# London Underground:
# The multi-cultural routes of
# London dance cultures

Caspar Melville
PHD Thesis,
Media & Communications. Goldsmiths College. University of London

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Candidate Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is all my own work

Caspar Melville

Abstract:

Popular music plays a powerful role in people's lives. The centrality that it takes in the individual and collective lives of social actors appears to be in inverse proportion to their social, cultural and political power: relatively powerless groups have historically used music as a way to organise themselves and their understanding of the world, a way to speak in public, and speak about, among other things, the forces they believe conspire to keep them powerless.

This thesis is concentrated on the cultures that have emerged around a series of genres collectively described as 'dance music' in London in the past two decades. It takes as its starting point the most promising theoretical models developed to understand cultures around music, the 'subcultural studies' of the 1970s, but it places these alongside theoretical perspectives that pay more attention to the politics of space, in particular new developments in cultural geography, and the work on transational cultures of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Combining a theoretical approach based on Manual Castell's notion of a 'network society', with ethnography – interviews and participant observation data gathered over 3 years at the end of the 1990s – and case studies of specific dance music genre-networks – Rare Groove, 'Acid House' and 'Jungle' – the thesis traces the evolution of London dance cultures in relation to immigration, the changing racial and political geography of the city, and the emergence of multicultural space and practice.

The thesis traces patterns of continuity and change across different dance genres, to argue that the African diaspora, and particularly the 'discrete cultural unit' defined by Gilroy as the Black Atlantic rather than the Nation, or an idea of English particularity, continue to be the appropriate contextual frame for understanding dance music activity in Britain. Some of the underlying questions to which this thesis provides the answer are: what role have London's migrant and non-white populations played in the cultural and economic life of the city? What are the mechanisms of multiculture, and what role has Afro-diasporic music played in these mechanisms? What is the relationship between the development of musical subcultures and 'the Nation'?

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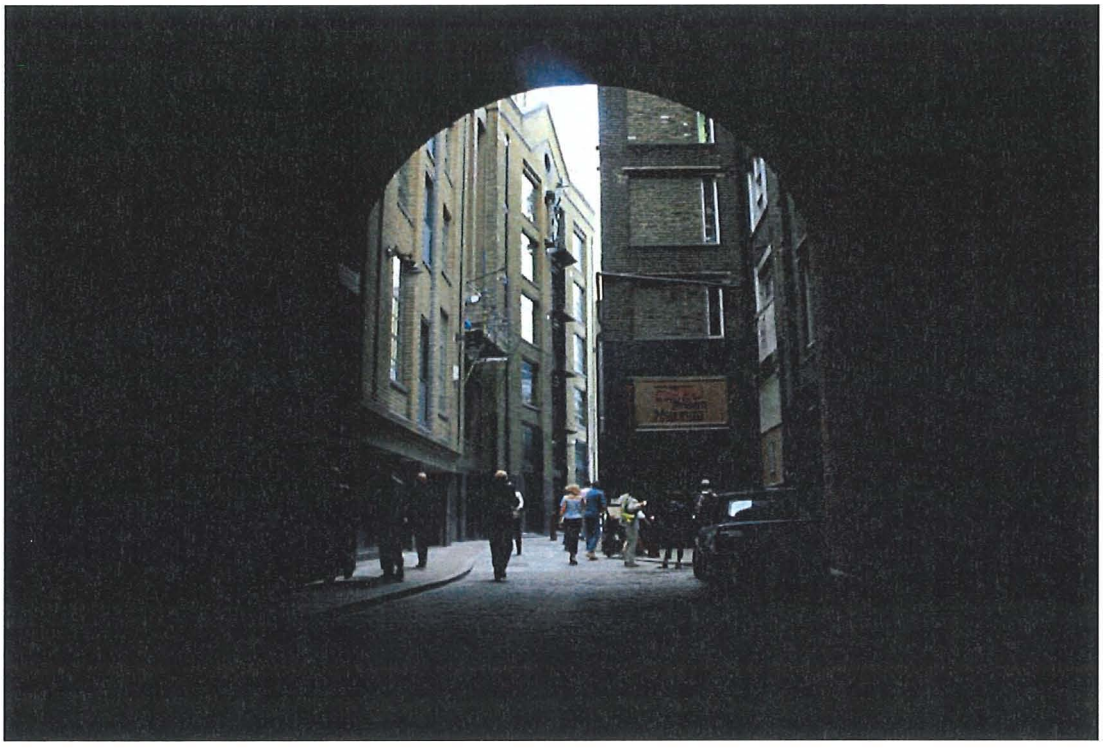
## Illustrations





Bankside, London – site of many of the underground warehouse parties and clubs on which this thesis is focussed

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## Introduction: Where's the party? locating dance cultures

The accelerating processes of globalisation[1] and increasing convergence of media corporations in particular[2], have intensified fears that fewer and fewer, bigger and bigger conglomerates are coming to dominate information flows, and cultural production, across the global media landscape. Western 'neo-liberal' capitalism in this argument is consolidating its grip on production and coming to dominate also distribution and the dissemination of information and the symbolic systems by which we understand and make sense of our world. Culture, in this view, has been captured and commodified, and critical space and self-generated cultural expression are merely a residue of a past era.

In Manuel Castells (1996) terms this new 'information society' is no longer defined, as was the previous period of industrial capitalism, by stable geographically circumscribed power 'blocs' – state governments, organised labour, institutions, classes – organised by 'clock time'; now 'space' has conquered time, and the 'network society' is defined by movement, or more accurately 'flows': "of capital, information, technology, flows of organisational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols."[3] These flows are increasingly dominated by trans-national business interests.

Castells' take on this new mobile, 'place-less' media-saturated world is a fundamentally gloomy one. Despite the existence of flexible, de-centralised 'new social movements' – like the Zapatistas, or the anti-globalisers – that can challenge the power of networked capital, it is those corporations with sufficient economic capital, and those individuals with, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, sufficient cultural and social capital, who are best placed to exploit these new fluid, risky conditions. The

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[1] The origins, dynamics and consequences of globalisation – as well as whether it is increasing – are the subject of hot debate. In an exchange with Paul Hirst, David Held makes the following argument: "I think of globalisation as the increasing extent, intensity, velocity and impact of world-wide interconnectedness. Such interconnectedness has existed for some hundreds of years. But if you trace its increase, I think you can argue that there is now an ongoing transformation, from economics, politics and migration to culture and law, which is creating a new kind of world order." David Held, from 'Globalisation: The argument of our time' published 22.01.02 at http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-6-28-637.jsp#one downloaded from 24/06/03.

[2] Again, this argument is the cause of much dispute. Supporters of the neo-liberal free market, like Ben Compaine, argue that convergence is exaggerated, but Robert McChesney insists that: "Over the past two decades, as a result of neoliberal deregulation and new communication technologies, the media systems across the world have undergone a startling transformation. There are now fewer and larger companies controlling more and more, and the largest of them are media conglomerates, with vast empires that cover numerous media industries." Published 25.10.01at http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-8-24-56.jsp. Downloaded 24.06.03

world may have taken on a different shape – flexible, unfixed, fluid – but inequality remains. Power flows (back) into the hands of the already powerful.

Yet globalisation is not a smooth or ordered process. It is risky, and disorderly[4] and even within media systems which at one level are increasingly dominated by global giants like AOL/Time Warner and News Corporation, alternative systems of communication and meaning do exist. These systems, like the forms of capital they mirror and are intertwined with, do not respect the integrity of national borders and narratives. Though they interact with national and corporate systems in multiple ways and they may be suppressed by or find themselves appropriated within state or market discourse; they are not the product of corporate planning, nor are they generated from the centres of cultural production, either state institution or transnational media conglomerate.

Such systems might, as Kevin Robins argues, offer forms of transnational identity or affiliation not available in the national or corporate media, like the symbolic communities of the Turkish diaspora in Germany.[5] Or they might, like peer to peer communities on the internet, create a global community of users who circumvent copyright by file-sharing, communicating direct, computer to computer.[6] They are the small scale, local or translocal, networks of information, identity and community which are born within capitalism, though they are not reducible to it.

The dance music cultures of London, are, and have been for some time, examples of such 'alternative' systems of cultural production. London dance cultures are self-generated and self-organised. They make use of the products and digital dissemination channels made available by globalised capital. London dance music cultures have used the global circuitry of the international record industry – the distribution routes of records, CDs, radio – to found new networks of affiliation, and the digital hardware produced by some of the worlds largest technology companies, in ways that often had not been anticipated by the designers of such equipment, to create new cultural products and express novel kinds of identity and affiliation. They have, as Paul Gilroy argued in *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) at least some

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[3] Castells, 1996: 412

[4] see Kevin Robins, 'Spaces of Global Media' 1997 (downloaded from http://transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/WPTC-98-06%20Robins.pdf ). Robins argument is that there s a 'productive disorder' created with the expansion of the global broadcasting markets – which have proved hard to control and dominate – which creates space for the emergence of new kinds of cultural space.

[5] ibid

of the characteristics associated with the 'new social movements' analysed by Castells and Alain Touraine.

The example of the London-based dance cultures that are the subject of this thesis offer both support and challenge to sociological notions – be it the 'network society' (Castells) 'post-traditional society' (Giddens), or the 'risk society' (Beck) – about the new ways in which the world is organised, and the place of cultural production in that world. The support comes from the fact that dance cultures exhibit precisely the network form that Castell's argues defines this new world, they do not operate with a secure sense of stable 'blocs' of class or institution as Gidden's 'traditional' society does: The challenge is this: how *new* are these new forms of society? (Castells himself admits that the network form has existed in other times and spaces.) The historical focus of this thesis, encompassing a twenty year period of club culture (1980-2000, but with 'routes' stretching back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century), is designed to explore the hypothesis that there is a continuity of form and structure about these cultures which queries interpretations that place them as part of some form of post-modern, post-digital or brand spanking new form of globalisation.

The starting point of this thesis is a particular conception of a place: London, and a particular idea about the history of the network form that Castells argues characterises the *new* form of (cultural) production. London, occupied continuously since ad 43, where its first permanent settlement spread out from the port at Southwark, has always been a place of transit, incomings and outgoings, trade, migration, setting out and returning. Waves of migrants, Jews and Arabs, Ethiops and Berbers, Italians and Hugenots, Chinese, Irish, and in the latter half of last century Caribbean, West Africans and Asians, have travelled through, and stayed in the sprawling, poorly planned overcrowded city. If, as Castells argues the city is 'process not form'[7], defined as much by what flows through it as by what it contains, then London is built from and expresses, draws its meaning from, these journeys to and through it, as much as from its legal residence and formal job description, as capital city of the United Kingdom.

Contemporary 'globalisation' has been understood as a novel reordering of the relations between local and global, where cultural products and symbolic forms are no longer contained within or expressive of national culture. But has London's 'culture' ever been an autochthonous, 'white' British culture? Trade and

[6] Siva Vaidhyanathan 'It's a peer to peer world' published 27.06.03 at www.opendemocracy.net

transportation throughout, for example, the long and murderous Atlantic slave trade from which British banking, real estate, architecture and commerce benefited so hugely, could not help but also open up conduits for other cultural influences, ideas, symbols and people. This thesis does not seek to prove that London culture has *always* been 'more than or not even' a discrete national culture. It *does* assert that the dance cultures that emerged in London from the late 1960s onwards – in different ways and using different forms of music – were significant precisely because they materialised the fact that London was, again in Castells language, a 'node' in a particular global network. That network, which was partially formed by the Atlantic slave trade and its repeated voyages between Britain, West Africa and the new World, has been named within contemporary cultural studies, as both Diaspora and 'The Black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1993).

Every musical genre of London 'club culture' in the past two decades has drawn on pre-existing networks of diasporic communication, most particularly the networks of friendship, knowledge and experience that underpin Jamaican sound system culture; familial, political and cultural links with black America that secured the enculturation of funk, soul and Hip Hop; and the globalised narratives of the African diaspora and its aesthetic form which articulate alternative ways of viewing, (especially racial) identity, forms of belonging, 'truth and rights'[8], justice and ways of being in the world. Paul Gilroy famously argues in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) that black music constitutes a significant element of a 'counter-culture to modernity', an alternative system of symbols and values that circulated along the channels carved by global commerce, but was not controlled by them (partly because of the low status given popular music and dance rituals, and the black people who made them). It is this already global system that created the very conditions within which we can discuss London dance culture, which without both the Atlantic slave trade and it's related though unforeseen consequences – mass immigration to the UK from the Caribbean and Asia between 1948-1962 – could not have become what it is. Dance music cultures – the kind of music that young people (and not just young people) listen and dance to in the city, the dance styles they employ and the meanings and values they find in that music all, as Gilroy has argues, "bear the imprint of distant experiences and their extensive planetary circuitry."[9]

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[7] Castells, 1996: 410
[8] cf Johnny Osborne *Truth and Rights* Studio One LP 1980
[9] Gilroy, 1997: 5

So London dance cultures, in this model, cannot be understood as an aspect of British culture, in any simple way. But rather than argue that London is a unique place where the walls of national culture have been breached I would suggest that the example of London dance music cultures could in fact potentially serve as a model for our understanding of all dance music cultures. British culture, notwithstanding the definitions handed down by Matthew Arnold, TS Eliot or Richard Hoggart, is always a composite, a product of interaction, a mixture, in the parlance of contemporary cultural theory it is 'hybrid'. Indeed a central assumption of this thesis is that 'culture' does not exist anywhere in a pure state. I agree with anthropologist Renato Rosaldo who argues (referring to the work of Paul Gilroy that), that 'culture is hybrid all the way down', and the task of the theorist is to explain the anomalous emergence of zones of 'perceived purity', which are always an ideological articulation of desire, rather than an accurate sociological description. Arguments about 'purity' and contamination in relation to culture are all too frequently reactions against the perceived threat posed by those considered irredeemably other. London dance cultures, and the attitudes to their particular material manifestations, if explored carefully, can reveal both something of the way culture and music in particular become extricated in struggles over 'difference' and the mechanics of multiculture, what the limits and tensions as well as the political possibilities of such a process are.

Castells conception of the network society is that it is a 'space of flows'. This is part of a larger re-orientation within cultural theory toward using space as a conceptual tool. Space, as a way of articulating and organising social relations is only now receiving the attention it deserves in cultural theory, and offers the potential for moving beyond what have been rather rigid notions of antagonistic class 'blocs' without abandoning notions of inequality, access and politics. Doreen Massey, a social geographer partly responsible for this re-orientation expresses it like this: "precisely because it is constituted out of social relations, spatiality is always and everywhere an expression and a medium of power."[10] We know, from Gramsci and from Foucault, that power is never total, or a one-way street, so the implication is that resistance to power also is articulated spatially, and can be read in and through space, and spatial practice. This is how I approach dance music cultures.

I have adapted Castells notion in what follows, to focus attention not only on the space where these kinds of global flows collide – London, a node in a global circuitry – but on dance clubs themselves, the spaces where dancing to music happens and

club networks are formed. I have named these as '*spaces* of flow' – where different kinds of 'movement': the movement of music through airwaves and bodies, of people across space, of ideas and associations, happens. It may only be a convenient coincidence that 'flow' – from the ability of the jazz musician to play endless different improvised chords, to the rappers ability to 'keep on' til the break of dawn' – has been identified by Tricia Rose (1994) as a pre-eminent trope (along with layering and rupture) within Afro-diasporic music practice. But I don't think it is. Instead I will argue that *flow*, understood as a practice of spatiality, a way to use and occupy space (though temporary) is a central practice of the multicultural public sphere, which is built on Afro-diasporic traditions.

Therefore this thesis foregrounds especially the *spatial practice* of musical scenes, from the spatial tactics employed by the Sound Systems in the hidden zones of the black public sphere to the spatial form of the inter-racial 'warehouse parties' and early 'club culture' to the way 'new forms' of post-rave music like Jungle offer new ways of mapping and negotiating multi-cultural city life, novel spatial networks, new clandestine cartographies which disrupt our understanding of the relationship between centre and periphery.

**Subcultures**

This brings me to the other significant theoretical assumption of this thesis. Traditionally the kind of youth networks I have been discussing as London dance cultures, have been called, within academic theory at least, 'subcultures'. This is based on the work of the Birmingham school of Contemporary Cultural Studies, under Stuart Hall, which first identified the symbolic importance of youth cultures within the political discourse of Britain in the late 1960s and 1970s. This group turned their analytic attention to the new formations of the mods, skinheads, rudeboys, rastas and, by 1977, punks which populated the landscape of youth culture. Their influential readings of the symbolic and social meanings which emerged from these groupings soon began to show that the articulation of these groups within the discourse of the powerful was just one, though an important, aspect of what they meant. After the ethnographic and analytic readings of especially Hebdige's *Subculture the meaning of style* and *Cut & Mix,* and Gilroy's *Ain't no black in the union jack* it became clear that these new groupings of young people around music were new forms of social organisation, new kinds of cultural production, and complex

[10] Massey, 1995: 104

new ways of 'being post-colonial'. Although subcultures, per se, may be "produced in the act of naming them", as Sarah Thornton has argued (see chapter 1 for a critique of Thornton), this insight does not exhaust the political meanings or social impact of the groupings this inadequate academic tag is used to describe.

Recently subcultural theory has come under sustained attack within cultural theory – for being romantic about 'resistance' and finding it in every sneer and safety pin, for its extravagant and ungrounded borrowings from (then) fashionable post-structuralism and semiotics, for overlooking the workings of representation and commodification, and for favouring the extraordinary over the everyday and quotidian. We need, according to David Muggleton, to become 'post-subcultural.'[11] I assess some of these critiques in chapter 1, but as a way to recuperate, not reject subcultural theory. I want to do this for one central reason: because subcultural theory provides a theorisation of race, and a way to understand how race works in and through music cultures. This may be underdeveloped in some work, or shackled to unsustainable political agendas in others, but Dick Hebdige's still profound insight that 'white' subcultures like mod, skinhead and punk, are a way for white British youth to work through the presence of symbolically threatening black youth in the city – indeed that subcultures are evidence of a complex dialectic between black and white youth being worked out on the terrain of style, music and dance[12], combined with Paul Gilroy's specifying of a black music tradition – encompassing the blues, jazz, funk, Reggae and Hip Hop – which allows black youth access to resources from which to construct an affirmative racial and political identity[13] – are and remain the twin starting points for analysing the at times racially mixed and hybrid (Hip Hop, funk, Jungle) and at others signally racially homogeneous (rave, Techno, dancehall) genres of dance culture that have emerged in London since punk and the heyday of subcultural theory.

Music, subcultures, dance music cultures, divide as well as join. If they are, in the well worn rhetoric of clubbers, like a family, they are a dysfunctional family, riven by what David Harvey (1990) calls the 'tensions of heterogeneity', marked by discourses of value and racial difference that they have inherited from the culture at large, a place of dissonance as well as harmony, and subject to the same threat of incorporation as any other kind of popular social art.

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[11] Muggleton, 1997
[12] Hebdige, 1979: 69

Nowhere in popular art or popular culture has 'race', in that specially limited sense in which it is framed and understood in the UK – that is as a question of black and white, Africa and Europe[14] – been more central than in popular dance music. Expertise in music and dance is a quality freely conceded by the white Anglo world to 'the other', epitomised and symbolised for that world by the African, as a form of purely notional compensation. This ideology imagines this expertise as a matter of nature, of biological destiny rather than as a product of thought with a function and a history. Black dance music has been taken to be the product of birth and blood rather than thought and work. This thesis makes a different argument – rhythm and dance are inherently cultural not biologically determined, they are the product of thought as much as feeling, in the context of a philosophy that rejects the corrosive division between mind and body, and crucially they are and can be taught and learnt. Dancing to music has a social meaning and function.

Studying London's dance music cultures opens up important questions around identity, race and nation. The Reggae sound system networks, the Rare Groove warehouse party network, the cartographies of Jungle, offer a model not only of alternative cultural production in the network society, and a form of network society of their own, but of how multi-culturalism – a well worn concept that struggles to identify the possibility of a culture which does not fetishise, or punish people on the basis of presumed racial difference – might be formed. Written across understandings of musical communities, of subcultures and scenes, is a history of racialised meanings in music, in its form, production and reception (Hebdige, 1979). For British national institutions black cultural production has always been problematic; ignored and derided until it could not be, co-opted when convenient, unassimable, by definition, to a narrow national agenda. From the Reithian BBC's suppression of jazz before the second world war (Curran and Seaton, 1997)[15], to BBC

[13] Gilroy, 1987, 1993

[14] The etymology of racial language is complex and nationally specific. 'Coloured' was the most common way of indicating racial difference in the post war period in Britain. The influence of Black Power in the US carried through the media and most obviously through music – led to an affirmation of 'blackness' and a shift in racial signifier: Black became a political identity and the way that Afro-Caribbean's self-identified. This was further complicated with the influx of Asians from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Uganda, who initially took up or were included within the designation 'black'. Recently 'British Asian's have developed versions of affirmative hybrid identity for themselves and now it is normal to distinguish between 'black (ie African or Afro-Caribbean, or mix) and Asian. This thesis, though wary of the inexactness and politically loaded language of race, uses 'black' to identity people and cultural products of African descent.

[15] One of the reasons for such an enormous transfer of listeners to the Forces network in the early 1940s was the huge popularity of American popular music available there

Radio 1's wholesale co-option of KISS FM's top black DJs in the mid 1990s[16] ; from Jeremy Thorpe's assertion in the late 1960s that a jazz concert he had witnessed was nothing more than 'musical Mau Mau' to cabinet minister Chris Smith's statement in 1998 that British black music (personified by Jazzie B and Roni Size[17]) was making an economic contribution to a British music industry which was more significant than British Steel, race and popular music have been entwined – by exclusion and inclusion – with definitions of the nation, its past and future.

This remains as true for contemporary genres like drum and bass or UK garage,[18] as it was for the mod, skinhead and punk scenes which Dick Hebdige detailed and analysed so influentially (1974, 1979, 1986). Relations between 'black and white' have been central to the way in which music, and especially 'dance music' has been received and understood, in the academy, in the public sphere, and by those who make, listen and dance to it. Organisation around music, however apparently dis-organised, have been the pre-eminent site of cultural mixing, of hybridity, of the development of what Les Back calls 'interculture' (1996) but they have also been the places where racial division has been most strongly marked, and the inadequacy of premature attempts to found 'rave new worlds' beyond race has been most clearly confirmed.

Post-coloniality is a lived reality in London, written in to the political geography of the city. The question is what part is accorded in official histories of the city to the often clandestine and frequently ignored networks of sociability where mixture has been prefigured, and worked through in shared space. The resilient popular music cultures of diasporic peoples in London, with their social and aesthetic forms which are not confined within the racial groups from which they are generated, have provided much of the energy on which conceptions of 'swinging London', 'cool Britannia' and recently 'London club culture' have been based. They have provided the form and content of the 'club culture' that is part of the cities special centrifugal pull on young people from around the world. It matters what place we accord to the cultural work of those for whom music cultures offered one of the only sources of

[16] The BBC's top 'dance' DJs : Judge Jules, Gilles Peterson, Trevor Nelson, The Dreem Team, Paul Oakenfold, are all ex-pirate radio DJs and were on KISS FM, the pirate-turned coastguard commercial station until the mid 1990s, when the BBC offered them national spots. There is a precedent here, after years of ignoring the popularity of American soul music in 1969 the BBC inaugurated their new youth station, radio 1, by poaching the soulful DJ Tony Blackburn from the pirate station Radio London, see Chapman, 1992

[17] Chris Smith 1998: 7. Smith's argument was somewhat undermined by his obvious unfamiliarity with his examples – neither Roni Size nor Jazzie B. are 'singers' as he described them.

[18] see Thompson, 2001

community, affiliation, play and employment. Black music is able to found communities of dance partly because of the social shape it takes precisely to counter-act the consequences of social fractures, estrangement and cultural impoverishment.

## Map of the thesis

The original question that gave rise to this thesis was posed by one particular musical genre, a hybrid of Reggae and 'rave' that emerged in London in the mid 1990s: Jungle. If, as many have claimed Jungle was Britain's first original *black* musical genre[19] then what do we make of the fact that many of the producers of Jungle, as much of its audience, are white? If, on the other hand, Jungle is thought of another site of crossover and appropriation, where a black cultural form becomes articulated to the enjoyment and identity work of white youth, as one of the traditions of writing about what Roger Hewitt calls 'black through white' holds,[20] how do we account for the sonically and sociologically obvious centrality of Afro Diasporic musical precedents and active involvement of black British cultural workers and crowds? If you listen to Jungle, or at least to the MCs – those who talk/rap on microphone at the Jungle club night – you are lead to understand that Jungle "is not about black and white it's a multi-cultural, inter-racial dance thing."[21] How does an understanding of Jungle as a hybrid music culture change our understanding of how subculture works in the UK – is it a sign of a truly shared cultural habitus or the emergence of a new hybrid 'underclass'? And what can examining music and dance cultures like these where race is explicitly on the agenda, tell us about the tenacity of ideas about racial difference and the possibility of transcending them; of founding more equitable multi-cultural societies through cultural activity?

Chapter 7 focuses on these questions in relation to the sociological and aesthetic co-ordinates of the Jungle genre. What comes before is an attempt to place Jungle, and the questions about music cultures, race and the possibility of multi-culturalism, in its historical and political context.

Attempts to interpret contemporary dance music cultures in Britain have been hampered by misrecognition of the context of their emergence. Certainly any social interpretive history of London dance cultures is forced to deal with the phenomena of 'rave' and 'acid house'. An undeniably significant moment for 'club culture', acid

[19] see Greg Tate, 1996, Benjamin Noys, 1994
[20] see Amiri Baraka, 1966; Ove Sernhede, 2000

house has also become the over-riding model by which both popular history and academic work on club cultures, understand dance cultures. Chapter 1 faces the emergence of a post-acid 'dance music consensus', in order to clear the ground for a re-evaluation of the history and politics of trans-racial dance culture. In Chapter 2 I address the methodological question arising from researching club networks, and introduce the informants. Chapter 3 gives an account of the deep and tenacious relationship between black popular music and dance and introduces, through the work of Paul Connerton, the idea that dancing to music might be construed as more than just a bit of fun on a Saturday night – rather it is the way in which societies denied access to the written word remember, interpret and understand: dance is the result of thought.

In chapter 4 I discuss the part that music and sociability around music and dance play in the expressive cultures of Britain's Afro-Caribbean community, and the struggles around making space for such cultural activity in the city. Chapter 5 uses the case study of a particular form of racially mixed music scene – Rare Groove – to open up the discussion of tactics of spatial resistance through music, and starts to account for both the ways in which multi-cultural activities around music can challenge and overcome racial binaries, and the way that these can be reasserted. Chapter 6 focuses on the racial politics of the acid house moment, and argues that rave rapidly reneged on its promise to offer a 'promised land'[22] beyond race, class and gender conflict. It also discusses London's black house and acid scenes that are frequently missing from dance cultures canonising texts.

If we are to grasp and interpret what is different about our contemporary situation – globalisation, the network society or the post-traditional society – we must be careful not to exaggerate the novelty of these processes, or leave out the stories as yet untold, lest we condemn ourselves to repeat the mistake of the past. We need to be sure we don't overlook the cultural forms that have developed, as it were, under our noses and behind our backs. In terms of finding new ways to understand British culture, and its place in a new Europe, or a newly globalised world, we need to look to the informal, dance cultures that have emerged in the city, London that "time and again...supplies the answer to the puzzle of what English culture is going to be."[23]

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[21] MC Conrad in Wiser, 1994

[22] The title of a big rave anthem by Joe Smooth (DJ International 12" 1989), incongruously remade the following year by Paul Weller.

[23] Paul Gilroy, 'London: Post-Colonial City' conference 1997 opening address

## Chapter 1: Rave New World? Disputing the dance music consensus

A complete history of dance music in Britain would self-evidently be long and complex, and way beyond the scope of this thesis. From folk traditions – Morris dancing, reels and jigs – to the enculturation of European styles like the Waltz; to the ubiquitous dance palaces of the 1930s and 1940s, to the bizarrely stiff-backed tangos, and 'pasa doubles' of ballroom dance competitions, dancing to music, at least in Britain, is not new. But you would be forgiven for thinking otherwise.

This is because since the arrival of one particular genre of dance music in the late 1980s, and the corresponding creation and consolidation of a 'dance music industry' with an ideological and economic interest in boosting one particular kind of dance music, the term 'dance music' has become institutionalised. Since the late 1980s 'dance music' in the popular media, and in some rather careless academic work, has acquired a fixed set of meanings. A brief sketch of this emergent consensus provides a definition of 'dance music' which centres on the ingestion of drugs – primarily Ecstasy – hedonism, sexual abandon, 'raves' (the unlicensed parties where a certain kind of club culture took hold), and a range of vague political positions clustered around the form of 'one world' new agism. This affirmative simplification of dance music serves a doublely problematic role. Firstly it shores up the commodification of popular dance music – the marketing rhetoric of certain night clubs, record labels and their spin-off merchandising. It trades in an historically short-sighted, hypocritical notion of novelty, which can be easily articulated to political projects (such as New Labour's Chris Smith's statement, above), or commercial agendas. Secondly it severs contemporary and future dance musics from their contested, disreputable past. This is not merely a matter of overlooking or understating the link between dance music and drugs (of which more later) – alliances between big club 'brands' and government strategies are only made possible in the context of a disavowal of the widespread use of ecstasy and cocaine within club culture, and hypocriticals announcement of 'zero-tolerance' club policies. More tellingly the dance music consensus represses the history of forms of dance culture associated with black populations in Britain, a history riven with conflict and ambivalence, and not so easily recuperable into a narrative of complacent hedonism or national vitality.

What is left out, and yet is essential in understanding the way American and Caribbean dance music has been used in subcultural life in Britain, and new forms of dance music have emerged from London in particular, is the cultural work,

organisation and resilience of Britain's black and multi-cultural populations engaged in what we might, in all cognisance of the political romanticism with which the term is associated, call a 'struggle' to create an affirmative form of culture – a culture beyond racism, if not 'race' itself – under the most challenging conditions.

Therefore this chapter looks at the way that the popular mass media has conceptualised and categorised 'dance music' as a particular set of forms and practices, and explores which elements, less easily assimilated to the dominant version of 'dance' authenticity, are hived off, neglected or mischaracterised. Secondly It looks at the way the ideologically laden notion of 'dance music' has entered the academy. It is my argument that most academics studying 'dance cultures' have taken the claims to vitality, novelty and egalitarianism of the 'dance music industry' too literally. This is related to the contemporary fashion within academic work on this subject to criticise and reject the work that has been done on youth music cultures in the past – so-called subcultural theory. The second half of the chapter moves to an assessment of how the work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and Dick Hebdige continues to provide a viable intellectual framework by which to understand and analyse youth cultural activity around music in London in the past three decades.

The argument I make in this thesis is that dance cultures in London, a networked series of genres drawing primarily on the cultural resources of the African diaspora, have provided forms of viable 'interculture', or functioning multi-cultural production, which can provide inspiration and support to the development of a more equitable postcolonial version of the city. They have been "a practical and creative means of cultural rearticulation and resurgence from the margins."[1] But this is under threat from the process by which 'dance music' and 'club cultures' are imagined, understood and their energy and imagery appropriated by a dance music market that cares little for the historic multi-cultural communities of dance. London dance cultures have a vibrancy, independence and structure that is unrecorded, and worthy of defence. But this requires a disarticulation of this history from the now conventional trotting out of the tropes of dance culture: what was once merely ignored and disparaged is in danger of becoming banal and over-celebrated (Gilroy, 2001).

[1] Born and Hesmonhalgh, 2000: 19. The authors are here talking about forms of post-colonial, hybrid cultures and the effect they can have on 'the West'.

## 'Dance music' genesis: rave

A new genre of dance music emerged in 1987 that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of London dance culture, and eventually that of the whole of the UK. A composite of a particular music genre, 'acid house', and a particular social form of consumption, the 'rave', it became known colloquially as 'acid house' and subsequently 'the rave scene' or simply 'rave'. Chapter six takes a close look at the rave phenomena from the point of view of race and cultural politics. It focuses on the way in which rave became the pre-dominant way in which dance music was understood, both journalistically and within academia.

Certainly it would be foolish to underestimate the impact of house music, and rave, on British dance culture – its effects were profound and long-lasting. 'Raves' – huge unlicensed all night parties – which originated (at least in this form) in 1987/8, really were unprecedented in terms of their size and location. Frequently with several thousands 'ravers' (some raves in this period, such as at Castle Donnington in Leicestershire, were attended by over 25,000 people), they took place predominantly outside the traditional zones of dance culture – the inner city – in disused airfields, abandoned warehouses, frequently outdoors (another innovation of the rave period) and even in stately homes.[2] Such enormous pay parties, which were also the site for mass consumption of ecstasy, generated, of course, huge profits for the promoters and drug dealers (who more often than not were allied, see Collin 1996). In the few short years between the so-called 'summer of love' of 1988 when acid house took hold in the UK, and the early 1990s when police forces started targeting raves and rave promoters, huge dance music 'brands' were developed by a handful of dynamic and aggressive promoters: Sunrise, Genesis, Biology, Tribal Gathering.

Run by entrepreneurial young men, some with links to right wing libertarian politics, and named by Matthew Collin (1997) as 'anarcho-capitalists', some of the 'brands' fell to in-fighting or exhaustion, but by the mid 1990s, through the combined work of promoters, drug smugglers and the media (whose fevered 'moral panic' about crazed youth high on drugs at 'acid house parties' confirmed its subversive appeal in the minds of youth[3]) the conditions had been created for the exploitation of a new mass market: the dance music industry comprising a network of branded nightclubs

[2] Collin, 1997: 251
[3] This is Sarah Thornton's argument, 1995

(Ministry of Sound, Cream, Tribal Gathering), 'big name' celebrity DJs with their own links to record labels, promotion and marketing emerged (Paul Oakenfold, Sasha, Danny Rampling, Carl Cox, Judge Jules) and a supportive batch of new 'dance music' magazines: *Mixmag, Muzik, DJ International* and, in 1998, *Ministry*.

**The dance consensus**

Traditionally the popular music press in the UK has had little time for music which was for dancing. Betraying their origins in what Dave Hesmondhalgh has called the 'rock ideology'[4], coverage of 'dance music' before acid house, in the pages of the established music publications like the *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker*, ranged from the sparse to the non-existence. The tendency of rock critics, deeply invested in the ideology of authenticity (which would reject for example the big production disco dance music of Earth Wind and Fire or Cameo as 'too commercial') technique, individual genius, and the electric guitar, was to consider certain forms of dance music associated with black musicians – blues, jazz, soul – as worthy but not their business, and others – primarily disco – as an affront to their aesthetic sensibilities, trivial, mindless, repetitive, crassly commercial and insufficiently masculine.[5] This meant that up until the rave explosion coverage of 'dance music' – jazz, soul, Reggae, funk – was ghettoised within the tiny, and independently financed, 'black music' press, notably *Black Music* Magazine (established in 1973, which merged with another small title, *Blues & Soul*, in the mid 1970s).

But with the rise of 'rave' and with it the supposedly new genre 'dance', alongside a precipitous drop in the sales of 'rock ' and alternative rock, the magazine market was reorganised in early 1990s, reflecting a global crisis in 'the rock formation' after the false dawn of grunge and (in the UK) Brit-pop, and the rise of newly economically vibrant 'dance culture'. As the sales of the traditional authorities on youth cultural style and music decline (Melody Maker was absorbed into NME in 2001) a new genre emerged within popular music publishing – the 'dance' music press. In 2001 the three biggest selling 'dance music' titles in the UK are *Ministry*, *Muzik* and *Mixmag*. *Mixmag* (strapline: "big tunes, real clubbing") is owned by the media conglomerate

[4] Dave Hesmondhalgh 'Rethinking popular music after Rock and Soul' 1996 in Curran, Morley and Walkerdine, 1996: 195-213

[5] To celebrate their 50th anniversary the New Musical Express produced a list of the top fifty most influential 'music icons', based on their own coverage, which included just three black music artists – Bob Marley (20), Marvin Gaye (43) and Michael Jackson (45). Manchester miserablists The Smiths were number 1. Angelique Chrisafis 'Roll over, Beatles – Smiths top of the pops' in *The Guardian* April 17th 2002.

Emap, *Muzik* ("dedicated to dance music") by its chief corporate rival IPC, and *Ministry* is the house magazine of the 'superclub' brand The Ministry of Sound.[6] These magazines provide the critical function of legitimating and publicising 'dance music', they are the cultural intermediaries between consumers and the industry whose frequently critical and ironical stance to the record and club industry, their commitment to innovation, to new styles and the activities of everyday clubbers- signified for example in Muzik's 'bedroom DJ' feature which features new and unheralded DJs, the prize of which is a record contract with a dance music label – belies their dependence on the revenue they get from advertising (records, technology and clubs) and the close relationships they need to have with record labels, clubs and artists in order to get access to editorial content.

Each publication claims to cover the full range of 'dance' music styles, and the naming and proliferation of dance subgenres is an important aspect of their appeal. However the organisation of content in these magazines carries a clear ideological message – some music that you can dance to *is* 'dance music' and some is not. While sub-genres from 'nose-bleed Techno' to 'hardbag' and 'trance' are subsumed within the category 'dance', as are some genres which are not even designed to dance to, such as 'chill out' and 'ambient', others are treated as separate entities, specifically soul, R&B and Hip Hop. Other genres which as share some characteristics with 'dance' – UK Garage and Jungle/Drum and Bass – are not discussed at all or confined to their own sections.

The point here is that these genres are distinguished by their racial associations: They are considered to be black genres and therefore not, in some special sense, dance music. Race is a conspicuous divider when it comes to describing and evaluating 'dance music'. The dance music press, as an important part of the larger multi-million pound dance music industry, which includes nightclub chains, clothing and lifestyle merchandisers, visual media like videos and dance music documentaries, and the use of dance imagery in advertising, promotes a particular version of what dance music is, who makes it and what it means.

[6] Emap is the UK's second largest magazine and media owner (including KISS radio), IPC is a subsidiary of AOL/Time Warner, the Ministry of Sound is a 'cross media music empire' (Guardian, Feb 11th 2002), which has developed out of a London based nightclub synonymous with the rise of 'dance culture.' It is the best selling 'dance music' magazine (Music Week, 4/7/01).

**Rave/race**

According to *The Face* magazine, by 1997 dance music had become "everywhere, the future sound of now, a cash cow for hep cats, and the saviour of many a backsliding "rock" act."[7] But it wasn't just the size of the rave audience that made it stand out, it was its complexion. Raves – heavily hyped (both by promoters and an eager-to-be-shocked media), taking place out of the urban centre, provided white British youth with a thrilling yet relatively safe form of access to a culture of music and dance. Previously white British youth would have of necessity had to either have specialist knowledge of and access to 'white' dance scenes such as Northern Soul or the soul scenes in the south of England, or to have connections with and the willingness to travel to, racially mixed areas of the city where 'dance cultures' had been incubated for the past thirty years. Rave provided the opportunity for hundreds of thousands of young white British kids to discover the joys of dancing to music in public, and the means, as the ingestion of MDMA (ecstasy) lowered the usual social inhibitions that prevented them, especially men, from venturing onto the dance floor.

It is this factor above all else that has fed the relentless mythologisation of rave in the popular media and academia. The uniqueness of certain of its features has led those unfamiliar with the precedents and history of social dance in the UK, to assume that 'rave' and rave meanings are synonymous with the meaning of dance cultures.

This is the fundamental shared assumption, a consensus, underpinning the writing about 'dance music'. This extract from a documentary 'Rave New World' sums it up:

> *It all began in 1988*, the so-called 'Second Summer of Love'. ...The kids said they just wanted to dance to a new music called 'Acid House'. But there was one more crucial element: the new dance music arrived at the same time as a new drug called Ecstasy. (emphasis added)[8]

What I want to call the *dance music consensus* is unanimous about the origins of dance music culture; they lie in 1988, in the fateful meeting of a group of subcultural Londoners, digitally produced American (primarily Detroit) 'acid' house music and the chemical stimulant 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetmine (MDMA), more commonly Ecstasy. The origins of 'dance culture' in this three way "deployment of

[7] Introduction to the article "Are you dancing...'cause they're asking" *The Face* 2, March 1997: 156
[8] Rave New World edited transcript 1994 Channel Four, MacDougall Craig productions

technologies – musical, chemical and computer"[9] has become the genesis myth of the dance music industry, and underpins all contemporary claims made on behalf of dance culture, club culture, clubbing, 'generation ecstasy', 'the chemical generation' or the Rave New World.[10]

What the dance consensus achieves is the conflation of 'house' music, a specific genre with a particular aesthetic and social form, with 'dance' music. This means that forms of behaviour associated with (certain forms of) house music, primarily the consumption of ecstasy, are conceived as the principle logics of all 'dance cultures' (hence 'Generation Ecstasy'[11] and 'The Chemical Generation'[12]) and that anything that happens subsequently in 'dance culture' (e.g. the development of new genres like 'Jungle') must be interpreted from within *this* dance music paradigm. The reason why this matters is that this removes 'dance culture' from the context of the 'dance' cultures which precede acid 'house' – soul, Reggae, funk and Hip Hop – or those which develop parallel to it in the 1990s, 'swing beat', Jungle or R&B (all genres associated with black audiences). It effectively whitewashes UK dance culture obscuring both the cultural work and influence of Britain's Afro-diasporic populations, and the part dance music has played in forging Britain's multi-cultural future.

Rave has a complex and ambiguous, though frequently ignored or misconstrued, relationship to the politics of race. In common with all subcultures since mod 'rave' is based around music generated from within the black Atlantic primarily by black American producers from the Northern urban centres: New York (and New Jersey), Chicago and Detroit. However, like Hip Hop, 'acid house' is not received in the UK as black music. It does not come primarily through the pre-existing networks of the black public sphere, and the race of its producers is obscured by the music's tendency towards texture over narrative, beat over voice, and the facelessness (hence race-lessness) of acid house producers. This relative distance from an immediate racial politics opened acid house and rave up to generations of white youth potentially alienated by the defiant 'blackness' of Reggae, Hip Hop and soul. It facilitated the appropriation of this music by a generation of white subcultural producers without

[9] Collin, 1997: 4

[10] Reynolds, 1998; Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999; Collin 1997; Pini 1997, Garratt 1999, Champion 1999. Some notable exceptions to this trends are Eshun 1999, Hutnyk, Sharma Sharma and Hutnyk 1997, Zuberi 2001all three of which, not coincidentally, approach popular music from the perspective of the cultural politics of race.

[11] Simon Reynolds' 1998 book *Energy Flash: A Journey through Rave music and Dance Culture* was published in the United States as *Generation Ecstasy*

the ambivalences and negotiations inherent in white uses of self evidently black forms (Back, 2002b).

Rave, in the words of Simon Reynolds, one of its more sophisticated historians, was suffused with a rhetoric of "transracial, cross-class unity."[13] This rhetoric has since become the basis for a dance music consensus which mistakes some of the 'promise' of rave for its materialisation in culture. Thus house music radio and club DJ Judge Jules can make, unchallenged, the speculative claim that "dance brought a lot of social and racial groups together who otherwise would probably never had socialised together. It brought about the end of football hooliganism." Lest we be in doubt as to which 'dance' music he is referring, he makes clear that he views 'the phenomena of dance and the phenomena of house' as equivalent, and that house – with the 'rave' moment as its origin in the UK – is distinct from, and implicitly superior to, other forms of dance culture: "If there is a science of youth culture then house has defied that science – its become an all-encompassing lifestyle."[14]

Such an emphasis on the novelty of house and rave, and its magical healing properties successfully obscures the connection with 'black music' which is inherent in Techno (a fusion of European 'machine music' with the basic elements of funk) and house (digital disco with gospel-inspired vocal), and the fact that these formal connections are partly what carries the music along diasporic routes to fuel the London black Acid and 'house' scenes of the 1980s (which precede the 'Ibiza' moment) which are conspicuous by their absence from most writings on 'dance culture.' While 'origins' supply less than half the answer to the 'meaning' of cultural products and social networks (Gilroy, 1993), nevertheless these have to be acknowledged and understood as connecting the music to other traditions along other pathways. This repeats an historical process which allows the role, investment and work of real people to be pasted over, in the service of a trans-Atlantic commerce in cultural products that as Amiri Baraka (1966) pointed out in the sixties, allows 'the British Invasion' bands like the Rolling Stones, to sell black American music back to white America, as a new thing. Any semblance of a 'rave' scene that exists in America is entirely based on the British model suggesting, once again, that white America sits up and listens to 'house' and 'Techno' once its origins in the specific black and

[12] The title of a channel four documentary 27th May 2000
[13] Reynolds, 1997: 104
[14] From "Are you dancing...'cause they're asking" a series of interviews by John McCready and Miranda Sawyer in The Face Magazine No 2 March 1997: 157-162. The article introduction exhibits

Hispanic gay club scenes of New York, Chicago and Detroit have been laundered by its routing through the dance music industry in the UK.[15]

Much of what follows is drawn from interviews with people whose involvement with dance music cultures precedes, often by decades, acid house. Speaking to such informants allows for perspectives on contemporary dance culture which are more attuned to the complex and ambivalent relationship between rave and race than can be found in the popular music press and the mass media:

> Acid house was full of the kind of rhetoric that it doesn't matter what creed or colour you are, but actually it was 90% white. Raves were not a black thing. A lot of the people organising the clubs and the DJs were black – Fabio, Grooverider, Carl Cox. Rave was for white people.[16]

I have outlined the dance music consensus as it has congealed within the specialist dance media, and suggested the impact this has had on popular understandings of dance. It is after all the music journalists, DJ and producer/promoters that are part of the dance music industry who are called on as experts in the TV documentary histories of dance, newspaper features and other mass media characterisations of dance culture history. They frame the way dance music and club cultures are understood beyond the specialist circuits of the field. But this is only one aspect of the pervasiveness of the ideological construct of dance, because this same consensus, these same sets of assumptions about what dance music is and what it means, have also framed the academic discussions of contemporary dance cultures, which might be expected to be sceptical of 'raves' claims to be novel, to offer, without any of the ironic resonance of Huxley's dystopia, a 'rave new world'. [17]

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just the historical amnesia have been discussing, albeit ironically: "In the "olden days" dance music was disco and what old men in suits played at weddings. Now dance music is, like, everywhere."

[15] A process sharing much with the first British pop invasion of the 1960s when The Rolling Stones sold blues and rock and roll – the music of black America – back to (white) America clothed, as Amiri Baraka argues (1967) in the garb of white middle class non-conformism – the beatnik.

[16] Rachael B. interview.

[17] Susan Broadhurst, in a book on contemporary 'dance cultures' (mainly 'Modern' dance) includes a chapter on 'rave culture' based from reading the 'dance music' theorists I have been discussing. Without bothering to test their assertions empirically the speculative assertion of 'collectivism' which is an ideology of 'rave' becomes a hardened social fact: her assessment of the future of 'rave' concludes, "it is to be hoped that their [rave culture's] egalitarianism and collectivism will be here to stay" Broadhurst, 1999: 152

## Dance in the Academy

There is still a very small literature within definable academic traditions that discusses dance music. The small sub-field of 'popular music studies' which might have been expected to produce work on dance subcultures has been particularly silent, a consequence perhaps of the origins of this field in a 'rockist' sentiment which values individual genius above social performance, and song lyrics and melody over rhythm or groove. Popular music scholars routinely indicate that dance music is an area which needs to be analysed but they all leave it to someone more qualified (who has yet to arrive).[18] There is a huge and growing literature on Hip Hop,[19] which is analysed from every disciplinary perspective conceivable, but no one to my knowledge has successfully attempted to link Hip Hop to other black American music and dance traditions like house and Techno, let alone British club cultures.[20]

This leaves academic literature on dance music to emerge in disorganised form from disparate disciplinary perspectives, including law (Redhead, 1993, Rietveld, 1998), media and communications (Pini, 1997) and sociology (Malbon, 1999) departments. Some of the best academic writing on dance music is actually produced from beyond the borders of any academic discipline or institution. Simon Reynolds, formerly a music journalist on staff at the *Melody Maker*, has consistently produced high quality, historically and sociologically sophisticated writing on dance cultures, with an unprecedented attention to the music itself and to the ethnographic composition of the music audience. I describe my disagreements with Reynolds arguments in chapters 6 and 7, but he has produced work of depth and sociological credibility, with close attention to the music at the heart of dance cultures.[21]

Broadly the academic literature of dance cultures can be divided into two distinct groups, which nevertheless share the same assumptions. The first might be called the affirmative 'ravologists' – those who believe that post-rave dance cultures offer truly new ways of being young, of social organisation and leisure, and ways of potentially transcending social division. Reynolds, Steve Redhead, Hillegonda Rietveld, Ben

[18] David Hesmondhalgh's work on 'dance' independent labels, and Will Straw's extremely speculative discussion of dance 'scenes' are among the only resources on 'dance ' produced by 'popular music studies. See Hesmondhalgh, 2000, Straw, 1991.
[19] among the best writings on Hip Hop are Rose, 1994, Potter, 1996, and Toop 1984
[20] This is something David Hesmondhalgh and I have tried to do, in the UK context see Hesmondhalgh & Melville, 2001
[21] see Reynolds, 1998

Malbon and Maria Pini are in this category, although this work varies dramatically in rigour and coherence. Then there is the tradition that Hesmondhalgh has described as 'the hermeneutics of suspicion,'[22] exemplified in the work of Sarah Thornton. Thornton's *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural capital*' (1995) argues that subcultures are created in the act of being named by the media, and that the extravagant claims made for dance music as politically radical and socially transgressive are merely markers of distinction in a struggle to acquire precious subcultural capital. Despite their cosmetic disagreements these two perspectives share two key assumptions. The first is the consensus on the history of dance music I have described; an historical amnesia to anything that happened before 1988. The second is that these writers agree that the academic traditions that precede their investigations into youth cultural activity around music are irrelevant or inadequate to their own attempts to understand contemporary youth cultural activity.

These texts agree[23] that the sociological models developed in the 1970s, primarily by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies at Birmingham University or 'Birmingham school', to characterise and analyse patterns of consumption and organisation around music, the so-called 'subcultural' studies, are no longer adequate or appropriate for describing or interpreting the relationship between young people and popular music. The second part of this shared assumption involves omission, which is linked to the first, because it is what marks this work off most sharply from that of the subcultural school. This is the absence of a discussion, let alone a theorisation, of race. This involves not only ignoring the academic literature on black dance musics which has been strategically omitted from the dance music canon – the rich literature on music such as Reggae, soul or Hip Hop[24] – but neglecting the issue of race in their ethnographic and putatively sociological characterisations of the dance music audience. For the majority of writers in this new tradition 'race' if it comes up at all is cursorily dismissed, or consigned to the category of 'origin'.

## Revisiting Subculture

The 'subcultural tradition' is exemplified in the work of Hall and Jefferson (1976), and Dick Hebdige (1974, 1979, 1983) following on from the pioneering work of Phil Cohen (1972). This tradition, with its roots in the sociology of deviance produced a

[22] Hesmondhalgh, 1998
[23] Some state this outright, in others it is implicit.
[24] This is huge literature: for soul Guralnick 1986, Ward 1998; for Reggae Hebdige 1987, Bradley, 2000

series of ethnographic and textual readings of youth cultural formations, centred around music – skinheads, mods, punks, rudies – which placed these formations firmly in a historical and political context and argued that what might be perceived as deviant or trivial cultural behaviour could only be understood in relation to the changing race and class contours of post-war British culture.

Against the dismal and reductive attitude to popular dance music of Adorno and Horkheimer,[25] and the austere, moralistic anti-Americanism of early British cultural studies (eg Hoggart, 1957), subculturalists took popular cultures seriously. In popular music and it's consumption, where Adorno saw passivity, regression and hollow effect, that flattered without satisfying, and Hoggart saw "spiritual dry-rot" and "sensation without commitment,"[26] the group of academics working collaboratively in Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, once Stuart Hall replaced Richard Hoggart as head in the late 1960s, saw young people actively wrestling with the contradictions visited upon them, and at least the possibility, through popular cultural activity, of symbolic resistance, of 'refusal'.[27]

The subcultural tradition places class at the centre of its analysis, but it does not project the image of a threatened authentic form of working class culture *endangered*[28] by the arrival of goods and ideas (and people) from abroad via the new transnational mediums of cinema, radio and records. It suggests instead that British youth make of these products their own kinds of culture, stitched together from the resources provided by the cultural industries but in ways the industries did not anticipate, the more urgently and spectacularly the further down the social hierarchy, the further from jobs and homes and satisfaction they found themselves.

Criticisms of subcultural theory have been numerous and convincing. Many of the most telling have come from within the tradition itself, or from theorists sympathetic with the overall aims of the centre (McRobbie and Garber 1975, Middleton, 1990), evidence of a healthy degree of reflexivity. McRobbie and Garber criticised the gender

[25] Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997 c1946
[26] Hoggart, 1957: 246-8
[27] Hebdige, 1979: 132: "both Reggae and punk rock are created within the contexts of subcultures which are themselves produced in response to specific historical conditions. This response embodies Refusal."
[28] Phil Cohen's work on the skinheads argues this – see P Cohen, 'Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community', *Working Papers in Cultural studies 2* , University of Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies – but later subcultural work, especially Hebdige (1979, 1988) and Gilroy (1987), seems to shift to a more affirmative idea of how transcultural products are used in forms of symbolic and political resistance.

reductionism of the subcultural model – focussing on the activities of small groups of white working class men, and others weighed in with criticisms of the focus on 'spectacular' subcultures, sidelining 'the conformist' (Clarke 1990) or the 'hidden spheres' of youth cultural activity (Gilroy, 1987). The 'magical', mysterious' and 'coded' ways in which 'style' and 'attitude' signified (an, in most cases inevitably futile) refusal, presented in the mysterious language of the French avant-garde could lead, as Stanley Cohen has argued, to well written but sociological shaky work which made unverifiable claims on behalf of their object subcultures.

Arguably worse was the fact that as analyses of activities based largely around the consumption of specific genres of popular music – skinheads and their appropriation of Reggae, mods and soul, punk – subcultural studies remained curiously 'deaf' to musical meaning, focussing instead on 'style' fashion and argot (Laing 1985, Hesmondhalgh, 1996). Sadly no one in subcultural theory pursued the interest in semiotics to develop a semiotics of musical meaning to accompany their readings of style, fashion and gesture.

But these failures and lacunae notwithstanding, the work of those studying youth music cultures at the CCCS, particularly that of Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige and Paul Gilroy, remains an important starting point for contemporary conceptions of dance culture, as I argue below. Yet academic writing about post-rave dance cultures have either ignored the work, or been especially dismissive of its attempts to understand youth cultural activity. A close reading of one of the most influential recent books on post-rave clubs will help to make this argument clear.

### *Club Cultures*: A critique

Sarah Thornton's *Club cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (1995) is the best written and most influential text on contemporary dance cultures in the UK. For Thornton the Birmingham school's subcultural method is 'empirically unworkable', distorted by an out-dated politicised quest for 'resistance' which the 'ideologies' within 'club cultures' themselves propagate. [29] The main issue to be considered in youth cultural activity around music is the construction and maintenance of (ideological) distinctions (Bourdieu, 1980), for example between 'the underground' and 'the mainstream', a jockeying for position in a struggle to acquire 'subcultural capital' which can then be cashed in for economic capital. Not for her the Dionysian

techno-shamanism of a 'rave new world', or the subcultural 'resistance through ritual' model, any and all dance cultures, the activities of all clubbers or ravers (which as David Hesmondhalgh notes "seem to be a remarkably homogenous entity"[30] ) are reduced to this jockeying for 'credibility' in a field defined by its utter lack of cultural politics.

But, as the editors of an issue of *Theory Culture and Society* devoted to the politics of music remind us, just because it may not be simply a question of assessing music cultures as 'winning' or 'losing', being 'for' or 'against' hegemonic culture[31] (as much subcultural work would, in fairness, have us believe) "it does not follow that (musical) youth cultures possess ...a politics of *only* taste and distinction", that there are not other forms of politics, other kinds of meanings being made in music collectivities. In particular, if dance music is recognised as having an unexplored but foundational relationship to 'black music', ethnic, racial and multicultural meanings.

Thornton fatefully ignores the issue of 'race' and how it plays out across music cultures. She suggests that 'race is a conspicuous divider' in club cultures but homogenises her club audiences ('clubbers') as if it were not.[32] "Although I did substantial work in Afro-Caribbean and mixed race clubs," she states, "the book more thoroughly (but not exclusively) analyses the cultural world of the white majority."[33] The methodological justification for this is far from clear, nor are the differences between an 'Afro-Caribbean club,' a 'mixed-race' club, and those of the 'white majority' explored or supported. These differences exist, there are 'dance musics' which are confined to relatively racially homogenous social forms of consumption, but there are reasons for this, which Thornton ignores, which cut the heart of how club cultures form and what they mean to their participants.

How each 'new' genre accommodates and articulates 'history', the 'fit' between it's rhetoric and the actual composition of it's crowds is surely of central importance in assessing its political meanings. 'Gabba', a Dutch sub genre of Techno, reconfigures elements of Detroit Techno (a black American form) to articulate a violent and frequently anti-Semitic hyper-masculinity; it is consumed in large predominantly

[29] Thornton, 1995: 8
[30] Hesmondhalgh, 1998: 6
[31] Hutnyk & Sharma, 2000: 58 citing Gilbert and Pearson, 1999
[32] Thornton, 1995: 7
[33] Thornton, 1995: 7

white and male 'raves.'[34] UK Garage, a generic hybrid of house, Jamaican dance hall and Hip Hop, finds space within its form for the paranoid gangsta funk of So Solid Crew, the slinky ghetto fabulous girl group Mis-teeq, and the down-beat street poetry of white 'rapper' The Streets – the composition of its audience reflects these contradictions and hybridities. There is no single logic, or politics of individual dance music 'genres,' let alone 'dance music' or 'club culture' as a whole.

Thornton narrows the scope of her enquiry to the boundaries of the nation-state (the UK), and to the activities of one ethnic group, the 'white majority', displaying an ethnocentricity which is rendered untenable by the very from and context of the music which forms the (excluded) middle of her enquiries.[35] Music and the "affective alliances" (Grossberg 1992), "scenes" (Straw, 1991) and communities it summons and structures are not so easily confined within national borders (Gilroy, 1993) and this is not only a consequence of the globalisation of the commodity form of the music industry, but also of the lines of affiliation and affinity, the routes and pathways of trans-national allegiance which dance music (of all kinds) traverses. The need to track both the specific local *and* global coordinates of popular music collectivities (Back, 1996) only becomes more urgent when the relationship between African, Afro-American and British 'dance' musics is laid bare (Chernoff, 1979, Potter, 1998).

Perhaps even more alarming is that Thornton, as with all other attempts to analyse post-rave cultures sociologically (Rietveld, 1998; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2002) neglects completely the rich and varied literature on black music – American jazz studies (eg Baraka 1967; Kofsky, 1976; Walser 1999), funk and soul histories (Vincent, 1996; Guralnick, 1986; Ward 1998; George, 1994), Hip Hop theories (Baker, 1993; Toop, 1984; Rose 1994; Tate, 1992) or the rich post-colonial literature on cultural practice and identity. Without even an attempt to explore the obvious fact that all dance cultures – however racially homogenous – are built around the musical forms of the African diaspora, or the aesthetic and social links between British dance genres and those of Afro-America and the Afro-Caribbean the work of the post-subculturalists, perhaps more accurately the anti-subculturalists, sacrifices in advance any coherent understanding of the complex relationship between identity, desire, race and cultural work. Dick Hebdige's important and still underrated assertion that at the heart of subcultures of all kinds is a dialectic between black and white youth (1979: 69), is therefore lost, the difficult implications of this argument – the suggestion of an

[34] Rietveld, 1998: 92.
[35] Hutnyk and Sharma, 2000: 58

oscillation between co-operation and co-option across the colour line – apparently overcome, but actually merely sidestepped.

The specific processes and contestations around this dialectic, involving the processes of 'racialisation' (the discursive formations and social practices through which music acquires a racial or ethnic meaning) is one important site of popular music politics that disappears from the accounts of 'techno-shamanists' and sceptical post-subculturalists alike. As John Hutnyk and Sanjay Sharma suggest one axis by which to gauge the politics of musical activity lies in assessing, "how far musical cultures are able to open up new polyvocal and radical multicultural *spaces*".[36]

**Post-colonial space**

It is in relation to this politics of race and multiculturalism, a central concern of this thesis, that the issue of 'space' emerges as an organising idea. The question of to what extent musical genres (and the networks which surround and connect them) are 'racialised', the degree to which they 'open up multicultural space' must be central to an analysis of their meaning. Space and race were, from the beginning, a concern of the subcultural project. Phil Cohen's analysis of the emergence of skinhead gangs in the East End (1972) discusses the way that they used specific, aggressive, style and music (Jamaican ska) to 'win' territory, both actual (the street corner, youth clubs) and metaphorical space for the 'magical' restoration of working class community under threat. Thus, for Cohen, "territoriality is [...] not only a way in which the kids 'live' subculture as a collective behaviour, but also the way in which the subcultural group becomes rooted in the situation of its community ...Territoriality appears as a magical way of expressing ownership."[37] Later subcultural work adopted Cohen's arguments about 'territoriality' and began, but only began, to use a notion of space that oscillated between material and metaphorical 'space', as in the term 'cultural space'.[38]

In the introduction to *Western Music and Its Others* (2000) Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh argue for the importance of bringing a 'post-colonial' perspective to the study of popular music "to consider the relations between culture,

[36] Ibid. (emphasis added)
[37] Cohen 1972: 97
[38] "Subcultures are not simply ideological constructions. They, too, win space for the young; cultural space in the neighbourhood and institutions, real time for leisure and recreation, actual room on the

power, ethnicity and class" in the light of the 'striking' lack of attention paid within popular music studies to the relationship between musical cultures, race and colonialism. The value of a post-colonial perspective they argue, lies in its concern with diaspora, its attention to the dialectics of diasporas – strung between technology and tradition, *here* and *there* – and its emphasis on the foundational experience of travel, difference and dislocation.[39]

This tradition, which introduces a form of 'spatialised' vocabulary around the trans-national model of the African diaspora, should be central to the analysis of UK club cultures and the forms of collectivity that they manifest. Why? Because of the deep structural links between 'black music' and diasporic culture understood as a series of recognised (and continually re-worked) traditions (Hall, 1992, Gilroy 1993); because of the subsequent link between white youth culture and black music (Hebdige, 1979, Hall 1998) and because of the numerous 'continuities' in musical form and social structure (the primacy of 'drum and bass', DJ technology, the sound system, the ubiquity of dance), continuities which must be judged alongside detours, ruptures and 'interruptions' in the formation of London as a multicultural, cosmo-political society. In this tradition the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, on the history and politics of popular culture, has been fundamental.

Stuart Hall was the leading intellectual force at Birmingham during the production of the bulk of subcultural theory; his co-edited collection *Resistance Through Ritual* (1976) is the founding text of subcultural theory. The influence of his readings of Marx, Althusser and, especially Gramsci, were crucial in providing the political analysis of popular culture, class and race which underpins much of the centre's work. Hall was never engaged in developing a 'grand theory' of the social although he has intervened in many which aspire to be that; structuralism, semiotics, psycho-analytic textual analysis, Marxist theory, political economy.

Even though Hall has never written in detail about popular music cultures, it is possible to extrapolate from Hall's work some basic elements that are crucial to the study of youth cultural forms particularly in relation to race and ethnicity.

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street or street corner. They serve to mark out and appropriate 'territory' in the localities". Hall et al, 1976:45

## 'The same thing that makes you laugh can make you cry": Contradictions of the popular[40]

Stuart Hall is crucially important in terms of his theorisation of 'the popular'. His argument, in the short essay entitled 'Notes on deconstructing the popular' (1981), which clarifies the terms and themes introduced in two earlier collaboratively written volumes (Hall et al 1976 and 1978; Mercer, 2000), provides a working definition of the 'terrain' of the popular, which is distinguished both from the notion of the popular as a cluster of implicitly trashy products through which 'the masses' are reconciled to capitalism, and from that position which conflates 'popular' with 'folk' culture and envisions it as an authentic expression of the timeless (and implicitly threatened) cultural traditions of an homogenous working class. Hall argues that there is a 'cultural dialectic', a struggle over meaning, in Gramsci's terms a 'war of position' that is fought out, between 'the people' and 'the power-bloc'[41] over the terrain of popular culture. While 'popular culture' has a specific relationship to 'tradition', and therefore to notions of 'traditionalism', Hall argues that this link has been misperceived and "misinterpreted as a product of merely conservative impulse, back-ward looking and anachronistic."[42]

Rather than a repository of a set of timeless cultural values, buried like some slumbering giant in the heartlands of British working class culture, waiting to rise against the encroachments of Modernisation, inherently resistant to the values of the ruling elite and American-style massification,[43] the popular, for Hall, is a site, a *space* within which 'traditions' are re-invented, fought over and come into conflict with the forces of change. Not only "is there no separate, autonomous, 'authentic' layer of working class culture to be found" but there is no reason to suppose that popular culture, or the traditions which are seen to animate them, are necessarily sedimented, only, with progressive or resistant values, they also draw attention to, and can reinforce, limitations imposed on subordinate populations from without. As Andrew Ross has observed in relation to the popular culture of Jamaican dancehall; "Like all forms of popular culture, the dancehall is compromised, multi-vocal, and as likely to

[39] Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 3-5
[40] Sly and The Family Stone 'Same Thing' from the album *Back On The Right Track*, 1974, WBA Records
[41] Hall, 1981: 238
[42] Hall, 1981: 227

serve its faithful with a taste of liberation as with a reminder of society's limitations."[44]

This contradiction changes form, but remains inherent to popular cultures. Just as the forms of nineteenth century music halls he discusses are "saturated with popular imperialism" so the culture of the skins and the mods which Hebdige outlines (1976, 1979) in his subcultural work, which takes Hall's redefinition of the popular as its frame of reference, amount to both resistance to hegemonic bourgeois values and a form of popular racism, reinscribe conservative notions of masculinity (skins) or patterns of consumption which could hardly be imagined as resistant, in any straight-forward way, to capital (Mods). This is the central point of Hall's argument. Popular cultures are contradictory, they are zones of contestation – the terrain of "struggle and resistance – but also, of course appropriation and ex-propriation."

> Popular culture is neither in a 'pure' sense, the popular traditions of resistance to [the processes of historical transformation]; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked. [45]

The corollary to this idea is that the meaning of popular forms (and by extension the sub-cultures which cohere around them) cannot be explained from within popular culture alone, the 'meaning' is not, he suggests, "inscribed inside its form, nor is its meaning fixed once and forever". What this argument suggests then, is that the 'politics' of popular cultures (for this is always and ultimately Hall's concern) is a question which cannot be approached purely on the level of text or form, it cannot be 'read of' from its internal relations irrespective of historical period or social context, it is a question instead of the social field into which it is incorporated, the specific space-time co-ordinates of any given instance.[46]

Hall adapts Gramsci's notion of the 'conjuncture' the specific historical moment and combination and conflict of forces, to define his form of analysis. We cannot say once and for all whether one form of popular culture is resistant another conformist, across time and space. Conjuntural analysis necessitates the development of both a diachronic (across time) and synchronic (across space) axis of analysis – what is the

[43] Hall is arguing against the anti-Americanisation thesis of Richard Hoggart and EP Thompson
[44] Ross, 1998: 67
[45] Hall, 1981: 228
[46] Hall, 1981: 235

specific history of a popular form? How does it relate to other popular forms in the same period? Who 'uses' it, and produces it as what it is by that use (de Certeau, 1980)? How is it incorporated in the cultural industry, how are its resistant potentials accommodated and neutralised?

Hall's notion of conjuncture have been influential across a wide range of academic disciplines, most particularly in studies of popular music. Mark Olsen, for example, draws on Hall in his idea of 'temporal dialogism', the relation to 'tradition and innovation', to history and the future, which is unique to each genre. Each 'dance genre' has a distinct 'temporal dialogism,'[47] proposing different relationships to the past, through processes of canonisation, sampling and citation. The notions of the relation to the past or future (compare say 'Northern Soul's obsession with a particular period of the 1960s with Techno's interest in 'the future') are worked over in definitions of what is known as the 'old school' in Hip Hop culture, Rare Groove in jazz and soul cultures, 'revivals' in Reggae and the endless series of Ibiza 'reunions' and 'themed' compilations in house scenes. Hall's conjuntural analysis treats such generic forms as "process", not thing, composed of antagonistic elements, unstable, up for grabs and never whole. "Today's cultural breaks", Hall reminds us, critically, "can be recuperated as support to tomorrow's dominant system of values and meanings."[48]

In this model there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between popular forms and social classes: "class cultures tend to intersect and overlap in the same field of struggle". Instead of 'the working class', the 'middle class' etc.., Hall speaks in the Gramscian language, of 'the popular classes', an 'alliance' of classes and forces ranged against another alliance, that of "the side with the cultural power to decide what belongs and what doesn't": 'the power-bloc'.[49]

Hall acknowledges that these terms are problematic, that the borders of these groups are continually shifting, that one of the key struggles around popular culture is precisely around the definition of 'the people' and the 'power-bloc' and popular culture plays a role in constituting these groupings, and that "within each of us" is the capacity to be constituted or conscripted as a "force against the power-bloc" or as a

[47]"scenes are th[e] site of temporal dialogism "an arena where memories of the past" – and I would add, representations of the 'now' and the future – "serve to critique and change the present" Olson, 1998: 277
[48] Hall, 1981:234 – 236.
[49] Hall, 1981: 238

member of a populist force saying 'Yes' to power: "Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won and lost in that struggle."[50] In this way analytic attention is focussed not on establishing what popular cultures 'express' about the class they are taken to 'represent', but on the spatial conceptions of the contradictory *terrain* and the shifting *border* (Hall, 1998). Necessarily hybrid in character popular culture is both a site and a process through which consent to a dominant culture is obtained but also where "an alternative way of live and a new cultural authority can be forged." [51]

Popular dance cultures, by this model, are the space where contradictions of race, class and gender play out; the right to define and fix their meanings is one of the stakes of the struggle. But this theory of the popular is incomplete unless we understand how it intersects with another strand of Hall's work, that on race, racism, ethnicity and black identity. Unless we enquire into the notion of 'black popular culture.'

**The 'Black' in black British popular culture**

Hall's reading of Gramsci suggests a central consequence of recognising the shifting and contested terrain of popular culture (and the identities articulated within it) is the necessity of 'periodisation' (Hall, 1981, 1986). He techn ique of 'periodisation', brings to centre stage the concern with historical specificity, provides a "dynamic historical analytic framework" which can account both for periods of relative stability in the relation of social forces and for those of "rapid and convulsive change."[52]

The 1978 collection *Policing The Crisis* co-authored by Hall and devoted to a detailed analysis of the 'mugging' phenomena of the 1970s concerns the development of new forms of racism embedded in the orchestration of a 'moral panic' around a new 'folk devil': The (inherently) criminal black youth. Kobena Mercer (2000) points out that much of Hall's early works, such as the essay 'Black Britons' (1970) and 'the Young Englanders' (1967) anticipate the key themes of diaspora and black (post-colonial) identity, but it is in *Policing The Crisis,* in the conjuntural analysis of a particular period of 'convulsive crisis' that an analysis of black British identity most clearly emerges. Hall and his team analyse in great detail the forms of representation, policing strategies and institutional discourses that *produce* the black mugger as a

[50] Ibid: 239
[51] Nixon, 2000: 256

threat to the moral order of 1970s Britain. In parallel they analyse the development of a political 'black identity', cohering in the 'hidden' public spheres of Britain's metropolitan black communities, or 'colonies', articulated through and produced within "the counter languages" of Black Power, Afro-centrism and Reggae. The significance of this form of black identity, Hall recognised, was that it was 'constructed' from multiple resources. Not only did the map of these (re)sources describe a particular trans-national route-map of affiliation – the African diaspora – which has become the central trope of the study of post-colonial identity, but the idea that 'identity' was 'constructed' not 'natural or fixed, or an effect of biology or 'origin', profoundly undermined what we now understand as 'essentialist' ideas of identity and ushered in the orthodoxy of identity not as something "that already exists" "a fixed essence lying unchanged outside history and culture" but something "constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth...points of identification. Not an essence but a positioning."[53] Popular culture, here not only 'Reggae' but the popular forms in which 'Black Power' and 'Afro-centrism' (film, books, music) circulated, is central to this process.

Using the autobiographical mode with which he is so adept, Hall makes clear the impact of new forms of black identity being made available through popular culture:

> When I was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s as a child in Kingston, I was surrounded by the signs, music and rhythms of th[e] Africa of the diaspora, which only existed as the result of a long and discontinuous series of transformations. But, although almost everyone around me was some shade of brown or black [...] I never once heard a single person refer to themselves or to others as, in some way, or having been at some time in the past, 'African'. It was only in the 1970s that this Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available to the great majority of Jamaican people, at home and abroad. In this historical moment, Jamaicans discovered themselves to be 'black' – just as, in the same moment, they discovered themselves to be the sons and daughters of slavery. [54]

In later work Hall has defined this period as the first phase of black British identity, and, in an important essay from 1988, he continues this periodisation by suggesting that 'black cultural politics', through which conceptions of black identity are made to

[52] Hall 1989: 422
[53] Hall, 1990: 112-3

articulate, had entered a new phase. If the resistant black identities of the 1970s provided precious resources and an effective rallying cry for black politics, then they look now, he argues, 'innocent' relying on essentialist notions of belonging which, in the new cultural conditions of the late 1980s need reconsideration.

While he acknowledges the necessity of 'a touch of essentialism' (Hall, 1992) to the construction of a political black identity capable of resisting powerful "regimes of representation" which (re)produce 'blackness' as pathology, he proposes that the late 1980s represents a 'new phase' "the end of the essential black subject", that 'racial identity', like all identities, are constructs which only "appear historically in articulation" which are "crossed and re-crossed" by other, no more stable or natural "categories and divisions...class, gender and ethnicity."[55] This is a complex argument developed in part in relation to the Black British cinema of the late 1980s. Hall has since acknowledged somewhat wryly that his notion of 'the end of the essential black subject' was proposed in "an unguarded moment" which signals, I think, not his withdrawal from this position but the controversy such an argument caused in the relation to the foundations of a distinctly 'black' politics.

But this argument has significant consequences for the analysis of groupings around 'black cultural forms' in a number of ways. Firstly it alerts us to the fact that merely establishing the 'blackness' of a cultural form is not sufficient in terms of assessing its politics. Even if it were true to say that, during the 1970s, being 'black' was always an (inherently progressive) political position by the 1980s this is not enough. This suggests that the issue of the 'racial' identity or 'racial politics' of a form (say, black music) must be treated as contingent, historically specific; it suggest that part of the analysis of popular cultural forms is precisely about assessing how it 'speaks' race, how 'race' operates within it, and the forms of 'racialised' communities, discourses and positions it embodies. Soul embodies a very different racial identity than does Reggae or 'two-step' Garage. Each, in the UK, have both 'black' and 'white' producers, mediators (DJs, Journalists, record company staff) and consumers. This also means that it is appropriate to enquire into the forms of desire which attract audiences to differentially 'racialised' forms, desire which, in Hall's formulation, is tinged, in the context of Eurocentric racism, with the "ambivalence of identification and desire."[56]

[54] Hall, 1990: 116
[55] Hall, 1988: 444
[56] Hall, 1988: 446

The question around the attraction to certain cultural forms of 'racialised' audiences hinges partly on the kinds of ethnic identity made available in and through them.

**Diaspora and its disco(n)tents**

Hall articulates clearly the (spatial) context of diaspora as the appropriate frame for such analysis. "The black experience" he argues, "is a diaspora experience", not a simple or unmediated relationship to the 'roots' of an African, Afro-American or Afro-Caribbean past, but a relation, continually renewed in the present, a source of intertextuality, a relation between the 'hidden histories' of dispersed black experience and the 'new grounds' of the post-colonial British city. Diaspora in this context draws attention to two 'vectors' of 'black' identity, and by extension to the realms of sociability within which 'black' popular culture is consumed: 'similarity and continuity' and 'discontinuity or rupture'[57], or the relationship between history, memory and technology. What must be reckoned with is both the common 'origin' in Africa of diasporic communities and the 'origin' of black cultures in the profound "traumatic ruptures" of the "enforced separation from Africa": the Atlantic slave trade which gives rise to the diaspora itself. Following this argument, into the present, in relation to black popular cultural forms requires the balancing of the continuities with the differences/ruptures (see chapter 3).

The notion of diaspora directs attention toward 'circulatory systems,'[58] processes of travel, migration, trans-national lines of affiliation and distinct local conditions within which new – potentially extra-diasporic – affiliations can be formed. Crucially Hall distinguished his conceptions of diaspora from that which supposes a reversal of the scattering process through the return to 'the promised land' by which group identity is finally secured.[59] There is no 'return' possible here, instead the necessity to live with and through difference. What is 'essential' to diaspora identity, for Hall, is precisely mixture, the recognition of 'hybridity' as a founding principle of (every) culture which is denied in efforts to defend racially exclusive culture, and integral notions of racially absolute belonging (Gilroy, 1993).

Theorist Kobena Mercer argues that Hall has been a pivotal figure in the development of the analytic frame of diaspora, which hinges on this notion of 'hybridity', but goes on to say that these (once) critical terms have been successfully recuperated into the

[57] Ibid: 111-13
[58] Gilroy, 1993: 88

discourse of a globalised cultural marketplace. Diaspora, 'ethnicity and 'hybridity', in Mercer's view, have successfully displaced an earlier sociological discourse of "assimilation, adaptation and integration", but have now been assimilated, themselves into the discourse of global capital in a process he dubs "multicultural normalization". There have always been significant problem with the use of the term hybridity, as Bart Moore Gilbert (1997) argues, in that calling a culture or cultural product hybrid implies the existence of such a thing as a non-hybrid, or 'pure' culture precisely the false idea underpinning ideologies of cultural integrity and cultural exclusion that diaspora theory proposes to question. Robert Young criticises the use of the notion of 'hybridity' because it reanimates the language of nineteenth century raciology and that scandalous disciplines obsession with miscegenation.[60] However as Les Back has recently argued this rests on a problematic argument that "these antecedent meanings determine its contemporary usage" and fails to grasp the *fact* of hybridity which nonetheless comes with no political guarantees.[61]

The issue in relation to black music is a question of what form of hybridity is being discussed, and the attitude to (racial and other forms of) 'mixing' that is implied in any given cultural articulation. The use of the term hybridity need not reproduce the possibility of cultural purity, if it takes as its object the stance of any particular cultural form to the idea of, the 'fact' of cultural mixture, and the forms of 'mixing' its types of sociability encourage or allow. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has made a useful intervention in the debate, by suggesting two different meanings of 'hybridity'. One sense, the version Young criticises, "can imply a space betwixt and between two zones of purity". He compares this version to the anthropological concept of 'syncretism', where, for example, a Latin American 'folk Catholicism' can be imagined to occupy a zone between the 'purity of Catholicism and that of indigenous cultures'.[62] His preferred option however points in the direction of the cultural studies tradition exemplified by Hall and continued in the work of Paul Gilroy and Les Back:

> On the other hand hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two way borrowing and lending between culture). Instead of hybridity versus purity, this view suggests that it is hybridity all the way down (as I would suggest for

[59] See Clifford, 1996 for a discussion of different conceptions of 'Diaspora'
[60] Young, 1995: 25
[61] Les Back 2002a
[62] Rosaldo, 1995: xv

> example it is in Paul Gilroy's [1987] work). From this perspective one must explain how ideological zones of cultural purity, whether of national or ethnic resistance, have been constructed.[63]

As Mercer argues the "challenge in rethinking hybridisation" as a process, lies in "refusing the seductive attraction of simplistic polarities and turning to a historically specific account of the more messy and ambivalent intermezzo worlds between the local and the global." [64]

The concept of 'diaspora' foregrounds a spatial analysis. Not only does it transgress the borders of the nation-state but it suspends the naive realism of location-based models of culture and identity. In the light of diaspora thinking is it no longer possible to contemplate analysis of 'black or multicultural British culture(s) without accounting for the multiple lines of affiliation which criss-cross the Atlantic. Diaspora also urges a reconsideration of the city as a space of difference, as a conjuntural site for the staging of these processes – as a node in a world system. Barnor Hesse argues that 'space', rather than 'time' is central to the organisation of diaspora society and memory (since blacks have been excluded from history). The diaspora popular cultures which exemplify this propose and conserve not only "a different history, but the history of different spaces: the African Diaspora."[65]

Avtar Brah (1996) in cautioning against a too fluid notion of diaspora which privileges motion over fixity, becoming over belonging, proposes a notion of 'diaspora space' as a form of intellectual framework. The benefit of this, for her, is that this explicit emphasis on 'space' addresses the 'realm of the border', the liminal 'in-between space', which is the site of contestation between the ties that bind across time and space – the "genealogies of dispersal" – and the "politics of location", the issues of making a place for yourself, of 'staying put'.[66] In this diaspora frame, which has developed from Hall, what emerges most clearly is the differential ways in which these relations – to 'other times and spaces', to here and now – in other words the tensions between local and global, are played out in actual concrete spaces and places and cultural – musical – forms.

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[63] Ibid
[64] Mercer, 2000: 235
[65] Hesse, 1993: 169
[66] Brah, 1996: 242

## The space of music

Throughout Stuart Hall's oeuvre he tantalisingly hints at but fails to explore in any detail one particular form of popular culture within diasporic 'black' cultures and their related racially mixed scenes: Music. Granted during his selection of 'desert Island Discs' on the BBC[67], he spoke movingly of his 'love' for the music of Afro-American and the Caribbean – Miles Davis, Billie Holliday, Bob Marley – and the way in which the 'longing, restless' form of this music – the 'sense of unfulfillment' in Davis's 'I waited for you' for example – chimed with his unfulfilled, restless diasporic identity. But he has not pursued this line of argument in his theoretical work beyond indicating the central role music has played in organising and articulating black identity and making the space for 'new ethnicities'.

But reading between the lines of his work the following arguments emerge: Reggae forms a crucial element of the cultural resources through which a resistant black identity is assembled in the 1970s in the UK.[68] The 'doubleness' of Caribbean identity, both inside and outside 'the west' is heard "most powerfully...'playing' within the varieties of Caribbean musics."[69] Music and its cultures are of the utmost importance in the development of Black identities in the West and the fostering of (comm)unity across Black Atlantic culture: "Displaced from the logocentric world...the people of the black diaspora have...found the deep form, the deep structure of their cultural life in music", the "repertoires of popular culture", and the particular social conditions of the sites where they are produced and consumed, "since we were excluded from the cultural mainstream, were the only performative spaces we had left."[70]

Black music, in this argument, is a, perhaps *the*, central feature of black cultural life,[71] but its significance is not confined within the boundaries of ethnic specificity. Black music, diasporic musical forms like jazz, soul, Reggae, Hip Hop and house, have been central to the development of white youth cultures too (Hebdige, 1979: 45), and have

[67] Desert Island Discs, BBC Radio 4 13/2/2000
[68] Hall, 1978
[69] Hall, 1990: 114
[70] Hall, 1992; 27
[71] I am arguing this in full awareness of the dangers of reducing the cultural expression of a large a heterogeneous group of people – defined epidermally with no necessary commonality – to one cultural form which is routinely ascribed in racial discourse as their 'natural' property. Racists have routinely 'reduced' the sum of black culture to 'dance music'. However as studies of slave societies have revealed, in the absence of other forms of cultural expression – literature, arts, education, all of which were forbidden on pain of death to the American slave (there are variations of this throughout the different slave holding regions) – music becomes one site where black creativity, expressivity and cultural value can be articulated.

become the pre-eminent form of global popular culture. Hall is a little ambivalent about this: his ever-present antipathy to exploitation and commodification has led him at times to hint at an appropriation argument. To suggest, that is, that there is something problematic in the way in which white youth are attracted to, and adapt, black form and style for their own purposes.

Thus in one lecture he suggests, correctly, that black youth "are *the* defining force in street-oriented British youth culture. Without them", he argues, "white British youth culture simply would not exist"[72] This echoes Dick Hebdige's assertion that all youth subculture is, at some level, a dialectic engagement with black 'style and fashion'. Hall reiterates this in relation to a dance music culture of the mid 1990s – Jungle: he speaks of "the leading role of rap, Jungle and drum and base [sic], not only in itself, as an expressive moment in black British urban culture, but as an arena of crossover, of desire, as part of the culture of working-class and middle-class wannabees."[73] The words 'crossover' and 'wannabes' here poses a dilemma. The implication is of unjustified borrowing – appropriation of black cultural forms by white kids who 'wish they were black'. There are historical precedents for such arguments – from Charles Mingus' insistence[74] that jazz is and should remain the property of black people, to Nelson George's 'cultural imperialism' argument: that the processes of the white-owned entertainment industry involve a form of cultural rape: black form is exploited, originators go unrewarded, styles and rhythms are diluted for a white market.[75] But in the same piece Hall also talks about "genuinely syncretic, multicultural culture." What he does not provide is any schema for judging the difference between the kind of appropriations of black music and its forms that is politically suspect – "wannabes" – and that which is politically positive, and an example of a working multi-cultural collaboration.

Hall distinguishes between what we might call the inward looking face of Black British culture, and its external face – the one that faces white England.
These he describes using *spatial* metaphors. The 'backyard' is the relatively autonomous and hidden zones of black popular culture. The 'frontline' is the contact zones and liminal spaces where this cultural contact – and the processes of appropriation and the formation of new, potentially more equitable cultures – play themselves out. It is here, through this kind of apparently trivial, accidental,

[72] Hall, 1998: 40
[73] Ibid
[74] 1964 cited in Walser, 1999: 289
[75] Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, 1988 New York, Pantheon

rhetorical device (the Frontlines/Backyards couplet was in fact the theme of the conference at which Hall was speaking), that we can start to glimpse a concrete methodological way in which we can start to discriminate between appropriation and hybridity, using a theory of space. Something about the political charge of black music relates to what it does to space – claims it symbolically – and what happens *in* the space sound creates. How and how successfully different dance music cultures open up spaces of co-presence, co-operation, polyvocality; and what are the forces that conspire to close these temporary autonomous zones down?

**Black Music, 'double consciousness' and 'the changing same'**

The relation between music and cultural identity has been the cause of much debate within the study of popular music, focussing around the degree to which music can be said to represent pre-existing, anterior, identities as opposed to the notion that music 'produces' individual and group identity.[76] As we have seen Stuart Hall has provided some of the intellectual resources for understanding the *terrain* of the popular. But we need a more detailed argument about the meanings, form and identity of popular music genres in order to get a full understanding of how London dance cultures have been implicated in these struggles over meaning. Black music, at the core of all London dance cultures, has long been the object around which this contest has taken place.

Paul Gilroy has argued persuasively that 'black expressive cultures', always based around music, spring up "at the intersections of 'race' and 'class'", and gender plays across them both as a site for the evocation of racialised authenticity and as one of the principle "conduits of crossover".[77] Once again 'intersection', like the trope of the *frontlines* and the *crossroads* which figures strongly in both the mythology of the blues and in cultural theory tracking these expressive cultures (Gates, 1988, Gilroy, 1987, Back 1996), directs attention to what Doreen Massey has called the 'space-time' co-ordinates of these scenes and away from monolithic constructions of distinct racial or class blocs which are then expressed in any given musical form.

Gilroy's work is vital for this thesis for two reasons. First, because of his readings of the political meanings of black music and the expressive cultures that surround it. Gilroy is always alert to the political meanings, both overt and covert, of black music.

[76] Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 37-8
[77] Gilroy, 1987, 1993

The argument he has been developing since 1987, is that while much black music from particular periods of 'crisis' articulate overt political messages – 'Black Power' era US funk, 'roots' Reggae of the 1970s – there is a powerful covert politics sedimented in the very form of black music and its cultures. The force of this argument is that even in circumstances where the lyrics of a dance genre do not reveal themselves as political (80s soul, Lovers Rock, swingbeat) or where in fact the political attitudes expressed in the lyrics are disappointingly regressive or supportive of misogyny or conspicuous consumption (much Hip Hop, R&B, Dancehall, UK Garage), or where there are no lyrics or songs to function as the bearer of political messages, the political meaning of any given 'scene' cannot simply be read off from its articulations in language. Black music in Gilroy's conception, through the 'unfinished form' of its products – primarily vinyl records that are wrongly thought of a 'merely commodities – it's performance traditions and its irreducibly social mode of consumption (and production as consumption) is uniquely suited to articulate a counter-culture to modernity, and resist attempts to commodify and fix it. Making this argument, which Gilroy does at its strongest in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), he employs Amiri Baraka paradoxical notion of how black music holds innovation and tradition together, how it articulates as a 'changing same.'

Second Gilroy puts at the centre of his analysis the very conundrum that we have just encountered: black music's double articulation as the music of black specificity and the music of trans-racial collaboration, of inter-culture of multi-culture. This argument draws on W.E.B. Du Bois' notion of black identity, in the West, as exhibiting a 'double consciousness' which at the level of cultural form produces "stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering that I have heuristically called the black Atlantic world."[78] It is worth reviewing these arguments briefly, because they are important in all that follows.

In a chapter entitled 'Diaspora, Utopia and the critique of Capital' in *Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* (1987) Gilroy lays out the relationship between 'black expressive' cultures, diaspora and the musical genres of soul, Reggae and Hip Hop. He argues that black music and its cultures of sociability have an intimate relationship with black politics and that both in terms of form and social structure they have articulated critiques of hegemonic cultures in the West. Songs, through titles and

lyrics, have explicitly formulated refusals of the capitalist form of work and labour relations (through, for example, re – conceptualising 'work' as dance as in 'you gotta work', and reclaiming the night time as 'the right time') of the post-imperialist capitalist state (through multiple critiques and witness statements about police brutality and arbitrary state violence) and have articulated a special relationship with an alternative diasporic history ( 'I hear you calling, Africa' by Sly Stone).[79] He suggests that black music has been an important site for the articulation of explicit democratic agendas (such as George Clinton's assertion that "we don't need the bullet when we've got the ballot' and Gil Scott Heron's satire of Reagonomics 'B-Movie'), new-found relations to an African Past (such as posited by Roy Ayer's album titles 'Red Black and Green', and 'Africa centre of the World') and new affirmative forms of black identity (James Brown's 'Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud').

But his argument goes beyond the limitations of a politics of music based solely on denotative lyrical content. He speaks of a 'deep structure' which unifies the multi-genres of the black Atlantic, beneath their apparent diversity,[80] a cluster of formal techniques of production and consumption which reveal "a *more profound* and complex struggle against the political, ideological and economic structures of capitalism than that powerfully spoken in the poetics of the song involved"(my emphasis).[81]

What is this structure? He turns to the Afro-American literary theory[82] and the specific studies of music which draw on this tradition.[83] The importance of this work lies in its sensitivity to history, to the dislocations of slavery and the resilience of 'African retentions' which alongside innovation and the aesthetic practices of 'making do' make up the powerful mix that is contemporary diasporic culture. The fundamental elements of what Gilroy calls the 'African legacy' of black music are the 'spontaneity' and orientation toward performance of black musics (as opposed to an emphasis on previously written texts and 'great works', a drive James Brown has expressed in a typically pithy way as 'We Don't need no Masterpiece, Pass The Peas"), an emphasis on improvisation, and the structural reliance upon rhythm, repetition, and circular time as opposed to the 'Western ('classical') logic of accumulation and harmonic resolution (Snead, 1984).

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[78] Gilroy, 1993: 3
[79] Gilroy, 1987: 199
[80] Gilroy, 1987: 212
[81] Ibid: 212
[82] Gates, 1984, Baker, 1984,

The presence of these features in all the black musics of the new world, Gilroy argues, marks their inheritance from Africa.


The dominant genres of London club music mapped onto The Black Atlantic

There is another feature of black musics that registers their origin, not in Africa, but in the traumatic dislocation of slavery. This is the 'unfinished' form of black music. Even when it is delivered via the cultural industries which are invested in the idea of the standardised, finished and packaged product, the 'product' comes 'unfinished' and requires and demands the 'creative' supplement of others 'producers'.[84] This active process constitutes the specific mode of consumption which black music creates, they are the processes of 'anti-phony' (call and response) and of 'signifyin(g), and 'the cut'[85] articulated through the performance practice of the jook joint, dancehall and sound system, and inherited by every form of dance culture since: they are the practice of the soul DJ (who 'spins records) and the Reggae DJ (who 'toasts' on the microphone), of the Hip Hop MC (or rapper) and the scratch DJ (who manipulates the record as it plays), the 'selector' (who places a record in a relationship with other records, into a different 'narrative' each time it is played 'out') of the dub mixer, remixer and producer (who turns the complete 'product – the

[83] Chernoff, 1979, Snead, 1984, Rose 1994, Potter, 1996

[84] Gilroy says of the "slave's aural bequest to the future": "Even in the fixed and frozen forms demanded by the industrialisation of culture, dissident transcendent music was produced and dispatched radically unfinished its openness anticipated the involvement of remote audiences" 2000: 273

record – into raw material for other music), and of the dancing crowd who embody the music as it plays, and give it its irreducibly social form.

In the 'counter-cultural setting' of the hidden spheres of black political culture, Gilroy argues, a commodity "like the twelve inch single, released from the belly of the multinational beast comes to anticipate, even demand, supplementary creative input", transforming it, in Baudrillard's terms, from 'object to event'.[86]

> These cultures have developed an approach in which records are not simply played and heard...Consumption is turned outwards; no longer a private, passive or individual process it becomes a procedure of collective affirmation and protest in which a new authentic public sphere is brought into being.[87]

So far Gilroy's argument, though sophisticated could without much trouble be appropriated within a black cultural nationalist paradigm, but this is not his intention: "black music cannot be reduced to a fixed dialogue between a thinking racial self and a stable racial community."[88] Instead he wants to use black music as an example of where such hard versions of ethnic absolutism – be they white racist or Black Nationalist – fail. For black music from the perspective of those interested in cultural or ethnic purity, "would be a litany of pollution and impurity."[89] At its very core black musical practice is mixed, multiple, promiscuous, unimpressed by boundaries, as are the cultural forms which move around it.

Gilroy has made a considerable contribution to the development of concepts of cultural mixing – employing the tropes of hybridity and syncretism, although he concedes they are 'weak' and inadequate' terms – attacking notions of purity and integrity as they become attached to definitions of belonging, to 'race and nation'. In the service of such arguments Gilroy has insisted upon the processes of 'transmission and translation' that underpin the development of complex contemporary modernity. The important idea here is that cultures ethnic rules (and this includes the rules governing black music production and consumption) can be 'taught and learnt'.[90] There is an unresolved tension in Gilroy's work between the depiction of the

[85] Snead, 1984: 67
[86] Gilroy, 1993: 105
[87] Gilroy, 1987: 210
[88] P Gilroy, 1993: 110
[89] Gilroy, 1993: 2

specificities of 'black' culture and cultural practice, the 'hidden' 'autonomous' 'exclusively black cultural institutions'; the 'jook', the black hop, the shabeen, the 'blues', the sound-clash and the myriad impromptu 'community' events in the youth clubs, community centres and after hours clubs of the (black) British city[91], and the notion of cultures as being inherently mixed, impure, hybrid, profane, the way that black music has functioned as a privileged site for the staging of racial mixing, or what he has called 'black and white on the dance floor'.

> ... the cultural resources of the Afro-Caribbean communities provide a space in which whites are able to discover meaning in black histories, style and language, but also where a shared culture...mediates the relationship between the different ethnic groups. [92]

These elements coexist, as they do in culture at large, though they meet, mix, fall together and apart in different historical moments, under different social, economic and political conditions. This thesis concentrates on precisely these processes of transmission, collaboration, and the forces that reassert homogeneity within cultures of (difficult, productive) mixture.

**Things can only get ... worse?**

But there is a problem in adapting Gilroy's arguments to the discussion of dance music cultures, especially those that come after rave. This is because Gilroy has recently shifted his position in relation to music, culture and its politics. It is not so much that he has reversed or disavowed the arguments I have just outlined, it is that he has in recent work, hit a new note of pessimism and mourning, for a black political culture around music now, apparently, lost.[93] This new melancholic mode combines several elements – an analysis of the ways in which the products and styles of a black dissident culture have become advertising slogans, used to promote conspicuous consumption and 'hollow defiance'; how images of black hyper-vitality (basketball players, muscled rappers, bling bling models) are being harnessed to the needs of the culture industries pursuing what he calls 'corporate multi-culturalism'; how the sonic culture of black music has been supplanted by the visual cultures of MTV the 'narrative shrinking' in the range of social concerns articulated within black music

[90] Gilroy, 1993: 109
[91] Gilroy, 1987: 163
[92] Gilroy, 1987: 217-18
[93] What follows is drawn from Gilroy's most recent writing about music, 1998, 1999, 2002.

(where increasingly 'life ain't nothing but bitches and money') and the way in which digital production technology has de-skilled black music (he refers to 'house and its dismal offshoots'), imprisoned the 'frail and funky' humanity of black rhythm within a restrictive 'digital grid' and morphed into banal workout music. This 'later Gilroy' on music poses two important questions for the purposes of this thesis. What evidence does he provide to support these claims, and are these arguments incompatible with those he made about music before 1997?

The question of evidence, a methodological question, is central here. I want to take this cluster of arguments I have outlined in three parts, because I think Gilroy does a brilliant analytic job with some of these but not all. The arguments that he makes related to the 'narrative shrinkage' of black music's political vocabulary, those about the way in which once abject blackness is now used to symbolise hyper-vitality (Michael Jordan), and about the way that Hip Hop in particular is involved in the marketing of hollow defiance, seem to me to be well made and reliable, based as they are on Gilroy's undoubted skills in an interpretative, historically informed textual analysis. These arguments are clearing based on his listening to recent mass marketed black music (as his examples – Snoop Doggy Dogg, R Kelly) and watching and analysing, what is pretty ubiquitous, advertising and media. His examples are strong and the pessimistic tone of the argument justified.

Much more problematic are the arguments associated with music production and dissemination. His argument, laid out most straight-forwardly in an essay called 'Analogs of mourning, mourning the analog' (1999) – is that the "deskilling, dehumanizing technologies" of digital production, which have predominated within popular music production for at least a decade, have meant the squeezing out of the textures of humanity (associated, for him, with 'real' instruments like the bass guitar), a flattening of the 'ontological depth' of black Atlantic art, and a reduction in the pleasure and the political value of black music reduced to generic work-out music.[94] The problem with this argument is that it makes assumptions about the value of music based solely on the technology used to produce it. It is an *a priori* judgement, and an example of a straightforward 'technological determinism'. Such a move, which seems rather out of step with Gilroy's usual careful attention to complexity, rests on the same problematic distinctions and assumptions that are associated with the 'rockist' tradition in popular music – which associates technology, here the digital circuitry of sampler, drum machine and compositional software, with

artificiality, insincerity, standardisation and rationalisation by contrast with 'real' music played by real people, which is understood as more human, more authentic. It is not that I disagree with Gilroy's notion that black musical cultures have failed to recreate the serious, and seriously funky, music of Curtis Mayfield or Marvin Gaye, or that I disagree that much of the electronic dance music produced since acid house has been repetitive and feeble substituting cheap easily achievable affect – gained through sampling, and the simplistic use of digitalized effects, it is that accepting this kind of judgement is methodologically unsustainable, and risks above all missing the multiple supplementary ways in which music that is initially produced digitally is put into play.

One example: Jungle music – which is readable in one dimension as an 'offshoot of house' though it is not dismal – is a dance music genre where the digital production process is merely the starting point. Digitally produced Jungle tunes (not songs) are pressed up on vinyl, or transferred to DAT, and played by DJs in club settings, mixed with other records. Every time a DJ 'plays out' she will play a different set, cut and mix different 'digital' sounds together in real time, the sounds are amplified and broadcast through analog reproduction equipment – the speaker cone – received by more analog reception equipment – the ear, MC's chat over the beats, blending cockney slang, patois and Hip Hop argot in multi-leveled engagement with the sound text and crowd (which might include singing snatches of song lyrics, matching the rhythm of the beat with quick-fire word association, commenting on the tunes and performance of the DJ, exhorting the crowd and articulating community 'inside the place'). The whole thing stands or falls on the way and extent to which the dancing crowd interact with, interpret and mediate the sounds. In this way Jungle, as chapter 7 argues, conforms precisely to the practices of black expressive cultures that Gilroy himself has specified – the recordings are more the commodities, they demand the supplementary creative action of distant agents, performance and improvisation remain central.

When Gilroy argues in this mode – and he accepts that such pessimism may be his 'generational affliction[95] – it is tempting to ask if he has forgotten his Hall: that the popular is the terrain of contradiction and negotiation. Or indeed if he has forgotten his Gilroy: that the commodities of the black public sphere are unfinished; that performance is key; that black cultural production is hybrid.

[94] Gilroy, 1999: 262

His readings of digital production as an aesthetic dead end, and of the rise of 'video technoculture' within the black, now very public, sphere dominated by a US inspired litany of muscle-bound millionaire rappers, lead him to suggest that 'the visual' has triumphed over the aural, that black music no longer stands at the privileged centre of black Atlantic culture. The problem lies in his evidence. Indeed it causes us to revisit his previous work to understand the empirical basis of those arguments.

The fact is that Gilroy does not justify his arguments ethnographically. His method combines close textual readings of music, associated arts (like his marvellous essay on record covers in *Small Acts* 1993) and the media with his vast ethnographic familiarity with the music scenes he discusses. Both the long chapter on music in *Ain't No Black In the Union Jack* and the discussions in *The Black Atlantic* which convincingly argue for the importance and specificity of 'black music' and its attendant scenes are based on Gilroy's intimate knowledge and immersion in local black music cultures (as he acknowledges[96]); visits to Daddy Pecking's Reggae record shop, to blues parties and live concerts. However there is precious little depiction beyond abstract description of either the hidden spheres of black sociability or the spaces where 'historic encounters' were staged between black and white youth around black music. Where this happened, what it looked and sounded and felt like, the texture of participation remain mysterious.

The Gilroy of this period has an ethnographic familiarity with his subject, shored up by close connections with 'organic intellectuals' in the field (specialists like Lloyd Brown who serve as Gilroy's musical guides). But the clubs, dances and discos themselves, and their audiences, are a shadowy presence. 'The club' (and it's corollaries the warehouse party & blues), the prime site for the 'social consumption of black music in the UK' (Reynolds, 1998, Chapman 1992: 272), and any sense of the composition, biographies and trajectories of the inter-racial audience is absent from Gilroy's account. Perhaps this does not matter in that his 'intimacy' with the music culture he describes underwrites his claims. But it does matter when his arguments might lead to the dismissal or devaluation of contemporary forms of dance music culture, which are disposed of in advance.

[95] "I fell obliged to confess that my own critical standpoint has been shaped by a sense of loss that is my demographic, geographical and generational affliction" Gilroy, 1999: 262

[96] "When I was a child and a young man growing up in London, black music provided me with a means to gain proximity to the sources of feeling from which our local conception of blackness was

The lack of attention to the 'sites' of consumption that he argues are so crucial to the meanings of black music in his early work licences him to ignore them again in making this pessimistic argument. But his source material is totally different now – in place of an obviously active engagement with the sites of youth cultural activity, we get readings of Major label released black pop – which is what contemporary Hip Hop is – and analyses of the MTVisation of the mediascape. What of the 'hidden spheres' of black expressive culture, do they still exist? How about the various forms of 'hybrid' music scenes that characterise contemporary London club culture? Are Jungle and UK garage evidence of the de-skilling of digital and the narrative shrinkage and corporate iconisation of black dissident culture? Without going to clubs like *Metalheadz* or *Twice as Nice,* or talking to people who do, is it warranted to make the assumption that the ways in which the music played at the clubs is produced, or the way it is represented visually – which is still secondary to its manifestation as a live, face-to-face, club scene – exhausts its potential meaning, and can be decided at a distance?

Without ethnographic underpinnings, without finding, observing and talking to the participants in these forms of cultural performance, arguments, whether positive or negative, are subject to no kind of verification. They remain abstract, and tend to stand or fall on the strength of their rhetoric alone. Although Gilroy is the single most influential theorist of black musical meaning, on this thesis and on the field as a whole, I have been concerned to develop a method that grounds such claims as Gilroy makes, and I make following Gilroy, in empirical method, partly so I can amplify his characterisations of black musical vitality, but also so I can question – even disprove – the negative assessments he makes of contemporary manifestations of black and multi-cultural dance music scenes, or their futures.

## Conclusion: Dance music, Black music, multiculture

This chapter started with a critique of the 'dance music consensus' which I argue pervades the way popular media and academia has written about and understood cultures based around music and dance. In chapter 6 I am more explicit about the way in which the current field of dance music emerged from the close relationships between London based style journalists and the promoters and DJs of certain

assembled." 1993: 1091 amassed recordings on vinyl and immersed myself in the ephemeral and disreputable scenes that surrounded them." 2000: 273-4

fashionable London clubs, around one particular genre – acid house – and its associated behaviours, primarily the use of ecstasy. Such a consensus serves to misrepresent what is a varied and differentiated field of cultural activity – dancing to music – and renders forms that do not comply with the techniques of acid house illegitimate.

I have suggested that academic work on dance cultures which might justifiably take issue with some of the analytical excesses and methodological weaknesses of subcultural theory has gone too far in disposing entirely of this important work; crucially they have left themselves without a theory of how class and race might work within, and continue to stratify, dance subcultures. Neither has such work paid adequate attention to the cultural politics of race or the idea of diaspora which is the only proper starting point for understanding dance scenes where black music and style continue to be the core aesthetic framework. Without this perspective the tendency has been to take a particular version of the rave ideology which claims to have created a 'community through chemicals', which is beyond race and class, as social fact.

I have covered the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy in some detail in order to suggest that the work they have already done on popular culture, music and race provides the essential staring point for understanding dance music scenes where the music of the black diaspora – soul, ska, Reggae, funk, Hip Hop, house, techno, Jungle and Garage – has been absolutely central and ubiquitous, and those dance scenes which have been racially homogenous have been the exception. As Renato Rosaldo (1995) argues there are no zones of purity here, it is hybridity and transculturation "all the way down", where discrete zones of apparent purity do emerge – be it the 'black public sphere' around Reggae dances in the 1970s (see chapter 4) or the overwhelmingly white raves of the late 1980s (see chapter 6) – this is because of specific local circumstances, discourses and strategies of power. The point is to inquire into how these zones of pseudo-purity cohere, discursively and sociologically.

From the discussion in this chapter I carry over three key assumptions about the London's dance music cultures:

1. They are multi-cultures, composed in different periods, of differential race, class and gender mixes, but they are based around the music of the black Atlantic – black music (however that may be inflected in local production).

2. They have and continue to serve as the site for the articulation and organisation of a distinct black identity and, and form part of black public sphere.
3. They are also the sites for the formation of new kinds of multi-culture and cross racial alliance, they are a place of translation (Jones, 1988, Back, 1996), but they are also the place where appropriation happens, where the rules and styles, body codes and gestures of black cultural expression are assimilated – a channel from subculture to the culture industry.

This chapter has introduced a conceptual frame that rests upon a weak but necessary vocabulary. The compromised and problematic concepts of multiculturalism and hybridity in this argument retain some purchase on the processes I am describing, and in the absence of an alternative they will have to do. I agree with Michelle Wallace who argues: "everybody knows that multiculturalism is not the promised land...[however] even at its most cynical and pragmatic, there is something about multiculturalism which continues to be worth pursuing...we do need to find ways of publicly manifesting the significance of cultural diversity..."[97]

Finally dance music cultures, and the impromptu and clandestine ways in which they are materialised are not, yet, completely owned or controlled by the state or by corporations, nor are they centrally planned. Instead they are organised though an interlocking series of production and consumption, and production-as-consumption networks – friendship groups and alliances (indicated by the ubiquitous nomenclature of 'crews', 'possess', and cliques), diasporic networks of affiliation and cultural production across the black Atlantic, and the informal economic networks of records and pirate radio. Dance music culture in London is a 'multi-network society'.

The challenge is how to research the unofficial, frequently clandestine dance music networks – the next chapter addresses these issues.

[97] 1994 cited in Hall, 2000, 213

## Chapter 2: Methodology: Black music networks and the people who make them

"the networking form has existed in other times and spaces.'[1]

The aim of this thesis is to produce a fuller understanding of multi-cultural production and dance music networks in particular, than has so far been available. An important component of this aim has been an attempt to integrate a theoretical with an empirical perspective. There is a paucity of empirical work available on this subject, and the voice of the dance music producer and consumer – the people who make, use and circulate dance music in London – is conspicuous by its absence from most of the work on subcultures and 'club cultures' that is available. While my interest in musical networks has been influenced by the theoretical work of the subcultural theorists and Hall and Gilroy in particular it has its origins in my own participation in dance music networks and access to the music and the people that make it such a pleasurable as well as a politically and sociologically significant form of informal popular culture. My aim therefore was to juxtapose a theoretical with an empirical perspective, to allow the voices and stories of the actors to mix with and at times moderate or even contradict that of the professional 'expert'.

The tough methodological question I encountered in approaching my fieldwork was how to access informants for the empirical component of this project. I was aware when starting that there has been much criticism of cultural studies' appropriation, some say 'mis-appropriation,' of the techniques of anthropological 'ethnography.'[2] Such critiques question the rigour of the cultural studies methodology[3], the 'culturalism' of the cultural studies perspective – which, it is argued, can overvalue 'banal' cultural objects, or essentialise culture as if it were a thing[4] – or the 'insider' status of the cultural studies researcher who, it is argued, is insufficiently objective in his or her empirical practice. Cultural studies defenders are right to point out that such critiques often take the discipline at its weakest, by critiquing atypical examples of theoretical excess, on the fringes of the cultural studies canon.[5]

[1] Castells 1996: 469
[2] see M. Ferguson and P. Golding, eds 1997
[3] for examples see Willis 1997: 253
[4] see Vermeulen and Slijper 2004
[5] Morley: 2000: 245-253

On the other hand it must be admitted that sociologist Stanley Cohen's critique of Dick Hebdige, whose work on punk and Reggae cultures though idiosyncratic, sits plum in the centre of the cultural studies canon [6], a critique that questions in detail the social scientific status of Hebdige's, undoubtedly attractive method (his own theoretical and observational bricolage), is destructive to the social scientific validity of his arguments (though not his reputation as a great writer).[7] It is Cohen, as sympathetic executioner as you could wish, who allows us to see that indeed there is a great deal of 'magic' in Hebdige, in the marshalling of the literate sources, and the beady-eyed precision of his readings of style, but that in the end the punk, the agent, the person is not 'there' (in the text) and therefore unable to contradict Hebdige's brilliant reading of him. The same critique could be made of Paul Gilroy, whose arguments, as in his long chapter in *Ain't No Black In the Union Jack* on uses of diasporic black music in the UK, based on his encyclopaedic ethnographic familiarity with the music and cultures he describes, are ultimately representations of music without listeners, dance floors that though they might be hosting 'historic encounters between black and white youth' are devoid of actual people.

In light of such objections it is tempting, and has been common practise in academic work, for the researcher to wrap themselves in a comforting cloak of positivist method, to concede to the disciplines of sociology and anthropology that cultural studies had it wrong, and that only a rigorous quantitative method can immunise aginast literary theoretical mysticism. This is not the path I have chosen. Although I adapt ethnographic techniques in my empirical work I do not accept that a positivist method shorn of theory, of subjectivism and of contradiction, is likely to lead to any greater truth. The complexity of the processes I wanted to analyse – involving shifting forms of self and group identity, cultural performance, in particular music, cultural co-operation across racial divisions – led me towards a qualitative, interpretative and dialogic method which placed the open-ended conversational interview at the centre of the data gathering project.

[6] Hebdige 1979 and 1981
[7] Cohen 1980

## Reflexivity and dialogism

My method was qualitative rather than quantitative, and based upon open-ended interviews with a group of informants I myself selected. These were relatively un-structured interviews. They mainly took the form of one long (average three hours) recorded interview following an initial contact and discussion and followed up in some cases with subsequent shorter interviews.[8] The interviews followed roughly the same general pattern; I encouraged informants to discuss their background and childhood, their first encounters with music and dance, and to reflect on their involvement with a number of different subcultures, genres and musical scenes. They took place either in the informants home or in a suitably comfy public space, a few in radio stations, several at recording studios. They were, as far as possible based on a basic sense of respect and equality (this may, as Clifford Geertz argues about the interview situation, have been a 'fiction' but it is a necessary fiction'[9]), they were generally free flowing and pleasant; they were conversations.

Dialogic, mutual, respectful and fun the elements of the good conversation, also, in Pierre Bourdieu's view, underpin good social scientific research. Equality is to be encouraged so as to minimise 'social censorship' and the tendency to 'symbolic violence'; the closer the researcher is in status and knowledge to the informant the better; the interview is merely a 'privileged moment' in an ongoing series of conversations. [10] The interview, like the conversation, establishes an irreducibly social relationship. Throughout these conversations I strove to develop what C Wright Mills has called the *sociological imagination*, the ability to see social structures, and historical processes through the narrated experience of real people, who may not recognise their experience in those terms.[11] But part of this was to try and share with informants where possible some of the basic theoretical concepts I would be using (diaspora, the Black Atlantic, the network society) to engage them in debate around these ideas, and to try and expand the bridge between inside and outside. I of course worry, as Dick Hebdige does so memorably at the end of *Subculture*, whether this work would be understood by any of my informants, whether it will mean anything for them. Perhaps he is right to caution against the 'foolish' belief that such self

[8] I also draw on published 'first hand' testimony of an earlier generation of black Britons collected in Phillips and Phillips 1999, and White and Harris eds. 1999
[9] Geertz, 2001
[10] Bourdieu, 2000:613
[11] "The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals" C. Wright Mills, 1959: 5

conscious attempts to mediate between such separate worlds could help 'resolve the contradictions of contemporary cultural studies' (1979: 135).

In thinking these issues through 'the notes on method' made by Paul Willis one of the more methodologically rigorous of the 'Birmingham school' has been a useful guide. Willis attacks the false dichotomy between empirical research and theory. He commends and defends qualitative fieldwork as a technique: including the use of interviews and participant observation, because of the possibility they hold for 'surprise,' that is the way in which they can challenge or destabilise previously held theoretically derived concepts and hypothesises. Willis views the 'crisis' inherent in having theoretical presumptions challenged by fieldwork as a critical opportunity, for "reaching knowledge not prefigured in our one's starting paradigm", and for the researcher to develop a 'hazardous' but productive 'self reflexivity'.[12] He is highly critical of the ideology of objectivity with its "hidden tendency towards positivism", of the assumption that only if the researcher is sufficiently observant and passive, if the research object – which is always as Willis argues, in fact, composed of subjects – remains undisturbed by the presence of the researcher, the data uncontaminated by theory, will any research findings be valid: ..."it is precisely a theoretical interest which induces the researcher to develop certain kinds of technique."[13]

Any social science research, no matter how 'objective' its techniques needs to proceed reflexively and recognise the traffic between people as a social relationship. The value of the 'reflexive qualitative' method Willis outlines, lies precisely in recognising that significant data are collected "not through the purity or scientificism of its method, but through the status of the method as a social relationship".[14] Oral historian Alexander Portelli has argued that the pretence to objectivity is ultimately self-defeating; distorting and falsifying the nature of the data itself. Social scientific research involves an inevitable act of construction – selection, ordering, editing – to pretend otherwise is to risk 'objectifying' the very subjects of the research, by assuming they are 'out there' somewhere in the eternal, external world, to be fully apprehended one day, if only the measuring tools are sensitive enough.[15] The will to objectivity, the suppression of subjectivity in search of the Truth: Morally dubious and also in terms of the efficacy of the research, counterproductive "the less

[12] Willis, 1997: 252
[13] Ibid: 253-4
[14] Ibid: 253
[15] Portelli, 1991: 80

[researchers] reveal about their identity and thoughts, the more likely informants are to couch their testimony in the broadest and safest terms."[16]

But of course there are the obvious dangers of subjectivism too, and special problems if you yourself are part of the research object, if you are an insider. Many critiques of the use of ethnographic interviews within cultural studies argue that rather than achieving the necessary scientific objectivity cultural studies scholars have assumed an 'insider' stance which uncritically reproduces the norms of the studied group, a scenario within which the researcher has 'gone native', defending the values of the object group rather than studying them.[17] In relation to London club culture and the field of multi-cultural clubbing I am an 'insider'. I'm a Londoner and have been involved for many years in the consumption and production of London based music scenes, as 'punter', DJ, promoter and music journalist. While recognising the dangers of uncritically reproducing the values of a specific perspective I nonetheless considered my insider status advantageous, not only in facilitating access but in establishing a mutuality and rapport in the interview situation which allowed a greater frankness and more dialogic interchange with the informants that would otherwise have been possible. I agree with Rolf Linder that there may, in the end, be considerable advantage in the 'insider' perspective. Whereas cultural anthropology, he argues, is concerned with "understanding 'the other'" cultural studies "produces a hybrid synthesis of insider and outsider perspective", it is "the discipline that gives this simultaneity of inside out and outside in."[18]

## Symbolic violence and social censorship

Reflexivity, then, enables the researcher to negotiate some of the key relationships that frame the research; between theory and practice, between their 'home' academic discipline and others, between themselves as a researcher and as a member of a given culture, and between themselves and their informants. But is it enough? Pierre Bourdieu argues that the social research interview always involves the risk of 'symbolic violence',[19] and that an extra layer of methodological self-awareness, a *reflex* reflexivity, is necessary to develop the kind of 'understanding' adequate to the "slightly arbitrary intrusiveness"[20] and fundamental 'asymmetry' of the interview.[21]

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[16] Portelli, 1991: 12
[17] See for example Woods, 1979
[18] Lindner, 2000: 208
[19] Bourdieu, 2000: 607-8
[20] Geertz,, 2000: 608

Such reflex reflexivity opens out the two-way nature of the interview where reciprocity is possible, but also alerts the researcher to forms of social censorship that can conceal or distort the research findings. Relations of inequality that structure the social world, of course, also structure the interview that is itself inherently asymmetrical. Race, class and gender power relations cut across the interview situation and render some things – because of the nature of the social relationship between interviewer and interviewee – unsayable.

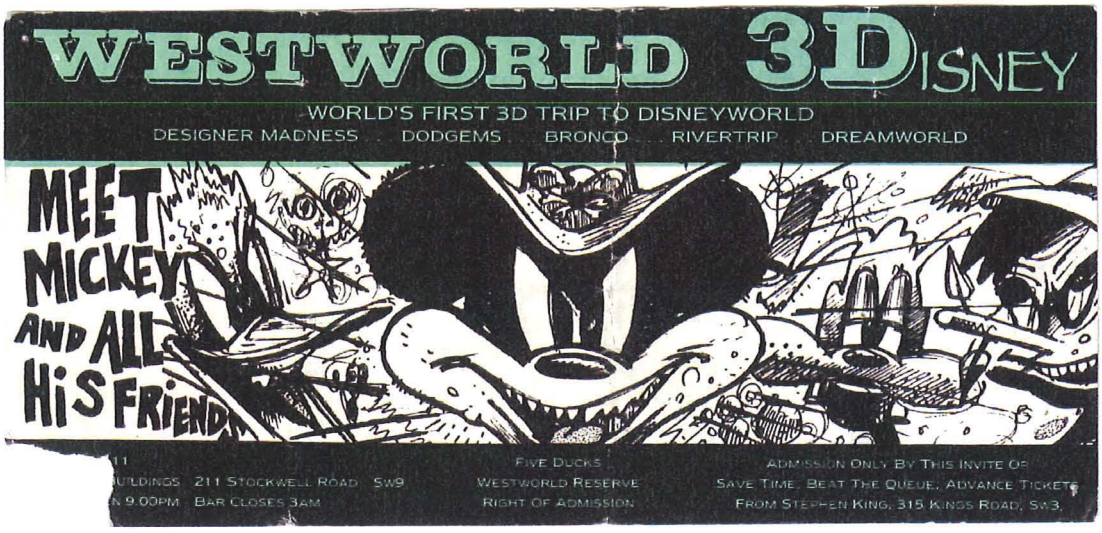
**Finding 'the field'**

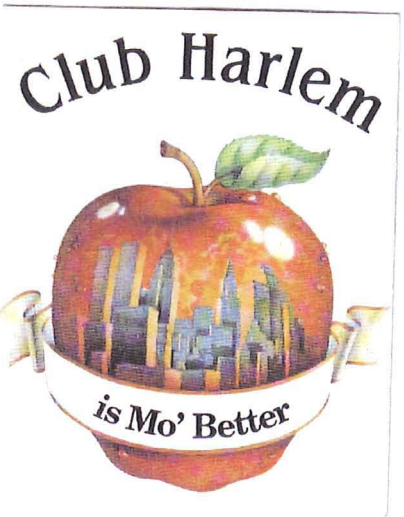
The most intellectually challenging question thrown up by the empirical portion of this project was the hardest to resolve. Having decided to undertake fieldwork, selected a methodology which insisted upon a rigorous reflexivity, a question remained; where was 'the field'? The language is a hangover from ethnography's origins in anthropology, with its notions of fieldwork being undertaken in some far flung village where life can be studied by a patient and observant researcher, who pitches his or her tent literally in the 'field'. The assumptions that underpin the notion of a secure distinction between the field and home, or between cultures or indeed persons, have been convincingly critiqued not least by anthropologists themselves like James Clifford who deconstructs the underlying positivism and ethnocentrism of such conceptions.[22] But it was not just that I was reflexive about the use of the idea of the field, but more mundane than that; the networks I wanted to investigate were located, literally, no-where. In no *place*.

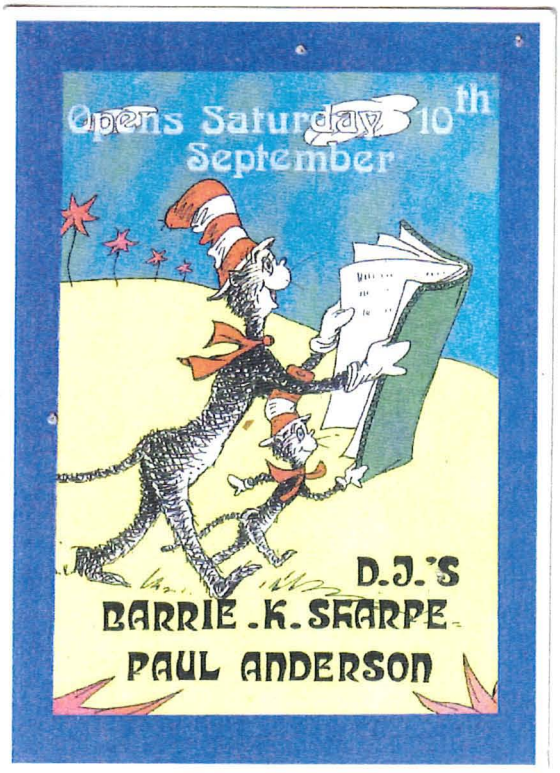
Although dance music cultures are in some sense all around in London – on any night in London there are hundreds of clubs open, and thousands of people dancing – compared to the subcultures of mod, punk or Goth, club cultures are nebulous, decentred, and illusive. You cannot identify a dance music 'fan' by their clothing, they often themselves do not identify with any particular title ('clubber and 'raver' are both vague and uncool). The very form presented a problem to the research project. They did not seem to take place in any particular place. And they do not stay still – club cultures are perpetually in motion, decentralised, informal, protean. These are the defining characteristic of the music networks I wanted to discuss

[21] Bourdieu, 2000: 608
[22] Clifford, 1988

Club scenes move. Their forms of consumption and norms of behaviour are founded on motion – dancing. They also move location, from venue to venue. A 'club' can often technically be 'no-where': appearing in a venue but not staying there. At the centre of London club culture is not the 'night club' that is the bricks and mortar venue but the 'club night' the temporary transformation of a somewhere – it could be a licensed dance venue but just as easily an abandoned cinema, a pub, a car park – into a 'club'. This accounts for the importance of niche media like flyers (handbills), listings in specialist magazines and the knowledge passed on by pirate radio networks – because clubs nights, that are the brands that drive club culture, move between 'venues' continually.



A selection of club flyers – *Cat in the Hat* 1985, *Westworld* 1990, *Club Harlem* 1991

London club networks do not draw their crowd, nor found their community's in any one particular geographical area. London itself is disrupted by the traffic of people and music *through* it.

These forms of symbolic, sonic and physical mobility necessitate a specific methodology, one which does not attempt to limit the focus to informants from a particular geographically defined area within the city, or particular ethnic or class fraction. This is because such 'controls' would risk inevitably minimising the aspects of mobility, interaction, co-operation across local area and boundaries of race and class which are among club culture's most significant features. Moreover, not delimiting in advance, by race or gender or other form of postulated identity (Bauman, 1995), avoids the tendency in social science research (which is still a conspicuously white liberal affair) of constructing 'samples of opportunity' (Phoenix, 1987) where informants for 'convenience' are drawn from the same social class and race as the informant.

This is not a locally bounded ethnography that constructs a particular 'field', imagined as a stable bounded container of a particular culture, [23] nor an attempt to outline the musical-cultural activities of one specific group of youth in one particular historical period. Instead I would have to track and pay analytic attention to networks – allow the loose affiliations of a group of London music practitioners guide me, and use network connections to find and approach my sample.

## Researching the multicultural network

London dance music networks are, geographically, in Britain, but they are not national. These networks and the music at their core challenge what we mean by a nation or national identity. They emphasise that the identity of a nation, or a place, is as being as much about what passes through and comes from elsewhere, as they are about what comes from 'the land', the 'nature' or the thought-to-be-distinct 'history' of the 'native' British people. Dance cultures have the form they do because of the historic traffic between the far-flung parts of the former British empire and London, its capital city and principal hub. London dance music as a form would not exist, or at least would have an entirely different form, if it were not for the empire the unequal social relations that were its consequence.

[23] For a critique of this anthropological assumption see James Clifford, 1996,

The most important of these, in terms of music, was the immigration to Britain from the Caribbean that at its high point – between 1948 and 1962 – resulted in the relocation of almost a million Caribbean people to Britain, half of whom settled in greater London. This immigration, which was concentrated in particular parts of the city, is the most immediate reason for the emergence of a multicultural London in the form I am discussing. These migrants, and their off spring are the people who settled in and created what Hall et al (1976) describe as the 'black colony' in London (Harlesdon, Brixton), and it is through their cultural activity that Afro-diasporic dance-music practices were enculturated and put down routes of their own in London.

I did not go out of my way to ensure that I drew informants from different racial groups, partly because any attempt to map the networks I was interested in would have to try very hard to create a racially homogenous sample. 'Black' and 'white' participants (the inadequate terminology bequeathed to us from US racial politics) collaborated at every level of these cultures – in DJing and sound systems, promoting, in the crowds. That there are no Asian informants in this project (descendents of the migrants from the Indian subcontinent and from Uganda in the 1960s and 1970s) is not meant to suggest that Asian's were not active in club cultures at the time. But Asian youth, the 'second generation considerably younger than their Caribbean counterparts (immigration from 'the new commonwealth' was at its height in the late 1960s) in this period, though avid consumers of dance culture, soul in particular,[24] were absent from the black and white networks I am describing.

In terms of area or locality, my informants are drawn from a fairly wide geographical area of London. Once again this was not so much planned as part of the basic logic of the networks. Though every one of my informants started with a 'local' involvement with dance music – associated with their local school, friendship group, sound system or community – they all graduated to a more city-wide (in many cases international) and fluid relationship with dance music, indeed it was their very involvement with dance music itself that facilitated their more active journeying around and across the large and difficult to navigate metropolis. Music and the involvement with dance music was the form and the pretext for learning how to negotiate the globalised city, and perhaps, the globalised world.

## Distribution of labour in the network

Music, for my informants, is a source of pleasure, for many a passion and an obsession. But it is also work, potentially the source of a job, for a few a high income. If it is cultural capitalism that defines the new world of work (Bewes and Gilbert, 2000), then dance music cultures in London, since the 1960s, are an early model. The networks of friends who work as they play which defines the new enterprise zones of London in the early twenty first century, which Angela McRobbie[25] describes, have precedents in the friendship groups, the crews, possess and cliques – the 'extended family' networks indexed in the nomenclature of Sound *Systems*, 'Dreem *Teams*, So Solid *Crews* – around and through which black cultural production has taken place in London. These networked forms, the sound system, the club and pirate radio, are first and foremost businesses with ambitions and bottom lines (La Rose, 1999). But they also collaborate around a shared commitment to their self-generated scenes, and to music.

Black music production at this scale – dealing second hand records, running clubs – has been referred to by several informants as a form of 'hustling,'[26] referring to the informal, often illegal, forms of work characteristic of the black colony or ghetto. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, there is a convergence between these highly individualistic practices and Margaret Thatcher' model of the enterprise culture (1998). Yet within the context of intense competition between sound systems, record dealers and clubs, forms of solidarity, networks of affiliation, are also characteristic. Networks are a politically ambiguous forms of association.

## Production and consumption in the reflexive network

All of the informants in this study are 'producers' musicians, music producers, dancers, DJs, promoters, or record label staff including owners. They are involved in the 'production' of dance music cultures, even when they are just part of the 'crowd'. Some were avid attendees of clubs, dancers, in club terminology 'punters'. But these categories in the field of London club culture are far from stable. Producers and those making a living in the field are always first and foremost music 'fans' (consumers),

[24] Banerjea and banarjea, 1996

[25] "[they] are obliged, and aspire to be multi-skilled. And they resist easy categorisation...they are simultaneously operating in 'creative' and 'business' modes – both motivated by the desire to makes mark creatively, yet ever alert to the career possibilities of network, publicity and sponsorship." McRobbie, 2001: 4

and it was in all cases a prior commitment to music and the collective social consumption of music that lead on to a 'career' within club music. Because of the anti-phonic social form of dance music, consumers are *productive*; club crowds, dancers, record buyers and radio listeners 'produce' dance music scenes, in alliances which are cross cut by unequal power relations, but fluid. The strictly social form of appreciation and reward, where the dancing crowd plugged into the same network as the 'producer' judge 'performance' (and can be harsh critics), prevented single points of concentrated power – over-powerful institutions – emerging. But all cultural production is hierarchical, as Sarah Thornton discovered about club culture. Despite the rhetoric of equality, prominent in many dance genres, some people and groups were more powerful than others, there is a canon and a hierarchy organised and policed by cultural intermediaries, which ordered production. Perhaps this should not have been so surprising to Thornton since she adapts her term 'subcultural capital' from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' and one of Bourdieus' most fundamental points was that the 'field' of cultural production is structured and hierarchal (Bourdieu, 1984). The question is what kind of hierarchy do different club networks have, what is their 'currency'?

In terms of the networks I am exploring, the common factor amongst my informants is expertise. The contemporary understanding of the DJ (Disc Jockey) as the central productive individual at the heart of 'dance' – valued for their technical skill on the decks (mixing, cutting, tweaking the levels) – paid vast sums for a few hours 'work,' does not accurately apply to the DJs I interviewed. While there are some who at this stage in their career can charge high hourly rates what they are paid is neither anywhere near the hourly average for a DJ (there are thousands of DJs, a handful of high earners) nor an indication of their 'real' income. DJs are 'player-collector's' (Toynbee, 2000: 134), experts in music who spend long unpaid hours acquiring their knowledge and expertise. Even highly paid club DJs generally also need to be involved in music production, record distribution on elsewhere in the media to pay the mortgage. The involvement with music that it takes to be an expert – to know how to move a crowd, year on year, and to run a successful club, is in most cases 'a labour of love'. Roughly half of my sample have made viable careers within music proper (some have parleyed their musical knowledge into related media like TV production or advertising where their expertise might count for something) and this is a far higher percentage than would apply to the thousands of aspirant dance music

[26] Pryce, 1979,

producers, DJs, promoters and dancers who would have liked to make a living from music.

Some of my informants are DJs. Many started DJing some time after they joined a dance music network. DJs and those who became DJs devote a large amount of time listening to, searching for, talking about and otherwise fetishing music – primarily in the form of records, vinyl discs (even this far into the digital age). They are knowledge seekers, relentlessly persuing new rhythms. The same is true of those who cluster around DJs and whose collective efforts produce clubs cultures. Promoters – the 'project managers' of the club night (every small detail is their job from getting the crowd there to making sure the toilets work, paying the DJ and cleaning up) music producers – those who make and think about making music themselves whether as musicians or 'samplers': dancers – the 'fans' without whom nothing the DJ or promoter could do would make any difference. In these networks production and the cultural power it carries is dispersed across the entire network. And so is expertise.

Some are more expert then others. Among my informants are successful music producers widely regarded as especially expert and original, and rewarded for it. Other informants have always had to seek income outside music to support their music habit, and some have long since put active involvement with musical networks behind them and chosen new careers. Some of the people I interview are exceptional, but I am not presenting them as such. Precisely because some of these names are well known I introduce my informants only by first name (if you recognise them, fine) but here although they are individuals with different stories to tell they are being treated as examples of a wider sociological and historical process – there are many, many others like them across the black Atlantic.

**Introducing the network**

The group of people I interviewed for this thesis do not constitute one network. Although many know each other, they are not a friendship group, although several are friends, and most know each other. They all come from or live primarily in London, and they have all been involved with dance music networks. In fact they have all been involved with many such networks – London dance culture is an intricate web of overlapping, temporary and fluid networks within which move tighter groups of family, location, or school connection. Networks overlap synchronically – it was possible at the same time to be part of both a soul and a 'rave'

network, and diachronically – Reggae, soul, Hip Hop, Rare Groove, rave and Jungle each ran parallel with its pre – and succeeding genre, and continue to. Partly through my interest in dance music over a twenty year period, and partly because expertise takes time, my sample are mainly in their mid thirties-mid forties. It is part of my research finding – revealing the interconnectedness and fluidity of Afro-diasporic form – that not one of them identities with or is identified with just one genre of music. Several are the leading figures in particular genres – Bryan is very big in Jungle/drum and bass, Norman in Rare Groove, Trevor in R&B – but all of them have moved through many – following and influencing generic change over time. From Reggae sound systems to raves and Jungle clubs the continuity driving beneath this apparent change is down not only to the similarities of musical form (as discussed in the next chapter) but to the people who moved from one genre to the next, staying close to music in a way they could not to youth.

In the following section I introduce, briefly, the informants. For the sake of clarity I have gathered them together into (as I have argued unstable) categories: DJs, promoters, musicians/music producers. I have also interviewed one music journalist, and one semi-professional dancer

**The DJs**

The DJ, disc jockey, is the person responsible for playing the records at a club night. This usually means playing 'their own' records, from their 'collection' which is expected to include both 'the classics' and the very latest releases (DJs are given privileged access to new music through the 'white label' and advance pre-release strategies of many record labels. In Reggae sound system culture this function is known as 'selector', and DJ identifies the person who speaks over the microphone (known as an 'MC' – master of ceremonies – in Hip Hop, and post rave dance cultures).

**Norman**: A professional DJ – at clubs and on the radio – in his forties. Both his parents are from Grenada in the Caribbean, migrating to the UK in the late 1950s. Norman was born in the London, the second of six children, and grew up in West London first in Notting Hill then on a council estate in Ealing. He was educated at a comprehensive school in west London which he left when he was fifteen and did not attend university. In his teens he built and established a sound system, Good Times, with his brother Joey, a Reggae DJ. He has operated Good Times, at Notting Hill Carnival for twenty consecutive years. In the mid 1980s Norman became associated

with a particular 'retro' genre, Rare Groove, rediscovered American soul and funk recordings from the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a sound system operator he was both a DJ and a 'promoter' organising a series of 'warehouse parties,' unlicensed events in empty industrial space, under the name 'Shake and Fingerpop'. Norman also ran one of the earliest 'house' (music) club nights in London – 'High On Hope' at Dingwalls in Camden – in 1986. He was one of the first DJs on the pirate station KISS FM which ran illegally in a variety of London locations between 1985 and 1990 before gaining a legal licence in 1991. In the late 1980s Norman worked briefly in A&R for Polygram subsidiary Talkin' Loud records where he was involved in signing The Young Disciples. Norman is a full time internationally renowned DJ, playing music from a variety of genres from soul, funk and Reggae to house and garage. He DJs throughout Britain and the world – Australia, South Africa, Ibiza and New York, is a DJ on London Live Radio and a remixer. The interview with Norman took place at the Central London studios of Greater London Radio (now London Live) 22/11/99 [In 2002 Norman was awarded an MBE for 'services to music']

**Trevor** : A club and radio DJ in his late thirties Trevor is the son of St Lucian migrants who came to London in the early 1960s. He was born and grew up in Hackney, North East London. He won a scholarship to a grammar school in East London, London Oratory, but after starting 'A' levels at a six-form college – Kingsway – he left and did not pursue a university education. In the early 1980s, he started a sound system with his next door neighbour, which he promoted in his local area. This evolved into the Madhatter sound system in collaboration with a white Hip Hop DJ, Martin Madhatter. Through his association with Jazzie B's Soul II Soul sound system he gained a reputation as a DJ and began to play throughout London joining the staff at pirate station Kiss FM where he specialised in playing funk and Rare Groove. In the late 1980s Trevor DJed at and promoted a series of London club nights including 'Respect' at the Wag club, 'Dance Wicked' at the Arches in Vauxhall, 'Yo Yo' in Kingsway, during which time he also worked in the Soul II Soul shop in Camden and for record distributor G&M distributing American import vinyl. In the mid 1990s Trevor was lured from Kiss FM (where he had one or the most popular shows) to BBC Radio 1 (along with a host of other ex-pirate DJs) where he remains. The interview with Trevor took place at his house in Finsbury Park 7/8/98.

**Roger**: A DJ and music producer in his mid thirties, born to Afro-Caribbean parents who migrated in the 1960s. He grew up in south London: Wandsworth and Battersea. He attended a mixed comprehensive school, but did not attend university. Roger's

initial involvement in music was as a leisure activity; he was a regular at south London soul nights like Tiffany's in Wimbledon in the early 1980s. During the mid 1980s he frequented many 'warehouse parties' throughout London at one of which he met West Londoner I.G.Culture. The two formed a Hip Hop act, called Dodge City, which was signed to Island subsidiary Fourth and Broadway and released a couple of singles. In the late 1980s, he became a DJ. As a music producer 'soul inside' he has produced tracks for soul singer Beverly knight, Damage, Stephen Simmonds and remixed numerous tracks for American artists. Dodge was interviewed at his home in Wandsworth 4/8/98

**Ben**: Club DJ in his later twenties born and raised in Bracknell in Berkshire by 'white English' parents. Ben attended his local comprehensive school that was almost entirely white. When young the music he was exposed to was mainly chart pop and rock – Dire straits, Phil Collins. After getting a job in an ice rink in 1989 he was exposed to 'acid house' and he became a 'raver' attending the huge outdoor 'raves' of the period. He worked as an assistant on a local Reggae sound system, Renegade, which was providing the 'sound system' for local raves, which was 'the first time he had social interaction with black people'. Through his association with Marvin Conner who ran the sound system he became educated in black music history – Reggae, soul, funk, early Hip Hop – and started to become a record collector. In the mid 1990s he started to work as a DJ with partner Peter Adaakwah, and formed the record label Barely Breaking Even. He continues to DJ and run clubs at Bar Rhumba in Central London. The interview took place at the BBE offices in London, 05/12/98.

**Bryan:** club DJ and record label owner in his late thirties Bryan is the child of Jamaican immigrants who came to the UK in the late 1950s and settled in Gloucester, where he grew up. Since his mid teens he has been involved in Reggae sound system culture, acting as 'selector' (record chooser) for the Challenger Sound System based in Gloucester (which travels widely to Swindon, Bristol and London for sound clashes). At the age of fourteen Bryan moved to London and settled in Brixton. Bryan spent some time in prison in the early 1980s. His cellmate was a white soul DJ who introduced him to soul and funk music. On his release he set up a pirate radio station and sound system – Passion – with his partner Jumping Jack Frost. After a visit to the illegal 'RIP' 'rave party in London Bridge they began to introduce house and acid trax into their radio shows and parties, much to the bemusement of their black Brixton audience. During the heyday of small scale 'acid house' clubs he ran several nightclubs; 'carwash' in Stockwell, and 414 in Brixton. He worked for the record

distributor Republic Records then at rhythm King, and began to DJ regularly in the rave and hardcore scene of the early 1990s. In 1993-4 was among the mainly black house DJs, together with Fabio, Grooverider and Goldie, who innovated the 'Jungle' genre. He is currently the promoter and DJ for the Movement club night in London and co-owner of the drum and bass label V Recordings. The interview took place at the V recordings offices in South London, 2/03/99

**Mike, Jonathon, Tim**: A collective of London DJs comprising three Afro-Caribbean Londoners in their late thirties. After various careers as DJs and outside music, involvements in sound system Reggae and soul scenes, these three joined forces on a pirate radio station (London Underground) in 1996 and were among the group who innovated a new style of distinctly UK house music known variously as speed garage, UK garage and two-step. They became renowned as DJs playing at many of the Capitals top garage nights including twice as nice and landed themselves a radio show on Radio 1 which they continue to broadcast. [Portions of the interview published in Touch Magazine, 79, April 1998]

**Promoters**

These are the people who organise, publicise and manage the club nights, sometimes in collaboration with the venue owners but in most cases independently.

**Femi**: A promoter and DJ born in West London to parents from the Creole community of Sierra Leone. He was schooled partially at international school in Sierra Leone and partly at a London comprehensive. He left school at sixteen. As a promoter Femi has been involved in 'promoting' – organising, running – dance events since the mid 1980s. He teamed up with DJ Norman to form the promotion crew Shake and Fingerpop and promoted some of the biggest 'warehouse parties' of the mid 1980s In the early 1990s Femi was a member of the band 'The Young Disciples'. Interviewed at his home 8/7/99.

**Dan**: A Jewish North Londoner in his late thirties. Dan describes himself as 'comfortably middle class', his father is an accountant, and he was educated at the private University College School in Highgate North London. He studied design at Westminster Polytechnic. Dan's involvement with music began when he joined 'Family Funktion', a group of promoters from his school, in 1985 and started the first Family Funktion club at the Sol Y Sombra restaurant in Charlotte Street, W1. Another member of this collective was the now world famous DJ Judge Jules (Julius

O'Riordan). In the mid 1980s Dan promoted a series of warehouse parties throughout London, as well as the Friday night Family Funktion club at The Astoria Charing Cross Road, and several live concerts featuring members of James Brown's 'funky people'. The interview with Dan took place in the garden of his mother in laws house in Islington, 12/8/98

**Racheal**: Professional promoter Rachael was born in Nottingham and grew up in a series of communes in Spain, Ireland and Wales, until settling in Brixton in the late 1970s. She attended a comprehensive school, Thomas Carlton, in Kennington, but did not pursue further education. Rachael was an enthusiastic attendee of 'soul clubs' like the Cat's Whiskers in Streatham and the Lyceum in Central London, with a mixed race group from her area. In the mid 1980s she attended many warehouse parties and west end clubs which led to a career as a club promoter. She has promoted dozens of clubs in London including 'Respect ' at the Wag, Club Harlem at the Pig, Flipside at Iceni, and The Lick parties, which she has recently taken throughout the capitals of Europe. In addition to arranging and organising clubs she works as a manager of DJs and Producers and as a consultant for American label Def Soul. She currently runs her own PR and event management company 'Impact' and lives in Brixton. The interview with Rachael took place at her home 10/08/98

**Claire**: A thirty one year old Jewish woman from North London, who worked as a club promoter in the mid 1980s. She attended private school, St Paul's Girls. Claire's entree into dance music came when her father bought a central London 'disco' in the mid 1970s – Hatchets in Piccadilly. Through this association with clubs she got to know the main players on the 'uptown disco' circuit including the famously flamboyant Phillip Salon who ran 'The Mud Club', for whom she occasionally worked. In the early 1980s her father bought the disco Xenons. She was involved in the Family Funktion promotion crew in the mid-1980s, and attended many warehouse parties. She now works as a freelance Television director. The interview took place at her home on 2/08/98

**Musicians/music producers**

**Cleveland**: Afro Caribbean Londoner in his early forties Watkiss started as a lovers rock/Reggae selector on a Hackney sound system, then moved into singing. He became interested in Jazz in the mid 1980s and joined the jazz warriors and Courtney Pine as a vocalist. After releasing several jazz albums he became converted to Jungle

in 1993 when he contributed a track to Goldie's 'Timeless' album, and became the MC/Vocalist at the Metalheadz club night at the BlueNote in Hoxton Square. He formed his own 'twenty-First Century Soul' band Project 23 with DJ LaRouge and drummer Marque Gilmore that released an album on the Dorado label in 1997. Interviewed at Dorado offices, 7/7/96

**Rob**: Is white in his early thirties from Stevenage. He is a pioneering Jungle/drum and bass producer who produced Goldie's first album 'Timeless' and runs the label 'Moving Shadow'.

**MJ**: Late twenties white Londoner from Twickenham MJ entered the music business as a 'tape op' and producer for many Jungle productions. In the mid 1990s he was among the first group of producer/musicians to innovate, under the influence of Armand Van Helden, Todd Edwards and Masters At Work, the Two-Step/UK Garage style. Since then he has signed a multi-album deal with Talkin' Loud (Polygram) and released his first full album. He has also taken his 'band' on the road performing live garage at jazz festivals and on TV. He is a highly sought after remixer having done mixes for TLC and De La Soul as well as most of the big two step acts.

**Mica**: Black Londoner of Afro-Caribbean descent, in her mid thirties Mica has been a celebrated singer since she was fourteen and was a star vocalist in a prominent London Gospel choir. Signed to Island in the early 1980s she was sent to America where her label attempted to make her "the next Whitney Houston". The album she released bombed and she was dropped. She has since been signed and dropped twice more, and has released a series of soul albums that have been under-promoted. She is best remembered by London clubbers for her seminal tune recorded with Omar, 'Should Have Known Better', which, though a huge club hit, was never released as a single by her record label. [Portions of the interview published in Touch Magazine, 82, July 1998]

**Simon** : A music producer and record collector Simon describes himself as white English and grew up in a middle class family in Clapham, South London. As a young boy Simon listened to mainly to 'pop' and 'chart' music. At school in a racially mixed London comprehensive, Elliot in Wandsworth, he was exposed to Reggae, soul and Hip Hop that gradually came to dominate his musical tastes. He attended many Reggae based 'blues parties' in Wandsworth in his teens, with his black friends. In the mid 1980s he attended Sussex University to study economics frequently returning to

London to attend 'warehouse parties' of the period. He began collecting records – soul, funk, and Hip Hop – and was involved in dealing second hand records while a student. Primarily a record collector Simon has also worked part time as a DJ. Since the early 1990 he has been producing his own music – releasing an album on America independent Ubiquity Records, and producing and remixing several London soul acts. The interview took place at his home 1/10/9

**Journalist**

**Jamie**: A journalist/TV producer in his late thirties, Jamie was born in South London, his father is an 'Anglo Indian' from Goa and his mother 'white Irish'. He always considered himself white, he says, despite his father's Indian heritage ('my skin is pale, people always treated me as white'). Jamie describes his parents as urban middle classes, his father is an accountant, and he was educated at the 'experimental comprehensive Elliott in Wandsworth, where he took his A Levels and subsequently, through a special ILEA scheme went to Oxford University where he read PPE. In his mid teens he was in a punk band that played on the punk-pub rock circuit. On a trip to New York in the mid 1980s he became fascinated with Hip Hop and on returning to the UK began to work intermittently as a DJ. He ran several club and warehouse parties nights in Oxford. Jaime became the editor of 'Free' Magazine, the music magazine affiliated with the pirate radio station Kiss FM. When Kiss gained a legal license Free Magazine became independent and changed its name to Touch Magazine, which operated as quarterly and then monthly free magazine of 'street culture and music'. The interview with Jamie took place at his house on 11/8/98

**Dancer**

**Diane**: Mid thirties, born in North West London to a couple who migrated from Trinidad and Tobago. She lived briefly in the Caribbean before moving to Wembley. She was educated at a London comprehensive school and attended Harrow College of Art. Diane has never earned a living from involvement with music but she has been a life long dancer and 'punter', attending clubs throughout her life, from the 'soul scenes in Wembley and Wimbledon, to the sound system family dances, to the warehouse parties of the 1980s and the soul and R&B clubs of the 1990s. She works as a fashion designer and teacher. The interview took place at her home on 6/08/98

These are the informants for this thesis – whose careers and what they had to say about them form the basis for the empirical portion of the work, and the arguments I make drawn from it. In addition to these long, detailed interviews this thesis also draws upon interviews that I conducted as a music journalist over the past decade.[27] Those that I have interviewed, primarily for Touch Magazine, On The One or Keyboard that I have quoted from or otherwise used as supporting evidence include: Jungle producers Roni Size and DJ Krust[28], music producer Tricky, rappers Michael Franti[29], Guru and Chuck D, Jamaican guitarist Ernest Ranglin, Afro-cuban pianist Eddie Palmieri, singers Omar and JK and Nigerian Afro-beat bandleader Femi (son of Fela) Kuti.

**Niche and micro media**

In addition to my own interviews I have drawn extensively on the archive of 'Touch' Magazine. Independently owned and run by a small racially mixed group of journalists, it covered the black dance music scene, primarily in London, between 1991 and 2000 (it remerged soon thereafter, now owned by its former printers). Touch was 'fanzine' in that it was strongly connected to the music scenes it recorded via the subcultural networks within which its writers moved, many of whom were themselves DJs and producers. While I would not want to reproduce the notion that Touch's independence from corporate ownership and proximity to 'the scene' somehow guarantees objectivity nevertheless Touch did tend to cover in detail the club scene and its key institutions and mediators in a way which was not triggered directly by the record release strategies of major labels. It frequently provided space to figures in the subcultural economy without the support of major label promotion departments, and the emergence of new musical genres, especially Jungle and UK Garage which, though the coverage came after the emergence of the scenes themselves, were far ahead of any coverage in the dance specialist press. In the columns and letters pages of Touch a continuing conversation about the meanings, politics and culture of London club scenes – a key indicator of the reflexivity I have argued for – evolved over a decade which is one of the only important written sources about these often hidden or emergent practices.

[27] I have worked a freelance music journalist since 1989, mainly for independent US and UK magazines like Touch, Blues and Soul, On The One (US), Urb (US) and Unesco Courier.
[28] interview published in Touch Magazine, 71 July 1997
[29] interview published in On The One Magazine 1, Fall 1994

As well as the interviews and the textual sources my research draws on my experience of attending of hundreds of clubs over more than fifteen years.[30] My historical accounts of the Reggae, soul and Rare Groove cultures and 'raves' of the 1980s are based, in addition to the interviews with participants, on my own 'ethnographic familiarity' with these forms. I was an enthusiastic attendee of these forms of club culture from 1984 onwards. Since the start of this project in 1996 I have attended clubs across the spectrum of available genres including, Reggae, soul, funk, 'breakbeat', Hip Hop, hard house, garage, Jungle, UK Garage. These clubs have been in all kinds of venues, from 'warehouses', to 'superclubs', dingy pubs, 'DJ-bars, in Central London (the west end) and across the city from Dalston to Shepherds Bush, Camden to Brixton. During the course of these visits I have engaged in conversations based on my research, recruited informants on occasion, and attempted to adjust my understanding of London's incredibly diverse, yet also consistent, network of night clubs, pirate radio stations, record stores and the other nodes of its subcultural networks.

One final resource for the research has been the music itself, and its commodity forms especially vinyl records. I am a record collector, and my (by no means comprehensive) collection of around 2000 jazz, funk, soul, Reggae, Hip Hop, Jungle and house records have been a central source of information for this thesis. Chapter 3 foregrounds the role that record collections continue to play as memory banks and bank accounts for 'subcultural capital'.

## Space and the network society

What theory of society underpins the research presented here? I have adapted Manuel Castells idea about the emergence of a new form of organisation with globalisation – the network society – as a way to think about the dispersed, rhizomatic and mobile club scenes I have been discussing.

The network society, for Castells (1996) differs from both feudal and industrial society in its modes of organisation. In a characterisation of the changing modes of

[30] I have been an regular attendee of nightclubs in all the genres I discuss since the age of fifteen. Growing up in London had access to the vast range of night clubs the city offers – a partial list of these would include The Wag, The Mud Club, Heaven (Spectrum, The Pig, Cat In the Hat, Camden Palace, Shaftesbury's, The Fridge , Dingwalls, Sol Y Sombre, 333, Ministry of Sound, The Shaft, Fresh and Funky @ Hanover Grand, Rotation @ Subterania, Woodys, The Cask and Glass, The Forum, Flipside @ Iceni, The Lick (Various Venus), London Calling @ The Arches (Vauxhall), and hundreds more which are no longer there, or which i am unable to recall.

capitalist organisation and experience which are called both postmodernity and globalisation (Harvey, 1989, Held, 1996) Castells argues that in the 'network society' there is a changed relations between space and time. The securities associated with 'place', both the idea of known, unchanging geographical space (the city, the nation) and the metaphorical 'place' implied by homogenous classes and rigid social hierarchies ('knowing your place') are overtaken by the shifting contingencies and struggles over 'space'. If capitalist clock time can be said to have anchored the logic of place in industrial society, it is space which organises time in the network society[31], space composed not of 'places' but of 'flows': "of capital, information, technology, flows of organisational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols."[32] Such flows are "purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political and symbolic structure of society."[33] Places in this model can no longer be defined outside of social actions (Harvey, 1990), or of their relation to these 'flows'.

If there is, in this network society, a paradoxical concentration *in* space – of capital, expertise and information in Silicon Valley or the City of London – these places are 'hubs or nodes' in larger patterns of flux, the city is 'process not form'[34] defined by the movements through it as much as what it is thought to 'contain.' Our societies, Castells argues, are increasingly organised around networks, rather than power blocs, institutions, classes or other forms of geographically circumscribed power: "Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture." [35]

Castells' emphasises the continuation of inequality and the differential access to networks of power; while 'elites' are able to transcend time and place to become 'cosmopolitan,' 'people' remain local, not only trapped in *place*, but in *time* where old patterns of temporality have broken down but those not surfing the information flows experience 'arrhythmia,'[36] a loss of the temporal securities which previously patterned their lifecycles. This is a loss of fixity, what McRobbie calls "the end of fixed

[31] Castells, 1996: 376
[32] Ibid: 412
[33] Ibid: 412
[34] Ibid: 410
[35] Ibid: 469
[36] A condition to which the rhythms of black dance music, with their special forms of repetition, can provide the antidote – see Chapter 3.

location, duration of employment and visible hierarchies of power and responsibility"[37] that can be freeing, but will privilege those with the right kinds of educational, symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Increased flexibility comes with inherent risk.

The implications for social science here is the necessity of developing new models by which to understand and interpret these 'flows', which do not rely on the unwieldy notions of identity as stable and self-consistent or reify national or cultural borders which are so easily traversed by these flows of information, and forms of organisation. Which equally do not operate with notions of given, rigid and definable class 'blocs.' There are utopian readings possible here, as are so often attached to conceptions of the internet.[38] These new flows enable subjects to transcend stifling notions of identity and form unprecedented connections across space, and the borders of difference. Yet as Castells points out, there is differential access to these new networks. The network society model directs our attention not only to new potential forms of domination, but also to possibilities for evading centralised discipline, and opening space for new forms of democratic organisation[39] which have the chance to be "decentralised... flexible and even capable of self-organisation. [New digital networks] are open and unpredictable."[40] But how *new* is this kind of network?

The 'black Atlantic,' as we have seen, is a rhizomorphic (multi-branched, rootless) series of flows – of people, ideas, cultural resources, and rhythms. It is a "network of communication and cultural exchange."[41] 'Flow' not only characterises the way these cultural products circulate across the Atlantic, and around the circuitry of affiliation, but constitutes a formal principle within black cultural production itself,[42] one aspect of a distinct diasporic restlessness (Gilroy, 1993). The venues of Afro-diasporic dance networks, in this model, are not only the (temporary, versatile) nodes, the points that link together the '*space of flows*'. They are also *spaces of flow* where DJs, dancing

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[37] McRobbie, 2001: 4)
[38] The protests around WTO meetings and other meetings of international power were organised "in a network mode" through the internet,. See Tiziana Terranova, 2000: 130
[39]Esther Dyson, has argued that the Internet has raised a new challenge, of 'global governance', to which the internet may provide solutions, as the site where new global political parties can be convened. See interview With Esther Dyson, openDemocracy issue 4, July 2001 www.opendemocracy.net
[40] Terranova, 2000: 129
[41] Gilroy, 1993: 80
[42] Rose, 1994: 21

bodies, rapper/MCs, 'keep on moving', or the in the words of one classic rap tune, keep "on and on and on on and on/and the beat don't stop til the break of dawn.'[43]

As Graham Murdock has pointed out, in a different context, understandings of the cultures of urban youth, particularly black youth, have been hampered by misunderstandings of their forms of organisation. Because these cultures are orchestrated differently to official culture, there has been a presumption that urban youth is disorganised. "Youth in the inner city are not disorganised", Murdock argues, "they are simply organised in a different way, built around informal networks and unofficial leisure milieu."[44] Such networks are hidden from view often for specific reasons: to avoid surveillance, to retain control over cultural organisation, to facilitate syncretic, hybrid cultural forms not sanctioned by official discourse suspicious of mixture.

The form of the Reggae sound system is exemplary here. Sound systems, the massive hi-fis developed by the Kingston pioneers in the 1950s, and carried to the UK along the routes of migration, are organised, financed and run collectively. Although 'big men' like Coxsone Dodd and Prince Buster lend the 'set' a particular identity they are inherently collective, involving the labour and commitment of dozens of people, and the hundreds more who support the sound as its audience. All the Reggae sounds, in the UK, Jamaica and beyond (eg Japan) are linked together loosely and informally both through the networks of music – the flow of records and *riddims* around the system, and through the practice of the *sound clash* – sounds travelling to each others patch to compete. Sound systems do not stay in one place – they are mobile by necessity and definition (see chapter 4).

Reggae sound system culture, like all black music cultures, is not just a form of entertainment or leisure. They provide a form of discipline for young people out of the reach of other institutions like school or employment[45] and provided access to both cultural and economic capital. A successful sound system, with origins in a particular local community built its reputation by expanding its networks translocally (between the dispersed populations of Afro-Caribbean Britain) and eventually

[43] Sugarhill Gang, 'Rapper's Delight', 1979, Sugarhill Records 12" Arguably the first Hip Hop *record*, though a controversial one – it featured a group of unknown 'rappers' who stole their lyrics and style from well known local street performers and rapped over a live band – re-playing Chic's 'Good Times' – not, in other words, using the DJing, scratching and sampling techniques which were essential to Hip Hop production as a live form.
[44] Murdock 1984: 85
[45] La Rose, 1999

internationally (Saxon sound system has played in Jamaica and the United States). Despite their commitment to redemptive black identity and history – to 'roots and culture' – sound systems were always also the site of mixing across borders of race class and gender, and remain so. The sound system clash of 2000, the competition to find the best system with the toughest tunes, was won by a sound system from Japan. The flows are two-way.

### The space of class

Ulrich Beck has argued that structural changes in the past two decades, in the world of work and in the private sphere, have resulted in the individualisation of social agents (Beck, 1992). With the breakdown and reorganisation of the traditional social structures of work, the family, marriage, and the 'narratives of belonging' which underpinned these, the individual, floats increasingly free and "must then reflexively construct their own biographies."[46] While the effects of forms of collective identity which provide a surety of belonging, remain – class and the social inequality on which it rests, race and gender still matter – they are no longer the determining structures of social life. There has been a 'surge of individuation' in the social world, an atomising where the interpellations of class, nation or race "recede into the background for the activities of people" although "relations of inequality remain stable."[47]Beck concurs with Anthony Giddens that contemporary society is a post-traditional society, where the 'formulaic truths' of tradition are increasingly irrelevant to individuals, and social and collective memory rather than being preserved to serve as the grounds of subsequent social organisation, is continually "reconstructed on the basis of the present."[48]

These changes are not the result of the rise of voluntaristic bourgeois individualism, but a result of the changes in the labour market. Individualisation is not based on the free decision of individuals – it is a compulsion.[49] The weakening of family, community, religious, ethnic or location based affiliations come partially as a result of the demand for mobility through work. [50] The end of the 'job for life' and the collapse of the manufacturing sector, flexible accumulation, post-fordism, the rise of freelancing, multi-skilling and part time labour means that increasingly urbanised

[46] Beck, 1992: 4
[47] Beck, 1992: 87-88
[48] Giddens, 1993: 63
[49] Beck, 1994; 14
[50] Beck, 1992: 94

Western populations "make their living in existentially different ways from their parents" (McRobbie, 2001). New forms of social ties emerge as traditional communities break down, new patterns of settlement (immigration), supra-local networks and taste networks emerge, and new social movements (ecology, peace, feminism, 'interpretive communities of difference'[51]) "result from the search for social and personal identities and commitments in a de-traditionalized world."[52] These new post-traditional forms of individualised 'risk, Beck argues, should be understood as a series of 'overlapping social networks'.

This suggests that the Weberian notion of social class is no longer adequate to analyse forms of social being in the network society. Which is not to say that inequality has been overcome, only that we need more supple notions of how it works, in a world where subcultural class identities have dissipated. The question then becomes if 'class' based understandings of subculture such as those posited by Cohen (1972), Hall et al (1976), Hebdige, (1979), which imagine subcultural activity of the 1960s and 1970s as acts of 'resistance through ritual' on the part of marginalised white working class youth, what kind of analysis can capture the non-class specific, mobile and flexible network forms of the past two decades? Although shared class position and consciousness continues to provide some of the resources for the founding of London club cultures (see Chapter 6 and 7) I argue here for a focus on space, the space of flows and the topography of networks, rather than a class specific understanding of these scenes. Class is itself expressed in and through space and mobility (or its lack) (Massey, 1994, Bourdieu, 2000).

One of the of the most important mechanisms of control, visited most harshly on those thought to be unassimable, hard to control or prone to trouble, has been the operation of spatially enacted power: incarceration, zoning, spatial segregation.[53] Being prohibited from moving, argues Zygmunt Bauman, is not only the 'most potent symbol of impotence' but fosters estrangement between groups, which "reduces, thins down and compresses the view of the other... typification takes then the place of personal familiarity."[54]

[51] Gilroy, 1987: 230-5. Here Gilroy argues that black music can be seen to constitute forms of interpretative community that is comparable to Manuel Castells (1983) definition of a 'new social movement.'
[52] Beck, 1992: 90
[53] Bauman, 1998: 106
[54] Bauman, 1998; 106-7

## Multicultural club networks: two kinds of reflexive community

One of the characteristics of the new forms of association and new social movements in the network society is that they are, or have to be, reflexive.[55] Scott Lash argues that while we must take on board the new cultural individualisation we must also be attuned to new forms of togetherness, new or resilient types of structure, of information, communication, knowledge and sociability which we might even term 'community'. The 'communities' that Lash is interested in are, like the new subjectivity required in the network society, already 'reflexive'. He cites two examples. The first are the 'subcultures' diagnosed by Hebdige: "the focus on subculture", he argues, "is also pre-eminently a focus on reflexive community."[56] Subcultures are reflexive, because they are actively and reflexively constructed, rather than membership being conferred by virtue of some genetic or social quality, "we throw ourselves in; one is not born but becomes a ted, punk or skinhead."[57] These communities, in Lash's argument, are 'reflexive' for a number of other reasons: because "they may be widely stretched over 'abstract space', and also perhaps over time... they consciously pose themselves the problem of their own creation, and constant reinvention far more than do traditional communities... their tools and products tend to be not material ones but abstract and cultural ones."[58] Lash distinguishes the subcultural 'community' from the 'resistance through consumption' taste communities: "people who share read the same newspaper or watch the same soap opera share only imagined community. To be in a taste community, which takes on the factiticy of community, entails shared meanings, practices and obligations. It entails the *transgression of distinction between consumer and producer*".[59]

Dance music cultures are exactly this kind of community: 'soul' cultures for example – they are stretched across 'abstract space' – the space of the city, and that between London, Wigan, Manchester, Detroit and New York, and across time – Northern Soul cultures pay obsessive attention to Detroit soul of the late 1960s, or the Rare Groove scene where music from 1970s America was highly prized in mid 1980s London clubs (see chapter 5). In each case there is a relentless concern with origins, original recording, with authenticity and how to 'keep it real'. Such cultures are reworked and

[55] Lash, 1994 110-174
[56] Lash, 1994; 160
[57] Ibid: 156
[58] Ibid: 161
[59] Ibid: 161 My emphasis

policed by notions of propriety.[60] Concern with 'authenticity' that dominates within music cultures is a clue to this reflexive preoccupation with self-definition.

But there are other 'reflexive communities' which could be considered models for new cultural groupings in post-traditional society; diasporic communities. These differ from subcultures in that one does not choose to throw oneself in, one is thrown in by virtue of migration, or race. Yet diaspora communities are reflexive because of their 'mode of being-in-the-world' and the diasporic self is straight away aware of heterodoxy: for Lash "the diasporic self *decides* to remain in his or her's ethnic being-in-the-world".[61] They share with subcultures a concern with their own origin and reinvention, they are by definition stretched over space (and time) and cultural tools are their primary form of making and sharing meaning (like Britain's Afro-Diasporic community which found it's 'deep structure' in music[62]).

I believe the alliances formed within such networks are politically and socially significant. However I think it is also true that the meaning of the network for its members is marked by race – that in some sense, because of the racial divisions in the society within which the network emerges – the network means different things for my black informants than it does for the white ones. This difference is addressed by Lash's distinction between being 'throwing oneself in' (to a subculture) and being 'thrown in' to a diasporic community. Both are reflexive, but one is an imposition. This difference will always cut across the potential of such networks to do away entirely with the racial stratifications with which they are marked from outside. Thus narratives celebrating *absolute* liberation from difference, a dissolving of atomised selves in the democratic space of the dance floor where 'everybody's free to feel good'[63] need to be treated with the utmost suspicion. In the network society we all choose, but some have more freedom to choose than others, hence the racially mixed dance scenes based around black music and Afro-Caribbean forms which are already individualised and reflexive (this is double-consciousness[64]) are also the sites of conflict between volunteers and conscripts. These scenes therefore are places of

[60] DJ Bob Jones, reports on the frequently vicious enforcing of the Northern Soul rules regarding the playing of records perceived not to be pure enough: "Moans were yet again heard at in the soul room at last Southport weekender when some of us were dropping modern beats [i.e. playing 'new music']...we were constantly taking flak from the "we'll keep it pure" brigade...I'm really cheesed off with these so called twice a year soul fanatics and whether I bother with weekenders in the future remains to seen" Bob Jones, The Soul Page, *Touch Magazine*, 15, May 1992.
[61] Lash, 1994: 162
[62] Hall, 1998
[63] The title of a particularly trite chunk of rave-pop by South African vocalist Rozalla (1994)
[64] Gilroy, 1993

contact between those with differential access to the cultural resources of the city outside the club, and different motivations for becoming part of new communities of interest.

Thus we can understand the mixed communities of London's dance culture as being akin to Pratt's 'contact zone' (1992),[65] as spaces of co-presence and the site of tension between different kinds of reflexivity, between the 'throwing oneself' into a community (the desire that drives white youth to use and participate in Afro-diasporic cultural forms) and the 'throwness' which in Bourdieu's argues in his notion of habitus, comes with being born in a particular place with particular access to cultural capital.[66] Music cultures here might be used to argue that the cultural work of diasporic urban youth – the busiest travellers – and their confreres in the post-colonial city have been living for along time with and through the 'individuated', post-traditional, unstable and risky social circumstances that Giddens, Beck and Bauman argue now characterise life for all in the 'global city.'[67]

**Forms of Togetherness; the ethics of the network**

I have discussed my method, and some of its problems, and introduced the research sample. I have also introduced a theoretical model of the dance music network. In this final section I want to try and ground my arguments for the importance of such networks, by discussing the moral quality of the kinds of sociability on offer in the informal networks of dance. In this regard the work of Zgymunt Bauman (1995) on post-modern ethics has proved an invaluable resource.

Bauman draws out some of the possible bonuses of what he calls 'a multi-network society": " a kind of society which is neither segmental, like its remote pre-modern ancestors, nor class-divided, like its immediate modern predecessor, and which, unlike them, is able to live with its own underdetermination, ambivalence and contradictions – absorb them, recycle then and even recast into resources for action."[68] Such a society makes possible new kinds of sociability, new forms of

[65] Mary Louis Pratt, 1992: ""contact zone" is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures and whose trajectories now intersect": 7

[66] Bourdieu, 1977: 77-78 Habitus is a 'system of transposable dispositions'. the "by definition not an individual phenomena", but regulates instead group activity, interaction: "thus the habitus is a family, group and especially class phenomenon, a logic derived from a common set of material conditions of existence to regulate the practice of a set of individuals in common response to those conditions." Garnham and Williams, 1986: 120.

[67] Sassen, 1998

[68] Bauman, 1999: 159

togetherness, based not on rigid models of belonging but "ad hoc bonds". But such bonds come with increased risk, threat and uncertainty, "all forms of togetherness are in effect vulnerable and fragile."[69]

What forms of togetherness are available in the post-traditional, individuated network society? In an essay entitle 'Forms of Togetherness'[70] Bauman adumbrates the various empirically verifiable forms of togetherness available in contemporary network society, in order to establish their moral character. Bauman offers three versions of the encounter, with different moral weights: 'being-aside', where the other is not even recognised as a 'stranger' (as a "being-with-intentions"), but is merely a (vaguely threatening) shape; 'being-with', where subjects form a uniform mass, and 'being-for', the start of the fully moral, "unbearably uncertain" relationship with Others.

Examples of being-aside, those quiotidian types of contact that explicitly avoid recognising anyone else as truly human include 'mobile togetherness' (the fleeting continually moving togetherness of the street, where the 'other' is experienced as a shape to be circumnavigated); the 'stationary togetherness' involved in waiting for a train, or an aeroplane, a refusal even to acknowledge the other *as* Other. Here other people are not required for the experience and it is the scene for the employment of the various tactics of avoidance – reading, staring at shoes, playing with mobile phones. [71]The 'tempered togetherness' of an office or factory provides more opportunity for contact, but its purpose is not togetherness itself, but the achieving of institutional ends.[72]

The category which most concerns the dance music network, is that of 'manifest togetherness'; those forms of togetherness that, though they may masquerade as instrumental, aim at togetherness itself. Manifest togetherness is in fact "its own goal and pretext". Bauman's examples here are the football match, the protest march and the 'disco'. "The purpose of this togetherness is being together, and being together in large numbers...numbers which exceed the ordinary." [73] In these environments, he argues, this physical density and the density of sensual impressions – loud music, flashing lights – the 'monotonous homogeneity of the stimuli – lead to the

[69] Bauman, 1999: 160-1
[70] Bauman, 1995: 44
[71] Bauman, 1995: 45
[72] Bauman, 1995: 46
[73] Bauman, 1995: 46-7

dissolution of the idiosyncratic and the private, into a uniform mass: "The routine of quotidanity is suspended for the duration, together with its bittersweet little freedoms and big dependencies, the daily tyranny of possibilities and sorrowful joys of decision-making...Nietzsche would call this kind of togetherness Dionysian; Maffesoli would call it orgiastic; Durkhiem would perhaps spy out in it the collective commemoration of a long-gone mechanical solidarity; Victor Turner could speak of a bank-holiday trip to communitas hidden on working days in the seam of the societas. All would agree that whatever its name, togetherness of this kind is mostly about the unloading of the burden of individuality..." This is uncannily similar to the argument used by advocates of 'rave communalism', like Reynolds (1999), Pini (1996) and Rietveld (1998), who suggest that the point and value of dance cultures is that they dissolve the individual into the collective, and allow a suspension of the difficulties of identity, a 'leave of absence from the taxing and testing gamble of encounter."[74]

But what of the longer lasting networks around dance which tie individuals together over time in networks not only of dance but of knowledge, information, work? I am thinking here of the networks through which music and knowledge is circulated – club scenes, the second hand record market, pirate radio, the sound systems, networks of affiliation which last longer then the duration of one visit to the disco. Viewed in this way dance club networks might seem to conform more to Bauman's forth example of togetherness, 'meta-togetherness'. This takes a 'matrix-like' form of "a pub, a holiday beach or a dance-hall", a form where "solitary lives are entwined and braided". This form of togetherness is precisely designed as a field of encounters, where some of the difficulty of encountering strangers is removed (by shared tastes and expectations), where we are less likely to be snubbed, and the amount of courage and skill necessary to encounter others is lessened. There are good and bad sides of this: "Encounters are available at a reduced price, which is good news. The bad news is that, the durability of the goods is less than guaranteed; few encounters survive the last orders or the end of the holiday season".

All the foregoing are contrasted with the least desirable form of togtherness, which is in fact only the impression of togtherness: 'postulated togetherness', "the brotherhood and sisterhood of nations, races, genders and other shadowy and abstruse dream-communities, a form of togetherness which can only be the work of

[74] Bauman, 1995: 46-7

imagination, which seduces by its promise of intimate encounters guaranteed to be consummated before being attempted."[75]

For Bauman all these forms of togetherness are flawed, because they are all ways of avoiding the fundamentally moral face-to-face encounter, they are ways of being-with not ways of being-for the Other. The encounters which are available within manifest or meta-togetherness can only be episodic and fragmentary, will involve the highlighting of some aspects of identity and the concealing of others, they are encounters between incomplete or deficient selves, they are mis-meetings. I want to take his characterisation of the nature of 'manifest and met-togetherness' to suggest some of the ways in which we can understand the kinds of encounters, which while not the complete meeting of whole selves which is Bauman's *being-for* has a moral component, and are far preferable to the false guarantees of 'postulated togetherness'.

Manifest togetherness, actual shared space, co-presence, questions the 'dreams' of 'postulated togetherness' – of guaranteed belonging by virtue of secure identity, and while it may not achieve the goal of the full being-for (no particular form of togetherness can do this, Bauman argues) nonetheless it strives to move beyond the being-aside of the street, and the imaginary bonds of blood or nation.

My research suggests that a dissolving of self is only one of the things that might be going on in dance. Though certain elements of individual identity are shucked off on the dance floor – the requirement to speak for example – others come to the fore, and express the 'self'; the ability to perform certain dance moves, to quote from the canon of dance, to 'articulate' the music physically, to ironise, exaggerate, seduce and otherwise perform versions of self to yourself and to others.[76] The quality of 'face-to-face encounters on and across the dance floor, is not all about the unloading of the burden of identity but about the inhabiting of forms of individual and group identity through dance, and a projection of these out of the movement of the body. My informants, unlike the ecstasy takers who Maria Pini (1996) or Ben Malbon (1999) interviewed, did not speak of 'losing themselves on the dance floor' but of finding a space for themselves, of 'self-expression through dance', and of the encounters available with other dancers as having a special quality in terms of the relationship

[75] Ibid: 48-9
[76] Breakdancing is a obvious example here – where conflict is symbolic, parody and caricature (of others dancing) a weapon, and a playful athleticism the norm.

between dancers – not one undifferentiated mass but people on a shared *journey*.[77] Black Atlantic dance traditions, as opposed to those of rave, suggest a model that understands the emergence of a temporary dance floor community (a routine way to reference dance floor solidarity) as a process of decoupling from group identities that exist outside the walls of the dance venue, and an imaginative reconnection with a different set of traditions, values and group identities made available through the music – *the sonic articulation of the history of other spaces.*

Bauman is absolutely right to argue that the bonds established through meta-togetherness come easier because they come 'on sale;' that is the rules of the encounter are such that the fact of being there makes encounter easier. Club audiences come, as Thornton (1995) argues, 'pre-sorted and pre-selected', tastes and access to the networks that bring you to a club reduce the unknowability of strangers. He is right also that these bonds may not last, and that the relevance of these encounters is limited by 'topicality'. "It is the "topic-in-hand, the ad-hoc interest which both generates and limits the relevance."[78]

But this does not exhaust the moral potential of dance clubs. Neither conversation nor the written word is the language of clubs, but we are mistaken to believe that this means they are not meaningful. The "power and significance" of the music of the black Atlantic, as Gilroy reminds us, "have grown in inverse proportion to the limited expressive power of language."[79] Bauman, himself, argues that the Other, the future and 'unpredictable art' have a shared character; the modality of a possibility, by definition full of mystery and never fulfilled. Like all possibility the being-for encounter is paradoxical, it lasts as long as it is unfulfilled. The appropriate mode of being in the world, therefore, to achieve a moral being-for is in the "not yet accomplished world of anticipation." Anticipation and hope, two of the key themes of black Atlantic music (Gilroy, 1993) that have provided the content of London's club cultures. James Brown's music, argues Cynthia Rose, and the funk and Hip Hop that stems from it, is the music of continual deferment, of anticipation that remains unfulfilled (1990). Brown's music never reaches harmonic resolution (Snead, 1984), his songs do not even really end (they fade out).[80] Rhythmically funk is sprung, tense,

[77] The notion of the DJ set as a journey, has, inevitably been commodified in the 'Journey By DJ' series of compilations.
[78] Bauman, 1995: 50
[79] Gilroy, 1993: 74
[80] The thirteen minute modulated funk opus 'Papa Don't Take No Mess' From the album Hell (Polydor,1972) is probably the best example of this continual deferral and fade out.

it is the music of anticipation. Jungle, a mid 1990s fusion of rave, Reggae and funk has been described as "all tension, no release."[81]

The manifest togetherness of clubs may not achieve the lasting face-to-face encounter that is Bauman's being-for, yet club networks and the music at their heart retain a sense of possibility, of unfulfillment, of the difficulties of difference, and can serve as a pre-condition for moral encounters, to overcome estrangement. Clubs and dance networks, then, have a moral component, lodged in the face-to-face real time encounters across borders of 'postulated togetherness' and spatial segregation. They do not automatically deliver the moral encounter with the 'other', yet they can chip away at the architecture of estrangement within which misconceptions and typifications (stereotypes) flourish. They may not guarantee the moral encounter, but they strive for it, and at a minimum, in London, they have been able to transcend the forms of postulated togetherness which has isolated individuals into apparently secure communities defined by class, race, or neighbourhood.

"People grow only by processes of encountering the unknown" says Richard Sennett. "Things and persons which are strange may upset familiar ideas and received truths; unfamiliar terrain serves a positive function in the live of a human being".[82] A club network in this model is like a city. It is not built on *a priori* notions of belonging it grows chaotically, rhizomatically. The club, like Sennett's city, teaches, it teaches what it is like being among people different to yourself – it challenges preconceptions from which prejudice and the architecture of structural inequality are built. And it is a moral lesson. Manuel Castells himself argues that while the network mode increasingly characterises contemporary society it is not new. The time and space, the space-time (Massey, 1996) of London's subterranean club culture, at least since the late 1970s, is an early example of this form.

**Conclusion**

This chapter sets my research in the context of characterisations of the 'network society'. I argue that not only does the network structure of London club culture necessitate a particular perspective, which foregrounds 'space' and 'movement' over apparently secure categories such as 'place ' and class'. I have argued that not only must we imagine society, and the city in particular, not as a stable geographical container, but as a *space of flows*, a node within transnational circuits of information

[81] Simon Reynolds, 1994.

flow, but also that clubs themselves – mobile and one-off but dependent upon longer lived fluid networks of affiliation, are themselves nodes or hubs of subcultural activity, which could be thought of as *spaces of flow*.

I have characterised the multi-networks of London dance music cultures as reflexive networks that are themselves sites of conflict between different kinds of reflexivity. But they are also places of possibility, of hope – not least offering the possibility of a face-to-face moral encounter across the borders of dismally tenacious difference. They also offer the possibility, and indeed provide in some cases the model, for how to create a working multi-culturalism – to transcend colonial power relations without forgetting the costs of the colonial period. Club networks themselves, and the patterns and spatial coordinates of their 'clandestine cartographies,' can be argued to anticipate or pre-figure ideas about culture and identity which are not anchored in the secure moorings of race class or gender, but exhibit precisely the 'post-traditional' forms of sociality, which are not determined *by* tradition yet preserve and remake tradition(s), in which notions of identity, race, class or nation, have been reworked across space, location, national borders and apparently intractable difference.

I have also suggested that club cultural activity is not reducible to the macro – flows of music, ideas, cultural energy across the circuits of subculture, it is also a matter of the cultural work, choice and creativity of individual agents. I have suggested that the people involved in these groupings are themselves nodes they also flow though the evolution of music genres, changing the context of the music they received through the record industry and radio transmission, and changing the course of black Atlantic music by innovating new genres and new forms of organisation. This is what my interviews are intended to do, alongside the historical, textual and spatial level of analysis I adopt in what follows. From chapter 4 onwards I take a chronological view of London based dance genres – from the 1970s to the 1990s. But before we look at London dance cultures in their historical depth, it is necessary to outline the longer history of the relationship between black rhythm and dance, to suggest some of the consistencies and coherences that connect all the genres I discuss, beneath the apparent generic differences.

[82] Sennett 1974: 340

## Chapter 3: 'Bump and Hustle Music' – Diaspora traditions of rhythm and dance

"Jazz was invented for people to dance to"[1]

One of the origins and aims of the thesis is to challenge the historical myopia which characterises much writing about 'dance music' by situating contemporary 'dance' genres like Rare Groove, acid house and Jungle in the historical context of black diasporic dance music. This involves refuting the orthodoxy that 'dance music' is synonymous with any single genre, and insisting instead on the continuing relevance of the history of black Britain and multi-cultural London in the life-cycles of popular dance genres. In its cycles of re-vivification contemporary dance music makes repeated use – through sampling reference and 'revivals' – to the forms and styles of the past. The music of the Afro-diaspora provides the main source of these innovations.

Such an approach along side emphasising generic *change* proposes also an historical and aesthetic *continuity*, with a dialectic relationship to change, which is largely absent from contemporary accounts so in thrall to the idea of 'the new.[2] While my research reveals the link between technological development and generic change (the new possibilities opened up by the sampler, the Technics 1200 turntable, MIDI and digital composition programmes), it also reveals significant continuities. These repeated patterns, which like rhythm in music are not the same thing over and over but 'repetition with difference over time', do not fit comfortably within a chronological schema. Therefore I want in this section to be explicit about certain theoretical presuppositions that underpin this research, certain consistencies of form that underpin all the dance scenes I discuss, whatever their generic dissimilarity. It needs saying that the idea of continuity over time is not an attempt to assert some ahistorical transcendental form carried unchanged through history, but to explore the apparently paradoxical idea captured in Amiri Baraka's notion of 'the changing same'. Or, in a more quotidian idiom, the statement by Jungle producer and DJ Brian G. in 1998, who as a teenager was a selector in the Reggae sound system Challenger, that

[1] Dizzy Gillespie 1979: 484-5

[2] "Within the context of diaspora cultural production, the challenge is how to keep sight of the histories that propel these cultural flows while remaining open to the new possibilities that emerge at the crossroads where unforeseen things happen...The crucial question thus becomes how to theorise forms of continuity within these cultural practices without invoking a notion of primordial essence." Back, 1996: 184-5

twenty years later, as a Jungle DJ and record label owner; "I'm still doing exactly the same thing".[3]

## The continuity of form

Drum and bass is a term currently applied to one particular genre of London dance cultures (it was formerly known as Jungle[4]), but this is not the first time the term has been applied to a form of diasporic music. 'Drum and bass' was used colloquially in London in the mid 1980s to describe the particularly rhythmically heavy recordings of James Brown's band The JBs.[5] John LaRose (1999) suggests that the term was before that attached to Jamaican Dub. Evidence for this can be heard in Hughie Achezzar's recording of Jungle Fever' [6], which samples Brown's 'funky drummer' break blending it with a Reggae bassline: the lyric declares that Reggae 'is always 'drum and bass music' – structurally emphasising the downbeat tones of the bass in counterpoint with the off beat 'break's ('rimshots') of the drummer. Funk, Reggae and UK Jungle, separated by time and space, and by the Atlantic Ocean which also joins them together, each explore the polyrhythmic 'tension and release' inherent in the special relationship between drum and bass in Afro-diasporic musics. The work of musicologists Ollie Wilson (1988) and John Miller Chernoff (1976, 1983) has argued forcefully for a rhythmic lineage which links Afro-American jazz and funk with West African music. Rather than proposing that this proves the existence of some form of African or black essence however, the account of this continuity should push us towards understanding how and why these traditions are made and remade – what is the continuity of social circumstance which renders such forms useful or meaningful? What is the use-value of this rhythm?

Discussions 'black' music have, in different periods, concerned themselves with objects such as 'syncopation', 'swing', 'groove', 'funk'. What is it, musicologists have pondered, which gives this music its forward propulsion, its unique pacing which seems to both mimic[7] and stimulate the movement of the human body. The underlying rhythms of New Orleans jazz, r&b, swing, swingbeat, funk, Jungle and Reggae are not the same, in any simple sense. Jazz evolved in New Orleans along

[3] Bryan interview
[4] see chapter 7 for a gloss on the naming jungle
[5] Simon interview
[6] which in its sampling of James Brown's 'Funky Drummer' materialises the interdependence of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean cultural production.
[7] The jazz 'walking' bass is perhaps the most obvious example of this 'mimicry'. Others are supplied below.

'simple' rectilinear rhythmic lines – 'even' or straight eight notes (8/8 time) were dominant up until the innovation of the triplet or shuffle rhythm of swing (12/8 time). There was a move back to 'straighter' apparently more simple 8/8 time with the invention of rock and roll – a fusing of r&b and country – and then funk in the late 1960s.[8] The return of dominant rhythm to 8/8 on the one hand led to the simpler rhythmic patterns of rock, but on the other allowed funk, a sub-genre grounded initially in the Afro-American public sphere of juke joints and dance halls, to subdivide rhythm into sixteenth notes, the basic rhythmic pattern of the breakbeat which underpin new Orleans r&b, and the funk, Hip Hop and Jungle. But within this temporal difference there are general rhythmic structures that express continuity beneath generic variation.

James Brown's music, so paradigmatic of black Atlantic form, from 'I Got Money' 1962 onwards, is funk, the music of anticipation, of continual deferment (Rose, 1990). This has a rather obvious homological political referent – to the 'promise deferred' of liberation for Afro-America. But equally, the tension within in, strung between the past as racial memory and the future as yet unfulfilled, between the tender ('Please, Please, Please') and the terrible ('I don't know Karate/But I know K-Razor'[9]), between the rattle of the break, the pulse of the bass and the chicken scratch guitar all working against each other and together, a "togetherness in motion"[10], is what propels the music and invites the dancer to enter. Although funk uses 4/4, apparently more simple than the 12/8 shuffle of swing, Brown's funk drummers (he frequently toured with six drummers) such as Clayton Fillyau and Clyde Stubblefield (*the* funky drummer[11]), who drew on the 'second-line' traditions of New Orleans, filled the breaks with subtle variations of time to create what Charles Kiel calls 'participatory discrepancies' (1966) and Alexander Stewart an 'in-between-ness' in the rhythm which stops a rhythm becoming too 'straight' to dance to.[12] James Brown describes the process as 'digging into the groove' and it is this that invites the *active* participation of the listener-dancer.[13] Brown was widely known as a strict disciplinarian, fining his musicians for lateness and mistakes – the shouted

[8] Stewart, 2000: 293.
[9] Lyric from The Payback, James brown 1972
[10] Vincent, 1996: 15
[11] The breakbeat from Brown's 'The Funky Drummer' featuring Clyde Stubblefield's subtly evolving funk drums, is probably the most sampled breakbeat of them all. The original record is pretty good on its own, too.
[12] Stewart, 2000: 297
[13] See Cynthia Rose *Living In America, biography of James Brown* 1990

instructions to his band are part of the anti-phonic textures of his recordings[14] – and he insisted that his players stay on the rhythm that he establishes, 'on the one'. Music and dance require discipline, regularity. It is this that has led many to follow Adorno in believing that 'the African derived beat' of popular music is a foot soldier in the forward march of "instrumental reason". But this apparent limitation of rhythm is in fact its liberation. As long as Brown's musicians were 'on the one', as long as there is an overall organising sense of togetherness which is also the pre-requisite for dancing, then the musicians, producers or dancers are free to play around and in between the 'dominant' beat, which itself evolves over time, repeating with a different accentual hierarchy from bar to bar. As James Snead (1985) has argued, as long as the beat has been established, and it is social (shared, constructed collectively), then enormous freedom opens up within for improvisation, comment, variation, irony.

**Flow, polyrhythm, syncopation**

Black music tends, as Samuel Floyd (1985) and Russell Potter (1998) have argued, toward repetition without (melodic, harmonic) resolution, but it is repetition 'with difference'. This is the *changing* same (Baraka, 1966, Gilroy, 1993) and the formal principle of 'flow'.[15] The principle that James Brown's 'Papa don't take no mess', which takes up one whole side of the album *Hell*, can have the 'same' beat throughout yet shift subtly and continually, that John Coltrane can play thirty-two consecutive choruses of 'My Favourite Things' over thirteen minutes without repeating himself, and the same formal principle that animates rapper Rakim's lyric in 'Follow The Leader' (1987) which continually (over)flows the metre: "I am everlasting/I can go on for days and days/with rhyme displays/deep as X-rays," that drum and bass DJ Hype can cut and mix a three hour set of drum and bass that enthrals and holds a crowd on the dance floor (in a kind of suspended animation). This is flow.

The music of the Black Atlantic cannot be defined easily but two rhythmic processes occur often enough in different times and spaces to warrant some discussion: Syncopation and poly-rhythm. Polyrhythm, that is the existence of more than one rhythmic pulse simultaneously in the same piece of music, is a prime component of African music (Chernoff, 1976) and of the African diaspora: the Latin Caribbean, Brazil and the music of Afro-American. Rather than rely upon uni-rhythmic regularity, the common feature of West African dance music and that of Cuba, Haiti,

[14] Instructions like 'Maceo, I want you to blow', or call and response between himself and the horn section

Brazil and Afro-America is the tension between different rhythms. Syncopation is a form of poly-rhythm, which places one rhythm up against another, whether played by two different instruments, for example the bass against the drums, or by the same player using different pieces of his instrument – for example a drummer syncopating the snare against the hi-hat. This drive vies with the urge to rhythmic regularity and predictability. In terms of what musician David Baker (1973[16]) calls the 'conflict of rhythm' in African music which might have as many as fourteen layers of intricate rhythm going on simultaneously, syncopation is 'mild', relatively unsophisticated. For those schooled in West African music, or in Afro-Caribbean music that is it's closest 'western' equivalent even skilled jazz drummers can sound rhythmically naive (Baker, 1973, Melville, 1986). Nonetheless syncopation and polyrhythm remain inherent in black popular music and mark it off from the extreme rhythmic predictability, which is the consequence of a focus on melody and harmony, of most western art music and 'white' pop.

Close links have been asserted by some writers between rhythmic form and social experience. John Miller Chernoff perceives a homology between the rhythmic openness, flexibility and poly-vocality of African rhythm and the flexibility, plurality and sense of balance required in their social institutions (Chernoff, 1983). Music in African societies, he argues, can serve "to encourage the socialisation of indigenous philosophical and moral ideas; respect, patience, flexibility and adaptability." There is no separation in the societies Chernoff studied, between music and dance which "sometimes provided the generative dynamics of large and small scale social movements" (Chernoff, 1983: 101).

### Homologies of rhythm

Phillip Tagg (1997) has speculated on the relation between *time sense* in music and the social experience of those who make and consume it. In an analysis of the way in which the rhythmic structure of rural blues was transformed in the electrified Chicago blues of the forties and fifties, he suggests that the more regular, rectilinear four square rhythmic pulse of the latter was related to the new urban experiences of the rectilinear grid pattern of streets, the identical boxes of apartments, the disciplines and repetitions of work according to capitalist clock time.[17] He concludes that music is a way in which communities work through and prepare for, "at levels of

[15] Rose, 1994; 38
[16] David Baker 'A periodisation of Black Music History' in *Reflections on Afro-American Music*, 1973, NY: the Kent university press.
[17] Tagg, 1997: 13

socially structured affectivity", important everyday experiences in their environment. Thus music, through rhythm (metre, pulse, repetition, multiple rhythm), expresses a relation between "a feeling and perception of time as expressed by the clock, by mechanical movements, by the soundscape and the relation of these to the internal bodily time patterns of the individual".[18]

Jazz musician and scholar Ben Sidran in his study *Black Talk*[19] also follows this homology line arguing that the tensions within black American rhythmic form – between regularity and chaos, constriction and freedom, this is syncopation – are analogues for the larger political and social struggles: "The development of rhythmic freedom has generally preceded social freedom."[20] Amiri Baraka goes so far as to propose that "a kind of graph could be set up using samples of Negro music proper to whatever moment of the Negro's social history was selected," that the social situation of black American could be abstracted from a reading of the music. Baraka similarly directs his attention both to profound changes in musical form, and to continuities, repetitions that are never the same: "The Negro's music changed as he [sic] changed, reflecting shifting attitudes or (and this is equally important) consistent attitudes in new contexts".[21]

This version of Adorno's homology argument, which rests upon a simple correspondence or reflection view of how musical meaning is made tends to overstress correspondence and overlook internal contradiction within genre or subculture which "display tensions between oppositional tendencies and an acceptance of basic categories associated with the dominant norms of society"[22]: They can romanticise. In its espousal of a notion of a fixed group identity which produces a self-consistent style or form which in turn expresses a coherent meaning 'the uncompromising drive to homology' (Richard Middleton's phrase) cannot recognise the *constitutive* role that music can play in identity, both individual and group. Rather than simply reflect a pre-existing guaranteed 'natural identity', music through participation, production and consumption, *produces* individual and group identity (Frith, 1996). Nevertheless the relationship between phenomenological musical form (rhythm in this case), identity and the social world, while it may not be a uni-

[18] Ibid: 13
[19] Sidran, 1995
[20] Sidran, 1995: 11
[21] Baraka, 1995: 133
[22] Middleton, 1990

directional relationship *from* identity *to* musical form embodies attitudes, to the body, to dance and to power, which are meaningful and can even be 'resistant'.

**The breakbeat: flow & rupture**

Lets take the breakbeat as an example. Played on a drum kit[23] which features a snare and foot-pedal operated bass drum, usually several tom toms and cymbals, the breakbeat underpins New Orleans 'second line' funeral traditions (Roach, 1996),[24] 'funky jazz', James brown's funk (and all that succeeds it), Hip Hop and Jungle and in a slightly different 'upside down form' (with drums lagging behind the bass rather than vice versa), Reggae drumming.[25] The link to the marching bands of New Orleans is instructive because one origin of the breakbeat – and the drum kit itself – is in military marching bands. Armies have traditionally used drums to synchronise the marching of troops, as a way of disciplining the bodies of individuals in aggressive group action. There are many curious convergences between military drumming and black music production. In slave cultures under the control of the British the use of drums by slaves was outlawed because the drum was conceived to be primarily a military weapon (Wilson, 1992).

After the Stono rebellion of 1740 the use of hand drums in public was outlawed in South Carolina, and later in most British held colonies. One of the reasons jazz flourished in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century was because that city was never under British control. Anglo Saxon discipline never threatened its status as a profoundly hybrid city saturated in religious and sacrilegious performance of all kinds.[26] The Crescent City was the home particularly to syncretic religions hybridising Catholic, Native American and African performance traditions (like Voodun), within which African drumming traditions were preserved (as they were transformed). New

[23] Sometimes known as the 'traps' (for 'trappings') the drum kit was an innovation of New Orleans. In contrast to the normal distribution of labour where bass drum and snare were played by different musicians in marching bands, the drum kit brought all the drums under the control of one drummer. The first one was assembled by Edward Dede Chandler, who played in John Robichaux's 'sit-down' dance band between 1894 and 1895. Letter from Brian Wood in *The Guardian* 29.11.01

[24] The 'second line' is a group of mourners who follow the band in a traditional New Orleans funeral. On the way to the cemetery the band plays mournful dirges, but on the way back the tempo is tripled and the mourners dance joyfully, exaggeratedly, through the street, Richard Williams, liner notes to The Best Of The Meters' 1975, Island Records LP. Second-line rhythm is related to Caribbean and West African rhythmic form, but it articulates itself differently. Afro-Cuban rhythm establishes 'one' as the beat, everything else is free, whereas in second-line the beat is four/one, there are two accents, articulating a different, and implicitly humorous, sensibility. Doctor John (Mac Rebbenck), interviewed in Downbeat, May 22, 1975.

[25] Which also draws from the Nyabingi drumming tradition which is another 'stream' of West African rhythmic 'retention.'

Orleans by the late 19th century was a crowded multi-cultural 'modern' city,[27] and had become a centre of Africanised drumming techniques through the almost continuous outdoor 'jam' in Congo Square. New Orleans was also the port through which passed the armies of imperial Europe, the American States, Mexico and the disorganised militias of the slave trade. Armies employed pipers, buglers and drummers, and equipped them. After the Spanish-American war of 1898, which ended Spain's colonial grip on the Caribbean, the disbanding American army offloaded their surplus instruments in New Orleans. Many aspiring musicians, including jazz legend Buddy Bolden, got their hands on cornets, trumpets and drums because of this military wastage.

Many Jazz (and subsequently soul and funk) musicians served in the US army and frequently in the military bands – a tradition which echoes that of the mainly black Janissary military bands of 18th and 19th century Europe. Black musicians of New Orleans took the rectilinear patterns of militaristic synchronised drumming, and the de-mobbed instruments, and 'Africanised' them by syncopating the static beats. "It was such a wonderful concept," Baraka has written of black adaptations of military rhythm, "taking the unison tradition of European march music, but infesting it with teeming improvisation, catcalls, hollers, and the murky rhythms of ex-slaves."[28] Thus triumphalist military marches were pluralised and resignified, losing their ability to express an oppressive uniformity innovating instead an ironic, suspended rhythm that, totally unlike the stomping marches, invited humour play, expressed through dance. This percussive New Orleans tradition, described by singer songwriter Earl King as 'rhythm attitude',[29] continued to sound throughout American popular music: among the most celebrated and sampled soul-jazz and funk drummers including Idris Mohammed, Herman Ernest (Neville Brothers), and Clyde Stubblefield were New Orleans natives or strongly influenced by this attitude to the beat.

This articulation of rhythmic irony – a flexibility of thought materialised in sound – which links Afro-American performance from the 'prancing' 'cake-walk' to body popping (Emery, 1988), named as signifyin(g) by Henry Louis Gates (1985), helps to explain how black music can be understood both as hybrid music – it folds in elements from all music traditions – and as *black* music which expresses a different

[26] Roach, 1996: 10
[27] Joseph Roach enumerates the main cultural streams of this interculture: "Bambara, Iroquois, Spanish, English, Aztec, Yoruba and French." Roach, 1996: 5.
[28] Baraka, 1995: 145.
[29] cited in Stewart, 2000: 296

sensibility and 'philosophy' (Baraka, 1966) about the *use* of music to European traditions. Syncopation, an example of the tendency within black expressive cultures toward 'deformations of mastery,'[30] destabilises imposed discipline.

Stride pianist James P. Johnson played music for Drake's dance classes in New York in the early 1930s, where the dancing was wild and comical. "Breakdown music was the best for these sessions" he told Tom David, "the more solid and groovy the better."[31] The breaks, stutters and skips of the breakbeat, literally the broken beat, signifies on the rigidity of military discipline[32] through the application, not of some natural relationship to the body but of rhythmic *intelligence.* The breakbeat articulates (in Stuart Hall's sense of both 'speaks' and 'joins') two core principles of Afro-diasporic cultural production together: 'flow' and 'rupture'.[33] It is both the fundamental rhythm, 'the one' in funk, or 'the loop' in Hip Hop and other sequenced music, groove or swing the forward propulsion, the *motion,* and it is the break in that motion, the cessation of movement, the suspension or interruption, the pause which builds anticipation, "a sudden release from structure, from the body, from the burden of being".[34] There is something both disruptive and constructive in the break, a call for unity which is fractured, which does not impose a rigid homogeneity on the listener-dancer, and yet offers space, between the beats, for the body to enter, in a way that the military march cannot. This disruption of authority, an apparent unruliness, which is in fact, a more flexible and adaptive discipline (Glissant, 1980), is the result not of some primitive instinct but the application of a philosophy, which refuses the split between mind and body (Frith, 1996). "Music, as paradoxical as it may seem, is the result of thought."[35]

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[30] see Richard Middleton 2000: 59-86

[31] James P Johnson interviewed by Tom David cited by Baraka, 1995: 145

[32] There is a scene in Gunter Grass' novel *The Tin Drum*, set in Nazi Germany in 1934, which captures this productive disruption. Oskar, the boy who refuses to grow up, has hidden himself under the rostrum at a Nazi rally. As the Hitler Youth band plays the procession in on a "rectilinear" military beat, Oskar, his drum fortuitously amplified, begins to drum a 'Charleston' rhythm 'Jimmy The Tiger'. The Charleston was one of the many Black American dances Southern Afro-Americans brought with them to Northern Cities at the beginning of the twentieth Century, and one of the first to 'cross-over' during the jazz age. In an ironic comment on this 'crossover' The Hitler Youth drummers and trumpeters unwittingly pick up the syncopated Charleston rhythm, the crowd begin to dance, the pomp and circumstance of the Nazi pageantry is parodied and punctured, by laughter, dance and syncopated music Grass, [1956] 1977: 114-118.

[33] Rose, 1994: 28

[34] Mudede, 2002: 3. A dance style of the early 1980s on UK soul dance floors called the Freeze (the single 'Southern Freeze' by ... was the hit which popularised this) emphasised this sudden stop – at the cessation of the rhythm dancers would literally freeze, for a beat longer than felt right, dance competence here was judged by the ability to know when to remain still.

[35] Baraka, 1995: 152

## Digital breakbeats: A fundamental break?

Some have argued for the absolute distinction between pre and post 'digital' music – that the 'breakbeat' of the digital era amounts to a *fundamental break*. Hip Hop certainly marks a great leap forward in the evolution of the breakbeat. Hip Hop DJs Grandmaster Flash and Kool DJ Herc (among countless nameless other) discovered that they could isolate the percussive breakdowns from soul and disco records to (re)create a harder more 'funky' drum beat of their own – and produce a stripped down rhythmic background for rapping over. With the development of digital audio technology – the drum machine and the sampler – producers were enabled both to create their own drum tracks and to 'sample' breaks from old records to splice together into new tracks. Digital music devotees call this the 'discovery of the breakbeat'[36], and argue that the moment that the break was freed from the reliance on its analogue reproduction by a human (a drummer playing drums) through digital manipulation was the moment that the possibilities of the breakbeat really opened up.[37]

Certainly digitally manipulated breakbeats and the experiments with them that go under the name of 'breakbeat science' have created new sonic possibilities. Yet if we suspend the imagined differences between digital and analogue, man made and machine made, it becomes obvious that there is no clear distinction within popular music between the qualities of a played (live or recorded), replayed, sampled, digitally edited, looped or otherwise chopped up beat. The rhythmic architecture of New Orleans jazz and funk continues to reverberate in even the most meticulously manipulated 'nu school breaks' and drum and bass. Whether popular dance music uses analogue or digital *production* technology, *reproduction* technology is analogue: speakers are made of paper cones that vibrate, and will probably remain so because this is cheap and highly effective technology. More than that *reception* is always analogue – the human ear pick up vibrations on its own '(ear)drum'. Digital manipulation technology allows producers to experiment with samples, to chop them, dice them, rework them, and make use of mistakes (a fundamental principle in Hip Hop[38]) but the stutters, sudden stops and counter-rhythms the Hip Hop or Jungle producer 'discovers' are precisely the same uses of time, suspension and release,

[36] eg Kodwo Eshun, 1999
[37] This point is made by journalist Tom Finney in his contribution to the 'Breakbeat' discussion forum at http;//www.greenspun.com/bboard/q-ands-a-fetch-msg.tcl?msg_id=007o1k

repetition with difference, used by the jazz, Reggae and funk drummer in real time. The skilled drummer uses his two hands and feet, the different parts of his kit, attack, delay, accident and momentum to produce the effect that a producer of electronic beats gets with filters, samples, 'time-stretching' and other capacities of digital production technology.[39] Of course there is no guarantee that these beats will move a crowd – but then all musical performance in the socially produced and mediated world of dance cultures, comes without guarantees. The issue for the dance floor is not how the beats were produced, but what they do, in the body and on the dance floor. The breakbeat, organic and electronic, runs as a (broken) thread through the diasporic popular music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## Disciplining rhythm: the low-other

One consequence of the primacy of rhythm within black music, compared with the rhythmic regularity of western art music and other popular forms has been the way rhythm has been perceived in ways coloured by racial discourse.[40] When 'classical' music or 'white' pop seeks to dynamise themselves rhythmically it is to black popular forms that they turn, amounting in some cases to forms of orientalism, of cultural appropriation, or theft, that do not challenge the categories of racist 'common sense'.[41] In addition, alongside the 'will to co-opt', the rhythms of jazz, r&b, funk, Afro-Caribbean music of all kinds, and rock which draws from black popular forms – have been variously conceived as primitive, unsophisticated, a matter of feeling not thought, base and animalistic, primitive and reminiscent of the Jungle. From Duke Ellington's 'Jungle music' of the 1930s,[42] to the 'Jungle' genre of the London dance floor in the mid 1990s, the association of 'raw' rhythm with the untamed savage, and with the social 'low-other', have played within black popular music itself. There was considerable conflict within the genre itself about the term 'Jungle' when it emerged, one of the explanations was that it was an act of signifying on a par with Hip Hop's flipping of the meaning of 'bad', reflecting the emergence of an 'urban Jungle' equivalent to the New York described in Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's

[38] Rose, 1994 and Charles Mudede 'Hip Hop Rupture' downloaded from http;//www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick =225 1/10/02

[39] Compare the breakbeats on Photek's 'The Hidden Camera' (1998) with those on Max Roach's track 'Abstrutions' (1969) or Tony Williams playing on 'stuff' from Miles Davis' 'Miles In The Sky' (1969) for confirmation of this theory.

[40] see 'Cultural Dialogics and Jazz; A White Critic Signifies, " by Philip K Bohlman in Bohlman abd Bergeron, 1992: 64-94

[41] see Richard Middleton , 2000: 59-86

[42] Middleton's essay has an expert discussion of the evolution, and politics, of Ellington's jungle style, which he argues 'resists ideological closure' 2000: 72

'The Message'.[43] Others suggested it was out-and-out racism (see Chapter 7). Black musics of all kinds have foregrounded, as form, these negotiations between high and low, the simple and the complex, the 'city' and the 'Jungle'.

A central dialectic in black dance musics in particular is the relation between simple and complex rhythm, between 'the street and the 'concert hall or 'discothèque', which correspond to struggles over the control and definition of 'black' genres. 'Swing' rhythm emerged as a more 'sophisticated version of black rural rhythm and blues which facilitated it's articulation as ('white') popular music. Bebop innovators responded in the 1940s by freeing bass and drums from their role as timekeepers, turning their back on the dancer (literally in the case of Miles Davis) as it attempted to assert jazz's place in the cannon of 'art music'. In doing so it lost its foothold in the social world of the dance club and found itself, ultimately, unprotected (by popular black support) against the attempts of white jazz intellectuals to purify and pickle it.[44] 'Funky' jazz of the 1960s[45] 'simplified' the dominant rhythm once more, although retained the breaks and syncopations, and reconnected with a black dance audience, paralleling developments in soul which are bringing the funk 'one' (which is really 'two') to the floor. In the 1960s and early 1970s many prominent black jazz musicians, including Donald Byrd, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis (after his *Bitches Brew,* 1969), were accused by the 'jazz establishment' of selling out, conceding ground to emergent 'popular' rock music in an attempt to profit financially.[46] The musicians[47] argued that the pared down but 'fatter' rhythms (employing New Orleans style funk breaks) were an effort to reconnect with the popular *black* audience who had been deserting jazz since its 1940s bebop inspired break with dancing.

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[43] 'Its like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder/How I keep from going under" Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five, 'The Message' Tommy Boy 12" 1982

[44] This is not to say that Bebop was not itself 'radical.' Black music was expected to be a popular but unsophisticated, 'instinctive' art, so the evolution of a cerebral, formally complex style with its own links to Stravinsky and the canon of the Western avant-garde was profoundly destabilising to musical orthodoxies. It's just that in rejecting dancers in an attempt to be taken 'seriously' Bebop undermined its social form, and left it eminently co-optable by jazz intellectuals – Bebop is now the sine qua non of jazz orthodoxy for jazz conservatives, something Miles Davis recognised when he declared jazz dead in the 1970s.

[45] The mid and late sixties recordings by Lou Donaldson, Charles Earland, Horace Silver, Johnny Hammond and Ivan' Boogaloo' Jones, mainly on the Milestone and Blue Note labels exemplify this funky, 'dance floor' jazz, which is revived in the London dance scene as 'acid jazz' in the late 1980s.

[46] "From musicians and critics alike, there were shouts of foul play. At the time they said it was sacrilegious to involve any other kind of music, especially R&B with jazz." Ramsey Lews cited in Vincent, 1996: 139. This was argued in the pages of the official self-appointed guardians of jazz authenticity – run by the white jazz establishment – such as Downbeat magazine.

Disco, popular with black dance audiences in the early 1970s (when it was synonymous with sophisticated but funky orchestral soul – Salsoul, Philadelphia International, Love Unlimited Orchestra, Van McCoy) always an upwardly mobile style, nevertheless retained the 'fat' breaks and syncopation up until Saturday Night Fever broke the genre to a white pop audience, at which point its rhythm began to be reduced to a simple, electronic pulse.[48] To reduce these struggles simply to conflicts between white appropriators and black originators would be false. This would risk writing out the many white contributions to rhythmically complex breakbeat music,[49] as well as assuming all 'black' contributions to music to be consistent, and worthy. One of the chief architects of disco's 'cleanness' was Chic's producer Nile Rogers, who strove for 'tightness' in production above all else (and disliked Hip Hop).[50]

The same rhythmic dialectic is discernable in house music in the late 1980s, as syncopated New York garage and house – which 'cut' the thudding four-four thud that defines house with cross rhythms and percussive effects drawn from Latin music often via funk – is whittled down to the pulsing 'programmed' (as opposed to 'looped') bass drum of much (euro) house, Techno and trance. There is frequently a racial discourse that defines these formal, generic changes. In the London clubs of the early 1990s, Jungle reintegrates the pulsing four-four with the syncopated basslines of Reggae and the breakbeats of funk and Hip Hop. Jungle also marks a significant 'break' in the social composition of 'dance cultures', as black youth whose participation as social dancers in 'rave' culture was severely attenuated (although not as producers, see chapter 6), 'reclaim' a place on the dance floors of London's clubs. 'Breakbeats' are read, by 'ravers' as racial code, through their structural links with Hip Hop and funk; Jungle is decried for being too 'dark' and menacing, of spoiling the ecstatic utopias of 'rave' (Collin, 1998, Touch, 1994). Similarly the rhythmic simplification of Techno accompanies the 'laundering' of its connections with P-Funk and Black radicalism.[51] The rhythmic traditions of Afro-diasporic cultural production continue to mark this doubleness and to materialise contradiction and ambivalence. Sounds and sonic forms themselves have no race, they are colourless, but they have histories that are braided with racial meaning. The ruptured flow that is the

[47] see Miles Davis The Autobiography, with Quincy Troupe, New York : Simon and Schuster, 1989: 288. Davis said that just before *Bitches Brew,* which mixes avant garde jazz, with funk rhythms and electronic textures, he was listening to a lot of James Brown.
[48] see Jason Toynbee, 2000, on the 'basic disco pulse' (BDR).
[49] Mike Clark, of the head hunters was responsible for many of the funkiest breakbeats of the seventies
[50] In Chic's music there is still rhythmic dialogism however, the work of syncopating the drums is devolved onto Bernard Edwards sinuous basslines. Chic's disco is still clearly in the tradition of Funk, see Vincent, 1996: 219
[51] Banerjea, 2000: 75

breakbeat keeps formal Afro-diasporic principles, which themselves correlate to histories of flow and rupture, at the centre of hybrid, post-colonial cultural production. UK Garage, London's most recent hybrid subcultural form innovated a syncopated 'skippy' beat which pluralises the univocality of the disco-house pulse with a stutter step, and places it against a bassline which rubs against it – rubbing the 'pure' house tradition (shored up by the dance consensus) up against the disreputable traditions of sugary soul, gangsta rap and ragamuffin.

**The diaspora on record**

The rhythmic continuities of these musical genres are matched and underpinned by the continuity of reference – by the signifyin(g) tradition, by sampling and by inter-textuality (Gates, 1988, Rose, 1994). This cultural information is not transported through some mystical circuitry of blood or 'cultural essence' – which is why it is not and never can be the exclusive racial property of any one group – it is carried in material form along the pathways of the diaspora – as records, sound frequencies and radio waves. These rhythmic continuities I have been describing are carried partly through the cultural apparatus of a 'tradition' – handed down through generations, taught and learnt through live performance, woodshedding, 'cutting sessions' 'paying your dues'. At least these are the clichés of jazz and blues. The fact is that if ever these processes ever were only a matter of face-to-face cross-generational contact (they certainly were for example in the hotbeds of jazz production in Kansas City in the 1930s, New York in the 1940s), this has not been precisely true since the evolution of the mass media and recording technology in music. Since the invention and refinement of record production and distribution the circulation of vinyl records has been one of the jugular veins through which black popular music has flowed. The trans-national circuits of the US record industry, as well as the unofficial circuitry of the diaspora, have allowed the cultural exchange and trans-nationalisation of black music rhythms.

Record collections are the materialisation, and memory banks, of the black music tradition. They are the way that diasporic populations, isolated geographically from the American or Caribbean centres of black music production, can stay connected to the diasporic 'conversation', use the resources of the past in the present, express their difference and 'refusal.' But they are also the way that those who are not children of the diaspora can experience and assimilate the forms and lessons of black music – record acquisition, like radio with which it goes hand in hand – is an open system.

This is not to say that access is infinitely open – from the apparently 'closed' systems of the specialist record shop and the knowledges (of labels, catalogue numbers, and producers and remixes) required to stave off the ever-present possibility of social embarrassment, to the circuits of knowledge required to find the right party, or limited edition 'pre-release' – these circuits are guarded. There are gatekeepers. However they are not, in the end, inaccessible, to anyone who has the commitment. In what is pre-eminently a 'knowledge economy' and a cultural economy, record collections are bank accounts where precious subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) is stored, and matures. Though there is always a danger that the currency will suddenly be devalued – fads change, once cool records can become over-exposed, re-issues threaten the value of hard found originals – the cyclical nature of musical fashion, and the way in which records are also put to use as sound resource and 'groove information', as well as the active new collecting, shuffling and recontextualising of the individual records, keep the vinyl collection a viable asset.

All DJs make their reputation on their access to records, on their own record collections. These are expected to contain both the old and inaccessible – the rarities – the new an inaccessible – 'pre releases, white labels, DJ-only 'specials' – and the classics, or standards. The average size of a DJs collection in my research was 5,000 records. Some had as many as 25,000. Although record collecting is not restricted to boys, there is a certain masculine tenor to the obsessive acquisition and discussion of these collections – a certain 'mine is bigger than yours' aesthetic that Will Straw discusses.[52]The acquisition of records implies involvement with other material circuits – the transnational routes of record importation – and the circuits of knowledge which is passed through radio (and pirate radio plays a privileged role here) through the circuits of record buying – and second hand stores and stalls have been central to this process – and circuits of exchange; knowledge passed from DJ to crowd and back. The fashion for record collecting which came on the back of Hip Hop culture – with the idea that old records could be used as sampling resources for new music – triggered a phenomenal surge in the second hand record market, and the practice of British collectors and dealers travelling to the USA to buy up (unwanted[53]) stocks of old soul, funk, disco, house and ephemera (see chapter 5)[54] exploded. These

[52] Straw, 1999

[53] Anyone travelling to America to find the thriving soul/funk/jazz popular culture which corresponds with the output of the American recording industry in the 1960s and 1970s will be sorely disappointed, as Paul Gilroy was: "I had come to America in pursuit of a musical culture that no longer exists" 1993: 109.

[54] Some informants have argued to me that they think that there are more American old funk, soul and jazz records in Britain than there are in America, because of this relentless collecting.

records not only are played, at home, on the radio and in 'revival clubs' but they provide the rhythmic inspiration and sound sources for the development of new musical genres. Record collecting, like that of book collecting according to Walter Benjamin, is a creative act of renewal, "to the true collector, the acquisition of an old [record] is it's rebirth."[55]

**Record Collections: the material changing same**

The logic of development of the record collections of black music producers, DJs and fans, reveals itself to be very different from that of the development of new musical styles within pop music. Pop music, directly motivated by the strategies and corporate decisions of a smaller and smaller group of conglomerates (six companies now dominate the distribution of 90% of the world's new music), operates on a *substitutive* logic which dictates that musical genres are replaced by subsequent genres as styles and bands 'go out of fashion', become old or redundant (until such time as they are recycled in 'best of... compilations or as 'ironic nostalgia'). This is particularly the case in the pop charts that are aimed at young, teen and pre-teen, consumers where tastes are segmented by age-group, and young people move from one to the next strata, leaving behind that they had previously valued.[56] This is the relentless drive to novelty which capitalism requires. The acquisition of a 'black music' record collection, however, which of necessity has to be done through the informal circuits of the specialist or second hand markets, obeys, according to my research, an *additive* logic.

DJs may have moved, in the past two decades through many different genres – the majority of my informants had been closely involved in Reggae, soul, funk and 'digital' genres like house and Jungle – but at no stage did they substitute one genre for the next. Their record collections retain the records of the previous genre, and each succeeding genre draws its inspiration in part from hybridising those that precede it. While the requirements of certain genres might make it necessary to only play one style of music on a given club night, I did not encounter a Jungle or UK garage DJ who could not have also played a Reggae, funk or Hip Hop set with their

[55] Walter Benjamin, 1992a. In the original 'records' reads 'books'.
[56] A straw poll of (white) students in a college classroom revealed that the vast majority no longer listened to the music they had liked as a teenager, indeed that many of them had gone through several changes before their twenties which involved an over-haul of their 'style' and a tossing out of previously cherished music with, in many cases, a sense of embarrassment about their previous tastes. Informal poll conducted on a class of Goldsmiths media students in March 1999 by the author.

own records. Les Back has called this the 'connective supplementarity'[57] which characterises Afro-diasporic identity in the post-colonial city. The fundamental acceptance of difference, of hybridity as a process, militates against a full lifetime commitment to one exclusive identity – for example, Jamaican or British – and by extension one genre or 'subculture'. Such supplementarity allows an additive logic that assimilates new elements to its own evolving structure. The acquisition of new records changes the 'meaning ' of the collection, and suggests new connections between old and new records – new mixes and juxtapositions, new 'sets'.

Records are music frozen as commodity, they are bought and sold. But they way they are used confirms that they are not *only* a commodity (Gilroy, 2000). The way that records are used and reused by DJs in different kind of juxtaposition, as samples and sources, suggests that they are, unlike the idealised 'complete' commodity, 'unfinished', requiring the active intervention of the audience. Cast in the crucible of capitalism – as the black Atlantic arts so clearly are – black music has developed ways to undercut and 'object' to capitalism's homogenising tendencies, and to commodification (Gilroy, 1987). The subtlety of black rhythm has resisted capture partly through its ability to frustrate attempts to render it in text – a scored breakbeat is a breakbeat no longer[58] – and partly through the form in which the breaks are 'used', embodied through dance in 'real-time' face to face, uncommodifiable because unrecorded social use.

**"If you're not dancing then fuck off"**

Jazz, Blues, Funk, Afro-beat, Salsa, Samba, Calypso, Garage, Drum and Bass are dance musics of the black Atlantic (which is why 'dance' can never be accurately applied to the cluster of post-acid house genres house, Techno and trance alone). Not just because you can dance to them. The relationship is much closer than that. These music are born in dance, they not only 'invite' but require dancing, their methods and sites of consumption are dance and the spaces that dance 'appropriates'. This 'consumption' is active, and constitutive, the music in many cases is 'danced' into being. The performance traditions of the 'circum Atlantic rim' are, as Joseph Roach (1996) argues 'interdependent' and if, as Gilroy has recently suggested, using Raymond Williams terms (1977), they are 'residual' rather than 'emergent' specifically *black* Atlantic culture (which does not mean that they may not be

[57] Back, 1996: 227

emergent within multiculture), they nevertheless "remain visible, audible and kinaesthetically palpable to those who walk in the cities along its historic rim".[59] London, one of the cities on this 'rim', does not have the *outdoor* dancing and music playing traditions of New Orleans, Havana or Kingston. Britain is a more socially reserved, colder, more private culture than that. Its public sphere is historically inside, in coffee shops, pubs and nightclubs. London does have a lively and vibrant 'club culture', with over a thousand licensed dance venues, and many more unlicensed, offering an extraordinary range of club nights which are also extraordinarily dependent on Afro-diasporic musical form. Social dance in London may be relatively hidden, but it is also commonplace and ubiquitous.

As is repeated by virtually every commentator who approaches the subject, social dance has been routinely ignored within sociological literature (McRobbie, 1991, Pini, 1996, Ward, 1993). Dance, as Angela McRobbie (1991) argues, continues to 'evade analysis'. Those concerned with dance as an aesthetic practice have concentrated on dance legitimated within the canons of Western 'art', ballet and 'modern dance', but social dance by non-professionals, the quotidian practice of everyday night life, has been largely ignored. Maria Pini, who bucks this trend in her research of the 'raving feminine' in rave cultures (1996), usefully sums up some of the possible explanations for this. These include the way that 'dance' has been associated with the body rather than the mind, and in the conventional chain of association therefore with the devalued feminine. In this argument 'dance' is characterised as another feminine /feminised cultural practice which is marginalised and trivialised through the western mind-body dyad which confers authority on the former. Given this it is logical that 'rave' received such attention as it was the moment at which large groups of white men took to the dance floor.

Then there is the association of dance with physical and sensual pleasure, with sex, which makes it problematic for the ascetic heirs of Adorno, keen to uncover evidence of 'real' politics. This is compounded by the problem of finding an appropriate language to 'speak' dance. Helen Thomas' ethnographic work points to the difficulty dancers themselves have in 'languaging their bodily practice.'[60] This resonates with my own experience of trying to get people to talk about, and trying to describe through observation, dance. The complex, physical/emotional, disciplined freedom of

[58] Hence musicologist David Brackett (1995) in his analysis of James Brownian motion is forced to use 'pictures' of rhythms taken with a spectrograph in order to pin down what only lives in motion
[59] Roach, 1996: 30
[60] Thomas, 1997

dance continually slips away from attempts to reduce it to text. Dance speaks but it does not do so in words.

'Dance' always implies a social function, and the relations between black music genres and the dance floor – their moving together and divergence as genres become 'gentrified' or legitimated, losing their grounding in the social world of the dance floor as they become articulated within the market – is one axis along which we can analyse larger patterns of cultural conflict."Jazz", as David Remy reminds us, "started as dance music and that social function was crucial in forming its character."[61] Swing was originally a vibrant dance-hall genre innovated by black American dance bands.[62] The arbiter of success in swing, at least initially, was the popularity of the bands in the dancehalls of black America. As swing is 'gentrified' in the 1930s, and white bands who are acceptable to broadcasters, advertisers and venue owners in an era of extreme racial segregation achieve popularity, rhythm becomes tamed and toned down, references to classical music creep in along with the tuxedos, and swing becomes divorced from its primary role as *black* dance music and associated with more genteel rigid and formalised manoeuvres than the raucous Lindy-hoping black teens of Kansas City and Chicago (this is the period when bandleader Paul Whiteman is promoted as 'the king of jazz'). But the relationship between swing and dance continued in the black dancehalls. The energy and excitement generated by the 'hard-driving' black dance bands of the forties, like Jay McShann's, which stimulated the hyper-kinetic dance forms Malcolm X called 'fever-dancing,'[63] was a significant factor in the 'Caucasian storming Harlem' for exotic thrills in the 1930s.[64]

This is not to argue with the black cultural nationalists, that 'real' swing is an expression of black essence,[65] but to emphasise that the ability to 'swing' is related to the practice of playing in front of a dance audience, to practising and refining the 'art' of dance music. There is a dialectic, anti-phonic, relationship between the music and the dancing, not a uni-direction one *from* music *to* dance. A concert hall audience may indicate displeasure at the end of the performance by their muted applause. If a dance floor doesn't appreciate a band's (or DJ's) attempt to swing, to establish and maintain a groove that corresponds to the agreed dance traditions of the time and place, the floor will clear. Dance audiences are rarely polite about failure. Conversely

[61] Remy 1996: 33
[62] Remy, 1996: 172
[63] Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, 1966:x
[64] see Rudolf Fisher, 'The Caucasian Storms Harlem' in Walser 1999: 65

the dance floor provides energy and stimulation for the music, *produces* the music in alliance with the musicians, even when that music has been 'produced' in a studio using digital technology, or that 'producer' is a DJ. The dialectical relationship between music producer(s) and dancer(s), described by Afro-Jazz band leader Eddie Palmieri[66] as a 'battle', where each tries to 'work'[67] or exhaust the other, continues to underscore any musical genre within black music culture, and the multi-culture sites which borrow their form. Its sites of consumption are better thought of as sites of what Michel de Certeau has termed 'production through use'.[68]

Social dance conforms to Bourdieu's notion of a 'popular' as opposed to a 'legitimated' art form; it embodies "a deep rooted demand for participation, which formal experimentation systematically disappoints."[69] Or in cruder terms dance music says, as Jazzie B. famously used to bellow over the microphone at Soul II Soul's Africa Centre Sunday Night session in the mid 1980s: "If you're not dancing, then fuck off." Social dance has always been about modes of participation, a relation between self and group (Frith, 1996); it invites and requires a commitment, a suspension of (some aspects of) self, a merging. I want to suggest a way in which we can understand dance as something more than trivial pastime, as more than the down-time body work that we do when we've finished our important mind work and switched off our brains, with reference to the idea of dance as embodied memory.

**Dance: Mind, body, memory**

Paul Connerton's short but important book *How Societies Remember* (1989) suggests that in oral/aural cultures, those without access to the formal textual technologies of remembrance, those that lack a history inscribed in written language, remember in different ways. Memory in these cultures is 'embodied'. This requires the casting of "large scale performative utterances in standardised [i.e. repetitive] form so they can

[65] Les Back convincingly argues against such musical essentialism in his discussion of the white 'soul' musicians who backed Aretha Franklin, Back, 2002b

[66] Personal interview with author, 2/08/94. Extracts of this interview published as C. Melville, *Eddie Palmieri: Mr Excitement* in On The One Magazine (USA), Vol. 1/2 Fall 1994

[67] DJs talk about 'working' the crowd, dancers about 'working the DJ. "One tune can start me off then if he keeps the momentum I'm with him all the way through, I almost feed off them, and I think they feed off me too. I've worked all the DJs, I feed them an energy they need to go forward" Diane L, interview. New Jersey DJ Kerri Chandler describes his DJ practice as " I choose one person in the room, one who isn't dancing. I make it my business to get that person dancing and keep them dancing. When they start to move I know that it's working." Kerri Chandler, personal communication with author, August 10th, 1998

[68] de Certeau, 1980. Chapter 5 discusses de Certeau's in more detail.

[69] Bourdieu, 1984: 176

be repeated by successive generations".[70] The key quality here is rhythm, as in the rhythms of 'oral verse', because rhythm "enlists the co-operation of a whole series of bodily motor reflexes in the work of remembrance." This formula helps explain for example the way in which verse is more easily consigned to memory than prose, or that the lyrics of a song are more easily recalled once the tune is remembered; rhythm is at the heart of recall, of individual and collective memory. Connerton argues that in this process there is both a cognitive and a habit-memory component. In Connerton's scheme what might appear to merely body movements also involve cognition. Gestures, ways of moving, walking, occupying space and dancing are "incorporated practices", habits that are "intimately part of ourselves". [71]

Connerton usefully explains why analyses of dance have such a hard time; these habits and gestures, he argues, should not be considered 'signs' in a theory where languages taken to be the model of society, "meaning cannot be reduced to a sign which exists on a separate level outside the immediate sphere of the body's acts. Habit is a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body: and in the cultivation of habit it is 'our body that understands'.[72] Connerton's insight helps heal the mind body dualism rift so handicaps understanding of dance, and of (dance) music.

Of course dance is a matter of the body, this much is obvious, but without breaking through the mind-body dyad we are left considering it as something unrelated to thinking, to meaning, to understanding, and to memory and identity. The evergreen notion of blacks having natural rhythm, some mystical and innate ability to dance conferred and guaranteed by a racial essence can be disputed by Connerton's argument that these incorporated practices are "the diachronic component of collective identity" the way in which "the past is kept in mind by habitual memory sedimented in the body".[73]

This recalls Marl Mauss' concept of the habitus (taken up by Bourdieu), the body techniques – swimming, walking, and dancing – that vary with individuals and groups but are inherently 'social' and the 'work' of "collective and individual practical reason."[74] Thus a picture of 'dance' emerges which accepts its location in the

[70] Connerton, 1989: 76
[71] Ibid: 88
[72] Ibid: 95
[73] Ibid: 88
[74] Mauss, 1979: 101.

individual body but posits its collective character, its relation to repeated rhythms within which are memories are sedimented, a matter not just of feeling but of understanding, of cognition, of 'practical reason'. In this way we can begin to disaggregate Melville Herskovits famous assertion that "the dance itself has ... carried over into the New World to a greater degree than almost any other trait of African culture" [75] from the dangerous routine association between blacks and the body which Gilroy has termed 'bio-politics'.[76] Dance considered as a cognitive process of embodied, is not the exclusive property of post-colonial blacks in Britain or anywhere else. Blacks, Europeans and Africans and all 'other' people dance, in their separate spaces and, in the post-colonial metropolis, in shared space. How they dance, what they dance to, and the differences which dance expresses about habitus, memory and forms of 'cognitive reason' have been largely ignored.

## Diaspora dance

In *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1994) Marshall and Jean Stearns have written an interpretative history of American vernacular dance traditions. They begin with a report of experiment undertaken in the early 1950s. At the Music Inn retreat at the Berkshire Mountain Resort they assembled a group of black professional vernacular dancers from three countries: Sierra Leone, Trinidad, and New York, USA.[77] "The results", they write, "were extraordinary." Their enthusiasm, and that of the dancers and audience, was based on the recurrence of similarity between the dances of each 'tradition': "One dancer hardly began a step before another exclaimed with delight, jumped to his feet, and executed a related version of his own. We were soon participating in the shock of recognition of what appeared to be *one great tradition.*"[78] The authors go on to qualify this and note important discontinuities, themselves revealing of the relationship between dance and social experience. 'American dances of predominantly British or European origin' went back only as far as the West Indies – they had no analogue in Africa – 'The Cakewalk' – a slave dance with a very immediate relationship to the condition of slavery and brief carnivaleque respite provided at play, with the opportunity of signifyin' parody, was similarly unknown in African dance. Yet the steps of the 'Mambo' are a kinetic facsimile of a Congo step, the Charleston is called the King

[75] From Herskovits, *The Myth of The Negro Past* 1976, cited in Stearns, [1968] 1994: 14
[76] Gilroy, 2000: 196.
[77] These were Asadata Dafora from Sierra Leone, Geoffrey Holder from Trinidad, Al Minns and Leon James from New York City, Sterns and Stearns, 1996: 11.
[78] Stearns, 1994: 11, emphasis mine.

Sailor Dance in Trinidad, the Ibos of West African know it as Obolo. The Stearns report on observing, both during the experiment and in ethnographic films, African equivalents of the Shimmy, Hucklebuck, Snake hips and The Twist.[79] In Paul Connerton's terms these moves amount to a 'mnemonics of the body' passed through repetition and cultural affiliation across the black Atlantic.

What sustains this mnemonics and makes a nonsense out of both the mind-body split and the production-consumption dyad, is the mutually sustaining relationship between music and dance in black Atlantic cultures. If we use Connerton's psycho-social language of 'mnemonics', of behaviours organised through rhythm, of 'habit-memory' and cognition, practical reason then we are forced to concede that dancing and making music are inseparably linked. When the use of hand drums were banned in Virginia in the early eighteenth century, amid fears of the relation between music, communication and insurrection, the practice of 'foot drumming' emerged to replace the lost rhythm (Wilson, 1992). Foot drumming is dancing, just as Bill Bojangles or Bunny Briggs tap-dancing is music.[80] The relation between music and the speaking and singing voice – particularly in blues and jazz – is well documented in American ethnomusicology. The celebrated soul and funk bass player James Jamerson, it is reported, found the inspiration for many of his bass figures by observing the way people walk, and the intonation of ordinary speech.[81] The 'human beatbox' in Hip Hop, where musical parts are produced through a microphone using vocal effects, is another obvious example of this interdependence.

In performance James Brown, the pre-eminent exponent of 'the cut' in funk, the 'break' that disrupts 'the discipline of the beat' (Hughes, 1994), would articulate the parts of the break using his body, rather than dancing *to* the break, Brown *danced* the break, for his drummers to pick up. This practice was cited to me by Jungle producer DJ Krust as the inspiration for his use, in live performance, of a light unit that triggers samples when beams of light are broken.[82] He is thus enabled to dance his music into being, samples played in 'real time', closing the dance-music gap which

[79] "The swaying motion of the Twist was employed long ago in Africa and by the Negro folk in the South. This movement was used in the 1913 routine of a dance called Ballin' The Jack [...]; blues shouters of the twenties used it as they raised their arms to belt out a tune; and in the thirties it was inserted during the breakaway (when partners separated) of the Lindy" Marshall and Jean Stearns, 1994: 1. Hank Ballard wrote and originally recorded the Twist in the mid-fifties, Chubby Checkers' 1960 hit, which triggered the dance craze, was a *version* (ibid: 5)

[80] Bunny Briggs 'soloed' with the Duke Ellington band in a serious of concerts. (Emery 1972/1988: 350)

[81] Rose, 1990: 238

[82] C. Melville *Size Matters: Roni Size and DJ Krust*, Touch Magazine, 71 July 1997

had been opened up by the disciplining of music through the segregation of audience and 'performer (the stage replaces the 'ring' or circle) and the disciplining of musician's physical stance (in classical music violins sit, in Irish folk music fiddle players stand and move). Thelonious Monk's habit of occasionally leaving his piano stool during a solo and breaking into a dance every bit as jagged, esoteric and minimally beautiful as his playing, seemed to capture his frustration at this false separation between musician and dancer. Lest we believe that these correspondences are a rapidly declining residual feature of vernacular cultures Burning Spear's live performance in London on July 30th 2001 argued for their tenacity.[83]

Lloyd Bradley (2000) reports on the instigation of dance styles through sound systems in Jamaica. On receipt of a new record Coxsone and his lieutenants would stand at the front to demonstrate a new dance style they had invented to go with the tune. A high store was set by the ability of sound systems operators to 'drop a foot' in the dance. All these examples foreground "the historicity of musical grooves" and '"consequently the historicity of the human body" [84] They articulate what musicologist Susan McClary's calls "the circularity between physical gestures and musical imagery. Music depends on our experiences as embodied being for its constructions and its impact: but our experiences of our own bodies – our repository of proper or even possible motions and their meanings – are themselves often constituted (to a much greater extent than we usually realise) through musical imagery."[85]

## "What James brown Knew all along"[86]: Dance and masculinity

That 'social vernacular dance' is less common in 'The West', in the habitus of the white (Anglo-Saxon) heterosexual middle class of the UK and America, is related both to their position as the cultural dominant, a privilege which is policed with its own notions of appropriate 'techniques of the body' and their lack of access to the techniques of embodied memory sustained by other populations. Turning the natural rhythm discourse on its head we might begin to argue, as some of my informants have that white men can't dance, or white men won't dance (the gender specificity is

[83] Spear (Winston Rodney) divided his time between the singing for which he is famous, playing conga drums, and dancing his idiosyncratic routines. His frequent switching suggested that what he wanted to say, the combination of rhythm and distinct timbre which makes his voice so memorable, was being expressed through three different media, neither took precedence, each making a different use of the body and technology – the microphone, the drum, the stage, the 'technology' of an articulated body.
[84] McClary, 1994: 35.
[85] McClary, 1994: 35

entirely intentional, white women *do* dance), because of their lack of access to, and antipathy towards, forms of embodied memory, of thinking and understanding which underpin the apparently magical rhythmic ability of black and hispanic people.

Dancing to soul, funk, Reggae, and Jungle (but not necessarily house or Techno) necessitates particular movement of the hips and pelvis. In white western heterosexual bourgeois culture where the body more generally has been associated with sex and consequently repressed, the hips and pelvis represent all that must be contained and denied. The West, consequently, developed protocols and techniques of the body, ways of standing and moving, which denied the flexibility of the torso, and tried by extension to deny sexual desire: "the custom of holding the body stiffly erect seems to be principally European", "the natural concentration of movement in the pelvis region [in African and Afro-American social dance] is similarly at odds with European usage."[87] Successive waves of innovation in black music and dance triggered moral panics around sexuality, miscegenation and the release of untamed, particularly, feminine, sexuality, symbolised, for one ladies magazine, by the young female jazz dancers checking their corsets on entering the dance halls.[88] The discipling of the body, imagined as the vessel for untrammelled and dangerous natural urges is a psychological parallel for the colonial situation where 'base' sexualised communities are subordinated and must be held in check. Compulsory white masculine heterosexuality in particular legislates against flexibility, particularly in those nether regions which if unloosed could spell disaster for the stability of 'decent' patriarchal society.

William Washabaugh argues that popular dance and music become firmly knotted with "gender and nation" in the nineteenth century.[89] My white male informants, most from what could be broadly described as the middle classes, are heirs to the 'body techniques, and embodied memory' of the Victorian empire, of uprightness (which lays bare the equation of physical with moral value) of the phlegmatic 'stiff upper lip', of 'playing a straight bat', and refusing to 'buckle' under pressure. Such

[86] McRobbie, 1999: 26
[87] Stearns and Stearns, 1994: 15
[88] in 1921 *The ladies Home Journal* ran its first piece on black music entitled 'Does Jazz Put The Sin in Syncopation?' This article made much of the fact that the 'jazz fad' had led to the creation of 'corset check rooms' at dance venues where young women could divest themselves of their whalebone stays and achieve the flexibility that dancing to 'jazz' demanded. The Ladies Journal wasn't impressed with this innovation: "Jazz", concludes the article's author, "disorganises all regular laws and order; it stimulates to extreme deeds, to a breaking away from all rules and conventions; it is harmful and dangerous, and its influence is wholly bad" Faulkner, 1921 cited in Walser 1999: 65.
[89] Washabaugh, 1998: 1

bodily practice, maintained on its boundaries by the huge social consequences of appearing too 'primitive' (associated with blackness) or too weak (associated with homosexuality which is in term equated with femininity), is policed though the social rituals of the school playground, the sports field and popular imagery. Such requirements involve both self-policing and a rejection of the body: "the petit bourgeois experience of the world is characterised by timidity and unease."[90] It is precisely this unease with the body and certain forbidden bodily movements that characterised the attitude of my white informants to dance. Although they expressed a love of dance *music*, their attitudes to dancing were more commonly reserved and uneasy.

**The disreputable dance floor**

Is it coincidental that dance cultures, and dance floors have conspicuously been associated with the activities of communities excluded from the rules of white male heterosexual comportment: women, black men, gay men? In 1966 Gene Kelly went public about his anxiety for the future of professional dance in American, because "of the paucity of men entering the field for a reason no one wants to talk about – the feeling that the field is dominated by homosexuals."[91] Kelly went out of his way to stress his own heterosexuality, and his conception of dance as akin to sport. He even put on a TV show called 'Dancing is a Man's Game'. There was something perceived to be 'unmanly' about the act of dancing itself. As the Stearns' research suggests the trajectory of relations between white and black cultures in the US could be mapped through the evolving relations between white American men and their hips. The activities of Elvis 'the Pelvis' and The Twist, a dance which existed within black American culture for a century before its 'discovery' by white America "briefly put 'hips' onto the agenda for white Anglos" but was followed by a fashion for increasingly more rigid or more obviously jokey dance styles. As the Stearns point out "the question of whether or not [male] dancers were cissies never arose in the native American [black] tradition of vernacular dance".[92]

In relation to the history of racial subordination, of white male attitudes toward an implicitly threatening black masculinity, and anxieties around homosexuality, we can begin to understand some of the psycho-social mechanisms which legislate against white male participation in social dance in London clubs befoee the 1990s. "Where

[90] Connerton, 1989: 91.
[91] Cited in Stearns, 1994: 355

were all the white boys?" is how one informant puts it to me, talking about the dance floors of the 1980s. We can also begin to understand why the 'rave' – a form of leisure which takes on certain aspects of black sociality but limits the participation of black people through its particular techniques of the body (including the use of ecstasy, see chapter 6) – thus removing those whose dance competence as well as sexuality is potentially threatening – might finally allow heterosexual white men to experience a degree of dance floor liberation from which, by virtue of their lack of competence and timidity[93], they had previously excluded themselves. Via house music and ecstasy, in racially homogenous surroundings (see chapter 6) some of the physical codes of homosexuality (including dancing itself, movement of the hips and the expression of affection) entered the habitus of the white male heterosexual brit.

Black men, as Angela McRobbie (1999) argues, have known all along that it is not unmanly to dance (although not all of them do). But are there gendered distinctions in dance styles? My participant observation in numerous dance clubs revealed particular patterns of display and specific lexicons of gesture that stratify the gendered dance floor. On the dance floors of the 'Jazzifunk Club' at the Electric Ballroom (see chapter 4), at the warehouse parties of mid 1980s London (chapter 5) and the Jungle dance floors of the mid 1990s (chapter 7), black men took a prominent and conspicuously central role. Most prominent of all were the 'dance crews'; all male groups of friends who started as enthusiasts and through the 1980s professionalised themselves as 'dance groups' for hire. These crews, like IDJ and Jazzcotech, became well known around London clubs in the 1980s and continue to dance, for fun and for money, to the present day.[94]

These collectives who frequently practised dance steps and routines for hours outside the club and some of whom were (modern) dance students, drew on the rich history of American vernacular dance – passed down to them partially by relations, friends and neighbourhood experts but also partly through the mass media (Hollywood cinema which featured dance such as *Hellzapoppin* and the *That's Entertainment* series with compilations of famous Nicholas Brothers and Fred Astaire routines[95]),

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[92] Stearns, 1994: 355

[93] Which is frequently disguised as principled disdain for the triviality of dance music, e.g. Reynolds, 1998, or as in the hyper-masculine and implicitly homophobic 'disco sucks' movement in the US see, Hughes, 1994

[94] IDJ have disbanded, but Perry Louis' Jazzcotech group still perform with live bands and Djs , at London's Jazz café in Camden.

[95] These films were often projected onto walls during the warehouse parties and club nights of the 1980s, a further source of education.

and music video.[96] Incorporating steps drawn from 'jazz', break-dancing and body popping, these men would dominate the centre of the dance floors, forming a 'ring' within which each would dance in turn, challenging the next dancers, parodying, subtly, less competent dancers, attempting the most audacious hybrid styles and dancing at a pace and degree of physicality which was unavailable, though enjoyable and instructive, to the ordinary dancers around them (who frequently were reduced to gawping). These 'performances', which manifested the degree of body competence available in black British culture and unavailable to white men who in the outside world had everything else,[97] constituted an important source of new ideas and historically validated movements, a way by which these were circulated and taken into to the bodies of a new generation. They were also a display of the intricate beauties of black Atlantic embodied memory.

Given what I have said about black dance crews, we might be tempted to conclude that, like the paradoxically hyper-masculine Flamenco dancers which William Washabaugh discusses, they are "men who dance for other men". [98]If we understand black masculinity in London of the 1980s as being embattled, marked by the history of racialised discipline, systematic brutality and the psychological scars of the de-humanising rhetoric of racism, then perhaps their practice, which "drew on an allegedly feminine expressive style to mark out their distinctively masculine territory"[99] just as had Andalusian flamenco, becomes more easily understandable. If we also recognize the fraught gender relations which stratify British black communities put under such stress by racism, and continually thematised in black music, a sense of black dance cultures as 'scenes' in the literal sense of places where human relations are 'staged', and in the theatricalised language of Erving Goffman's[100] understanding of the social world, where social relations of stigma are managed, performed and resisted through dramaturgy, gesture, allusion, irony and play, the dance floor emerges as an important locus of information and everyday cognitive reasoning about the larger social world.

This information was available to white as well as black, and many white males learnt all they know about dancing to black music from watching, surreptitiously, these

[96] Perry Louis, Jazzcotech, personal communication, January 4 1996
[97] Charles Mingus on whether black music is really black: "Aren't you white men asking too much when you ask me to stop saying this is my music? Especially when you don't give me anything else?" cited in Playboy, 1964 cited in Walser, 1999: 289
[98] Washabaugh, 1998: 16
[99] William Washabaugh, 1998: 16
[100] Goffman, 1963

'performances'. The keenest among white men would attempt to emulate or even join these groups. However the fact that the white male participant at the 'multi-cultural' dance is someone who has already decided to cede authority over space to black cultural values and the black men who claim it, that, as Roger Hewitt (1988) discovered, whites uses of black cultural style is mediated by black friends (an over-identification with blackness, 'trying to look/be black' is highly disapproved off), and above all that to look like you are trying to hard, which is the virtual requirement for practising these complex athletic dance steps, is to consign oneself to the social margins, very few white men took this route. Why should they when there is another field of competence and 'respect' open to them, which requires a less immediate relationship with dance and the body, and can reap equal rewards? Many chose the path of musical competence – record collecting, of accruing knowledge of labels, dates, catalogue numbers and BPMs,[101] the required specialist knowledge of the vinyl junkie and the DJ, which can guarantee respect, acceptance and even a career within black music without revealing the lack of the 'cognitive' and habit-memory structures required to dance, with the added benefit of side-stepping the implication of homosexuality which threatens the white heterosexual male sense of self.

This is not to suggest that black British cultures, dominated by an Afro-Caribbean discourse, are free of homophobia. Homosexuality remains criminalized in Jamaica and homophobic narratives are endemic in Reggae, ragga and Hip Hop cultures. The controversy surrounding Buju Banton's gay-bashing dancehall hit 'Boom Bye Bye', and more recently the success of the track 'chi chi man' which explicitly condones violence against gay men, are graphic examples of what Andrew Ross calls the 'heteronormativity' of the Jamaican dancehall.[102] One possible explanation for the exaggerated degree to which Hip Hop and ragga 'speak' homophobia is that it serves to disavow the 'homosexuality' which, because of dance, threaten to brand the black male dancer as insufficiently masculine. Nonetheless, while black dance cultures have their own forms of compulsory heterosexuality, and 'male dance' as sexual display and threat (such as the aggressive moves of 'hardcore Hip Hop ' or Jungle) dance remains sanctioned within black dance cultures in a way it is not by white British codes of masculinity.[103]

[101] Beats per minute – in order to mix effectively a DJ must be able to count the bpms of a record. Some do this counting at home and write the bpms on the corner of the record to prevent the disastrous clash of tempos which will clear a dance floor.
[102] Ross, 1998: 67
[103] Delroy Constantine-Simms has recently explored this issue in his edited collection *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities,* London: Alyson Books 2001. One of the central arguments explored here is that it is the proximity between codes of male display in Hip Hop and

White people can be taught and learn this, if they are prepared to subordinate themselves to the rituals and traditions over which they have no priority. But they can also adapt the techniques and forms of the black dancehall to their own rhythmically simplified forms where they can and do assume priority.[104] This is a plausible interpretation of the huge poularity of the rave experience among young white men.

Although I argue for the political benefits of multi-cultural dance floor communities throughout this thesis, I am not suggesting that the tensions of heterogeneity were totally dissolved on the mixed dance floor. Considered as an aspect of embodied memory, transmitted via rhythm diachronically and synchronically, dance and the attitudes to the body it encompasses, stratified and divided the multi-cultural club along racial lines. This is on the one hand a matter of teaching and learning. Black informants had all been exposed to the social dance traditions of the Caribbean and Afro-America at an early age, had picked up these traditions from the behaviour of those they saw around them "in whom they have confidence and who have authority over them. The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving his body."[105] It bears repeating that both Mauss' and Bourdieu's notion of habitus, the structuring structure, emphasises the crucial importance of what is taught and learnt at an early age as foundational to how we receive and understand future 'habitus". For white male informants however, social dance was something that was almost wholly absent from their young lives, until their mid teens. Therefore while black males had integrated styles and modes of social dance as youngsters, had had the chance to develop habit-memory patterns which required no self-consciousness in order to negotiate the jagged rhythms of funk or Jungle, white men who aspired towards social dance were forced to consciously learn its body techniques, a process, like any educational process, which requires the acceptance of inferiority in regards to those who teach, a willingness to learn from them.[106]

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ragga's extremely homo-social communities and male homosexual style which necessitates extreme forms of black homophobia. Toure, in the books most controversial chapter argues, "Gangsta rappers *en masse* have much in common with drag queens."

[104] as is the case in predominantly 'white' gay disco and in my argument most forms of 'house' see Hughes, 1994

[105] Mauss, 1979: 102.

[106] Indeed informants insisted on this – the debt they owned to 'black informants', to black, music and culture', and the fact that though they worked within it they did not claim priority over it. A kind of compensatory politics of exaggerated 'respect' was the norm amongst white informants.

I have already describedthe relative absence of white men on the heterosexual dance floor. A major factor pushing black music 'underground' into the hidden spheres of black sociability in the 1950s and 1960s was the white male panic over miscegenation, the perceived fear of black male threat to white women (Schwarz, 1995). The multi-cultural dance floor too – in various ways which both differ in and unite soul, Reggae, funk and Jungle scenes – plays out the feared/desired social relationship between black men and white women. Mervyn Morris in 1965 commented on the impossibility of this relationship because of larger racial discourses: "The big difficulty in black men-white women relationships in Britain seems to be that British women know that because of common prejudice there are social dangers in dating a black man, and so only the emotionally involved, the mentally liberated or the sexually abandoned think it is worth the risk."[107] By 1985 there were areas in the city where black and white had lived a relatively shared culture, where mixed race children were being born, and some of the absolute barriers to intimate relations across the colour line were coming down. Nonetheless the legacy of this discourse remained and though dance scenes since the 1940s hosted unprecedented degrees of intimate physical racial mixing, which not only illustrated degrees of 'Jungle fever' but social and political commitment to equality too,[108] they were not free of these regulating discourses.

Relations across the colour line which was an effect of racism, were socially transgressive, both of the norms of white British society and of the 'defensive' norms of Afro-Caribbean family life in Britain. These 'defensive' codes, a system of rules and regulations governing the social behaviour of Afro-Caribbean women especially,[109] form part of the way black women, in the context of racism, learn to strictly regulate their own sexuality.[110]

Although black women have no trouble dancing they are firmly within the diasporic habitus where dance styles are remembered and preserved, their access to some of London's dance music scenes has been attenuated by the rules and regulations governing their physical and social mobility.[111] Bibi Bakare Yusef (1998) argues that the Rare Groove scene in London in the mid 1980s was one of the first to afford black

[107] Mervyn Morris *Disappointed Guests*, 1965: 20
[108] Nava, 1999: 71
[109] "We don't let our black girls run around we have rules and regulations. They have to stay in, and when they are out they have to be careful." One of the Afro-Caribbean women interviewed by Wayne Collins in his unreleased film 'Building Castles'.
[110] Tracey Reynolds 'Black Women and Social Class identity' in *Cultural studies and the Working class: Subject to change,* 2000 Sally Munt ed.

women a chance to transcend the confines of the *black* public sphere – the Reggae and soul dances within black communities – and participate in a racially and socially more diverse network. Such participation in the social networks of multi-cultural clubbing for black women, she argues, allowed some black women to invent and reinvent themselves outside "the fixed racial regime". My research suggests that the rules and regulations governing the movement of Afro-Caribbean women, and the high value and central role they could find for themselves on the dance floors of the back public sphere, particularly in the 'dancehall,'[112]mitigated against the mass involvement of black women in the multicultural networks I am discussing. This is not the case with Jungle, partly because the crossovers in form and style between the dancehall and the Jungle rave facilitated the transition for a generation of young black women from Reggae to Jungle. The same can be said for UK Garage. Both Jungle and UK Garage are examples of the black public sphere opening itself up, and accepting its own hybrid character.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the continuities of form – rhythm, records and dance – which provide the 'deep structure' of all the dance networks I will be discussing – Rare Groove, 'black acid' and Jungle. I have discussed the centrality of rhythm in Afro-diasporic music – of the 'drum and bass' working against each other and together, and the breakbeat, which juxtaposes the formal elements of flow and rupture. This chapter has also suggested that 'black' music recorded on vinyl, and shipped around and across the black Atlantic, stored by DJs and experts, and passed on through family and friendship networks through generations, play a critical role in nurturing club cultures and the forms of collectivity they express. In subsequent chapters we shall see more precisely how the informal circuits of the second hand and import record markets, and pirate radio (which itself relied upon records) succeeded in creating a new, autonomous knowledge economy.

I have argued that music has a distinct relationship to history, and that dance floors offer a place where such memories can be taken into the body and 'expressed' through movement which are forms of embodied memory and ways of constructing identity. I have discussed some of the ways in which dance is cross cut by the resilient discourse of race, class and gender difference, in order to suggest some of the

[111] Bibi Bakare Yusef, 1998: 5
[112] Cooper, 1993

limitations we must place on any reading of positive political implications of multi-cultural dance networks. The next task is to ground these discussions of form and continuity in the history of the political geography of London. In order to understand how racially mixed social activity in the 1980s and 1990s might be understood to have remade the city, we need to understand how spatial power was enacted, before we see how translocal alliances of black cultural producers, and the emergent racially mixed warehouse party scene of the 1980s resisted and overcame these spatial divisions.

## Chapter 4: London's racial geography, 1960-1980: Spatial discipline, spatial resistance and black cultural production

"The city's inhabitants create an exquisitely complex geography" [1]

"One has the Paris (or London) that goes with one's economic capital, and also with one's cultural and social capital." [2]

This chapter explores in detail the emergence in London of an affirmative black expressive culture with music at its centre. But it starts with institutional policies, with the shape of Caribbean immigration and settlement, and the responses of the government and the police. It starts not with resistance but with power. This is because the context within which black music networks developed in London was not of its own making. Black communities were contained and confined – spatially and discursively. The shape of the music and social cultures which emerged in what the sociological literature of the time called 'the self-defensive black colony'[3] and their content – what had led Paul Gilroy to call them 'dissident' – was a deployment of diasporic tradition as a specific response to these forms of containment.

The conditions for the multi-cultural sociability around music that emerged in the 1980s, were created in the late 1960s through specific *strategies* of the powerful, and the specific 'self-defensive' *tactics* of London's new black populations (the distinction here is de Certeau's[4]). If, as this chapter argues, the strategies of an increasingly overt 'law and order' regime amount to a programme of *spatial discipline*, then the response – the creation of a network of informal leisure – jooks, shabeens, 'blues parties', sound systems – with the music of the African diaspora at its heart, can be read as resistant in a specific material way: The creation of this network of linked, clandestine leisure institutions, sound-tracked by new forms of Jamaican popular music, can be read as a concerted act of *spatial resistance*. The knowledge, practices and forms of these same black dance music networks were to provide, in the following period, the basic model for 'London' club culture in the 1980s.

Although this chapter emphasises the attempt to enforce a form of spatial segregation and the consequent emergence of a defiant network of black social institutions, it also

[1] Michael Moorcock, 1997 *Mother London* London: Simon and Schuster,
[2] Bourdieu 1999: 129
[3] see Hall et al, 1979
[4] de Certeau, M 1984; xix there is a fuller discussion of de Certeau's argument in the next chapter

suggests that there was always something about segregation that was incompatible with London's history. Not because London is the 'home of democracy', but because London's piecemeal and plural history is inscribed in its architecture and infrastructure. London is an unplanned 'patchwork' that has developed organically – even when attempts are made to keep populations separate, London remains porous[5]; so the physical conditions exist for, indeed make inevitable, the emergence of shared cultures, even amidst racial polarisation. Within these shared cultures cultural products, competences, and style, are shared and remixed in the space of the street, the housing estate, the schoolyard and the dance.

Black music has routinely been understood as embodying forms of resistance (Gilroy, 1987, Rose, 1994, Campbell, 1985, Jones, 1988, Jones/Baraka, 1966). This may have become a cliché, as Andrew Ross (1998) observes – there is now a healthy traffic in 'hollow resistance' and ersatz revolution (Gilroy, 2000) – but this should not lead us too easily to dismiss the claims of music to articulate 'resistance' especially at times of extreme state-sponsored repression. The narratives and style of black music from ska to soul and blues to Hip Hop have served to articulate the voice of marginalised people, to criticise arbitrary power and racism in particular, to marshal the resources of possible alternatives. The very *form* of black music production, as we have seen, can be read as embodying a critical tradition (Gilroy, 1987). But black music has also provided the *space* where alternate cultures can be incubated, and forms of spatialised control can be resisted. The emphasis here is on this spatialiality.

The chapter is in three parts. It starts with Caribbean migration, and an analysis of the forces – not all external – that 'clustered' Britain's black populations in specific parts of the city. I focus here on the strategies that the state employed, largely through their forces 'on the ground' – the police – particularly to limit the movement of black youth – the processes which led both to the politicisation of black youth and the music they listened to and made, and to the politicisation of black leisure, and leisure around black music, in general.

Secondly I use the notion of 'space' metaphorically, in a discussion of the 'space of the black teenager.' The argument here is that the forces of containment and racialisation, the pressure visited on what became known in sociological parlance as 'the second generation,' (a term which has contributed to the idea of immigration as a

[5] Sadly this is not the porousness of Naples which Walter Benjamin wrote about (1979: 170) – buildings which open onto streets, with many exits and entrances. It is the porousness of poor planning, curving streets and dead ends, commuter crush and overcrowding which forces people of all kinds into reluctant proximity.

kind of permanent condition) shrank the available social space for the emergence of the black 'teenager' in the 1970s. The exclusion of black youth from the rituals of teenage – football, shopping, the pub[6] even 'hanging out' – is partly what drew so many to work so hard on developing alternative social forms of communication and (if this is the push factor then there was of course an equal pull which was, as with any youth subculture the deep pleasures of music and the suggestion of sex). These social forms acquired cache for black cultural producers at school where black music and its specialist knowledges and competences earned 'respect', a position in the hierarchy (which is marked by the use of 'respect in these cultures), friends – of all races – and money. School taught more than the curriculum; diasporic knowledge absent from the history classes circulated freely in the playgrounds, youth clubs and social lives of young Londoners who were all learning how to be 'post-colonial.'[7]

**Patchwork London**

The city is a place of mixture where proximity to difference is inevitable. Mixing, of classes, races and religions can be perceived as threat, and traditions of centralised planning in some cities have been devoted to maintaining spatial divisions between groups, through urban planning and architecture. But any attempt to navigate around Britain's capital city will prove that the development of London has largely been a piecemeal affair.[8] Unlike the grand Boulevards of Hausman's Paris (specifically designed to prevent the barricading of streets[9]), or the freeways of Los Angeles which allow the white middle class to drive over 'undesirable' neighbourhoods without even seeing them, London had no central planning, no freeways of Boulevards, and life in the city reflects this organic, frustrating, chaotic development. Social reformer Charles Booth's celebrated colour-coded map of social class (graded by income) in London, of 1889,[10] illustrates that London, even in the late Victorian period has always been a patchwork of classes and income levels.

Booth's map uses a seven part colour coding – from gold – "Upper class, Wealthy"' to black, "lowest class, vicious, semi criminal'[11], grading each house in London, based on door to door surveys (which included a certain degree of speculation on the part of

[6] "You just knew you didn't go into pubs, no-one told you, you just knew that if you were black it could be 'oi nigger' and a glass in the face. So if we wanted a party we didn't hire the backroom of a pub, it was in someone's house or the church hall." Norman Jay Interview with author
[7] Schwarz, 2000: 268
[8] Mandler, 1999: 219
[9] As Richard Sennett shows in *Flesh and Stone* 1979
[10] 'Poverty Map of London', 1997
[11] As Franco Morretti suggests Booth's taxonomy "is either naive of very, very ironic" Morretti, 1998: 77

researchers).[12] Although London's wealth is clearly concentrated in the North West, particularly around the opulent new commercial developments of Regents Street, and poverty is concentrated in the East and South East, there are no areas which are totally gold, nor any which are totally black.

Charles Booth's map 1889, South East

At a macro level London looks like a "self-organizing system, with a set of regular patterns"[13] but this impression collapses at the micro level where a closer look reveals that even in the wealthy 'West End', it is never very far between one extreme – gold, and the other-black. In 1889, within a two hundred yard walk of Oxford Street you would encounter three different classes; five minutes would take you from the "brilliant gold" of Russell Square to "a working class area with patches of chronic unemployment and misery". "A good walker", Franco Morretti writes, "could cross the entire spectrum of Booth's seven classes in no more than five minutes".[14] This is a sign of the confusion of the city: London is not easy to read, to map or to negotiate. Therefore very different populations are thrown together in public space.

This piecemeal nature of London forces a higher degree of proximity between members of different social classes (and therefore also immigrant communities[15])

[12] Introduction to 'Poverty Map of London', 1889/1997
[13] Morretti: 1998: 77
[14] Ibid: 78
[15] Porter, 1994, details the long history of immigration to, and settlement in London, which of course far precedes the Caribbean immigration I am discussing here.

than obtains in other cities. The German Luftwaffe, half a century after Booth's research, exacerbated this patchwork during the extensive bombing of the city during the late months of 1940. The blitz, as well as German bombers offloading excess bombs over London on their way back from raids on the industrial midlands, resulted in the loss of 100,000 family dwellings, creating not only 'gargantuan housing problem's' but further patchworking.[16] By 1942 areas such as the Georgian squares in Islington and Clapham, which had been relatively homogenous on Booth's map, were dotted with bomb craters. In post-war reconstruction priority was given to housing, and by 1949 (a year after the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush*, the first ship carrying Jamaican migrants to dock in London) 50,000 new homes had been built, and 64,000 were on the way.[17] Much of the housing was built on bombsites and was low-income council housing, in areas which had a high concentration of dwellings Victorian and Georgian single family dwellings, which appear in Booth's taxonomy as red and gold. Local authority housing estates sprung up cheek-by-jowl with Victorian middle class housing (much of it in fairly dilapidated condition by the late forties, but gentrified since, in increasingly intensity toward the end of the century).[18] The pattern of post-war London affected profoundly the kind of space and therefore the kind of culture which emerged in the post-war years.

## The black metropolis[19]

There is a history of the idea of London as a 'black metropolis' that precedes Caribbean immigration: Politically London has been central both in white political movements expressing racial solidarity with Afro-diasporic communities– from the original anti-slavery movement which started in Clapham to the anti-Vietnam protests of 1968, and the anti Nazi League of the 1980s – and to specifically Afro-diasporic political projects. London was an important centre for black political development on the black Atlantic from the crucible of Pan-Africanism in the early part of the 20th century, to hosting to the generation of political leaders who went on to lead African liberation. CLR James and Linton Kwesi Johnson were both long-time London residents.[20] But it was the mass migrations from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and the other former colonies of the British West Indies, between 1948 and

[16] Porter, 1994: 349-351
[17] Porter, 1994: 351
[18] The great social housing rebuilding projects of post-war reconstruction did not to last. Successive Conservative governments introduced a more laissez faire approach that delivered the city into the hands of property developers who have been in the most powerful force in shaping London since Mandler, 1999.
[19] The phrase is from Barnor Hesse, 1993

1962[21], that irrevocably and profoundly altered the racial geography of the city, and the way people understood and moved through city space. As historian Bill Schwarz argues "the moment of arrival in Britain for the West Indian immigrant was a moment of intense dislocation" not just for the newcomer but for 'white' Britain as well. The resulting 'cognitive dissonance' he goes on to suggest, also provided the conditions within which "new ways of being could be imagined, which ultimately were to serve white Britons as much as black West Indians."[22]

West Indian settlement was from the beginning an *urban* phenomenon transforming the political geography of Britain's cities. By 1971 68% of the West Indian population were concentrated in Britain's' two biggest conurbation's; 13% in Birmingham, and 55% in London.[23] There are clear general patterns pushing Caribbean migration into British conurbations, and into the centre of these conurbations. A primary factor is the *depopulation* of these inner city areas – London in 1981 had a population two million less than in 1938[24] – a 'leakage' concentrated in central boroughs like Hackney and Lambeth which lost 18% of their population between 1971 and 1981, precisely the areas where Caribbean settlement was highest.[25] This population leakage was primarily a result of economic depression.

The decline of manufacturing and especially the accelerating decline of London's a consequence of the decline of Empire and its lucrative trade relationships, led to the contraction of the labour market, and a move toward suburbanisation. A large proportion of London's East End working class population who had relied on the ports for employment were relocated, from the late 1960s, to parts of Kent and Essex and the 'New Towns'.[26] But in addition to this, once Caribbean migrants had started to settle and be housed in these emptying London boroughs 'white flight', the abandonment of inner city areas by whites as a consequence of increasing black population, also occurred and led to 'increasing racial polarisation.'[27]

The decision of many thousands of Caribbean's to make the long journey to Britain was the result both of the 'push' effects of the domestic circumstances – a weak

[20] Schwarz, 1996, Fryer 1980
[21] Migration continued into the 1970s and 1980s but at much lower rates that before the passing of the draconian Immigration Act in 1962
[22] Schwarz, 2000: 269
[23] Peach, 1986: 72.
[24] Porter, 1994: 346
[25] Peach, 1987: 75.
[26] Mandler, 1999: 218
[27] Peach, 1986,

domestic labour market, an economy built on short term travel to work, and the passing of the McCurran Walter Act in 1952 which severely limited the access of Jamaican labour to America, the preferred destination up 'til then – and of the 'pull' of the British labour market, which during reconstruction had more jobs than workers.[28] Membership of the new 'commonwealth' meant that British West Indians had British passports, and the right to live and work in the UK (although this was not to last).

Caribbean immigrants were, from the outset, "economically marginal"[29] a "labour surplus" required in times of labour shortage but prevented, through social exclusion, from integration into Britain's skilled workforce – a "replacement population"[30] for those who were moving out of the run-down inner city. The Caribbean migrant population settling in these areas inherited urban 'decay' for which, in racist common sense of the next twenty years, "they are seen as a cause."[31]

The 'clustering'[32] of Britain's black population into areas of high concentration in Britain's inner cities, above all London, obeys both an economic and a 'social' logic. When they arrived, they had to settle in those places that were prepared to accommodate them and where the first pioneers had already established a foothold.[33] But this 'chain' pattern of migration[34] – where familial, friendship and community ties dictate patterns of settlement, the urge for Caribbeans to live close to one another – was further reinforced by the virulent and wholly unexpected everyday racism experienced by black migrants.[35] The majority of those settling in South London around Brixton were Jamaicans, whereas those in North West London were predominantly 'small islanders', from Trinidad, Antigua, St Kitts and Nevis. However the common experience of British racism in this period pushed West Indians from different islands together, who otherwise might have felt they had little in common,

[28] Foner, 1977 'The Jamaicans: Cultural and Social Change among Migrants in Britain' in James l Watson ed. 1977 *Between Two Cultures: Migrants and Minorities in Britain.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell' 1977: 120-151
[29] Peach 1986
[30] Rich, 1986: 71
[31] Peach, 1986: 82.
[32] The fact that Caribbean populations 'clustered' was used in the racist common sense of the time to suggest a neo-organic process where black people 'clung together' because they were unable or unwilling to adapt to 'the British way of life': The words of Tory MP Norman Pannell, in 1965, serve to make the general case: "The fact that coloured immigrants congregate in certain areas of the larger cities in deplorable conditions inevitably arouses resentment." Such 'congregation, he says, "increases the difficulty of their integration into the community", and within five lines, "congregation" becomes "the alien invasion of the[...] district" Pannell, 1965: 18.
[33] Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 92
[34] Byron, 1994

in a process which spurred the creation of a series of new collective cultural identities; West Indian, and then 'black'.

Initially Caribbean migrants settled around three main transport termini; Paddington in the North West, Kings Cross in the East and Brixton in the South. Housing was an immediate problem, not just because of the chronic shortage but due to racialised attitudes of private landlords.[36] Not only were landlords actively discouraging black tenants but at the beginning "the Caribbean population was effectively barred from the most significant source of working class accommodation, council housing"[37] making immigrants particularly dependent on the 'racial tolerance' of potential lettors[38] and especially vulnerable to the machinations of unscrupulous landlords, like the infamous Peter Rachman.[39]

In the first instance it was often the dilapidated Victorian houses of formerly 'gold regions' like Notting Hill, which provided accommodation for newly arrived immigrants. However this situation changed over the next three decades as local authorities began to accommodate migrants in council housing, where they perforce shared social space with the white working class. [40] The areas which had been most severely effected by the German bombing, and then the rebuilding of council housing, correspond quite exactly to the areas where Afro-Caribbean migrants settled, and shared space with white Londoner:[41]: "Camberwell, Stockwell, Walworth, Peckham, Deptford, Camden Town, Kentish Town, Kensal Rise, Shepherd's Bush, Hammersmith, Fulham, Stoke Newington ...Tottenham and all the East end Boroughs."[42] These also become the heartlands of London's black expressive cultures and the stalking grounds of the sound systems.

## The absent London ghetto

Despite the increase of racial polarisation I have described, and the development of defiantly and visibly black enclaves where black styles, politics, values and music were prominent, racial polarisation, or 'ghettoisation', in London has never been

[35] Foner, 1972: 131
[36] Fryer, 1991
[37] Peach, 1998: 211
[38] Pannell offers a typical attitude of the time: "Strange in habits, colour and background, and often possessing imperfect or no knowledge of English, they are not readily acceptable as lodgers." 1965:14
[39] Gilroy, 1987, Porter, 1994
[40] Peach, 1998: 211.
[41] Peach 19??
[42] Porter, 1994: 352.

absolute. Human geographer Ceri Peach shows that degrees of segregation in Britain are not only far below those of the United States, but have been slowly *decreasing* since 1961. There is no-where in Britain where the Afro-Caribbean population has ever made up more than thirty-one percent of the residents,[43] a stark contrast to American cities where figures for Afro-American concentration incredibly often approach 100 percent. [44]

Two processes militated against the absolute ghettoisation of black communities. The first was this re-location throughout the 1970s of a considerable part of the black population into local authority housing where, despite a degree of 'white flight' black populations shared living space with the white working class. The second are the economic processes which lead to the large scale re-gentrification of Victorian and Georgian London by the urban middle classes who, capitalising on the depressed housing market and mass suburbanisation of the 1960s and 1970s (Porter 1994), 're-claimed' dilapidated single family houses in many of the same areas of high immigrant population; Notting Hill, Stockwell, Camden. Obviously gentrification is a highly suspect process for marginal(ised) communities (Cohen, 1972), and these movements provided much fuel for increased economic and racial conflict, resentment, and 'border skirmishes'. However through the unavoidable sharing of public space and services an emergent multiculture was, alongside the emergence of 'colony culture', also incubated.

## The racialisation of space and criminalisation of youth

Ideas about the inherent criminality of 'black' people are not an invention of the 1970s. As far back as the 16th century European adventurers were commenting on African predisposition for vice and immorality,[45] these kinds of 'factual ' accounts' which were popular reading in Britain heavily influenced the racial attitudes of the 18th and 19th century, which in turn "influenced the emergence of more modern racialist thought."[46] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1810 defines 'Negro' as: "Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race; idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, *stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness and intemperance*, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have

[43] Peach, 1998: 208
[44] Ibid: 213, and see Wacquant, 1999.
[45] James Walvin 'Black Caricature; The Roots of Racialism', 1982: 59 in Husband ed *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* London: Hutchison 1982: 59-75
[46] ibid: 59

silenced the reproof of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man left to himself."[47]

Such racial 'common sense', re-vivified by the perceived 'threat' of Caribbean immigration during a process Schwarz calls the 're-racialisation of Britain' (1996), lies behind the conception of the 'race problem' as a problem of law and order, and infects the very methodologies and institutions charged with compiling data on crime, and developing strategies for dealing with it. The tenacity and apparently self-evident nature of the link between race and crime gave anti-immigration politicians such as Norman Pannell the confidence to assert, "it can be stated on incontrovertible evidence that immigrants are far more prone to certain grave offences than are the rest of the community."[48] As Susan Smith argues such characterisations serve the ideological role of legitimating the political management of urban problems and in this case deflecting attention away from discrimination and racism – which sustain the economic and social marginalisation of Afro-Caribbean populations in the UK – and onto the moral character of black people themselves. [49]

In the period between the passing of the Immigration Act of 1962 – which was drafted to curtail 'black' immigration to Britain (though it had precisely the opposite effect, at least initially[50]) and the major 'racialised' civil unrest (riots) of the early 1980s – the Brixton riots of 1981 and 1985, Tottenham 1985 – London's political geography became racialised, subdivided into white and black areas, 'no-go areas', 'frontlines and 'backyards'.[51] Space becomes understood by reference to race, just as race comes to be understood geographically – places where black people live are represented as 'trouble spots' with disproportionate rates of street crime, drugs, prostitution and associated social chaos. These places then come to stand metonymically for the blackness itself: 'Brixton'[52] comes to signify the indigestible, unassailable difference at the heart of blackness, a 'blot' on the lily white landscape of the nation. A similar form of metonymic slippage characterises the emergence, in the

[47]Encyclopaedia Britannica:Edinburgh 1810, vol. xiv., p. 750 cited in Walvin, 1982: 70 (emphasis added)
[48] Pannell and Brockway, 1966: 29.
[49] Smith, 1993: 137.
[50] See Joppke, 1996, and Byron, 1994, on the rush to beat the ban which caused an increase in immigration in 1962
[51] Keith, 1993, Hall, 1998
[52] Keith, 1993. The fact that Brixton is also dripping with cool cache, positive associations with 'club culture' and soft drugs, and prices have been rising since the late 1980s says a lot about contemporary attitudes to blackness, which as Gilroy points out used to be abject and now symbolises a kind of hyper vitality, (2000).

1970s, of the figure of the 'innately criminal black youth', a folk devil known in populist parlance as the 'mugger'.[53]

The logic here was to establish through statistics, (assembled by the home office using questionable methodology, including a lack of consistency in racial categorisations) that a disproportionate amount of violent street crime was being perpetrated by young black men. The term mugger could then be indiscriminately attached to any male bearer of black skin, and only to black men (white criminals were far more likely to be called thief or burglar, Demuth, 1978). The term mugger stood in for the host of social problems which black masculinity signified and was heir to. This discursive slippage had a brutal material correlate. The racialisation of space in 1970s London was effected not only through discourse but through the specific 'paramilitary' state strategies enacted by the forces of 'law and order'.[54]

## Spatial discipline

David Theo Goldberg in his study of apartheid era South African Cities, argues that spatial *containment* is the primary mode by which racial marginalisation has been (re)produced in the western city. This does not require the absolute removal of undesired populations beyond the limits of the city, but is produced through "their circumscription in terms of location, and their limitation in terms of access – to power, to (the realisation of) rights, and to goods and services."[55] While to suggest that the activities of the British state in the 1970s is equivalent to apartheid would be patently ridiculous – and would misrepresent the specific brutality and inhumanity of *that* system – the effects of the spatial strategies of policing in the London in the 1970s, constructed around a particular discourse of race, bear some comparison. Different groups of the general population were treated in profoundly different ways based on a pre-defined, if in the British case extra-legal, understanding of a link between skin colour, race, and moral character.

In *Policing The Crisis* (1978),[56] Hall et al show how the orchestration of specific 'moral panics'[57], during the social crisis of the 1970s, led to a state of virtual, and of

[53] Hall, et al, 1978
[54] Hall et al, 1978, Gilroy, 1987, Carr-Hill and Drew, 1988, Keith, 1993, Smith, 1993.
[55] Goldberg, 1993: 47.
[56] CCCS, 1982: 36
[57] The term 'moral panic' has been central in the sociology of youth/deviance since Stanley Cohen's 1972 book 'Folk devils and moral panics; The creation of the Mods and Rockers' and it' subsequent adoption by the neo-Gramscian group at Birmingham's Centre For Cultural studies see Hall et al 1978.

course wholly unequal, *war* between black youth and the police. This war was fought on the streets of London – both the 'frontlines' and back alleys of the emergent black colony – like Brixton's 'Cold Harbour Lane' and the All Saints Road in Notting Hill, and in the respectable thoroughfares of London's West End. It was fought around the issue of being 'at home' in the streets where you live and having access to the public space of the city, and it was fought in many cases around music. Music, because of its material form, can lay symbolic claim to space, can re-code space – music can cause symbolic disruption. Music, as a sign of Afro-Caribbean cultural specificity, and difference from white conceptions of Englishness, was in this period perceived by some (and some with real power) as a sonic symbol of untamed otherness, threatening to disrupt the order of the aural Englishness with its amplified 'bass' notes and passion-stirring drum beats. Some of the worst cases of 'civil unrest in 1970s London, and the most egregious examples of spatial discipline, took place around music. The Notting Hill Carnival confrontations of 1976, a series of running battles between black youth and police at the annual Caribbean street festival (which the youth arguably won) was only the most visible example of confrontation between black youth and police triggered and sound-tracked by the increasingly militant strains of Jamaican Reggae.

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It emphasise the discursive construction of public hate figures – the 'hooligan', the 'mugger', the 'junkie' – through the media, and the relationship between the emotional stylistics of fear and approbation and the legitimation of hegemonic power: "The moral panic appears to us to be one of the principle forms of ideological consciousness by means of which a 'silent majority' is won over to the support of increasingly coercive measures on the part of the state" Hall et al, 1978: 221. Sarah Thornton in Club Cultures (1995), argues against a simplistic notion of moral panic as a repressive ideological strategy by suggesting that moral panics are (like having a record banned from Radio 1) welcomed by subcultural groups as securing their reputation for danger and 'hipness' – their 'subcultural capital' – and are best through of a form of 'marketing strategy'. In terms of 'resistance' a notion that is implicitly ascribed to those who are depicted through moral panics Thornton concludes: "derogatory media coverage is not the verdict but the essence of their resistance." In this she is mistaken. For populations subject to the daily experience of inequality, arbitrary justice, and the historical memory of colonial violence which it repeats, who use music to discuss, understand, and answer back these processes – dance music in Britain is historically and continues to be cross cut with the articulation of ideas of justice, freedom and a critique of authority, and an important gathering site for a ideas about resistance and liberation – a 'moral panic' about their presence in society is neither welcome nor constitutive except in the negative function of pushing them to do things themselves. Roots Reggae, funk, Drum and Bass, Hip Hop while always intertwined with their own representation, and never innocent, are not mere by-products of negative depictions in the media. Here's where Thornton's inability to distinguish between genres, and levels of club/dance formations really cuts. Without theorising race she misses not only the way differently 'raced' subcultures behave very differently, but how race – because dance music is so predominantly black music although never uncomplicatedly so – is a kind of master signifier and evr present symbolic and psychological theme, across all dance and club cultures, at least in London (which is where Thornton did her research). Thornton, 1995: 168.

> "There were day to day battles with police over where we could play our music, where we could be, where we could congregate. Because if black youths congregate anywhere, there was a big problem"[58]

The street 'riots' of the early 1980s in Brixton and Tottenham, which caused such a ripple of shock in the British mass media and triggered a round of hand-wringing and soul searching in the mass media, if viewed in the context of the spatialised racial politics of the 1970s, look much more like the inevitable reaction to the routine over-policing and harassment of Afro-Caribbean youth which had been continuing unabated at least since 1968.[59]

## The political backdrop

In April of 1968 Enoch Powell, a pretender to the leadership of the opposition Conservative Party, made his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in Wolverhampton. Powell's inflamed language polarised the debate around migration and race, gave support and inspiration to the gathering forces of populist racism and nationalism (including the embryonic National Front) and defined the terms of the entire 'race' debate until at least the 1980s. It licensed a new form of confidence among popular racists, and Powell received overt backing from the dockers union, and covert support from many other quarters. Also in 1968 two significant pieces of legislation left their mark on the racial politics of the 1970s and 1980s.

In the hysterical climate stoked by Powell's rhetoric and cranked to fever pitch by Idi Amin's expulsion of Uganda's British-passport holding Indian population, assailed by unfounded fears of being 'flooded' with another wave of immigrants, the Labour government rushed through the 1968 Immigration act, with what Barbara Castle, a minister in that government, has called indecent haste.[60] This law introduced, among other restrictions and potential indignities, the infamous 'partial clause'.[61] The impact was clear on those 'foreigners' residing at that time in Britain – blacks were an unwanted threat.[62] Not only was there apparently a rising tide of support for Powell,

[58] La Rose 1999: 124
[59] The 'riots' of 1985 both followed assaults by the police on black women – the shooting of Cherry Croce triggered riots in Brixton, the death of Cynthia Jarrett during a police raid in Tottenham sparked the worst 'race riot' in British history. Carr-Hill and Drew, 1988: 38
[60] Barbara Castle, a member of that labour Government, cited in Playing The Race Card
[61] This clause meant that migrants had to establish a link with a blood relative who already resided in the UK in order to be granted residency.
[62] Joppke, 1996: 118

on the far right and in the centre, but even the Labour party could not be relied upon to act against this wave of racialised panic.

The other legislation, supposed compensation for the strengthening of the immigration laws, was the 1968 Race Relations Act. This legislation sought to toughen up the provision of the first act of 1965. While that had outlawed discrimination 'in places of public resort', the 1968 act extended this to include housing and employment and established the 'Community Relations Council' to adjudicate claims of direct discrimination. The Home secretary at the time, under whose jurisdiction the legislation fell, was James Callaghan, who had been foreign secretary until the devaluation crisis. Callaghan, who as an MP was sponsored by the police federation union, exempted the Police from the provisions of the act. This effectively relieved the police force(s) from any obligation to curb discriminatory practice and left them unaccountable for their policies in relation to race. [63] It was effectively a capitulation to elements within the police who viewed themselves as special cases, and institutionalised the permissive environment within which unaccountable individual officers participated in the collective neo-military policing of black communities in the 1970s and 1980s. In the words of one who came of (political) age during this period: "It's a time of almost internal colonisation...the black settlement population at the middle of most cities are being policed like they're foreign territories."[64]

This exemption can be seen to be a major contributory factor in the degree of discretionary power the police were able to use in the streets. The apparently arbitrary but actually systematic over-policing and harassment of black people (particularly youth) and black areas in London in the 1970s from which no black Londoner was exempt, relied for its effectiveness as a form of control on these discretionary powers (Carr-Hill and Drew, 1988). The spatialisation of power and control is how this discretion operated.[65]

[63]Callaghan has since admitted publically that this exemption was a serious mistake, Playing The Race Card BBC2 first broadcast 2/10/99 BBC2
[64] Paul Gilroy interviewed in Phillips and Philips, 1999: 296
[65] Keith, 1993: 131

## Technologies of spatial control: Sus, SPGs and police discretion

In the early seventies, in a context of the increasing frequency of confrontations between police and black youth,[66] The Metropolitan Police in London, and other urban forces, began to employ a specific strategy which came to be known by its colloquial appellation; 'sus'. Standing for 'suspected person', the sus laws derived from section 4 of the vagrancy Act 1824, which evolved from ancient laws to control the 'wandering poor'. Sus enabled police on the streets to 'stop and search' anyone who they suspected of committing, or planning to commit a crime. The use of 'sus' in Britain was concentrated in metropolitan regions, primarily Liverpool, Manchester and London; it was rarely used outside cities. But the act was not evenly applied even within these metropolitan districts but only used "in certain very specific areas".[67] Its application has been revealed in research to have systematically targeted black youth in an attempt both to confine and harass them in 'their own' black areas, and exclude them from other kinds of public space completely.

In her examination of the use of the 'sus' law Clare Dumuth (1978) collates the evidence from court and police records. She asserts that 'sus' cases falls into two basic categories – tampering with car doors (intent to steal) and loitering with intent to steal from handbags (eg 'mugging'). In the 55 cases she researched she found that in the first instance the suspects were from a variety of backgrounds (races), while the second category was overwhelmingly Afro-Caribbean men. In both cases it was far more commonly police who were the witnesses than members of the public.[68]
As Dumuth puts it, in the politest of terms, because of the close relationship and frequent professional contact between the police and magistrates, not to mention their shared relation to the larger discourse of race circulating in culture and to the institutional practice of the state, "it is often difficult for the magistrate to accept that police evidence may be open to question".[69]

Dumuth finds that while 'good references', from a school, college or employer, were an important factor in securing a dismissal in criminal cases arising from arrests for 'sus' – which required by law the witnessing of two distinct acts of 'suspicious behaviour' – the social standing of the suspect had little bearing on the initial arrest.

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[66]Gilroy claims the first of these confrontations took place at the Metro Youth Club in Notting Hill in 1971 1987: 93
[67] Dumuth, 1978: 38
[68] Ibid: 53
[69] Ibid: 29

In terms of the 'dipping' cases where black people were disproportionately arrested all kinds of black (mainly young, mainly male) people, the employed and unemployed, school children, college students, who were in the places were 'sus' arrests were concentrated were liable to arrest.

Two clear points emerge from Dumuth's analysis. The first is the high degree of discretion granted to the police in the execution of the 'sus' arrests. [70] The second is the specific form of spatialisation by which this arcane piece of legislation was enacted.

**Spatial discrimination**

The very nature of 'sus' placed an unprecedented amount of discretionary power in the hands of Police constables, with whom lay the decision who to stop and when (based on poorly defined criteria). Even if it were not for the well documented high incidence of racist attitudes held by British police officers,[71] of the sort re-iterated by the McPherson Report in the late 1990s, it would still be reasonable to assume the influence of the 'common sense' notion of 'black criminality' which would pre-structure these kinds of discretionary decisions. This seems borne out by the huge disproportion between stopping and arrest rates; although blacks stopped for 'sus' were 30% more likely to be arrested than whites, one study, based in Toxteth, Liverpool, found that of 3,482 people stopped only 179 were arrested. Having being stopped once the likelihood increases of being stopped again: for black respondents to one study the (mean) average number of stops, for those who have been stopped at least once, is 4.7 (for those stopped in a vehicle), 2,2 (on foot), which argues for the emergence of a generation of black youth with intimate and frequent experience of police harassment. Carr-Hill and Drew (1988) report one estimate that blacks were fifteen times more likely to be stopped for 'sus' than whites, and another study[72] finds that for whites aged 15-24, the likelihood of being stopped on foot by the police was 18%, whereas for a comparable group of Afro-Caribbeans it was 45%.

Sus it appears, though technically a matter of discretion, was systematic: attempt to intimidate and harass young people (for whom stop rates are far higher), and more

[70] "discretionary operation of police power [is] always something that's spatialised, it's always something that's localised, it's always something about keeping people in one area and excluding them from another." Interview with Paul Gilroy, Phillips and Phillips, 1998: 306

[71] see Smith and Gray 1983. The following is based on the findings of their study

specifically an attempt to keep black youth off *certain* street. It was used to harass and to contain. Black (especially young) populations were subject to processes of containment that meant their confinement in some areas and effective exclusion from other, white, wealthy, areas of London. Not only was 'sus' being applied in 'trouble' spots, which were 'black areas', such as Notting Hill, Brixton and Toxteth as a method of social control, but that it was routinely applied in significant public space, as a method of spatial control: to keep black youth away (Willis, 1980).

Black youth were stopped and searched frequently around the streets where they lived, discouraged from 'hanging out' on the streets. Almost half the 'sus' cases of October 1977 in London were heard at the Marlborough Street Court which covers the West End. Oxford Street is London's premier shopping street and statistically the place where most pick pocketing takes place, but this does not entirely account for the high rates of stop and search. [73] This attempt to keep black youth away from the commercial and leisure centre of London was reflected in sentencing policy: frequent conditions for a non-custodial sentence involved *staying away* from central London.[74]

Allied to sus was the use of specially trained 'para-military' squads of police lurking in areas considered to be 'trouble spots' in specially armoured vehicles stocked with full riot gear. These Special Patrol Groups (SPGs), during the rising tensions of the mid-1970s, appeared, often parked in back streets, under railway bridges, yet obvious to the whole local community, in areas such as Brixton, Tottenham, Southhall and Hackney. It was these groups – often composed of recruits from outside London unfamiliar with the area,[75] or with contact with black people – who were charged with executing stops. During 1975 14,000 people were stopped by the SPG.[76] The SPG groups were widely blamed for the death of anti-nazi activist Blair Peach in the violent incidents in Southall in 1979.[77]

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[72] Smith and Grey , 1983

[73] "...it was a common thing to be arrested, from 12 years old onward...When I used to walk up Oxford street, I would be stopped four times by police, searched on the street and asked what I was doing and where I was going. Four times in one day on Oxford Street." Michael La Rose in Harris and White, 1999: 125

[74] Dumuth, 1978: 34

[75] Anecdotal evidence suggests a prevalence of 'scousers' ( from Liverpool, North East England) police amongst those policing Brixton at the time (see Keith, 1993)

[76] Phillips and Phillips, 1999

[77] Carr-Hill and Drew, 1988: 37

On January 19th 1981, after a political campaign organised by a cross-generational alliance within the Black community,[78] the 'sus' law was scrapped, to be replaced by the Criminal Attempts Bill, which partially reinstated some elements of 'sus' under the heading of a new offence 'interfering with parked cars' which could be enacted in a similarly arbitrary way.[79] Nevertheless the success of the 'scrap sus' campaign, an alliance of political activists, politicians, community leaders and ordinary people within which black women took an significant role, not only strengthened the sense of the possibilities of black political gain, but " drew young black people and older black people together."[80]

All of my black informants had first hand experience of the SUS laws, most had been stopped more than once, all had been stopped at least once. Of my white and female informants none had been stopped by police because of 'sus'. However I did encounter a marked unwillingness on the part of those who had experienced sus first hand, to necessarily make a political interpretation of their personal experience. As Claire Alexander (1996) found in here research of black male youth, many black people who have suffered at the hands of police discrimination are unwilling to dwell on these incidents or attribute them to racism, a form of self preservation which leads them away from occupying the role of victim. The ability to ride out these 'refusals', Alexander argues, helps transform "a recognition of group powerlessness" into "an assertion of individual control".[81]

One informant, who had experienced a shocking and extraordinary incident[82], which was also absolutely typical of the incidents that Claire Dumuth discusses in her analysis of stop and search arrests, said that although he was aware of the larger context of racism he "tried not to think of it like that" because, "he didn't want to

[78]Phillips and Phillips, 1998; 306-8
[79]Spencer, 1981
[80]Phillips and Phillips, 1998: 307
[81] Alexander, 1996: 121
[82] "I was with two mates of mine, we were all doing our A levels. We went up-town, to Oxford street we were there to see the girls in the make-up store in Selfridges. We were going up and down Oxford Street and we were obviously being followed. All of a sudden we got stopped by plain-clothes police. We were happy to go to the station because we were innocent. Next thing we know we were fucking nicked, under sus or some kind of attempted this or that. That was really foolish – they concocted a story about some woman that we tried to mug, but they couldn't even find her. Then because we didn't plead guilty we had to go to court. I had an uncle who was a judge who helped us out with lawyers. When the trial came up the police told a pack of lies in court, it was so weak and cheap. It was thrown straight out. It was major stress, it's almost like I blocked that incident out of my mind. When I deal with the police I still give them a chance, you'll get some who are alright and some who aren't." Femi Interview

become bitter."[83] Therefore, while all the black interviewees acknowledged some experience of harassment by police in the streets of the city, and a few made mention of 'run-ins' with the law where they acknowledged some fault ('I was a bit wild' Bryan G) few were willing to speculate on the exact nature, or the psychological consequences of such encounters. What is obvious, however, is the way that black music and its cultures took on a powerful critique of such policies, the black dance became a place where the political and cultural analysis of such events were 'witnessed'[84] and placed in the larger context of slavery, racism and inequality, alternatives were explored – "chant down Babylon!" – and the act of listening to this music, and the space where that happened, became infused with a powerful political charge.

There is a strong tradition within diasporic music from all around the 'circum-Atlantic' rim, Junior Murvin's 'Police and Thieves' (1979) to Smiley Culture's 'Producer' (1986) and NWA's 'Fuck Tha Police' (1990) which thematises and challenges police harassment. Black music has provided a political analysis of racism and discrimination that is developed with these kinds of experiences in mind, and forms part of a new affirmative culture around Reggae. But, we must remember, it has been relatively open (Gilroy and Lawrence, 1988). Such music provides a context within which to deal with and understand isolated incidents in a systematic way, which becomes available, both to the black people who have first hand experience of such incidents, and who organise their resistance through the music, and for the whites who share social space with them.

It is in the context of this spatial discipline, the attempt to keep young black men in particular confined to 'black' areas and away from the centre of the city that we can begin to understand the special appeal of challenging this discipline – of consciously 'hanging out', of cruising through the city centre, and of gaining access to the largely forbidden world of white youth culture. For Norman J, growing up in Ealing, West London, Central London especially Soho had an almost 'mythical appeal' – the coffee bars, where mods and teds gathered, Carnaby street, and the vivid Soho nightlife, played on the imagination of a generation of young Londoners who were equally children of the diaspora and children of the British city. In the night cubs of the self-same centre black music and dance styles were taking an increasingly central role, but restrictive door polices, quota systems ( this time at the 'discretion' of

[83] Femi, interview
[84] Dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson's powerful 'Sonny's Lettah' (1979) is a fine example of this

bouncers) and hostility to black men in groups continued to exclude most black Londoners from participation in the dance floor celebrations of diasporic culture that fuelled the white urban imagination of the fifties and sixties.

**The teenager in black and white**

In 1950s America 'the teenager', is born and born into consumption.[85] At a time of rising affluence for youth in American and Britain, with a new generation of cinema and popular music heroes who defiantly rejected their 'straight parent culture', (James Dean, Marlon Brando, Elvis and even, the rebranded Frank Sinatra, an image which Phil Cohen argues drew upon the images of 'the brute and the 'hipster' which had been around since the forties Cohen, 1980), the teenager was 'invented' by Madison Avenue. Just as rock and roll, the first teenage cult, synthesised Country music with black American rhythm and blues, these images drew heavily on the iconography of 'refusal' and proud even aggressive non-conformity of the American 'ghetto Negro'. Colin MacInnes' 'Absolute Beginners' of 1959 captures exactly this moment in London's history, and suggests the central role played by symbolic expressions of black identity and history – distilled most powerfully in music – in the white imginary: MacInnes' teenage narrator says of his older brother "The trouble with Vernon, really, as I've said before, is that he was the one of the last generation who grew up before the teenager existed...in those days it seems you were just an overgrown boy, or an undergrown man, life didn't cater for anything whatever else in between. ..America launched the teenage movement, there's no denying it."[86]

The jazz clubs of Soho, the 'cool' Jamaicans and dangerous in West London, are the images from which this new English version of the American teen was created. It is through his identification with blackness, not only African students and the hip Carribbeans around him in Notting Hill, but the American jazz they all listened to, that MacInnes hero expresses both his difference from the straight English society of Windsor and Vernon *and* from the loutish racist violence of the white teen gangs nostalgic for pre-migration times; the teddy boys. *Absolute Beginners* was published the year after, and clearly coloured by, the first race 'riots' of this era, the Notting Hill attacks of 1958.

[85] Abrams, 1959
[86] MacInnes, [1959] 1992: 36

Though 'teddy boy' is a complex and contradictory culture of its own, so to imply an uncontested racism amongst teds would be wrong, there were many instances of racist attacks by teds, including Notting Hill. The white youth culture that succeeded them, mod, had a franker taste for black American 'hipness' (the teds attraction-repulsion to black America was cloaked by the apparent whiteness of rock and roll exemplified by Bill Haley), but for Mods as for the skinheads that came after a taste for black style and music did not necessarily translate into a liking for black people. Blackness for all these groups, no matter how positively it connoted, was epic not something associated with actual human beings. The image of the black man in the white subcultural imagination was 'a constant', a frozen, static image.[87] The very ideology that romanticised black cultural expression – and the essential blackness that was thought to lie behind it – was "underpinned by racist commonsense."[88] The racial homogeneity of the subculture grouping ensured this black typification was relatively unchallenged by experience.

The Mods, Phil Cohen argues, were certainly working class, but they tended to be suburban and steadily employed. They had money to spend, with which to construct their style and build up their difference. Drawing inspiration from Italian and American cinema, and black American popular music – rhythm and blues, soul – and the 'rude boy' culture of Afro-Caribbean youth, Mods were the pre-eminent over-the-counter culture. Shirts, Parkers, haircuts, cappuccinos, scooters and the never-enough scooter accessories, soul records, amphetamines – the Mods made shopping cool and group identity was constructed through consumption.

For the Mods' and other 'absolute beginners' of the period black youth style and music provided the core of the difference they were seeking, an antidote and supplement to the suffocating respectability of a post-war Britain encouraged to believe that with technology, abundance and US dollar they had never had it so good. Black music – jazz, rhythm and blues, soul and funk – offered tempo, pace, excitement, sex – it brought the speed of the US city into the dingy, turgid back alleys of London, where culture seemed to have stalled in the early 1950s. But this opening of space for youth – albeit within consumption – was unavailable to not-yet-adult black Londoners. Products from the Black Atlantic were respected, used, even loved, but ideally they came from far away, and the people who made them would remain at a distance, in the half light of cliché: Attractive but not demanding.

[87] Hebdige, 1979: 40-1
[88] Gilroy and Lawrence, 1988: 127-130

Geographically, discursively and economically there was no space, in the 1950s and early 1960s, for the black teenager. The central principle of the first teenage movements, as of consumption itself, was choice. Mods chose to be different, and chose how. The extraordinary social co-ordination and communication that dictated what exactly was chosen – why this round collar was the preferred one, where the fish tail parker came from, what legislated the width of ties – is fascinating. But the differences between white youth cultures of the period and those of black youth is that white youth had the opportunity to choose to different from their 'parent' culture– and used black music to do this – whereas black youth had no such choice. White youth 'throw themselves in' to youth cultures saturated with black style while black youth are thrown in to 'otherness' which is imposed on them from outside, and continuously reconfirmed through spatial discipline. Black youth were already subculturalised by virtue of their race, which was presumed to speak them.

Black youth's ability and willingness to reject the 'parent culture' is complicated by racism and the fact that the dominant culture was not their parents' culture. The cultural institutions of black youth are also at the same time the space where generations pull together. [89] Music and style the pre-eminent arena for white youth to construct a 'teenage' identity different from their parents, functions by the 1970s, for black youth as the politicised arena by which they express their solidarity with their parents culture and with the cultural resources of the Black Atlantic. For all the talk of the 'generation gap' that dominates the 'race relations' literature of the 1970s (Troyna and Cashmore, 1974) the 1970s is a time of black British culture pulling together, of black parents rallying behind 'the youth'[90] which is being denied the freedom to be young, extravagant and experimental with difference.

Black youth from the 1960s onward experienced severe underemployment, and in particular found themselves barred from the kinds of service jobs – in shops ands cafes, which would afford them the financial self-determination to participate in the consumption patterns of the white teen.[91] As Ken Pryce's ethnography of Bristol's St Paul's area in the mid 1960s suggests the equivalent of the white Mod is the black

[89] "As the pressures on the colony 'community' – from police surveillance and control, from unemployment and from official or institutional racism – have steadily increased, so the division within the 'colony' between old and young, or between those who have chosen the respectable route and those who have chosen to hustle and survive, has been eroded, and there is an increasing tendency to close ranks, internally, in the face of a common and hostile threat" Hall et al, 1978
[90] Prescod, 1999
[91] Runymede Trust, 1980

'teenybopper' (Pryce, 1979). This teenybopper is by and large unemployed, both because of racist employment patterns and an unwillingness to work the kinds of menial jobs offered to their parents, 'drifting' and more likely to be drawn towards 'hustling' as an income source. 'Hustling' or 'higgling' (in Jamaican parlance) is a catch-all term for the informal, if not illegal, jobs available in the black areas – drug dealing, pimping, petty crime. But 'Hustling' also includes the semi-legal practices of running a sound system, buying and selling second hand records and accruing the street smarts to survive in the informal economies of the colony. Whether working above or below the legality threshold, by virtue of the imagery and discourse of black criminality, the response to the disappointment of their parents dreams of assimilation, and more particularly in the 1970s the enactment of racialised power, black youth are not free to choose to signify through consumption or spectacular style, the difference they already symbolise. Their experience politicises and radicalises them and the music they make and listen to.

The American teenager and their first musical form – rock and roll, emerges from the proximity in the American South of black and white cultures. Such proximity was only slowly emerging in London – Absolute Beginners is a very early example – but as the seventies progress and sharing public space, at least, became routine romantic notions on 'both sides' of what Du Bois describes as 'the colour line', are challenged. In shared social space, particularly that of schools and the streets and clubs, romanticised homogenising ideas about racial otherness are chipped away by experience, friendship and common purpose. Co-presence holds the possibility of demystification and new alliance.

**Sound system music: the emergence of Reggae**

West Indian immigrants to Britain carried a love for music with them, and used music as a source of connection with the culture of home (Hinds, 1980, Dennis, 1999). In the forties and fifties this music was primarily Afro-American – swing, jump blues, jazz – broadcast unintentionally to the West Indies' via powerful radio transmissions in the American South and the early sound systems of Clement 'Coxsone' Dodd (who began by playing his beloved bebop), and Duke Reid.[92] In Britain this music was not played on the radio – the BBC had a long history of banning or severely limiting the playing of black American music, wary of its

[92] Bradley, 2000

perceived sexual connotations.[93] Migrants had to find their own ways of hearing the music they craved: The radiogramme such as the 'Blue Spot', one of the earliest models of record player, became "a standard piece of furniture" for every West Indian immigrant. Donald Hinds calls the young migrant men who would clustered around the radiogramme 'Saturday night disc jockeys.'[94] In Norman's house, one of the first in the neighbourhood to own a radiogramme, his father's took pride of place in the living room: It still does. On these, West Indian families would listen to American popular music not only 'black' music but the equally popular country music of Hank Williams and Jim Reeves.

The central place that the record player took in the domestic space of the Afro-Caribbean migrant in London was matched by the increasingly central place the local sound systems – like those of Count Suckle and Duke Vin, modelled after the Kingston originators – played in the cultural lives of Afro-Caribbean communities. These alternative forms of leisure and employment, of cultural interaction and decompression from the pressures of racism, provided a substitute for black Londoners excluded from the sites of white working class leisure, the pub, football, and nightclubs.[95] Gradually the blues and country sounds of rural America were displaced as new genres emerged more suited to the tone of life in the city: both Kingston and London.

There was already an indigenous music of the 'British' Caribbean – calypso, mento, myriad other 'folk music' – some of which was being recorded but the domestic Caribbean production of records was small scale and unreliable. In Jamaica the sound systems and the popular music production which surrounded them, previously reliant upon American music on shellac and then vinyl, began to thrive in their own right in the early 1960s, with the evolution of the edgy, modern, urban form ska, a synthesis of indigenous 'mento' and American r&b form (Bradley, 2000). But Jamaican music was to all intents and purposes unknown outside the Caribbean, except by Jamaican immigrants, small groups of aficionados, and those who travelled back and forth frequently. This began to change in 1964 when a home grown

[93] see Chapman, 1990

[94] Hinds, 1980: 51 "of course the Saturday night disc jockeys were not partial to Tommy Steele and Marty Wilde, but favoured Shirley and Lee, Lloyd Price and Fats Domino, none of whom might have ever featured in the British charts."

[95] You get together and play your music and you feel at one with each other because you share a common bond against the kind of discrimination that is perpetrated against you as a black person. Without the music, without the Friday night shabeen and the Saturday night parties, I don't know what we would have done as people. ..the music played a major part." Mike Nesbeth in Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 299-300

Jamaican singer – Millicent (Millie) Small – backed by an experienced band of jobbing Jamaican musicians under the leadership of producer/guitarist Ernest Ranglin, who had cut their teeth playing all kinds of jazz and popular music for American tourists in Jamaican hotels throughout the 50s, recorded a version of Barbie Gray's bubblegum r&b song 'My Boy Lollipop'. This tune, a simple ditty aimed squarely at the pop market, had, nonetheless a distinctive Jamaican flavour. A jerky rhythm, the distinctive down-stroke guitar playing, announced a new force in pop. It wasn't so much the formal qualities of the tune that made it important; it was what happened to it. 'My Boy Lollipop' sold 6 Million copies, rising to number two in the UK pop charts, and entering the top 5 in America.

'My Boy Lollipop ' was far from being the first ska record – Prince Buster, among others had been innovating the new style for several years in Jamaica – nor even one of the best. Much of the rough and ready ska element was missing. Nevertheless its success had huge ramifications for the Jamaican record industry and, eventually, black British sensibilities. The record was released on the Island label, run by a white Jamaican entrepreneur Chris Blackwell. Seeing the economic potential for the music of Jamaica Blackwell made it his explicit intention to develop Jamaican popular music for export – to the UK and USA. His ambivalent impact on Reggae culture – backing the rise to global stardom of Bob Marley, Burning Spear and Black Uhuru – was a big factor in facilitating the import of Reggae into the UK.[96] 'My Boy Lollipop' announced Jamaican popular music to the Western pop markets, and ushered in a period of ska fever, particularly in London, where jazz and r&b loving Afro-Caribbeans were converted to Jamaican popular music, almost overnight. London based sound system operator Duke Vigo, told Lloyd Bradley that "ska came in like a rush .... It was what so many of us over here were waiting for. I am a jazz man, I love my jazz, but when ska came along it just lick clean out of my head, because I know I'm far more attached to ska than to jazz ... because it was something from our own Jamaica, and that meant so much if you was living in England ... it took the people back home a while to realise there was a market over here."[97]

Although ska was already being played by UK sound systems that were established in London – who got frequent packages of records mailed from Jamaica – Small's little record, radio friendly and unassuming as it was, alerted both the wider British public to what Jamaica had to offer, and Jamaican record moguls to the potential for

[96] see Bradley 2000 for a balanced discussion of Blackwell's legacy.
[97] Vigo, cited in Bradley, 2000: 142

international sales. In terms of the economic investment necessary to stimulate a domestic recording market with international ambitions, its impact was dramatic. By 1968 ska exploded as an underground club form in London and an at least moderately successful chart genre. Sound system dances formerly confined to black 'colony areas began to extend across London from their local concentration in Notting Hill and Brixton into the West End clubs like the Flamingo and Roaring Twenties and Count Suckle's Q club in Paddington.[98] In these West End haunts, outside the black areas, white Britons, Afro-Caribbeans, American servicemen and African students mingled and danced. The Jamaican 'rude boy' the idealised image of the super-sharp stylish black Mod conjured by ska and embodied by Jamaican sound operator and former boxer Prince Buster, became the dominant icon of late sixties cool. Mick Jagger and The Beatles attended these clubs, and assimilated this style. So did a whole generation of white working class men, infatuated with ska and rude boy cool, who innovated a 'rude' style of their own with shaven heads, smart sporty shirts and shiny boots: The skinhead.[99]

In 1967 'Guns of Navarone' a ska tune long past its sell-by date in Jamaica, made it to the top ten in the British charts, another Island records success. By 1969 Desmond Dekker topped the UK charts with the sweet but authentically Jamaican anthem 'The Israelites', announcing not only the combined strength of the Afro-Caribbean and skinhead consumer power, and the strength of Jamaican export (once again the BBC gave scant coverage[100]) but also, in its biblical referencing and slower thrum, anticipated a new more militant old-testament infused style.

In Kingston, in 1968, Reggae was being born. Ska rhythms which had been slowing and thickening throughout the 1960s, were becoming 'sticky' (Hebdige, 1987), militant political messages combined with a millenarian spiritualism began to dominate, dreadlocks were replacing the crop on the heads of Kingston ghetto youth, and prominent converts to Rastafarianism like Bob Marley and Burning Spear were transforming fast, furious and rude 'ska' into a slower, deeper more straight-forwardly confrontational 'rocksteady'. Marley's 'Steady Rocking' (1968[101]) and

[98] Bradley, 2000, Hebdige, 1987
[99] see Cohen 1972 for a reading of skinhead style, and Hebdige 1979 on the 'fear and desire' underpinning the skins complex attitude to black culture.
[100] Bradley suggests that most Jamaican records which made it to the BBC offices were thrown in the bin unplayed
[101] Although this track is conventionally credited as being recorded in 1971 – as in the sleeve notes to the reissue album One Love (Heartbeat Records) Ian McCann suggests that, given that 'rocksteady' a musical form and a dance style is already over in Jamaica by 1971, when Reggae has finally emerged, it is likely to be from a 1968 Studio One session McCann 1994: 21

Spear's hit 'Door Peep' (1969) epitomise this change, as the ska bands of the 1960s – The Skatelites, The Vikings, the Prince Buster – give way to the new Reggae stars of the 'golden age'[102]: Augustus Pablo, The Mighty Diamonds, Gregory Isaacs, Bob Andy. Once the Jamaican industry got off the ground, under the often brutal control of 'big men' like Duke Reid and future prime minister Edward Seaga, there was no longer the need to go to America to buy records or to cede to America's cultural superiority. From the late sixties onwards the sound systems by which music was circulated and performed in Jamaica, and the UK, had an exclusively Jamaican repertoire, the period of 'Reggae hegemony' in the black public sphere was at hand. Reggae music and iconography would galvanise resistant black identity, in the name of the 'sufferer', from poverty and from racism, and create the sound systems as the most significant force in Jamaican music and within black communities in Britain. It would also, as Simon Jones and Les Back have argued, provide the site for the staging of confrontations and alliances between black and white British youth, and provide one of the blueprints for British dance culture.

The late 1960s provides some key themes for what was to come. First the growth of confidence in and explosion of the recording and distributing of Jamaican popular music, and the crucially interactive relationship between Jamaica and the UK, secured by the sound systems and the informal networks of record acquisition which take place of necessity outside the official channels. Second the cultural impact of Afro-Caribbean migrants in the UK of new Jamaican genres, first ska, then rocksteady and eventually 'roots' Reggae. A music truly theirs, closer to them than American black music, expressing the pain, suffering and militancy which corresponded to their experience as second class citizens in their adopted home – an outlet for the disappointment, frustration and disillusionment which was the legacy of the unkept promises of the 1940s. Third a growing market for black music, ska and its cousin American r&b, then Reggae, amongst white British youth increasingly sharing a degree of social space with Afro-Caribbeans.

Pumping Reggae music – that emphasised the dual values of 'roots and culture' – around the arteries of post Imperial Britain were the massive sound systems. A Jamaican staple since the 1940s, the sound system marks the continuity on the level of social form across disparate dance genres. The basic set – turntable(s),[103] several

[102] Gilroy cited in Philips and Phillips, 1999

[103] Original sound systems often only had one record player or 'deck'. To this day Jah Shaka still uses one deck, placed high up on his set. In place of the smooth deck to deck mixing of 'club culture' the

amplifiers, bass, treble and 'tops' speakers, arranged to as to create a 'field' of sound which envelops, encloses and 'enters' the dancing crowd. This remains the basic form of all club culture. Sound systems, while coming from the margins, and being associated with the often semi-legal activities of the socially marginalised, are 'organised units', which are sustained by networks of family and friends, primarily, but not exclusively, Afro-Caribbean, involving the cultural labour of many people to build, store and string up the system, acquire the records (with a premium on exclusives) and 'select' the right records in performance, and the lyrical skills of MCs (known, confusingly, as DJs in sound system parlance). They were the mobile night-clubs of Afro-diasporic culture, a substitute for the legitimate clubs from which they were excluded. [104]

Sound systems established a network in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s, a network defined by competition. 'Sound clashes' the form of many Reggae dances involved sounds competing against each other, on the basis of the volume and quality of the sound, and their access to 'unique' recordings – dub plates, specials, acetates – with which to win over the crowd, who were the final judges. Although they played 'records' by named artists the music was not reducible to a series of discrete , 'unique' commodities. Rhythms would come into fashion and proliferate, countless 'versions' would appear of the same tunes, dubs and special versions would be prepared, a sound system session was a densely woven inter-textual panorama always mediated by the voice of the DJ chatting over the microphone. Novelty was balanced with tradition in a social forum where the crowd decides who triumphs.

Intra-sound system competition reflected and channelled the social circumstances of their times and spaces. They were born in impoverished areas of Kingston where fierce competition for scarce resources were reflected in the fierce competition for 'rare' and original tunes, and the frequently violent tactics of the sound crews around the 'big three': Coxsone (Clement Dodd), Duke Reid and Prince Buster. Such rivalries were reconfigured in the UK sound system networks which were themselves highly localised and competitive[105], in the manner of competing businesses, yet also

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Reggae sound system fills the gaps between record with mc chat, reverb and all manner of sound effects available though its analogue technology.

[104]: "we would go to certain discos and clubs and found that they had colour bars or quota policies. I remember we used to go to the Locarno in Streatham, and you had to get there before eight o'clock...because after that no more blacks would be let in. And so we established our own independent cultural institutions..." Linton Kwesi Johnson cited in Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 299

[105] "Every area was known for its sound. The reputation of the sound gave reputation to the area."Larose, 1999: 130

constitutive of local and supra local networks of community affiliation[106], and 'the front line troops' in the battle with the police.[107] They were also employment and career training opportunities: "[sound system] gave me invaluable experience in business management as well as inspiring me to study audio electronics."[108]

Although apparently rudimentary Sound Systems require specialist knowledges to build, acquire, operate and maintain. They often involve the input of members of the same family – 'Good Times' is jointly run by brother Joey and Norman J. – across different generations. Sounds are handed down from father and uncle to son and nephew, or, as in the case of Soul II Soul, from older to younger brother. Although Sound Systems would usually be run by older men, the discipline of the late nights, travel and physical energy required to organise and run events meant that often older sound operators would cede control to younger, 'the community' across generations would be involved; "what in effect would happen is that you would have your speakers in somebody's house, another in one of your cousins houses, and one in your uncle's house."[109] Sound systems are a collective cultural and economic endeavour, an informal but regulated and hierarchical knowledge economy.

### Segregated leisure and the Black public sphere

Pubs the centres of British social life were, with very few exceptions, off-limits to black Londoners. If Afro-Caribbeans wanted to drink, they did so at home, or in drinking establishments of their own devising, many of which were unlicensed. Dillip Hiro estimates that by the mid 1960s there were at least fifty such unlicensed black clubs in South London alone.[110] In his memoir of growing up in London in the sixties and seventies Ferdinand Dennis suggests the scale and the feeling of this social exclusion. His father, an early migrant from the Caribbean, liked to sip rum of an evening, but for him and his generation it was "never in a pub".[111] Just as their fathers were excluded from the zone of grown up working class male leisure, so the sons and daughters were excluded from youth clubs and from the others rituals of British culture like access to sport: "As the[...] white boys reached their teens, the football

[106] Bryan G, who grew up in Gloucester, found involvement in sound system culture provided a 'common' language, across black British culture, by which he could transcend the limitations of the local: "At 15 I was coming to London to see Shaka and Coxsone and buy records off them. We played all over, Gloucester, Swindon, Bristol. Eventually I was drawn into London because of my sound system connections." Bryan G, Interview.
[107] La Rose, 1999
[108] Stan, Shock sound system, Sound Business, Carnival Guide Touch Magazine/Time Out, 1995.
[109] Ibid
[110] Dilip Hiro,1971 *Black British White British*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode,

culture seized them ... We, the boys from the Caribbean or with Caribbean parents, had fewer outlets for our adolescent energy. ..the football stadium, perhaps the most important arena for celebrating and affirming working-class belonging, was a no-go area for us. At a football ground, we knew, they likened us to monkeys and drew on an astonishingly rich vocabulary of offensive racial terms. The passion for football was also a passion for whiteness."[112]

While music and dance has been historically more central in Afro-Diasporic cultures than in Britain, there is no 'natural' biological or cultural reason why Black youth threw so much of their time and energy into their own forms of music and dance culture. The history of British sound system culture, and that of club culture in general, might have been significantly different had Afro-Caribbeans found space in the pubs, youth clubs and football stadiums of white working class Britain. They did not, and that a war was taking place on the streets of Britain over access, lent the self generated sound system networks around which would form the black public sphere, part of their particular spatial character.

**The Space of Black cultural production**

Through Sus and the use of paramilitary policing strategies the streets were made unsafe for black youth during the 1970s. Pubs and football was out of bounds. Black British communities, and the 'black youth' who had become the focus for anxieties about the decline of Britain's moral fabric, were embattled and confined. It is during this period that Reggae music and Rastafarian culture, along with to varying degrees the ideology of Black Power and African liberation, begin to found an indigenous 'black British' identity. This identity was partially forged in struggle – the struggle around the playing of music and the social congregation this required and produced.

> "The music, the poetry, the language all spoke of the shared experience of transformation and anxiety and defiance and hope. Young black British style became the same as the content of their protest."[113]

These independent cultural institutions – the blues party, shabeen, sound system and Notting Hill Carnival – in turn became the focus for confrontation between white and black residents, and increasingly in the 1970s, black youth and the police. But they

[111] 1999: 318
[112] Dennis, 1999: 315

also provide the venues and resources for the founding of new forms of more-than-youth culture, of ways of being in the world and of organisation. Despite the fact that black youth were in some sense leading the political and cultural vanguard – because of their daily experience of racism, and the bankruptcy of the 'mother country' ideology within which their parents grew up, sound systems and the knowledge networks that underpin them were cross-generational. The role played by parents in Mod and punk subculture is to confirm its rebel fantasies by being shocked – parents are not meant to understand or approve. But the function of parents and other older relatives within sound system cultures was supportive – musical knowledge and the hardware to circulate it – records, sound systems, dance styles – were passed on through black families and across black generations. DJs, like Norman, got the bug for record collecting from his father; they would go to Webster's record stall in Shepherds Bush market together. Trevor discovered American soul and funk through the record collections of his parents' friends. Young black children learnt to dance from watching their relatives at weddings, christenings and community events. For others the Pentecostal church provided an early musical training, and even the most respectable church-goer was likely at one time or other to encounter the music of Jamaica at social events. One dancer, whose strict mother disapproved of most youth culture describes the musical fare at her family parties thus: "Studio One, Studio One Studio One."[114] For the white teenager of this period their attraction to black music was part of their subcultural separation from their parent culture. For black youth it was precisely the opposite. It was a question of re-connection to a diasporic tradition.

## Spaces of conflict: Carnival and clubs

Afro-Caribbean music and the institutions through which it was disseminated, became in the 1970s, prime loci of racialised conflict. The 'race riot' of 1958 in Notting Hill began with an orchestrated attack by white teddy boys on a 'mushroom party' a black social event where a sound system was playing loud Caribbean music and the crowd were dancing. Complaints about noise were at the heart of the resentment among white Notting Hill residents, and musical events were frequently scenes of confrontation between black youth and the police.[115] There is no secure

[113] Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 295
[114] Studio One, operated by Clement Coxsone Dodd was the most innovative, radical and successful Reggae studio and label of the late sixties and early 1970s, recording such luminaries as The Heptones, Bob Marley, Burning Spear and Horace Andy. "In studio one Dodd established a brand identity and a reputation unsurpassed before or since" Bradley, 2000: 212.
[115] Gutzmore, 1993,

distinction between music and noise. Noise is the wrong kind of sound, and a sonic emblem of the wrong kind of people (see Jacques Attali, *Noise*, 1985).

The Notting Hill area was not only the site of rioting in 1958 but the focus for racial antagonism again in the early 1970s under the dual pressure of black residents being forced out of the area (mostly north) by housing strategies and price rises, and the politicisation of black leisure with the raid on the Mangrove Cafe and subsequent court case (which lasted for 55 days and resulted in the acquittal of all the black defendants), and on the Metro club in 1971.[116] There were numerous incidents of confrontation, often extremely violent, between black youth and police at musical venues and outdoor events. This includes the frequent 'raiding' of youth clubs and black dance venues like Pastor Morris' club in Tottenham, the Carib Club (raided in 1974 with 13 arrests no convictions), The Burning Spear in Harlesden, and the Four Aces in Dalston. This pattern continued into the early 1990s with police raids on the (racially mixed) Pullit club in Camden. Cecil Gutzmore describes this as "systematic brutalisation". [117]

Notting Hill Carnival, the now three day music and culture event that attracts over a million people, did not start big, or as a symbol of Afro-Caribbean culture, let alone black resistance.[118] But by the mid sixties the carnival was an established Caribbean event that featured decorated floats accompanied by musicians, most notably playing the steel drums, the improvised percussion instruments innovated in the Caribbean from old oil drums.[119] Kensington and Chelsea council began to sponsor the carnival – with small loans – and the early period was characterised by an emphasis on West Indian culture, but in the context of a liberal, and not exclusively black, coalition emerging in the area.[120] Throughout the early seventies the carnival expanded, with the increasing participation of West Indian activists, who organised costume and band competitions, and an increasing flow of West Indians from throughout the London area into Notting Hill, for what was to become the most important cultural celebration for London's black community.

[116]Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 175, 278
[117] see LaRose, 1999;Gutzmore, 1993;Touch Magazine, July 1992:5
[118] One version of the contested origin of the Notting Hill Carnival, holds that it was a Polish school teacher, Mrs Laslett, who originated the idea for a cultural festival to represent the ethnic diversity of the area, not specifically Caribbean culture, although Trinidad was an early model.
[119] see Toni Morrison, Playing In The Dark.
[120] Phillips and Phillips, 1998: 276

In this context the carnival by the 1970s, had taken on something of the flavour of a black political demonstration, as policing of the event became more confrontational. The carnival of 1971 saw serious clashes between youth, black and white, and the police, establishing a grim pattern. Police would squeeze the crowds, in a pincer movement as night fell, with the apparent motive of clearing the area but the result of increasing hostility while blocking escape. It proved, time and again, a volatile tactic, becoming "a ritual battle".[121]

In 1975, under the control of Leslie Palmer, the carnival emphatically swung toward *Jamaican* popular culture, as Reggae music displaced the steel bands and African musicians of old as the most significant musical attraction, just as Jamaican Reggae itself was entering its most fruitful and militant phase. Palmer enlisted the support of local radio stations London and Capital to popularise the event and a crowd of half a million attended. The unexpectedly huge crowd, not all black, were poorly catered for in terms of amenities. The significance here is that not only was the popularity of Caribbean culture for youth of all races proven beyond doubt, but battle lines were drawn and furious attempts made – by local committees like the mainly Irish Golbourne 100 residents group, local police and politicians – to limit the spread of carnival in the future.

The next year Kensington and Chelsea council attempted, incredibly, to force the committee to stage the carnival at Stamford Bridge, the Chelsea Football ground[122]; this idea was only abandoned at the last minute due to safety concerns. In 1976 a force of 1600 police was assembled, many drawn from riot control squads and placed around Notting hill in patrols or parked in coaches down side streets in the heat waiting for trouble. The carnival was divided into six segments and passage between the sections was restricted. In the disturbances that followed, which saw police charge crowds with riot shields and batons, and the crowd charge back, 500 people were injured. Notting Hill Carnival was to be a focus of anxiety and confrontation for the rest of the decade with policing increasing each year (in 1979 10,000 police were deployed). One of the crucial aspects of this is the way in which Caribbean cultural expressions took an increasingly important role in articulating and expressing the building frustrations of the black community and black youth in particular.

[121] Gutzmore, 1993: 281

[122] In view of the reputation for racism of the Chelsea supporters this suggestion must have been greeted with some horror by Carnival organisers

The 1970s was a decade of confrontation, and of rising polarisation. Black Britons excluded as much from the sites of white working class leisure as they and the white working classes were absent by design from the concert halls, art galleries, lectures, soirees and regattas of British middle class leisure. It is a time when even the educated aspirational black middle class, if such a fraction could be said to exist, turned their back on assimilation (Hall et al, 1978), turned both 'inward' – to other 'blacks in Britain' who they might otherwise have shunned, and 'outward' to America, Jamaica, Africa, the nodes of the Black Atlantic consciousness. Either way, it was away from 'official' British 'culture' and its tepid pleasures, long denied. London-born journalist and author Mike Phillips: "Sometimes...I hear a golden oldie on the radio or the television and it's like a gap in my memory. I don't recognise it, or I've never heard of the band, and [my friend] would say 'how come you never heard of it they were big in the seventies?' Right there is your answer because, for most of that decade I didn't hear most of the white bands, even by accident, which was a consequence of where I was and what I was doing, because I only ever heard the music of Jamaica or perhaps the USA. And that went on for a long time starting with Desmond Dekker."[123]

Reggae became a vital vehicle of protest, affirmation and cultural cohesion during the period between its invention in 1968 and the death of Bob Marley in 1981. Reggae became the rallying cry to a new international black identity, and through its social form in the sound system the predominant form of black leisure. But it was not the end point of black British identity. Reggae allegiance as well as inherent criminality was assumed to be another inherent feature of blackness. Reggae was not a youth subculture, in the sense that punk was, but a cultural continuum, dominated by the older 'big men' who ran the sound systems and the complex and frequently violent politics of turf and respect which characterised both its Jamaican origins (Bradley, 2000) and its British urban manifestations (Gilroy, 1987). It was not a free space for teens, but a sophisticated cross-generational hierarchy.

While Reggae provided crucial resources for British black youth it also imposed limitations, a hegemonic Jamaican identity did not serve everyone, not all black youth were Rastas. Therefore this is also the period of a search for other forms of black sociability which were not so confined solely by Jamaican aesthetics, or which better reflected the hybrid multi-cultural life worlds of London's black youth. This is the inter-culture that emerged in the mixed spaces of London, the street, housing estate, club and the school.

[123] Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 263

## The Multi-Cultural playground

One origin of the social networks of multi-cultural London of the 1980s, of the alliances amongst black children and the cross racial alliances and networks which support the cultural activity of the 1980s and 1990s, is the comprehensive schools of the 1970s and early 1980s. These schools were already suffering from the exhaustion of the comprehensive dream laid down in the 1944 Education act, they were routinely under-resourced, often dangerous and riven by the same racialised conflicts that structured the streets and communities beyond. But it is in these schools – like Pimlico school, Holland Park School, Archbishop Tennyson, Dick Shepherd, Elliot, and the faded grammars like Central Foundation in Hackney – that white, black and Asian children mixed, made friends, fought, and learned how to function in a multi-racial society, learned how, in Bill Schwarz's terms, to be post-colonial. Black children were ill-served by this school system as a group[124] but in the classroom, the playground and the social networks which develop out of them, black youth and their music and style, took a prominent role. Darcus Howe suggests something of the novelty of this mix: "the power of West Indian spontaneity and English caution has produced a generation of ... children who are quite remarkable in the way they approach things."[125]

Just because schools were racially mixed it did not necessarily mean they mixed well. The tensions of heterogeneity were palpable and powerful. Even where friendships across the colour line were possible they often did not last beyond the early years or sustain beyond the school gate. Alliances were often temporary and tenuous, at best there was a kind of truce in the race 'war' raging outside, at worst schools were battlefields in that war. Often the multi-groupings of the schoolyard were merely congregations of pre-existing cliques 'being-aside' not 'being-with' each other (Bauman, 1995). But these were also the places from which strong, flexible multi-cultural relationships emerged.

Popular music, because it figures so large in young people's lives, was a particular cultural bridge, which in the context of the times took on additional, often political meanings. Musical taste took on meanings beyond 'aesthetic' choices – your musical taste here, could get you beaten up, or accepted. In an environment cross cut by racial antagonism – the rise of the populist racism of the NF and second wave skinheads –

[124] Runnymede Trust, 1980, Solomos 1988
[125] Darcus Howe cited in Phillips and Phillips, 1999: 393

music, at school, becomes an important site of political identification, for sharing meanings and making new ones.

The 'dominant aesthetic' of the multi-cultural London playground in the 1970s, was, arguably, one drawn from the Afro-Caribbean and black America – soul and Reggae. White working class youth adopted the style of the skinhead (mkII) or the soul boy (or *casual*), both in their own ways white adaptations of black cultural forms. The prestige of black youth in the schoolyard was a crucial component in attracting white youth to black cultural forms.[126] For many white youth the comprehensive school was the first time they were in social contact with black people. Many of them carried with them the ideologies of the 'criminal black youth', the vicious black mugger, 'or the tough street corner man'. One informant, who grew up in a working class area of south London, describes how the black boys he saw at school appeared to him, "they looked like they could handle themselves in a fight, they seemed cool and they seemed to be together."[127]

Conversely he politicisation of some white youth through exposure to the forms of over-policing experienced by all black youth in the 1970s and their desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with black friends in the light of Sus the SPGs and the rise of populist racism, was another factor pushing black and white together in cultural alliances around music and dance – particularly in the anti-racist organisations like the Anti Nazi League and Rock Against Racism[128]. Black music, in the light of this, was chosen by many of the white youth as a way of identifying themselves as anti-racist, although in such contexts the use of black cultural styles, language and products, the participation of whites in the trans-racial spaces of black expressive culture was "dependent on peer approval".[129]

Black students who were not best served by the educational institutions found ways to use the schools to establish their own cultural authority, and make some money. Although relatively uninterested in most of his lessons, Jazzie B paid attention in woodwork where he built the speakers for his new sound system.[130] Norman J used his musical knowledge and record collection as a form of 'currency', with which to

[126] see Back, 1996, Hewitt, 1988
[127] This is even more pronounced in Jean Paul Flintoff's novel about Holland Park Comprehensive 'Comp: A Survivor's Tale' (1991) where he describes the black boys in his class as "tougher, harder, stronger, cooler", and his own feelings of anxiety as a white middle class boy thrown into contact with them.
[128] Widgery, *Beating Time* 1988
[129] Back, 1996: 211
[130] Jazzie B in Phillips and Phillips 1999: 318-9

build affiliations outside the autonomous circuits of black expressive culture. At his school there was a music classroom that had one old turntable in it. He began bringing in his records to play at lunchtime. A kind of exchange economy emerged – "all the kids who used to bunk off music to play football started coming in at lunchtime. The white kids would bring in their Simon and Garfunkel records, and I'd bring in my Marvin Gaye and Reggae records. Soon it turned in to a disco session."[131]

Trevor got a scholarship to a grammar school, Central Foundation, where he was among a small group of black pupils, 3 in a class of 30. He prospered in the school environment, where he became used to be "a minority person in a white situation". A successful career as a record trader (a prelude to his DJ career) relied upon this ability to mediate between the colony and the 'white' culture beyond.[132] : "school was a perfect ground for me I would spend my dinner money on records and then sell them at school, make a bit of profit. I hustled."[133] Through these forms of exchange black and white children acquired multicultural capital, and networks developed which inverted the racial hierarchies of the widen culture of the city. Blacks retained priority in the hierarchies of the sound system and in the black music that was circulated through the networks of the hidden black sphere.

The comprehensive "dream" was of providing a standardised quality education to all: "Comprehensives were first introduced as the answer to an insidious system that divided children up by apparent ability before they were teenagers and consigned large sections of young people to a no-hope future."[134] Although they aimed at providing a consistent standard of education across the country, the actual standard of schooling, and the character of their democratic ideal on the ground varied widely and depended on the quality and commitment of the staff, available resources and the degree of commitment to this form of education on the part of middle class parents in the area.[135]

Social divisions that characterised the world beyond the school gates did not suddenly vanish inside comprehensives. "Class distinctions" (and I would add those

[131] Norman, interview
[132] "At school the kids would give me their Police Albums, Stranglers, Stiff Little Fingers, and I would give them Bob Marley, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Earth Wind and Fire." Trevor interview
[133] Trevor, interview
[134] Melissa Benn, 'Child of a Dream', Guardian, January 30th 2001
[135] I'm not suggesting having middle class pupils in the school, by definition made it better, but comprehensives aimed for a rich social mix, and if, as has happened in the late 1980s, middle class parents send their children to private schools, then the economic, social and cultural capital of these privileged groups is lost to the school, where it might otherwise help nurture the environment.

of race) "are not erased in the comprehensive school, if anything they become sharper."[136] The potential for humiliation in school is enormous and scary, standing out is to be avoided, excessive eagerness downplayed, skills in certain legitimated pastimes – sports, computer games, 'penny up', making jokes – can secure a safer passage. This is one of the logics of the quest to be cool which Sarah Thornton considers merely a matter of economically motivated distinction-making. To be cool in a big mixed inner city school may often mean deflecting the dangerous attention of bullies, finding ways of negotiating difference successfully – a lesson in democratic citizenship. In such contexts ideologies of difference and the ability to negotiate it are magnified *and* put to the test.

Within a mixed school environment common ground can be found amongst youth across difference. In a basic way white and black young people could find shared identity in being in the same form class or year, the same subordinate position to the school authorities, formal (head of year) and informal (bullies), and in shared extra-curricula activities, sport, clubs and school leisure – school journeys, discos. Many London schools had more than a thousand pupils. Finding your way in such circumstances, and in the context of the mixing of groups by class and race, was an intimidating proposition for every pupil. While there were immense tensions they also provided what Richard Sennett calls the "jolts ... necessary to a human being to give him that sense of tentativeness about his own beliefs which every civilised person must have."[137]

## Conclusion: the emergence of multicultural space

This chapter has used 'space' as a conceptual frame for analysing both discipline and resistance in London in the 1960s and 1970s. I have argued that in order to understand the novelty in content and form of the emergent black public sphere the necessary context was the emergence of racialising discourses of space, and the enactment of spatial discipline through specific strategies of power. In this perspective the multi-networks of sound system culture and the powerful articulations of black identity and political resistance they carry emerge as the one major site of new articulations of race, nation and belonging, which is, given London's porous, patchwork nature. The next chapter moves to the 1980s when these

[136] Benn, 2001, 3
[137] Sennett, 1992: 269

novel forms are articulated in new ways by a generation who had lived through the fraught racial politics of the 1970s.

## Chapter 5: Places & Spaces: Rare Groove, Warehouse Parties and Soul Sounds

"If you play the music of James Brown in a bank the total environment is changed. An energy is released in the bank, a summoning of images that takes the bank, and everybody in it, on a trip. That is they visit another place. A place where black people live." [1]

"...all the places and spaces I've been"[2]

The extreme racial polarisation achieved through the strategies which racialised space that I have described was reflected also in the forms of popular dance culture available to white and black youth. Reggae, though creolised in form, was a powerful articulator of black specificity. Sound systems relayed a more complex political philosophy than simple black essentialism, yet the evocation of 'roots and culture,' of 'Africa' and the white world as Babylon, was an ever-present narrative (this was rarely explicitly hostile to white people but it was expressive of a powerful discrete black identity). In this complex network Jamaican men dominated cultural production. Conversely, at the start of the 1980s the soul dance scenes of the period, while the music was predominantly Afro-American in origin, were largely operated by white working class men. Though there was a degree of race mixing on the soul dance floors, its multi-cultural meanings were confined within the practices and values of white working class leisure. The West End and Soho clubs of Central London, which had always hosted a degree of racial mixing along with its other forbidden pleasures, offered space for some soul, funk and even Reggae nights, but access to these clubs was still limited for black youth, by the racial surveillance of the streets, and the explicitly exclusionary practices of the club doorman. As Trevor put it "in those days it was hard enough getting into a club in the West End, let alone playing [i.e. DJing] there. Club owners wanted the music played, but not by the likes of us."[3]

But in the early 1980s a more obviously and self-consciously multicultural music and dance scene emerged in London – borrowing its form from the Reggae sound system, its content in part from the soul scenes (including Northern soul and jazz-funk) and using particular spatial tactics to circumvent the racialised strategies of both the club owners and the police. This scene was peopled largely by those who had grown up

[1] Baraka, 'The Changing Same (R&B and the new black music)' 1966/1980: 186
[2] Donald Byrd, Spaces and Places LP, 1975 BlueNote

within London's multicultural milieu. With the emergence of the Rare Groove genre and the development of the warehouse parties of 1983-88, a club culture coalesced in London with distinct and novel features. In place of the Reggae and contemporary (eighties) soul canon it had the music of 1970s Black American city (funk and Hip Hop) at its core and introduced a new form of "temporal dialogism" into club culture, a new relation between the musical past, funk, and the musical future, Hip Hop and its digital forms of composition and juxtaposition. This new network represented the combined cultural work of black and white Londoners and in its form and content it prefigured subsequent syncretic dance scenes. This chapter is focussed on the moment of the warehouse party and the emergence of Rare Groove.

It begins with a discussion of the relatively racially homogenous scenes which Rare Groove fused and transcended: the white soul scenes, and the black soul sound systems which emerged out of the Reggae networks of the 1970s. As concrete exemplars of a much bigger process I focus on the emergence of and co-operation between three particular promotion crews – *Family Function*, *Soul II Soul* and *Shake and Fingerpop* – and on two specific sites in the city where warehouse parties happened: the former dockland area of Southwark and Paddington Basin in the west. I describe the Rare Groove genre, and tie its constantly moving diasporic conditions of production together with the distinct spatiality of its form of consumption. The argument is that the fluid and mobile tactics of the warehouse party both mark it as a diasporic practice (although many white people were involved) and were specifically tailored toward and successful in thwarting the racialised power-geometry (Massey, 1995) of the recently post-colonial city.

## White Soul Scenes

The white soul scenes evolving from the Mods in the late 1960s to the 'soul boys' of the 1970s and early 1980s, had its own network of night clubs. This soul scene[4], which is really an overlapping series of scenes around the periphery of London, has its own diverse history (much of which is waiting to be told) and is heterogeneous. Yet there were general patterns. It was primarily a suburban phenomenon, dominated by a loose collective of white working class DJs known as the soul mafia,

[3] Trevor Nelson, 1994

[4] NB This is not the same as the 'Northern Soul scene, although there were multiple links. The main difference , apart from geography – Northern Soul's heartlands were in Manchester and Wigan – is the fact that Northern soul fetishises and insists upon playing music only from a very specific period of the

or soul patrol.[5] Nelson (1994) and La Rose (1999) both make mention of the 'soul mafia', a group of white DJs who were perceived to dominate the DJing at soul clubs and restrict the possibilities of black soul DJs: "We used to call them the white mafia, because they used to keep black music, especially the soul ... for themselves and would not allow any black DJs to come in."[6] It is not that the dedication to black music and culture of these DJs was anything less than sincere, but for many like John La Rose, the success of DJs like Steve Walsh, Froggy and Robbie Vincent was directly tied to the strategies of the media who wanted access to black music but blocked the reciprocal development of broadcast and DJ careers for black people.

Many of the soul DJs were from working class suburban areas outside of the metropolitan centre – especially Kent and Surrey – and despite a continuous soul presence in the West End – such as the club nights at the Lyceum in the Strand and The Embassy in Bond Street – the real soul heartland's were out of the centre. These scenes certainly hosted some degree of racial mixing[7]. Clubs such as *Tiffany's* in Wimbledon, *Cheeky Pete's* in Richmond, *Cat's Whiskers* in Streatham, *Bogarts* in South Harrow and *Bentleys* in Canning Town were popular with black as well as white youth drawn from residential areas on the same side of London as the club (although frequently many miles away). Young black and white people travelled a long way to attend these soul discos, from Wembley in the North West, to Richmond in the South West for soul nights at *Cheeky Pete's* , from the Walworth Road in the South East to the *Lyceum* on the Strand. Movement was in and out of the centre, or laterally across suburban space, but rarely crossing London, retaining a regional and local character. While the music was undeniably black and almost entirely American, racial 'authenticity' being a central value for the majority of soul DJs, and the crowd mixed, these clubs were almost exclusively run by groups of white promoters and DJs in collaboration with the owners of licensed venues.

The white middle classes were almost entirely absent from these spaces. "I never went to the soul clubs, *Cheeky Pete's, Cat's Whisker's, Sinatras*, I never contemplated going there it was totally out of my universe."[8] White middle class youth had access to a totally different form of sociability; "Our social life revolved around going to

late 1960s and early 1970s, whereas 'southern soul' scenes play contemporary soul music – even house. See Bob Jones, 1992, and footnote 67 of the previous chapter

[5] DJ Bob Jones, liner Notes to Stop and Listen Vol. 1 BBE. Records

[6] La Rose, 1999: 144

[8] Jamie D interview

people's houses when their parents were out and having house parties."[9] "I never went to soul clubs," says another informant, "I was too middle class for that. There were loads of soul clubs around but they were mainly white working class."[10] This was to be true for middle class white youth until a new form of leisure emerged that was in spaces not strongly coded with race or class meanings.

## End of 'Jamaican hegemony' in the Black public sphere

Despite the influence of Afro-Caribbean sound system culture and the strong association with Jamaican Reggae culture of a period which Gilroy has called one of 'Rasta hegemony' (1987), the predominance of Jamaica, as a signifier of 'blackness' and an organising aesthetic of black leisure in London, was, by 1980, abating. There was the declining black identification with Reggae that was partly a consequence of the global marketing of Reggae. Bob Marley's rise to global superstardom, orchestrated by Chris Blackwell's Island label, had the effect of undermining Marley's (and by extension Reggae's) ability to signify a discrete and rebellious blackness. Amongst some black youth in London, even by the end of the 1970s, by which time Marley had appeared several times on Top of The Pops and 'crossed over' into the American and UK pop market, Marley was already perceived as 'too white.'[11] Once white populations adopt black cultural forms, black youth will drop them.

1981 saw a confluence of events; Bob Marley's death from cancer, race riots on the streets of Britain's urban centres, and a 'revitalisation of soul' within the black public sphere of London. These processes are reflected in the changing nature of the sound system itself. From the late 1970s onwards some Sound Systems started to break the "unwritten rule"[12] that they must play only Jamaican Reggae.[13] While historically sound systems had played be-bop (Coxsone), jump blues and ska (Prince Buster), mixed Reggae with other Caribbean forms like Soca and Calypso (Count Suckle) and played a variety of other music like rhythm and blues and African hi-life, through the years of Jamaican hegemony in the black public sphere in London, the vast majority of sound systems were exclusively, and often militantly, Reggae only: 'strictly roots'.

[9] Dan B. interview
[10] Simon P. interview
[11] Femi William's, Interview,
[12] La Rose, 1999
[13] Here 'Reggae' included the genre of 'Lovers' Rock', an soul-Reggae innovation of London based Jamaican Dennis Bovell, the roots influenced Reggae produced in the UK – by Aswad, Steel Pulse, Pablo Gad among many others – and associated Caribbean forms like soca and calypso.

Reggae was the music of black cultural revolution in the UK and any deviation from its Jamaican Rastafarian aesthetic could be interpreted as a betrayal.

Michael La Rose' People's War sound system was, in 1975, one of the earliest to attempt to integrate other forms of music into the sound system play list; "we had to physically fight to keep that [broad music] policy ... there was a lot of competition and a lot of false nationalism and threats."[14] In the early 1980s a new British-born generation began to take over the controls acquiring or building their own systems, or inheriting them from brothers or uncles.[15] This generation were as influenced by American soul – via the soul clubs, pirate radio stations and second hand record markets – as they were by Caribbean music. The emergence of innovative and hard-edged Hip Hop in the early years of the eighties reinforced this shift away from the Jamaican 'roots' music. While Jamaica had its own version of 'gangsta rap' in the emergent 'dancehall' or 'ragga' style, which stimulated, paralleled and was influenced by Hip Hop in an extraordinary dialectic over the next decade, and most sound systems played it, there was also a marked broadening of the sound system play list. As a younger generation of 'selectors' (those who decide which record gets played) came through along with a younger audience, many sound systems became associated with playing music other than Reggae – among these new Hip Hop and electro sounds like Mastermind and Rappattack.

Although Reggae had been the single most powerful tool for the articulation of a resistant form of black British identity during the 1970s, reflecting in part the numerical supremacy of the Jamaican community but also drawing on Jamaica's rich traditions of musical protest and resistance[16], the hegemony of Jamaican versions of authentic black experience could limit access to sound system sociability. During the late 1970s it was normal for black London youth, no matter from where in the Caribbean their parents had migrated, to claim to be Jamaican – and adopt Jamaican linguistic forms (patios) and body techniques to prove it.[17] For some black African Londoners their distance from the presumed authenticity of Jamaican-ness led to ridicule or rebuke from Afro-Caribbean youth. One informant, a black Londoner of African descent, openly acknowledged Reggae's importance, that it was "conscious music" that started a "cultural revolution", but also said that he "looked on

[14] La Rose, 1999: 133
[15] see Les Back, 1996: chapter 8
[16] see Segal, 1995 for details of this tradition of resistance

Reggae as a West Indian, a Jamaican thing I was never against it, but I was never really in it. I was a soul boy." [18]

Jamaican hegemony had articulated a 'conscious' riposte to racism, exclusion and colonialism which, ironically, was the precondition for founding a black *British* culture; "*that* was the start of being grounded in England."[19] In Stuart Hall's terms Jamaican hegemony was the organising form of the first phase of black politics in Britain. But the 1980s opens up the possibility of "new ethnicities"[20] through the recognition of the heterogeneity of black experience and the formation of new group identities, within and beyond the black "community":

> The cultural and political histories of Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, and St Lucia, like the economic forces at work in generating their respective migrations to Europe, are widely dissimilar. Even if it were possible, let alone desirable, their synthesis into a single black British culture could never have been guaranteed by the effects of racism alone. Thus the role in external meanings around blackness, drawn in particular from black America, became important in the elaboration of a connective culture which drew these different 'national' groups together into a new pattern.[21]

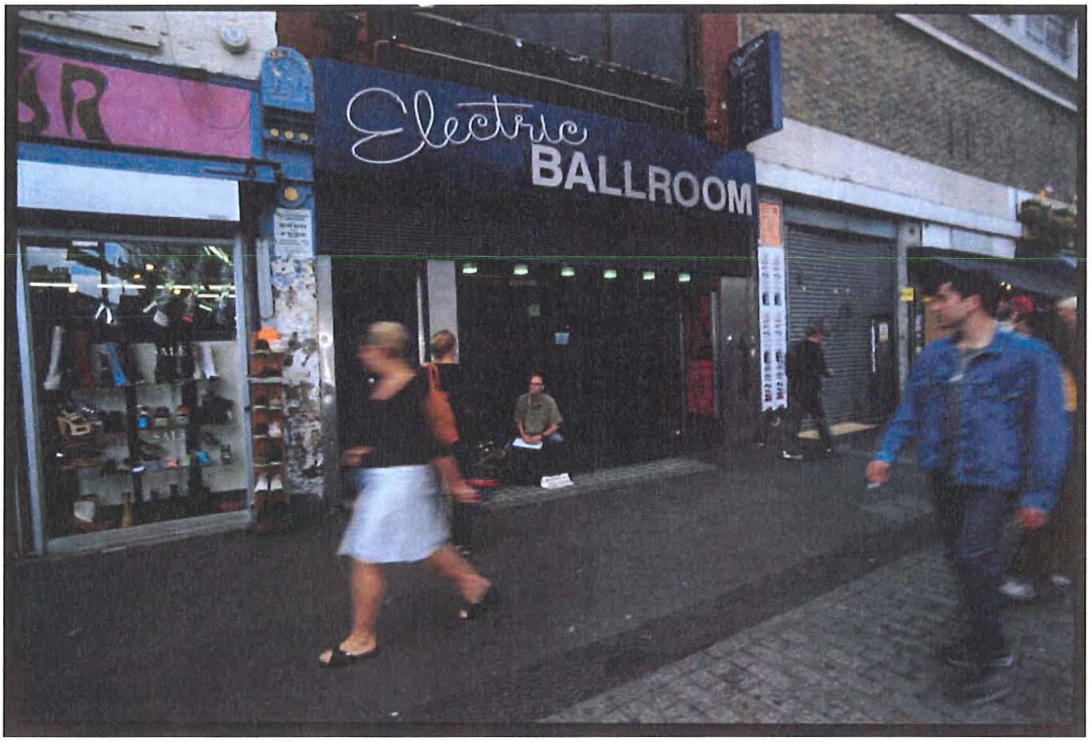
These new musical allegiances, based around soul and funk that was heavy with "meanings around blackness" (Vincent, 1995) helped develop new cultural networks across London, initially between the dispersed black communities in the North, South, East and West, and led also to the strategic alliances with white middle class club promoters and DJs during the Rare Groove period. These people began to open up the liminal space of the city.

**Electric Ballrooms – trans-local black soul**

For many black Londoners [22] "soul" cultures held out the promise of a mixed environment, on black terms, not subject to the reification of Jamaican culture. During the 1970s, with Reggae dominant, soul 'heads' were dependent on the

[17] "Everybody said 'I was born in Jamaica', even though they were Trinidadian, Grenadian, St Lucian. Everybody was born in Jamaica because to be Jamaican is to be hard, and if you were hard you could be in a sound system" La Rose, 1999: 134
[18] Femi W, interview
[19] La Rose, 1999: 132.
[20] Hall, 1988
[21] Gilroy, 1993: 82

networks of suburban soul, the pirate radio stations dotted around London's peripheries, and the all too brief 'soul' sessions offered by some sound system selectors.[23] That is before the development of the trans-local black club scene symbolised by one particular club night, the Jazzifunk Club at the *Electric Ballroom* in Camden Town. For many black Londoner's, after a decade of blues parties and Reggae dances this was 'the first *real* night-club"[24] they attended.




The Electric Ballroom, Camden (2001)

The *Electric ballroom* is on Chalk farm road in Camden Town, North London, next to the Grand Union Canal and opposite Camden Lock, the site of a lively weekend second hand market for over twenty years.[25] The *Electric Ballroom* has been a nightclub ever since the end of WWII and has been owned and operated continuously by the same man, Bill Fuller, through his company Castlerock properties. In 1940 the building next door was in use as a munitions factory. It was flattened in a bombing raid in 1940. When the war ended Fuller bought the derelict property and expanded his club, building a spacious new dance floor where the munitions factory had stood.

During this period a large proportion of Camden's population were migrant workers from Ireland. Soon after the war Fuller established his club with this audience in

[22] like Femi, Norman, Diane and Trevor
[23] "At Reggae dances I used to wait all night for some soul, ALL Night!" Trevor, interview
[24] Trevor, interview
[25] see McRobbie, 1989 :32

mind. The ballroom offered a space for these migrants many of whom worked in Camden's engineering and metal factories[26] to drink, socialise and to dance to the 'show bands' which the management hired in on short term contracts. The ballroom operated continuously through the 1950, 1960s and 1970s as the local demographics of Camden changed dramatically around it. A decline in manufacturing jobs[27] and Caribbean immigration displaced the Irish and introduced a new population, part of an ongoing process of the ethnic re-mapping of the city.

Meanwhile processes of gentrification began reclaiming dilapidated Victorian homes for a new white urban middle class. Camden market, serviced by the Northern Line of the London underground, which cuts North/South through central London, expanded as a youth hangout and small-retail haven, bringing a steady stream of young consumers.

In 1980 a young entrepreneur of Greek extraction, George Power, approached the management of the *Electric Ballroom*, whose traditional market among the Irish had dwindled. Power wanted to put a club night into the *Electric Ballroom*, featuring 'dance' music from Afro-America played, not by musicians, but by a DJ, a well-known figure on the black music scene Paul Anderson.[28] Power and Anderson opened the 'Jazzifunk club' in 1980, and continued every Friday night for five years. The music policy of the club mixed 1970s funk and soul with more contemporary 1980s soul and the new sounds emerging from New York; Hip Hop and Electro and early house. Although the crowd was actually racially mixed at this club night – upstairs in a second dance room white DJ Paul Murphy was playing jazz-dance – it has been described by many of my informants as a "black" club.[29]

> It was a black club in feel but it was really mixed and the people were from all over London, it really opened my eyes. [30]

[26] Peter Wood, 1978: 40
[27] see Porter 1994
[28] Anderson is known as 'Paul 'trouble' Anderson or just 'trouble'. Allegedly this stems from his days as 'a bit of a hooligan' (Anderson in private conversation, June 1996), an appellation he celebrates at his weekly club 'Troubles' House'. Anderson has been a Kiss FM radio DJ and a well known advocate of US Garage music (as opposed to UK or 'speed garage') since the late 1980s. He was not known as 'trouble' when he started DJing at the Electric Ballroom (Brian Wheeler, Manager of Electric Ballroom since 1981, interview July 24th 2000)
[29] Wheeler, interview 2000, Nelson interview, Dodge interview, Femi interview
[30] Trevor N., interview

Unlike the furtiveness imposed on those wishing to attend the often illegal events of the autonomous black public sphere like the blues party, who made sure not to draw attention to themselves to avoid surveillance, the Jazzifunk crowd freely self-confidently, occupied Camden High Street. In an open rejection of the unwritten rule that large congregations of black youth would attract the attention of the police, black youth here queued for the club outside, and flooded the streets on the way home symbolically laying claim to them:

> We would walk home. I remember coming out of there and the amount of black people from West London all streaming down to Trafalgar Square, it was mad, we walked there all the time, it was part of the night.[31]

> When I was younger we used to get the train to Electric Ballroom, and then get the night bus home. The journey home was as big as the club – we used to look forward to the journey home. [32]

At the time a very infrequent night bus service ran through London to and from Trafalgar square. With few cars, and no money for the expensive cab home, black youth from all over London would traipse through the central thoroughfares while the city was asleep. Black youth made the night time city their own through occupying space from which they were routinely excluded. Paul Gilroy (1987) sees in the practices of black expressive culture which make "the night time the right time" an implicit critique of the discipline of work. The route from Camden to Trafalgar square traverses the heart of London's commercial and entertainment district (Oxford Street, Soho) areas where black youth in the 1970s and 1980s were particularly vulnerable to police surveillance. By night, while the official city was dormant, the racial topology was temporarily remade: "You walked from the West end, all through the night, like ghosts, just these people walking." [33]

The Jazzifunk club became for the Rare Groove scene of the next period part of its founding mythology, the place it all started and the site of origin.[34] It was where a generation of young people first encountered the possibilities and techniques of sound system culture put in the service of a trans-local London scene, using trans-

[31] Femi W., Interview (from West London)
[32] Dodge, interview (from South London)
[33] La Rose, 1999: 135
[34] "This was our weekender, it was our hedonism, it was our Shoom. It was here that I really started wanting to be a DJ." Trevor, interview

Atlantic, hybrid Afro-diasporic music, for a racially diverse audience where nonetheless black style was absolutely central. For white youth – in particular the white middle class youth who had never been part of the various soul scenes – it provided the necessary competences in dance styles and musical knowledge, access to the rhythm memory banks of the diaspora, to begin to participate in the musical events of the black public sphere.

Networks and alliances that emerged from the Jazzifunk club were central to the new warehouse party scene of the mid-1980s. It was particularly significant as it proved not only that there were venues where black crowds were welcome but that these events could prosper and attract a racially mixed audience. However it was not to legitimate, licensed venues that promoters turned. Traditionally they had been short-changed and mistreated by West End venues, which if they were available could only be hired out for black events on Wednesday or Sunday[35]. The new trans-local network that emerged out of this licensed night-club in the next period moved into clandestine unknown spaces. The whole issue of surveillance and quotas, of trying to win acceptance in legitimate nightclub land, was circumnavigated by the creative reusing of unlicensed, "diverted" London space.

**Warehouse parties**

The term 'warehouse party' is in some ways self-explanatory. It identifies, on a simple level, a party which takes place neither in someone's home nor in a legitimate licensed night-club. London's warehouse parties need not take place in an actual 'warehouse' – some were in warehouses but others in de-commissioned cinemas, bus garages, clothing wholesalers, offices, railway arches. Abandoned or empty buildings of all kinds have been used for the purpose.

In London the use of unlicensed venues for parties is not a new phenomenon, nor an innovation of the mid 1980s. The practice has always suggested the behaviour of the deviant; a warehouse party, not subject to the rules and regulations imposed by the licensing regulations: fixed entry prices, the regulation of the 'door' by bouncers, restrictions of dress, behaviour and comportment, and limitations on the duration of the night imposed by licensing law. Therefore the warehouse party inevitably will be favoured by those who by dint of their difference – by race, class or proclivity – are excluded from or their presence is heavily mediated at, forms of 'legitimate' leisure.

There are two important traditions that come together in the warehouse parties of the 1980s. The first is that form of impromptu 'happening' that is associated with sixties psychedelia and the hippies. Britain's uniquely liberal squatting laws allowed thousands to find places to stay and to use throughout London. Artists in Britain, largely unsupported and in need of studio space have, at least since the 1960s, commandeered and occupied empty space where they can find it in warehouses, disused factories, and abandoned houses. Examples of this can be found, in different periods, in Brixton, Hoxton, Rotherhithe, Waterloo and other formally industrial areas. Inevitably such venues – squats, studios, derelict warehouses – were also used for social events, parties, performances, and exhibitions.

In the 1980s politically radical collectives, inspired by Situationist rhetoric and radical politics held 'event's in industrial space which drew on the illicit energy of punk, the political engagement of the by then defunct Rock against racism and Anti Nazi League movements (see Wigdery, 1989) and the aesthetics of Dada and Surrealism. Test department, one such collective who performed as a band, staged multi-media (music, art, politics, poetry) events at the almost derelict Roundhouse[36] in Chalk Farm, North London combining political poetry (from a miner, this was during the Miners strike 1984), musical performance (the industrial avant-garde music of Test Department) and a dance performers in 'Socialist Futurist Costume'.[37]The performance, partially funded by the Greater London Council, was repeated in vacant Railway Arches in Waterloo. The anarchic artist collective the Mutoid Waste Company, occupied a disused bus garage under the Westway in Paddington ('the Dome') in the early 1980s which they used as a studio for the construction of post-apocalyptic industrial art including a series of huge 'dinosaurs' mounted on the chassis of trucks. They used the dome for several art/performance warehouse parties in the mid 1980s.[38]

[35] See Nelson 1994

[36] The Roundhouse was built as a turning point for railway engines. In the 1960s and 1970s it was abandoned and became known as a music venue famous for hippie happenings, and performances by the likes of Bowie and Jimi Hendrix. In the 1980s it fell into disuse,. It has been restored as a performance space in the 1990s and recently hosted the successful De La Guardia show.

[37] C Rose, 1991; 18

[38] The Mutoid Waste Company collaborated with Afro-Caribbean sound systems, including Soul II Soul, on several warehouse parties. With the rise of 'rave' in the late 1980s they diversified into playing music themselves and organised a series of anarcho-raves in the late 1980s and 1990s. In the mid 1990s they relocated to Rimini in Italy. Julian, personal communication.

The other crucially important precursor of warehouse parties was the Afro-Caribbean sound system tradition. Music and dance provided the core of black expressive culture. The skills acquired 'stringing up' the sound – from negotiating door splits to balancing the levels and pacing the night to profitably selling drinks – enabled black London youth to be considerably ahead of the game in having the technological hardware, skills and business sense to innovate successful new forms of club culture (Nelson, 1994).

Warehouse parties turned empty disused industrial buildings into temporary night-clubs, using the sound system principle of 'stringing up', and the technological expertise and business acumen both of sound system veterans, and a new generation of white middle class entrepreneurs with whom they collaborated. Transcending the local politics of the Reggae sound system network and the suburban networks of soul, warehouse parities took place in the abandoned spaces of post-industrial London, and brought space that was 'fixed' and dead' back to life in a temporary but profound reordering of London's political geography. Warehouse parties were not explicitly political 'happenings'; they had no agenda other than offering continuous loud dance music through the night. They were, like the Reggae sound themselves, primarily a business, with overheads and bottom lines, and ambitious promoters seeking to accrue cultural and economic capital.

But warehouse parties had effects that were political. Warehouse parties were a reaction to the limitations of officially sanctioned leisure – in particular the quota system which mediated black attendance, and the music policies of the high street discothèques, – and to the localism of the sound system and soul scenes. Taking place in bleak, industrial 'nowheres' – the residue of Britain's once formidable trading and manufacturing muscle – warehouse parties were, to a degree, beyond the jurisdiction of locally enacted power – both formal, in the police, and the informal territorial power of neighbourhood or area gangs. In this space "diverted" temporarily from its official usage (Lefebvre, 1991), places made "spaces", to use de Certeau's distinction, because it is defined not by what it contains but by what passes through it (1984), a self-generated hybrid cultural economy emerged.

The warehouse party is an example of this "politics of making do" (de Certeau, 1984). For there to be a warehouse party there must already be empty buildings, owned by someone else, buildings designed for other purposes completely, which can be temporarily transformed into something else. The hustling skills required to find,

secure, promote and 'string up' a party are precisely those of de Certeau's tactician of everyday life "sly as a fox and twice as quick" (1984: 29). Warehouse promotion followed the model of the sound system division of labour. Each party was the result of the labour many different people – DJs and technical support took care of the sound and the music, a promoter would be in charge of logistics, providing toilets, lighting, 'visuals', buying drink, booking live bands. On the night workers would be hired in – doormen, someone to collect the money, bar staff. Every party was a collaboration, and in some cases, catering to audiences of several thousand, a large scale operation. But it was also chaotic and risky, without insurance, amenities or licence.

**Doing Warehouse parties**

In the hidden spheres of black leisure an informal information network existed through which information became available regarding empty space where the sound systems might play. Friendship, familial and local affiliations circulated the knowledge of when a property was to become available, or when someone was in need of the economic boost of a 'rent party'. Similar networks on a larger geographical scale sprang up in the mid 1980s parallel to and strengthened by the networks established through club attendance, listening to pirate radio, second hand record networks.

Holding a warehouse party often began with a 'sourcer' – an individual or team who specialised in finding venues. This was potentially rewarding. Once a 'sourcer' had located a venue they would 'offer' it to a sound system or a promotion crew. This could involve financial recompense, either a finders fee or, more usually, a piece of the action (door take). The south London based crew *Charlie Brown*, who later promoted warehouse parties in the late 1980s, started out as 'sourcers' finding venues for promotion crews Family Funktion, Shake and Fingerpop and Soul II Soul. This process relied upon the ingenuity and discretion of the sourcers, but it was made possible by cracks in the strategies of the powerful; the de-industrialising of the inner city (Porter, 1980), the patchwork localised strategies of policing and the inadequate securing of empty industrial space, the husk of a firm fallen victim to the economic recession of the 1980s. Dan B: "It was mid-recession when we were doing the parties, the highpoint of Thatcherism, just after the riots, with lots of empty business space ...'

The usual tactic was, once a building had been spotted, to kick the door down or sneak in. This was, of course illegal, but promoters did not consider themselves criminals, and they exercised careful judgement:

> If it was quite evidently somebody's space and they were utilising it we would leave – we had morals. If the space was empty and there was nothing happening with it – often it was up for sale – you'd have a look around and 'spec it up'. Physically think about how many people you could get in, my mind would go straight away to logistics – what loos have you got, how can you accommodate people, how do you get them in quickly, get them off the street quickly, how can you run it effectively. Because you know the police will turn up but they will be able to see that its being run fairly effectively so its not total mayhem[39]

Although illegal the practices of the warehouse party promoter are in fact the exact opposite of the burglar they would appear to resemble. The promoter breaks into a building not in order to empty it but to fill it up, to use the space which up 'til then had been "dead, fixed, undialectical".[40] The warehouse party disobeys the 'law of place', it creatively 'diverts space' by putting to use "existing space which has outlived its original purpose and become in a sense vacant." [41]

The three most prominent promotion crews associated with warehouse parties of this era were Family Funktion, Shake and Fingerpop and Soul II Soul. Each crew had its own parties and distinct audiences, drawn from local affiliation networks, but each also collaborated on large scale parties with the other two, and together, as promoters DJs and entrepreneurs they were largely responsible for the most memorable parties of the period.[42] Soul II Soul was operated by a group of friends clustered around Jazzie B, in the Finsbury Park area of North London. Jazzie B had been an enthusiastic Reggae fan but since inheriting the Soul II Soul sound from is older brother had started playing predominantly American soul and funk. The group cohesion of the Soul II Soul was symbolically referenced in the fact that everyone associated with the sound system adopted the 'funky dread' hairstyle (spiky

[39] Dan Benedict, interview
[40] Foucault, 1980
[41] Lefebvre, 1974:167.
[42] In many cases my informants wee unable to recall specific parties – all the warehouse parties they attended merged into one – and this was usually 'Bear Wharf' (see below). This confirms the point that the actual geographical location of the parties was relatively unimportant compared to what they contained – informants recall of the music played was frequently far clearer.

dreadlocks, cropped at the neck) and the 'Jazzie' moniker: Jazzie Q, Jazzie P, Jazzie B.

Shake and Fingerpop was a promotion team made up of DJ Norman and promoter Femi. Norman also ran the Good Times sound system with his brother Joey – a roots Reggae selector – but they used the Shake and Fingerpop name when promoting soul and funk parties. From Ealing in West London Norman had, by the mid 1980s, already acquired a very strong reputation as a DJ who discovered and 'broke' unheard music.

Family Funktion a group of North Londoners was different in a number of respects. Firstly the individuals who made up Family Funktion were white middle class Londoners, the core of which had met at the North London public school University College School. Unlike Soul II Soul and Shake and Fingerpop they had no relation to the Reggae sound system networks. Their attraction to Afro-American soul and funk had happened primarily via pop music – the neo-funk of Heaven 17 and neo-soul of Dexy's Midnight Runners drew them towards black American musical form. It was from the sound system tradition however, once they had made the necessary connections, that they learnt the basics of party promotion and that they assimilated the musical knowledge required to run successful parties. Unlike the black crews who owned and maintained their own sound system hardware Family Funktion never owned their own gear, but hired in sound equipment for each party. Without a sound system of their own they would have had no hope of making it in the competitive sound system networks where you were judged partly on the size, power and sound quality of your own 'set'.

But in the warehouse party world, as long as you had access to someone else's powerful system and a small network of hire shops were available for this purpose the more crucial skill was the ability to find suitable venues. The involvement of this group of white middle class public school boys in the warehouse party process brought another spatial 'tactic' to the fore. Through school contacts who had gone into lucrative commercial estate agency warehouse crews were able to obtain on occasion confidential information about empty commercial properties, and even the keys to such properties. Some of Family Functions best sourcers were Estate Agents.

## Finding the party

London Warehouse Parties and Rare Groove clubs, 1983-89 (red dots– parties, green dots- licensed clubs)

Warehouse parties were held all over London in industrial locations that, by the mid 1980's had fallen into disuse. If you were to refer to the London Street Atlas (the A to Z) the main areas where warehouse parties were held stand out because they are blank. In the A-Z colour scheme residential areas are shaded a light pink, parks are green, major roads are yellow. These sites, the locations for dozens of illicit warehouse parties, are, like waste land, former industrial space and other 'empty' sites, uncoloured, whited-out, defined by what they border not what they contain. The map shows them to have been dead spaces, ripe for diversion, almost as if they have "escaped notice by the mapmakers..."[43]

An example was Paddington basin. This large area of waste ground in West London bordered by Praed Street and the station itself to the South, and the 1950s A40 flyover, (the Westway) to the North, is the dead space at the meeting point of three generations of transportation networks. The late 18th century Grand Union Canal[44], the first efficient form of heavy goods transportation, crosses by the mid 19th century railway tracks which link London to the West and under the A40, the late 20th century route of mass transit which takes you to Heathrow Airport and is among the

[43] Hakim Bey, 1995, TAZ: 103
[44] The first Canal in Britain was built in the 1760s.

world's most heavily trafficked roads. Warehouse parties were held in buildings all over the basin between 1984 and 87.


Original flyer for 'Subway' warehouse party, front and back

Another was 'Bankside', a former industrial site by the river Thames in Southwark. Bear Gardens is a tiny street that runs for one short block between Park Street and the South Bank of the river Thames, just West of Southwark Bridge. There is no sign of a garden. It is in the borough of Southwark, the oldest settled part of London[45] pre-dating even the Roman settlement on the site of the City of London. This part of Southwark was an important part of London's dockland infrastructure until the terminal decline of the London docks. Gilles Gilbert Scott's monumental Bankside Power Station is just to the West (now the Tate Modern), a symbol of industrial might and confidence, become by the 1980s, after decades or dormancy, a symbol of terminal decline, de-industrialisation and neglect. At the end of Bear Gardens, where

[45] Permanent Exhibition, Museum of London

it abuts the Thames, 'the jugular vein of empire'[46], is a 1950s storage warehouse: Bear Wharf.

**'Bear Wharf'**

In summer 1986, Family Funktion and Shake and Fingerpop were alerted by sourcers to the fact that there was an empty building on the river, ideal for a party. They went down to take a look. Although they were opportunistic and reliant on using space they could find, there were aesthetic considerations too. Bear Wharf, without even a road between the building and the river, with a view of St Paul's Cathedral, was ideal. The building was empty, long since unused as a warehouse, filthy, unlit and dangerous, Dickensian in its squalor and desolation.[47] But it was in a location with no residents, hidden from the main roads, off official maps of containment or surveillance.

The promoters hired portaloos and lighting, signed contracts and paid with 'company' cheques the legitimate firms who 'happily' provided the equipment, no questions asked. As was usual with warehouse parties there was a two week lead up time – an extremely short amount of time to organise and promote such a big affair to which thousands were expected – and a clue to the efficiency of the information networks which publicised then event. The flyers held the bare minimum of details; where, when with a small map, and the names of the promoters. With no mention of music genre, or DJ name, it was solely the reputation of the promotion crews which 'sold' the event.

By midnight a substantial crowd had gathered, the promoters estimate 1500 people, and, in the cavernous, barely lit, dank and dusty warehouse, the crowd danced to the sounds of the black diaspora – James brown and Manu Dibango, Dr Funkenstein and Dr Donald Byrd, Marva Whitney, Lyn Collins, Eddie Bo, Grandmaster Flash and Curtis Blow, Chuck Brown and the Soul Searchers, jazz-funk and funky-jazz, soul and go-go, Hip Hop, electro, salsoul, disco, and boogaloo. Warm weather and no sign of the police meant that at dawn the dancing crowds could go up to the roof and watch the sun come up over St Paul's. Bear Wharf became, for many, the emblematic warehouse party – symbolic of what could be achieved in the heart of the city through informal self-generated network capacity. For many of my informants all memories of warehouse parties collapsed into memories of Bear Wharf.

[46] Gilroy City Intro, 2001
[47] "what I remember is pigeon shit." Femi

As was the ethos of the warehouse party the music was played until the last person left the party. Going till 7 o'clock in the morning was, in relation to the rigid licensing laws that were in place in this period, unprecedented. At the time British pubs closed at 11 o'clock. This had always been one of the factors that has driven British club culture , a club, either a members bar[48] or an illicit space, is a place to drink 'after hours'. Late night clubs in central London have operated for decades, and Afro-Caribbean cultural events and blues parties often do not start until midnight and frequently go on all night. But Bear Wharf was still, in a sense, unprecedented. To have such a large mixed group of young people, in the heart of London in an illegal venue, able to dance on the roof – and this at the height of Thatcher's "authoritarian populist" regime (Hall, 1988), seemed to the attendees "miraculous" (Simon).

The sound transformed dead place into live space, filled it with dancing bodies and with music whose lyrics, form and "distinctive social relations of consumption" (Gilroy, 1987: 210) embodied important 'messages' from the African Diaspora – "strategies for survival"?[49] – which not only nurtured Black British Diasporic sensibilities, but, through the "affection and intimacy ... created in collective rituals" like dance, bound black and white Londoners into 'affective alliances."[50]

The particular spatial tactics of the warehouse party promoters clearly surprised the police, who appeared neither sure when these parties were taking place, nor willing to shut them down once a substantial crowd had gathered. The fact that these parties were being held in hidden space outside of the formal local strategies of London police forces (Keith, 1993) and that they brought together young black and white youth in collaboration posed problems for police in terms of how to respond.[51] One particular instance from New Year's Eve 1996 illustrates the way in which police discretion in the case of warehouse parties operated differently than it did in relation to Sus, a difference marked racially.

[48] many night clubs have exploited loop holes in the legislation by offering 'free membership' on payment of the entrance fee, or handing out flyers which double as membership cards.
[49] see I Chambers, 1976
[50] see Grossberg, [1984] 1997 in K Gelder and S Thornton, 1997: 477-94
[51] "When the police would come [to a warehouse party] they would see enough white faces not to freak out. At the time the police would come along to assess and, nine times out of ten, Dan and Jules would do the middle class number on them. They knew, the police, that it wasn't a real problem, especially as they were so hidden, you know in some industrial scenario, it's a case of the old bill thinking 'what's the point'" Femi, Interview

**'New Years Eve By the riverside'**

For New Years Eve 1986 Family Funktion and Shake and Fingerpop planned a party to be held in the former corporate headquarters of Beefeater Gin, in a now empty office block at Bell Wharf on the North Bank of the river by Southwark Bridge. The Flyer proclaimed 'New Years Eve at the Riverside', had directions from bank tube station and carried the legend 'with Mr Magic's house of fun.' The promoter later admitted that this was meaningless, but typical of the kind of thing he would put on flyers to fill space.


Original flyer for New Years eve warehouse party, moved from the marked venue on the day

At about four in the afternoon, as the promoters were preparing the venue, The City of London Police, in whose jurisdiction the party was to be held, arrived in full riot gear. A police constable informed the promoter that the party would not be allowed to take place. He told the policeman that there were a lot of people expected. After a few moments thought the policeman pointed over Southwark bridge towards an empty office block on the south side (Riverside House, next door to Bear Wharf). "You can't have the in the City of London," said the policeman, "but over the river is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police. Why not do it there?" The party was hastily rearranged.

Riverside House eventual location of the New Year's Eve at the river warehouse party (2001)

Riverside House is a five-story office block in the brutalist style popular in the 1960s. Inside the building the signs of its recent commercial use remained: office partitions, desks, chairs and other ephemera lay around the (soon to be) dance floor. The 'still warm' feel of the building contributed to the thrill for the party-goers, who commandeered the space of the functionalist office: "I just remember that everyone was off exploring rooms, that was one of the mad things you could do at warehouse parties. At your own peril you could stray down corridors..."[52] Symbolically, at least, the values of that 'work' 'place' were questioned, laughed at, defeated. *New Year's Eve By The Riverside* attracted a crowd of over five hundred people. The Metropolitan police, into whose jurisdiction the party had been moved, showed up sometime after midnight but, with the party in full swing, did not attempt to stop it. [53]

At midnight the DJ (my informant Norman) counted down the last ten seconds of 1986, and then played the record that had become the 'anthem' of the warehouse party scene, the James Brown produced funk tune 'Cross The Tracks (we better go

[52] Simon, Interview.

[53] "The police were always reactive, not proactive. The main thing is," he claims, "that usually the police never found out about our gigs until they were already happening." Dan. interview

back)' by Maceo and the Macks (1975).[54] This track encapsulates the racialisation of space and the spatialisation of power which consigns the 'other' to the impoverished margins[55], through the image of the tracks. Over a 'fat' James Brown produced breakbeat and bassline, the male group vocal 'cross the tracks', which references the spatial segregations of American racial politics was counter-poised with a single female voice saying 'I never cross the tracks baby 'cos I know what it's like'. Whether the 'we better go back' subtitle was a call to leave the ghetto – 'cross the tracks, to the right side of town, and 'move on up' – or a sly dig at black middle class values, where the funk stands for authentic abject blackness in a call to Afro-Americans not to turn their back on the ghetto, is not entirely clear, probably both themes are at work. The tune never resolves itself into an easily readable formula in terms of its narrative. Yet rhythmically it was readable, accessible to all, which kept the entire crowd moving.

It is important to set the reaction of police to warehouse parties in the context of the relations between black sound systems and the police, I have already discussed. Warehouse parties can be read as a specific response, on the part of black sound system operators to systematic over-policing. Many techniques of evasion, ruses and tricks (de Certeau, 1984) characterised the practices of arranging everyday (but usually Saturday) nightlife. These could range from demonstrating that the venues were secure and well managed – portaloos! – to selling tickets for events in vans parked away from the actual venue (thus circumventing the need for an entertainment licence), and claiming that the party was 'private' (ie that the crowd were not being charged). It is unlikely in many of these circumstances that the police 'believed' such stories, promoters had the sense that the there was no overall strategy of containment for such events (this would come later), and if ground level PCs could be persuaded that the party 'appeared' legitimate then no further action would be taken:

> It seemed to me that they had a no policy at the time, because it was such a new thing, they would come along and assess, and it wouldn't be a hierarchy decision, this is just the guys on the street who come along and say there's nothing really happening here, there's no trouble.[56]

[54] Maceo Parker was James Brown's lead tenor sax player, a founder member and hugely influential figure on Brown's backing band The JBs. He recorded several albums produced by Brown under a number of different names, Maceo and the Macks, Maceo and the Kings Men, The Horny Horns. See Vincent 1996: 72-76, Neal, 1998, Brackett 1995

[55] "We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town" bell hooks, 1984: ix

[56] Femi, interview

The location of the warehouse parties themselves and the knowledge networks that sustained them make up a "clandestine cartography" of the city, which successfully evaded power. Warehouse promoters, for all their desire to make a living, relished the hidden nature of their underground networks, imagining that it was precisely this that allowed the relative freedom and self determination within the warehouse party,[57] just as it was the precondition of membership of knowledge networks based around the valuing of non-commercial, non-pop music which granted the DJs the freedom to play music that the crowd had never heard before, and that they had been unable to play elsewhere.

Tim Cresswell (1996) proposes that specific forms of transgression can be claimed for activity which makes use of sites of 'power' (fixed 'places' in de Certeau's sense, with single 'meanings' and rationalised codes of access), at unusual times – particularly 'the night-time' when the building is 'asleep'. Such activities 'restore spaces to ambiguity' (Lefebvre, 1974) and cut across stubborn borders of inside/outside with 'other trajectories': here not just the trajectories of each participant in the warehouse party (the multiple journeys through blues parties and sound systems, soul clubs or 'art happenings'), but the trajectory of the African Diaspora relayed by the music. The diasporic dance floor, as I have argued, was not a destination in itself but a collective journey around the diaspora.

## Interpreting the spatial practice of warehouse parties

In his speculative but suggestive argument about the resistant possibilities sedimented in the practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau (1984) provides a useful formulation for thinking through the practice of 'warehouse parties', or the "practice of [every]night life". He makes a distinction between 'strategies' and tactics' the former the preserve of power, of institutions, and the latter the mode of everyday resistance. 'Strategy' is that which characterises the planning, techniques and effects of "political, economic and scientific rationality," the method by which "a subject of will and power ... can be isolated from an "environment"(xix). Strategies, he argues, "assume a place which can be circumscribed as the proper (propre)", and is involved in the enforcing of norms (proper behaviour) according to the requirements of systems, structures and the needs of power. In this way strategies correspond to what Foucault has called "technics of space" (1977).

[57] "The difference with the warehouse is that you were free – from bouncers, dress codes – to do whatever you wanted in there, it was a good feeling, you stayed until whenever, till the sun comes up".

I have outlined the strategies of institutional power which led to the development of the black inner city, the forms of policing and surveillance which constructed black confinement and limitation on urban movement, and the forms of political-economic rationality, and 'market logics', behind the recession of the 1980s and the processes of 'urban renewal' and re-development of property in the city which lead to the 'fixing' of the meaning and function of an area (e.g. Docklands). As Foucault argues, "One of the primary objects of discipline is to fix ... it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion."[58]

By contrast de Certeau introduces the notion of a "tactic" – always of "the weak" and of "the other" – the tactic is not granted a constitutive status, it has to "make do" with what it finds (is given) and "whatever it wins it does not keep."[59] Nevertheless the tactic "because it does not have [proper] place" depends on time, and on opportunities afforded it by temporary lapses in the strategies of the strong. Thus "tactics" productively involves a notion of the inter-relation between the spatial and the temporal: space-time.[60] "A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over entirely ..." is continually on the look-out for "propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements."[61] Thus, in this politics of the everyday, even acts of consumption can be imagined to be "productive", a "productivity through use". Sound systems and the cultures around them were the tactical response of London' black community: warehouse parties the tactical response of an emergent multicultural production network.

De Certeau differentiates between "place" and "space". In place he argues, the laws of the proper rule (117), place implies a configuration of positions, a rational economy which fixes sites with single meaning: "it thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location." This is counterposed by a concept of "space" which, over fixity, emphasises movement (which implicitly destabilises the fixity of power): Space is composed of "intersections of mobile elements", it exists "when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables", it the effect "produced by the operations which orientate it, situate it, temporialise it" it has none of the "univocity or stability of a "proper". In his justly famous invocation of the

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Roger, interview
[58] M Foucault 'panopticism' 1977/1984 in P Rabinow 1984: 207
[59] de Certeau 1984: xix
[60] This is an idea drawn from the work of Doreen Massey.
[61] de Certeau, op cit: xix

resistant practices of the walker, the users of the rationalised structured city, de Certeau employs the trope of "trajectory" (embodied in this space-as-movement schema) to suggest how "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (117), who "insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order" (105) in acts of "everyday" but nevertheless significant resistance.

Thus "space is practised place": the "place" – corporate headquarters with its particular hierarchies and qualities of "tempered togetherness" is transformed through rhythm and motion into the manifest togetherness of the dance floor. The city is for de Certeau pre-eminently a place of "contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power" (1984: 95). In this sense "movement", and the right to transgress the "laws of the proper" (the racialisation of space, segregation) with "other" trajectories, take on an even higher value in relation to those (race, class and gender) populations whose movements are circumscribed, limited and scrutinised.

**The Warehouse Soundscape: Rare Groove**

> You'd be driving round these dark industrial areas that you'd never been to, Waterloo or Kings cross, and it would be pure mashed-up buildings. Then you would wind down the windows, turn off the engine, and listen for the pulse...[62]

Warehouse parties were illegal ad hoc events, held in areas unknown to most of the people who went there, subject to cancellation or police raid, sound system failure or building-clearing fire. They were risky and unpredictable[63], and those who paid their money to get in were partying without guarantees. Unlike going to the local pub, or night-club, or even one 'uptown', the very act of finding a warehouse party could be a difficult process, described most often by my informants as "an adventure".[64] What drew people to warehouse parties was not location, or advertising in the usual sense, but particular forms of subcultural affiliation, primarily to music.

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[62] Roger, Interview

[63] "Going to those venues where you were never sure what was going to happen". Jaime interview

[64] Although these were the sites of play and pleasure for urban youth there was often nothing that pleasurable about the surroundings. One attendee to The Hole in the Wall parties remembers the moment at which he decided to leave; "I tried to light a match but it wouldn't catch. I realised that there wasn't enough oxygen in the building – with all the people and no ventilation, it was dangerous." Norman Rosenberg, personal communication, August, 2000

The warehouse parties took place in abandoned factories, offices, industrial warehouses and cinemas, with up to 1000 attendees, often under the noses of the police. Although musically these events were diverse, featuring Hip Hop, 1980s 'soul', even Reggae, it was the Rare Groove sound of 1970s Afro-American funk , ideally suited to the 'valve' amplification technology of the sound systems, which was most associated with warehouse parties.

**Genre: Rare Groove**

Music scenes are sites of temporal dialogism (Olsen, 1998), different conceptions of the past and the future and the present are brought together, in tension, within discrete formations. What then is the specific temporality, or temporalities of Rare Groove?

Rare Groove is a music scene that is based almost entirely on music recorded at least a decade previously it is a term retroactively attached to certain recordings of the late 1960s and 1970s, records which when made would have been considered 'soul' 'rhythm and blues' of 'jazz'. The term does not appear anywhere, in black American music of the 1970s. The 'groove' refers to particular form of soul-funk rhythm that features heavy emphasis on the drums and bass guitar, and though the predominant rhythm is a basic four-four, the beat is accented on the first and third beats of the bar. This breakbeat pattern was most highly developed by a generation of jazz and funk drummers often from the American South especially New Orleans (e.g. Idris Mohammed, Bernard Purdie, John 'Jabo' Starks), and epitomised in the early 1970s recordings of James Brown.

It was the emergence of Hip Hop which first stimulated interest in Rare Groove. With the huge popularity of the first Hip Hop release 'Rapper's Delight' in 1979 and then Grandmaster Flashes' 'The Message' in 1982, a new generation of British kids began break dancing rapping and aspiring to DJ like Africa Bambaata. Hip Hop, not perceived as the ethnic property of Afro-Caribbeans because it came from America via record companies and the mass media, proved attractive both to black and white British youth and provided a common language and cultural bridge for the formation of a multi-cultural club scene. Perhaps the most significant impact of Hip Hop was the way it was constructed – out of sampled pieces of older recordings (confirming the open and unfinished nature of black music commodities). Hip Hop stimulated a

massive interest in the collecting of records, specifically the soul, funk and jazz records which contained the precious 'breaks' which were being sampled by Hip Hop producers like Grandmaster Flash, Africa Bambaata and Marley Marl. While some 'beat freaks' were searching for records (diggin' the crates) which they could strip apart and reassemble on their decks or in their samplers, others began to realise the quality of many of these recordings in their own right, and a trend emerged for playing the original records (especially the highly valued 'rare' 45 rpm 7-inch singles) for a generation of dancers who had never heard them.

Sampling and in time Rare Groove scene itself was dominated by the musical output and influence of one man: James Brown. Although a well-known figure and occasional chart topper in the UK James Brown had largely fallen from the public consciousness by the 1980s. Although some of his recordings were staples of the commercial disco – especially 'Sex Machine' – most of his 1970s catalogue was unreleased in the UK or unknown by the general audience. Rare Groove DJs painstaking unearthed a treasure trove of James Brown recordings. Not just those released under his own name but the hundreds of tracks he produced for his band members (Bobby Byrd, Vicki Anderson, Marva Whitney, Fred Wesley, Lyn Collins) and protégés many of which were released on his own King and People labels. Among the probably thirty Brown tracks which qualify as Rare Groove classics are Lynn Collin's womanist anthem 'Think', former Famous Flame Bobby Byrd's 'I Know You Got Soul', Marva Whitney's 'Mama Feelgood' and his own 'Don't Tell It', 'Get On The Goodfoot' and 'I got ants in my pants (and I need to dance)'.

Although there are numerous other musical heroes of Rare Groove Brown's influence is audible in almost every record. The sophisticated funky-jazz of Donald Byrd and Roy Ayers, while less earthy than the JBs, is indelibly stamped with the influence of the apylt monikered Soul Brother Number One; The 'swamp' funk of the New Orleans bands which were Rare Groove favourites – Chocolate Milk, The Meters, the Neville Brothers – is indebted to Brown rhythmic experiments, as are the hyperactive instrumental workouts of Eddie Bo/Chuck Carbo (which might be described as Hip Hop twenty years early[65]) and Hank Ballard. Even the 'strong women' anthems that were a feature of Rare Grooves' appeal – likethe Jackson sisters' 'I Believe in Miracles' to Gwen McRae's 'Giving All My Love' – bear the JB stamp, primarily through the regular-but-flexible punch of the drumbeats, set against the pulsing regular bass riff. Brown had drilled his own drummers – John 'Jabo' Starks and

Clyde Stubblefield (the original "funky drummer") – on the importance of the rhythm by insisting they stay 'on the one.' Stubblefield's masterful disquisition of the 'changing same' of the breakbeat on the track "Funky Drummer" may be the most sampled break in Hip Hop, but Rare Groove DJs played the record in its orgininal, and the dance floors usually heaved to it.

Within the American jazz of the 1960s 'funk' became a popular effect. Gritty rawer rhythms, associated with the American South New Orleans in particular, were 'revived' in the 1960s – a reaction to the intellectual, clean and distanced sounds of 1950s 'cool' – around the funky post-bop playing of musicians like guitarist Grant Green, pianist Horace Silver, alto-sax player Lou Donaldson and the battalion of Hammond organists Jimmy Smith, Charles Earland, Johnny Hammond, Richard 'Groove' Holmes and Brother Jack McDuff. All these players favoured a rhythm section that placed the emphasis on breakbeats played on the trap drum set, and incorporated into jazz the innovations taking place in popular music in the 1960s. The numerous cover versions of James Brown songs on the Prestige, Bluenote and Milestone releases of the period testify to this musical cross-fertilisation of the 1960s and 1970s. Even more self consciously avant garde jazz, following Miles Davis' groundbreaking 1969 sessions Bitches Brew and In a Silent Way, began to integrate funk stylings – popping bass and breakbeats. The jazz fusion which emerged in the early 1970s, in particular that made by former Davis sidemen like Herbie Hancock and his band The Headhunters', less 'raw' but as danceable as James Brown, was another important musical stream. The attempt was to reconnect jazz to 'the people' by re-injecting the earthiness of hard drum and bass rhythms you could dance to.

In terms of 'soul' music by the late 1960s the perky, upbeat melodically complex but rhythmically simple recordings which typify the mid 1960s Motown output gave way in the late 1960s and 1970s to a harder, cooler and more militant pulsing funk. Marvin Gaye's Vietnam 'concept' album 'What's Going On' (1969) was the auger of a new philosophy within soul – politically engaged, confrontational, funky. Figures like Curtis Mayfield, Ramsey Lewis, Roy Ayers and bands like Earth Wind and Fire (which emerged from the Chicago based Black Arts projects surrounding the band called The Pharaohs), Funkadelic (under the eccentrically brilliant leadership of George Clinton), Kool and The Gang, and Brass Construction melded jazz musicianship with the fundamentals of funky dance rhythm, and achieved sufficient commercial success at the time (jazz and soul purists frequently misread 'funk' as

[65] see Michael Odell, The Guardian 6/7/01

capitulation to commercialism) to record numerous records which, by the early 1980s in the UK were not highly valued, until the Rare Groove DJs got hold of them.

The other prominent drive within Rare Groove is that toward hybridisation. The late 1960s political scene in America, with the rise of both the Black Panthers and white counter-cultures, and the pan-racial protests against Vietnam, and then Nixon, produced and underpinned the success of inter-racial funk bands like Sly and The Family Stone, Funkadelic, The Headhunters, Blood Sweat and Tears, The Brecker Brothers, War and Sun (Vincent, 1996). Many 'white' bands of the era experimented with 'the funk' too, Chicago, Rare Earth, Foxy, the Herbie Mann band, Archie Fairweather, Kenny Rankin, Jose Feliciano and Britain's Brian Auger. Keen DJs searching for breakbeats unearthed funk breakbeats in surprising places that became favourites of the Rare Groove dance floor. While these experiments had largely been abandoned by the American recording industry by the mid 1970s, the information stored on the vinyl grooves remained, and could be recombined, sampled and amplified through the booming Reggae sound system replayed to an entirely new audience.

In addition to the racially integrated American groups, Rare Groove unearthed music from across the black Atlantic which incorporated funk motifs with other musical influences. Thus The Equals and Cymande, British bands made up of Afro-Caribbean musicians blending Reggae and funk, The Beginning of The End from The Bahamas, Puerto Rican pianist Eddie Palmieri's Afro-Cuban funk band Harlem River Drive, the Afro-beat of Nigerian Fela Kuti and the Afro-funk of Manu Dibango from Cameroon, and Mandrill a conglomerate from the Spanish and Anglo Caribbean, all featured on the Rare Groove play list.

The hybridisation of the bands, the Black Atlantic journeys described by their members and their musical mix was a side issue, of course, in terms of their 'use'. The major issue was their ability to make (at least one) good dance record that would satisfy the Rare Groove dancers who, as in all sound system cultures, are the final arbiters of value. While Rare Groove in many ways was the prototype of all future 'dance' cultures, introducing the concept of the DJ as the central figure in production, putting special premiums on the ability to acquire new (old) music and string it together into an integrated uninterrupted set, in this respect it remained much closer to Reggae culture than to subsequent rave scenes. It did not fetishise the DJ techniques of smooth mixing which derive from the innovators of disco culture

(Rietveld, 1998), nor did it place such a premium on what the DJ decided were the 'right' tunes. It retained the critical tension between the DJ – as a selector and presenter of the music – and the dance floor. If a DJ got too obscure, deviated too far from the rhythmic principles of funk, fluffed a segway or, conversing, was too predictable, the crowd could and would voice disapproval and, the final sanction, vote with their feet by quitting the dance area. The relations of taste and prestige, the direction the music would take across the long unrestricted hours of the warehouse party, was negotiated between DJ and crowd, was always, in the words of a Roni Size Jungle tune which samples and pays tribute to Rare Groove, 'Strictly Social.' [66]

The 'rare' in Rare Groove referred not only to the difficulty of obtaining the records – original 7" recordings, mint condition albums from the early 1970s, many US-only releases but brought to the UK along the paths of the Black Atlantic – but also referred to the rediscovery of musicians and records that had been less successful, and long forgotten. Figures like Terry Callier, who recorded three albums for the Chess label in 1972/3 but who, because of his musical eclecticism – combing blues and folk with funk – was poorly promoted by Chess and had returned to his job as a computer programmer by the early 1980s, were revivified and celebrated. Similarly Gil Scott Heron, a jazz poet who was incorporating funk riffs and jazz licks as early as his debut in 1971, and Lonnie Liston Smith, a jazz pianist who pioneered the Fender Rhodes electric piano, who were only ever a marginal figures in American popular music, were central in Rare Groove because of their funky, danceable and politically inspired recordings, particularly Heron's 'The Bottle' and Smith's 'Expansions'.

In terms of it's temporal dialogism Rare Groove was a retro genre, comprised of music from the past, but it was not nostalgic. It was a return to a past that none of the audience had experienced a kind of simularum of a genre of which there was no original (Baudrillard, 1985). It was not, like the second wave skinhead or Modism of the early 1980s a re-tread of a previous youth cultural movement. While it drew on black music which had a place in the continuum of black Atlantic musical forms, it was largely unfamiliar both to the white and black club goer: "Rare Groove was as exciting to black people growing up in London as it was to white people fascinated with black culture. It was new to all of us. It was multi-cultural, and it went across the Atlantic."[67] While DJs like Norman J had collected and collated this music

[66] On 'Return to Planet V', V recordings compilation, 1998.
[67] Simon, interview

throughout the 1970s, for most of the black audience the Rare Groove club was their first time of experiencing this music socially.

Rare Groove then was a process both of recovery and of discovery. The 'old', *the history of other places* – primarily 1976os and 1970s America, the age of Black Power and riots, of stylistic refusals, pimp rolls, gangster leans – was replayed in an entirely new context. Just as Hip Hop strip-mined seventies funk for breaks and samples, Rare Groove re-examined the music of one of the richest periods in recording history, for information, ideas and modes of being. In contrast to the glossy a-politicism of 1980s pop, Rare Groove offered forms of utopianism which were informed by a pragmatic anti-racist politics and an acknowledgement of the existence of racial inequality, especially as enacted spatially in the emblematic American ghetto.

A thematic dialectic between pleasure and pain, the desire to let yourself go and to remember the histories of inequality and suffering played at the heart of the Rare Groove canon. During a period of extreme social fragmentation, high unemployment, economic recession, the rise of populist nationalism that had been triggered by Margaret Thatcher's Falklands adventure, Rare Groove grounded the idea of a better tomorrow in a clear-eyed assessment of inequality – specifically racial inequality and the spatial politics of ghettoisation. Thus in the same DJ set apocalyptic narratives like 'Slipping Into Darkness' (Ramsey Lewis), 'Right On For The Darkness' (Curtis Mayfield) and Gil Scot Heron's chilling but funky narratives of drug and alcohol addiction 'Home Is Where The Hatred is'[68] and 'The Bottle', were juxtaposed with optimistic calls for pan-racial unity like Funkadelic's 'One Nation Under a Groove,' for self realisation and fulfilment like Charles Wright's 'Express Yourself', Lyn Collin's 'Think', and Rueben Wilson's 'Got To Get Your Own ('Cos They Sure Ain't Gonna Give You None), and statements about the binding transcendent qualities of music: 'Music is My Sanctuary' (Gary Bartz) and The Blackbyrd's 'Do It Fluid.'

Precisely the relation between the two most famous Rare Groove anthems – Maceo and The Mack's 'Cross The tracks' and The Jackson Sisters 'I Believe In Miracles' is that between an ironic commentary on the spatial politics of American segregation and a celebration of the utopian possibilities of music and dance. Maceo Parker's 1974 remake of James Brown's 'Soul Power' went as far as to lay Martin Luther King's

[68] It was Esther Phillips recording of this heart-wrenching diary of a drug addict (penned by Heron from his own experience) that proved the more popular with DJs and dancers.

'I have a dream' speech over the rhythm, together with a sample of a baby crying, symbolising the new life called into being by the power of music.

Of course Rare Groove, just like the black American music of the 1970s, never achieved the community it sought. The music was littered with interpellatory language 'The People', 'My People,' 'You', 'We', 'Let's': but if the 'you', of Penny Goodwin's 'Too Soon Your Old', or the 'we' of 'Pharaoh Sanders' 'We Got To Have Freedom', was not racially specific, it was a multi-cultural community that was imagined, the forcefulness of this repetition suggests that such a community was not in fact felt to exist – the music was trying to bring it into being. Here is a part of the explanation for the popularity of this music in two different slices of space-time – the public spheres of black America in the 1970s (Neal, 1999), and of the warehouse parties in the 1990s. Both are eras of social fragmentation and instability brought on by economic crisis and racial segregation. 'Race' riots were a recent experience for both groups, and the everyday operation of racialised institutional power, driving black and white apart, was commonplace.

The calls for the formation of pan-racial dance floor communities that are such a central part of the music register precisely the lack of such a community beyond the temporary alliances of he dance floor. Rare Groove imagined itself through the metaphors of family and community borrowed from the 'argot' largely of Afro-Diasporic popular forms. The name *Family* Funktion reiterated the trope of the family to be found in Black American music like 'Its A Family affair', 'We Are Family,'[69] the greetings of 'respect' and 'safe' which were carried over from Afro-Caribbean culture emphasised the intimacy of the Rare Groove audience who did not in fact know much about each other, the personal mode of address of much of the music, with its tales of 'Runaway Loves' (Linda Clifford), 'Women of the Ghetto' (Marlena Shaw) and 'Brothers on the Slide' (Cymande), brought the listener in to a community which existed nowhere outside of the space of the warehouse party: "it had an intimate feeling, you began to recognise people and it began to feel more of a family thing."[70]

The distance between the dance floor community and that of the streets outside is marked by the unmistakable presence of racialised irony that is a marked feature of Afro-American popular music (Baraka, 1966). The Pharaohs track 'Black Enuff'

[69] Sly and the *Family* Stone, *Sister* Sledge. See Gilroy, 1993 for a discussion of the way this trope functions to limit the narrative frame of reference of soul.

(1971), for example, ironically plays with the idea of racial authenticity in music, which has resonance both as a critique of black essentialism and white appropriation. The vocal part of the tune features a voice speaking in an exaggeratedly black southern American drawl: "Gimme some of that ole' grandpa music" it asks. The guitarist obliges with a bluesy riff against a funk background, and asks, "Is that Black enuff for ya?" The interpolator is never satisfied with the racial authenticity of the music, as the guitarist and horn section offer various versions of black sounds. The result is an ironic disquisition on racial authenticity in music, which you can also dance to (an unprecedented achievement).

### Pirate radio and import records

Lawrence Grossberg (1994) has argued that music scenes can be imagined as 'apparatuses' produced by particular logics of "production/commercialisation" and are therefore best understood as products of the industrialisation of culture, and the strategies of major label marketing departments. While Rare Groove was produced through forms of rationalisation commodification and distribution – it was based around records produced by the American recording industry – it was not created in the corporate suites of major labels, who had long since forgotten this music, but was produced through the cultural activity of London youth in ways that were not anticipated by the culture industries. Indeed Rare Groove contravened one of the basic tenets of pop capitalism in that it turned its back on the 'new' and instead recycled cultural products that had already passed through the cycle of production, distribution and consumption – second hand records. Of course Rare Groove was the product of a particular logic of production, and consumption. But this logic was dictated by un-consecrated cultural intermediaries (DJs, promoters), and disseminated along the informal networks and alliances of the post-colonial city.

A key feature of the Rare Groove economy, outside of the parties, is its relationship to the market in second-hand and 'import' records which developed in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike rock or rap Rare Groove (like the 'dance genres which were to follow it, e.g. House) revolved around the playing of records rather than live performance. The DJ, rather than the musician, was the most prominent figure, and dance was the preferred form of consumption.

[70] Rachael, interview

The sound systems that played this music in the late-night drinking clubs, community centres and house parties of the black community developed their own networks to provide the latest music from across the Atlantic. Sound system operators travelled far and wide to acquire the specials and new releases by which their performances in sound clashes and cup dances were judged. Packages of records were mailed or carried by hand from Jamaica and America, and networks of record stalls such as Websters in Shepherds Bush market, and Bernard's in Camden market provided a further source.

A small scales network of specialist record stores and supplying Caribbean and American 'imports' sprang up also, alongside the circuits of south of England soul. Shops like Record Corner in Balham, established in 1967, made contacts with small labels in America, and imported small quantities of mainly 7" inch singles to supply the network of soul DJs. In the early days owner Ron Boulding would call up the hundreds of independent soul labels in America and get them to play their latest releases over the phone to check for new records which he could sell in the UK market, which were unlikely ever to be officially released in England.

In the late 1970s a handful of one-stop distributor were established on the East Coast of American which meant that London shops could get most of what they wanted from one source, and imports increased. With the development of the "DJ friendly" longer playing and more easily mixable 12" single during the disco era – the Salsoul release 'Ten Percent' by Double Exposure (1976) was the first example – these import network flourished. Small importers like Record Corner would receive packages of new records that a 'man in a van' would carry around Central London record stored – like Harlequin, Quicksilver and Groove. Store owners listened to the new releases , usually the first time they would have heard it, and order accordingly. DJs and vinyl junkies made frequent visits to snap up the new records. Terry Davis, one of the original van distributors, recalls that major record companies would frequently complain that imports were threatening the possibility of future chart position for their releases should they decide to release them in the UK. "That was rubbish" he argues, "most of the time the labels have no idea what they are releasing in the USA, and what would work in the clubs here. They will only pick up on something once it has done well on import over here."[71]The ability to judge what was going to work in clubs was pre-eminently a form of subcultural expertise, where DJs who were in close touch with the trends of the dance floor were prominent. Independent record stores

were key institutions in disseminating knowledge and information about music that was not available through the channels of the official music industry.[72]

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s record stores sprang up catering to the newly forming club markets – both to DJs and wannabe DJs – Soul Brother, Crazy Beat, Beat Street, Groove Music, Vinylmania, Black market, Black Market, Soul Jazz, Honest Jon's. In addition to the circuits by which new 'imports' made it to the London club scene, Rare Groove relied upon a lively second hand record market. Most specialist stores sold a combination of new and second hand records, and a series of 'record fairs' at hotels and conventions centres would bring together hundreds of second hand record dealers to sell and trade with the new generations of vinyl junkies searching for Hip Hop breaks, and unknown 'Rare Grooves'. Within this economy London's black music DJs played a prominent role, both as guides to new generations of would be DJs (continuing the role they had established back in school), and as dealers in their own right. Jazzie B, for example, sold new and second hand records at his Soul II Soul shop in Camden. In addition to these specialist record sellers – who knew their products and charged according to the market – there were the less savvy second hand stores, charity stores and junk shops which sold records usually a set rate irrespective of what it was. The patience to 'dig in the crates' at the stores could yield dramatic rewards. The Record and Tape Exchange with shops in Notting Hill and Camden was a combination of specialist shop and junk shop. It employed staff who were skilled in the pricing of second hand records, yet as the Rare Groove DJs slowly uncovered the rich catalogue of 1970s funk and soul, it lagged behind in its valuation of obscure records. Although London was one of the hubs of this trade DJs and collectors travelled the country, where the Northern Soul scene kept a second hand market alive and frequently crossed to American and the Caribbean in search of record stores who, being outside the subcultural club circuits were not aware of the suddenly increased value of much of their old stock.

The other network of crucial importance to the formation of Rare Groove, was that of pirate radio. Although there had been offshore pirate radio stations broadcasting to mainland UK for decades (Radio Luxembourg, Radio Caroline) the 1980s saw an explosion in pirates broadcasting from within national borders, especially London.

[71] Jackson, 1995 in Touch 47 May 1995

[72] On independent record shops: "that's where learnt how to buy black music. You don't go in and say can I have this: You go in and stand there for a few hours. No one talks to you at first. After a while they get to know what you. Other people come in and hang out, its all have you heard this, can you get that. Its all word of mouth" Jamie, interview

Aside from a handful of specialist radio shows on legal stations the BBC largely ignored black music which therefore had no choice but to locate itself in 'the underground' (Chapman, 1992: 272). Since the early days of Caroline and Luxembourg there had always been an association between pirates and soul music In the 1980s, thanks to relatively cheap broadcasting technology many 'soul' pirates sprang up in the south of England like Radio London, JFM, Invicta, Skyline, Jackie and Horizon (Hinds and Mosco, 1988). These stations were extensions of the networks of south of England white working class soul, featuring many of the same DJs, and based largely in the suburbs to the south and West of the city, like Crystal Palace, and Slough. Although crucial in disseminating black music across the city – some pirates claimed up to a million listeners – these stations could be involved in bitter struggles around which genres of black music were appropriate to play; many for example, which associated themselves with particular forms of soul were antagonistic to the forms of 'electro' soul and Hip Hop which emerged in the early 1980s (Hinds and Mosco, 1988: 32).

London did not get its first black run pirate station until the launch of the Dread Broadcasting Company (DBC) in 1982 devoted almost entirely to Reggae which was generally shunned by the soul stations. Pirate stations, as the name implies, were illegal, broadcasting without a licence. Through the use of remote transmitters they were able to avoid detection by the department of Trade and Industry but throughout the early 1980s the pirates were frequently forced to shut down or relocate. DBC had its transmitter confiscated three times in 1983 alone; LWR suffered 25 raids on its transmitter. In 1984 a new Telecommunications Bill was passed increasing the penalties for illegal broadcasting but it did not deter what was a burgeoning market. The mid 1980s saw an explosion of pirates within London, many broadcasting from empty council flats, or, as in the case of Passion in Brixton, the DJs bedroom. Increasingly London-based DJs associated with the urban multicultural club networks set up their own stations. A whole generation of new stations sprung up on the FM dial including Passion, Fantasy, SLR, Elite, Station FM, WLIB, Starpoint and Powerjam. In 1985 a new station, run by Camberwell born soul DJ Gordon Mac and a collective of 30 London DJs associated with the whole range of available club genres, emerged. The roster of Kiss FM brought together DJs from London's soul, Reggae, Hip Hop, funk and emerging house scenes, but was particularly associated with Rare Groove through the popular shows of Norman Jay, Jazzie B, Jay Strongman, Trevor 'Madhatter' Nelson and Julius 'Judge Jules' O'Riordan.

Kiss embodied a new multi-racial musical network. Distributing the new and 'rare' music unearthed through the record markets, Kiss provided a focal point for the London club network, demonstrated the inter-connection of apparently separate music scenes, and facilitated the spread of information about music and importantly the location of warehouse parties: "Pirate radio played a big part, that was where you got your information as far as the music and parties was concerned. In the club DJs wouldn't be talking about these records but if you listened to these shows – I used to tape them – they'd tell you what the tunes were, or you'd play the tape to a record dealer."[73]

Kiss, unique in its broad combination of musical styles, became the highest profile pirate station of the period. At the very end of the 1980s, mirroring the shift in public and official perceptions of 'cub culture', Kiss applied for one of the London wide broadcast licences made available by the DTI. It went off air in the hope of securing legal status and organised a successful petition campaign using the network of clubs with which it's DJs were associated. In 1991 Kiss gained its licence and a generation of 'underground' DJs, who had developed their art and business acumen in the informal economy of pirate radio, warehouse party and rave, became, for the first time since Radio 1 signed up Tony Blackburn in the late 1960s, legitimated. What happened to Kiss Fm in the ensuing years mirrored the new forces that were prevalent in 'club culture'. Shortly after securing their licence, with a new management team and ambitions to compete with the established heavyweights like Radio 1 and Capital Kiss started getting rid of its ' specialist' shows – radio shows which featured for example old soul or Hip Hop which did not appeal to advertisers nor fit the agendas of record companies looking to promote new product.

Media conglomerates Emap and Virgin had taken a 20% stake in Kiss from the outset, and soon Emap moved to secure control over the whole operation.[74] Founder Gordon Mac was increasingly sidelined, and then left. Moving further toward major label dance-pop Kiss under Emap haemorrhaged its DJ talent losing Norman Jay, Bob Jones, Tony Munson, Jazzie B. The fledgling TV arm Kiss TV, which had been providing training and jobs for a new generation of broadcasters was peremptorily shit down . In the mid 1990s Andy Parfitt, the new controller at Radio One charged with reversing its declining listening figures among the young, poached Kiss top rated

[73] Dodge, interview
[74] A Birthday Kiss, Touch magazine special edition, 1991

Djs for national Radio 1 – Judge Jules, Trevor Nelson, Gilles Peterson, Paul Oakenfold, Danny Rampling, Fabio and Grooverider and Dave Pearce.

## Conclusion: bringing dead space back to life

It is from sound systems, from Afro-Caribbean forms of leisure, that warehouse parties took their form. Afro-Caribbean culture provided the model of the warehouse party – and eventually the rave and the contemporary dance club.[75] For many black Londoners warehouse parties and the club culture which emerged from them were extensions of the practices of the black public sphere on a larger, translocal scale. For white working class people with a history of inter-racial activity, they were an extension of the leisure practices begun in the soul clubs, albeit in new circumstances.[76] For the white middle classes, however, they were something utterly new.[77] From the warehouse party era, and around the musical genre of Rare Groove, new networks formed which were based around the needs of a new cultural economy, even while they understood themselves symbolically as forms of community.

There are obvious limitations to a perspective which uncritically celebrates race mixing or 'border crossing'. It is possible to argue that such liminal encounters constitute a micro-politics of resistance, and create 'cultural networks', organised around the consumption of transnational cultural commodities which constitutes the founding of new traditions and complex syncretic 'ritual's' which have been read as critiques of capital (Gilroy, 1987) and sites where "collective sensibilities" across race and class, "could be shared and new ones forged" (Back, 1996: 187). However it is important to remain aware of the history of cultural appropriation that, partially, facilitates these processes. Coco Fusco, in her discussion of the politics of appropriation, makes the point that:

> interracial or intercultural desire, whether it goes by the name of 'slumming', border crossing, or appropriation, in and of itself does not disrupt historically entrenched inequalities ... [we must] cease fetishizing the gesture of crossing as inherently transgressive, so that we can develop a language

[75] "The social habits of white youth changed due to the influence [of sound systems]. When I used to go out to clubs you would go out at 12pm by bus, and...you walked home...the white guys I knew would be coming in from the pub when I was going out. Now that is completely different.." M La Rose 1999: 145

[76] "I went to warehouse parties and suddenly there were all sorts of different people, it was much freakier, much freer [than the soul scene]." Rachael B. Interview

that accounts for who is crossing, and that can analyse the significance of each act[78]

The Rare Groove warehouse party scene, like the hybrid music scenes that George Lipsitz has analysed "demonstrate how ethnic differences might be transcende", but at the same time they "draw attention to ethnic [gender and class] divisions" (1994: 119) to the stubborn persistence of inequality, and even within multi-cultural alliances, do not necessarily amount to new forms of communalism across these divisions. What from one perspective can look like long overdue acknowledgement of black creativity can, from another, appear to be the marketing and incorporation of marginal forms by the cultural industries ("a bit of the Other"). The very same processes and motivations which open up the possibility of new forms of post-racial communalism can prove to be the route by which competence in the forms of and style of the (always desirable) Other are parlayed into profit, in a process Paul Gilroy has recently called "the commodification of blackness" or "corporate multiculturalism" (2000).

Nevertheless the Rare Groove moment can be seen to open up a number of important political possibilities. First in its narrative treatment of ideas of race and belonging, around the core of its Afro-diasporic rhythm, is provides the preconditions for the foundation of a racially multiple popular culture by refusing to forget the way in which race thinking and forms of inequality has contributed to structuring the grounds on which we can imagine moving beyond. In his invocation of a "planetary humanism" Paul Gilroy makes the point that moving beyond race necessitates also recognising the central place race thinking has played in our material and symbolic lives.[79] Similarly Rare Groove opened up the uncertain possibilities[80] of founding communities around music. The next decade would see the evolution of new networks and new forms of practised dance floor multiculture, which develop alongside the "over-the-counter club cultures" which emerge from the corporate suites and agendas of media corporations alert to the vitality of dance cultures.

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[77]"My friends heard about a warehouse party, and we were going, 'a party? In a warehouse? How does that work, so we went to see." Jamie, Interview

[78] Coco Fusco, English Is Broken Here, 1995:76-77

[79] Paul Gilroy 'Where is Liberalism Taking us?: neither Jews Nor Germans" 2002 www.opendemocracy.net

[80] "A positively understood invocation of urbanism has to be about opening oneself up to difference. The creation of a political space, a social space and a cultural space where the boundary stalking logics of identification are overturned, where *uncertainty and unpredictability* provide the conditions of possibility for the mutations, hybridity and combinations that define how newness enters the world, are all definitive features of the lived city" M Keith 1995:143 in Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1996

## Chapter 6: Rave and Black Acid: Racial divisions in late 80's club culture

With Rare Groove established as the dominant dance genre but peaking in popularity, a new genre of dance music emerged in 1987 that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of London dance culture, and eventually that of the whole of the UK. A composite of a particular music genre, 'acid', and a particular social form of consumption, the 'rave', it became known colloquially as 'acid house' and subsequently 'the rave scene' or simply 'rave'. Although rave is the 'dance' scene least obviously based upon pre-existing black Atlantic models, and therefore may not appear to be relevant to the analysis of black Atlantic or Afro-diasporic music scenes on which this thesis has concentrated, it is essential to deal with 'rave' and its contours within the scope of this thesis, for two reasons. First, because of the scale and importance of 'rave' in academic and popular histories and ideologies of dance. The majority of popular texts (books, television and film[1]) on 'dance culture' place 'rave' at their centre, and understand all dance culture in relation to the model of 'rave'. Academic texts on contemporary youth culture (eg *The Club Cultures Reader*, Redhead ed, 1997) also tend to place 'rave' acid house' or the specific behaviours associated with this particular dance genre ('raving', ecstasy) at the heart of their analyses.

Secondly rave has a complex and ambiguous, and frequently ignored or misconstrued, relationship to the politics of race. In common with all subcultures since Mod, rave is based around music generated from within the Black Atlantic primarily by black American producers from the Northern US cities, New York (and New Jersey), Chicago and Detroit. However, like Hip Hop, 'acid house' is not received in the UK as black music. It does not come through the pre-existing networks around sound systems, and the 'blackness' or otherwise of its producers is obscured by the music's tendency towards texture over narrative, beat over voice, and the facelessness (hence race-lessness) of acid house producers (who were, in fact, mainly Afro-American). This relative distance from an immediate racial identification opened acid house and rave up to generations of white youth potentially alienated by the defiant 'blackness' of Reggae, Hip Hop and Rare Groove. Its apparent lack of race facilitated the appropriation of this music by a generation of white subcultural producers without the ambivalences and negotiations inherent in white uses of self evidently black forms (Back, 2002b). This racelessness, led many to suggest that rave existed somehow beyond difference, that the tensions of heterogeneity – racial, as well as

those of social class and gender – were transcended in the rave where everyone was welcome, and individual identity was shucked off, through the use of drug 'technologies'. Simon Reynolds for example argues rave was suffused with the rhetoric of "trans-racial, cross-class unity" (Reynolds, 1997: 104). This did not necessarily correspond with the actual composition of the rave audience. This chapter explores the issue of the rave's racial hybridity, and emphasises the discursive and material limits placed upon the realisation of rave's utopian agenda. It would be foolish to underestimate the impact of house music, and rave, on British dance culture – its effects were profound and long-lasting. Yet arguments for the novelty of acid house and rave and its foundational status for UK club culture in general miss completely the history of London dance cultures I have been analysing. That rave brought a generation of white British youth onto the dance floor and into networks of all-night dancing is undisputed. What is in dispute here is the theoretical and journalistic colour-blindness which allows rave to be discussed as if it were an autochthonous subculture, which invented this form of subcultural behaviour, and is therefore the moment at which London – and by extension – British dance culture begins.

This chapter places rave in the context of antecedent dance scenes – Reggae, soul and, in particular Rare Groove and the Reggae sound system tradition that underpins all these scenes. It is not an exhaustive history of acid house on its own terms, of which there are several already (e.g. Reynolds, 1998 is one of the best), but an exploration of acid house in relation to the dance scenes that immediately precede it, as well as, in the next chapter, those that succeed it. The aim is to interrogate the claims made on behalf of this musical form by what I called back in chapter 1 the 'ravologists' (rave apologists), and to focus in particular on the interplay between race and space which has been the focus of this thesis throughout. This involves emphasising the discursive and material underpinnings of rave which were incompatible with the black British, and multi-cultural habitus, and understanding rave therefore as yet another subculture where despite the centrality of black style and form, black access is circumscribed by virtue of specific strategies of exclusion.

But if rave becomes a conspicuously white phenomenon in terms of consumption this is far from the case with its production. The second half of the chapter reworks rave history around a relatively hidden part of its development: The part London's black

[1] *Human traffic*, Dir. Justin Kerriganh, Miramax, 2000. *Rave New World*, Derek Jones, McDougall Craig Productions for Channel 4, 1994.

cultural producers played in the formation of rave scenes, the impact of the social technologies of the sound system on raves, and the evolution of a London-based multicultural urban incarnation of rave culture which became known as 'hardcore' and provided the (semi) public sphere within which Jungle emerged in the early 1990s.

But we start with the immediate context within which 'rave' appeared, the decline of Rare Groove and warehouse parties in London.

**The end of Rare Groove**

"At first everything was cheap" says Roger, "it wasn't linked into the record industry; it didn't have anything to do with sales."[2]

Rare Groove as a definable club scene, network and way of *doing* club culture, was losing its energy by 1987, and was effectively over in 1988. Rare Groove and warehouse party social networks that had attained a relative stability in the preceding few years began to change. Decisions of record companies who had started to take notice of Rare Groove had an impact on its practices of acquisition and the competences necessary to acquire cultural capital within the field. Meanwhile the combined pressure of an increased attention from the police and a changed attitude on the part of licensed club owners spelt the end of the inner city warehouse parties which were the primary sites of Rare Groove consumption.

The Rare Groove scene relied upon, indeed was partly a function of, the informal networks of distribution and dissemination of relatively unknown Black American music – the second hand and import record stalls, shops and vans, and the pirate radio network through which this knowledge culture was formed. To some degree the success of Rare Groove was its undoing. Between the early 1980s and 1987 Rare Groove DJs had scoured the stocks of second hand records held in the UK plundering the resources of the pre-disco American jazz, soul and funk recording industry, by that point largely forgotten by audiences and the recording industry. But by the late 1980s these stocks were drying up. It became harder and harder to find new (old) records, and those that were available, and made famous in the clubs, became more expensive as dealers (many of whom were Rare Groove DJs themselves) profited from the new found taste for old vinyl. As the market for Rare Groove expanded the

second-hand markets and shops – staffed largely by DJs so well aware of the popular club tunes – increased their prices accordingly. It became harder to unearth Rare Grooves cheaply, but easier to buy a rare vinyl collection if you were willing to pay.

Unaware of the subcultural value of their back catalogues and unable to control pricing or distribution in the used record markets major record labels were successfully circumvented by Rare Groove. Having recognising the threat to their earnings implicit in the trade in second hand records that yielded neither royalties nor chart position, major labels began to recognise the value of their back catalogues and to reissue the tunes which Rare Groove had made popular. Record labels began to find ways to capitalise on Rare Groove, by employing DJ-experts, paying close attention to pirate radio, and developing subsidiaries with close links to the clubs[3], thus threatening the independence that was one of its most potent attractions.

In 1986 the Polydor label began releasing their Urban Classics series featuring tracks from their vaults which had acquired cache in the second hand markets, and been made popular on the Rare Groove dance floor. Volume four of the series, released in 1987, included Maceo and The Macks' 'Cross The Tracks', the Jackson Sister's 'I Believe In Miracles' and Bobby Byrd's 'I Know You Got Soul', each of which was synonymous with Rare Groove as a genre. The sleeve gave "special thanks" to a string of DJs who had helped with compiling the series, a list which includes all London's prominent Rare Groove DJs: "Norman Jay, Simon Goffe, Jonathan Moore, Nicky Holloway, Derek Boland, Jay Strongman, The Kiss Crew, Family Funktion and Shake and Fingerpop."[4] The album exemplified both Polydor's desire to get some return on the music which they felt they owned and the ineptitude of attempts by major labels to parlay in subcultural knowledge. Alongside the big dance floor tunes the album included unlikely and inappropriate tracks from LaToya Jackson and Gloria Gaynor – evidence of the labels inability to understand the tastes of the audience they sought to exploit, or alternatively of the traditional "quota system" of US multinational distributors who, like the Hollywood studios of the 1920s, bundled desired star pictures together with filler the audience were forced to accept.

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[2] Interview Roger D.
[3] These examples were supplied by DJs Norman J, Trevor N, and promoter Rachael B. all of whom worked for or closely with record labels in the late 1980s.
[4] Urban Classics Vol 4 1987, Polydor URBLP4. This established the process by which club DJs became important mediators in the process of record releases – it was with the advice and collaboration of Rare Groove DJs that record labels selected which tunes from their back catalogues to release.

Reissue and compilations compiled by DJs proliferated – 'original' albums by James Brown, Roy Ayers and the JBs were reissued by the original (copyright-holding) label or as unlicensed "bootlegs". Warehouse party and pirate radio DJs were increasingly called upon to dig in the catalogues of Major American labels (Blue Note, Muse) to find the valuable recordings they themselves had no competence to judge. Numerous small specialist labels sprang up in the UK frequently associated with record stores or clubs, to cater to the taste for reissues and retro sounding new music. Prominent amongst these were the DJ-run labels Acid Jazz, Hubbub, Barely Breaking Even, BRP, Soul Jazz and the Mastercuts compilation series.

This proliferation presented a quandary for the Rare Groove DJ, whose investment of time and knowledge in acquiring the right records was under threat from the mass availability of reissues of the records that they had patiently unearthed. The expert knowledge systems by which Rare Groove was organised were under threat. Once this music became more widely available the role of the club/party as a place to break new music and play unknown music was diminished. If one important aspect of the appeal of the scene for the audience was the educative knowledge-disseminating role – "Going out" argues Trevor, "was as much about being musically educated as having a good time,"[5] – by the late 1980s these same DJs were beginning to feel restricted by the lack of fresh music available second hand. In this context the arrival of 'new' dance music in the guise of 'house' and its derivatives (Garage, Techno) took on a special appeal both for crowds and for DJs.

Different DJs took different attitudes to the dilemma of exposure. Soul II Soul under the charismatic leadership of Jazzie B. had, by 1987, established a strong club-based brand comprising of a record and clothing store in Camden Town, a 'sound system' and roster of DJs (all using the 'Jazzie...' moniker), a successful Sunday Night club at the Africa Centre in Covent Garden and a band. By 1987 Jazzie B. had branched out from playing records into making them. A hybrid coalition of young UK musicians and black Atlantic musical styles, Soul II Soul released a series of singles which powerfully announced London club culture's 'outernational' aspirations. Soul II Soul were signed by a subsidiary of the UK 'major' Virgin and the debut album – confidently titled *Club Classics Volume 1* (Virgin/10 records) – was released in 1987 to immediate critical acclaim, and commercial success. Jazzie B and his posse's 'Funki Dred' persona, a hybrid black British identity spun the essential character of the club scene he had a hand in creating out to a popular audience beyond the

boundaries of the post-colonial city. Utilising his styling and branding talents Jazzie B orchestrated the production of a total style – where the sound, imagery and especially videos from the band drew on the iconography of the Rare Groove networks. The Soul II Soul videos, which foregrounded the joyful multi-racial community at the heart of Jazzie's appeals for a "smiling face and a thumping bass for a happy race", were picked up by American MTV and presented a very different image to that which America's black music audience was familiar. Soul II Soul's success in America, several charting singles and videos on heavy MTV rotation, constituted one of the first and most important interventions from this side of the Atlantic in the ongoing evolution of Black Atlantic cultural expression, and announced to the world the vitality of multi-cultural music cultures in London. It introduced a more complex black identity into the lexicon of black identity in America (Gilroy, 1993). Soul II Soul suspended their Africa Centre club shortly after to concentrate on touring and recording.

For those DJs who were not producing music the issue involved what attitude to take to the mass appeal of Rare Groove. In this, a racialised logic plays a part. Several white DJs who had been involved in the Rare Groove scene – although always associated with the 'jazzier' side of it – solved the problem of availability by searching harder and harder for more and more obscure recordings. If the resources of the black American recording industry of the 1970s were exhausted then they would look elsewhere – obscure funk, jazz and soul recordings from the UK, from Germany and France, funky recordings made by artists considered 'mainstream' (Liza Minelli, Ella Fitzgerald, Andre Previn[6]), were highly valued. This was the origin of 'acid jazz', an obscurantist jazz dance scene that, following the demise of Rare Groove, set itself against house music (the name itself was an ironic response by DJ Giles Peterson to the ubiquity of acid house).

Around a series of key clubs like Talkin' Loud and Saying Something at Dingwalls in Camden, Acid Jazz took part of the Rare Groove audience. Acid Jazz aspired to reproduce the racial hybridity of Rare Groove but there were problems in terms of the form of acid jazz which tended to reproduce racial stratification. The aesthetic of obscurity that dominated, and the avant-gardist antipathy to commercial success and familiarity that underpinned its system of values, meant that a large part of the black

[5] T Nelson, Clubbed To Death, Touch 37 June 1994

[6] The tunes referenced here are : Liza Minelli's version of 'Use Me', Ella Fitzgerald's version of 'Sunshine of Your Love' and Andre Previn's soundtrack for *Rollerball* which included the jazz funk tune 'Executive Party'

music canon was now out of bounds. Rare Groove had struggled to maintain a balance between novelty and familiarity. Many Rare Groove anthems like The Blackbyrds 'Rock Creek Park', Tom Brown's 'Funkin' For Jamaica' even the Jackson 5's 'I Want You Back' had been substantial commercial hits and were familiar to the majority of the audience. Acid jazz tipped the balance away from the dancer toward the specialist DJ and his (or her) close cohorts. Upsetting the antiphonic equivalence central to the black dance floor, acid jazz became, for some, all call and no response: "There were some wicked tunes and some not so great ones" says Jaime D "As the [acid jazz] scene grew you had more and more DJs trying to outdo each other by finding more and more rare records, they would find stuff that was purely rare, but wasn't actually a groove. I think what happened to spoil it was the ego of the DJs."[7] While it retained a degree of heterogeneity acid jazz was perceived by much of the black club audience as unnecessarily obscure and self-conscious, as akin to the white dominated dance scenes, like Northern Soul, which obsessively traded on nostalgic images of blackness from a bygone era, but showed no interest in, indeed set itself explicitly against, contemporary forms of black Atlantic music which were found to be insufficiently 'deep'.

The split in Rare Groove that occurred in 1987 was in some sense a result of the centrality that the DJ had acquired within that culture. Structurally based on the model of the sound system early Rare Groove involved a series of crews and sound systems that worked collaboratively. A DJ was one, albeit an important, member of a crew, which would run and organise the parties, often in collaboration with other crews. The rise to prominence of Rare Groove was also the rise to prominence of the DJ as a stand-alone individual. In the late 1980's 'name' DJs became the 'brands' of club culture. The "cult of the DJ" grew and DJs began to float free of the sound systems and clubs which had supported them. The availability of DJs with high subcultural capital and reputations built on their prominence within the informal economies of pirate radio, second hand and import record sales and warehouse parties, enabled the 'explosion' of club culture in the late 1980s. Individual DJs could be hired in as 'guests' to lend any party or club the necessary credibility to attract an audience. In the late 1980s, for the first time, DJs became guns for hire, divorced from their role as co-promoters with equal responsibility for the night, and thus began the pattern which continues in contemporary club culture where for 'star' DJs often with a prominent radio show and deals with record companies 'residences' (DJing at one club regularly) are the exception, while 'guest bookings' at a string of

[7] Jaimie D, interview

clubs, often several on the same evening, are the norm. This also relied upon a change in attitude amongst the owners of licensed nightclubs, the very people who in the early 1980s, as Trevor put it, "wanted the music played but not by the likes of us".

## Competition

For Family Funktion promoter Dan B the demise of Rare Groove was "a combination of warehouses becoming more of a hassle and licensed clubs openly courting us." The composition of the warehouse party crowd, as well as the attitude of the police to them, had been changing as the phenomena spread. In the *appropriated* space of the warehouse parties, outside areas of locality based turf wars and the purview of both the music industry and the police, the warehouse parties of 1985 and 1986 came close to achieving a degree of multi-cultural co-operation around a mutual 'respect' for music and a self-generated culture of dance. By 1987 this was threatened not only by the strategies of the music industry capitalising on the popularity of the music that Rare Groove had discovered, but also by the influx of people into the warehouse party production for whom *respect* was only an Aretha Franklin song. As rumours of the money to be made from warehouse parties grew (far outstretching the actual returns), competition among promoters became fierce.

In the early days of Rare Groove, promoters made an effort not to compete with each other for the relatively small crowds – they scheduled parties on different nights, and attended each other's events, to promote their own. It may not have actually been "one happy family" but it felt like that to many who were there.[8] As the potential crowd expanded, and the potential for making money increased, so did the rivalry between promoters. As Ulrich Beck (1992) has suggested, one consequence of the rise of the post-traditional network society with its increased risks and flexible work patterns, is the increase of competition between those who have the most in common, who are competing within the same markets. Many warehouse parties in 1987 were disrupted by violence which many believe to have been 'sabotage.' In one incident CS gas canisters were set off inside a party with several hundred people in it, causing panic and a stampede to the single fire exit.[9] Warehouse promoters and crowd became aware of the possible disastrous consequences.

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[8] Rachael interview

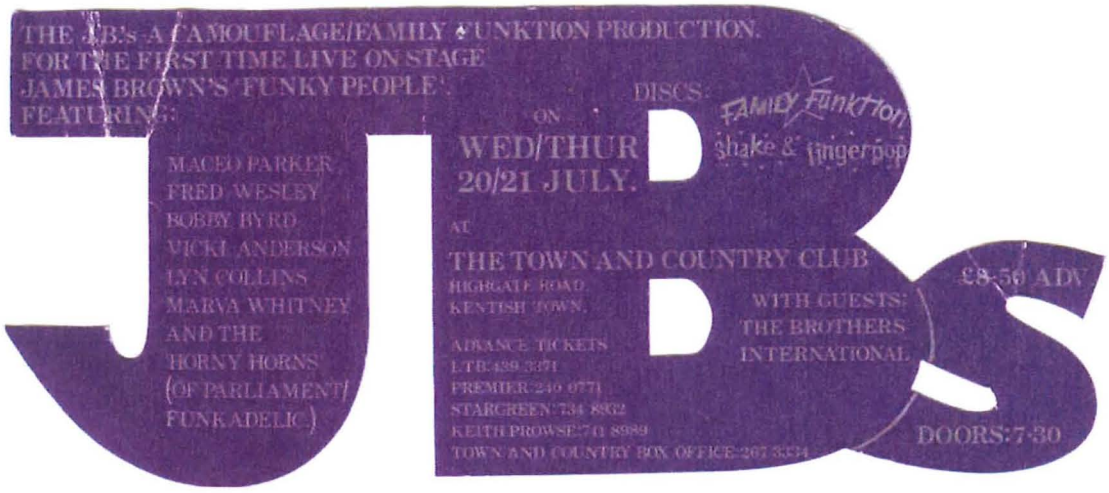
[9] "The club scene started to get very big...By this time there was big money to be made, there were rival promoters and legal clubland was cottoning on to it. The rivalry started" Jamie D. This warehouse party was held in 1986 in a derelict department store in Queensway, West London (now its Whiteley's shopping centre).

## Policing the Warehouse

The attitude of the police to warehouse parties was also changing. It wasn't until 1989, and the explosion of mainly outside London 'raves,' that superintendent Ken Tappenden formally organised the Pay Party unit', based in Gravesend, specifically devoted to tracking and trying to prevent illegal raves (Collin, 1998: 100). But by 1987 London police forces, were starting to learn how to locate and prevent illegal parties.[10] Pirate radio stations and flyers freely distributed the time and location of upcoming parties, once police forces picked up on this they were able to shut down events before they started before sufficient crowd had gathered to threaten a riot situation. At one venue on Chiswick roundabout the police swooped and confiscated the sound system and the DJs records. Nothing could be better calculated to dispirit erstwhile party people, or discourage DJs from risking their precious, and irreplaceable, musical resources.

If, in terms of the 'migration' of warehouse parties into licensed venues, these are the *push* factors then they are balanced with the *pull.* Owners of licensed club venues, who had had slim pickings through the period of warehouse, belatedly realised that not only did they need to provide audiences the black music they so clearly preferred, but that they needed to attract the DJs and promoters with established reputations within subcultural fields to organise and 'front' their club nights. London clubbers who had been to warehouse parties were no longer to be satisfied with attempts by in-house club promoters to lure them back to legitimate club land merely with the old techniques of drink specials and "ladies free before eleven" promotions. Consequently legitimate venues strenuously 'courted' warehouse promoters offering them preferential door splits even up to 100% of the door take (clubs would make their profit from the drinks), and total control of the music policy, and ambience. This was particularly true of those venues that were large and needed multiple thousands of customers to break even. Suddenly rare funk, Hip Hop, electro and the DJs and promoters who had supported them, previously confined to pirate radio and small or unlicensed clubs found themselves lured to the heart of the licensed London club industry.

[10] "the illegal stuff started to get clamped down on and they started to work out what was happening, they started picked up flyers – suddenly a lot of parties got shut down before they started." Dodge, interview




Family Funktion moved into promoting live shows like this featuring members of James Brown's band

The balance of London leisure life moved decisively back towards licensed clubs in 1987. Soul II Soul were already safely ensconced in The Africa Centre, a licensed venue although retaining an 'authentic' warehouse/blues party feel. Norman Jay, started a new club night, 'High On Hope' at Dingwalls in Camden in late 1986. Family Funktion were persuaded to launch a Friday night club at the Astoria in Charing Cross Road – a 'live music venue' which was suffering from the downturn in appetite for live rock, and the new disc-dominated club culture.[11] It was when Family Funktion moved to the Astoria, however that another shift in club culture became apparent. As the Friday night Family Function club was losing audience, the Saturday night was gaining them. This night, *Delirium*, run by brothers Noel and Maurice Watson, was one of the first regular London nights to play a new uptempo electronic dance music coming from New York and Chicago – house music. To much of the Rare Groove audience house was new and different, but Delirium had the added advantage that it was, from the outset, publicised and supported by the style press and record companies keen not to be left out of any new club culture: "Delirium was a different vibe ... There was much more of a record company presence, there was a new record company/media industry springing up around it, it had already been featured in *The Face*."[12]

In pirate radio too there was, after years of thwarting the DTI, a move toward legitimacy symbolised by Kiss FM. Voluntarily ceasing broadcasting in 1988, Kiss gained its broadcast licence in 1990 and began broadcasting as a legitimate London wide dance music station in September.[13] By the time Kiss re-emerged as a licensed

[11] Dan interview
[12] Dan interview
[13] A Birthday Kiss, Touch magazine special edition, 1991

independent' station[14], the club scene had changed dramatically. Many on the club scene view this move, with hindsight, as the beginning of the end for Kiss as a credible music outlet dedicated to the diversity and independence of London music cultures ('Radio Waves', Touch Magazine, July 1992). Its gradual paring down of its 'specialist' music shows, which are not linked directly to the strategies of the music industry as are play listed new music shows, and jettisoning of its original pirate staff severed its links with the community which had sustained it in the late 1980s.

In popular histories of music, and within academic analysis, the years 1987 and 1988 have been consistently presented as the start of something new. 1987 is cited as the year when 'house music' broke through in London club land, while 1988 known in 'clubbers' vernacular and music magazine parlance as 'the second summer of love', was the year that 'acid house' reached the popular consciousness. It is not my intention to rewrite the history of acid house here, which has been written exhaustingly elsewhere (e.g. Reynolds, 1998, Garrett, 1999, Collin, 1997, Rietveld, 1998: chapter 3, Redhead, 1993). I will briefly cover the main elements of the 'rave' phenomena – the music, the 'raves' themselves and the drug rhetorics and consumption that underpin it – both to suggest the core features of this youth subculture that were genuinely novel, and to emphasise the unacknowledged debt it owes to Reggae, funk and Rare Groove.

**House Music**

House music is defined by its rhythm. Rejecting the breakbeats of funk and Hip Hop, and the polyrhythms of jazz, house music draws in the first instance on the simplified rhythms of ' sophisticated soul' (such as that of the Salsoul and Prelude labels) and then the synthesised pulse of disco. Lacking the jagged stutter step emphasis of either funk's 'one' (which hits on the one and three) or Hip Hop's ruptured rhythms tracks (Mudede, 1999), house rhythm is a steady four beats to the bar, expressed as '4/4 ', or colloquially as 'four to the floor'. Rietveld's term for house music, 'digital disco' (1998) conveys this rhythmic inheritance, as well as the impact of digital sequencer, drum machine and sampling technology on the evolution of house. The furthest house music deviates from rhythmic regularity and thumping predictability is in basic syncopation – New York and New Jersey styles of house music often called garage generally employ the 'thd-siss' syncopation of bass drum-hi-hat as its

[14] an independence that was always compromised by the fact that both Virgin and Emap took a stake of over 20% and finally vanished when Emap assumed full control in 1992-

rhythmic building block. This regularity and predictably is given an extremely high value by house, rave, and Techno audiences who consider the repetitive nature of house rhythm an aid to achieving transcendent trance-like states on the dance floor. Cultural critics and defenders of disco and house rhythm suggest the metronome regularity can have a socio-psychological payoff. The cultural critic Walter Hughes in his essay, "In the Empire of the Beat: The Discourse of Disco," argues that submission to the "insistent, disciplinary beat" of disco – and by extension house – has been instrumental in deconstructing the conventional ego of straight society "in order to refashion it, much in the manner of military ... or sado-masochistic discipline" into one type of gay identity. "By allowing the synthesized disco beat to move you, you surrender yourself to becoming an extension of the machine that generates the beat," writes Hughes (1992). Such an argument is made in the context of the fact that house emerges in the black and Hispanic gay underground of New York and Chicago at clubs like the Paradise Garage and the Warehouse. House is pre-eminently DJ-made music, and evolved through the 'live' experiments of a generation of New Jersey, New York and Chicago DJs, most of whom were closely associated with the black and Hispanic gay club scenes in those cities, in particular Larry Levan, Frankie Knuckles, Tony Humphries and Ron Hardy

On top of this widely shared and largely invariant rhythmic base, house music can incorporate a wide array of generic influences. Early New York, New Jersey and Chicago house and Garage draw very obviously on soul, disco and gospel song structures and vocal delivery. Hildegonda Rietveld (1998) and Willi Ninja (1992) have written about the discursive form of this kind of house as expressing and embodying a particular black and Hispanic gay attitude to self presentation, survival and the articulation of a resistant identity through an identification with the figure of the 'diva'.

Techno, from Detroit, although influenced by what was happening in New York and Chicago, takes a different course. In the hands of producers like Juan Atkins and Kevin Saunderson, Techno tended to move away from the sophisticated soul and disco roots of house. Atkins, Saunderson and others in Detroit had been producing records which combined stripped down P-Funk influences with the bleak machine futurism of European Electro pop (Depeche Mode, Kraftwerk). Their techno pushed toward a futuristic minimalist funk which glories in technology, and retained only the thinnest link to black music tradition through the presence of the heavy 'space bassline'. Nonetheless the club scene in Detroit was still marked strongly by the

patterns of American spatial apartheid. As Juan Atkins said, "we were brought up with this racial conflict thing, instilled in us since babies ... if you're a kid in Detroit, [you might] never see a white person, unless they're on TV."[15]

These genres – Garage and Chicago House (the 'jack style') and Techno are the musical cousins of acid house, and much of this music is played in the UK at raves, alongside acid house. *Acid* house differs from these forms but slightly. Generally it is faster, more frenetic, and in particular it utilises the sound of a Roland 303, a synthesiser designed to reproduce basslines digitally. According to DJ Pierre the distinctive 303 sound which characterises acid house of 1987/8 came about because of an accident. He and his colleagues in the band Phuture liked the sound that was pre-programmed in to the synthesiser, so they used that as a basis for their 'song' – which was played by several DJs in clubs before it had a name but was eventually recorded as 'Acid trax' (Cheesman, 1995: 4). The way that acid house came about, the do it yourself and accidental nature of its creation, places it very much in the tradition of black Atlantic popular creativity as described by Toni Morrison and James Snead (1984), where notions of correctness are subordinate to chance, and accident is folded back into a larger sense of order. This is consistent with the social emergence of acid house, amongst the relatively autonomous black club scenes of Chicago, and rapidly-becoming post-industrial Detroit. But this does not account for the way in which acid house music produced in the first instance in America, finds a ready audience in the UK, and very quickly slipped its moorings in Afro-diasporic practice (though never entirely) as it takes on the cast of a British national youth cult.

**From Acid to rave**

House music had been arriving in the UK along the routes of the underground record distribution, and in cassette tapes recorded from US radio since 1985. The first house music compilation, *The House Sound of Chicago,* drawing material from the Chicago label DJ International, was released in the UK by London records in 1986 and various London radio DJs, like jazzy M on LWR, began to integrate Chicago and New York house into their sets. In the second half of this chapter I discuss some of the ways in which house was articulated within the black public sphere in London. But the route of *acid* house and rave culture in the UK does not travel directly from any of the big cities of the Northern United States. According to the oft-repeated 'official' history, rave culture in the UK is routed through a small Island of the coast of Spain: Ibiza.

[15] cited in Reynolds, 1999: 56

Long a node on the international hippy trial Ibiza in the 1980s retained a tint if bohemianism. In particular Ibiza combined a relatively liberal attitude toward drugs with a reputation for all night partying embodied in the sland's night clubs which were open until dawn at least. Ibiza was host to the usual 'hippy' bundle of psychedelic mind-expansion and fuzzy global unity sensibilities. Combined with the fact that Ibiza was a short flight from the UK and that Spain had become by the 1970s the number one destination for young working class British holidaymakers and the we get what might be described as the 'Balearic coincidence'.

A group of young white working class men from London, with experience of London's club and music cultures from Reggae to Hip Hop and Rare Groove, holidaying on the Island in 1986 found that a combination of American acid house (mixed by Ibiza DJs like Alfredo with a range of music styles including flamenco and rock), clubs which were open all night, and the use of the drug MDMA or ecstasy which was available in Ibiza along the traveller pathways that linked Ibiza to Amsterdam and New York made for a new kind of dance experience. On their return to the UK, so the story goes, this group almost alone created UK dance culture. Undoubtedly the influence of the Balearic DJs was significant. The clubs they each opened in London to recapture the Ibiza feel – Nicki Holloway's 'The Trip', Paul Oakenfold's 'Spectrum' and 'Land of Oz', Jenni and Danny Rampling's Shoom' – were hugely significant in disseminating and popularising acid house and the rave ethos. These clubs were held initially in small venues on the fringes of the capitals official club circuit, venues like the 'soundshaft' the small club behind Heaven in The Strand (The trip) or a sports Hall in Elephant and Castle (Schoom).

Rapidly these clubs came to the attention first of the inner circle of the London 'style' media (The Face and iD magazines) and latterly of the British tabloid press who launched a series of 'moral panics' which, as Sarah Thornton argues significantly increased their attraction for young people (1995). Well connected with London-based journalists and fashion leaders the Balearic DJs and their clubs rapidly became popular. Larger and larger crowds flocked to see and participate in this strange new phenomenon – people dancing all night to a new faster music, wreathed in dry ice and strobe lights, apparently invigorated and freed from inhibition in an almost magical way.

During 1987 the acid scene remained relatively underground but by the summer of 1988 when the Balearic DJs had moved their clubs to bigger venues – Oakenfold's

Spectrum taking over the huge gay club Heaven on a Monday night and within a few weeks filling it up – acid was a nationally recognised event. This so called "second summer of love" also triggered a phenomena perceived also to be novel and distinct, known as raves. A 'rave' is an acid house party. These could take many forms from the small, intimate and free (one hundred people in a country manor) to the huge and expensive – one rave at castle Donnington hosted 25,000 people, and such events by the late 1980s could cost upwards of £25 pounds (which did not include the drugs which were rapidly becoming compulsory). The chief characteristics of the rave are first, that they would not take place at purpose built clubs but be held either in some kind of available legitimate space – recording studio, leisure centres – or staged illegally on farmland, or abandoned buildings. Secondly that they have very loud continuous music pumped out by a sound system and all-night dancing. As should be obvious from this description 'raves' were extensions of the warehouse party. The rave scene certainly contained new features – raves were generally bigger than warehouses, they took the phenomena out of the inner city and into suburbia, the countryside and parts of the UK which had no club scenes of any kind, spreading eventually across the UK from Cornwall to the North of Scotland. They placed the consumption of a particular kind of drug at the centre of their practice, and they brought huge numbers of white British youth onto dance floors for the first time. But they were still modelled after the Reggae dances and warehouse parties of London's dance culture, although in practice raves tended to alienate the very same people on whose cultural model they were built.

There was some obvious continuity between warehouse and raves. One of the first London 'raves' was a warehouse party – Hedonism – and for a trime Rare Groove and house would coexist within one club space. Some London based events managed to hold together a degree of multi-cultural unity such as the *Westworld* and *Enter The Dragon* parties which successfully combined acid house and Rare Groove sound systems, and held their parties in multi-cultural space such as the Academy in the heart of Brixton. At this point even commercial black American pop was distinctly hybrid – early house tunes such as those produced by Todd Terry, the C&C Music Factory (Clivilles and Cole), The Turntable Orchestra, Inner City and Ce Ce Penniston were recognisably soul based and fit alongside soul and funk on the dance floor. They were also chart hits. This was also the era of 'hip house' a short-lived Hip Hop-house hybrid which briefly, with tunes like The Jungle Bothers 'I'll House You,' the breakbeat house of Nitro Deluxe's 'This Brutal House' and the fast rap-over house beats of DJ Fast Eddie, appeared to be the house genre most likely to cross over into

mainstream pop. Such musical hybridity seemed able to extend the format of the warehouse party into an even greater social and musical mix. But with acid house the ubiquity of ecstasy was increasingly marked in the music itself as psychedelic washes, rhythmic simplicity and constant musical climaxes, favoured by those experiencing the ecstasy 'rush', began to predominate. The 'broad church' of rave dreamt of by Oakenfold, Holloway and Rampling took on the flavour of a narrow music and drug cult. The difference which the use of ecstasy made pushed the genres apart, a difference of tone which can be glimpsed through the changing taxonomy of event names: from Rare Groove's neo-familial solidarity and retro chic – Family Funktion, The Company, Shake and Finger Pop, Good Times, Soul II Soul to the altered state of mind, and psychedelic connotations of the late 1980s 'raves' Hedonism, Delirium, Sunrise, Tribal Gathering and Biology.

Unlike the hidden venues of the black public sphere raves promised to do away with what Bauman (1995) calls the "postulated togetherness" community. They offered the possibility of new forms of sociality not based on restrictive notions of belonging – racial, gender class or any other. They were potentially arenas of freely chosen involvement which offered new ways of being young, new post-modern even cyborgian (Pini 1995) identities via the mediation of the 'technologies' of digital production, the sound system and drugs. There was huge promise in the rave moment for every young person who encountered it, black and white. All of my informants participated to some degree or other in rave culture, black as well as white. From 1988 onwards 'rave' is the first dance music subculture which is not predicated directly on a notion or the imagery of black (American or Caribbean) culture. The emphasis on 'faceless' post-human technology and transcendence through drugs replaces the embodied black voice of soul, the 'live' drum breaks of Rare Groove, and the images of hipster and rude boy beloved of skinhead and Mod. The rigid stratifications of race, class and gender by which the social is subdivided and policed are, in Simon Reynolds words "fluxed up" in "a promiscuous chaos". There is great promise here, and Reynolds details the way in which, for example, rivalries between football gangs, male sexual threat and homophobia are reduced by ecstasy in an environment where "everyone is kissy-kissy" (Reynolds, 1999: 44).

Rave promised to dissolve the "tensions of heterogeneity" (David Harvey) and free participants from the stultifying norms of British social inhibition, to found a 'rave new world'. Yet there is little evidence for the longevity of these changes (which occurred usually at the very beginning of each local rave scene amongst people in

their first flush of the love affair with good quality MDMA) or for the specific lessening of racial tensions. Rave, despite its black Atlantic circuitry, alienated the wider black audience. There was something about the 'vibe' of the rave which made it a conspicuously white affair. The rapid souring of the Balearic dream, and the commercialisation of rave and the domination of drug gangs, football firms and anrcho-capitalist public school promoters were all factors in this homogenisation. But so were the basic principles of rave; its rhythms, forms of dance, and the consumption of ecstasy.

**Rave economics**

Despite the everybody welcome rhetoric and fluffy sentiments of the public (smiley) face of rave culture, the increased profits made available through the mass popularisation of Acid House and particularly the soaring use of ecstasy, drew profit hungry entrepreneurs into the club promotion business. In his history of acid house 'Energy Flash', Simon Reynolds' (1999: chapter 2) provides a fascinating account of rave's economic development. He emphasises the way in which gangs of organised criminals infiltrated the rave scene at the dawn of the 1990s, because of the huge profits to be made not only in hosting raves but in supplying them with ecstasy (which hovered at around £20 a pill during this period). As rave which had started as a West End and somewhat exclusive scene (despite or because of the fact that the rave originators were working class Londoners) spread it moved East, toward the large post-industrial areas of East London ripe with potential rave venues, at which point gangs of organised criminals, such as the football 'firms' like the notorious ICF (Inter City Firm, West Ham's travelling supporters), began to take control of the organisation, 'security' and drug supply for raves in the area.

The higher economic stakes shifted the emphasis from a cultural to an economic rationale as promoters who had no experience of music or connection to London's black music networks entered the field. Ambitious entrepreneurs like Quinton 'Tintin' Chambers, Jeremy Taylor and Tony Coulston-Hayter who had met promoting the Gatecrasher balls for aristocratic "hooray henrys and henriettas" (Collin, 1987) began to recognise the economic potential of raves. Paul Staines, a right wing libertarian 'anarcho-capitalist' worked as an aide to Thatcher adviser David Hart before joining the *Sunrise* rave-promotion organisation (Collin, 1987).
These anarcho-capitalists were unscrupulous, rapacious and inventive. In one incident Coulston Hayter persuaded a senior police officer that the rave he was

holding was a private party for George Michael. So successful was his 'blag' that the police ended up helping out with the parking arrangements.[16] These promoters were allied with the networks distributing ecstasy. Huge profits were available, and the ecstasy benumbed crowds were easily pleased – they would respond en masse to simple musical cues – with the pitched up regular rhythmic climax as the most overused technique. This crowd were frequently so 'out of it' that hundreds of pounds could be found on the floors of the rave bars (selling water at £2) dropped by oblivious ravers who had lost their orientation and sensory perception. As raves became big business they moved further and further from the practices, values and techniques of the black public sphere where physical grace and control is a *sine qua non* of social respect.

## Rave dancing

Diasporic dance, as I have argued, is an embodied form of knowledge and memory (Connerton, 1991) built upon agreed traditions, established through repetition (Marable, 1990). The stiff monotonous beats of acid house and Techno, and the arm-waving and glassy-eyed grins of the drug-fuelled dancers, were in stark contrast to the forms of discipline and control, of gesture and dramaturgy, which competence on the black dance floor demanded. Truly this was a democratisation of dancing from the perspective of white Britons, and white men in particular, previously too intimidated by black dance competence to take to the dance floor in soul, funk, Reggae or Rare Groove clubs. Suddenly the rules are changed. Regular militarised rhythm reduced the complexity of dance steps as did the consumption of ecstasy – a remarkable drug which dramatically reduces social inhibitions and produces, when high quality, a warm glow of well being and a twitchy nervous sensation which virtually forces your body to move. Ecstasy encourages a turning inward, a loss of inhibition and gives even the least rhythmically competent the confidence to take to the floor.

Simon Reynolds, who is the most eloquent advocate of rave, cites one early rave convert on its uniqueness: "you'd dance for six hours. The idea was 'if you're not into dancing, then don't come down'."[17] All night dance parties since the early Afro-Caribbean blues and throughout the warehouse era were the norm in black dance cultures. This was hardly an innovation of 'rave.' As for the ethos of 'if you're not

[16] Personal communication with Coulsten Hayter, April 10 1997
[17] Reynolds, 1999: 47

dancing don't come down', I have already cited Jazzie B. of Soul II Soul on this subject, from several years before rave. These elements could only look novel to someone, like Reynolds, who had no experience of the London's multi-cultural dance music networks before 1988. What was new was ecstasy, "a miracle cure for the English disease of emotional constipation, reserve and inhibition."[18] The drug appeared to dissolve the norms of white masculinity, challenging the heteronormativity (Ross, 1998) of the straight dance floor – "they were beginning to come to terms with the idea that y'know I'm a man but I can hug my mate, it was as if they had taken this Ecstasy and they were releasing themselves for the first time."[19]

We have already encountered the argument that black dance floor sociability – during the long Saturday night (or the Wednesday and Sunday nights which black parties were frequently confined) – allowed Afro-Caribbean Britons to cast off the 'endless pressure' of everyday racism, reconnect to the Afro-Caribbean habitus (Dennis,1999), experience pleasure and freedom unavailable in the larger social sphere.

In chapter 3 I connected this to the tradition of diasporic dance and suggested that through dance memory and sensibility was brought in to the body, and articulated by it. It should therefore be obvious that black Britain already had a deep and lasting relationship to dance and to the freedom of the dance floor which did not require ecstasy to get them loosened up. For Reynolds raving was about "losing it, losing your cool, losing your self-consciousness" (39) in the rush of drug induced euphoria he has accurately named a form of 'spiritual materialism' a greed for sensation. But for those populations for whom dance had always been associated with different registers of sociality and collectively, differently nuanced relations between self and group (local, racial, national) ecstasy-trance dance offered little that was attractive. For, in the expressive cultures of black Britain, dance *already* "nurtured forms of self-consciousness, historicity and sociality [and] orchestrated the relationship between the individual and the group" (Gilroy, 1997: 22). Which is not to say that black people, individually, did not take ecstasy – many happily did. But it is to argue that any possible community they might aspire to through music didn't *need* the drug to create the conditions for it to happen.

[18] Barry Ashworth cited in Reynolds, 1999: 47
[19] Mark Moore cited in ibid: 39

The development of a different set of body technologies to that which pertained on the black dance floor is mirrored in the music, which is increased 'bleached' of the influences of funk and R&B. The traces of Reggae, Hip Hop and soul in house and Detroit Techno are gradually weeded out, especially in European forms of Techno (Reynolds, 1999: 56). This movement away from the forms of Black Atlantic music and its social consumption practices reflects and contributes to the 'whitening' of the rave crowd; as rave gets bigger and acid house and ecstasy become increasingly domineant racial homogeneity increases contradicting its own rhetoric of inclusion. Acid House, which had originated in the autonomous black public spheres of Northern US cities, and had in London, been very closely associated with a multi-cultural habitus, *become* white.

**Black House**

Just like rock 'n' roll in the fifties, soul in the 1970s, and Hip Hop in the 1980s house music was received by the white London audience primarily as American music rather than black music. This was despite its formal links to funk and gospel and the fact that the majority of house and Techno music productions were by black American producers working within relatively racially homogenous music scenes. However the black dance audience in London received and understood house in an altogether different way than its original producers. Acid house precipitated a split in black London club culture, as well as in its multicultural manifestations: you either went raving, or chose to stick with funk and soul (including Swing Beat at this period) which defined themselves as 'rave' free zones. Some clubs nights, like Slow Motion (at Maximus, Leicester Square), made a selling point of playing no music faster than 100bpms, way below the rave threshold; but this was merely a marker of 'rave hegemony' elsewhere.

But the rupture between funk and house in club culture should not be exaggerated. House music and even 'acid house' *had*, since 1985, been incorporated into the DJ sets of many black DJs. Acid house and rave in Britain became white in a way that belied the multiple way in which it was incorporated into London club life. There is a parallel history of how house and even acid house was received and understood within pre-existing structures of black sociability, where its link with ecstasy was not its most significant feature, and the links to other black Atlantic forms were not repressed. The small but influential black and multi-cultural acid networks which

would evolve into the hardcore scenes of the early 1990s and bear strange fruit in 1992/3 in the construction of new musical genres, Jungle and UK garage.

### *High On Hope* at *Trouble's House*

In chapter 4 I touched on the careers of two Black London DJs whose trajectories through musical subcultures link the Reggae sound system with soul and Rare Groove. Paul 'Trouble' Anderson the DJ at the Jazzifunk club between 1980 and 1985 was a significant influence on the development of the Rare Groove scene and of the soul and Hip Hop sounds systems. Norman Jay was the prime mover in Rare Groove. Yet both DJs resisted their classification as merely retro funk DJs. As early as 1986 they were inspired by the models of the gay racially mixed New York nightlife, particularly the examples of Larry Levan and Tony Humphries the DJs at New York's sweaty all-nighter The Paradise Garage which they had both visited in the mid 1980s. They immediately took up the new music, but without abandoning their allegiance to previous genres. At the warehouse parties and Rare Groove clubs they continued to play the funk and soul that the crowd insisted upon (later Rare Groove crowds were there precisely to hear certain records, and as rave grew Rare Groove fundamentalism hardened). But at other clubs and parties the two DJs played house. Anderson started his own club 'Troubles' House' at the HQ club in Camden in 1986. That same year Norman and his partner Femi, at the same time as running warehouse parties, began a new club at Dingwalls, also in Camden, called 'High on Hope'. The ambience of both clubs transplanted the up-tempo urban chic of New York house clubs to London's multicultural dance floors.

'High On Hope' featured luminous wall hangings, picked out by ultra violet lighting in the style of New York graffiti artist Keith Haring. The music policy allowed Jay to sonically demonstrate the formal links between the up-tempo orchestral soul of the Salsoul and Philly labels, disco, and the newer styles of New York house heavily influenced by the New York Latino 'freestyle' (such as can be heard in Aleem's 'Get Loose', Hamilton Bohannon 'Lets Start To Dance' and Candido's 'Jingo'). The new sounds of Chicago Jack-styles – JM Silk, Steve 'Silk Hurley' and Colonel Abrahams – were also built into the mix. Unlike the blaxpolitation chic of warehouses High On Hope showcased the new athletic, logoed sportswear fashions associated with Hip Hop and more appropriate to the heavy sweaty aerobic workout which accompanied a night of dancing to music with bpms of over 120. This club suggested the continuity

of Afro-Diasporic music within which house – and acid – were merely the next stage of innovation: "House was the obvious next step."[20]

Informants describe the music as 'uplifting', as a euphoric experience, but this was achieved without the ingestion ecstasy. Just as with warehouse parties the use of cannabis was ubiquitous and tolerated, if used discretely, by the club's management. There was a full bar. But as far as the organisers and attendees that I have spoken to were aware there was no heavy drug use, and certainly no ecstasy which would appear in London in 1987 and not become generally available – in acid house clubs – until 1988/9. Thus two years before the 'acid house' explosion, 'house' music from New Jersey, New York and Chicago, played side by side with its musical forbears – Salsoul and Latin disco, electro and Hip Hop – was being consumed and understood in the context of London multi-cultural club culture.

In addition to the clubs this music was being disseminated via the channels of independent and pirate radio stations where, between funk soul and Rare Groove shows, figures like Jazzy M on LWR, Colin Faver, Steve Jackson and Bobbi and Steve on Kiss, introduced the new music of black America. Club promoters from the soul and Rare Groove scene made frequent trips to New York and Chicago to scout for records and returned not only with stacks of vinyl but also with tapes recorded from New York radio stations like WBLS where DJs like Timmy Regisford were mixing house with Hip Hop and funk. The networks of music affiliation, word of mouth and tapes, spread the music in ways unaccounted for by the official histories of rave.

**Soul sound systems and house**

The soul sound systems that had been so important in establishing soul and Rare Groove amongst the multicultural audience in London were also instrumental in incorporating house music into the circuits of black subculture. Systems such as Mastermind who had originated a unique six-deck mixing style (Hinds and Mosco, 1988) began to incorporate house music in 1986, and while much of the audience at this point were ambivalent about the newer, faster sounds, Mastermind 'made sense' of the new form through juxtaposing it with more familiar funk and Hip Hop. The London based Shock sounds, run by brothers Stan and Dean and a crew of their friends, formed as a Reggae/soul sound in 1983. Shock played mainly Reggae, funk and soul to begin with, and travelled frequently to play in Nottingham, Derby and

[20] Dodge, interview

Birmingham. In 1987 they returned to playing primarily in London as the emerging 'house' scene began to disrupt Rare Groove.[21] As house music spread along the circuits of the London club scene several prominent soul and funk DJs began to champion the new style. DJs like Roy the Roach and Judge Jules, who had made their name in Rare Groove, began to integrate house into their sets. Even Soul II Soul forever associated with London' multi-cultural Rare Groove scene integrated house into their sets. It was the Soul II Soul club at the Africa centre in 1986where camp male 'disco diva' Darryl Pandy first performed his soon to be chart hit with Farley 'Jackmaster' Funk 'Love Can't Turn Around'.

**Black Acid**

'Raves' were dependent on the model of the Afro-Caribbean sound system and not only as a source of inspiration and historical precedent. This is because Reggae sound systems in many cases were called upon to provide the 'hardware' for the raves themselves. Sound systems such as London's *Saxon*, the *Renegade* sound in Slough and *Challenger* in Gloucester found lucrative work in providing the big sets which raves required to project their sounds across the large (often outdoor) raves.

Bryan, from the West Country, was brought to London from Gloucester by the centrifugal pull of London's sound system culture. Settling in Brixton he made alliances with other sound system operators and set up both a soul sound system, Kleer, and a pirate radio station (with DJ-partner Jumping Jack Frost), Passion, broadcasting from his Brixton bedroom. In the mid 1980s he was an enthusiastic attendee of warehouse parties throughout London, and started his own Rare Groove club, Carwash, in South London. He was not part of the Balearic group of DJs. Any account of the origins of rave culture must take into consideration the development of the 'black acid' scenes that he was part of. It began with a visit to an 'underground' club which though it played the similar kind of music as Spectrum, Shoom and The Trip – the West End acid clubs which received the bulk of the attention in the style press – remained closer to the model of black London clubbing. This unlicensed club, called RIP (for Revolution in Progress), was run by North Londoner's Paul Stone and Lu Vukovic at Clink Street in Southwark (close to the site of the Bear Wharf warehouse parties). The promoters tried to distinguish themselves from the more high profile 'Shoom' scene[22] by excluding the press.

[21] Stan Shock, Carnival Guide, Touch/Time Out, 1995: 20
[22] Boy George, Patsy Kensit, and members of Frankie Goes To Hollywood, ABC, and journalists Robert Elms and Gary Crowley all attended Shoom, Collin, 1997: 66 & 73

"I can't remember how we got there, I didn't know where I was," says Bryan, "but that was the turning point ... we all started doing the same thing. Fabio, Grooverider, Dave Angel, Frost, Booker T, we all shared the same funk background but we all changed. We all started buying the music and introducing it onto our radio show, then all of a sudden our whole radio show was like that and we started getting stick for it." The music network he was involved with revolved around playing soul, funk and Rare Groove to a largely black Brixton audience. To this audience Acid House was perceived as a white, West End phenomenon and not readily accepted by the audience. Unlike other Black Atlantic genres acid lacked the black voice or other self evidently black music affect, to secure identification. Put off by the association with drugs and crazy white kids Afro Caribbean Londoners tended to steer well clear of rave.

Bryan admits that one of the problems was that 'acid house' relied strongly on the combination of music and crowd in specific locations. Without access to Clink Street, which was unique in the degree to which it married black sound systems aesthetics (both Shock and Soul II Soul played there in 1988) with the newer acid house sounds of Detroit and gradually the UK, the music was difficult to understand for an audience schooled in Reggae and funk. "If someone had just played the music to me I probably would have said 'take that fucking shit out of my face, that's just noise', that's how people perceived it in Brixton. Don't forget that you've got to go to this kind of thing, to feel it, you can't just hear it on the radio and say 'yeah I'm into this thing'. It was the whole vibe, the lights, the people, everything that made it happen ... people thought we were on drugs in Brixton."[23] Acid house certainly looked new and fresh to these black producers and offered a new take on clubbing. But other black audiences with long standing associations with social dance networks were wary of this new form.

Nevertheless Bryan and his peers became hooked on acid house and in addition to 'raving' as much as possible, including attending the 'orbital' raves beyond the city, they started to establish a small acid house scene in Brixton itself, despite the reservations of the soul crowd. Using their experience and connections in the music cultures of Reggae, soul and Rare Groove, G., Fabio, Grooverider and Jumping Jack Frost quickly established themselves as acid DJs and instigated a series of nights which presented rave in the context of black club culture. Carwash, which had been a

Rare Groove club, started playing acid house around the same time as Shoom and Spectrum were taking off. A series of illegal and semi legal nights in Brixton drinking dens like Mendozas and Steppers at the 414 club became the heart for a small but influential black acid network. During the summer of 1988 Clapham Common became an informal 'wind down zone' for each weekend's ravers, where a multicultural crowd of several hundred congregated on Sunday afternoons. The Brixton acid scene, which was largely illegal, and located in the centre of the inner city, sought no publicity, and established itself by word of mouth. Like Clink street these clubs were hard to find and could appear unwelcoming to new comers. Black acid tended to draw out the darker more dystopian themes of acid house, linking it thematically though sampling and mixing with Hip Hop.

Within a year the DJs Fabio (an insurance agent) and Grooverider (an accounts clerk) who had met as funk DJs on the pirate station Phase 1, became established as among the most in-demand acid house DJs. By 1989 the pair were 'rave heroes' (Collin, 1997), appearing at numerous 'raves' as they spread from London across the South East. In 1989 the duo started a new club at Heaven in Charing Cross, Rage, which though an 'acid' club eschewed the 'happy strains' of acid just as it relied upon the hard 'raving' principles of black dance floor aesthetics. Drugs including ecstasy were ubiquitous, but the ambience was very different from the 'luvved up' norm of white rave. Fabio and Grooverider each in their own way sought to connect acid house with the continuum of black Atlantic musical styles which they already knew. Fabio favoured the more musically complex jazz-funk oriented tunes and Grooverider the harder more percussive beats which were reminiscent of Hip Hop and ragga. Significantly as acid house developed, they began to manipulate the technology at their disposal , the records, turntables and mixing desks, in such a way as to emphasise the breakbeats hidden within the synchronised four-square house rhythms. By pitching Techno tracks up or down and playing the beat loops on b-sides, they roughed up the smooth surface of house so beloved of the hippie aesthetes of rave, and accentuated the rough, raw, energy of acid which structurally linked it to the linage of 'Afro-Futurism' (Eshun, 1999) psychedelic jazz, p-funk and the 'sonic terrordome' (Reynolds, 1998) of Hip Hop.

Linked pockets of 'black rave' culture sprang up across London. In East London the Reggae soul sound system 'Shut Up and Dance' (SUAD), who had been remixing American Hip Hop in an East London Reggae context scored an unintentional rave

[23] Bryan G. Interview

hit with their 1989 spoof of rave's musical simplicity '5678'. Sonically the music fit well into rave culture yet SUAD remained critical outsiders to the main current of 'rave', making ironic commentaries on the supposed collectivism, the activities of unscrupulous promoters, and the gullibility of the drug-addled audience with their tunes, "£10 to get in" (and it's remix "£20 to get in") and "(Raving) I'm Raving." Carl Hymen (Smiley) from SUAD, remained sceptical of the claims made from rave togetherness: "People always argue that raves have successfully united blacks and whites, but in reality that argument's bollocks. Everyone at raves is on a fucking E [ecstasy]. If you took the drugs out of the raves and everyone was just on spliff and drink, you know what would happen? There'd be fights. In fact if you take E's out of the rave scene it wouldn't even exist in the first place."[24] Other sound systems, like the interracial 'Top Buzz' crew from Tottenham took a similarly irreverent attitude to raves, refusing to accept their claims to novelty, yet enjoying the 'mental' part of raving. "I never saw it as that different from Reggae or Hip Hop" says DJ Mikee B, "we just mixed everything up together."[25]

Another group of DJs and sound operators from North London – Timmi Magic, Dr S Gatchet, Kenny Ken – were RIP regulars where they assimilated the new music as mixed by Hip Hop and Reggae veterans DJ 'Evil' Eddie Richards and Mr C (Richard West) who 'presented' acid in the context of the sound system. Even in the West End certain clubs like the Sunday night 'Confusion' on Shaftsbury Avenue, retained the feel of a black club by staying close to the form of the sound system. DJs like Ashley Beadle drew out house's links to uptempo jazz and funk, and Reggae chatters like E-Mix toasted over the beats. Rapidly these seasoned DJs became prominent fixtures on the lucrative nationwide rave scene, but they played to more and more racially homogenous crowds. Increasingly black DJs – Fabio, Grooverider and Carl Cox – came to dominate the decks at whiter and whiter raves.

## Conclusion: Rave contradictions

In terms of race and its relationship to the black music scenes that preceded it, rave was profoundly contradictory. It was built on the models of sound system culture, the legacy of funk, soul, and Hip Hop, the 'hardware' of the sound system, and the knowledge and experience not only of a generation of white DJs skilled in the norms of black clubbing, but of black specialists like Frost, Fabio, Grooverider and Bryan G.

[24] Interviewed in i–D magazine 7/92 cited by Collin, 1997: 243
[25] C. Melville 'The Dreem Team, Touch Magazine 79 April, 1998

Acid house drew portions of its crowd from the Rare Groove and funk subcultures of the mid 1980s, and millions more from far beyond the club circuits of the multi-cultural city. It instigated something of a revolution in taste and behaviour.

Yet it failed to extend the multi-cultural constituencies that distinguished London club culture up to 1988. What looked like an epochal change for those (white) youth with no access to social dance traditions or experience of 'dance floor communities', was significantly less profound, for those for whom having music and social dance at the centre of one's leisure activities had been an integral part of their lives for many years. For all its emphasis on non-conformity, rebellion, freedom the rave scene virtually mandated the consumption of one drug with rather predictable universal effects. This lead both to a narrowing of the musical variety, an homogenisation of the rave atmosphere and an over-reliance on drug dealers and the fluctuating quality of their products (several countrywide 'rave' slumps have been attributed to the unavailability or sudden drop in quality of the ecstasy supply, Collin, 1997).

Despite the important activities of a small group of London black music experts it is clear that rave marginalised the black audience. Among even the black ravers who frequented the urban and rural raves of the late 1980s there was a sense that although the music was exciting, rave wasn't welcoming to a black audience.[26] Several remarked that they never felt fully comfortable there, or that while they liked the music, they didn't want to dance. Some like DJ Kenny Ken notes that even those clubs espousing the most extreme forms of 'love and unity' operated exclusionary policies where 'knock-backs' (ie the inability to get past the bouncers and into the club) were frequent.[27]

The impact of Acid House was ambiguous. On the one hand raving attracted large groups of black and white youth who had had no access to the relatively specialised circuits of warehouse party culture. Once Acid House entered the public consciousness it was no longer necessary to be networked to the subterranean circuitry of records, pirate radio or word of mouth. Big London raves like Sunrise, Biology and Raindance and the other large events which began to spread beyond the M25 which encircles the capital, were heavily marketed and foten legal. If club flyers are less 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' (Rose, 1990) and more 'direct marketing' as Thornton (1994) argues, then the big glossy rave flyers distributed in their tens of

[26] Roni Size cited in Melville, 1997 'Size Matters' Touch Magazine
[27] Kenny Ken cited in Wiser, 1995

thousands attested to the marketing savvy, big budgets and business aspirations of the big rave promoters. Press coverage in the Tabloids and style magazine reinforced the mass appeal of rave.

On the other hand through these processes, and the normalisation of ecstasy consumption, what had felt to participants as adventurous, active and democratically organised club culture, started to look like a new form of conformism, a retreat from rather than an extension of cultural self-determination: "You paid your twenty quid to get in, you twenty quid for a pill, and there you were, with everyone else, feeling the same thing, doing the same thing making someone else rich."[28] For all it initial promise, its new forms of "mind/body/technology assemblage "(Pini, 1997: 124), its new sounds and new freedoms (for some women, for large sections of white youth) rave failed to live up to the promises of freedom its rhetoric – 'Promised Land', 'One Day We Will All Be Free' 'Everyone is free to feel good' – so vividly asserted.

Never before in British dance culture had black cultural producers achieved the degree of prominence within primarily white subcultural space that Fabio, Grooverider, Frost and Carl Cox were able to. Yet black ravers like these did not abandon their long standing commitments to black Atlantic music and as the 'rave' scene broke down and began to subdivide in the early 1990s they increasingly took a leading role in the 'hardcore' scenes which retained a degree of multi-cultural collectivity which was missing from the mass rave era.

[28] Femi, interview

## Chapter 7: 'A London Some'ting Dis'[1]: Jungle remaps the city

"When you break it down, the musical history that has happened in England, we've had to invent new forms of music, it was inevitable."[2]

"I welcomed Jungle as a long lost friend."[3]

### Welcome to the Jungle

Throughout this thesisI have emphasised the importance of balancing historical ruptures with an understanding of continuity. In this regard I agree with Paul Gilroy that Amiri Baraka's notion of 'the changing same', with its socio-political correlative in the unfulfilled promise of black liberation,[4] is a useful theoretical device when applied to understanding Afro-diasporic cultural production. Operating across different scales, from the breakbeat, the basic building block of Afro-diasporic rhythm, which repeats but with difference, to the lyrical injunctions to 'keep on keeping on' and 'keep on moving' which enshrine a political relentlessness in the face of the repeated set-backs of black liberation, to the long history of Black Atlantic popular dance music which has innovated genre after genre without ultimately stepping too far from the rhythmic patterns of west Africa and the sacred relationship between drum, bass and body , Baraka has identified a homological unity across the diverse terrain of black popular music. Does this unity still exist? Can we find it in contemporary genres of post-acid dance? This chapter poses these questions in relation to the genre 'Jungle'.

'Jungle', a musical genre and club scene which emerges in the periphractic urban space of mid 1990s London, in the shady clubs and pubs of Dalston, Bow, Tottenham and Brixton and the suburban rave scenes of Kent and Essex, exemplifies this changing same. Most versions of Jungle's origins assume it to have emerged from the rave scene, and this is half right. Jungle in its sounds and styles self-consciously reconnected rave culture to its Black Atlantic antecedents and contemporaries: jazz, soul, funk, Hip Hop and dancehall. It was in part a response to and correction of the 'whitening' of rave.

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[1] The title of a jungle track by Code 071 (1992)
[2] DJ Krust. Interview With DJ Krust and Roni Size, 10th July 1997. Portions of this interview were published as Melville, C 'Size Matters' in Touch magazine 71 July 1997: 14
[3] Cleveland W, interview

In its iconography, argot and sound texts Jungle declared itself indelibly marked by race. Not by an uncomplicated *a priori* blackness predicated on a stable essential African past, but a racial hybridity, a *mixture*. Jungle reclaimed, resignified, celebrated the identity of the 'mongrel' or racial hybrid, on the level of sound as a mixture of Techno, hip-hop and ragga Jungle was a hybrid of hybrids. Goldie, one of the pioneers of Jungle music, suggests that Jungle provides the musical correlative, and perhaps the answer, to his experience of growing up mixed race in 1980s Britain: "I would look at the colour of my skin and think: I'm not black I'm not white, I'm not anybody, who am I?"[5]

This chapter is concerned with exploring both Jungle's textual and its social composition. It investigates the relationship between Jungles' putatively 'new form' and the black Atlantic rhythmic traditions I have described. It asks; if Jungle is indeed "the first truly British black music"[6] what is its relationship with the nation and national belonging? Can we read the emergence of Jungle as evidence of black-Britons resolving creatively the tension between the two sides of their hyphenated identities, or even of the nation itself registering the importance even the benefit of its multicultural destiny? What can a reading of Jungle texts and contexts tell us about the ambivalences inherent in post-colonial urban culture, and the difficulties, violence and psychological pressure of urban living in the last decade of the twentieth century?

Central to the claims I have been making for popular dance cultures is that their network structure both anticipates the post-traditional 'network society', and has the potential for acting as a countervailing force to the processes of separation and estrangement because they do not respect borders of race, class or locality. Does Jungle achieve a new form of post-racial popular culture and constitute a new form of ethnicity, hybrid at the core? Or is it like the Rare Groove anthems I have discussed, like the soundtrack for a movie not yet made, music which corresponds to an identity and community not yet formed, measuring sonically the distance yet to be travelled socially?

[4] Baraka, 1980b, Gilroy, 1993: chapter 3
[5] cited in Collin, 1997: 255
[6] Ibid: 260

## Defining Jungle

As with all hybrid forms the meaning and origin of Jungle are open to interpretation, and to co-option: For Les Back Jungle is a direct descendent of the Reggae sound system tradition. A London based "new and richly syncretic form" which while it creatively fuses elements of Reggae, Hip Hop, house and rave is nonetheless continuous with Afro-diasporic cultural production.[7] For Simon Reynolds, by contrast, Jungle is "the black sheep of the *post-rave diaspora*".[8] Reynolds' phrase does some odd work here. It decouples Jungle from the racial history of the black Atlantic continuum, by asserting the existence of a 'rave' diaspora (imagining 'rave' as the point of original unity) and reinserts 'race' surreptitiously in the phrase "black sheep", implying (correctly) that what was disreputable and upsetting (to the ravers) about Jungle was to do with its codings of blackness. American critic Greg Tate also notes the link between Jungle's hectic rhythms its racial codings – between its sonic and its social dissonance – but his historical palette is broader than Reynolds. Comparable to Jazz and to Reggae, in its cultural-political significance at least, Jungle amounts to "the first original form of music to emerge from the black experience in the United Kingdom, a sound and a movement that UK blacks can unequivocally call their own."[9]

But for Jungle producers, DJs, MCs and consumers (self identified as 'Junglists') while the black experience and black music styles are central to the musical subculture, Jungle is pre-eminently the music of 'multiculture', a hybrid form which is produced and performed in mixed space, by a mixed group of producers; "its not about black and white", declares MC Conrad, "its a multi-cultural, inter-racial dance thing."[10]

The emergence of Jungle music, in and around London in 1992/3, significantly reorganised the racial geography of London club culture by bringing large numbers of black ravers back into clubs dominated by rave and other forms of ecstasy-house, from which they had been (or felt) excluded. This 'new' generation was in fact not one

[7] Back, 1996
8 Reynolds, 1999: 238 (emphasis added)
[9] Tate, Jungle Boogies, Pulse Magazine, 1996, Tower Records
[10] MC Conrad cited in *Wiser*, 1994. 'MC' standing for 'Master of Ceremonies' is one of the many borrowings from Hip Hop argot and identifies the person who 'chats' into the microphone while jungle records are played by the DJ. Jungle MC's exemplify the 'diasporic code switching' Les Back identifies as a central practice in dancehall – they switch between American style rapping, the Jamaican patois of the dancehall, and the British regional accents used in Rave.

homogenous group defined by age, although many were teenagers, but a new congregation of black Londoners from several generations, both those new to club culture and groups with experience of the Reggae, soul, Rare Groove and black acid scenes. They were joined by a disparate grouping of white clubbers, Hip Hoppers drawn by the music's breakbeats, Rare Groove and Acid Jazz veterans enticed by Jungle's sonic debt to jazz and funk, ravers looking beyond the increasingly bankrupt promise of trance transcendence. The musical form and network of dissemination contributed to the cross-generational, cross class and trans-racial affiliations which Jungle manifested.

**Jungle Music**

Musically Jungle is a hybrid of Techno, Hip Hop and dancehall Reggae (ragga), combining these black Atlantic influences with the spirit and energy of 'rave' culture. Defined by its distinctive rhythmic form Jungle is distinguished from Techno and house because it is not based on an even, pulsing four/four beat derived from disco[11], and instead uses breakbeats, derived from Hip Hop and from the sources of Hip Hop breaks (jazz, funk and soul) as its rhythmic underpinnings. Jungle is distinguished from Hip Hop however by its use of multiple breakbeats. Rather than the one loop of Hip Hop Jungle tunes will often use six or more different breaks in a single tune, and as opposed to Hip Hops chugging uniformity Jungle tunes typically change tempo frequently within each 'sound text'. Jungle also differs from both Techno/house and Hip Hop in terms of pace defined by beats per minute (bpms). As opposed to the 80-100 bpms typical of Hip Hop and soul, or the 120 bpms of house, Jungle breakbeats will often clatter along at 160bpms. Unlike Techno, Jungle foregrounds poly-rhythm and poly-meter, not only do different breaks loop at different speeds, but Jungle separates out the tempo of the drum breaks from that of the bassline, which in Techno and house are conventionally at the same tempo.

Although Jungle is frequently (mis)understood as 'fast' or 'hyper' music in fact it exhibits a kind of rhythmic 'pluralism', because the basslines of Jungle drawn in many cases from the model of dub Reggae, move nearly always at about half the speed of the breaks, approximately 80bpms. This has the effect of offering two possible dance tempos, two temporal spaces inside the music, for the dancer to enter. Plural rhythm could be Jungle's most obvious and defining feature; it dramatically alters the feel of the dance floor, and the forms of movement licensed there. Pete

Haigh, producer for Omni Trio, suggested this in his discussion of the rhythmic pattern he calls a 'soul step': "When the tune is rolling at 160BPMs the first and third beats are emphasised [as in funk] ... which gives the illusion that the tune is running at 160 and 80bpms at the same time. It gives the music room to breathe and is much easier to dance to. Like the half speed Reggae bassline, the soul-step has made Jungle smooth-grooving, wind-your-waist music; sexy even."[12] This rhythmic doubleness played a significant role in securing the cross generational appeal of the form, older crowds more used to soul and Reggae, the same crowds alienated by fast mono-rhythmic rave, could dance to the basslines, while the youth could "jump up" to the fast breaks. The Jungle dance floor accommodated different age groups in a way that materialised its debt to Reggae, soul and lovers rock cultures – the spheres of black expressive more-than-youth cultures – rather than its more frequently touted rave antecedents.

It is this rhythmic structure that defines Jungle, rather than its melodic or harmonic structure that, as in the music of James Brown (Brackett, 1995), is an affect of the rhythm. This is both a relatively rigid structure, without the breaks or the bassline it would be rare for a piece of music to be considered Jungle or played at a Jungle club, and relatively 'open', almost any other genre of music can be laid over this rhythmic skeleton most commonly jazz, soul, funk, Reggae, acid house and 'ambient'/sound effects. As Simon Reynolds argues "Jungle is where all the different musics of the African-American /Afro-Caribbean diaspora ... reconverge"[13]. Thus Jungle has been defined as everything from 'Techno-Hip Hop'[14] to 'Cyber-Jazz' to 'digi-dub', 'gangsta-rave' [15] and 'raggamuffin-Techno'[16].

Jungle differs from House and rave in tone too – in contrast to house and garage's 'uplifting' rhetoric Jungle, especially in its early incarnation, is 'dark', hard, paranoid and scary. Many of its samples and much of its iconography was derived from Afro-Caribbean 'bad-bwoy' culture (with the use of vocal samples from Reggae vocalists like Cutty Ranks, Buju Banton, Ninja Man) and American 'gangsta' rap. Film soundtracks horror films, gangster films like *Goodfellas*, and Kung Fu films were favoured sources combined with a brutal edge connoting foreboding about the future characteristic of Belgium and German Techno

[11] What Jason Toynbee (2000) has defined as the Basic Disco Rhythm or BDR
[12] Pate Haigh (Omni Trio) Simon Reynolds, The Wire, 1995
[13] Reynolds, 1999: 246
[14] Noys, 1995
[15] Reynolds, 1994, 1999

## Jungle as British music

Jungle does not aspire to dissolve difference either sonically or socially, as rave did. Instead it foregrounds the anxiety of difference; it is tense, coiled, foreboding. Equally it does not, like rave, retreat into trance and ecstasy induced utopianism, a 'celebration' of difference overcome, predicated on the heterogeneity of its audience and the ingestion of ecstasy. Jungle and its discourse of 'darkness' of 'inner city pressure'[17] materialises tension, conflict, paranoia, makes these explicit formal themes, and in so doing, despite its turning away from the representational forms of language (like Techno Jungle largely does away with the traditional song structure and lyrics) it remains close to the narratives of suffering and of hope which lie at the heart of Afro-Diasporic music.[18] Jungle does not revolve around a serene imagined past or future – neither the promised land of Rasta Etheopia or Rare Grooves' Civil Rights inspired land of milk and honey, nor Techno's post-human ascetic interstellar utopia have any purchase in Jungle. It remains firmly in the here and now of late 20th century urban Britain.

For all the evidence of mistreatment by the 'mother country' through the previous decades, Jungle founds an Afro-Caribbean British sensibility right under her skirts. If the emergence of such vital cultural forms suggests that the "mother country" has been profoundly changed for the better by exposure to the culture of her (no longer) colonial 'children', it also suggests that multiculturalism is a process not a destination, that it needs work and commitment. Despite the overwhelming texture of gloom, crisis and destruction there is a strain of optimism within the Jungle discourse typified by Alex Reece's anthemic 1996 tune 'Feel the Sunshine'[19]. Interviewed in 1997 producer Roni Size exudes a confidence about this new music, a confidence grounded in social history, in the experience of black Britain: "we've had the worst of it for years, it was grim, but now we're having a laugh, the sun is shining, and we got new music."[20] Jungle is simultaneously a celebration and an argument that "Britain is not a place of gentle unchanging conflict-free peace, and never has been, and never will be."[21]

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[16] Collin, 1997
[17] cf 'Inner City Life' from Timeless, Goldie, 1995 ffrr.
[18] Gilroy, 1993. Jungle is as upfront about difference, in its way, as Curtis Mayfield is in 'Mighty Mighty, Spade and Whitey', 1969.
[19] Alex Reece, 'Feel The Sunshine' 12" Island Records
[20] Melville, 'Size Matters' Touch Magazine, march 1997
[21] Robinson, 2001: 6

Indeed Jungle exhibits a "strange patriotism" (Reynolds, 1999). It declares itself essentially British. But what is understood as the essential quality of Junglist Britain is the way it functions as a crossroads and a meeting place for the various Afro-diasporic musical and cultural traditions that Jungle mixes and extends. Jungle forces Britain to imagine itself in terms of its post-colonial cities, and London in particular, and to come to terms with the racial hybridity that is there: But not in terms of a vapid celebration. If Jungle encapsulates a Britishness it is not a national character of unalloyed good-fellowship and phlegmatic tolerance; it is of 'inner city pressure', a unifying experience of urban meltdown, unemployment, racialised strife and, only then, it imagines possible transcendence through new forms of digitised music and dance networks. Jungle, as Nabeel Zuberi argues, is emphatically diasporic music, taking elements of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean form and sending them back along the routes of the Black Atlantic – this time *from* Britain: "the diasporic subject's return to Africa is impossible, [but] the black artist has pieced together, juxtaposed and digitally mixed up the fragments from the past – rummaged through the rubble of the past, the documents of barbarism, in Benjaminian fashion – to create something that bears the traces of a history of ruptures."[22]

Jungle is British then in a new way, because it is a local articulation of diasporic sensibility, indicative of the shifting, restless, dark and creative potential of the post-colonial city that is Britain's future. Jungle is an expression of the "sustained confrontations between same and different, black and white, native and interloper [that] have been staged for the benefit of the national community as a whole in urban environments, usually [...] those that London has supplied." [23]

## Hardcore, you know the score

Sociologically, one way of understanding Jungle as a distinct musical form and subculture and the one that predominates in dance histories, is that it emerged out of what has been called the 'hardcore' (or 'ardcore) scene. 'Hardcore', in contrast to the elite ranks of the Balearic scene (who were scornful about the 'dilution' and popularisation of the 'original' rave ethos) and the circuits of mass rave which were spreading throughout the UK, was the name given to the disreputable, dodgy, generally inner city-and-surrounding-suburbs networks of post-rave club culture.

[22] Zuberi, 2000: 174
[23] Gilroy, 1997 (intro to London conf.):3-4

There have been several 'hardcore's with popular music notably hardcore Punk, and hardcore Hip Hop. Although there is little that links these musical forms aesthetically[24] 'hardcore' in each case does acquire a discursive inflection which implies a class reading, suggesting adherence to the basic principles of a renegade form and the intention to 'speak' from the margins, *for* dispossessed groups. Thus rap poet Saul Williams makes a distinction between 'hardcore' and corporate Hip Hop: "Hip Hop became the language of youth rebellion. But now, commercial Hip Hop is not youth rebellion, not when the heroes of Hip Hop like Puffy are taking pictures with Donald Trump and the heroes of capitalism."[25] But hardcore is also distinguished from Bohemian 'rap'. Williams argues that the merit of hardcore Hip Hop acts such as Public Enemy, above the 'gentrified' jazz-rap of acts like Tribe Called Qwest and Mos Def is that their music "was what the drug dealers listened to", it spoke to the constituency of 'the street' *and* facilitated a conversation across and between the different part of America's black community and an 'outernational' conversation across the African diaspora.[26] Similarly 'hardcore' in terms of the post-*rave* club audience in the UK is usually imagined to identify a working class dance scene which is distinguished, for example in Reynolds (1999), from the constituencies of West End clubs and the various outposts of elitist Ibiza rave.

Geographically 'hardcore' identifies the point, after 1988 and the first wave of ecstasy euphoria when London's rave culture shifted Eastward, away from the West End clubs and into the largely working class areas to the East of the city of London, West and East Ham, Plaistow, Canning Town, Dalston, Hackney. One of the significant aspects of the "summer of love" especially at Paul Oakenfold's 'Spectrum' had been the influx of ravers from the East end, audiences of mainly white men and women from East London, many of whom had been associated with the pub-based soul scenes of East London and had not previously ventured 'up West' for entertainment, on a regular basis. My own observation of the Spectrum dance floor in 1988 confirms that it was primarily ecstasy that sustained the broad rave coalition and held in check the simmering tensions of heterogeneity. Despite the fluffy rhetoric of dance floor harmony what emerged from this mix was the class-based discourse of the 'Acid Ted' or 'love thug' a discourse promulgated by 'original' Ibiza veterans and their media

[24] Although 'hardcore Hip Hop and hardcore house are sonic cousins and aesthetically inter-dependent, as I will show
[25] Chang, 2001
[26] Chang, 2001

contacts which claimed that 'their' scene was being invaded by 'proletarian' ravers who were not sufficiently committed to their bohemian vision of rave. [27]

What this discourse both masked and embodied was the discomfort of many white middle class clubbers at having to share their subcultural space with people they considered potentially threatening. Matthew Collin details how those who took a proprietorial position in regard to the ecstasy-house music core of rave felt that these groups, who adapted the 'baggy' styles, bandanas, and 'acieed' chants which had been popularised at Schoom the previous year, were cheapening or spoiling their exclusive scene. Sarah Thornton rightly points out that this was a process of distinction making where in pursuit of subcultural capital a mythical 'mainstream', with a class character is cast as the male successor of 'Sharon and Tracey' dancing round their handbags, 'a disparaged other' which contributes to a sense of community and shared identity' of those within groups which imagine themselves to be 'original' or truly 'underground'.[28] Following the 'summer of love' and with the demise of many of the central London rave clubs, this fragile coalition broke down and many East End ravers returned to establish their own dance networks closer to home.

The racial politics of hardcore are a complex business reflecting the contested social geography of regions where black, white and Asian lived side by side but not harmoniously, in regions where, for example, the British National Party were able to gain footholds in local councils and racial attacks were commonplace. Nevertheless, as Les Back has shown in his study of working class areas of south East London[29], even within a climate of economic recession and apparent racial disunity, music scenes and the language and style of Afro-Caribbean youth often provided the means for forging shared cultures and the hardcore scene which developed in East London in early 1990s was always more racially mixed than the apparently more inclusive 'up-town' or 'orbital' raves scenes. Tense and violent as they could often be, East End clubs and the raves that followed them, were also sites of mixing where multi-cultural networks emerged, in a context that drew more closely on the models of Afro-Caribbean 'raving', and the inspiration specifically of RIP at Clink Street, than did the large scale raves, or "trance parties" of the Ibiza veterans. Through the work of former soul boys who had been converted to raving, like Andy Swallow, Joe Wieczorek and Tony Wilson, the series of warehouse party raves run by Genesis, where (hardcore and then Jungle) DJs like Peshay and Kenny Ken got their first breaks, and the

[27] Thornton, 1995, Collin, 1997: 123
[28] Thornton, 1995: 111

establishing of a network of small Acid House clubs including The Labrynth (sic)(which became Britain's longest running club in the 1990s), the area in the East from Tottenham in the North to Aldgate and Stepney in the South, began to develop its own rave tradition, and its own philosophy.[30]

Fitting the surroundings in one of Britain's poorest and least prepossessing regions, East End hardcore rapidly shucked off the fluffy optimism of Ibiza Rave and took on a 'darker' cast under the influence of the increasingly lucrative drug business, the increased consumption of 'speed' (amphetamine) and the 'hardening' sounds of German and Belgium Techno.

As East End hardcore evolved, changes were afoot in suburban rave culture. In 1990 Graham 'Bright's Entertainments (increased penalties) act signalled an end of the (illegal) rave. The increased penalties it brought in for running illegal raves backed up by Commissioner Kenneth Tappenham's newly professionalised and well-funded police Pay Party units, just like in 1987, returned dance culture to licensed clubs and away from the illegal mass events of the late 1980s. Raves continued but this time in licensed venues and often with the approval of local councils and police forces provided the amenities were safe and security and other provision in place.

Acid house, after several years of dominance, began to break down into sub-genres as 'original' Ibiza ravers attempted to return to their 'Balearic' vibe, holding small exclusive parties where no one dared speak the word 'rave', the sounds of 'deep house' and specialist Techno emerged, and new European forms, from the uplifting piano chords of italo-House to Belgian 4-beat took hold. The early 1990s drew hundreds of thousands of young white people, of all classes, in to dance cultures, many of whom experienced some of the euphoria and hippie promise of early rave though ecstasy, but the increasing power of rave promoters and their drug dealing partners was having its effect on the forms of sociality, and ambience of the rave.

The huge profits to be made from drug dealing had led inevitably to a drop in quality – at one rave at Castle Donnington in Leicestershire the drugs squad seized hundreds of ecstasy tablets, 97% of which turned out to be fakes.[31] Increasingly drugs were being 'cut' with amphetamines, so that those pills which did have some effect were not delivering the happy hedonistic 'luvved-up' ecstasy rush but something altogether

[29] Back, 1996
[30] Collin, 1997: 130-1

harder, scarier and more paranoiac. The emergence of hardcore as a musical genre with its scary dystopian textures was a reflexive sonic commentary on the state of rave culture at the time. Rave histories which conventionally begin with the 'dream' of 1987/8 view this period as a nightmare. This is embodied in 4 Hero's ecstasy-death record Mr Kirk's Nightmare' with its repeated refrain "Mr Kirk, come down to the station house, your son is dead." One of the earliest examples of the dark reflexivity of Jungle, a conscious disobedience of the rave injunction always to be 'up-lifting' this record was guaranteed to spoil a raver's high. The ferociousness of the response of many ravers to the encroachment of Jungle into what they believed to be the sacred space of the rave dance floor concerned precisely the origins of the junglist spirit in a scorn for and ironic debunking of rave's claim to transcendence through chemicals.

Post-rave dance culture began splitting at a furious amphetamine fuelled rate. On the one hand much of the early 1990s 'hardcore' was getting faster and sillier. To go with the increasingly infantile dance floor styles of baggy androgynous clothing, the popularity of dummies, whistles, Vicks inhalers and other school yard paraphernalia, the music increasingly featured theme tunes from children programmes, speeded up and distorted, or jokey sound bites from politicians (one famously sampled Mrs Thatcher twisted so as to be heard recommending the joys of 'e'). The Prodigy ('Charley,' a street name for cocaine) and The Shamen ('Ebeneezer Good'), two bands which fused rave with Indie Rock had chart hits with novelty rave records. So-called 'happy hardcore' and its performance codes clung on to the unravelling shreds of rave's communal ethos and utopian promise. The infantile paraphernalia embodied a refusal to grow up, a desire to return to the comforting womb of that first ecstasy rush, and the early optimistic raves.

Techno, one of the elements of the hardcore musical mix, was evolving too. With the notable exception of acts like Underground Resistance (Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson, Mike Banks) US Techno, mainly from Detroit, was a somewhat polished affair, aspiring to a kind of post-human clarity, an idealised fusion of man and machine, sipping space cocktails in a Martian lounge. But in the early 1990s new kinds of European Techno emerged, 'harder' and faster, more confrontational than anything Jeff Mills had ever made.

Increasingly music was being made in the UK that began to take on a 'darkness' of its own. Particularly the early releases of former graffiti artist and Hip Hop fanatic

[31] Collin, 1997: 251

Goldie, who had been converted to hardcore through watching Fabio and Grooverider cut black Atlantic breakbeats out of slabs of Techno at Rage. Recording as Metalheadz, Rufge Kru and one half of 2 Bad Mice Goldie helped develop a 'dark' sound which was as hard, heavy and menacing as Belgian Techno, but drew on the polyrhythmic traditions of jazz, junk, the Hip Hop breakbeat, and, the deep and slower basslines of Reggae. The music mix which had been championed by the black rave sounds like Shut Up and Dance and Top Buzz, and the mixing of Fabio, Grooverider and Jumping Jack Frost was materialised in the sounds of what was initially called, after a release on independent Ibiza records, 'Jungle Techno'. Bryan G who started raving with fellow funk Djs Grooverider and Fabio in 1986 suggests that Jungle began through a reactivation of diaspora memory. Just as happy hardcore embodied the televisual memory of the white rave generation – through the use and wilful distortion of samples from children's TV themes – "black people started making music from the things that had influenced them, reaching back to what they knew, people were going back where they were coming from."[32] For Paul from Ibiza records the re-emergence of ragga and Hip Hop on the sound plane was a reaction to the dominance of hard Techno from continental Europe, which was far removed from the sound system ethos, lacking the warmth, swing and 'sexiness' of the Black Atlantic tradition. Black British rave producers – Shy FX, Grooverider, Ray Keith, and Jumping Jack Frost – began to draw on the resources of the black Atlantic to remake London dance music with a new cultural agenda.

**The Racialised Split in hardcore**

The new dark music split the hardcore scene down the middle: "a lot of people couldn't understand the Reggae and Hip Hop references, a lot of house DJs couldn't understand what the fuck was going on, all of a sudden you started to get a split in the hardcore scene. The brothers started to come into the scene, and many ravers left."[33] For many ravers this new form of music and its audience represented an even greater threat than had the acid teds, and made clear the limits of their dreams of pan-racial harmony. Not only was the new music ominous, fractured and 'dark' – tunes called 'Darksides', 'The Psycho' and 'Doomsday' made by artists calling themselves 'Phuture Assassins' and 'Kaotic Kemistry' – but also the new Jungle crowd consciously avoided ecstasy, the precondition of membership in rave's "neo-tribal communitas".[34] The first wave of 'dark' hardcore soon gave way to even more explicit references to Reggae

[32] Bryan interview
[33] Bryan Interview

as dancehall MCs like Supercat were sampled by black producers like Shy FX and A Guy Called Gerald. Hardcore fractured into camps. The spilt was explicitly racialised. The perceived 'darkness' of Jungle in terms both of form and content – the return of the breakbeat, dystopian samples from horror films, the Afro-Caribbean 'patiois' voice of the MC – triggering conventional readings of blackness as threat. The 'rave establishment' galvanised against Jungle suggesting that it was a betrayal of the rave ethos. The magazine *Ravescene* announced that the breakbeat was killing rave. Behind *Ravescene's* announcement many, familiar with the racial politics of club culture, detected an unspoken fear of the black dance floor. "Jungle, so the racist myth goes, is what turned every ravers little Woodstock into an Altamont with bass bins."[35]

A racialised panic swept post-rave dance cultures as the make-up of the audience and the tenor of the music dramatically brought the sound system connections latent in rave to the fore. While dance music magazines who were advocates of rave ignored, or criticised Jungle, others, like Touch, which embraced it as a modern form of dancehall Reggae, gave space to its advocates. This letter is typical of this transitional period:

> "Jungle-Dark? See how all the happy housers stay. It contrasts greatly with happy hardcore, but dark sounds don't necessarily mean bad vibes. It's only recently that the rest of the rave scene has acknowledged its existence: the Jungle – heavy bouncing basslines, synchronized rhythmic drumbeats combining to give the *natural buzz*. As with any underground music, Jungle will have it's critics – and the inevitable 'link with drugs'. But to those who know this is the normal criticism of black music. The critics do not – and cannot – understand."[36]

This letter places the discourse around Jungle firmly in the context of the fears expressed throughout popular music history about the dangers of undisciplined black rhythm, which are wrapped up in fears of the Other potentially disruptive of the social world. This discourse, and the way Jungle as a network responds to it is captured in the term Jungle itself where the dispute over the origin, meaning and validity of the name provides further evidence of the reflexivity at play.

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[34] Gore, 1997: 55
[35] Kodwo Eshun in *iD magazine*, 5/94 cited by Collin, 1997: 259
[36] Letter to Touch Magazine from 'A Junglist' N.W London June 37 1994,: 58

The very term Jungle itself encapsulated and addressed both notions of the untamed 'African Jungle' and the cluster of stereotypes attached to this idea and the resignification of these ideas within black music – from Duke Ellington's self-conscious integration of high swing and low rhythm that he himself termed 'Jungle'[37] to the urban 'concrete Jungle' mythologised in music by Sly Stone, Bob Marley and Grandmaster Flash. The origin of the term, just as that of Jazz, Hip-Hop and Reggae, is contested. The first time it appears, according to some, is a release on hardcore label Ibiza records in 1992 called 'Jungle Techno'. Paul from Ibiza records states that he got the name from the mid-seventies James Brown album *Jungle Groove.* Others have argued that 'Jungle' (or 'dungle') refers to the Tivoli gardens ghetto of Kingston, references to which were carried from Jamaica on 'yard tapes' (tapes of sound system performance) and sampled on British records by figures like Rebel MC. There was a brief controversy about whether, as one of the Shut Up and Dance DJs argued, the term had primitivist connotations and was racist. Some black DJs refused to use the term but it rapidly got taken up within the emergent subculture, and attached to Reggae influenced hardcore recordings and events such as the 'Jungle Fever' parties. Members of the network began to identify themselves as 'Junglists'.

From its name and argot – which was derived primarily from an Afro-Caribbean lexicon, blended with 'cockney' pronunciation and 'rave' vocabularies – to its sonic references and codes of embodiment, Jungle articulated 'race', in ways which though drawn from familiar sources, Reggae, Hip Hop, had a distinctly new cast. The reaction it provoked however, especially from within 'dance culture', drew largely on the all-too-familiar architecture of racial stereotype. As Matthew Collin points out this was not only an aesthetic reaction to Jungle's brooding textures and jagged breakbeats, so disruptive of the smooth peaks and troughs of 'happy' house, but a response to the changing ethno-socio-spatio-economics of the Jungle moment: "The panic about Jungle commenced when black people ceased to be a minority and were visibly in control of the scene."[38]

[37] Middleton, 2000: 70-5. Richard Middleton argues that Ellington's jungle period (1927-32) exhibited a complex "double consciousness"; both a blatant exoticism, attractive to white audiences, and a sophisticated, reflexive commentary on primitivism. The UK's Jungle, like that of Ellington, avoids ideological closure.
[38] Collin, 1997: 259

## Jungle's multi-networks

Jungle in its aesthetic form and the composition of its audience puts to the test the race and space coding of the city, it operates at the border of the city and the suburb, of 'white' area and black areas, and of the music which is supposed to express the communities who live there.[39] If 'Hip Hop' and 'Reggae' are pre-eminently music of the urban centre, the black inner city ghetto , and Jungle takes the breakbeats and basslines of these forms, what do we make not only of the emergence of Jungle networks in the 'white' space of the East End, but of its suburban articulations? A prominent Jungle label was called 'suburban base' and based in Romford, Essex. Jungle flourished in Croydon and in Reading. Rob Playford based his Moving Shadow label in his home town of Stevenage, the producer Photek is from Harpenden, Kent, Origin Unknown (Andy C and Ant Miles) are from Essex and Source Direct (James Baker and Phillip Aslett) from St Albans. Although punk is the subculture most associated with suburban space (and its rejection) these areas for the past three decades have been criss-crossed by the pathways of suburban soul. Yet the soul circuits while they dealt in versions of blackness abstracted from American soul never brought large groups of white suburban youth into cultural contact with black urban populations, they were the relatively homogenous zones of the soul club and the out-of-London soul pirate stations.

There were two significant networks that brought these suburban ravers into contact and affiliation with the sound system aesthetics and black urban crowds of Jungle. The first were the networks of Hip Hop. Not based around clubs these were connoisseur networks of vinyl junkies, wannabe DJs, rappers and break-dancers whose obsession with Hip Hop led them to aspire to be producers, to purchase decks and samplers and set up bedroom studios. There were few Hip Hop clubs in suburban areas, but Hip Hop through both the underground and the commercial circuits of the record market, which Hip Hop progressively colonised in the 1990s, and the proliferation of cheap production technology prepared the ground for the explosion of home production which powered Jungle's digital networks.

The second network was that of rave that I have described. As rave spread from the urban centre progressively out of London white kids with no access to central London club life experienced the mass rave and formed their own relationship both with the

pounding beats and with fellow ravers. As with Ben J it usually started with an introduction from a friend: "He said did I want to go to a new kind of club, which went all night. I didn't know what to expect, once I was there I couldn't believe it, I became obsessed."[40] Rave offered Ben a change from the limited cultural life in Bracknell and new connections to a network of club kids, throughout the south of England. Through this network he found access to others: he found work with the Reggae sound system Renegade, which was at that time providing the hardware for raves. Overcoming both his own reservations, this was the first time he had been in close social contact with black people, and those of the other 'sound boys' he became a trusted member of the sound system network. He worked hard to earn the knowledge and respect that is the currency of these informal networks. Ben's experience differs from that of my white informants who grew up in London, because they were surrounded by Reggae and soul sound systems in their youth, whereas his first exposure to sound system practices was in his twenties at a rave, but in the end the effect is the same. Ben came into contact with black music experts who guided his taste and taught him the rules of the inter-connected genres and networks of Afro-diasporic cub culture.

Jungle created a new network which linked the periphractic space of the inner city, Dalston, Hackney, Brixton, with that of outer London and the home counties. It reused and revivified the Reggae sound system networks, the circuits of south eastern soul, the 'rave' networks, all of which were underpinned by the pirate radio and record selling networks. Jungle refused to resolve itself into one thing – inner city, urban music – or the other – 'the sound of the suburbs', just as it leaves its ethnic being radically open. Jungle, cannot be understood as an urban or suburban phenomena, a black or white musical network or a by reference to secure class formations: It is itself an "integration of a series of unstable cultural and musical hybrids".[41]

Prominent in early Jungle networks are the sound system trained DJs of the black inner city, Brixton, Harlesdon, Hackney; figures such as Fabio and Grooverider, DJ Ron, Kenny Ken, Randall, Brockie. But it also pulled in black cultural producers, also with Reggae and funk sound system credentials, from outside the metropolis; Bryan G. is from Gloucester, DJ SS from Leicester, Ray Keith from East Anglia. Many prominent junglists come from the sound system saturated and racially mixed Bristol

[39] Noys, 1995
[40] Ben Interview.

club scenes; Roni Size, DJ Krust, DJ Die, Suv, Flynn and Flora.[42] Jungle also drew heavily from the white suburban rave networks, and the suburban towns to the North and East of the Capital. Because of this Jungle has been understood by many as evidence of a new class-based form of allegiance across racial boundaries, a "new underclass". Yet the class form of Jungle is not homogenous. Hip Hop, which has always been popular in the UK amongst middle class white youth as much (or perhaps even more) than in working class areas, drew many members of London's metropolitan middle class into Jungle. White college educated Londoners like DJ Aphodite, MJ Cole, John B were drawn to Jungle production, and the No U-Turn label (Nico and Ed Rush) emerged in the leafy South West London suburb of Barnes. This heterogeneity was facilitated by the fact that though Jungle may emerge from the East End and the relatively hidden black spheres, it very soon colonises clubs at the heart of London club land, clubs in the West End like the Astoria in Charing Cross Road, and the Bluenote in Hoxton square.

**Jungle Clubs**

'Jungle' emerged slowly in 1992/3 alongside other forms of hardcore and Techno and it wasn't until late 1993 that it began to take on a shape of its own. One of the reasons behind the extreme acrimony of the raver toward Jungle was that this new form with its Hip Hop breaks and Reggae basslines was upsetting ravers on their own dance floors, ruining their high in their own space. All the prominent Jungle DJs were hardcore and house DJs, who gradually moved away from the rave principles of that form. Arguably Fabio and Grooverider's club at Heaven, Rage, could be considered the first Jungle club, though that was before the Reggae influences that were materialised in ragga Jungle became a prominent feature.

Jungle unlike Rare Groove and rave was primarily associated with licensed clubs rather than illegal venues. Following the various rave panics and the reactions to them on the part of the police, holding illegal raves in London became harder and harder (though they continue to be held sporadically), so Jungle emerged initially from a series of unfashionable, often dingy clubs and pubs sprinkled around London. After the media discovered Jungle in late 1994 it began to move into central London and the cool areas of London youth culture. 'Sunday Roast' Jungle's mega-club was at The Astoria, Charing Cross Road, where Family Funktion and Delerium had been in

[41] Noys, 1995: 331
[42] Johnson, 1996 185

the late 1980s. Goldie's club Metalheadz was at the BlueNote in Hoxton square where it drew in large crowds of white students and media types which facilitated the passage from its disreputable hardcore and relatively underground past to its culturally sanctioned gentrified future.

**Pirates Return**

In the early 1990s there was an explosion of pirate radio activity similar to that which had happened in the mid 1980s. Kiss was by this time legal, and even Radio One had started playing significantly more dance music belatedly recognising the growing importance of club-based music genres. Yet they continued to lag behind the taste of the club audience. A new generation of house, acid, hardcore and eventually Jungle stations emerged. Many like Centre Force broadcasting from housing estates in the East End. In March 1991 Touch magazine attempted to publish the music policy and bandwidth details of 43 London-based pirate stations. They were prevented from doing so by the Department of Trade and Industry who issued a writ warning that it was a criminal offence to publish details of illegal broadcasters. Despite this journalist Bill Tuckey predicted a massive increase in pirate activity, because "while there are listeners that are not being catered for by legal stations, pirates will always find a way of operating".[43] The official warning may have signalled an increased awareness of illegal music networks on the part of the authorities, yet the best efforts of the DTI, and the many raids they launched on the transmitters of pirates, did nothing to reduce the pirate boom. Kool FM, Girls FM, Don FM, and dozens of others did occasionally disappear from the dial but they usually reappeared, with new transmitters and, like the pirates of the 1908os, played a major role in the disseminating the music and information of Jungle and its networks.

Former sound system DJ and jazz singer Cleveland Watkiss first heard Jungle on the Hackney pirate station that his teenage daughter was listening to. After several decades in music as a jazz vocalist he had been working as a session singer for a number of different producers. Having no interest in rave he had not heard the way that Reggae and funk influences were permeating hardcore. When he first heard the way Jungle mixed up the genres it came as a revelation to him: "I welcomed Jungle as an old friend."[44] Within a year Watkiss was the MCs at Goldie's club Metalheadz singing and chatting on the mic. The lyrics were improvised, around what were, for

[43] Tuckey, B Pirate column, Touch, March 1991
[44] Cleveland interview

him, familiar patterns: "If you knew Reggae then you knew when the tunes would change, when the beats would start and stop."[45]

As well as the rhythms Jungle borrowed from Reggae the style of the MCs and the body technologies of the Reggae dance floor. Few house clubs or raves featured MCs, these were thought to detract from the smooth pulsing beats that ravers required, and the dissolution of the individual they aspired to. Within the Reggae sound system, as in Hip Hop, the MC continued to play an important role. Within the black Acid networks too MC's would make an appearance and this practice carried over into hardcore networks. But it is in Jungle that the MC makes a full return to the club experience. The language and style of the Jungle MCs, figures such as Moose, 5-0, Stevie Hyper-D, GQ, Dynamite indicates the passage of the music America, Jamaica but also the specific local shared identity granted, albeit temporarily, by being , in the oft repeated phrase: "inside the place".

In addition to the MC and Reggae textures Jungle clubs featured the body technologies of the Reggae dance, although cast this time alongside the differing body codes of the hardcore audience. 'Shout outs' for rewinds, cries of 'boom ' and 'booyaka' derived from ragga, forms of dance derived from the dancehall – win'ing and skanking – were prominent in the Jungle club, and very quickly predominated as the white hardcore crowd, who were prepared to accept Jungle, learnt the new codes. Jungle audiences, such as those at Sunday Roast, which took the Sunday night tradition that had been established within black expressive culture for decades as a response to the limitations placed on the availability of clubs to black audiences, and made it a virtue, dressed up in extravagant ways: Girls in strappy sandals and tight skirts, boys in slacks and polished shoes, shirts and gold chains. The ambience owed nothing to the baggy-clothed rave and everything to the smart dress traditions of the lovers rock and soul dance. Although, as in the production of most popular music there was an extreme gender imbalance, Jungle opened up some institutional space for female DJs and producers: DJs Kemistry and Storm became an important part of Goldies' Metalheadz collective, and Dazee and DJ Rap[46] were popular DJs.

[45] Cleveland Interview

[46] DJ Rap, who was well known for playing 'hard' jungle in clubs made an unfortunate bid for pop success by recording an album where she sang over jungle beats, which not only bombed but spoiled here credibility within jungle circles.

## Sound of the digital diaspora

This final section is concerned with Jungle production. I have argued throughout this thesis that the distinction between producer and consumer that has been fundamental to the way communication has been understood is dissolved, certainly porous and vague, in dance music cultures. Nevertheless I am concentrating here on the production of Jungle music itself, and its relationship to technology, as one aspect of the Jungle network. The argument is threefold: that Jungle utilises an attitude to technology and music production that marks it as pre-eminently a diasporic form; that though Jungle relies heavily on pre-recorded music produced using digital reproduction technology this does not mean that it is not also a human, real time even 'analogue' form; and that Jungle therefore provides evidence of why technological determinists, most prominently in this context Paul Gilroy, are too pessmistic in their assessment of at least some digital music.

Firstly what I have been calling "diaspora aesthetics". At the core of Jungle production are the new digital technologies of the sampler, sequencer and above all the digital compositional tools developed in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the composition programme Cubase and, later, Pro-Tools. Jungle relies upon technology but in its diasporic forms, and despite the frequency with which the word digital appears within Jungle discourse,[47] it does not fetishise digital technology. Jungle producer Goldie was no doubt playing up his 'bad boy' credentials when he described his working method to a Guardian journalist as "joy-riding technology"[48], yet this nonetheless suggests the irreverence, the practical aesthetics with which Jungle producers approach their technology. It is an approach which marks Jungle as a continuous with the diaspora practice described by Toni Morrison as the "the ability to use found objects, the appearance of using found things"[49] and the diasporic practice named by Richard Middleton as "deformation of mastery"; using objects, products, things in ways not sanctioned or anticipated by the institutional forces that produced them. James Snead defines a certain kind of black American aesthetic where accident is folded back into a larger sense of unity, almost as if to control it (Snead, 1985). Both Tricia Rose and Charles Mudede focus in on this tendency in Hip Hop, the high value placed on noise, disturbance and mistake 'rupture'), an

[47] Both Roni Size (New Forms, 1997) and Goldie (featuring KRS 1, 1998) have recorded tracks called Digital
[48] Decca Aitkenhead interview with Goldie in *The Guardian* 16/5/98
[49] Morrison, T, Playing In The Dark

antipathy to the too clean, the too planned the over- produced. Jungle displays, indeed foregrounds, this ambivalence to technological rationality.

Goldie has also spoken about they way he composes using "trash technology", forth or fifth generation samplers to get the texture of sound he wanted.[50] When asked what kind of technology he used to produce his music producer Roni Size said "Yeah, I use Cubase but I also use pots and pans I use wooden leg."[51] There is an insouciance about this approach to composition and studio manipulation that recalls another of Morrison's diasporic rules: "and it must be effortless, you must not look like you're sweating"[52]: "The way we operate is headtop. You go to a dance, you grab the microphone, you ain't got anything written down, you headtop it. We don't go into the studio with a list of things, yeah we'll have the bass drum there and the bassline there and we'll have X dbs, nah man, you switch on and hit those buttons. I don't know kilohertz but I know killer beats." Size traces this practice back to the sound systems cultures of Bristol where he grew up; "we didn't have a proper system, we were always blowing the amps and the bass bins, I like the sounds harsh, what's too toppy for you might be lashing for me." [53]

In this diasporic taxonomy mistakes and accidents are highly prized: "Some of the best things are mistakes, you hit a button accidentally and a sound comes out that you like. The attitude we have about music is to be natural, spontaneous, you don't make something and bash it into shape, you do it and it feels right and there it is."[54]

I have discussed a length elsewhere (Melville and Hesmondhalgh, 2002) the way in which Jungle practice can be understood as a enculturation in Britain of Hip Hop technology and from, combined with Jamaican sound system sensibilities, from which Hip Hop itself drew much of its inspiration.[55] The Jungle production aesthetic is based around what Tricia Rose has described in her discussion of Hip Hop producers The Bomb Squad, as "playing in the red" pushing technology beyond its maximum capabilities, where it distorts, buzzes and creates a disruptive dissonance. In Rose's argument this kind of rupture questions the ideological division between

[50] Goldie piece in Guardian
[51] Melville, 1997
[52] Toni Morrison cited in Gilroy, 1993: 78
[53] Melville 1997
[54] DJ Krust cited in Melville 1997
[55] Hesmondhalgh & Melville, 2002

music and noise, and by extension the whole series of binary distinctions by which power, especially racialised power, holds ideological sway.[56]

The feature of 'time-stretching' for example was developed in the late 1980s as a production aid to allow the tempo of recordings to be altered without changing the pitch, to retain the illusion of the 'human', the 'real person' or band to render technological mediations apparently transparent. Time-stretching is used by Jungle producers to achieve a completely opposite effect: to rip the breakbeats apart or compress them in such a way as to emphasise technological mediation, and the 'presence' of the producer.[57] As Andrew Goodwin[58] argues in relation to new digital production technologies, these practices eschew 'illusionism' they are not trying to sound like a band or to create the impression of a 'real human community'. As Goodwin anticipated the development of cheap digital recording technology did serve as a riposte to "rationalisation in the recording process."[59] With the fall in production costs inherent in domestic digital recording new networks of 'bedroom producers' were enabled to circumvent the gate-keepers of popular music; the A&R men presiding over a regulated system where only bands who had signed binding contracts with major labels could afford to record in a 'real' studio.

The proliferation of cheap samplers, drum machines, Technics decks, combined with the records which could be plundered for samples allowed these young producers to react instantly to changes in taste on the dance floor to adapt and 'deform' artefacts delivered from the epicentre of the industry as finished commodities (every new soul and R&B record would receive an instant Jungle remix[60]), to experiment and to try out their tracks on the dance floor before deciding whether to go to the cost of pressing and releasing as a single. Such practices challenged the distinction between producer, consumer, professional and amateur, undermined the hegemony of the major record labels and created a generation of media producers whose network forms of organisation stood against the rationalisation and standardisation of popular music.

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[56] Rose, 1994
[57] Rob, co-producer of Goldie's 'Timeless' and owner of Moving Shadow Records interview with author, June 1996
[58] Goodwin, 1994: 88
[59] Ibid: 89
[60] In the end many of these practices were incorporated by the major labels – often an unlicensed 'bootleg' jungle mix would be licensed and released by the record label – as happened with Aphrodite's remix of BlackStreets 'No Diggity'..

Jungle may draw attention to itself as technologically produced but in the club the live dancing body mediates the sounds, literally incorporates (takes into the body) them according to the technologies of the Afro-diasporic dance floor and through interaction with DJ and crowd. As dance music designed for and judged by the dancing crowd Jungle retains a 'live' human element and stays close to the principles of the black dance floor. As producer Rob Haigh states Jungle cannot be considered only as technology, as post-human because of its irreducibly social form of consumption: "our live element happens on the dance floor."[61]

This performance element lies in DJing to a live audience and the 'strictly social' nature of this encounter in that it is reciprocal. MJ suggests that "the only way you can perform dance music is DJing – it's the performance element of live music. It seems to be such a simple thing, but the more I do it the more I recognise my responsibility to the crowd, it is an interaction with the crowd ... of course it can be a total shambles." [62]

Beyond its rhythmic pluralism lies another doubleness. In Jungle's digital production and its social form of consumption both the humanist nostalgics, and the techno-futurists are wrong in their assessment of Jungle; it embodies neither a complete rejection of the compromised human body, fatally marked by identity and its attendant plea for realness voiced by the notion of 'soul' , as Kodwo Eshun would have a believe, nor is it a fatal retreat from the complexity of fragile but fundamental humanity into a too hasty post-human techno-topia as Paul Gilroy argues.[63] Both have missed the dialectical relationship within Jungle between the human and the machine, the live dancing body and the limiting, programmed digital web within which the music is created.

Kodwo Eshun argues that Jungle in the tradition of 'Afro-nauts' such as Sun Ra, George Clinton and RZA is 'alien' post-human music which leaves the body and soul behind as it peruses new forms of human-machine assemblage. Eshun's history connects a particular line of black Atlantic musical history, what he calls "black Atlantic futurism". Yet in his desire to distance himself from what for him is a fatally compromised notion of redemption, embodied by the soul tradition, he overstates Jungle's rejection of the 'human' and amplifies instead its cyborgian futurist elements. Certainly there are forms of 'post-human' identity that are offered in

[61] Rob Haigh, Omni Trio cited in The Wire, 1995
[62] MJ Cole producer, interview, September 10th, 2000

Jungle narratives; the promoter of the Jungle club 'Ruff neck Ting' told one interviewer that if Jungle was a person it would be "Darth Vader"[64]; and the 'neuro-funk' sub-genre championed by Grooverider and John B suggests in its iconography and techno-funk sounds new synthesises of man and machine. Yet it is misleading to overstress the technophillia of Jungle or to miss the fundamentally dialogic relationship between the human and the machine that it embodies.

Paul Gilroy argued strongly for the loss embodied by digital music production. In an essay entitled 'Analogs of mourning, mourning the analog' he suggests a link between the digitisation of music production, the loss of a face-to-face communitarian culture around music and the breaking of the close relationship between black music and politics: "...digital audio, stagnation and what we could politely call recycling have intervened to make live music less pleasurable ... This loss involves grieving for a certain fragile, precious relationship between black music and black politics ... [my sadness] is provoked by my recollections of a long-vanished ontological depth, a lost ethical flavour in our face-to-face prevideo transculture."[65]

Further in the same essay he laments the "imprisonment of rhythm" within a digital matrix, as a result of the rise of "deskilling, dehumanizing technologies", the squeezing out of "feeble, fragile humanity" (for Gilroy embodied in the warm sounds of 'real' – though amplified – instruments – and analogue recording technology) and jettisoning of the human in "house and its dismal offshoots"[66]. While it is not clear if he actually includes Jungle as one of these dismal offshoots, his argument is clear: Digital production squeezes the life out of music and is the parallel process to the disappearance of the 'performance-centred' cultures of diasporic dance music. In other words "things ain't what they used to be" (a charge of nostalgia he semi-acknowledges[67])

Perhaps it is unfair to single out this argument pitched as it is squarely at the US (it was a conference paper he gave in America) and concerned mainly with the Afro-American black public sphere that is increasingly dominated by consumerist Hip Hop consumed via the privatising medium of the video screen. However since Gilroy has been such a staunch advocate of the political importance of black music and

[63] Kodwo Eshun, 1999; Gilroy, 1999, 2001
[64] Touch march 1993
[65] Gilroy, 1999: 262
[66] Gilroy 1999: 267-269

diaspoirc performance traditions it matters that he thinks these traditions are over or that the real time face-to-face irreducibly ethical flavour of sociability around music is lost. The problem with this argument is twofold, it concedes too much to certain forms of corporate popular music, and it asserts the disappearance of a viable face-to-face culture without proof.

Gilroy argues that black music now "has become workout music and generic dance music" (1999: 269) that the aural (music) has been displaced by the optic (MTV) at the heart of black sociability, a tragic reification of black culture has occurred. His intellectual debt to Adorno – who was hostile to all forms of 'popular music', and mis-read jazz – is made clear in his argument that there has been a "regression" in the listener and the claim that "we've lost our minoritarian, dissident public sphere."[68]

Perhaps it is true that in certain genres, especially corporate R&B and Hip Hop, there is a more distant relation between black music and black politics than there was in the hey-day of political funk and Reggae which Gilroy relentlessly memorialises. However his argument has always been that there are political meanings in the 'performance' elements and spatial practice of black music cultures, irreducible to the poetics or the mode of production, which reside in the unfinished nature of black music recordings and the way they are put to use in remote, often partially hidden sites of intercultural collectivity. He once considered the role of dance, of cut 'n' mix, of dubbing and DJing and the fact that these took place in partially hidden spheres to be part of the political charge of this culture. Without providing empirical evidence for the disappearance of this culture we are left with the impression that what has actually changed is the relationship between Gilroy himself and the music cultures he discusses.

Once he knew enough not to judge the total impact of popular music by the pop charts and the output of major record labels (much of the music he discusses in *Ain't No Black* never troubled the pop charts on either side of the Atlantic). While the relation between music and politics has undoubtedly changed to cede so much to MTV and Sony, as he seems prepared to do, or to retreat behind a technologically deterministic position which fails to register that the electric bass and turntables are *also* technology or that much of the music he once admired was mediated by digital technology (Soul II Soul, Eric B and Rakim) begins to look like defeatism.

[67] "I fell obliged to confess that my own critical standpoint has been shaped by a sense of loss that is my demographic, geographical and generational affliction" Gilroy, 1999: 262

It may be that the pendulum has decisively shifted away from hidden (and implicitly homogenous) *black* music scenes towards a proliferation of complex inter-cultural cultures. Jungle like Rare Groove is not straightforwardly 'black' but neither is it entirely severed from issues of racialised belonging (which it thematises), nor was it during its heyday (1994-8) dominated by video or the corporate strategies of the culture industries. The moment at which videos and corporate strategies did start to change Jungle's centre of gravity, the first appearance of Jungle tunes on shampoo commercials on TV, was also the moment at which Jungle ceased to signify for a generation of black London youth who provided the audience for the new black London genre: UK Garage, Grime.

While Jungle eschews the narrative structure of soul, along with lyrics, melody and song, it nevertheless imports the textures and emotional registers of soul, funk and jazz through sampling. Jungle operates at the interface between the agent and technology. In this Jungle stays close to and draws on diasporic uses of and (ambivalent) attitudes to technology, and its claims (like that of ecstasy) to set us free. As Nabeel Zuberi argues, Jungle "is not a question of giving up 'humanness' to accept the machine and a cyborgian future, but the integration of technology into existing discourse of musical creativity" (2001:169). Producer Roni Size suggests an intimate relation to technology when he said "I am a sampler". But what he means is not that he is a machine, but that the sampler does the same thing that he has been doing ever since he started to DJ and collect records – capturing sounds, cutting them together.

## Conclusion

Within Jungle at both the level of aesthetic and social form, several different Afro-diasporic streams reconverge. It is in and through this new hybrid form that 'black Britain' makes its first generic contribution to the diasporic musical mix. Jungle was even, in places, received with some enthusiasm by American audiences and cultural intermediaries: KRS 1 recorded a track with Goldie ('Digital') – where he gave support, albeit somewhat awkwardly to "UK drum and bass, all up in your face": legendary Hip Hop DJ Africa Bambaata whilst on a DJ tour of the UK played Jungle tunes mixed with Hip Hop in his sets. There has even been the suggestion that Jungle's stutter step rhythms have indirectly influenced the production sound of

[68] Gilroy, 1999: 270

contemporary Hip Hop/R&B producers like Timbaland and Rodney Jerkins. As well as replaying rhythms, Jungle reused the pathways of rave which had connected the inner city and the suburb, the East end with 'up West' and reconnected these to the pathways of Reggae, soul and funk, from which they have were severed by whitening of rave.

Jungle ushered in a new multi-cultural confidence, a sense that Britain's version of the Afro-Anglo-Euro mix could successfully express itself. In the genre of Jungle the UK produced a new genre expressing its multicultural vigour, but consistent with Hall's diagnosis of the popular, this was a deeply contradictory and ambiguous process.

Many within 'hidden' or 'underground' networks have every reason to welcome the greater visibility of their scene, and the attention of major record labels. All the high profile Jungle producers were signed to contracts with major labels and their subsidiaries in the 'feeding frenzy' of 1994/5. Bryan, who formed the V Recordings label with Jumpin' Jack Frost was, in 1997, extremely pleased that the record companies were taking an interest. He recognised the relationship between independent and major labels that Dave Hesmondhalgh discovered in his research (2001) where independence is relative and major labels use smaller labels to do their research and development for them – as mutually beneficial. At the same time appropriation is always a threat – though a threat Afro-diasporic audiences and producers are well used to. As Jungle moved into the media spotlight and the strategies of major record labels, adjustments were already being made in the aesthetic and social networks on the ground that would lead to new genres, new reversions of Afro-diasporic form, and articulate a new relationship between the nation, the diasporic network, America and the other nodes of the diasporic network.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion – music and the multicultural city

"London provides a vast space – bigger in some senses than the nation – in which cultures can be differently imagined and conceived."[1]

"We have to comprehend the colonial character of this city in a more profound manner ... and produce histories of the city...which allow the presences of diverse colonial peoples and their stubbornly non-colonial descendents a far greater significance than they have been allowed in the past."[2]

When the research for this thesis began in 1998, Jungle was already mutating considerably. The term Jungle had all but disappeared from clubbers discourse supplanted by the less racially emphatic term 'drum and bass'. The music had already started 'crossing over' from pirate to commercial and public service radio, and insinuating itself, through the work of subculturally aware TV researchers, into television. Jungle motifs began cropping up in advertising jingles and TV background music by 1997. Goldie was becoming a 'celebrity' (he popped up as a flash gangster the soap opera *Eastenders*) and Roni Size had already won the Mercury Prize. Around 1998 a new genre emerged which drew from the same textual raw materials as Jungle – Hip Hop, soul, house and rave – but mixed them into a very different hybrid.

In sharp contrast to Jungle's dystopian narrative and end-of-the-millennia militancy 'Speed garage' (aka UK Garage and 'two-step') presents a slinky sophistication, which though conspicuously black, in terms of audience and aesthetics, drew on Afro-Caribbean dance genres which were parallel to but distinct from those which inspired Jungle: eighties soul and jazz funk, the conspicuous consumption wing of Hip Hop and dancehall (bling bling) and the smart Sunday night 'lovers rock' scene. Speed garage reimagined London not as somewhere on the verge of the apocalypse, but as an upwardly mobile, 'smart' yet still 'hardcore' (the seed bed of UK garage was, again, East London Pirate radio) heir to Detroit Techno's futurism and New York's Hip Hop and studio 54-style disco excess. The social networks of Jungle – especially the black youth who had been its originators and core audience, and many of the music producers– shifted over to the new genre at the same time as Jungle moved 'overground'.

[1] Robins, 2001: 491
[2] Gilroy, 1997: 4

By the time I am finishing this thesis 'speed garage' itself has mutated into myriad sub-genres, and is itself losing its brief coherence. At the same time it is possible to find Jungle 'revival' club nights in London, which claimed to offer "the original spirit of 1996".

Such turnover of new dance genres in London, does appear to be accelerating, some evidence for the space-time compression which David Harvey (1990) diagnosed in post-modernity. Although the speed of global flows is part of the answer, it is the concentration, not lateral dispersal, of the cultural industries in London which closes the gap between subcultural network creativity and the mass national, and then global market. One effect of globalisation and the rise of network society is concentration of power in particular 'global cities' (Sassen, 1994). The distance between 'underground' articulation and 'mainstream' co-option in London (and the argument has been that these terms retain some purchase partly because race still divides) has been considerably shortened by the concentration of cultural industry power that feeds off and is revivified by contact with self generated music and dance cultures.

The cultural intermediaries through which this co-option happens– including my informants and many more like them – have found ways to convert their subcultural capital and their expertise, into economic capital working in the various branches of London media. They are not the unwitting pawns of the cultural industry but nor are they in full control of the consequences which sharing their knowledge and experience might have on the music and dance scenes through which they move. When music that has been developed within and for the dance network appears as background music to commercial advertising, or incidental soundtrack in reality TV documentary there is a sense of misapplication, or misquotation, as when a full and complex statement is filleted in the edit to produce the opposite impression than the one intended by the speaker. When the anti-phonic back-channel is closed, and the relationship between music and 'receiver' becomes one-way, an important part of the potential political and social charge of the music is lost. Users who value the two-way strictly social way in which dance music makes itself meaningful recognise this and consequently they move toward new genres, new recombinations, in order to stay in control of the meanings attached to their creative work.

And yet it is not just the strategies of the media corporation, or the fact that subcultural intermediaries find work within these strategies, that accounts for black Atlantic music's global popularity, and ubiquity. Soul, funk, Hip Hop, Reggae, house, Techno and their numerous derivations are all global musical genres in terms of their reach. They are all *already* transnational, which is why I have emphasised the diasporic context of their genesis and continual evolution, and the particular network of the black Atlantic, but they are no longer confined within the circum-Atlantic world or to places where people of the African diaspora reside. Hip Hop, as just one example, has spread across Europe, Asia and Australasia: from "Tunis to Honolulu" (Mitchell, 2001: 2).

Part of this is, of course, due to the power of the American cultural-industrial complex that has sent the forms in which the music is apparently commodified round the global markets. There continues to be the danger that these flows, under the influence of American particularism powered by American industrial power, are merely 'flows of consumption', uni-directional and hegemonic. As Tony Mitchell has pointed out the global articulations of Hip Hop culture are largely ignored within America and within academic work on Hip Hop, which commonly propose Hip Hop and rap as an articulation of a specific 'Afro-American' identity which is as American as it is 'Afro'.

In the unfolding diasporic conversation through music America has always been the loudest voice, because it developed early in the twentieth century large domestic industries and markets. Through American industrialisation ways were found to render what is ineffable (sound) in material form – shellac then vinyl, magnetic tape (cassette, then video), CD, DVD and digital file. This obviously suited the needs of the ever-expanding US entertainment complex but it also suited the music. Through the American entertainment industry the 'folk' musics of Afro-America (blues and jazz), the Afro-Caribbean (Reggae, Afro-jazz, salsa) and Brazil (bossa nova) found ways to propagate themselves across the world, and use the pathways of the market to nurture a strong, flexible, modern transnational diasporic network. This thesis merely concentrates on the London articulations of this network in the given period. Much more research is needed to connect local articulations like this with those in other cities on the Atlantic rim – Kingston, New Orleans, New York, Lagos – before we follow the pathways which lead away from the Atlantic or, indeed, away from the city. The networks of file sharers who swap, rework and remix music through peer to peer networks on the internet (Vaidhyanathan, 2003), who could be 'located'

anywhere, are the latest articulation of this de-centred creative network form which clusters around and re-produces black Atlantic music and memory.

But however much the demands for standarisation and completion have rendered Afro-diasporic music into the commodity form the music itself demands to be consumed actively – cut, mixed, sampled – and socially: the music wants to be danced. The flexible and open nature of multi-genred African diasporic music, which as Paul Gilroy continues to argue demands the supplementary 'work' of the cultural intermediaries and consumers of dance cultures wherever they are, makes it eminently adaptable to local circumstances because it is welcoming to local inflections – its already hybrid form lends itself to hybridisation again (Garcia Canclini, 2000: 45). Because these music cultures are themselves modes of thinking through, experiencing and surviving flow and its consequences, trans-national movement and the inevitable contact with difference, they are pre-eminently resources for others in need of their own models of translation, transmission and adaptation.

There is an analogy here between the forms of diasporic creativity I have discussed and life in the city. Both the diaspora and 'the city' are attuned to flows and rupture (Rose, 1994), to the exercise of arbitrary power and the possibility of resistance to it, and to the fundamental, indeed fundamentally productive relationship with difference. The African diaspora precisely specifies a population 'from' elsewhere, needing to adapt and develop techniques for negotiating contact with Others, and unequal power relations. The city – defined by what flows through it as much as what it contains – the scene of staged difference, the locus of cosmopolitanism is both a parallel to, and an articulation of Afro-diasporic culture. In both diasporic and city culture, which continually overlap though they are not synonymous, the appropriate mode of creativity, as of social interaction, is guarded opportunism. The diasporic person and the city dweller need to have an eye to the main chance, they hustle, cut n mix, sample, version, they "get there own ('cos they sure ain't going to give you none)". The mode of creativity here is a sharp contrast to the romantic notion of individual genius: it makes use of what it can find, and when 'newness enters the world' it does so because found objects and pre-existing elements are juxtaposed in new ways, by new groupings in unanticipated circumstances and spaces.

The 'experts' I have interviewed, and whose testimony guides this thesis, are typical in the networks of London dance in that they are expert at collating, compiling,

archiving, and recombining but they are not necessarily expert at autochthonous innovation. They, by and large, do not claim to be 'artists', and when they do discuss their modes of creativity they routinely refer to influences, forerunners, and the creative qualities of the network itself as the driving force of their creative work. In contrast to the idea of the individual genius, Brian Eno has termed this collective creativity 'scenius'. Just as London dance cultures do not exist without the Jamaican and American music produced in very different circumstances, although circumstances that are linked historically and politically, so the forms of creativity available in their networks make use of what they find. These networks are marked as diasporic by this emphasis on the found and already made – the 'use' of 'old' music in new contexts (Rare Groove) or 'old' rhythms, basslines or vocals, in new juxtapositions (rave, Jungle, UK Garage), the ever present ability to bring 'dead' space back to life. The dance music network takes things over that it did not create, and finds new, temporary ways to make them relevant. They are a form of social recycling.

In this thesis I have only gestured toward a full consideration of the forms of expertise that characterise popular music cultures and in particular the practices of the DJ. There is a clear need to expand the analysis of the collecting, collating, and performance practices of club networks in general and the DJ in particular. The DJ has become in recent popular representation a crucial central figure in dance culture. Some DJs are highly paid proto-celebrities, whose name on a flyer (whether or not they actually turn up) can ensure a huge crowd. Through their central position in the club economy DJs can wield huge influence, breaking new records, affecting generic change. There is a need for a political economy of dance music that analyses this influence, the emergence of the DJ star as a commodity and cultural intermediary, and the forms of discourse and market strategies that feed the notion that the DJ is God or (as one club and chart hit by *Faithless* held) that 'God is a DJ.'[3]

But the DJs who actually fit this category are a very small number of the actual amount of active DJs in popular dance music. Research is also needed into the everyday creative practise of the non-star DJ, the routes and forms of commitment that underpin their practice, the hierarchies and methods of selection that guide their record collection and the performance of their records in a 'set'. Being a successful DJ is not only a matter of money. Nor is it just a matter of the various technical skills a DJ displays – cutting, beat-mixing, working the levels, acquiring new records –

though these are important and interesting creative acts in themselves. If, as this thesis has argued, a useful metaphor or 'chronotype' for the dance floor experience of the dancer is that they are on a 'journey', then the DJ function is that of guide. How does a DJ organise and oversee the itinerary of any given journey? What are the actual processes of anti-phony I have sketched out on the general level? What kinds of decisions, hierarchies and models guide the decision to play which record when, in what interrelation or juxtaposition with which other, to what effect? What might a phenomenology of DJ technique reveal about the informal, untrained but patient, well honed and meticulous skills of a DJ who is able to bend a large heterogeneous dancing crowd to their will, to take them where they want them to go? Although anti-phony might dictate which records from the box a DJ selects at any given time during the evening, the ultimate choice is limited by what the DJ has brought with them – what kinds of judgements, genre notions, relations between self (my record collection) and network (this or that crowd or style) play out in the club?

**Multiculturalism**

This thesis has focussed its attention on forms of sociality that it calls 'multi-cultural' and the possible political and moral value of these forms of association. In this last section I want to discuss briefly what kind of multi-cultural politics is implied by my research, and where research may go from here?

I have argued throughout for a focus on space and the way that power and resistance especially that of racial discourse, articulates together in and through space. Multicultural space, both the spaces of sociability inside the club, where music calls trans-racial community into being, and the space of the city at large, are susceptible to recuperation. Multiculturalism, like identity itself is a process, a journey, not a destination. It must be renewed, generation after generation, and the forces of absolutism, of suspicion, and of hijack, which seek to harness the evident power and possibility of creative communalism, for instrumental economic ends, which were apparently beaten in one vector of spacetime can remerge in another. No battle with power is ever final.

[3] 1998 12" Cheeky/intercord/EMI

## City Space: evolution and recuperation

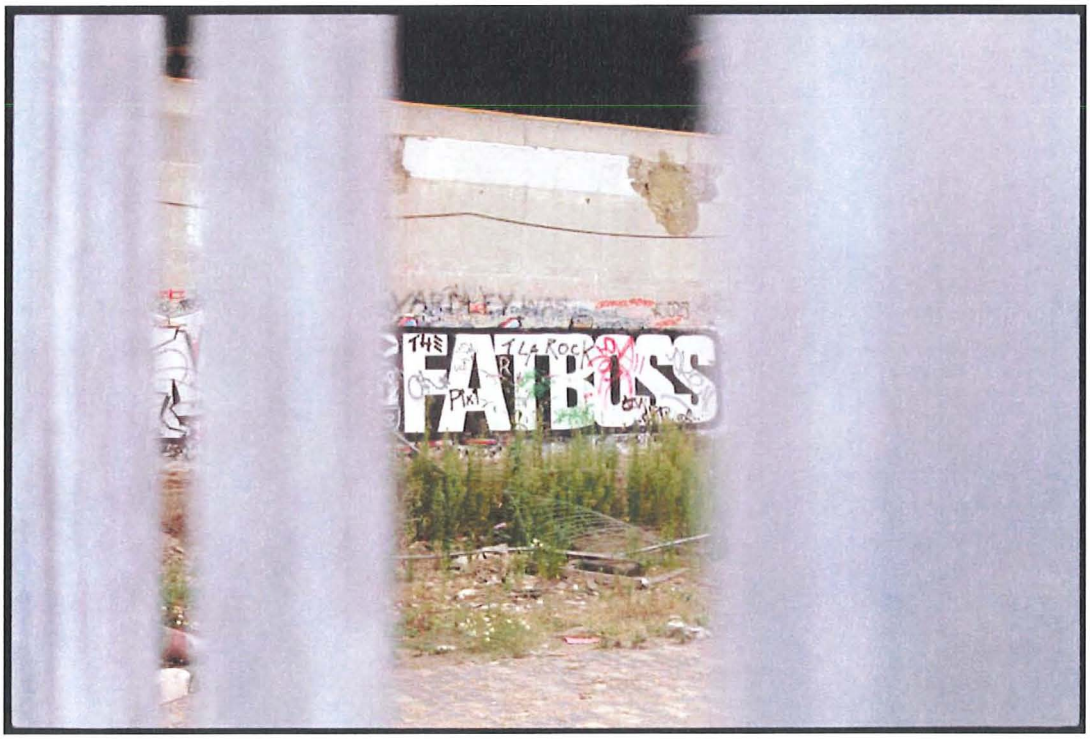
In the past decade it is not just the musical map of London that has changed. The political geography of London has shifted dramatically. Between 1960 and 1990 the impact of Afro-Caribbean young people, born in Britain, on the culture of the city, in both the narratives of 'law and order' and those of popular music, was the overarching theme of popular and academic accounts of the period. The binary way of viewing race, as an issue of black and white, that was a function both of reductive racist reason and the affirmative 'black liberation' movements that answered them, dominated racial discourse and how 'race relations' were understood in Britain. Because of immigration from the Caribbean 'black' in this period became synonymous with 'Afro-Caribbean' (which itself was dominated by the hegemony of Jamaican identity as discussed in chapter 4). This provided the frame of reference within which the genres discussed in this thesis were situated. But that binary logic no longer applies, if it ever did. First because the composition of the two main 'actors' in this Manichean drama, the assumed to be stable 'white' and black communities, have been transformed. Gentrification, rising property prices, the relative economic stability of the past decade, has significantly reorganised the distribution of 'white' populations in London. Formerly cheap and unfashionable areas have become desirable locations –Hoxton, Hackney and Brixton. Relatively settled medium and low income communities have been displaced and moved outwards, as successive waves of young, single, media and cultural workers have moved in. The turf wars and contact zones have been transformed, as have the forms of conflict or community available in these areas.

In a related process the city, particularly the partially abandoned, 'dead' city space that warehouse parties and club networks put to use, has been reclaimed from above by property developers and corporate entertainment industries.

The economic activities both of property developers and corporate entertainment conglomerates eager to cash-in on the perceived vitality of club culture in particular, have increased the privatisation both of public spaces, and of the space of dance culture. A brief trip back to the spaces discussed in chapter 4 will help clarify this.

## Privatising public space

Fourteen years after the 'Hole in the Wall' warehouse parties, Paddington basin, the 'no-where' at the intersection of the canal, the Westway and railway, is under development. Where once there were flimsy fences, easily hopped over by sourcers, promoters and crowds, there are high steel fences, guard cabins and barbed wire. While the residue of London's unruly musical cultures are still visible, in the form of graffiti, the space is becoming 'place' again.




At Paddington basin, through the security fence you can still glimpse the impact of years of 'diversion' (2001)

Large signs indicate that the area is being redeveloped by 'Development Securities (Paddington) Ltd'. This redevelopment, combining high-end residential, with commercial developments (offering in the words of the press release "World class office space combines maximum flexibility with flawless quality") is no doubt a boon to the blighted area, and is a partnership between local authority and private development money. The development includes buildings designed by some of Britain's leading architects (Richard Rogers) and sculpted open space by the canal, leisure facilities including restaurants, bars and night clubs: "A user-friendly space that puts the human factor first."[4] But it will not be public space. While it was

[4] Quotes from the website of property developers Chelsford PLC at http://www.paddingtonbasin.co.uk/

abandoned the space though hardly the kind of public space many would want, was diverted and put to the use of dance cultures. That possibility is now closed, as the use and meaning of the space is returned to the 'laws of the proper'.

On the other side of London a similar process is occurring. Bankside was the site of both the Bear Wharf warehouse parties, and the regular RIP parties when it was an industrial shell hollowed out by the decline of the docks. In a development zone stretching from Hungerford Bridge in the West to Tower Bridge in the East the riverside has been transformed by economic development. The past decade has seen; the erection of the 'Millennium Wheel', the creation in County Hall, formerly the seat of the Greater London Council (disbanded by the Thatcher Government in 1986), of leisure facilities now including an Aquarium and two art galleries (a permanent Dali museum and Charles Saatchi's Brit-art collection); the creation of a pedestrian path in front of the buildings all the way to Tower bridge; the construction of 'Shakespeare's Globe Theatre' funded by American film-maker Sam Wanamaker and based on the original Elizabethan design; the redevelopment of Gilles Gilbert Scott's designed Bankside Power Station into the Tate Modern; and the creation of a wax-work museum on the site of the former gaol in Clink street (below were the RIP parties were held). The building where the Bear Wharf parties were held has been redeveloped and is currently advertised for commercial rent.


Site of the Bear Wharf warehouse parties, refurbished and available for rent (2001)

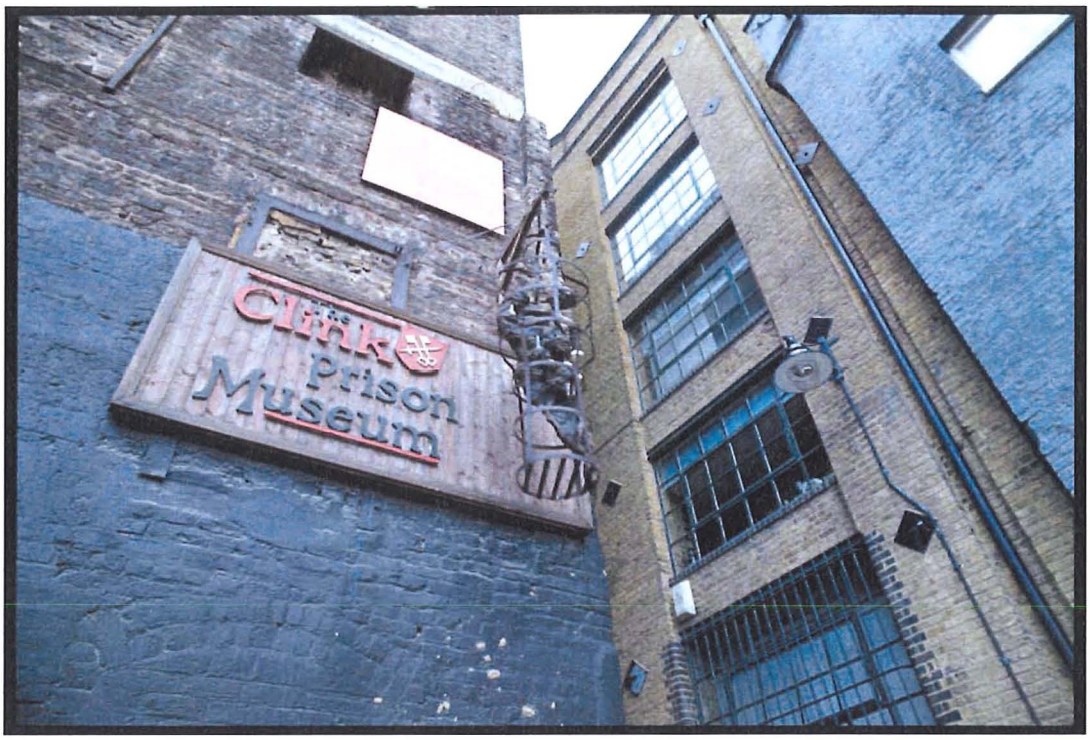
Once again these developments come with contradictions. It is now possible and pleasurable for anyone to stroll along the river from Vauxhall to Bermondsey, and unused and neglected parts of the city have been revivified. But although these areas are open to the public they are primarily open for business. Every development is a commercial opportunity. Freedom of movement is restricted. The space outside County Hall public use of that space is in the gift of the corporation which ownsv it. The neglect that allowed this area to be tactically produced as ambiguous spaces of possibility has been replaced by an attention to detail a panoptic precision and simulated frozen history.

Such developments recall Michel Foucault's prescient warnings about the way power will react spatially to threat, to any complexity or challenge to its ultimate right to dictate:

> [Discipline] must master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organised multiplicity; it must neutralise the effects of counterpower that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it; agitations, revolts, spontaneous organisations, coalitions – anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions.[5]

In his famous invocation of *Heterotopia* (other spaces) Foucault argues that one of the tendencies of these kinds of spaces is that they "can change function and meaning over time, according to the particular synchrony of the culture in which they occur." The informal warehouse parties, clubs and parties I have been describing are one possible kind of heterotopia, "fleeting transitory precarious" spaces of possibility, where space is put to use in ways other than which it was designed or intended, for the purposes of groups not catered for in the world of official leisure. But in the examples above another heterotopia emerges, that of "a more disneyfied world"[6] where time, history, culture are presented as if pickled; "specialist sites of all time, packaged environments that appear to abolish and preserve time and culture"; heterotopias of power.

[5] Foucault 1984: 209
[6] Soja, 1995: 16




Above the museum was the site of the RIP parties of the late 1980s and early 1990s (2001)

The same process can be seen operating at the micro level: in the club culture industry. Ten Minutes walk from Clink Street down Southwark Bridge Road brings you to one of the most successful clubs in contemporary London, the Orwellian sounding 'Ministry of Sound'. Opened in 1990 by old Etonian James Palumbo on the back of the explosion of 'club culture' which followed in the wake of Acid House the Ministry is housed in a former warehouse in Gaunt St just of Elephant and Castle. The interior of the club, which is cavernous, with a capacity of several thousands, has a bare wall and steel look reinforcing the 'warehouse chic' of the location. The Ministry of sound book 'some of the top DJs in the world' (as it's sign proudly proclaims), average entrance fee is £15 and the numerous burly bouncers are connected by to each other by ear piece walkie-talkies while the club is continually surveyed by CCTV cameras. According to the Managing Director Mark Rodol, the aim of the club is to provide "safe raving in a *safe well managed environment.*"[7]

[7] Mark Rodol MD Ministry of sound cited in Collin, 2000


Ministry of Sound, front entrance (2001)

But this process is not all one way. In the late 1990s, following the commercial success of Ministry, the nightclub chain 'Home' (with branches in Ibiza and Sydney), using DJ Paul Oakenfold as its figurehead, opened a huge 'superclub' in London's Leicester Square. This appeared to extend the trend for bigger and more influential club brands dominating the landscape of London dance culture.

But after a series of highly publicised drug incidents and, more importantly, despite huge marketing and the booking of global name DJs, the paucity of the crowds forced the nightclub to close in 2002. The decline and fall of Home seems to indicate that although corporate expansion, development and marketing continue to exert an influence on the landscape of dance, they have not been able to corner the market on dance music entirely. Somewhere, elsewhere, informal, bottom-up musical networks continue to emerge and organise.


Home, Leicester Square, before it was closed

**Sonic recuperation**

The dangers of recuperation are not just a matter of the shrinkage of public space, or the commodification of the nightclub venue. The forces of recuperation also operate at the sonic level. Musical genres themselves are symbolic spaces whose meanings can be fixed and possibilities closed off. I have discussed how the patterns of gentrification and property development have changes the shape of 'white' London, but this process, obviously has also changed what has been understood as the (implicitly stable) black community. In London the 'black communities' of London Afro-Caribbeans no longer have the numerically superiority of the 1970s and 1980s. Successive migrations from West Africa – Nigeria, Ghana – and from the East – Somalia, Ethiopia – have reshaped the constituency of the supposed to be cohesive black community.[8] There are new kinds of translations between Afro-Caribbean, Black American and contemporary African social networks and the real possibility of building alliances across the black Atlantic which are not wedded to an idea of Africa as fixed, unchanging, authentic and long lost. But there are new tensions too, and a changed relation between different versions of blackness in Britain, and between black and white Britons. This shift in the political racial geography of the city has been matched, mirrored or challenged by the shift in the space of the black dance club, in particular the forms of music available there. While the massively

[8] Arogundade, 2001

predominant music of the 'white' mainstream corporate club culture is house and its derivatives (Techno, Trance etc..) that of the emergent 'black' mainstream is an American genre called RnB (aka R&B).

The emergence of RnB has and can be given a 'positive' spin. There is much talk of the long awaited emergence of a strong, commercially viable, black 'mainstream' (visible, accessible, officially sanctioned) club scene with all the benefits in terms of kudos and pay cheques that this carries with it. That the key figures in this emergent black British cultural industry have found a place in the mediascape of twenty first century Britain, such as my informant Trevor who has a top rated BBC Radio One radio show and makes frequent television appearances, should not, in the context of the racialised politics of space and music I have discussed, be underestimated.

But premature celebrations gloss over the more troubling aspects of the RnB phenomena. First in terms of a symbolic act of restitution or compensation for Britain's post-immigration fit of racial hatred, this hardly amounts to much more than meeting the first demand in the platform of black political demands of the early 1970s – increasing the visibility of black Britain, allowing 'positive roles models' with whom black youth might identify. If, as Hall has argued, this demand corresponds to the first phase of black political maturity, a phase which has been over since 1988, then it doesn't look quite so profound a change or amount to evidence of a post-racist Britain.

Indeed, once we factor in the music genre itself and its norms, narrative and modes of expression it might look more like a backward step. For unlike the hybrid, wilfully trans-national and composite genres of the 1990s – Jungle chief among them – RnB is profoundly and irreducibly American. While soul, funk and Hip Hop, though American in origin, were turned outward through symbolic and rhythmic identification with Africa, and thereby with the diaspora, RnB has turned inward focussing on a tightly limited range of American places – the basketball court, the pool party, the bedroom – identities and politics.

RnB is the industrial product of the Black American recording industry which since the huge global success of Hip Hop and the soul influenced by it (eg Mary J Blige, Lauren Hill), has joined up two reliable black genres , gospel derived soul and hip-hip production and 'attitude', to produce a slick, powerful but standardised product. While there is much talent and occasional genius on display in RnB, overall it is a

tightly controlled, generically and narratively limited pseudo-genre, based in no identifiable social realm.

It is this music which has replaced the complexity of the narrative landscape of soul, jazz, funk and Hip Hop, which, at its best, held joy and pain, sincerity and irony, love and lust, good and evil, individual and collective in a playful, delicate balance with a straightforward fetishisation of money and commodities for their own sake and an obsession with a limited, raced physicality. It is this music and style – a "culture of simulation" not experience – which Paul Gilroy deconstructs so powerfully in *Between Camps*, and here where his warnings about the growth of "bio-politics" and the "marketing of blackness"[9] are most acute and devastating. RnB is a prime example of the "processes which flatten out cultural and linguistic variation into the blander, more homogenous formations in which consumerism can take hold" (Gilroy, 2000: 271).

**The state we're in: Multicultural Britain**

To tie this all together it is necessary to say what I think can be drawn from the kinds of networks I have been discussing in terms of a politics of multiculturalism. In this I hold the words, once again, of Paul Gilroy close. In his opening address to a conference about London in 1997 he said: "London's multi-culture will not necessarily take care of itself as a private phenomena."[10] My reading of this warning, which I think is consistent with what Gilroy would argue, is that he is not calling for policy initiatives – a state guided cultural agenda to support multiculturalism – but for a political consideration of both the fragility and then importance of the kind of multicultural society forged and pre-figured by the music networks I have discussed. In his view, and my own, London is a relatively successful multicultural society, but its form of multiculture is, always, 'emergent', fragile and worthy of attention, and, if not celebration, then a full recognition of its history, contours and value. The work needs to be done not at the level of policy but at the level of analysis where attention to "the mechanisms of cultural transmission and translation"[11], to the work put in by those people who have made difference not threatening but workable, and in so doing have remade the space of the post-colonial city, and our understanding of the nation. This analysis can then be used to underpin politics that resists the recuperation of public space and creative expression, as it resists the rearticulation of mono-cultural

[9] Gilroy, 2000, 239-241
[10] Gilroy, 1997: 3

or narrowly national versions of identity. What we can learn from the shift from culture to multiculture in London can help form the ground on which we try to understand and grapple with what is different about the contemporary world, and arguments about the place of culture and multiculture in that world.

According to Nestor Garcia Canclini "hybridisation is not synonymous with reconciliation among ethnicities or nations, nor does it guarantee democratic interactions." Just like multiculturalism. But what it does specify is "a point of departure from which to break from the fundamentalist tendencies and the fatalism of doctrines of civilising wars. It serves to make us capable of recognising the productivity of exchanges and crossings" while staying attuned to the fact that "hybridisation can also be the place in which cultures can lose their defining characteristics or be thwarted."(Garcia Canclini, 2000: 43)

If recognised both as a fact, rather than a political philosophy or program, and as a starting point, multiculturalism, which holds an attempt to understand the differential process of hybridisation and flow at its centre and an understanding of how race and ethnicity have and still play in distributions of power and resistance, can and should remain the most promising conceptual device for opening up life in the contemporary city and the nation within globalisation.

I want to finish with music, and an example that I think suggests both the triumphs of, the normalisation of hybrid metropolitan London culture, and the dangers it continues to face. Despite the riches of London's multicultural music networks and the battles it has won over city space, we cannot be complacent. Not only is hybridity no kind of prima facie guarantee of validity it serves also the cultural industries but multiculturalism needs renewal and our understanding of its processes must always start from the premise that any gains (especially aesthetic and social) are vulnerable and temporary. One example from a recent popular celebration of British music makes the case.

A recent celebration of 'British Music' which though it went under the title of 'the best pop group ever' was in fact a run down of the best selling chart singles since the inception of the charts, featured a number of interesting covert references to the issues I have been discussing. For example Blondie (the Tide is High) and The Police were featured, both having had considerable chart success with their Reggae-tinged

[11] Gilroy, 2000: 133

pop. The fact that their music was an example of cultural intermixing if not cultural robbery was not mentioned. This elision was reinforced in the segment celebrating the chart success of the band Madness. Madness, who had a string of hit singles in the mid 1980s, were associated with the 'two tone' movement of the 1980s, although they differed from the core bands of that movement – The Specials, The Selector, The Beat – because they were not a multi racial group, they were all white men from North London, and they briefly, and much to their avowed chagrin, became associated with support from racist (second wave) skinheads. The programme told none of this story, but after all it was not a social history programme. But the striking feature was this: In a series of interviews with the talking head pundits that these kinds of shows specialise in Madness were referred to as a "typically British band".

Reference was made to their fun-filled story telling and cheeky chappy personas, to their local depictions of life in the school yard (Baggy Trousers) and lower class suburbs (My House). But what was revealing was the complete lack of attention to the – at least to me – glaring point that this typically British band were making music that was fundamentally Jamaican in style. Madness are and continue to be a pop-ska band. On the one hand this could be evidence of the normalisation of Britain's, indeed London's (given Madness strong association with Camden) musical multiculturalism. It is not necessary to mention and considered entirely ordinary that white British bands and British music itself is based on a negotiation and hybridisation with the Black Atlantic musical tradition. On the other hand the omission of the context for understanding this musical mixing could signal something far more sinister, the complete erasure of the pre-existing parallel Afro-diasporic musical tradition hidden behind the apparent 'originality' and nation typicality of a white British band. For those of a generation that can reconstruct this history such historical myopia need not be catastrophic, just annoying. But for those remote from the times and spaces of the two tone conjuncture the consequences could be far more serious.

Putting myself in the position of the teenage target audience for the programme I asked myself what I would have made of it. Without the historical social or spatial context it is entirely possible to neglect, misunderstand or obliterate the complex work that went into creating the music that Madness borrow from so skilfully, the Madness 'moment' itself and the society within which such musical and cultural mixings become unexceptional. The danger of recuperation, exclusion, and the

rewriting of cultural history remain ever present. We must be ever vigilant to this, and it is towards this end that I write and present this thesis.

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