AHRC Network on Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change: Event 2

Sound Affects

The workshop will ask how, in understanding the relationship between subcultures, music and social change, we should research and analyse the particular contribution made by music. Does it, as some seem to suggest, provide a ‘soundtrack’ to social history, merely illustrating the ‘real’ business of change; or does it play a more direct part in constituting identities and mobilising action? To answer such questions, the symposium will draw on expertise from political science, sociology, history and music studies to develop a framework for the analysis of music's role.

Tuesday April 15th 2014

Room 1.02, Julian Study Centre, UEA

Session 1: Places (10.00-11.30)

Keith Gildart (University of Wolverhampton) – “Coal, Cotton and Rhythm ‘n’ Blues: Leigh, Wigan and Soho, 1955-65”

Mike Brocken (Liverpool Hope University) – “The Uselessness of the 70s Cavern: Only Good Enough for the Hippies”

Rosalind Watkiss Singleton (University of Wolverhampton) – “(Today I met) the Boy I’m Gonna Marry: Romantic Expectations of Teenage Girls in the Black Country”
Coffee/Tea: 11.30-11.45

Session 2: Movements (11.45-1.15)

Martin Cloonan/John Williamson (University of Glasgow) – “Conflict and consensus - the British Musicians' Union and industrial relations in the music profession”

Mark Jones/Gerry Carlin (University of Wolverhampton) – “Evolutionary Agents sent by God: The Beatles, Charles Manson and Historical Feedback”

Hazel Marsh (University of East Anglia) -

Lunch: 1.15-2.00

Session 3: Subcultures, Scenes and Genres (2.00-3.30)

Eithne Quinn (University of Manchester) – “Spit Truth to Power? Occupy Wall Street and New York’s Hip-hop Moguls”

David Wilkinson (University of Reading) – “Agents of Change’: Post-Punk, Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Popular Music”

John Street/Matt Worley (UEA/University of Reading) – “Reading the sound of punk: From Elton John to Eddie Cochran”

Tea/Coffee: 3.30-3.45

Closing remarks (Network and future events)

Organisers: Keith Gildart and John Street, on behalf of the Subcultures Network

Places are very limited. Please contact John Street if you wish to attend.

Contact details: John Street, School of Political, Social and International Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; email: j.street@uea.ac.uk
Abstracts

“(Today I Met) The Boy I’m Gonna Marry”: Romantic Expectations of Teenage Girls” (Ros Watkiss, University of Wolverhampton)

Since the mid-1950s, facilitated by expanding sales of the ubiquitous Dansette record players and transistor radios, music has provided the backdrop to adolescent dreams and desires. Supplemented by television programmes aimed at the younger viewer, these electronic devices allowed teenagers virtually uninterrupted access to popular music. The messages of the music were reinforced by the innovation of magazines, produced for the consumption of teenage girls, which used images of pop stars and the lyrics of their songs to "illustrate their romantic fantasies" and interpreted music “exclusively in terms of romance” (Angela McRobbie, Feminism and Youth Culture (2000) Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, pp. 145-6). As recent histories have characterised the post-war world as one of generational conflicts, social revolution and sexual permissiveness, this paper will utilise oral testimony to explore the influences on the romantic expectations of teenage girls c. 1960-c. 1975. It will argue that, for the vast majority of young women, their ideas of love were encapsulated in the lyrics of the songs and endorsed by magazines such as Jackie, Honey and Boyfriend, where the concepts of romance and marriage remained inextricably linked.

Coal, Cotton, Rhythm ‘n’ Blues: Leigh, Wigan and Soho, 1955-65 (Keith Gildart, University of Wolverhampton)

This paper examines the impact of rhythm and blues music on the industrial towns of Leigh and Wigan in the years 1955-1965. The first part explores the ways in which popular music and American youth culture complemented, challenged/transformed particular localities, soundscapes, spaces and individual and collective feelings of belonging, alienation and escape. The second part traces the journeys and experiences of three musicians (Ronnie Carr, Mike O’Neil and Clive Powell), who forged a career in the pubs of North West England and in the coffee bars and rhythm and blues clubs of Soho. Powell’s three-year residency in the Flamingo Club (1962-1965) was especially notable in symbolising the meshing of class, racial and sexual identities and contributing to the development of musical/social networks and youth subcultures. The careers of these musicians exemplify the connections between Black America, West Indian migration and white working-class youth. The paper poses a challenge to recent revisionist accounts of the relationship between class, race, popular music and youth culture in post-war Britain.

Conflict and consensus: the Musicians’ Union and industrial relations in the (British) music profession (Martin Cloonan and John Williamson, University of Glasgow)

This paper examines industrial relations in the British music profession since the formation of the Amalgamated Musicians’ Union (AMU) in 1893. It will do this is three parts. It will begin by identifying the changing nature of both the employers and the working musicians across the profession before considering the role played by the AMU (and its successor, from 1921, the Musicians’ Union) in pursuing improvements for musical labour. In doing so, it will explain how the Union used both its own power and a series of alliances of mutual benefit with other Unions and employers to do this. Finally, it will reflect on the outcomes of the Union’s interventions in the professional lives of musicians and these compare with the wider changes in the trade union movement in the post 1979 period.

The Uselessness of the 70s Cavern: Only Good Enough for the Hippies (Mike Brocken, Liverpool Hope University)

Many of us have possessed at one time or another, a once-valuable commodity such as a video recorder or a ‘brick-like’ mobile phone of which we were proud to be the owner. A special device
can make us feel good, being part of the modern society that had created such marvels. Yet both
time and technologies move on, making once treasured objects redundant, no longer wanted.
Similarly we all know the feelings of experiencing current trends and being in a place that was
thrilling to enter: the atmosphere of a venue, hearing music pulsating through hot and sweaty warm
air. Furthermore, meeting friends before, or in selected venues often added to this ‘specialness’ of
place. All such feelings (and more besides) generate a deep sense of nostalgia for times and places—
and ask us to question why such places (in our case, those linked with popular music
authenticities) frequently and repeatedly vanish – should they not, we ask, last forever? In the case
of Liverpool, such a question is frequently asked regarding the demolition of the original Cavern
club. Indeed, this is supplemented by further rhetoric statements: how could anyone in their right
minds have allowed the Cavern’s demise? Who was responsible for such a wanton act of seeming
urban terrorism? I have already stated elsewhere that:
The council’s actions did, at times, seem baffling: the building housing the Cavern was knocked down
for a ventilation shaft that never materialized; other venues such as the Flying Picket were forced to
close through a deplorable lack of funding. Still more such as the Royal Court Theatre were
mutilated, with its stalls seating removed, and allowed to fall into disrepair – the Watch Committee
even banned the showing of the movie Woodstock in the city centre in 1971. [1]
While such remarks certainly have their point, it should also be stated that place-based rhetoric
tends to resonate and re-resonate through time and space, changing imaginings, creating ‘different’
places in the newly informed recipient’s mind and, in turn, allowing subsequent mythologies to grow
and develop. However the popular music historian has to acknowledge that any city is a complex
phenomenon in which buildings and building typologies play significant yet changing roles in the
construction and idealization of place. The lives and deaths of buildings profoundly
condition the
production and alteration of the urban. Therefore the study of collective behavior via popular music
should ask us to consider how any changing criteria for the existence of buildings is related to how
popular music has contributed to the dismemberment of the urban.

“Evolutionary agents sent by God”: The Beatles, Charles Manson, and Historical Feedback
(Mark Jones & Gerry Carlin, University of Wolverhampton)

The music speaks to you every day, but you are too deaf, dumb, and blind to even listen
to the music…. It is not my conspiracy. It is not my music. I hear what it relates. It says,
“Rise!” It says, “Kill!” Why blame it on me? I didn’t write the music. I am not the person
who projected it into your social consciousness. (Charles Manson trial testimony, 19th
November 1970)
While popular music from its earliest expressions has commonly been accompanied by degrees of
fan hysteria, early sixties Beatlemania has come to define the parameters and social significance of
such phenomena. In retrospect, it is a nascent indication of the profound cultural transformations
which characterise the period, and which The Beatles would both represent and help to generate.
Prime purveyors of rock’s utopian promise that all we needed was love, hailed by Timo
thy Leary as
“divine messiahs”, adopting the role of cultural intermediaries – conduits of ideas both esoteric and
avant-garde to an unprecedentedly large and attentive audience – The Beatles seemed to embody
the late sixties’ dream of Aquarian evolution. By 1970 the band had acrimoniously split, evolution
was becoming violent revolution, and utopia would only be ushered in by an apocalyptic cleansing.
Such was the belief of the Manson Family, whose murderous rampage in Beverley Hills in August
1969 was apparently motivated by their interpretation of The Beatles’ ‘Helter Skelter’ as prophecy of
imminent Armageddon. Along with Altamont a few months later, the Manson murders brought the
sixties to a dark and bloody conclusion. While popular culture continues to revisit the psychedelic,
visionary and utopian sixties, amongst various disaffected youth subcultures Manson has become an
iconic symbol of the historical moment when utopianism turned to dystopia and optimism suddenly
flipped to its paranoid obverse. In musical genres which typically extol nihilism and negation, and
which deny futurity through a variety of performative and musicological strategies, Manson is sampled and cited as the oracular denier of utopian possibilities. This paper will examine how the Beatles’ massive cultural significance, and Charles Manson’s millenarian appropriation, have determined the historiography of the late sixties.

Spit Truth to Power?: Occupy Wall Street and New York’s Hip-hop Moguls (Eithne Quinn, University of Manchester)

The Occupy protest movement, which started in New York in September 2011, was one of the most striking grassroots political movements of the US left in recent years. Rappers became prominent participants: some “conscious” rappers like Talib Kweli and Common, which is perhaps not surprising. But also a number of New York’s most commercial and hustler-inflected rap moguls became associated, in very different ways, with the protests – especially three black men who are the focus of this paper: Shawn (Jay-Z) Carter, Russell Simons (of Def Jam), Curtis (50 Cent) Jackson. These hip-hop moguls are comfortably within the 1% wealthy elite, to use the terms of the Occupy protest; but, paradoxically, they’ve forged careers by speaking for people at the other end of the economic spectrum – near the bottom of the 99%. In a 2008 interview, Cornell West asked Jay-Z “What’s the difference between a hustler and a revolutionary?” His reply was “level of maturity.” This paper argues that the Occupy movement, and the broader anti-capitalist energies since the start of the financial crisis in 2008, is starkly exposing levels of maturity of these rap moguls. With most of society now sold off, these rap moguls’ materialist perspective, populist rhetoric, business savvy, and stark understanding of power moves – whether by music corporations, politicians, or bankers – places them in a position of relative critical privilege. I previously argued in my book on Gangsta Rap that expecting music to save the day in the midst of neoliberal depoliticization and market encroachment was, in some ways, a conceptually and politically limited pursuit. However, the example of the rap moguls’ involvement in the Occupy movement – amid a crisis in neoliberalism’s legitimacy and extreme levels of social inequality – may cast doubt on such a thesis.

Agents of Change: Post-Punk, Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Popular Music (David Wilkinson, University of Reading)

In this paper I draw on cultural materialism to address the workshop’s question of whether music simply reflects or soundtracks social change, or whether it can constitute and mobilise such change too. Using the example of British post-punk, I argue that whilst culture (including popular music) cannot stand in for politics, it can potentially act as a ‘resource of hope’, binding affects to convictions and providing an indication that things could be otherwise than they are.

Reading the sound of punk: From Elton John to Eddie Cochran (Matt Worley, University of Reading, and John Street, UEA)

The first part of this paper will examine the ways by which punk was constructed in the music press, political journals and mainstream media, examining how meaning was projected onto it and related to the socio-economic, political and cultural context of the time. In the second part of the paper, we explore the assumptions evident in the accounts given of punk music’s relationship to politics. Drawing on work by Simon Frith and Theodore Gracyk, we draw out the distinction they make between ‘realist’ accounts of music’s politics and ‘aesthetic’ accounts. Each reveals a different perspective on both the music and the politics of punk.
List of those attending

**Speakers**

- Mike Brocken (Liverpool Hope University)
- Gerry Carlin (University of Wolverhampton)
- Martin Cloonan (University of Glasgow)
- Keith Gildart (University of Wolverhampton)
- Mark Jones (University of Wolverhampton)
- Hazel Marsh (University of East Anglia)
- Eithne Quinn (University of Manchester)
- John Street (University of East Anglia)
- Ros Watkiss (University of Wolverhampton)
- David Wilkinson (University of Reading)
- John Williamson (University of Glasgow)
- Matt Worley (University of Reading)

**Members of the Subcultures Network**

- Anna Gough-Yates (University of West London)
- Paul Hodkinson (University of Surrey)
- Sian Lincoln (John Moores University)
- Bill Osgerby (London Metropolitan University)
- Lucy Robinson (University of Sussex)
- Pete Webb (University of Cambridge)

**Other Attendees**

- Angela Bartie (University of Strathclyde)
- Tori Cann (University of East Anglia)
- James Donaghey (Loughborough University)
- Jasper Heeks (London School of Economics)
- Claudia Lueders (Royal Holloway, University of London)
- Andy Perchard (University of Strathclyde)
- Zhou Mei (University of East Anglia)
- Simran Singh (Royal Holloway, University of London)
- Jessica Winterson (University of Huddersfield)
- Nathan Wiseman-Trowse (University of Northampton)
Details of location etc

The workshop takes place in the Julian Study Centre (Room 1.02). There will be signs, but in case you miss these, there is a map below (building H2). If you are coming by taxi, the driver can drop you directly outside. If you are coming by bus, there is a stop nearby on Chancellor’s Drive (stops are also marked on the map). If you are coming by car, you will need to park in the main car park (P1), and walk down Chancellor’s Drive.

If you are arriving the (Monday) night before, then feel free to meet up at the Golden Star pub (http://www.goldenstarnorwich.co.uk/) from 8.00pm onwards. This is next door to the Premier Inn on Duke Street (Norwich, NR3 3AP), where many of the participants are staying (http://www.premierinn.com/en/hotel/NORCIT/norwich-city-centre-duke-street?cmp=KNC_D_BND&mckv=sgEC8UwPe_dc|pcrid|37931710419|kw|premier%20inn%20norwich|match|e|plid)

The Golden Star is on the corner of Duke Street and Coegate, and there are several restaurants nearby (the Golden Star doesn’t do food on Monday nights). For example:

The Last Wine Bar (http://www.lastwinebar.co.uk/) – an upmarket brasserie on Colegate

Torero (http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Rrestaurant_Review-g186342-d787473-Reviews-Torero-Norwich_Norfolk_East_Anglia_England.html) – a Tapas restaurant on Magdalen Street, at the end of Colegate

Nazma (http://www.nazma-norwich.co.uk/) – one of several Indian/Bengali restaurants on Magdalen Street.
Getting to UEA

By Car
From London take the M11/A11; just outside Norwich take the A47 towards Swaffham; the University is signposted at the next junction.
From the North or the Midlands, use the A47 via King’s Lynn, or the A14 to Newmarket and the A11 to Norwich. UEA is situated approx three miles west of the city centre, just off the Earlham Road (B1108).

By Air
Norwich International Airport has scheduled flights to and from Amsterdam, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Manchester, Exeter and international connections to 200 cities worldwide.
The easiest way to reach UEA from the airport is by taxi.
www.norwichairport.co.uk

By Rail - Bus
Norwich is about two hours from London (Liverpool Street) railway station and there are excellent intercity links with the rest of the country. For train timetables and tickets:
www.greateranglia.co.uk
A taxi from the railway station to UEA usually costs about £8.00 - £9.00
There are regular buses direct to the University which leave from the railway station forecourt – bus number 25 or 25A. Once on the university campus, get off at the first stop (opposite the main car park). A one-way ticket costs approx £2.50.
Check the buses within the Norwich area:
www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/easterncounties/easterncounties/home/
By National Express coach
National Express coaches run from all major cities in Great Britain as well as London airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted) to Norwich, Surrey Street Bus Station in the city centre. This is the cheapest way to travel to UEA from London, but it is not as fast as travelling by train.
Enquiries +44 (0) 8718 81 81 78 or http://www.nationalexpress.com/home.aspx

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