entailed a showdown between the Labour leadership and far left elements within the Party, who were widely perceived as making Labour appear unelectable. Key among these groups were the Militant Tendency, the myopic revolutionary entryist Trotskyist organisation, which by 1985 boasted somewhere in the region of 8,000 members, and effectively controlled the youth section, the Labour Party Young Socialists, who had even had

---

<sup>856</sup> On Kinnock's election as leader, Labour was at 24% in opinion polls. 'Enter the Rose', *The Wilderness Years* (BBC Two, 1995).

<sup>857</sup> Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London, 2010), p.375.

<sup>858</sup> Andy McSmith, *Faces of Labour: The Inside Story: Your Guide to Labour Old and New* (London: Verso, 1997), p.295.

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>860</sup> Andrew Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners: Billy Bragg* (London: Virgin Books, 2007), p.161.

<sup>861</sup> 'Enter the Rose', *The Wilderness Years*.

two MPs elected to parliament in the 1983 General Election on Labour tickets.<sup>862</sup>

At the 1985 Labour Party Conference, with the excesses of the Militant-influenced Liverpool city council providing heavy embarrassment to the party, Kinnock would famously seize an opportunity to denounce Militant and other sections of the far left for ‘playing politics with people’s jobs and people’s services’.<sup>863</sup>

This was a move that helped to garner a great deal of acclaim for Kinnock and greatly increased Labour’s standing in the opinion polls. However for those such as Livingstone, though by no means a friend of Militant, this aspect of modernisation represented a timidity, which was also distinctly uncomfortable with confronting Thatcherism on a non-electoral basis. Labelled ‘the most hated man in Britain’ by the *Sun* newspaper on a number of occasions, often for his outspoken beliefs and policy positions, Livingstone and by extension the GLC were frequently held up as a pillar of opposition to Thatcherism.<sup>864</sup> When Thatcher’s Government began to make moves to abolish the GLC after their victory in 1983, Livingstone found himself ‘determined to inflict the maximum damage on her government.’<sup>865</sup> This one comment more than any other reveals the gap between Livingstone and Kinnock. Whilst Kinnock chased respectability and popularity, Livingstone wanted to harness radicalism to directly confront the government even in the face of media scorn.<sup>866</sup> Livingstone’s use of concerts at the GLC had been pointed and ideological, concerts were not simply PR and recruiting exercises but also a chance to radicalise all involved.<sup>867</sup>

---

<sup>862</sup> McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p.285.

<sup>863</sup> ‘Enter the Rose’, *The Wilderness Years*.

<sup>864</sup> Livingstone, *You Can’t Say That*, p.224.

<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>867</sup> Hoyland, ‘Reggae on the Rates’, pp.379-381.

It was in between these competing views about the future that Red Wedge would be formed. However there was also a great deal of agreement from most sections about the potential of Red Wedge to increase Labour's electoral fortunes. Arguably what had made the project so appealing in the first instance was the desire to recapture the youth vote, which was one of the many casualties of Labour's kamikaze 1983 election campaign.<sup>868</sup>

Yet despite the fact that the Labour Party was now ran by a generation who had grown up with popular music and appreciated its potency, Red Wedge still represented a collision between two different worlds and cultures. However, at first it appeared that there was ideologically much more to bind the Labour Party and its MPs to Red Wedge's musicians than there was to divide them. Crucially, there was a strong anti-Thatcher and pro-Labour consensus at the heart of much popular culture. This was in part a lasting legacy of the ANL and RAR campaign which had taken the unprecedented step of calling for a Labour vote in 1979. It was as Denselow would later acknowledge, 'something that had once seemed impossible', to see a political popular music campaign directly attach itself to an established political party.<sup>869</sup> This was a consensus that was well served by the majority of the mainstream youth music press, such as the *NME*, *Melody Maker* and even the distinctly less serious *Smash Hits*, happily served and bought into this consensus. Despite the suggestions of some that the early 1980s saw a retreat from political ideas at the higher reaches of the charts, a number of famous musicians were happy to express their affiliation to the Labour Party in the pages of music journals.

This included surprising additions such as Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet and Phil Oakey of the Human League, both of whom were not always regarded as

---

<sup>868</sup> Pugh, *Speak For Britain*, pp.370-373.

<sup>869</sup> Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, p.203.

particularly political artists. In a 1982 interview with *The Face*, Phil Oakey was happy to tell Lesley White, that he was ‘most annoyed’ by ‘people that vote for the SDP’ and that;

I always wanted to join the Labour Party, I never quite got around to it. It seems like their ideas are the sensible ones: get things improving, but do it so you don't offend too many people, because things will get better and they are getting better all the time.<sup>870</sup>

Similar sentiments would be echoed by Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet, who despite often being portrayed as the very model of a Thatcherite New Romantic group remained an enthusiastic supporter of the Labour Party. This was a support that was frequently and clearly articulated in interviews. Both Kemp and the bands manager, Steve Dagger were happy to tell the press that they were card-carrying members of the Labour Party.<sup>871</sup> When asked about his participation in Red Wedge, Kemp, the former pupil of Trevor Huddleston, told *Smash Hits* in 1986;

I think the Labour Party is all we have, and if you don't like it, change it. *Live Aid* showed the power of people. It's no good just complaining in your beer about things, you've got to come out and say it.<sup>872</sup>

What this shows clearly is that despite the protestations of Denselow and others that synth pop groups and new romantics represented merely, ‘an obsession with style narcissism and clothes’ there remained a predominantly left wing consensus in British popular music.

That this consensus seemed so all encompassing in publications like the NME can be seen in a few rogue reviews by the journalists. For example, a December 1985 review by Barry Hoskyns of the Fine Young Cannibals transformed into an extended diatribe on what he called ‘the ultimate '80s NME

---

<sup>870</sup> Lesley White, ‘*The Face* Interview: Phil Oakey’, *The Face*, December 1982. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-ifacei-interview-phil-oakey>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>871</sup> Chris Salewicz, ‘Spandau Ballet: Revolt Into Style’, *The Face*, August 1981. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/spandau-ballet-a-revolt-into-style>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>872</sup> Shaw, ‘Red Wedge’.

band – suitable politics with just the right Red Wedge quotient of style... an inverse status quo of conformity and GLC right-on-ness'.<sup>873</sup> Perhaps though, the ultimate evidence of this pro-Labour popular music consensus can be found in the cautionary tale of Gary Numan, who, with some justification, believes that his music career was curtailed because he had openly supported Thatcher and the Conservative Party.<sup>874</sup> In a somewhat more sympathetic 1988 *NME* interview, Steven Wells would suggest that Numan's outspoken political views had made him 'the most hated man in pop'.<sup>875</sup>

In many ways, Red Wedge is best understood through the musicians who were most active in it. In particular, through the experience of Billy Bragg, who came to be regarded by many as the lynchpin of the entire Red Wedge campaign. As one biographer, the journalist Andrew Collins, has argued, Bragg's political convictions were the product of a great deal of soul searching and were 'anything but an overnight conversion'.<sup>876</sup> Indeed, for somebody so strongly associated with protest music, the majority of Bragg's early output had concerned the personal rather than the political.<sup>877</sup> Yet despite the assertion in an early song that Bragg did not 'want to change the world' and that he was 'just looking for another girl', Bragg was keenly interested in politics on something of a political journey. This journey had begun in earnest after seeing The Clash perform at the Hackney Rock

---

<sup>873</sup> Barney Hoskyns, 'Wedged Down Their Throat: Fine Young Cannibals', *NME*, 14 December 1985. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/wedged-down-the-throat-i-fine-young-cannibals>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>874</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum, 2010), p.63.

<sup>875</sup> Steven Wells, 'Gary Numan: "I'd love to carry a gun. If some nutter comes at me with a gun I'd like to be able to shoot him."', *NME*, 15 October 1988. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/gary-numan-id-love-to-carry-a-gun-if-some-nutter-comes-at-me-with-a-gun-id-like-to-be-able-to-shoot-him>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>876</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, p.147.

<sup>877</sup> From his first two albums only 'To Have and To Have Not', which talked about unemployment, on *Life's a Riot With Spy vs. Spy* and 'It Say's Here' and 'Island of No Return', dealing with the Tabloid press and the Falklands War respectively, from *Brewing up With Billy Bragg*, could be regarded as particularly political

Against Racism Carnival and had further developed during a short time in the British Army. However more than any other event, it would be the Miners' Strike in 1984 where Bragg's opinions were consolidated and further developed by his involvement in a number of benefit concerts.<sup>878</sup> It was through these concerts that Bragg was inspired to write 'Between The Wars', his most strikingly political song to date. Released in February 1985, as the Miners' Strike drew to a close, the song has been described by Bragg as a 'hymn to the welfare state'.<sup>879</sup> The songs evocation of 'the green field and the factory floor' and calls for 'sweet moderation' to deliver 'a living wage' and 'a path from cradle to grave', chimed perfectly with the prevailing anti-Thatcher/pro-Labour consensus.<sup>880</sup>

It was also in this period that Bragg, like most left leaning musicians, was already a willing participant in most political popular music campaigns, first came into contact with the Labour Party. Almost immediately after the release of the *Between the Wars EP*, Bragg happily participated in an LPYS campaign against the Youth Training Scheme, which led to an eight date 'Jobs For Youth' tour sponsored by the Labour Party.<sup>881</sup> In many ways the 'Jobs For Youth' tour presented a blueprint for the later Red Wedge tour, with musical performances interspersed with lively discussions between the audience and MPs on political issues.<sup>882</sup>

However, Bragg's direct involvement with Labour would also unintentionally bring him into the developing conflict at the heart of Kinnock's modernisation project. After playing at the LPYS conference in April of the same year, Bragg was 'summoned to have beer with the Militant Tendency'.<sup>883</sup> After

---

<sup>878</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable For Miners*, p.160.

<sup>879</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.515.

<sup>880</sup> Billy Bragg, *Between The Wars*, Billy Bragg (Go! Discs, AGOEP1, 1985) [7" EP].

<sup>881</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, p.160.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid.

<sup>883</sup> Ibid., p.162.

being lectured about the transitional demands Bragg simply told the group that if he ‘believed in everything they believed in I would join the Socialist Workers Party, but I don’t, so I’m sorry I can’t be your singer-songwriter’.<sup>884</sup> By doing so, Bragg had effectively positioned himself, even if unconsciously, with Kinnock, a move that would later have a direct impact on Red Wedge.

Buoyed by the success of the ‘Youth for Jobs’ tour, Labour spent the summer of 1985 drawing up plans for what would come to be Red Wedge. Officially launched on the 21 November 1985, with a reception in the House of Commons, Red Wedge was mainly envisioned as an all-star package tour that would travel the country, distributing pamphlets and to and even allowing concert-goers to quiz and meet MP’s. In action this proved to be something of a fine balance, with many of those involved asserting a degree of autonomy from Labour, which caused a degree of consternation for some supportive MPs. As Red Wedge’s press officer would tell *Q* in 1996, MPs had;

expected the tour to be a gong-banging exercise for the Labour Party but we were much more ambivalent about it. So you had these very stolid long-term party members suddenly finding themselves confronted by young people who wanted to talk about the environment, gay rights, minorities, and to get all these things on the Labour Party agenda.<sup>885</sup>

This however was a dispute that had been hardwired into the very DNA of Red Wedge during the numerous planning meetings of the summer of 1985. Officially Red Wedge’s line, as articulated by Bragg’s manager Peter Jenner, was,

Red Wedge is committed to supporting the Labour Party and returning a Labour government. But we’re not saying “Vote Labour”, we’re saying you should become politically involved.<sup>886</sup>

As Spencer would later reflect, Red Wedge ‘was a great idea, but a confused idea... no one could quite decide what it was about’.<sup>887</sup>

---

<sup>884</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, pp.517-518

<sup>885</sup> Black, ‘Red Wedge’

<sup>886</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.222.

This was a point painfully obvious to those deeply sympathetic yet unwilling to become involved. Talking to Len Brown in a December 1986 interview for the NME, Paul Heaton from the Housemartins outlined his misgivings;

The time has come to present a united front, yeah I'd go with Red Wedge on that, but not a hypocritical united front, not a trendy united front. It should be a proper Red Wedge, a Red Wedge which wants to do away with the Royal Family, to nationalise the music industry, to withdraw imperialism from Northern Ireland once and for all. Clear policies. But you see they're in a difficult position because they use Labour Party headquarters – which means that if there was any revolutionary input it'd probably be kicked out – and they aren't really a Wedge, they're a wodge of varying ideas, people from the Right wing of the Labour Party through to communist and revolutionary sympathisers. They need to clarify what they stand for. I don't like having a dig at fellow socialists because I can't dig enough at the Tories, but to be honest we're now finding more political allegiance with bands like The Redskins and Easterhouse.<sup>888</sup>

Interestingly Brown's response once again shows evidence of the popular music press's pro-Labour stance, noting his belief that it was, 'depressing that they [The Housemartins and Red Wedge] can't work together. After all, the birth of Red Wedge was the major political development in music in 1986.'<sup>889</sup> Yet despite Heaton's criticism of Red Wedge's ideological confusion, it was probably exactly this degree of confusion which also allowed Red Wedge to engage a number of wavering artists, most notably Paul Weller, who felt less convinced about being linked to Labour.

Similarly on tour, this confusion about what exactly Red Wedge did was to some degree an asset, with the greater emphasis placed on broader political involvement drawing larger crowds than local Labour members. The first Red Wedge tour was on the most part well received. The *Smash Hits* review of the tour

---

<sup>887</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, p.171.

<sup>888</sup> Len Brown, 'The Housemartins: If You Love Jesus', *NME*, 20 December 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-housemartins-if-you-love-jesus>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*



by William Shaw remarked that it was ‘a tour that's not all champagne binges, wrecked hotel rooms and the usual pop nonsense... No, this is pop with a political conscience. And it's not boring!!’, highlighting that the explicitly political content, such as appearances by MPs did not dominate proceedings.<sup>890</sup> The success of the tour was further aided by its format, an all-star package tour, which combined regular slots by Bragg, Weller’s Style Council, Junior Giscombe and The Communards amongst others, with high profile one-off slots by groups such as The Smiths and Gary Kemp from Spandau Ballet.<sup>891</sup> The execution was in the words of Shaw for *Smash Hits* ‘absolutely flipping marvellous’.<sup>892</sup> This enthusiasm for the format was also shared by the participating musicians who would later praise the camaraderie and solidarity of the tour.<sup>893</sup>

However the January 1986 tour and Red Wedge events in general were increasingly blighted by reflections of wider conflicts in the Labour Party. In particular the Militant Tendency, who had been spurned by Bragg the previous years, appeared to take it upon themselves to disrupt Red Wedge, mainly as they believed that it represented an attempt by Kinnock to displace their dominance of the Labour youth section the LPYS. Red Wedge’s press officer Spencer would later accuse Militant of attempting to systematically sabotage Red Wedge’s events, in order to discredit both the scheme and the Kinnock leadership.<sup>894</sup> Practically this sabotage often amounted to LPYS members making bold claims about high profile Red Wedge members playing at the smaller day events between concerts, so as to create disillusionment in the wider project. Bragg would later tell *Q that*:

---

<sup>890</sup> Shaw, ‘Red Wedge’.

<sup>891</sup> Ibid.

<sup>892</sup> Ibid.

<sup>893</sup> Ibid.

<sup>894</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, pp.162-163.

Right through the tour we had constant problems with the extremists, like our friends in the Young Socialists. They would make promises, without bothering to tell us, that Red Wedge acts would perform in various halls and community centres and so on in the afternoons before the gigs. Then, at the last minute, we'd find out and have to rush off to save their bacon.<sup>895</sup>

Yet whilst Red Wedge found itself the target of attacks from Militant it was not necessarily welcomed by other sections of the party. To some of the old right embittered by the experience of Militant, any youth involvement was treated as highly suspicious. One local party in Derby rejected the offer of a Red Wedge concert with the claim that 'we don't have any young people here'.<sup>896</sup> As Bragg would later explain to Lynskey, 'The old guard thought we were entryists and the LPYS thought we were being used by the Leadership to water them down! It was bonkers.'<sup>897</sup> More than anything, it was most likely this combination of the difficulty of navigating the party line and the experience of the ongoing conflicts about modernisation which alienated and disillusioned many of those who had taken part in Red Wedge. Following the election defeat in 1987 Red Wedge was quietly put to rest, with nothing quite like it ever being attempted since.

Due to both Labour's failure in the 1987 election and the legacy of the campaigns chaotic nature, the conventional wisdom remains that Red Wedge was something of a failure. In his right leaning *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s*, Graham Stewart argued that despite the 'sound and fury' of the Red Wedge campaign, the overall defeat of Labour 'dealt a withering blow to pop as a medium of political protest'.<sup>898</sup> Dylan Jones, the Conservative supporting editor of *GQ*, would give a slightly more scabrous verdict, arguing that 'in terms of content Red

---

<sup>895</sup> Black, 'Red Wedge'.

<sup>896</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.518.

<sup>897</sup> Ibid.

<sup>898</sup> Graham Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p.298.

Wedge was an enervating experience.’<sup>899</sup> This was an opinion shared by Bob Geldof, who when asked his opinion on Red Wedge cruelly suggested that it was ‘a joke’ and that ‘It was so old hat it may as well have been in the Twenties with no conception of what modern politics was about.’<sup>900</sup>

Although these were rich words from somebody who had displayed a degree of political illiteracy and who’s ultimate answer to complex global political problems was nineteenth century philanthropism, this consensus has in part even been adopted those much more sympathetic to the project. The *Guardian* journalist John Harris has suggested that Red Wedge was ultimately undermined by a growing ‘apolitical’ cultural climate under Thatcherism, many bands that followed would seek to avoid Thatcherism rather than confront it.<sup>901</sup> For at least one of Red Wedge’s key participants this cultural apathy was partly the fault of the campaign itself. In a 1993 interview with Matt Snow in *Q*, Paul Weller explained how the experience of Red Wedge had dissuaded him from ever becoming involved in political activism, noting that;

Before the Wedge, the Style Council had done a lot independently, raised a lot of money in benefits. But after the Wedge we were so disillusioned it all stopped. We were totally cynical about all of it.<sup>902</sup>

For Weller, who was never a wholly comfortable participant in an explicitly party political campaign, the main culprit in the demise of political pop in Britain was the Labour Party itself. In the same Snow interview, Weller had expressed a sense in which himself and others had been swept up with the general desire to do something, arguing that;

---

<sup>899</sup> Jones, *The Eighties*, p.61.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.153.

<sup>902</sup> Mat Snow, ‘Paul Weller: We All Make Mistakes’, *Q*, October 1993.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-weller-we-all-make-mistakes>> (9 July 2015)

The Wedge thing escalated from when a lot of artists, including us, were doing benefits and someone decided to pull it all together. I felt uneasy about getting involved but I did, and did the best I could. I thought we were exploited by the Labour Party. Around that time they wound down the Young Socialists and said that the Wedge would take the Y.S.s' place. But it shouldn't have been down to us. I felt we were manipulated. And on the road we met a lot of local Labour Party people who I just didn't believe in; they were more showbiz than the people on the tour bus. I've got a real mistrust for a lot of politicians, and I wouldn't get involved again. I should have stuck with my original instincts.<sup>903</sup>

Here we can see the way in which Red Wedge was also a victim to the changing nature of the Labour Party in this period. The competing visions of figures such as Kinnock and Livingstone for both Red Wedge and Labour more generally as well as the Party's wider shift to the centre had placed great pressure on the project. The suggestion that Red Wedge was meant to form the nucleus of a new Labour youth section to replace the LPYS, the symbolic standard bearers of the excesses of the far left, reveals the difficult territory in which Red Wedge was placed. Caught between so many competing visions and demands, the artists involved with Red Wedge faced pressure unique among political popular music campaigns.

However there were some who remained much more positive about their experience of Red Wedge. Reflecting on the campaign in 1996 Bragg, suggested that;

There was a feeling immediately afterward that we hadn't actually achieved very much, but now, in retrospect, I think we did. We hadn't set out to change the world, just to create some common ground between young people and the Labour Party. I think that's what we did.<sup>904</sup>

Indeed there is evidence to suggest that Red Wedge helped to foster a significant swing to Labour from young voters. Post-election analysis by Bryan Gould, who had planned Labour's campaign, had suggested a marked rise in support with 18-24

---

<sup>903</sup> Ibid.

<sup>904</sup> Black, 'Red Wedge'.

year olds, with a particularly strong female showing.<sup>905</sup> Red Wedge was judged to be, ‘an important part of our efforts to reach the young.’<sup>906</sup> Furthermore as Pugh has argued, Red Wedge was an important part of a strong campaign which had important ramifications for Labour’s long term success, marginalising the impact of the Liberal/SDP Alliance and increasing support in other areas.<sup>907</sup> Ultimately, though Red Wedge’s success may have been fairly modest and its progress chaotic, it demonstrated the way in which popular music could in the most difficult circumstances, inspire political action.

## The 1988 Mandela Concert

Despite the shortcomings of Red Wedge, its scale and intention helped to shape the next stage of the musical campaign against apartheid. Due to the high crossover between Red Wedge and AAA, Dammers and others could not have failed to understand the lessons of the Red Wedge experience, but also to have grasped the potential that associated glamour had to create excitement around an issue. It was after all, ‘star’ cameos by big name acts such as The Smiths and Spandau Ballet’s Gary Kemp which had generated the most momentum around the first tour.<sup>908</sup> A momentum that subsequent tours, mostly consisting of Billy Bragg could not quite match.<sup>909</sup> Even Bragg would later recognise the importance of taking ‘the Spandau Ballets of this world with us’ and building as broad a coalition of support as possible.<sup>910</sup> In this sense AAA were also informed by the impact of the 1985 *Live*

---

<sup>905</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.231.

<sup>906</sup> Ibid.

<sup>907</sup> Pugh, *Speak For Britain!*, pp.380-381.

<sup>908</sup> Shaw, ‘Red Wedge’.

<sup>909</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, p.228.

<sup>910</sup> Tom Hibbert, ‘Who The Hell Does Billy Bragg Think He Is?’, *Q*, October 1991.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/who-the-hell-does-billy-bragg-think-he-is>> (9 July 2015).

*Aid* concert, which for all it lacked in political content, was able to tap into the public consciousness.

In this way we can see how the intentions for what became the 1988 *Nelson Mandela Birthday 70th Birthday Tribute* was caught between these two models of a political popular music concert, the collectivist left wing activist concert and the individualist right wing musical spectacle. Certainly it seems hard to believe that *Live Aid* had not in part influenced the presentation and sheer size of the 1988 *Mandela Concert*. Writing, prior to the Mandela concert in 1987, Ullestad had already discussed the way in which *Live Aid*, despite the limitations of the actual event, still provided the scope to use popular music as a vehicle for political debate or even collective action.<sup>911</sup> Interestingly, the example Ullestad uses to advance this claim, is that of the American Artist's United Against Apartheid 'Sun City' campaign, which Ullestad saw as having the potential to take a political message far beyond the 'tentative steps of *Live Aid*'.<sup>912</sup> Ultimately Ullestad concludes that the model established by *Live Aid* was not inherently constrained by the prevailing new-right ideology, but rather remained open to radicalism depending on how self-conscious those involved were.<sup>913</sup>

Certainly the political potential of a huge musical event is something that Hollingsworth also recognised whilst organising 1988 *Mandela Birthday Concert*. Yet whilst *Live Aid* had centred itself on the notion of charitable giving, Hollingsworth and Dammers organised the 1988 *Mandela Birthday Concert* around a tangible and controversial political platform.

---

<sup>911</sup> Ullestad, 'Subversive Effects of Live Aid and 'Sun City'', pp.72-73.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., p.75.

That the event had such a clear political message was certainly not lost on those who sought to criticise the event. Speaking in Parliament prior to the concert, the Conservative MP for Luton North, John Carlisle argued that;

Nelson Mandela is a terrorist... Why is this concert going ahead and being sponsored by the BBC?... I suggest that it is outside the BBC's charter that such an unashamedly political organisation should obtain 10 hours of time and receive the considerable sums of money from the public purse and the licence payers that the concert will generate.<sup>914</sup>

Carlisle, who was the chair of the British-South Africa Parliamentary Group, would, along with twenty-three other Conservative MPs, later table a parliamentary motion criticising the BBC for giving ‘publicity to a movement that encourages the African National Congress in its terrorist activities’.<sup>915</sup>

Admittedly, Carlisle arguably represented something of the lunatic fringe of the Conservative party. His lobbying for the apartheid state was so transparent that the Labour MP and anti-apartheid campaigner Peter Hain recalls that Carlisle was derided as ‘the Member for Pretoria Central’ by many in the Commons.<sup>916</sup> Yet Carlisle's opposition indicates the way in which the public debate about apartheid had continued to approach Mandela and the ANC with some caution. Until 1986 the British government had officially refused to make ‘contact’ with the ANC for ‘as long as the nationalist organization continued to use violence to achieve its political objectives’.<sup>917</sup> Even after officials from the Foreign Office had begun dialogue with the ANC, there still seemed to be a reluctance on the part of most ministers in the Thatcher government to associate themselves too closely with the ANC despite the growing shift towards sanctions, in part forced by Britain's membership the

---

<sup>914</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Adjournment, 6<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 134, cols 364-366.

<sup>915</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.507.

<sup>916</sup> Peter Hain, *Inside Out* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2012), p.175.

<sup>917</sup> Jan Raath. ‘Britain talks to ANC in sudden switch of policy.’, *The Times*, 5 February 1986.

European Economic Community and the Commonwealth.<sup>918</sup> This was certainly an opinion shared by the critics of the Thatcher government's policy of 'constructive engagement' with the apartheid state under P.W. Botha. In a letter to the then Foreign Minister Sir Geoffrey Howe, Oliver Tambo the ANC president in exile made clear the ANC's belief that 'the statements repeatedly made by the British Prime Minister have, to say the least, been wholly unhelpful', before asking for 'closer contact' with the British government.<sup>919</sup> Although by the time of the Mandela concert in June 1988, Howe had moved to a position of keeping open 'channels of communication with representatives of black opposition organizations', offhand comments such as Thatcher describing the ANC as a 'terrorist organization' at a 1987 Commonwealth summit in Vancouver demonstrated the limits of support for the ANC from the British government.<sup>920</sup> In fact a Downing Street source consulted by *The Times* journalist Nicholas Beeston was still happy to state that 'there are many strands to the ANC including terrorist ones' in the light of Howe's recognition of the ANC.<sup>921</sup>

---

<sup>918</sup> Philip Webster, 'Sanctions shift signalled by Howe.', *The Times*, 17 July 1986.

<sup>919</sup> Oliver Tambo, 'Letter from Oliver Tambo to Sir Geoffrey Howe, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs', 21 July 1986.  
<<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4490>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>920</sup> Nicholas Beeston. 'Howe backs ANC link.', *The Times*, 18 May 1988.

<sup>921</sup> More recent work has revealed the actual situation was more complicated. In particular the 2015 memoirs of Robin Renwick, ambassador to South Africa from 1987 to 1991 show that there was by the late 1980s a great deal of pressure put on Pretoria by the Thatcher government to bring about the end of apartheid. However the covert nature of these exhortations meant that groups such as the AAM were completely unaware of their existence. The government's apparent hostility towards the AAM, particularly on the issue of sanctions, led the organisation to conclude that the government had a similar approach to the ANC. The AAM's Annual Report for 1989-1990 noted that the AAM believed itself to be in 'direct conflict' with the government and was critical of the government's 'attitude to the African National Congress; its view as to what constitutes a climate conducive to negotiations; and its position in relation to the ANC's goal of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.'

Robin Renwick, *The End of Apartheid: The Diary of a Revolution* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015).

Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.13, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 'Annual Report 1989-1990', October 1990, p.10.



Whilst these views were continually opposed by a myriad of different campaigning groups, the very existence of public voices expressing concern about the ANC and Mandela, helps to illustrate the charged political context that the 1988 *Mandela Concert* was organised amidst. That the concert remained controversial in some quarters, can also be seen in the way, the American broadcasters of the concert, the Rupert Murdoch owned Fox TV, were so uncomfortable with the politics of the concert that they heavily censored their broadcast, in what was regarded by many as a ‘significantly de-radicalised version’ of the concert.<sup>922</sup> Fox even went as far as to rename the event as Freedomfest in an effort to further obscure the political cause at the heart of the concert.<sup>923</sup> This is in marked contrast to the way in which American networks had been eager to accommodate the transmission of the *Live Aid*, just three years before.

However it is exactly the fact that the *Mandela Concert* was so political that makes the concert distinct from *Live Aid*. As Denselow would later summarise, the main difference between the two events was that the *Mandela Tribute* concert was focussed on ‘raising consciousness rather than just money.’<sup>924</sup> This is a theme that Hollingsworth himself would later champion when describing the motivations behind the *Mandela Tribute*. Specifically Hollingsworth would claim that the concert had four distinct aims; ‘fund raising, consciousness raising... artist activism... and agitation’.<sup>925</sup>

Even bowdlerised as *Freedomfest*, the 1988 *Mandela Tribute* represented a distinct set of political ideas, which were owed to the direct involvement of the AAM and ANC. Crucially it was also a political message distinctly out of tune

---

<sup>922</sup> Elman, ‘Nelson Mandela 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute’.

<sup>923</sup> Ibid.

<sup>924</sup> Denselow, *When The Music’s Over*, pp.279-280.

<sup>925</sup> Elman, ‘Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute’.

with the prevailing orthodoxy of 'constructive engagement', which possibly had even more currency in Reagan's America than Thatcher's Britain.

In this way, the *Mandela Tribute* demonstrated that it was possible to mobilise popular music as an international spectacle and not necessarily lose the political message of an event. In an echo of the debates that had been had at the GLC, many remained concerned that the concert's political message would be lost among the media hype. Simple Minds, contemplated pulling out of the concert which they believed was no longer political enough. In a later interview Hollingsworth recalled that Simple Minds argued that;

“There’s not enough grit in it. Whitney Houston and George Michael shouldn’t be there”. They were worried about their image. I told them there was plenty of grit in the show – they themselves, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Aswad, Sly and Robbie and others. I told them Whitney and George, who were extremely popular at the time, were there to broaden the audience. We needed their pop audience – the audience that was not so likely to know about Mandela and apartheid. We needed to get across the message to them.” Simple Minds accepted the argument. The two big US stars were important in getting US television to take the show.<sup>926</sup>

In a surreal twist of fate, that went unmentioned on in the weeks following the concert the headliners, Dire Straits were joined on stage by Eric Clapton, who had inadvertently prompted the formation of Rock Against Racism and much of the musical radicalism of the late 1970s and early 1980s. This fact was apparently concealed from Dammers until the day of the concert.<sup>927</sup>

That Clapton would ever have been allowed to play at Red Wedge is unthinkable. Asked in 1992 about whether he would allow Clapton to play a Red Wedge type event, Bragg was emphatic that Clapton still had questions to answer about his 1976 outburst.<sup>928</sup> Clapton's involvement with the *Nelson Mandela 70<sup>th</sup>*

---

<sup>926</sup> Ibid.

<sup>927</sup> Stephen Dalton, 'Revolution Rock', *Vox*, June 1993.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/revolution-rock>> (9 July 2015).

<sup>928</sup> Hibbert, 'Who The Hell Does Billy Bragg Think He Is?.'

*Birthday Tribute* attests to the differences between this event and Red Wedge, and also to a wider shift on the political left. If *Live Aid* represented an individualistic Thatcherite view of the world and Red Wedge had called for 'a fairer saner' society closer to post-war collectivist ideals, the 1988 *Mandela* concert seemed to recognise a politics of the future, a third way between the competing individualist and collectivist narratives.

## The Last Political Concert

The ultimate success of political concerts can be judged by the official follow up to 1988 *Mandela Tribute*, the 1990 *International Tribute for a Free South Africa* concert. The triumphant and celebratory tone of this 1990 concert was symbolic of the way in which the wider campaign against apartheid was beginning to change. Superficially it shared many of the same characteristics as 1988 concert. It was once again a massive success, attracting a host of big name artists, selling out Wembley Stadium and like the first concert was broadcast to over sixty different countries.<sup>929</sup> However the 1990 *Tribute for a Free South Africa* also represented something of a departure from the 1988 *Mandela Tribute*. Points of controversy that dogged the planning of the 1988 concerts, such as the inclusion of Johnny Clegg and any other South African artists, were resolved with the British MU being pressured into accepting Clegg by the ANC.<sup>930</sup> Furthermore the exiled musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba who had, partly as a result of having toured with Simon on his *Graceland*, played only a minor role in the 1988 concert, were elevated to privileged positions on the bill.<sup>931</sup> The 1990 concert was advertised and presented as an end point in and of itself, with the very presence of the recently

<sup>929</sup> Elman, 'Nelson Mandela 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute'.

<sup>930</sup> Denselow, *When The Music's Over*, p.285.

<sup>931</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284.

released Mandela signifying the expectation that the days of the apartheid regime were numbered.

This was reflected the way in which the AAM and the wider anti-apartheid movement was beginning to shut itself down. By 1990 the AAM's literature began to talk of 'the last mile', predicting with confidence the imminent fall of apartheid, in a way that would have seemed unthinkable even after the 1988 concert at Wembley.<sup>932</sup> In the context of a rapidly changing situation, the AAM were increasingly unsure of the future of the campaign against apartheid and of the organisations itself.<sup>933</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, who had himself been a member of the AAM, has argued that the events of 1990 had surprised the AAM and effectively 'caught it on the hop'.<sup>934</sup> In addition to this existential crisis about the purpose of the AAM, there were also a series of real practical problems generated by the changing events. As an internal document from 1992 acknowledged, the AAM was not only failing to recruit new members but was beginning to lose members and subsequently found itself constrained by dwindling finances.<sup>935</sup> For all those who had rushed to join the AAM following the 1988 *Mandela Tribute*, only the most dedicated remained members.

In this context of a widespread sense of triumph against apartheid and the subsequent declining interest in South Africa, the large scale political concerts of the 1980s quickly became a thing of the past. Tied to the strategy of the cultural boycott, which had been so thoroughly undermined by both the events after the 1988 Wembley concert and the growing market for world music, groups such as

---

<sup>932</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.923, AAM National Committee, 'Campaigning Perspectives for 1991', January 1991.

<sup>933</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain, A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005), p.441.

<sup>934</sup> *Ibid.*, p.443.

<sup>935</sup> Bod, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MSS.AAM.2376, AAM National Committee, 'Changes and Challenges', 23 March 1992.

AAA, who had been at the forefront of organising these events struggled to confront the changing landscape. Furthermore many of those who had been at the forefront of AAA, such as Jerry Dammers, were simply worn out by almost a decade of having to organise a political campaign.<sup>936</sup> Practically speaking the AAM, who found itself having to dramatically reduce its operations in the early 1990s, were no longer able to provide practical support for the organisation of cultural events. From 1992 onwards the few concerts and cultural events which were organised were done so by the ANC Mission in London, who remained keen to use culture as a means of promoting their vision of a new South Africa.<sup>937</sup>

In spite of the ANC Missions desire to continue hosting cultural events, the concerts continued to shrink in both size and in terms of the attention they garnered from the wider media. Crucially there was also a steady decline in the numbers of musicians willing to take part in the concerts. The extent of the problem is demonstrated well in a letter circulated to the general secretaries of Trade Unions, many of whom were still regularly contributing large sums of money to the ANC, in April 1992, which revealed the difficulty the ANC Mission was having in persuading people to play at an *ANC 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert*.<sup>938</sup> Already by the time of the letter the concert had been moved from the Crystal Palace Bowl to the much smaller Brixton Academy because of the ANC Mission's failure to secure an artist who would be able to generate the ticket sales to fill Crystal Palace.<sup>939</sup> Only two years after selling 74,000 tickets for Wembley for a second time, apartheid was no longer the draw it once was for concerned musicians or music fans.

---

<sup>936</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.506.

<sup>937</sup> Shirli Gilbert, 'Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Struggle Against Apartheid', *Journal of South African Studies*, 33:2 (2007), p.432.

<sup>938</sup> MRC, Archive of the Fire Brigades Union, MSS.346.3.221, Mendi Msimang, 'ANC 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations', 28 April 1992.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*

In the decades that followed, political concerts, some of which were organised by Hollingsworth would come to increasingly resemble *Live Aid* rather than the 1988 *Mandela Tribute*. The most obvious and bizarre example of which was the direct spiritual successor to *Live Aid*, 2005s *Live 8* concert, which somehow managed to be even less political than its predecessor, with another parade of, mostly white, musicians simply asking the countries of the G8 to cancel Third World debt.<sup>940</sup> Meanwhile those who had been so reviled for breaking the boycott in the 1980s appeared to be absolved of all sins. Just how much the fault lines of 1988 had disappeared can be seen in the unremarked appearance of Queen on stage at 2000's 46664 concerts, a South African concert designed to increase awareness of AIDS named in honour of Mandela. That May, who had joined in an ensemble version of 'Nelson Mandela' at the conclusion of the 4664 concerts, was still largely untroubled by serious political analysis can be seen in a series of inane comments from 2012, where he compared the struggle against apartheid with the campaign against the badger cull in 2012.<sup>941</sup>

Arguably one of the most illuminating examples of the redundancy of the concert as a political event in Britain can be found in Labour's ill-fated 1992 Sheffield Rally. To an extent the spiritual successor to the Red Wedge campaign's attempt to inject glamour into an election campaign, The Sheffield Rally, held just over a week before the 1992 General Election, was in the words of Turner a 'whopping American style extravaganza' designed to show Labour's readiness for government.<sup>942</sup> Consisting of a mixture of endorsements from supportive

---

<sup>940</sup> Jones, *The Eighties*, pp.390-394.

<sup>941</sup> Brian May, 'Vegetarian rock stars don't vote Tory. I did. But I'll never vote for Cameron after his bloody badger cull', *Daily Mail*, 25 August 2012. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2193595/Brian-May-I-voted-Tory-But-Ill-vote-Cameron-bloody-badger-cull.html>> (25 September 2015).

<sup>942</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013), p.34.

celebrities, performances by popular musicians such as Simply Red and Nigel Kennedy and brass bands, the Sheffield Rally was a vast amplification of Red Wedge, except with an even greater emphasis on glamour. Whereas Red Wedge had asked awkward questions about the policies and directions of Labour, the rally offered a much more comforting and unquestioning reflected glory. Notably, there was no turn by Billy Bragg, who had quietly left Labour the previous year.<sup>943</sup> However in a mirror image of the rough and ready nature of Red Wedge, the Sheffield Rally would enter history not for its sterility but for its one moment of chaos. In an unscripted outburst prior to his speech, Neil Kinnock had reacted to the adulation of the crowd by bellowing ‘WELL ALRIGHT’ repeatedly to the crowd. Interestingly when later quizzed as to why he had done it, Kinnock suggested that;

I walked into the Sheffield Arena with 10,000 people there... And like a rock n roll singer said 'Well. Alright.' To my surprise the audience shouted back. So I did it again. It didn't mean anything. It's what Johnny Cash does. It's what The Everley Brothers used to do.<sup>944</sup>

This one example more than any other gives some insight into the continuing gulf between politics and popular music. Kinnock’s unconscious evocation of rock and roll and Red Wedge’s attempts to mix popular music and politics both fell short because of a perceived gap between the two worlds. As Simon Reynolds had written in a *Melody Maker* review of Red Wedge, politics, and in particular party politics was something of a ‘fundamental antagonism to pop’s intolerant utopianism’.<sup>945</sup>

---

<sup>943</sup> Ibid.

<sup>944</sup> Andrew Porter, ‘Revealed: Neil Kinnock thought he was Johnny Cash at Sheffield Rally’ *Telegraph*, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2009.

[http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewporter/9403287/Revealed\\_Neil\\_Kinnock\\_thought\\_he\\_was\\_Johnny\\_Cash\\_at\\_Sheffield\\_Rally/](http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewporter/9403287/Revealed_Neil_Kinnock_thought_he_was_Johnny_Cash_at_Sheffield_Rally/) (9 July 2015).

<sup>945</sup> Jones, *The Eighties*, p.61.

Yet it is this seeming failure of political concerts in general to leave a lasting legacy that makes the success of the 1988 *Nelson Mandela Birthday 70th Birthday Tribute* even more marked. By virtue of its unique cause and of a time period that allowed a collision of ideas and ideologies to play out in relative harmony. Although it is tempting to view as the beginning of the end of political popular music campaigns it also stands as a beacon of just what can be achieved through using popular music to raise awareness. Though none have yet been able to capture it's unique political potency the message and power of the *Nelson Mandela Birthday 70th Birthday Tribute* has stood the test of time.



## **6) Epilogue: ‘Worker’s Playtime’**

### **“Mixing pop and Politics/They ask me what the use is”**

There was an undeniable lull in explicitly political popular music following the second Mandela concert. This dearth of popular political music was in many ways long trailed by the increasing of its key proponents. This was particularly clear in the international musical campaign against apartheid. For those heavily involved in AAA, the need to campaign and follow, what was essentially, the ANC’s strict line on issues such as the *Graceland* boycott, not to mention being involved in other campaign tours for the likes of CND and Red Wedge, meant that creating music became secondary to campaigning. As Jerry Dammers later admitted; ‘It’s fair to say I lost the thread of my career. I didn’t spend any time making music.’<sup>946</sup> More than anything the way in which so many musicians had become burnt out by balancing their careers with political activism demonstrates the greatest shortcoming of the political popular music campaign model that had been inherited from Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League.

This sense of campaigning fatigue is best demonstrated by the post Red Wedge career of Billy Bragg. Bragg, in common with many other Red Wedge stalwarts, would later tell the journalist Andrew Collins that he had taken the general election ‘really personally’.<sup>947</sup> Although Bragg was not immediately disillusioned about the Labour Party or politics in general, Red Wedge’s slow yet inevitable death, heralded by the departure of Paul Weller, who certainly was disillusioned, does demonstrate a dearth of enthusiasm for campaigns such as Red

---

<sup>946</sup> Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.507.

<sup>947</sup> Andrew Collins, *Still Suitable For Miners: Billy Bragg* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), p.189.

Wedge.<sup>948</sup> This can be seen clearly in the way that post Red Wedge, Bragg's output shifted away from the heavily political content of 1986s *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry*.<sup>949</sup> This can be clearly seen on Bragg's first album following the 1987 election defeat, September 1988s *Worker's Playtime* which contained only one explicitly political song. It was a collections which Collins would dub 'a fine cycle of injured love songs. With a bit of politics'.<sup>950</sup> The album's title itself, via its evocation of 'Playtime' could be interpreted as a signposting to Bragg taking a break from political activity.

Furthermore the one song on *Worker's Playtime* which is explicitly political, 'Waiting For The Great Leap Forward', is grounded in a sense of weariness and political fatigue. Despite Bragg's earnest pleas that you can be 'Active with the activists/ Or sleeping with the sleepers', he is only able to offer 'embarrassment and my usual excuses' to the question 'Mixing Pop and Politics he asks me what the use is?'.<sup>951</sup> This admission of 'embarrassment' at the very nature and indeed usefulness of political popular music contrasts greatly with the way in which Bragg's output during the Red Wedge era had been so assured of its political message. Much of this could be put down to sheer fatigue through political activity. In a later interview with John Harris, Bragg would admit that; 'We'd had so much politics for so long that everyone was fucking sick of it... People didn't want to talk about Politics in the NME any more- they wanted to talk about "Let's just get

---

<sup>948</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable For Miners*, pp.190-192.

<sup>949</sup> With the notable exception of 1990s stopgap album *The Internationale* which was made up of covers of traditional left wing songs such as 'The Red Flag', 'The Internationale' and a version of William Blake's 'Jerusalem'.

*The Internationale*, Billy Bragg (Utility, UTIL 11 CD, 1990) [CD Album].

<sup>950</sup> Collins, *Still Suitable For Miners*, p.200.

<sup>951</sup> John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p.153.

out of it”.<sup>952</sup> Bragg would continue to make highly political recordings, yet they would also sit alongside highly personal songs on his albums. Perhaps the lasting effect of this period of soul searching was that Bragg gradually drifted away from party politics, quietly leaving the Labour Party in 1991 and committing to a series of much broader political campaigns around electoral reform.<sup>953</sup>

In addition to the depletion of the energies and resolve of the key advocates of political popular music, there was also the challenge of a distinct shift in popular music, away from right on social realism towards a new sense of escapism. In the words of the right leaning Graham Stewart, popular music, post the failure of Red Wedge, ‘duly went in search of a new focus and in doing so rediscovered hedonism and, in its wake, the embrace of some unrepentantly pro-free-market capitalism.’<sup>954</sup> This latter point is also supported by Alwyn Turner, who has suggested that by the end of the 1980s, the freewheeling radicalism and anarchic nature of independent record labels had been replaced by an entrepreneurial spirit that mirrored the ‘Thatcherite agenda’.<sup>955</sup> If the beginning of the 1980s had been sound tracked by Jerry Dammers *2-Tone* label, then a work of another Coventry native, and former Specials manager, Pete Waterman would neatly symbolise the end. Alongside collaborators Mike Stock and Matt Aitken, Waterman would pioneer a new breed of optimistic and saccharine pop music performed. This mood of optimism and rebellion through hedonism even extended to black British music,

---

<sup>952</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>953</sup> Bragg’s post Red Wedge politics are neatly summarised in his 2006 book *The Progressive Patriot* which champions among other things, a positive and progressive English national identity, reform to voting and the House of Lords.

Billy Bragg, *The Progressive Patriot: A Search for Belonging* (London: Bantam, 2006).

<sup>954</sup> Graham Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p.298.

<sup>955</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum, 2013), pp.378-379.

previously a consistent site of radical ideas and outlooks with a new wave of sound systems guided by the maxim that ‘if you’re not dancing, fuck off’.<sup>956</sup>

It was this channelling of optimism and as others have suggested hedonism that was key to the success of Stock, Aitken and Waterman’s products. However in this they were not alone. This optimism and hedonism appeared to be a universal theme even capturing the sort of bands that featured in the formerly assuredly left wing *NME*. In this post Red Wedge climate of apolitical culture, rising stars such as The Stone Roses and the Happy Mondays represented opposition to Thatcherism through escapism. The idea, seemingly borrowed from dance music and the rise of Acid House which had a large influence on both indie bands and the likes of Stock, Aitken and Waterman, that music could provide, if only temporarily an escape from reality. It was an approach that could be summed up neatly by the Happy Mondays 1987 single ‘24 Hour Party People’, which suggested that constant hedonism represented the only escape from ordinary life, to ‘press the pause of the self-destruct’.<sup>957</sup> In this new climate the dour nature of party politics was clearly out of fashion. Harris would later somewhat uncharitably describe the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays as being more interested in ‘drug consumption, pulling funny faces and sweating over the cut of one’s trousers than bringing down the Tories’.<sup>958</sup> Yet in this they were more participants in a general rejection of politics rather than instigators. Even those who had entertained outspoken political views began to adopt this hedonistic outlook. Bobby Gillespie, the lead singer of Primal Scream and son of the leading Scottish Trade Union leader and former Labour by-election

---

<sup>956</sup> Lloyd Bradley, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2013), pp.323-325.

<sup>957</sup> Shaun Ryder, Paul Ryder, Mark Day, Paul Davis, Gary Whelan, *24 Hour Party People*, Happy Mondays (Factory FAC 192, 1987) [12” Single].

<sup>958</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.153.

candidate Robert Gillespie, would flirt with the notion of hedonism as an escape from the everyday.<sup>959</sup> Primal Scream's 1990 single 'Loaded' was built around a sample from the 1960s B-Movie, *The Wild Angels*, which defiantly declared that;

We wanna be free/  
 We wanna be free to do what we wanna do/  
 And we wanna get loaded/ And we wanna have a good time/  
 That's what we're gonna do<sup>960</sup>

Though Gillespie would continue to express left wing opinions in interviews and even in some songs, Primal Scream would continue to be defined to the notion of rebellion through hedonistic abandon of 'Loaded' and its parent album *Screamadelica*. It was an album that in the words of Paul Lester at *Melody Maker* appeared to point 'towards a gleaming polycultural future'.<sup>961</sup> Significantly though this was a future with little or no space for a party political line. As Bragg would later acknowledged, the new spirit in popular music was "Let's just get out of it".<sup>962</sup>

This would be clearly reflected in the refusal to engage with politics in any meaningful way. Despite displaying some left wing sympathies, The Stone Roses perfectly encapsulated this idea of escapism and hedonism as a means to escape Thatcherism. When asked by Simon Reynolds for a 1989 interview in the *Melody Maker* whether they had political ideas, guitarist John Squire and frontman Ian Brown replied;

John: "Yeah, everybody should be a millionaire. Everybody on the planet."

---

<sup>959</sup> Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, p.596.

<sup>960</sup> Bobby Gillespie, Andrew Innes, Robert Young, *Loaded*, Primal Scream (Creation, CRE 070, 1990) [7" Single].

<sup>961</sup> Paul Lester, 'SCREAMADULLICA – Primal Scream: Give Out But Don't Give Up (Creation)', *Melody Maker*, 26 March 1994. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/screamadullica--primal-scream-igive-out-but-dont-give-upi-creation>> (6 August 2015).

<sup>962</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.153.

Ian: "You can't help it, can you? We drive into London and we just turn off the motorway and we see people living under a bridge. What's it all about?"<sup>963</sup>

When pushed further about the group's politics, Brown could only offer,

We're all anti-royalist, anti-patriarch. Cos it's 1989. Time to get real. When the ravens leave The Tower, England shall fall, they say. We want to be there shooting the ravens.<sup>964</sup>

This was a sentiment that would inform one of the debut albums only explicitly political songs, the republican themed 'Elizabeth my Dear'. However the bands political approach could probably be best summed up by the almost throwaway assertion that 'Every member of Parliament trips on glue' on the album track '(Song For My) Sugar Spun Sister'.<sup>965</sup>

Whereas Billy Bragg and Red Wedge had happily posed in Parliament with Neil Kinnock and had even taken MPs on tour with them, this one throwaway line demonstrates well the growing cynicism about parliament as a means of bringing about change. Even more notable was that the way in which The Stone Roses viewed themselves as powerless to influence politics. In the same *Melody Maker* interview with Reynolds, Squire argued that

we don't see pop music as a way of changing things anyway. That's not what we set out to do with the group at all. If we really wanted to change the world we'd be involved in politics.<sup>966</sup>

To Billy Bragg in his Red Wedge heyday, popular music had seemed an ideal way to communicate a political message, just two years on from the 1987 General Election musicians like Squire saw it as impossible to bridge the gap between the two worlds. Whilst less than a decade previously even Phil Oakey of the Human

---

<sup>963</sup> Simon Reynolds, 'The Stone Roses: Shooting from the Lip', *Melody Maker*, 3 June 1989. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-stone-roses-shooting-from-the-lip>> (6 August 2015).

<sup>964</sup> Ibid.

<sup>965</sup> Ian Brown and John Squire, '(Song for My) Sugar Spun Sister', *The Stone Roses*, The Stone Roses (Silvertone, ORE LP 502, 1989) [LP Album].

<sup>966</sup> Simon Reynolds, 'The Stone Roses: Shooting from the Lip'.

League had been confident in expressing a party political preference, the inability of a band, who self-identified themselves as on the left of the political spectrum, to engage with politics speaks volumes of the growing disconnect between politics and popular music.

Perhaps the greatest example of this disconnect from all politics rather than the immediate and the personal can be seen on the Happy Monday's 1990 single 'Step On'. A cover of the white South African émigré John Kongos 1971 hit 'He's Gonna Step On You Again', the Happy Monday's strip the songs from its original anti-apartheid context and placed it into the context of Britain's new apolitical and hedonistic popular music consensus. Whilst Kongos' original had, through its use of sampled African drums and air of menace, invoked both the brutality of Apartheid South Africa and defiance to it, the Happy Mondays cover seemed to evoke nothing greater than the desire to dance. It was what Jack Barron in the *NME* would later call, 'a very liberal adaptation' of the John Kongos original.<sup>967</sup> Explaining the group's motivation to record the songs in a 1990 interview in *Q*, the groups frontman Shaun Ryder betrayed his lack of engagement and possibly ignorance, admitting that;

We didn't know 'Step On' – the record company just sent us a tape of songs they suggested we might want to cover. As soon as we heard the bongo drums that start the song, we said, Right, we'll do that; we'll sample the bongos and everything else, and I'll sing about three lines off it, and we've done it in about two seconds.<sup>968</sup>

When asked about a cover of another John Kongos, the even more explicitly anti-apartheid 'Tokoloshe Man', Ryder was only able to offer the insight that, 'John

---

<sup>967</sup> Jack Barron, 'Happy Mondays: Homage to Catatonia', *NME*, 31 March 1990. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/happy-mondays-homage-to-catatonia>> (6 August 2015).

<sup>968</sup> Matt Snow, 'Happy Monday's Shaun Ryder', *Q*, December 1990. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/happy-mondays-shaun-ryder>> (6 August 2015)

Kongos is supposed to be a bit of a twat, I think.’<sup>969</sup> That this could happen in the context of the publicity surrounding the two Mandela concerts at Wembley is in itself an indictment of the failure of the musical campaign against apartheid in particular.

Yet for their ignorance and seeming unwillingness to engage the Happy Mondays were not alone. Bragg found it hard to get even socially conscious groups to take part in any sort of political concert. When in 1991 he tried to convince Blur to take part in a concert against the first Gulf War, Bragg found that the group ‘didn’t want to know’.<sup>970</sup> It is noticeable that none of this new wave of bands were involved with any anti-apartheid concerts.

Yet in Britain this disconnect and growing de-politicisation was also apparent in much of popular culture and even politics itself. In a 2012 essay for the *New Statesman* Turner argued that this represented the sum total of a generation born in the early 1960s ‘whose adult political experience was of a seemingly permanent Conservative government’.<sup>971</sup> For this generation Turner argued that youth culture had played a key role in shaping political opinion and outlook and that crucially,

youth culture itself had ... polarised, split between a shiny, apolitical, Live Aid mainstream on the one side and on the other a dissident, disgruntled minority, espousing the causes of alternative comedy, identity politics and an increasingly emasculated indie guitar music that only rarely made any impression on the outside world.<sup>972</sup>

This was a sense that would be amplified by Labour’s failure in the 1992 General Election. A failure that to many had seemed even more implausible due to Labour’s

---

<sup>969</sup> Ibid.

<sup>970</sup> Matt Snow, ‘Happy Monday’s Shaun Ryder’.

<sup>971</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, ‘Things Can Only Get Bitter: The Lost Generation of 1992’, *New Statesman*, 19 September 2012, p.20.

<sup>972</sup> Ibid., pp.20-21.



lead in the opinion polls and the sense that John Major was an easy target. Indeed there had been in many quarters a sense of inevitability and great optimism about the prospect of the end of Conservative government. Some had even convinced themselves it was inevitable. In his memoir *Reasons to be Cheerful* Mark Steel, then a member of the Socialist Worker's Party, described how he was so sure of a Conservative defeat that by 1991 he had started to count down the months till the election.<sup>973</sup> Turner argued that as 'the anti-Thatcher generation' moved into middle age 'the demoralising kick of the election seemed to vindicate' a sense in which the political right was unassailable.<sup>974</sup> Reflecting on his night spent watching the Election result come in at Croydon Labour Club, which he describes as 'the most awful experience of my life', Steel suggested that;

...defeat never takes people to the left. The dominant conclusion is always that we were asking too much. All the statistics, all the evidence, all the reports that showed the main reason that people didn't vote Labour was that they didn't believe the promises were ignored for the convenient theory that 'we were still too left wing.'<sup>975</sup>

In Turner's opinion the result of the 1992 General Election represented 'the moment when a generation gave up on politics and turned instead to capturing the commanding heights of popular culture'.<sup>976</sup>

The result of the 1992 election result also seemed to mark the final death of any link between popular music and party politics, which in turn hampered any attempts to construct political popular music campaigns. Under John Smith, elected shortly after the 1992 defeat, Labour moved to regard 'glitz spectacle and

---

<sup>973</sup> Mark Steel, *Reasons to Be Cheerful: From Punk to New Labour Through the Eyes of a Dedicated Troublemaker* (London: Scribner, 2001), p.219.

<sup>974</sup> Turner, 'Things Can Only Get Bitter', pp.21-22.

<sup>975</sup> Mark Steel, *Reasons to Be Cheerful*, p.224.

<sup>976</sup> Turner, 'Things Can Only Get Bitter', p.20.

trendiness' as 'ballot-box poison'.<sup>977</sup> This was in many ways a symbolic move, by 1992 the legacy of Red Wedge and the growing disconnect between popular musicians and party politics meant that few had flocked to publicly support Labour during 1992. The most famous musician at the Sheffield Rally had been Mick Hucknall from Simply Red, a group that whilst enormously commercially successful, were far away from the glamour, credibility and energy that Red Wedge had injected into the 1987 campaign.<sup>978</sup>

For their part the Conservatives continued to avoid any close contact with popular music or culture in general. Indeed as British popular culture seemed to be in full bloom following 1992, Major's government seemed to descend into nostalgic self-parody. Major would use his speech to the 1993 Conservative Party Conference to call for 'The old values - neighbourliness, decency, courtesy'.<sup>979</sup> Though this approach, commonly referred to as 'Back to Basics', would soon become mired in increasingly comical scandals, where it became apparent that decency as defined in the speech, was not a value shared by some Tory MPs. The speech's emphasis on law and order continued to guide the policy direction of Major's government. This would lead to the bizarre collision between the government and dance music with the 1994 *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act* which sought to clampdown on raves, which the Act claimed to be 'predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats'.<sup>980</sup> For his part Major would demonstrate the gulf between the Conservatism and popular culture

---

<sup>977</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.70.

<sup>978</sup> Paul Morley, 'Punk in Manchester, Oh How We Laughed', NME, 15 February 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/punk-in-manchester-oh-how-we-laughed>> (6 August 2015).

<sup>979</sup> John Major Speech to 1993 Conservative Party Conference. <<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1096.html>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>980</sup> *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994*

perfectly by nominating the unrepentant boycott breaker Cliff Richard for a Knighthood in 1995.<sup>981</sup>

## ‘Da Struggle Kontinues’

Yet if popular music was becoming increasingly disconnected from politics in Britain in the early 1990s, events in South Africa were giving popular music an increasing significance and potency. In 1989 Jonas Gwanga, the leader of the ANC’s Amandla group had confidently stated that;

there has developed a vibrant people’s music, rooted in South African realities and steeped in democratic values, in opposition to the racist music associated with the apartheid regime.<sup>982</sup>

With the release of Mandela in 1990 this statement seemed particularly pertinent as many sought to use popular music to express their opinions on the changing political landscape. Ingrid Bianca Byerly would later argue that it was at this point that music had seemingly ‘been proclaimed the medium of the people... through artistic contribution and public reception’.<sup>983</sup> Free from the excesses of censorship that had thwarted many black South African musicians in the preceding decades, there was an explosion of popular music which lived up to Gwanga’s description of a ‘vibrant people’s music. Symbolically this period also saw the return of, if only on record many of South Africa’s exiled musicians. Hugh Masekela would appear on Chicoco Twala 1993 release ‘Peace in Our Land’ which also assembled a number of other exiled musicians and many of South Africa’s top recording artists.<sup>984</sup>

---

<sup>981</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013), p.125.

<sup>982</sup> Jonas Gwanga and Fulco van Aurich, ‘The Melody of Freedom’ in Willem Campscreur and Joost Divendal, *Culture in Another South Africa* (London: Zed, 1989), p.157.

<sup>983</sup> Ingrid Bianca Byerly, ‘Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa’, *Ethnomusicology*, 42 (1998), p.35.

<sup>984</sup> *Ibid.*

This optimistic view of music as a progressive force was a view shared by many of those who wrote about the role of popular music in the campaign against apartheid. Writing in 1990, Denselow, had argued that the anti-apartheid campaign represented a ‘key element’ in history of political popular music.<sup>985</sup> Popular music, which at the heart of apartheid had been a secretive and covert weapon for political change, appeared to now function as a tribune of hope in an increasingly open South Africa. Releases such as Brenda Fassie’s 1990 single ‘Black President’ seemed to signal radical change. Confidently hailing the newly released Mandela, ‘in a popular song, freely played on radio stations across South Africa demonstrated just how popular music in South Africa had become an accepted arena for political discussion.

Whilst it is tempting to accept this account of an increasingly confident and forward looking popular music as an end point in itself, further developments in South African popular music point towards continued conflict. In particular the development of a distinctive South African hip-hop scene in the 1990s poses some interesting questions about the role of music in the new South Africa that musicians such as Clegg had spent so long imagining in song. In many ways the growth of hip-hop in South Africa has parallels with the development of jazz and reggae in South Africa. For black South African musicians the emerging stars of hip hop were role models of success in a white world in the same way that jazz and reggae musicians had been to previous generations in the townships.<sup>986</sup> Furthermore hip-hop like reggae before it, was also embraced by black urban youth because hip-hop lyrics often made reference to apartheid in South Africa as an example of an

---

<sup>985</sup> Robin Denselow, *When the Music’s Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.202.

<sup>986</sup> Rob Boffard, ‘Hip Hop, Who Represents South Africa’, *Guardian*, 17 February 2011. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/feb/17/south-african-hip-hop-the-future>> (7 November 2015).

international struggle for black liberation. In the lyrics of hip-hop groups such as Public Enemy and A Tribe Called Quest, reference was made to figures such as Biko and Mandela as well as linking the progress of civil rights in America with the fight against apartheid in South Africa.<sup>987</sup> In addition to this, the themes of urban violence present in the hip hop sub-genre gangster rap appealed greatly to disenfranchised urban youths in areas such as Cape Town.<sup>988</sup>

As a result hip hop in South Africa developed as both highly political, but at the same time reflected a disenfranchised urban youth which could even be critical of the progress made by the ANC in government.<sup>989</sup> South Africa's most successful hip hop group Prophets of Da City made frequent references to the continuation of problems such as poverty and lingering racial and tribal division in South Africa in their music.<sup>990</sup> The groups 1993 single 'Understand Where I'm Coming From', dismissed the ability of politicians or the rich to bring about change to end poverty in the townships before in the final verse declaring;

A new South Africa,  
I don't believe them,  
I see them with a new scheme, a scam,  
To set up the black man.<sup>991</sup>

An even clearer example of this can be found in their 1995 single 'Da Struggle Kontinues' which questions the lack of real change by questioning whether the new

---

<sup>987</sup> See

Chuck D, Eric, 'Vietnam' Sadler and Hank Shocklee, 'Show 'Em Whatcha Got', *It Takes a Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back*, Public Enemy (Def Jam Recordings, 527 358-2, 1988) [LP Album].  
D, Eric, 'Vietnam' Sadler and Keith Shocklee, 'Who Stole the Soul', *Fear of a Black Planet*, Public Enemy (Def Jam, 466281 2, 1990) [CD Album].

Jonathan Davis, Ali Shaheed Muhammad and Malik Taylor, 'Steve Biko (Stir It Up)', *Midnight Marauders*, A Tribe Called Quest (Jive, HIP 143, 1993) [CD Album].

<sup>988</sup> Zine Magubane, 'Globalization and Gangster Rap: Hip Hop in the Post-Apartheid City' in Sid Lemelle and Dipa Basu (eds.), *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* (London, 2006), pp.212-213.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid., p.214.

<sup>990</sup> Ibid., pp.216-217.

<sup>991</sup> Prophets of Da City, 'Understand Where I'm Coming From', *Age of Truth*, Prophets of Da City (Tusk Records TUCD30, 1993) [CD Album].

free South Africa is ‘free of mental slavery?’.<sup>992</sup> The existence of such a challenging piece, released less than a year after Mandela’s election as President, provides a counterpoint to more optimistic recordings such as Brenda Fassie’s ‘Black President’ or even Johnny Clegg’s call for democratic rights in ‘One (Hu)’Man One Vote’.

Yet in its own way this musical dissent, far from muddying our understanding of music’s role in the campaign against apartheid, actually help us to see past a simplistic narrative of music as a purely progressive force helping to soundtrack the change of power in South Africa. Songs such as ‘Da Struggle Kontinues’ are important precisely because they illustrate the ability of music to remain a questioning voice of opposition in South Africa. With its assertion that ‘Knowledge is the only life support system’, and its emphasis on the need to continue the fight for black cultural liberation, ‘Da Struggle Kontinues’ can be seen as a continuation of the themes adopted by those influenced by Black Consciousness and groups such as Stimela, who had called for ‘black upliftment’.<sup>993</sup> Furthermore the parallels with the development of other music styles such as jazz and reggae, which had also been used as styles for protest music, shows how South African hip hop, as critical of the ANC in government as those who used mbaqanga and reggae to protest the National Party, fits neatly into the tradition of South African protest music.<sup>994</sup>

---

<sup>992</sup> Prophets of Da City, ‘Da Struggle Kontinues’, *Universal Souljaz*, Prophets of Da City (Nation Records, NAT 53T, 1995) [12” Single].

<sup>993</sup> Prophets of Da City, ‘Da Struggle Kontinues’.

<sup>994</sup> Popular music has continued to be an arena for political debate in South Africa. In 2010 the ANC Youth League led Julius Malema sought to use a number of different styles and genres to call for the ANC to take a more radical stance on the issue of mine ownership. More recently there has been a clamour to claim one particularly successful South African rapper Cassper Nyovet as ‘ours’ by both South Africa’s President Jacob Zuma and Malema who left the ANC to form the more radical Economic Freedom Fighters

## Things Can Only Get Better

Popular music would seemingly have its last dalliance with party politics in Britain during the 1997 General Election. As Major's Conservative government had lurched from scandal to scandal, Labour, under its new leader, the youthful Tony Blair, seemed much more in tune with the prevailing cultural change. Rebranded by Blair and Mandelson as New Labour, Labour went on something of a charm offensive to attract the leading lights of British popular culture. In particular those associated with the run-away success of Britpop, which had led to a distinct spike in the sales of popular music. Not long after being elected Labour leader, following the sudden death of John Smith, Blair had attended *Q* magazine's annual award ceremony, where in the words of the journalist John Harris, Blair laid 'claim to a groovier kind of statesmanship than that being practiced by John Major'.<sup>995</sup>

Crucially this was an attraction felt equally by those who, as Turner had argued, sought the 'commanding heights of popular culture'. At the 1996 Brit Awards Oasis' Noel Gallagher had dedicated in part the award for Best Group to Blair as one of the few people who was 'giving a little bit of hope to young people in this country' before imploring the audience to shake Blair's hand.<sup>996</sup> Gallagher, who would later be invited to a post-election party at 10 Downing Street was also the cover star of promotional material for Labour in autumn 1996, in which he claimed that he had been moved to tears by one of Blair's speeches.<sup>997</sup>

---

Tsholofelo Wesi, 'Zuma has Mad Respect for Cassper' *Citizen*, 2 November 2015.  
<<http://www.citizen.co.za/848883/zuma-has-mad-respect-for-cassper/>> (7 November 2015).

Anon, 'Why is Malema Promoting Cassper's Music?', *Citizen*, 6 November 2015.  
<<http://citizen.co.za/855341/why-is-malema-promoting-casspers-music/>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>995</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.191.

<sup>996</sup> *Ibid.*, p.273.

<sup>997</sup> Stephen Castle and Paul Routledge, 'What a Party - The Guests Are Leaving' *Independent*, 15 February 1998.

However what occurred during the 1997 General Election was not a re run of Red Wedge, but rather something much different. Indeed Damon Albarn was persuaded to meet Blair and John Prescott in 1995 on the understanding that it would not be a reincarnation of Red Wedge.<sup>998</sup> Whereas, Red Wedge had asked awkward questions of Labour and had functioned as an official part of it, Blair's new friends in popular music were distinctly detached from debates around policy or the direction of the party. Darren Kalynuk, one of the key architects of the link between Blair and Britpop, later told Harris that Red Wedge had failed because;

it turned into a political lobby group, rather than what it should have been, which is a source of support for the leadership and the policies of the party. You would have Paul Weller waxing lyrical about Labour's employment policy. Well, frankly, who cares what Paul Weller thinks?<sup>999</sup>

This approach would be mirrored by New Labour's approach to popular culture more widely both in opposition and later in government after the 1997 General Election. Through policy documents such as 1998's *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, New Labour sought to recast popular culture as the 'creative industries', emphasising the potential of popular culture as a site of economic activity.<sup>1000</sup> This is in stark contrast to political popular music campaigns such as RAR which had conceived of popular music as a means to educate and engage their audiences, who had sought to circumnavigate the economic dimensions of the established music industry. Even AAA's hard-nosed negotiations with the reality of the music industry as a commercial enterprise, mainly through the enforcing of the boycott, had retained some sense that popular music could be a tool to educate and radicalise its audience. Under New Labour, popular music was to become a business interest. The *Creative Industries Mapping Document* was happy to

---

<sup>998</sup> Harris, *The Last Party*, p.197.

<sup>999</sup> *Ibid.*, p.196.

<sup>1000</sup> Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), p.158.



emphasise that the ‘value of the creative industries to the UK gross domestic product is... greater than the contribution of any of the UK’s manufacturing industry’.<sup>1001</sup>

More than anything, this clearly demonstrates the way in which New Labour’s flirtation with Britpop represented the final development of a disconnect between popular music and political campaigning. Whereas Bragg and Weller, in the tradition of Rock Against Racism, had questioned and welcomed people to debate through music, this new disconnect championed the vague and supportive. Rather than a song like Bragg’s ‘Between The Wars’, 1997 would be sound tracked by D:Ream’s ‘Things Can Only Get Better’, a hopelessly optimistic song about nothing in particular.

---

<sup>1001</sup> *Creative Industries Mapping Document* cited in Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism*, p.158.

## Conclusion

It could be argued that the conditions that made political popular music campaigns such as the cultural boycott possible, no longer exist. Not only has the specific cause of anti-apartheid ceased to be relevant by virtue of its success, but the political context that shaped it has also disappeared. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was born in Britain in the 1950s at the height of the post war social democratic consensus. Even in opposition to a Conservative government, the groups on the political left that came together to shape the AAM could claim an organisational strength unthinkable merely a few decades later. This was a period where the Labour Party claimed to have over a million members and the Liberal Party had somewhere in the region of a quarter of a million.<sup>1002</sup> Even the Communist Party of Great Britain, suffering a rapid decline in membership since its wartime high of 60,000 members was still able to claim approximately 40,000 members.<sup>1003</sup> To put this into perspective, today no left of Labour group can realistically claim to have more than 2,000 members.<sup>1004</sup>

Yet even among the steady decline of political membership in the 1960s and the 1970s, these same groups, through their organisational forbearers, were still able to claim respectable memberships and even at times sizeable influence working inside of the Labour Party.<sup>1005</sup> Events such as Vietnam, the threat of nuclear war and the beginnings of challenges to the post war consensus would inspire a new generation of young people to become politically active. Whilst

---

<sup>1002</sup> Richard Keen, *Membership of UK Political Parties* (London: House of Commons Library, 2015), pp.4-8.

<sup>1003</sup> Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain, A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005), pp.26-27.

<sup>1004</sup> Keen, *Membership of UK Political Parties*, p.8.

<sup>1005</sup> Michael Crick, *The March of Militant* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pp.61-64.

traditional political groupings such as Labour appeared to struggle with this new and more diverse membership, the AAM greatly benefitted as this new layer of membership enabled it to not only reach out further but also to adopt new forms of campaigning.

The rise of what Hobsbawm had termed the ‘revolutionary popular entertainment industry’, with popular music at its forefront, seemed to fit this new direction in activism perfectly.<sup>1006</sup> The early examples of anti-apartheid folk concerts were insular affairs, appearing to do little to reach out beyond the AAM’s core constituency whilst eschewing any link with mass culture.<sup>1007</sup> In contrast the affinity between popular music and popular politics that emerged in these decades championed increasingly outward looking campaigns. By the end of the 1970s this would manifest itself in Rock Against Racism, a campaign that saw the value of popular music as a campaigning tool and used it to educate, agitate and mobilise its audience. Even more importantly, it was in this image that campaigns such as AAA and later the two Mandela concerts would be forged.

However by the 1990 Mandela concert at Wembley, the post-war political context that appeared to have made the concerts possible had been replaced with a newer neo-liberal context. Writing in 2010, Tony Judt argued, this was a transformation that entailed the championing ‘of the pursuit of material self interest’ effectively eroding ‘whatever remains of our sense of collective purpose’.<sup>1008</sup> For Judt this ‘materialistic and selfish quality of contemporary public life has impacted on wider conceptions of political justice, noting that;

---

<sup>1006</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 2004), p.509.

<sup>1007</sup> See in particular the lengthy character assassination of Bob Dylan by traditional folk fans in programmes for anti-apartheid folk concerts in ch.5.

<sup>1008</sup> Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin, 2010), p.1.

We no longer ask of a judicial ruling or a legislative act: is it good? Is it fair? Is it just? Is it right? Will it help bring a better society or a better world? Those used to be *the* political questions, even if they invited no easy answers.<sup>1009</sup>

Campaigns such as the AAM had rested on these political questions yet in this new political context they seemed no longer relevant. Mark Fisher has suggested that dissenting political voices had been neutralised, with political protest becoming nothing more than a ‘carnavalesque background noise’.<sup>1010</sup> This could indeed be arguably seen in the way that the 1990 Mandela concert at Wembley represented something of an abrupt full stop, with follow up concerts failing attract anything close to the interest that the two Wembley concerts had generated. Potentially this could be understood as a manifestation of a shift in how the wider public had come to understand the cause of anti-apartheid. Even if organisations such as AAM, the ANC and conventional political parties, still perceived anti-apartheid in a more traditional centre left way, their audiences were increasingly drawing from a different source.

Fisher has suggested that those who attended these Mandela concerts at Wembley or viewed them on television were increasingly guided by the notion that ‘caring individuals’ could intervene in political issues, ‘without the need for any kind of political solution or systemic reorganization...[that] politics has to be suspended in the name of ethical immediacy’.<sup>1011</sup> This can also be seen in the failure of campaigns such as Red Wedge or indeed the wider decline of the broad left Kinnockite political consensus that had been reflected in publications such as the *NME* in the mid-1980s. The retreat to the politics of escapism and hedonism in music of groups such as the Happy Mondays and the Stone Roses could also be

---

<sup>1009</sup> Ibid., pp.1-2.

<sup>1010</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative* (London: Zero Books, 2009), p.14.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., p.15.

seen as reflection of a new appetite for ‘ethical immediacy’. Crucially Fisher also argued that this also changed the way in which popular politics functioned, with ‘the consensual sentimentality of Live Aid replac[ing] the antagonism of the Miners Strike’.<sup>1012</sup> Fisher uses the example of campaigns such as Bono’s Red, built around a fashion range, which appeared to offer to consumers the maxim that ‘all we have to do is buy the right products’.<sup>1013</sup> This presents a curious inversion of the boycott campaign which long lay at the centre of the popular music campaign against apartheid and indeed the very foundations of groups such as the AAM.

### **‘History had vindicated the AAM’**

Viewed in the context of the wider political debates and the contradictions which it raised, the example of the AAM and AAA still represented a campaign whereby politics and popular music were successfully able to interact. Despite the disagreements and debate over the limits of the tactic, the cultural boycott, alongside the many other boycott campaigns was judged to have been a great success. Former member Roger Fieldhouse’s history of the AAM in Britain, has argued that although not always able to directly influence government policy, the ‘greatest achievement’ of the AAM’s boycott campaign was its ability to raise;

awareness both within the political establishment and the general public, thereby keeping the apartheid issue on the agenda in Britain and around the world. This prevented apartheid from being quietly shelved in the way other political calamities, such as the genocide in East Timor, were.<sup>1014</sup>

Despite his judgement that ‘a total international cultural boycott of South Africa was never close to being realised’, Håkan Thörn has argued that the cultural boycott played an important role in forcing the apartheid regime to loosen some of

---

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>1014</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.481.

apartheid's opposition to black performances and mixed audiences at concerts.<sup>1015</sup> Indeed this could certainly be seen in the way that the apartheid state tried so hard to co-opt the success of *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto* and *Graceland* and had even commissioned the recording of 'Together We Will Build A Brighter Future' as an official 'peace song'.<sup>1016</sup> What this shows, is that for all the contradictions and even limitations, the cultural boycott achieved its twin aims of keeping the issue of apartheid in the minds of the public and also of forcing it onto the wider political agenda. Writing in 1996, the veteran anti-apartheid activist and Labour MP Peter Hain argued that the boycott was a key part of a wider strategy to 'confront whites [in South Africa] with the necessity to abandon their position.'<sup>1017</sup> The long stated aim of the AAM and AAA to use the boycott to culturally isolate South Africa had played a key role in encouraging what Hain had called 'the modernisers' to call for an end to apartheid.<sup>1018</sup> Reflecting on the winding up of the AAM in 1994, Hain would later argue that, 'History had vindicated the AAM and all those who had supported it'.<sup>1019</sup>

Yet the entry of popular music into the campaign against apartheid also had an important effect on those outside of South Africa. Speaking at an event to mark the fortieth anniversary of the AAM in 1999, Stuart Hall reflected on how boycotts had played a key role in helping to raise the issue of apartheid with those who had not previously considered. Specifically he highlighted that,

---

<sup>1015</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.63.

<sup>1016</sup> Ingrid Bianca Byerly, 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa', *Ethnomusicology*, 42 (1999), p.29.

<sup>1017</sup> Peter Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country: The Struggle for the New South Africa* (London: Pluto, 1996), p.210.

<sup>1018</sup> *Ibid.*, p.210.

<sup>1019</sup> Peter Hain, *Outside In* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2012), p.175.

...the fact that you could construct a political conversation with the green-grocer was one of the most pertinent objects of political discourse throughout this whole period. Have you ever tried to construct a political conversation with most greengrocers? It's a very difficult task... These staged every day encounters, this political talk enters everyday life, enters ordinary consumption... This pervasiveness of a political issue in everyday life is one of the most enormous transformations which took place in terms of political consciousness.<sup>1020</sup>

Importantly Hall also distinguished the boycott campaign from calls for sanctions, as 'something done by ordinary people' as opposed to governments and therefore an activity which 'stirs the heart'.<sup>1021</sup>

Crucially though, Hall's definition of boycott campaigns also suggested the space for direct action by participants. This also mirrors the earlier judgements of Hain and others with regards to the value of an active boycott campaign.<sup>1022</sup> This notion of a boycott campaign which sought active participation, not only refraining from buying South African fruit or supporting those who had broken the musical boycott, but acting to actively confront apartheid through direct action. This, Hall argued engendered a creativity in campaigning which allowed the AAM to tap into the consciousness of ordinary people in Britain;

Practically anything – it could be a run, a concert, a mobilisation, a boycott, a vigil, a march – could be hitched to the anti-apartheid theme if you knew how to do it. That was where the imagination in the Movement came in, how to make the hitch. It was a brilliant stroke to discover that the heart of the British way of life lay in sport... One of the great contributions of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to the politicisation of sport was that it found a way of bringing home to people who thought sport was time out from real life, that real life was in the centre of time out.<sup>1023</sup>

The entry of popular music through calls for boycotts and as a campaigning force in and of itself in the 1980s arguably operated in a much similar vein to the earlier

---

<sup>1020</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective*, 1999, < <http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/officialdocs/anti-apartheid-movement/aam-britain.htm> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1021</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1022</sup> Hain, *Sing the Beloved Country*, p.45

<sup>1023</sup> Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain'.

sports boycotts. In a speech to close the same 1999 conference, Kader Asmal one of the founders of the AAM and then South Africa's Education Minister, recalled that;

In the 1980s Nelson Mandela became a household name in this country, the most recognisable name – not face yet – throughout the world, to a large extent because of the involvement of the music business, and AAM's message was carried way beyond the conventional political constituency by the activities of Artists Against Apartheid and other musicians.<sup>1024</sup>

In this way we can see the real strength of the popular music campaigns against apartheid was not the boycott campaign in and of itself but rather its ability to use popular music as a platform to raise awareness. Whilst the cultural boycott could be flaunted and was later a focus of tension and debate, the existence of songs such as the Special AKA's 'Nelson Mandela' or Little Steven's 'Sun City' could act as a powerful means for growing consciousness. Despite Jerry Dammers reticence about 'airy fairy revolution music', songs such as his own and even more importantly events such as the Mandela concert helped to grow awareness of apartheid in South Africa and were arguably even able to plug gaps in the cultural boycott strategy. The sale of 150,000 copies of the explicitly political 'Nelson Mandela' in 1984 demonstrates the way in which popular music could both disseminate a political message and help to recruit activists.<sup>1025</sup> Certainly the vibrant grassroots campaigning against boycott breakers such as Status Quo, Queen and Black Sabbath attests to a highly motivated membership inspired in part by the actions of campaigns such as AAA in Britain and AUAA.

---

<sup>1024</sup> Kader Asmal, 'Making Hope and History Rhyme', *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective*, 1999. < <http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/officialdocs/anti-apartheid-movement/making-hope.htm> > (7 November 2015).

<sup>1025</sup> Max Bell, 'The Special AKA: Still Special (After All These Years)', *Face*, The, June 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-special-aka-still-special-after-all-these-years>> (7 November 2015).



This ability to grow awareness and consciousness was the greatest success of campaigns such as AAA and the AAM more generally. As Hall had suggested in 1999

One of the few areas in which a Thatcherite consensus did not displace an earlier popular politics was around the question of apartheid... Anti-apartheid had sunk itself into the liberal consciousness of the population as a whole so deeply that it could withstand the tide of a Thatcherite withdrawal from political involvement on the right side.<sup>1026</sup>

In a decade of defeats for left wing campaigns which saw the severe limitations of the involvement of popular music in a number of other political campaigns, whether it was for CND or Red Wedge, the cause of anti-apartheid was the one example of success. The shortcomings of the cultural boycott and the bad feeling surrounding the internecine squabbles surrounding Paul Simon or Johnny Clegg have largely been erased by the lasting images of Nelson Mandela addressing the crowd at the 1990 Wembley Concert.

### **‘By the Strength of our Common Endeavour’**

This new political landscape appeared to confound the AAM as much as many other contemporary campaigns. As early as 1992 the AAM had found itself in severe financial trouble with a rapidly decreasing income and debts of up to £250,000, as what had become a large organisation found itself with a falling membership and decreasing donations.<sup>1027</sup> In an era of both rapid change in South Africa and of a growing post-Thatcherite consensus in Britain the AAM, crafted in the image of the social democratic consensus, appeared out of step. After a long consultation following the election of Mandela in the April of 1994, the AAM would reconstitute itself as Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) in October of the

---

<sup>1026</sup> Hall, ‘The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain’

<sup>1027</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.443.

same year.<sup>1028</sup> Introduced at a reception at the 1994 Labour Party Conference, ACTSA was conceived as ‘a change of style’, an organisation more focussed on lobbying than direct campaigning.<sup>1029</sup> The age of an activist led group such as the AAM picketing concerts and directing heavily localised protest was to be replaced by a foregrounding of high politics. Though this was an inevitable by-product of the changing nature of the situation in South Africa, it also shows something of a move from an active to passive solidarity.

The same 1994 Labour Party Conference at which AAM announced its transformation to ACTSA, would also be the first to be addressed by Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party. To many, Blair was symbolic of a political left that existed in a post-ideological or post-political context. Fisher would go as far as to suggest that Blair was devoid of any ideological beliefs and subsequently ‘never had any beliefs that he had to recant’.<sup>1030</sup> As Andy McSmith has shown, this narrative, that Blair’s ‘head must be empty’ had been well established in the run up to the 1997 General Election.<sup>1031</sup> Yet this is an interpretation which fails to grasp the way in which Blair represented a wider shift on the political left that effected the groups which had come together in campaigns such as the AAM.

Judt has suggested that this was part of the wider impact of the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism that followed it. Specifically that social democratic forces in Europe, of which a campaign such as AAM had relied up were left without a sense of historic purpose.<sup>1032</sup> This is an interpretation which very much repeats the charges made against the contradictions of social democracy

---

<sup>1028</sup> Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p.213.

<sup>1029</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.461.

<sup>1030</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, p.57.

<sup>1031</sup> Andy McSmith, *Faces of Labour: The Inside Story: Your Guide to Labour Old and New* (London: Verso, 1997), p.7

<sup>1032</sup> Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, p.142.

by Stuart Hall in his 1979 Essay 'The Great Moving Right Show'.<sup>1033</sup> For others though, these changes not only showcased the failure of the left, both socialist and social democratic, but the success of the political right in replacing the narrative of social democracy with their own neo-liberal hegemony. Fisher has emphasised the way in which following the fall of communism it has become impossible to imagine an alternative to capitalism.<sup>1034</sup> In this new hegemony, Fisher argued that even remaining social democratic forces existed within the framework of, what Fisher termed, capitalist realism.<sup>1035</sup>

In Britain this sense that there was no longer an alternative to capitalism did much to change the nature of popular politics. As Hall would reflect in 2003, 'eighteen years of Thatcherite rule had radically altered the social, economic and political terrain in British society' and was therefore 'not likely to be reversed by a mere rotation of the electoral wheel of fortune'.<sup>1036</sup> Hall saw the ultimate proof of the success of the Thatcherite consensus in the direction taken by the Labour government after its election in 1997, particularly in moves such as,

the fatal decision to follow Conservative spending commitments, the sneering renunciation of redistribution ("tax and spend!"), the demonisation of its critics ("Old Labour!"), the new ethos of managerial authoritarianism, the quasi-religious air of righteous conviction, the reversal of the historic commitment to equality, universality and collective social provision.<sup>1037</sup>

Here we can see evidence of Judt's claim that without a clear ideology left and social democratic politics could fall victim to simply being an agent of 'social accounting', with no grand narrative of an alternative to capitalism.<sup>1038</sup>

---

<sup>1033</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979, pp.16-17.

<sup>1034</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, p.7.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78.

<sup>1036</sup> Stuart Hall, 'New Labour's Double Shuffle', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 27 (2005), p.319.

<sup>1037</sup> *Ibid.*, p.320-321.

<sup>1038</sup> Judy, *Ill Fares The Land*, pp.142-143.

Indeed Thatcherism appeared to have the greatest effect on its opponents. Martin Pugh has argued that Blair's election and adoption of the Third Way was 'symptomatic of the extent to which the Labour Party had been shredded by Thatcherism ideologically and institutionally' to the point at which it was 'intellectually demoralised'.<sup>1039</sup> Four consecutive election defeats had in the minds of many confirmed the unpopularity of Labour's traditional left social democratic platform and the need for some accommodation with the newly emerging political consensus.<sup>1040</sup> Turner has suggested what really marked Blair out from previous leaders was the extent to which he was determined to 'deliberately' pick a fight with the left of the party.<sup>1041</sup> Peter Hain, at the time associated with the soft-left *Tribune* group of MPs, would later reflect his unease with 'Blair's New Labour mantra which defined itself against the Party'.<sup>1042</sup> This could also be seen in the way that Blair and New Labour interacted with traditional allies such as left based campaigning groups and trade unions. In his 2010 memoir *A Journey*, Blair noted his growing conviction throughout the early 1980s and 1990s that the 'mixture of politics and industrial agitation' associated with trade unions represented something irretrievably old fashioned'.<sup>1043</sup> To Blair 'progress in human rights, in women's rights, in defeating racism and apartheid came from 'overturning conventional thinking'.<sup>1044</sup> Yet this was a view of history and events which appeared to exclude groups such as the AAM and campaigns such as the cultural boycott.

---

<sup>1039</sup> Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain: A New History of The Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011), p.387.

<sup>1040</sup> Roy Hattersley, *Fifty Years On: A Prejudiced History of Britain Since The War* (London: Abacus, 1998), p.373.

<sup>1041</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013), p.260.

<sup>1042</sup> Hain, *Outside In*, p.182.

<sup>1043</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (London: Arrow, 2010), p.40.

<sup>1044</sup> *Ibid*, p.254.

This intention to combat the left of the Labour Party would first be made clear in Blair's speech to the 1994 Labour Party Conference, which ended with Blair announcing his intention to reform Clause IV of Labour's constitution. Referring to his intention to replace Clause IV, which committed Labour to public ownership of the means of production, Blair asserted that 'Parties that do not change die... If the world changes and we do not, we become of no use to the world' and that Labour was 'a modern party living in an age of change'.<sup>1045</sup> It was this move more than any other, supported by the notion that the world had changed, which symbolised a distinct shift from a model of popular politics which had underpinned the long campaign against apartheid. By rejecting its long standing commitment to public ownership Blair and Labour left themselves open to charges such as Hall's that there had been a 'reversal of the historic commitment to equality, universality and collective social provision'.<sup>1046</sup>

Yet what this judgement of the changes of the popular politics of the left in Britain ignore is the extent to which these changes reflected a continuation of the difficult negotiations which had marked the progress of popular left politics throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In particular the path travelled in the campaign against apartheid gives a sense of how left politics in Britain could change to embrace a constituency wider than its traditional base. The importance of balancing the ideals of solidarity with the practical action of the boycott had required the AAM and AAA to make, with the notable exception of the cultural boycott, a number of compromises in its approach. In the new Clause IV's language of the 'strength of our common endeavour' and championing of

---

<sup>1045</sup> Tony Blair, 'Leader's Speech', 1994. <<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=200>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1046</sup> Hall, 'New Labour's Double Shuffle', p.319.

‘solidarity, tolerance and respect’ there remained much of the spirit of groups such as AAM. Rather a dramatic capitulation to an emerging Thatcherite neo-liberal hegemony the course of the long campaign against apartheid demonstrates the growth of a broader liberal left settlement that altered the nature of activism.

## Culture

This long shift to a new liberal left settlement over the period can also be seen clearly in the role and understanding of popular music. The long discussion over the effectiveness and morals of the cultural boycott shows how it became increasingly hard to link popular music to political campaigns. In particular, the shift in the perception of *Graceland* could be viewed not simply as a contradiction of the cultural boycott campaign, but rather as an unexpected addendum to popular music campaign against apartheid. Certainly the ways in which *Graceland* had been perceived by some contemporary listeners and the ease with which it has increasingly become seen as an implicit anti-apartheid statement speaks to the way in which popular music’s role in shaping and guiding consciousness around the wider issues of apartheid. If campaigns such as AAA, AUAA and AAM’s greatest success had been recruiting people via spectacle and high profile interventions such as the ‘Nelson Mandela’ and ‘Sun City’ singles and the increasingly large and grand Mandela concerts at Wembley, then *Graceland* can also be seen, if not by design as a project which drew attention to South Africa and apartheid. That the sources which opposed *Graceland* so vocally would later find themselves comfortable with Harry Belafonte’s *Paradise in Gazankulu* project also speaks volumes about the way in which anti-apartheid grasped that a project like *Graceland* could act as a signifier for anti-apartheid. Furthermore, this can also

clearly be seen in the debate between the ANC and the AAM about the introduction of a limited boycott that followed *Graceland* and the controversy over Johnny Clegg's attempts to tour Europe. What *Graceland*, and the shifting perceptions of the album, arguably represented was remarkably similar to the triumph of the boycott campaign, in that its lasting legacy was of a spectacle capable to raise consciousness.

That both 'Nelson Mandela' and 'You Can Call Me Al' represented a means by which consciousness could be raised through popular music, is a testament to the way in which there had been a greater political shift throughout the existence of the campaign against apartheid. On the whole it could be argued that this was a process of gradual de-politicisation. Whereas Dammer's 'Nelson Mandela' had directly referenced Mandela's involvement with the ANC, the *Graceland*, save the later additions of Masekela and Makeba during its live outings, contained nothing from which a political message could be directly inferred other than the use of South African music. In many ways this reflected the different contexts from which both projects had emerged. 'Nelson Mandela' had grown out of a long established and heavily politicised boycott movement and was the work of Dammer's who had a long association with political popular music campaigns from RAR onwards. Simon and *Graceland* represented, as Hamm has argued, a 'late blooming product of the "Folk Revival"', an essentially liberal project which had become increasingly divorced from the political focus of the late 1960s.<sup>1047</sup>

The ability of Simon's extremely liberal interpretation of the wider campaign against apartheid to be interpreted by many as an anti-apartheid statement in itself is arguably a testament to the increasing failure of explicitly left

---

<sup>1047</sup> Charles Hamm, 'Graceland Revisited', *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), p.304.

wing popular music campaigns throughout the 1980s. In some ways this demonstrates the extent to which anti apartheid was unique in its ability to enthuse and engage popular sentiment. As Hall had argued 'Anti-apartheid had sunk itself the liberal consciousness' to the point at which it was impervious to the attacks had undermined other campaigns. Campaigns for the likes of CND or the Labour Party flew much more in the face of public opinion finding themselves at odds with prevailing narratives that placed them as out of date, misplaced or even fundamentally irrelevant. Despite the support of the majority of the popular music press, a campaign such as Red Wedge was hampered by the sense in which it was connected to a post war consensus that was increasingly losing its potency as a popular idea.

Conversely, anti-apartheid had at its heart a series of much broader messages about freedom, liberty and fundamental human rights. These were not only ideas that transcended the changing political climate but also were easier to express in a piece of popular music. Bragg's 'Between The Wars' evocation of austerity in the 1930s and pleas for 'sweet moderation' could never be as direct as the much simpler call of 'Free Nelson Mandela'.

Furthermore there is also the issue of the way in which these institutions themselves differed in their composition and the ways in which they confronted a changing political context. In this way the AAM were better prepared than many other organisations. Though broadly left of the political centre in Britain, the AAM had long been a broad coalition of different opinions and groups. Whilst Labour and other political groups would struggle to accommodate a shifting membership base and would struggle to understand demands for self-organisation and the rise of identity politics, the broad nature of AAM right from its inception prevented the



great deal of soul searching that was to characterise other groups. Practically speaking this meant that a campaign like AAA was able to operate without the degree of internal wrangling which had characterised Red Wedge. Whereas Red Wedge had existed at a point in which different ideas about the future of the Labour Party were in flux and campaigns for the CND had relied greatly on the likelihood of nuclear war, anti-apartheid hinged on a clear mission that appeared to be both current and could transcend other more domestic demands. Even at the point at which AAA and the AAM found itself at odds with the ANC over the cultural boycott, the sense of a wider mission prevented the derailing of major events such as the Mandela concerts at Wembley Stadium.

Whilst no cause has been able to generate an explicit political popular music campaign other less political popular music campaigns have continued. This can be seen most clearly in the spiritual successor to *Live Aid*, 2005's *Live 8*, which sought to 'Make Poverty History'. Belatedly Bob Geldoff appeared to 'understand the structures of poverty and not just the symptoms, like AIDs, corruption and hunger'.<sup>1048</sup> Yet despite the fact that the concert and wider campaign hinged upon a tangible political goal, convincing leaders of G8 countries to cancel debt, rather than raising money, *Live 8* still betrayed many of the shortcomings of the original *Live Aid*. Namely that the political message was overly simplistic and extraordinarily patronising towards Africa.

This was also reflected in the almost completely western and mostly white line up of the groups that contributed to *Live 8*. As Andy Kershaw argued in his memoirs;

---

<sup>1048</sup> Dylan Jones, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade* (London: Preface, 2013), pp.388-389.

Geldof didn't learn. Or, more likely, didn't care... he again invited no Africans to share the stage in Hyde Park with their European and American counterparts-and on equal terms.<sup>1049</sup>

In fact *Live 8*, just like *Live Aid* before it, was also criticised for its distinct lack of black artists. Damon Albarn would refuse to take part in the concert which he described as an 'anglo-saxon event' for the absence of many prominent black British acts in the early provisional line ups of the concert.<sup>1050</sup> Geldof's attempts to deflect criticism included organising a concert, dubbed *Africa Calling*, for African musicians at Cornwall's Eden Project, served to only further exacerbate many. In an incandescent opinion piece for the Independent, Kershaw railed;

I thought apartheid was dead... The *Africa Calling* concert at the Eden Project compounds the insult to the continent which Geldof purports to help... tossing Africans crumbs from the table of Europe's rock aristocracy... I am coming, reluctantly to the conclusion that *Live 8* is as much to do with Geldof showing off his ability to push around presidents and prime ministers as with pointing out the potential of Africa. Indeed Geldof appears to be not interested in Africa's strengths only an Africa on its knees... He might as well put up signs on the lanes leading to the Eden Project saying 'Grateful Darkies This Way'...<sup>1051</sup>

It is unthinkable that such charges of egotism and insensitivity could have been levelled at a campaign such as AAA. Dammers arguably sacrificed his musical career playing an active role campaigning, whilst the AAA was always conscious of working alongside the ANC rather than a belief that it could help lead the fight against apartheid.

In contrast Bono the lead singer of U2, held alongside Geldof as a figurehead for *Live 8*, has balanced his charitable works with creative tax arrangements which saw his band U2 move much of their business arrangement to

<sup>1049</sup> Andy Kershaw, *No Off Switch: An Autobiography* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2011), p.169.

<sup>1050</sup> Sarah Left, 'Albarn Hits Out at 'Anglo-Saxon' Live 8', Guardian, 10 June 2005.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jun/10/g8.live8>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1051</sup> Kershaw, *No Off Switch*, p.170.

the Netherlands, to take advantage of lower tax rates.<sup>1052</sup> In a 2014 interview with the *Observer* Bono defended this move and competitive income tax rates in general, noting that;

As a person who's spent nearly 30 years fighting to get people out of poverty, it was somewhat humbling to realise that commerce played a bigger job than development,... I'd say that's my biggest transformation in 10 years: understanding the power of commerce to make or break lives, and that it cannot be given into as the dominating force in our lives.<sup>1053</sup>

This belief in 'the power of commerce' to bring about political change, not only reflects the legacy of *Live Aid's* emphasis on philanthropism and of the Third Way, but also a distortion of the logic of the boycott, which had guided anti-apartheid popular music campaigns. AAA and AUAA had aimed to subvert commerce to isolate apartheid South Africa, *Live 8* appeared to see commerce and raising money as an end in itself.

Ultimately this illustrates well the difference between anti-apartheid popular music campaigns and the way in which individuals have tried to use music in campaigns since. The Mandela concerts, in the tradition of both the boycott campaign and the activist concert tradition of RAR, had sought to raise consciousness to promote the involvement of ordinary people in a mass campaign with a clear goal. *Live 8*, influenced by *Live Aid's* philanthropism, appeared to seek to re-mystify politics, the fate of Africa was to be solely in the hands of the G8, who could only be moved by a massive, yet hollow spectacle. Yet this was also a development which has affected the way we look back and assess the impact of popular music in the campaign against apartheid and as a political tool in general.

---

<sup>1052</sup> Richard Osley, 'Bono Defends U2's Tax Arrangement: We Are In 'Total Harmony' With Irish Government's Philosophy', *Independent*, 23 September 2013. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/bono-defends-u2s-tax-arrangement-we-are-in-total-harmony-with-irish-governments-philosophy-8833065.html>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1053</sup> Rupert Neate, 'Bono: controversial tax laws have brought Ireland the only prosperity it's ever known', *Guardian*, 12 October 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/12/bono-tax-laws-bring-ireland-prosperity-apple-google-u2>> (7 November 2015).

A development which has nullified the controversy generated by *Graceland* and places it alongside ‘Nelson Mandela’ and ‘Sun City’ as a protest against apartheid of equal worth. In effect this is a process that obscures the reality of the series of explicitly political popular music campaigns against apartheid rooted in the political left and often the labour movement in favour of a re-imagining of an indistinct and liberal humanitarian campaign. It is therefore fitting that one of the last musical tributes to Mandela would be U2’s mawkish and indistinct ‘Ordinary Love’.<sup>1054</sup>

### **Come Together (reprise)**

This is a beautiful day, it is a new day/  
 We are together, we are unified and all for the cause/  
 Because together, we got power, apart, we got power/  
 Today on this program you will hear gospel/  
 And rhythm and blues and jazz/  
 All those are just labels we know that music is music<sup>1055</sup>

Yet for all the contradictions, hypocrisy and apparent shortcomings of popular music as a means of delivering a political message, there remains an appeal and allure in using popular music to try and deliver a political message. Though the combination of individual charity that marked *Live Aid* and the refusal to engage meaningfully with politics that marked *Live 8* continue to guide the majority of popular music campaigns, they are not without their detractors.

A third version of ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas’ released in 2014 to raise funds against the spread of Ebola was roundly criticised for its depiction of Africa. One black British hip hop act, Fuse ODG, told the *Guardian* that on reading the

<sup>1054</sup> Bono and Brian Burton, *Ordinary Love*, U2 (Interscope, B0019655-11, 2013) [CD Single].

<sup>1055</sup> Bobby Gillespie, Andrew Innes and Robert Young, *Come Together*, Primal Scream (Creation, CRE 078T, 1990) [12” Single].

song's lyrics he had been 'shocked and appalled by their content' and that 'message of the Band Aid 30 song absolutely did not reflect what Africa is truly about'.<sup>1056</sup> For Fuse ODG the 'offensive lyrics' of 'Do They Know It's Christmas' betrayed a much wider problem, the recurring trope of 'Africa – a resource-rich continent with unbridled potential – always being seen as diseased, infested and poverty-stricken'.<sup>1057</sup> A similar note would be struck by a British nurse William Pooley who had contracted and survived Ebola working in Sierra Leone who argued that the lyrics represented a 'cultural ignorance' that was fundamentally 'cringeworthy'.<sup>1058</sup> For his part, Geldof responded by diplomatically telling critics to 'fuck off'.<sup>1059</sup>

Yet what this incident shows is that despite some appearances, the apparent hegemony of the philanthropic model of popular music that typified campaigns following in the wake of *Live Aid* and cemented by *Live 8*, is open to criticism. Indeed those most associated with this model have often been those most widely criticised. Crucially though is that in addition to media ridicule and protest, the hypocrisy inherent in this philanthropic model of popular music campaigning has been criticised in song by other musicians. At the 2011 *Glastonbury Festival*, Primal Scream chose to update the song 'Come Together' in their headlining set to lampoon U2 for their controversial tax arrangements.<sup>1060</sup> The song which begins with the sampling of Jesse Jackson addressing the *WattsStax* music festival now

<sup>1056</sup> Fuse ODG, 'Why I Had To Turn Down Live Aid', *Guardian*, 19 November 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/19/turn-down-band-aid-bob-geldof-africa-fuse-odg>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1057</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1058</sup> Daisy Wyatt, 'Band Aid 30 is 'Cringeworthy', Says British Ebola Nurse William Pooley', *Independent*, 9 December 2014. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/ebola-nurse-william-pooley-calls-band-aid-single--culturally-ignorant-9911054.html>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1059</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1060</sup> Adam Bychawski, 'Primal Scream Unveil New Songs at Teenage Cancer Trust Gig', *NME*, 22 March 2013. <<http://www.nme.com/news/primal-scream/69342#4Rw42E0vzq6kzTbB.99>> (7 November 2015).

included a new section with the repeated refrain of ‘Paying my taxes’. This new section which also includes chants of ‘agitate, educate, organise’, not only represented a dig at U2 for their perceived hypocrisy, but also appeared to champion a much different political context to the ‘power of commerce’ consensus espoused by U2.

That Primal Scream were still using music to make a political point was not lost on those whom it was intended to comfort. In a 2012 blog the Scottish Trade Union Congress praised Primal Scream for the political additions to ‘Come Together’. Also included in the blog was an advert for the STUC’s own *Songs for Social Justice Festival* that promised, ‘protest sounds’ and ‘the best in soul, funk, ska, reggae and hip hop’.<sup>1061</sup> Headlining the *Songs for Social Justice Festival* was Jerry Dammers. Subdued though it may be, the spirit that guided the popular music campaigns against apartheid lives on.

It could even be suggested that political popular music is poised to make a comeback. Debates surrounding musicians playing concerts in Israel has reopened discussion on the use of cultural boycotts. Often with direct references to the musical campaign against apartheid, with advocates seeking to deprive and isolate Israel in a manner similar to South Africa. Although there has not been a mass boycott campaign led by performers unions there is a growing grass roots call for a boycott.<sup>1062</sup> In the summer of 2010 a number of British acts including The Klaxons, Gorillaz and Elvis Costello cancelled scheduled concerts in Israel in response to calls for a boycott, an action quickly followed by the American group the Pixies.

---

<sup>1061</sup> Scottish Trade Union Congress, ‘Songs for Social Justice: Primal Scream – Come Together’, 12 January 2012. <<http://stucbetterway.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/songs-for-social-justice-primal-scream.html>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1062</sup> Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, ‘Factsheet: The Cultural Boycott of Israel’, June 2010. <<http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=868>> (7 November 2015).

By the February of 2015 over a hundred cultural figures including a number of musicians would write to the Guardian calling for a cultural boycott of Israel.<sup>1063</sup> In an echo of Huddleston’s original letter on South Africa, the 2015 letter on Israel declared;

During South African apartheid, musicians announced they weren’t going to “play Sun City”. Now we are saying, in Tel Aviv, Netanya, Ashkelon or Ariel, we won’t play music, accept awards, attend exhibitions, festivals or conferences, run masterclasses or workshops.<sup>1064</sup>

Similarly an open letter to Sting in 2006 calling for the cancellation of a number of concerts in Israel makes a similar allusion to the campaign against apartheid with its assertion that ‘international civil society’s opposition to Israel’s occupation and other forms of oppression is inspired by and looking akin to the anti-apartheid movement that brought down the racist regime in South Africa’.<sup>1065</sup>

However the growing attempts to bring about a cultural boycott of Israel differs from the previous campaign against apartheid in South Africa on many levels. Firstly and most importantly is the way in which groups such as the Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) and their offshoot the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel have been less successful at integrating and working with pre-existing campaigns in countries such as Britain. In contrast the ANC had deep connections with the AAM in Britain, with representatives from the ANC present at some of the earliest meetings to establish the Boycott Movement.<sup>1066</sup> As Fieldhouse has acknowledged the ANC

---

<sup>1063</sup> Artists For Palestine, ‘Letter: Over 100 artists announce a cultural boycott of Israel’, *Guardian*, 13 February 2015. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/cultural-boycott-israel-starts-tomorrow>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1064</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1065</sup> Palestinian Campaign for the Cultural and Academic Boycott, ‘A Stinging Tribute to an Apartheid State: An Open Letter to Sting Urging him to Cancel his Israel Gig’, *Electronic Intifada*, 6 June 2006. <<https://electronicintifada.net/content/stinging-tribute-apartheid-state-open-letter-sting-urging-him-cancel-his-israel-gig/528>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1066</sup> Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, pp.10-12.

placed great esteem in ‘international solidarity’ as an organising and campaigning tactic, investing time and effort in working alongside national organisations such as AAM in Britain.<sup>1067</sup> Through the AAM, the ANC was able to build a strong and lasting relationship with the trade union movement in Britain, which helped to further build support for actions such as the cultural boycott.<sup>1068</sup> Although the TUC in Britain, alongside many individual unions, have supported the broad aims of the BDS movement and have promoted the Palestine Solidarity Campaign there has not been as close a working relationship as the AAM and ANC had previously enjoyed.<sup>1069</sup> For example, a 2014 statement from the General Council of the TUC, raises the possibility of a campaign against supplying military equipment to Israel, whilst stopping short of explicitly acknowledging or explicitly supporting the BDS initiative.

There is also an unease in some quarters about the nature of the debate over Palestine that contrasts with the widespread condemnation of apartheid South Africa. Writing in 2014 Noam Chomsky called into question the value of the BDS campaign suggesting that any campaign for Palestine had to be ‘carefully thought through and evaluated in terms of their likely consequences’.<sup>1070</sup> In particular Chomsky pointed out that the focus of BDS on returning displaced peoples to Palestine represented a ‘virtual guarantee of failure’ to the wider cause.<sup>1071</sup> Chomsky also argued that boycotts of Israel based on ‘very dubious’ comparisons with South Africa further harms the campaign.<sup>1072</sup> Instead of a wholesale BDS

---

<sup>1067</sup> Ibid, p.370.

<sup>1068</sup> Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p.94.

<sup>1069</sup> Trades Union Congress, ‘General Council Statement on Gaza, Congress 2014’, 18 September 2014. <<https://www.tuc.org.uk/gaza2014congress>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1070</sup> Noam Chomsky, ‘On Israel-Palestine and BDS’, *The Nation*, 2 July 2014.

<<http://www.thenation.com/article/israel-palestine-and-bds/>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1071</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1072</sup> Ibid.



campaign, Chomsky instead advocated supporting the boycott of goods produced by Israel in settlements in Palestinian territory, the same position taken by the EU and endorsed in the General Council of the TUC's 2014 statement.

This confusion and division about tactics which could replicate the success of groups such as the AAM has fed into debates about a potential cultural boycott of Israel. Noticeably absent from the list of trade unions affiliated to the PSC are performance unions such as the Musicians' Union or Equity, both of which had been early supporters of the AAM and the cultural boycott. Those who have travelled to play in Israel over the course of the past decade include a number of figures such as The Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and Sting, who had long histories of refusing to play within apartheid South Africa. This demonstrates the extent to which, despite the extensive lobbying from groups such as the PSC, BDS and PCABI many musicians were unable to make the comparison between Israel and apartheid South Africa.

There is also a sense in which this reticence based upon a reflection of the way in which a strict adherence to the cultural boycott had become a site of tension between groups such as the AAM and individual activists during the latter part of the 1980s. Writing in response to the cancelling of concerts in Israel by Elvis Costello in 2010, Dorian Lynskey suggested that the experience of the cultural boycott against South Africa, had shown that 'a boycott is a sledgehammer, not a scalpel, and it does not divide people neatly into right and wrong'.<sup>1073</sup> Yet despite the lack of a unified and effective campaign the calls for a cultural boycott of Israel have resulted in a succession of artists cancelling concerts in Israel and a number of

---

<sup>1073</sup> Dorian Lynskey, 'When Musicians Boycott Countries There Are No Clear Winners', *Guardian*, 26 May 2010. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2010/may/26/musicians-boycott-countries>> (7 November 2015).

others refusing to accept offers to perform all together.<sup>1074</sup> This shows that in spite of any misgiving about the tactic of the cultural boycott, these debates show the way in which a musical boycott, the mainstay of the long popular political music campaign against apartheid in South Africa, could become a significant tactic again.

Furthermore changes in popular politics, particularly on the political left, across the whole of Europe appears to recall the activist culture that sustained and provided forwarded momentum to the AAM. In Britain the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party on the back of a dramatic surge in the parties membership, arguably contests the notion of hegemonic post Thatcher political consensus in Britain. Instead it recalls the way in which Labour was taken to the left by an expanding and increasingly diverse membership throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In 2009 Fisher had argued that Labour's complete capitulation to the post-Thatcherite political consensus, which he terms capitalist realism, had left it 'gutted, and gutless, its insides replaced by simulacra which once looked lustrous but now possess all the allure of decade-old computer technology.'<sup>1075</sup> Less than a decade later, the election of Corbyn on an unashamedly Keynesian programme suggests that challenges to the post-Thatcher/capitalist realist consensus are still possible. Yet whilst Fisher had argued that the political left needed to in part address 'failure of previous forms of anti-capitalist political organisation and to leave behind 'a certain politics of failure', to move towards a new collective politics, there is something distinctly antique and familiar about Corbyn and his

---

<sup>1074</sup> The most recent famous musician to pull out from concerts in Israel after extensive lobbying includes Neil Young who stated concerns over safety.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, 'Cultural Boycott', 10 July 2014. <<http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/cultural-boycott>> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1075</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, p.58.

challenge to the capitalist realist hegemony.<sup>1076</sup> As Richard Seymour has acknowledged ‘Corbyn’s prospectus for a Labour government may be one that only a hard left leadership could secure today, but it is also one that would have once been advocated by the Party’s mainstream’.<sup>1077</sup>

Whether or not this challenge could supplant capitalist realism or even lay the path for future challenges to it is hard to say. What it does point towards is the rebirth of a wider popular politics cast in the image of groups such as AAM. In turn this could well clear a path for the return of a radical popular music to function as a site for agitation, education and mobilisation. Fittingly the emergence of Corbyn as a contender for the Labour leadership prompted the public intervention of Billy Bragg, who offered a whole hearted endorsement of Corbyn.<sup>1078</sup> At a refugee rally following Corbyn’s victory Bragg appeared on stage to sing the ‘Red Flag’.<sup>1079</sup> Whether or not this heralds the return of Red Wedge or a Red Wedge type project, it is hard to say, but long after many had declared it dead, the conditions to shape a popular political music campaign such as that mobilised by AAM appear to be in the wings awaiting an encore.

---

<sup>1076</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>1077</sup> Richard Seymour, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics* (London: Verso, 2016), p.83.

<sup>1078</sup> Eve Hartley, ‘Jeremy Corbyn: Billy Bragg Supports The Labour Leadership Contender And Condemns Tony Blair’, *Huffington Post*, 27 July 2015.

<[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/27/billy-backs-the-beardjeremy-corbyn-billy-bragg-supports-labour-leadership-condemns-tony-blair\\_n\\_7879344.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/27/billy-backs-the-beardjeremy-corbyn-billy-bragg-supports-labour-leadership-condemns-tony-blair_n_7879344.html)> (7 November 2015).

<sup>1079</sup> Anon, ‘Billy Bragg Sings the Red Flag After Corbyn’s Refugee Rally Speech’, *Guardian*, 12 September 2015. <<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2015/sep/12/billy-bragg-sings-the-red-flag-after-corbyns-refugee-rally-speech-video>> (7 November 2015).

# Bibliography

## Manuscript Collections

### Bodleian Library

#### *Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1956-1998*

- MSS.AAM.13- AAM annual reports, 1962-90, and political reports, 1992-3.
- MSS.AAM.206- Correspondence with the Musicians Union 1968-1995.
- MSS.AAM.1460- Cultural Boycott, Correspondence and Memoranda, 1964-77.
- MSS.AAM.1461- Cultural Boycott, Correspondence and Memoranda, 1980s.
- MSS.AAM.1462- Cultural Boycott, Correspondence and Memoranda, 1980s-91.
- MSS.AAM.1463- AAM memoranda and leaflets on cultural boycott, 1963-91
- MSS.AAM.1464- AAM lists of entertainers visiting South Africa and background notes, 1982-8.
- MSS.AAM.1465- Artists Against Apartheid concert, Mar 1965.
- MSS.AAM.1467- Sun City, Bophuthatswana, 1981-8.
- MSS.AAM.1470- British tour by Amandla, the Cultural Ensemble of the African National Congress, 1984-5.
- MSS.AAM.1473- Paul Simon, 1986-7.
- MSS.AAM.1474- Artists Against Apartheid, 1986-93.
- MSS.AAM.1476- Johnny Clegg and the Nelson Mandela Birthday Tribute, 1988.
- MSS AAM 2227-Campaign material (mainly leaflets, postcards, stickers), 1960-94.
- MSS AAM 2512/1/46- 'March for Freedom in Namibia & South Africa!', 1986.

### Warwick University Modern Records Centre

#### *Papers of Amnesty International*

- MSS.34/4/1/S.AF/1-170- Amnesty International Publications and Briefing notes on South Africa, 1963-1999.

*Papers of the Fire Brigades Union*

MSS.346/3/221- South Africa: correspondence, circulars re anti-apartheid campaigns, 1991-1993.

*Papers of the National Union of Students*

-MSS.280/32/3-11- Correspondence on South Africa.

*The Papers of Richard Kuper (International Socialist Group / Socialist Workers Party).*

-MSS.250/1/2/9-International discussion bulletins, nos. 5-8, 1977-1978.

*Papers of Rodney Bickerstaffe*

- MSS.389/6/B/77- Anti-Apartheid Movement 1983-1985.

*Papers of the Socialist Party*

- 601/D/3/5/23-Peter Taffe, 'South Africa: From Slavery to the Smashing of Apartheid', 1994.

- 601/H/4/6/22- LPYS 'Smash apartheid and capitalism. For a socialist South Africa', 1986.

*Papers of the Trades Union Congress*

- MSS.292D/968/23-70- TUC Papers on South Africa, 1977-1990.

*Papers of the Transport and General Workers Union*

- MSS.126/TG/1784/24/1-Anti-Apartheid Publications, 1976-1980.

## Digital Archives

### Anti-Apartheid Movement

Jeff Howarth Interviewing Jerry Dammers, 20 February 2014, transcript < [\\*http://www.aamarchives.org/file-view/category/10-all-files.html?s\\_f\\_id=13341](http://www.aamarchives.org/file-view/category/10-all-files.html?s_f_id=13341) (7 November 2015).

### African National Congress

African National Congress, 'Some important developments in the movement for a Cultural Boycott against South Africa', 23 November 1983, < <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=6869&t=Boycotts> (11 September 2015).

Asmal, Kader, 'Making Hope and History Rhyme', The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective, 1999, < <http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/officialdocs/anti-apartheid-movement/making-hope.htm> (7 November 2015).

Gurney, Christabel 'The Origins of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement', 1999, < [http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British Anti-Apartheid Movement](http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5691&t=British%20Anti-Apartheid%20Movement) (11 September 2015).

Hall, Stuart, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective, 1999, < <http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/officialdocs/anti-apartheid-movement/aam-britain.htm> (7 November 2015).

Redgrave, Vanessa, 'Hanging on a Tree', 2008, < <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=5670&t=The> (20 January 2014).

Tambo, Oliver, 'Letter from Oliver Tambo to Sir Geoffrey Howe, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs', 21 July 1986, < <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4490> (9 July 2015).

Terry, Mike, 'Some Personal Recollections of the Free Nelson Mandela Campaign', 1996, < <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=45> (22 January 2014).

### fRoots

fRoots, 'International Pop Label Meeting Agenda', 29 April 1987, < [http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world\\_music\\_history/minutes/page02.html](http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world_music_history/minutes/page02.html) (25 September 2015).

fRoots, 'Minutes Of Meeting Between The Various 'World Music' Record Companies And Interested Parties', 29 June 1987, <

[http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world\\_music\\_history/minutes/page03.html](http://www.frootsmag.com/content/features/world_music_history/minutes/page03.html) (25 September 2015).

## **Government Publications**

*Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.*

*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Adjournment, 6<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 134, cols 364-366.

Keen, Richard, *Membership of UK Political Parties* (London: House of Commons Library, 2015).

## **Contemporary Articles, Books, Pamphlets and Speeches**

Blair, Tony, 'Leader's Speech', 1994,  
<<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=200>>  
(7 November 2015).

Major, John, Speech to 1993 Conservative Party Conference,  
<<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1096.html>> (7 November 2015).

Mandela, Nelson, 'Speech to Wembley Stadium', 16 April 1990.

## **Music Press**

Allen, Kevin, 'Reggae', *Record Mirror*, 27 September 1975.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/reggae>> (7 November 2015).

Barron, Jack, 'Happy Mondays: Homage to Catatonia', *NME*, 31 March 1990.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/happy-mondays-homage-to-catatonia>> (6 August 2015).

Barron, Jack, 'Paul Simon: Graceland' Sounds, 6 September 1986.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-igracelandi-warner-brothers->> (25 September 2015).

Barron, Jack, 'The Redskins: Acne in the UK', *Sounds*, 18 January 1986.  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-redskins-acne-in-the-uk>> (7 November 2015).

Bell, Max, 'The Special AKA: Still Special (After All These Years)', *Face*, The, June 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-special-aka-still-special-after-all-these-years>> (7 November 2015).

Black, Johnny, 'Red Wedge', *Q* (March 1996).  
<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/red-wedge>> (9 July 2015).

- Bradley, Lloyd, 'The Specials: *More Specials* (2-Tone)', *Q*, July 1989. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-imore-specialsi-2-tone>> (7 November 2015).
- Brown, Len, 'The Housemartins: If You Love Jesus', *NME*, 20 December 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-housemartins-if-you-love-jesus>> (9 July 2015).
- Charone, Barbara, 'Eric Clapton: Farther On Up The Road', *Sounds*, 9 October 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/eric-clapton-farther-on-up-the-road>> (7 November 2015).
- Christgau, Robert, 'The Indestructible Beat of Sowetwo', *Village Voice*, 1986, <[http://www.robertchristgau.com/get\\_album.php?id=648](http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_album.php?id=648)> (25 September 2015).
- Christgau, Robert, 'Ladysmith Black Mambazo', *Village Voice*, 9 March 2003. <[http://www.robertchristgau.com/get\\_artist.php?name=Ladysmith+Black+Mambazo](http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_artist.php?name=Ladysmith+Black+Mambazo)> (25 September 2015).
- Christgau, Robert, 'South Africa Romance', *Village Voice*, 23 September 1986. <<http://www.robertchristgau.com/xg/rock/simon-86.php>> (25 September 2015).
- Coon, Caroline, 'British Reggae: Prejudiced Vibrations', *Melody Maker*, 9 October 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/british-reggae-prejudiced-vibrations>> (7 November 2015).
- Coon, Caroline, 'Punk Rock Rebels Against the System', *Melody Maker*, 7 August 1976. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/punk-rock-rebels-against-the-system>> (11 September 2015).
- Dalton, Stephen, 'Revolution Rock', *Vox*, June 1993. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/revolution-rock>> (9 July 2015).
- Duran, Julie, "'Oliver's Army' Elvis Costello", *NME*, 3 February 1979. <[http://www.elviscostello.info/wiki/index.php/New\\_Musical\\_Express,\\_February\\_3,\\_1979](http://www.elviscostello.info/wiki/index.php/New_Musical_Express,_February_3,_1979)> (7 November 2015).
- Gillett, Charlie, 'Bob Marley & The Wailers: *Catch a Fire* (Island)', *Creem*, May 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-marley--the-wailers-icatch-a-firei-island>> (7 November 2015).
- Gillett, Charlie, 'Reggay: Son of R&B', *Record Mirror*, 10 May 1969, <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/reggay-son-of-r--b>> (7 November 2015).
- Gillett, Charlie, 'Various Artists: The Harder They Come', *Let It Rock*, October 1972. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/various-artists-ithe-harder-they-comei>> (7 November 2015).



- Goldberg, Michael, 'Special AKA: New Band, Old Causes', *Rolling Stone* (November 1984). <[http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/special-aka-new-band-old-cause#.Uvzjt\\_1\\_uwU](http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/special-aka-new-band-old-cause#.Uvzjt_1_uwU)> (9 July 2015).
- Goldman, Vivien, 'Jah Punk: The Black New Wave', *Sounds*, 10 September 1977. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/jah-punk-the-black-new-wave>> (7 November 2015).
- Goldman, Vivien, 'Jah Punk: New Wave Digs Reggae', *Sounds*, 3 September 1977. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/jah-punk-new-wave-digs-reggae>> (7 November 2015).
- Goldman, Vivien, 'Linton Kwesi Johnson: Poet Of The Roots', *Sounds*, 2 September 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/linton-kwesi-johnson-poet-of-the-roots>> (7 November 2015).
- Goldman, Vivien, 'The Specials: *More Specials*', *NME*, 20 September 1980., <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-imore-specialsi>> (7 November 2015).
- Griffiths, David, 'Max Romeo: This Is The Record That Will Give The BBC Troubles — If It Reaches The Top...', *Record Mirror*, 21 June 1969. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/max-romeo-this-is-the-record-that-will-give-the-bbc-troubles--if-it-reaches-the-top>> (7 November 2015).
- Hibbert, Tom, 'Who The Hell Does Billy Bragg Think He Is?', *Q*, October 1991. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/who-the-hell-does-billy-bragg-think-he-is>> (9 July 2015).
- Hoskyns, Barry 'Hugh Masekela, Blazing in the Bush', *NME*, 31 March 1984. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/hugh-masekela-blazing-in-the-bush>> (11 September 2015).
- Hoskyns, Barney, 'Wedged Down Their Throat: Fine Young Canibals', *NME*, 14 December 1985. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/wedged-down-the-throat-i-fine-young-cannibalsi>> (9 July 2015).
- Ingham, Chris, 'Paul Simon: Life after The Capeman', *MOJO*, November 2000. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-life-after-ithe-capemani>> (25 September 2015).
- Jones, Peter, 'Millie: A Blue Beat Bombshell', *Record Mirror*, 4 April 1964. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/millie-a-blue-beat-bombshell>> (7 November 2015).
- Lester, Paul, 'SCREAMADULLICA – Primal Scream: Give Out But Don't Give Up (Creation)', *Melody Maker*, 26 March 1994. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/screamadullica--primal-scream-igive-out-but-dont-give-upi-creation>> (6 August 2015).

Miles, 'The Clash: Eighteen Flight Rock', *NME*, 11 December 1976.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-clash-eighteen-flight-rock>>  
 (11 September 2015).

Morley, Paul, 'The Jam: The Revolution Will Start When Paul Weller Has Supped His Pint', *NME*, 3 November 1979.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-the-revolution-will-start-when-paul-weller-has-supped-his-pint>> (11 September 2015).

Morley, Paul, 'Punk in Manchester, Oh How We Laughed', *NME*, 15 February 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/punk-in-manchester-oh-how-we-laughed>> (6 August 2015).

Murray, Charles Shaar, 'Eric Clapton: *Timepieces*', *NME*, 29 May 1982.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/eric-clapton-itimepiecesi>>  
 (7 November 2015).

O'Brien, Glenn, 'Paul Simon: *Graceland* (Warner Brothers)', *Spin*, November 1986.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-graceland-warner-bros>> (25 September 2015).

O'Hagan, Sean, 'UB40: Salt Of The Earth', *NME*, 8 December 1986.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/ub40-salt-of-the-earth>>  
 (7 November 2015).

Pidgeon, John, 'The Harder They Come (dir. Perry Henzell)', *NME*, 22 July 1972.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/ithe-harder-they-comei-dir-perry-henzell->> (7 November 2015).

Reel, Penny, 'Paul Simon: *Graceland*', *NME*, 13 September 1986.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-igracelandi>>  
 (25 September 2015).

Reel, Penny, 'The Wailers: *Catch a Fire* (Island)', *International Times*, 31 May 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-wailers-catch-a-fire-island>> (7 November 2015).

Reynolds, Simon, 'The Specials: Reissues', *Uncut*, May 2002.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-specials-reissues>> (7 November 2015).

Reynolds, Simon, 'The Stone Roses: Shooting from the Lip', *Melody Maker*, 3 June 1989. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-stone-roses-shooting-from-the-lip>> (6 August 2015).

Rose, Cynthia, 'The Special AKA: In the Studio (2 Tone)', *NME*, 4 August 1984.  
 <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-special-aka-iin-the-studioi-2-tone>> (7 November 2015).

Rosen, Judy, 'When World Music Became Universal', *Rolling Stone*, 21 June 2012.

Salewicz, Chris 'Led Zeppelin: Smiling Men With Bad Reputations', *NME*, 4 August 1979. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/led-zeppelin-smiling-men-with-bad-reputations>> (11 September 2015).

Salewicz, Chris, 'Rock Against Racism Carnival: Victoria Park, Hackney, London' *NME*, 6 May 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/rock-against-racism-carnival-victoria-park-hackney-london>> (7 November 2015).

Salewicz, Chris, 'Spandau Ballet: Revolt Into Style', *The Face*, August 1981. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/spandau-ballet-a-revolt-into-style>> (9 July 2015).

Savage, Jon, 'The Jam, London Hammersmith Odeon', *Sounds*, 31 December 1977. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-london-hammersmith-odeon>> (11 September 2015).

Shaw, William, 'Red Wedge', *Smash Hits*, 12 February 1986. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/red-wedge-2>> (9 July 2015).

Silverton, Peter, 'Steel Pulse: No Jah-Babble In-A Birmingham', *Sounds*, 22 April 1978. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/steel-pulse-no-jah-babble-in-a-birmingham>> (7 November 2015).

Smith, Alex, 'Bob and Marcia: 'Why Marry? Our Way's Okay' says Bob Smiling While Marcia Frowns', *NME*, 21 March 1970. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-and-marcia-why-marry-our-ways-okay-says-bob-smiling-while-marcia-frowns>> (7 November 2015).

Snow, Matt, 'Happy Monday's Shaun Ryder', *Q*, December 1990. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/happy-mondays-shaun-ryder>> (6 August 2015).

Snow, Matt, 'Paul Weller: We All Make Mistakes', *Q*, October 1993. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-weller-we-all-make-mistakes>> (9 July 2015).

Staunton, Terry and Sinker, Mark, 'Paul Simon: The Boy in the Boycott', *NME*, 4 April 1987., <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-simon-the-boy-in-the-boycott>> (25 September 2015).

Stewart, Tony, 'The Jam: Setting Sons (Polydor)', *NME*, 10 November 1979. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-jam-isetting-sonsi-polydor>> (11 September 2015).

Sutcliffe, Phil, 'Brian May: Happy and Glorious', *Q*, March 1991. <<http://www.deaky.net/rain/q91E.html>> (9 July 2015).

Wells, Steven 'Gary Numan: "I'd love to carry a gun. If some nutter comes at me with a gun I'd like to be able to shoot him."', *NME*, 15 October 1988.

<<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/gary-numan-id-love-to-carry-a-gun-if-some-nutter-comes-at-me-with-a-gun-id-like-to-be-able-to-shoot-him>> (9 July 2015).

White, Lesley, 'The Face Interview: Phil Oakey', *The Face*, December 1982, <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-ifacei-interview-phil-oakey>> (9 July 2015).

Williams, Richard, 'Bob Marley: The First Genius of Reggae?', *Melody Maker*, 24 February 1973. <<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bob-marley-the-first-genius-of-reggae>> (7 November 2015).

## **Newspapers and Periodicals**

Beeston, Nicholas. 'Howe Backs ANC link.', *The Times*, 18 May 1988.

Brown, Colin, 'Today Brent South, tomorrow Soweto: Africa Lures Boateng', *Independent*, 3 August 2012.

Castle, Stephen and Routledge, Paul, 'What a Party - The Guests Are Leaving' *Independent*, 15 February 1998.

Dowden, Richard and Lister, David, 'Ecstatic Crowd Hails Mandela at Wembley', *Independent*, 17 April 1990.

Franks, Paul, 'It's Paul, but you can call him Al', *The Times*, 21 March, 1987.

Raath, Jan, 'Britain talks to ANC in sudden switch of policy.', *The Times*, 5 February 1986.

Hall, Stuart, 'Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop et al', *New Left Review*, 151 (1985), pp.115-124.

Hall, Stuart, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979, pp.14-20.

Turner, Alwyn W., 'Things Can Only Get Bitter: The Lost Generation of 1992', *New Statesman*, 19 September 2012.

Webster, Philip, 'Sanctions shift signalled by Howe.', *The Times*, 17 July 1986.

## **Published Secondary Sources**

Theodore Adorno, 'On Popular Music', in Frith, Simon and Godwin, Andrew (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.256-267.

- Allen, Lara, 'Commerce, Politics, Musical Hybridity: Vocalising Black South African Identity During the 1950s', *Ethnomusicology*, 47 (2003), pp.228-249.
- Anderson, Muff, *Music in the Mix: The Story of South African Popular Music* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981).
- Ballantine, Christopher, 'A Brief History of South African Popular Music', *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), pp.305-310.
- Ballantine, Christopher, 'Music and Emancipation: The Social Role of Black Jazz and Vaudeville in South Africa between the 1920s and the Early 1940s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17 (1991), pp.129-152.
- Bilby, Kenneth, From 'Jamaica', in Potash, Chris (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp.29-38.
- Barfe, Louis, *Where Have All The Good Times Gone? : The Rise and Fall of the Record Industry* (London: Atlantic, 2004).
- Blair, Tony, *A Journey: My Political Life* (London: Arrow, 2010).
- Bradley, Lloyd, *Reggae: The Story of Jamaican Music* (London: BBC Worldwide, 2002).
- Bradley, Lloyd, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2013)
- Bragg, Billy, *The Progressive Patriot: A Search for Belonging* (London: Bantam, 2006).
- Byerly, Ingrid Bianca, 'Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa', *Ethnomusicology*, 42 (1998), pp.1-44.
- Campbell, Horace, 'Marley in Zimbabwe', in Potash, Chris (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp. 48-49.
- Castle, Barbara, *The Castle Diaries: 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984).
- Clarke, Donald, *The Rise and Fall of Popular Music* (London: Penguin, 1995).
- Clarke, Victoria Mary and MacGowan, Shane, *A Drink with Shane MacGowan* (London: Pan, 2002).
- Collins, Andrew, *Still Suitable for Miners: Billy Bragg* (London: Virgin Books, 2007).
- Collins, John, *African Pop Routes: The Inside Rhythms of Africa* (Slough: Foulsham, 1985).

- Coplan, David B., *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- Crick, Michael, *The March of Militant* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
- Curtis, Deborah, *Touching From a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.35.
- deKonigh, Michael and Griffiths, Marc, *Tighten Up: The History of Reggae in the UK* (London: Sanctuary, 2003),
- Denselow, Robin, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).
- Doggett, Peter, *There's A Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the rise and Fall of '60s Counter-Culture* (London: Cannongate, 2007).
- Erlmann, Veit, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- Erlmann, Veit, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Erlmann, Veit, "The Past Is Far and the Future is Far": Power and Performance Among Zulu Migrant Workers', *American Ethnologist*, 19,(1992), pp
- Ewens, Graeme, *Africa O-ye: A Celebration of African Music* (Enfield: Da Capo, 1991).
- Feld, Steven, 'My Life in the Bush of Ghosts: "World Music" and the Commodification of Religious Experience', in White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.40-51.
- Fieldhouse, Roger, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin, 2005).
- Fisher, Mark, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative* (London: Zero Books, 2009).
- Frith, Simon and Godwin, Andrew (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 1990).
- Frith, Simon, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- Frith, Simon, 'Rock and the Politics of Memory', *Social Text*, 9/10 (1984), pp.59-72.
- Frith, Simon, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable, 1983).
- Geldof, Bob and Valley, Paul, *Is That It?* (New York: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987).

Gilbert, Pat, *Passion is a Fashion: The Real Story of the Clash* (London: Aurum, 2005).

Gilbert, Shirli, 'Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Struggle Against Apartheid', *Journal of South African Studies*, 33 (2007), pp.421-441.

Gillett, Charlie, *The Sound of The City: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009).

Gwanga, Jonas and van Aurich, Fulco, 'The Melody of Freedom: A Reflection on Music' in Campschreur, Willem and Divendal, Joost (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa* (London: Zed, 1989), pp.146-159.

Gurney, Christabel, 'The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement's Difficult Decade' in Sapire, Hilary and Saunders, Chris (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (UCT Press: Cape Town, 2013), pp.229-250.

Hall, Stuart, 'New Labour's Double Shuffle', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 27 (2005), pp.319-335.

Hamm, Charles, "'The Constant Companion of Man': Separate Development, Radio Bantu and Music', *Popular Music*, 10 (1991), p.147-173.

Hamm, Charles, 'Graceland Revisited', *Popular Music*, 8 (1989), pp.209-304.

Hamm, Charles, *Putting Popular Music in its Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Charles Hamm, 'Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society', *Popular Music*, 5 (1985), pp.159-174.

Harris, John, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and The Demise of English Rock* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004).

Hattersley, Roy, *Fifty Years On: A Prejudiced History of Britain Since The War* (London: Abacus, 1998).

Healey, Denis, *Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989).

Hain, Peter, *Outside In* (London: Biteback, 2012).

Hain, Peter, *Sing the Beloved Country: The Struggle for the New South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 1996).

Haslam, Dave, *Young Hearts Run Free: The Real Story of the 1970s* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007).

Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 2004).

- Hobsbawm, Eric, *The New Century: In Conversation with Antonio Polito* (London: Abacus, 2003).
- Hoyland, John, 'Reggae on the Rates: The 'Jobs for Change' Festivals', in Mackintosh, Maureen and Wainwright, Hilary (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics* (London: Verso, 1987), pp.370-397.
- Iommi, Tony and Lammers, T.J., *Iron Man: My Journey Through Heaven and Hell with Black Sabbath* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).
- Jones, Dylan, *The Eighties: One Day, One Decade* (London: Preface, 2013).
- Judt, Tony, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin, 2010).
- Katz, David, *People Funny Boy: The Genius of Lee Scratch Perry* (Edinburgh : Payback Press, 2000).
- Kershaw, Andy, *No Off Switch: An Autobiography* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2011).
- Kilfoyle, Peter, *Left Behind: Lesson's From Labour's Heartland* (London: Politico's, 2000).
- Kornbluth, Jesse, *Graceland 25th Anniversary Reissue Liner Notes* (London, 2012).
- Lemelle, Sid and Basu, Dipa (eds.), *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* (London: Pluto Books, 2006).
- Link, Roland, *Kicking Up a Racket: The Story of Stiff Little Fingers 1977-1983* (London: Appletree Press, 2009).
- Livingstone, Ken, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).
- Long, Pat, *The History of the NME: High Times and Low Lives* (London: Portico, 2012).
- Lydon, John, Zimmerman, Keith and Zimmerman, Kent, *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (London: Plexus, 1994).
- Lynskey, Dorian, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).
- MacDonald, Ian, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Vintage, 2005).
- MacKinnon, Niall, *The British Folk Scene* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).
- McSmith, Andy, *Faces of Labour: The Inside Story: Your Guide to Labour Old and New* (London: Verso, 1997),
- McSmith, Andy, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable, 2010).



- Mackintosh, Maureen and Wainwright, Hilary (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics* (London: Verso, 1987).
- Magubane, Zine, 'Globalization and Gangster Rap: Hip Hop in the Post-Apartheid City' in Lemelle, Sid and Basu, Dipa (eds.), *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* (London: Pluto Books, 2006), pp.208-229.
- Mandela, Nelson, 'Steve Biko: Address at the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Steve Biko's death, East London, 1997', in Asmal, Kader, Kidester, David, James, Wilmot (eds.), *Nelson Mandela In His Own Words: From Freedom to the Future* (London: Abacus, 2006), pp.451-454.
- Mandela, Nelson, *Long Walk To Freedom* (London: Abacus, 2001).
- Marcus, Greil, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001)
- Marsh, Dave, *Sun City By Artists United Against Apartheid: The Making of the Record* (New York, 1985).
- Martin, Denis-Constant, 'The Musical Heritage of Slavery: From Creolization to "World Music"', in White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.17-39.
- Meintjes, Louise, 'Paul Simon's Graceland, South Africa and the Mediation of Musical Meaning', *Ethnomusicology*, 34 (1990), pp.37-43.
- Meintjes, Louise, *Sound Of Africa: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
- Middleton, Richard, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2000).
- Murray, Charles Shaar, *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and Post War Pop* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
- Panter, Horace, *Ska'd For Life: A Personal Journey with The Specials* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2007).
- Pimlott, Ben 'Trade Unions and the Second Coming of CND', in Pimlott, Ben and Cook, Chris (eds.), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London: Longman, 1982), pp.215-236.
- Pimlott, Ben and Cook, Chris (eds.), *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London: Longman, 1982).
- Potash, Chris (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997).
- Pugh, Martin, *Speak for Britain: A New History of The Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011).

- Regan, Colm, 'Live Aid: A Challenge to the "Experts"?' . Tro'caire Development Review (1986), pp.68-75.
- Reckord, Varena, 'Reggae, Rastafarianism and Cultural Identity', in Potash, Chris (ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp.3-13.
- Renwick, Robin, *The End of Apartheid: The Diary of a Revolution* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015).
- Reynolds, Simon, *Rip It Up and Start Again: postpunk: 1978-1984* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006).
- Reynolds, Simon, *Bring the Noise: 20 Years of Writing About Hip Rock and Hip Hop* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007).
- Robinson, Lucy, 'Putting the Charity Back Into Charity Singles: Charity Singles in Britain 1984–1995', *Contemporary British History*, 26 (2012), pp. 405-425.
- Robinson, Lucy, "'Sometimes I like to stay in and watch TV...': Kinnock's Labour Party and Media Culture', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), pp.354-390.
- Rogan, Johnny, *Ray Davies: A Complicated Life* (London: The Bodley Head, 2015).
- Rolston, Bill, "'This is Not a Rebel Song': The Irish Conflict and Popular Music', *Race and Class*, 42 (2001), pp.49-67.
- Salewicz, Chris, *Bob Marley: The Untold Story* (London: Harper Collins, 2009).
- Sapire, Hilary and Saunders, Chris (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013).
- Saunders, Chris, 'Activism in Britain for Namibian Independence: The Namibia Supporters Committee' in Sapire, Hilary and Saunders, Chris (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), pp.274-289.
- Savage, Jon, *England's Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).
- Schumann, Anne, 'The Beat That Beat Apartheid: The Role of Music in Resistance Against Apartheid in South Africa', *Vienna Journal of African Studies*, 14 (2008), pp.17-39.
- Schwarz, Bill, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1: The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Seymour, Richard, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics* (London: Verso, 2016).
- Simon, Paul, *Graceland Liner Notes* (London: Warner Brothers, 1986).

- Skinner, Rob, *The Foundations of Anti Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c.1919-1964* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- Steel, Mark, *Reasons To Be Cheerful: From Punk to New Labour Through the Eyes of a Dedicated Troublemaker* (London: Scribner, 2001).
- Stewart, Graham, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013).
- Taylor, Timothy D., *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- Taylor, Timothy D., 'World Music Today', White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.172-188.
- Thomas, Evan, *Robert Kennedy: His Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).
- Thörn, Håkan, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- Turner, Alwyn W., *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013).
- Turner, Alwyn W., *Crisis? What Crisis: Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum, 2008).
- Turner, Alwyn W., *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum, 2010).
- Ullestad, Neal, 'Subversive Effects of Live Aid and "Sun City"', *Popular Music*, 6 (1987), pp.67-76.
- Williams, Paul, *You're Wondering Now: The Specials, from Conception to Reunion* (London: Cherry Red, 2009).
- Leroy Vail and Landeg White, 'Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique', *The American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), pp.883-919.
- Wall, Tim, *Studying Popular Music Culture* (London: Sage, 2013).
- Waters, Anita M., *Race Class, And Political Symbols: Rastafati and Reggae in Jamaican Politics* (Oxford: Transaction, 1985).
- Weight, Richard, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London, Macmillan, 2002).
- White, Bob W., 'Introduction: Rethinking Globalization Through Music', in White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.1-16.

White, Bob W., 'The Promise of World Music: Strategies for Non-Essentialist Listening', White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.189-218.

White, Bob W. (eds.), *Music and Globalization: Critical Encounters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

Williams, Elizabeth M., 'Black British Solidarity With the Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The West Indian Standing Conference and Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa' in Sapire, Hilary and Saunders, Chris (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), pp.251-273.

Winders, James A., 'Reggae, Rastafarians and Revolution', in Potash, Chris (Ed.), *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music From Ska to Dub* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1997), pp.14-20.

Woods, Donald, *Biko* (London: Penguin, 1987).

## **Recordings**

Belafonte, Harry and Makeba, Miriam, *An Evening With Belafonte/Makeba*, Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba (RCA Victor, LPM-3420, 1965) [LP Album].

Bono and Burton, Brian, *Ordinary Love*, U2 (Interscope, B0019655-11, 2013) [CD Single].

Bragg, Billy, *Between The Wars*, Billy Bragg (Go! Discs, AGOEP1, 1985) [7" EP].

Bragg, Billy, *The Internationale*, Billy Bragg (Utility, UTIL 11 CD, 1990) [CD Album].

Brown, Ian and Squire, John, '(Song for My) Sugar Spun Sister', *The Stone Roses*, The Stone Roses, (Silvertone, ORE LP 502, 1989) [LP Album].

B.R.O.T.H.E.R. Movement, *Beyond the 16<sup>th</sup> Parallell*, B.R.O.T.H.E.R. Movement (4<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, 12 BRW 139, 1989) [12" Single].

Cook, Paul, Jones, Steve, Matlock, Glenn, Rotten, Johnny, *God Save the Queen*, Sex Pistols (Virgin, VS 181, 1977) [7" Single].

Dammers, Jerry, *Ghost Town*, The Specials (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT 17, 1981) [7" Single].

Dammers, Jerry and Chalmers, Lloyd, 'Too Much Too Young', Too Much Too Young (*The Specials Live!*), The Specials Featuring Rico (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT7, 1980) [7" EP].

Davis, Jonathan, Muhammad, Ali Shaheed, Taylor, Malik, 'Steve Biko (Stir It Up)', *Midnight Marauders*, A Tribe Called Quest (Jive, HIP 143, 1993) [CD Album].

Gabriel, Peter, *Biko*, Peter Gabriel (Charisma, CB 370, 1980) [7" Single].

Gillespie, Bobby, Innes, Andrew, Young, Robert, *Come Together*, Primal Scream (Creation, CRE 078T, 1990) [12" Single].

Gillespie, Bobby, Innes, Andrew, Young, Robert, *Loaded*, Primal Scream (Creation, CRE 070, 1990) [7" Single].

Grant, Norman and Grant, Ralston, 'Free Africa', The Twinkle Brothers (Front Line Records, FLS 104, 1978). [7" Single].

Hall, Terry and Dammers, Jerry, 'Man at C&A', *More Specials*, The Specials (Two-Tone Records, CHR TT 5003, 1980) [LP Album].

Heaton, Paul, Cullimore, Stan, Key, Ted, *Flag Day*, The Housemartins (Go! Discs, GOD7, 1985) [7" Single].

Holmes, Jake and Coakley, Alistair, 'Global Carnival', *Paradise in Gazankulu*, Harry Belafonte (EMI, CDP-7-46971-2, 1988) [LP Album].

Holmes, Jake and Coakley, Alistair, 'Global Carnival', *Paradise in Gazankulu*, Harry Belafonte (EMI, CDP-7-46971-2, 1988) [LP Album].

Hill, Joseph Hill, 'Two Sevens Clash', *Two Sevens Clash*, Culture (Lightning Records, LIC 1, 1978) [LP Album].

Hinds, David, 'Biko's Kindred Lament', *Tribute to the Martyrs*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, ILPS 9568, 1979) [LP Album].

Hinds, David, 'Jah Pickney-RAR', *Tribute to the Martyrs*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, ILPS 9568, 1979) [LP Album].

Hinds, David, *Ku Klux Klan*, Steel Pulse (Island Records, WIP 6428, 1978) [7" Single].

Jansch, Bert, 'Anti Apartheid', *It Don't Bother Me*, 1965, Bert Jansch (Transatlantic, TRA 132, 1965) [LP Album].

Lennon, John and McCartney, Paul, 'Ob La Di, Ob La Da', *The Beatles*, The Beatles (Apple Records, PCS 7067/8, 1968) [LP Album].

Livingstone, Dandy *A Message To, You Rudy*, The Specials Featuring Rico (Two-Tone Records, CHS TT5, 1979) [7" Single].

MacColl, Ewan, 'The Ballad of Sharpeville', *Saturday Night at the Bull and Mouth*, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger (Blackthorne Records, BR 1055, 1977) [LP Album].

Marley, Bob and Sporty, King, 'Buffalo Soldier', Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, 12IS 108, 1983) [12" Single].

Marley, Bob, 'Punky Reggae Party', *Jamming*, Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, 12 WIP 6410, 1977) [12" Single].

Marley, Bob, *Redemption Song*, Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, WIP 6653, 1980) [7" Single].

Marley, Bob, 'War', *Rastaman Vibration*, Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island, ILPS 9383, 1976) [LP Album].

Marley, Bob, 'Zimbabwe', Bob Marley and The Wailers (Island Records, WIP 659, 1979) [7" Single].

Motloheloa, Forere and Simon, Paul, 'The Boy in the Bubble', *Graceland*, Paul Simon (Warner Bros. Records, 7599-25447-2, 1986) [LP Album].

Murvin, Junior and Perry, Lee 'Scratch', *Police and Thieves*, Junior Murvin (Island Records, WIP 6539, 1976) [7" Single].

Okosun, Sonny, 'Where you Gonna Go (Soweto)', *London Calling: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, The Clash (Columbia, 517928 3, 2004) [CD Album].

Bert Jansch, 'Anti Apartheid', *It Don't Bother Me*, Bert Jansch (Transatlantic, TRA 132, 1965) [LP Album].

Prophets of Da City, 'Da Struggle Kontinues', *Universal Souljaz*, Prophets of Da City (Nation Records, NAT 53T, 1995) [12" Single].

Prophets of Da City, 'Understand Where I'm Coming From', *Age of Truth*, Prophets of Da City (Tusk Records TUCD30, 1993) [CD Album].

Ridenhour, Carlton 'Chuck D', Sadler, Eric 'Vietnam' and Shocklee, Hank, 'Show 'Em Whatcha Got', *It Takes a Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back*, Public Enemy (Def Jam Recordings, 527 358-2, 1988) [LP Album].

Ridenhour, Carlton 'Chuck D', Sadler, Eric 'Vietnam', Shocklee, Hank,, 'Who Stole the Soul', *Fear of a Black Planet*, Public Enemy (Def Jam, 466281 2, 1990) [CD Album].

Romeo, Max and Perry, Lee 'Scratch', 'War Ina Babylon', *War Ina Babylon*, Max Romeo and The Upsetters (Mango, 539 392-1, 1976) [LP Album].

Ryder, Shaun, Ryder, Paul, Day, Mark, Davis, Paul, Whelan, Gary, *24 Hour Party People*, Happy Mondays (Factory FAC 192, 1987) [12" Single].

Scott-Heron, Gil and Jackson, Brian, *Johannesburg*, Gil Scott-Heron (Arista, ARISTA 23, 1976) [7" single].

Simon, Paul, 'All Around The World or the Myth of Fingerprints', *Graceland*, Paul Simon (Warner Brothers Records, 7599-25447-2, 1986) [LP Album].

Simone, Nina and Irvine, Weldon, *Young, Gifted and Black*, Bob and Marcia (Harry J Records, HJ 6605, 1970) [7" Single].

Simonon, Paul 'Guns of Brixton', *London Calling*, The Clash (CBS, CBS CLASH 3, 1979) [LP Album].

Strummer, Joe and Jones, Mick (*White Man*) *In Hammersmith Palais*, The Clash (CBS, S CBS 6383, 1978) [7" Single].

Tosh, Peter, 'Apartheid', *Equal Rights*, Peter Tosh (Virgin, V 2081, 1977) [LP Album].

Tosh, Peter, 'Equal Rights', *Equal Rights*, Peter Tosh (Virgin, V 2081, 1977) [LP Album].

Tosh, Peter, *Legalise It*, Peter Tosh (Intel Diplo, PT-177-A, 1975) [7" Single].

Van Zandt, Steve, *Sun City*, Artists United Against Apartheid (Manhattan Records, 1A 006-20 0927 7, 006-20 0927 7 1985) [7" Single].

Wakeling, Dave, *Stand Down Margaret*, The Beat (Go- Feet Records, FEET 3, 1980) [7" Single].

Weller, Paul, *Eton Rifles*, The Jam (Polydor, POSP 83, 2059 176, 1979) [7" Single].

Weller, Paul, *Going Underground*, The Jam (Polydor, POSP 113, 2141 232, 1980) [7" Single].

Weller, Paul, 'Time For Truth', *In The City*, The Jam (Polydor, 2383 447, 1977) [LP Album].

Williams, Willi, *Armageddon Time*, Willi Williams (Coxsone Records, 1012, 1980) [7" Single].

Zukie, Tapper, 'M.P.L.A.', *M.P.L.A.*, Tapper Zukie (Front Line Records, FL 1006, 1978) [LP Album].

## **Films**

*Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Dir. Lee Hirsch, 2002).

*Beats of The Heart: Rhythm of Resistance* (dir: Jeremy Marre, 1979).

*Dance Craze* (Dir: Joe Massot, 1981).

*The Filth and The Fury* (Dir. Julien Temple, 2000).

*Have You Seen Drum Recently* (Dir. Jurgen Schadeburg, 1989).

*Joe Strummer: The Future is Unwritten* (Dir: Julien Temple, 2007).

*On Tiptoe: The Music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo* (Dir: Eric Simonson, 2000).

*Marley* (Dir: Kevin Macdonald, 2012).

*Sing Your Soul* (Dir: Susane Rostock, 2011).

*Soul Boys of The Western World* (Dir. George Hencken, 2014).

*Under African Skies* (Dir: Joe Berlinger, 2012).

*Wattstax* (Dir: Mel Stuart, 1973).

## **Radio Broadcasts**

Hugh Masekela, *Freedom Sounds*, BBC Radio 4, 21 June 2010.

## **Television Broadcasts**

*World in Action*, Granada, 27 January 1978.

‘Margaret Thatcher, Interview for London Weekend Television’, *Weekend World* (London Weekend Television, 16 January 1983).

‘Enter the Rose’, *The Wilderness Years* (BBC Two, 17 December 1995).

## **World Wide Web Sources**

Anon, ‘Billy Bragg Sings the Red Flag After Corbyn’s Refugee Rally Speech’, *Guardian*, 12 September 2015.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2015/sep/12/billy-bragg-sings-the-red-flag-after-corbyns-refugee-rally-speech-video>> (7 November 2015).

Anon, ‘A Sentimental Journey’, *Scotsman*, 11 April 2004.

<<http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on/music/a-sentimental-journey-1-1392490>> (11 September 2015).

Anon., ‘Stand Down Margaret’, *Uncut*, April 2013.

<<http://www.uncut.co.uk/features/stand-down-margaret-23780>> (7 November 2015).

Anon, ‘Topic Records: Celebrating Over 70 Years’ (2009).

<<http://www.topicrecords.co.uk/celebrating-over-70-years/>> (20 January 2014).

Anon, ‘Why is Malema Promoting Cassper’s Music?’, *Citizen*, 6 November 2015.

<<http://citizen.co.za/855341/why-is-malema-promoting-casspers-music/>> (7 November 2015).

Artists For Palestine, ‘Letter: Over 100 artists announce a cultural boycott of Israel’, *Guardian*, 13 February 2015.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/cultural-boycott-israel-starts-tomorrow>> (7 November 2015).



BBC, 'Nelson Mandela Death: Tories 'right on South Africa'', 6 December 2013. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25266180>> (25 September 2015).

Boffard, Rob, 'Hip Hop, Who Represents South Africa', *Guardian*, 17 February 2011. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/feb/17/south-african-hip-hop-the-future>> (7 November 2015).

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, 'Cultural Boycott', 10 July 2014. <<http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/cultural-boycott>> (7 November 2015).

British Phonographic Industry, 'BPI Yearbook 2014', January 2015. <[https://www.bpi.co.uk/assets/files/Sales%20by%20Type\\_2014.pdf](https://www.bpi.co.uk/assets/files/Sales%20by%20Type_2014.pdf)> (7 November 2015).

Brogan, Daniel, 'Live Aid: A Guide To Concert To Be Heard Around World', *Chicago Tribune*, July 12 1985. <[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-07-12/entertainment/8502150153\\_1\\_live-aid-wls-band-aid/2](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-07-12/entertainment/8502150153_1_live-aid-wls-band-aid/2)> (9 July 2015).

Bychawski, Adam, 'Primal Scream Unveil New Songs at Teenage Cancer Trust Gig', *NME*, 22 March 2013. <<http://www.nme.com/news/primal-scream/69342#4Rw42E0vzq6kzTbB.99>> (7 November 2015).

Byrne, David, 'I Hate World Music', 1999. <[http://www.davidbyrne.com/news/press/articles/I\\_hate\\_world\\_music\\_1999.php](http://www.davidbyrne.com/news/press/articles/I_hate_world_music_1999.php)> (25 September 2015).

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, 'Factsheet: The Cultural Boycott of Israel', June 2010. <<http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=868>> (7 November 2015).

Chomsky, Noam, 'On Israel-Palestine and BDS', *The Nation*, 2 July 2014. <<http://www.thenation.com/article/israel-palestine-and-bds/>> (7 November 2015).

Denselow, Robin, 'Paul Simon's *Graceland*: The Acclaim and the Outrage', 9 April 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/apr/19/paul-simon-graceland-acclaim-outrage>> (10 March 2013)

Denselow, Robin, 'We Created World Music', *Guardian*, 29th June 2004. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/jun/29/popandrock1>> (25 September 2015).

Elman, Peter, 'Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute', 2013. <<http://tonyhollingsworth.com/?q=content/nelson-mandela-70th-birthday-tribute>> (9 July 2015).

Elman, Peter, 'Tony Hollingsworth: A Summary Biography', 2005. <<http://tonyhollingsworth.com/?q=content/tony-hollingsworths-biography>> (23 January 2014).

- Eternal Thunder, 'Lee Perry F.A.Q. (Frequently Asked Questions)', 2005. <<http://www.upsetter.net/scratch/faq.htm#5>> (7 November 2015).
- fRoots, 'Homepage', 2013. <<http://www.frootsmag.com/homepage.html>> (7 November 2015).
- Fuse ODG, 'Why I Had To Turn Down Live Aid', *Guardian*, 19 November 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/19/turn-down-band-aid-bob-geldof-africa-fuse-odg>> (7 November 2015).
- Hartley, Eve, 'Jeremy Corbyn: Billy Bragg Supports The Labour Leadership Contender And Condemns Tony Blair', *Huffington Post*, 27 July 2015. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/27/billy-backs-the-beardjeremy-corbyn-billy-bragg-supports-labour-leadership-condemns-tony-blair\\_n\\_7879344.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/27/billy-backs-the-beardjeremy-corbyn-billy-bragg-supports-labour-leadership-condemns-tony-blair_n_7879344.html)> (7 November 2015).
- Jacobs, Sean, 'When Steven Van Zandt convinced AZAPO to take Paul Simon off a hit list and what Paul Simon really thought of Nelson Mandela', *Africa is a Country*, 26 January 2014. <<http://africasacountry.com/when-steven-van-zandt-convinced-azapo-to-take-paul-simon-off-a-hit-list-and-what-paul-simon-really-thought-of-nelson-mandela/>> (25 September 2015).
- Left, Sarah, 'Albarn Hits Out at 'Anglo-Saxon' Live 8', *Guardian*, 10 June 2005. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jun/10/g8.live8>> (7 November 2015).
- Lynskey, Dorian, 'When Musicians Boycott Countries There Are No Clear Winners', *Guardian*, 26 May 2010. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2010/may/26/musicians-boycott-countries>> (7 November 2015).
- Mashilo, Alex, 'Nelson Mandela was a member of our CC at the time of his arrest - SACP', 6 December 2013. <<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/party/nelson-mandela-was-a-member-of-our-cc-at-the-time->> (7 November 2013).
- May, Brian, 'Vegetarian rock stars don't vote Tory. I did. But I'll never vote for Cameron after his bloody badger cull', *Daily Mail*, 25 August 2012. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2193595/Brian-May-I-voted-Tory-But-Ill-vote-Cameron-bloody-badger-cull.html>> (25 September 2015).
- McCormick, Neil, 'Paul Weller: Some of my Best Friends are Tories', *Telegraph*, 5 May 2010. <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/neilmccormick/100008022/paul-weller-some-of-my-best-friends-are-tories/>> (11 September 2015).
- Musician's Union, 'The Musician's Union: A Social History, 1981-1990 (2013), <[http://www.muhistory.com/?page\\_id=206](http://www.muhistory.com/?page_id=206)> (11 September 2015).
- Neate, Rupert, 'Bono: controversial tax laws have brought Ireland the only prosperity it's ever known', *Guardian*, 12 October 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/12/bono-tax-laws-bring-ireland-prosperity-apple-google-u2>> (7 November 2015).

Osley, Richard, 'Bono Defends U2's Tax Arrangement: We Are In 'Total Harmony' With Irish Government's Philosophy', *Independent*, 23 September 2013. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/bono-defends-u2s-tax-arrangement-we-are-in-total-harmony-with-irish-governments-philosophy-8833065.html>> (7 November 2015).

Porter, Andrew, 'Revealed: Neil Kinnock thought he was Johnny Cash at Sheffield Rally' *Telegraph*, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2009. <[http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewporter/9403287/Revealed\\_Neil\\_Kinnock\\_thought\\_he\\_was\\_Johnny\\_Cash\\_at\\_Sheffield\\_Rally/](http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewporter/9403287/Revealed_Neil_Kinnock_thought_he_was_Johnny_Cash_at_Sheffield_Rally/)> (9 July 2015).

Palestinian Campaign for the Cultural and Academic Boycott, 'A Stinging Tribute to an Apartheid State: An Open Letter to Sting Urging him to Cancel his Israel Gig', *Electronic Intifada*, 6 June 2006. <<https://electronicintifada.net/content/stinging-tribute-apartheid-state-open-letter-sting-urging-him-cancel-his-israel-gig/528>> (7 November 2015).

Scottish Trades Union Congress, 'Songs for Social Justice: Primal Scream – Come Together', 12 January 2012. <<http://stucbetterway.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/songs-for-social-justice-primal-scream.html>> (7 November 2015).

Simon, Paul, 'Remembering Days of Miracle and Wonder: Paul Simon on Mandela's Role in Graceland', *New York Times*, 13 December 2013, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/14/arts/music/paul-simon-on-mandelas-role-in-graceland.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/14/arts/music/paul-simon-on-mandelas-role-in-graceland.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)> (25 September 2015).

Trades Union Congress, 'General Council Statement on Gaza, Congress 2014', 18 September 2014. <<https://www.tuc.org.uk/gaza2014congress>> (7 November 2015).

Tsholofelo Wesi, 'Zuma has Mad Respect for Cassper' *Citizen*, 2 November 2015. <<http://www.citizen.co.za/848883/zuma-has-mad-respect-for-cassper/>> (7 November 2015).

Two-Tone Records, 'The 2-Tone Label'. 2010. <<http://2-tone.info/articles/label.html>> (7 November 2015).

United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 35/206, 'Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa' (1980). <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/35/a35r206e.pdf>> (8 October 2013).

Wyatt, Daisy, 'Band Aid 30 is 'Cringeworthy', Says British Ebola Nurse William Pooley', *Independent*, 9 December 2014. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/ebola-nurse-william-pooley-calls-band-aid-single--culturally-ignorant-9911054.html>> (7 November 2015).