

**Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White: Morality in the
Music Press, 1967-1983**

by

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Abstract

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This thesis argues that between 1967 and 1983 the music press became increasingly embroiled in extra-musical, social and cultural issues. The music press provided an arena for editors, journalists, musicians and readers to debate social mores. This has gone unnoticed in the existing historiography. The music press – which was conventionally assumed to favour ‘permissiveness’ – hosted a variety of different moral viewpoints that challenge our understanding of conversations on social mores from 1967-1983. Bringing the music press to the fore of historical analysis in this period illustrates that British moral discourse was complex, fragmented and drew from a variety of narratives from the conservative to the radical. The thesis examines how moral debates emerged in the late-1960s’ music press and then investigates the most salient themes that elicited discussions. These themes include youthful rebellion and generational divisions, sex, sexuality, drug use, gender, anti-racism, violent transgression, urban decay and alienation. The thesis analyses how these themes were narrated in the music press and identifies multiple viewpoints were articulated in reference to other tensions that affected moral conversations, such as the music press’s commercial concerns and journalistic styles. It recognises that the music press gave journalists, musicians and readers considerable scope to express their views. Thus the music press is a unique source for gauging the sentiments and proclivities of youth, music subcultures, the press and music industry.

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Abbreviations and Figures

Abbreviations

ABC	The Audit Bureau of Circulation
BBC	The British Broadcasting Corporation
EMAP	East Midlands Allied Press
LSD	Lysergic acid diethylamide (or acid)
LSE	The London School of Economics
MC5	The Motor City 5
MTV	Music Television
NME	<i>The New Musical Express</i>
NRS	<i>The National Readership Survey</i>
NWOBHM	The New Wave of British Heavy Metal
PiL	Public Image Limited
RB	Rock's Backpages
IPC	The International Publishing Company, from 1968 IPC Magazines
UCL	University College London
U.S.	United States of America
YOP	The Youth Opportunities Programme

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Introduction

Conduits for Sale!

In the first few months of 1967 there was a distinctive change in the content of the music press that would shape music papers like *NME* and *Melody Maker* for the following decades. Previously, mainstream music papers had indulged popular musicians through safe, uncontroversial articles intended to protect the public image of artistes and promote their music. Musicians were expected to entertain and reap the material rewards, and while some musicians were more opinionated, this was about pop music not politics. During the late-1960s and 1970s, however, music papers became increasingly littered with outspoken statements. Musicians, journalists and readers self-consciously became conduits for discourses on socio-political matters and morality was a vital element of this discussion. Through the music press these narratives connected the cultural practices of popular music with a wider social, economic and political context that could rarely be communicated in a song or even an album. Musicians were not politicians though, so rather than coherent ideological doctrines they offered a variety of opinions and moral intuitions; they could be impassioned, irreverent or sardonic, even uninformed, but they were always vocal. To use a much abused cliché, those writing for or featured by the music press were presented as spokespeople for their generation who were able to escape the predispositions of their elders; some even encouraged youth to speak and think for themselves.

Young people in this period followed the popular music world's developments with intense interest. Music papers reached an extraordinary number of readers. Britain's most prominent papers *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express* (*NME*) frequently sold over 200,000 copies per week and sometimes even 300,000 copies.¹ According to the *National Readership Survey* (*NRS*) the papers were normally read by around six to ten people per copy.² Thus several million people read the two main music press titles each week. This thesis argues that the music press was a widely read discursive space for predominantly young people to discuss British morality.³ A varied debate emerged encompassing the morality of war and protest, race, sexuality, gender roles, consumerism, rowdy behaviour, politics, sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Accordingly the music press provided statements that could be appropriated by

¹ This is according to Audit Bureau of Circulation (*ABC*) figures provided by IPC Media (2010).

² This figure is based on data from *the National Readership Survey* (*NRS*). For instance *NRS* (London, January-June 1972), p. 3; *NRS* (London, January-June 1978), p. 3.

³ It should be noted that the papers were read more by men than by women.

readers, journalists and musicians to construct their selves. This thesis explores these discourses and argues that the music press, in conjunction with other cultural actors concerned with British morality, offered British youth a discursive space for vigorous and multifaceted conversations on morality.⁴ Unlike other forces shaping youth and popular culture – the BBC’s music coverage or radio – the music press rarely censored its content and allowed journalists, artistes and readers to debate morality freely.

The thesis uncovers and analyses the music press’s varied and fragmented moral articulations. These statements and debates contributed to the guiding moral principles in post-war British society which constructed and framed individual behaviour. Whilst the thesis attempts to explain how the music press, as a sector of the popular periodical press, came to be involved in moral debate there are more wide reaching implications to the study. The music press was an arena for the debates on personal morality that continued to be broached in British culture. This thesis examines how the music press approached important social matters such as youthful rejections of authority, anti-war protest and activism, sexuality, gender, sex, drug use, alienation, bad behaviour race and racism. It shows that the discussions that were seen as ‘permissive’ in the 1960s were not accepted or settled by the 1970s or early-1980s. The music press represented a range of views, from the provocative and controversial to the traditional and conservative. Whilst some argued for a revolution in social mores, a vocal minority impeded social change. Indeed vocal elements in the music press communicated the manifold possibilities of urban life, negotiated the righteousness of ‘traditional’ social mores and responded to the diffusion of cosmopolitan or bohemian narratives outside of cultural elites. The morality debate was uncommonly populist, inclusive and unabridged when discussing the transgressive or representing social change.

After preliminary analysis of the 1960s’ music press it became clear that discussions of morality became more widespread and detailed from around 1967. Consequently 1967 is the starting point for this thesis. This coincides with wider conversations regarding ‘permissiveness’ and youth that responded to liberal law reforms, the economic autonomy of youth and burgeoning mass youth culture. These debates were discussed sporadically before 1967 however they were outweighed by *NME*’s more asinine pop reporting and *Melody Maker*’s detailed, scholarly and professional music coverage.⁵ In 1967 Maurice Kinn, the editor of the *NME*, set the

⁴ The music press was often in conversation with groups such as women’s liberation activists, aware of gay rights activism, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the underground press, and even Mary Whitehouse was included in debates on morality.

⁵ *Melody Maker* had previously advocated specific causes such as anti-racism, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and it had of course championed socially conscious jazz and folk artistes. Nevertheless *Melody Maker* was more focused on discussions of musical issues of influence, styles of playing, career progression and plans.

precedent for moral discussion by calling for papers to avoid a ‘whitewash’ of contentious debates (as the BBC had done in regard to ‘drug songs’ in pop on *Jukebox Jury*).⁶ This coincided with popular blues influenced artistes and underground rock acts assertively expressing their views on wider society whilst maintaining both commercial success and notoriety.⁷ It had previously been assumed that outspoken artistes would alienate consumers by promoting contentious views. By 1967 and onwards papers indulged and even instigated contentiousness.

The study finishes in 1983, by which time the music press’s readership was in decline. Accordingly the leading music papers’ role and content changed. Also the music press, as an industry, fragmented into a range of niche titles from 1979 onwards. Cheaper printing costs resulted in many titles being released; they intensified competition in the music paper, or by then magazine, market. These magazines were more likely to solicit readers with a single musical interest: for instance *Smash Hits* concentrated (mostly) on pop and *Kerrang!* was concerned with heavy metal. Indeed even established music papers, with previously catholic musical interests, progressively specialised: *Sounds* focused upon British working-class punk’s legacy and metal whereas *NME* fixated upon post-punk. As papers reported on particular genres and subcultures rather than youth culture and music in general they provided less of a platform for populist moral discussion. Music press stalwarts – *Melody Maker* and *NME* – no longer commanded the authoritative position that they had previously claimed. *Melody Maker* declined in quality and readership after a disastrous aborted re-launch. Its ability to report debates on the music’s social role was mitigated significantly. *NME* on the other hand became increasingly influenced by high-brow academic theories; it was beset by internecine struggles and could not be seen as a mainstream music paper. The rise Hip Hop and Rap made these debates even more pointed and, with the oncoming rise of electronic dance music, added to the number of titles in competition. Rock morality no longer dominated as a key discourse. Indeed claims of youth revolution had been undermined by years of unemployment, inflation and Thatcher’s government: rather than utopian progressiveness, dystopian negation, angry resistance and escape were more easily invoked. Furthermore, by 1983 the music industry had changes significantly: electronic instrumentation had been tersely accepted (after years of dissent from the Musicians’ Union), MTV had been launched and to some extent the image had begun to be privileged over the text. Music writing still had a role, it continued in fanzines, monthly magazines and online, but it existed in a much more crowded media marketplace with uncertain sources of revenue. The

⁶ Maurice Kinn, ‘The BBC and Drug Songs’, *NME*, 14 January 1967, p. 8.

⁷ Even The Beatles and Bob Dylan had kept the music press at a distance. They often obscured their views through indifference, playful banter or in Dylan’s case refusing to be interviewed.

rapidly declining music papers would not regain market dominance or social role that they had once commanded.

Context and Historiography

Full employment, growing consumer power and greater freedoms granted by the liberalising censorship encouraged a buoyant 1960s culture industry that could be used as a platform to critique society. Young people's unprecedented economic position gave them greater autonomy from parental authority and defined them as a discrete market for goods.⁸ Young people spent a disproportionate amount on records and music papers and were key markets for the music and publishing industry.⁹ The music press's success epitomised the more significant cultural, social, political and economic position of youth.¹⁰ But affluence and its cultural trappings did not cause an immediate mass questioning of social ethics. Metropolitan elites dominated debates on propriety and had more access to arenas of transgression: traversing morality was a high-cultural, elite pursuit and media such as the popular press interpreted morality within these parameters.¹¹ The music press, however, was written from within this milieu and transmitted influential cosmopolitan discourses to a mass audience. The cosmopolitan elites' mores were complimented by a discursive shift to more candid public expression which was enabled by the legacy of new legislation. The Wolfenden Report's recommendation to decriminalise homosexuality (1957), the Obscene Publications Act (1959), Abortion Act (1967), Sexual Offences Act (1967), Theatres Act (1968) and Divorce Act (1969) elevated topics previously steeped in innuendo and secrecy into the public discourse as the threat of legal reprimand was reduced. This was in conjunction with how notions of British imperial and economic decline, scandals such as the Profumo crisis, secularisation narratives and global youth concerns such as the Vietnam War prompted a re-evaluation traditional moral arbiters' authority.¹² This was a tentative process as the legislative changes that were not related

⁸ Christian Bugge, 'Marketing to Youth in Britain since 1959', in Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds), *An Affluent Society? Britain's Postwar 'Golden Age' Revisited* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 185-202. Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture Society and Politics* (London, 2005), pp. 28-47.

⁹ Mark Abrahams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London, 1959), pp. 5-14.

¹⁰ The construction and greater cultural prominence of youth is covered in John Gillis, *Youth and History* (New York, 1972); Jon Savage, *Teenage* (London, 2007); Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth* (Oxford, 1992).

¹¹ This argument has been put forwards most convincingly in Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs* (London, 2010), pp. 5-12. It has also been argued by Andrew Holden, *Makers and Manners: Politics and Morality in Post-War Britain* (London, 2004), pp. 2-19.

¹² Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 170-199. To Brown secularisation was a post-modernist phenomena that embodied the rejection of 'core values' and explanatory metanarratives. Also Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford,

to obscenity – legislating upon sexual behaviour and the body – were often set within private behaviour rhetoric rather public liberation.¹³ The responses to issues such as secularisation or youth protest were multifaceted and incorporated many competing discourses. The music press was privy to these discussions. Music papers conveyed metropolitan narratives and the wider debates on morality, transmitting these ideas and controversies in mainstream, mass market papers. Music papers provide a valuable source for exploring changing moral discourses because they acted as a bridge between metropolitan cultural elites and a more commercial youth culture.

Scholarship on post-1945 British morality has often been overshadowed by 1960s permissiveness; nonetheless the concerns and contentions that discussion of permissiveness brought to the fore predated the 1960s and continued to be relevant into the 1970s.¹⁴ In this sense the thesis will fill a historiographical gap. There was, of course, ‘permissive’ legal change and a discourse on permissiveness in the 1960s, but they have often been overstated as a symptom of a rapid shift in sensibilities. Marcus Collins, for instance, is perhaps too easily impressed by the ‘avatars’ of ‘sexual revolution’ and the ‘new morality’ of the ‘immoral majority’ following the ‘permissive’ legislation.¹⁵ It has been more convincingly argued, however, that the sexual revolution was a longer process.¹⁶ More hyperbolic reading of the sixties, such as those by Arthur Marwick, Collins or Jonathan Green overstate the 1960s unique permissiveness and understate the extent permissiveness was a fundamentally elite metropolitan phenomenon with a lengthier ancestry that was more thoroughly, but still not entirely, realised in the public sphere during the 1970s.¹⁷ There are studies

2008). This rejection of a single societal morality is explored by Andrew Holden, *Makers and Manners*, p. 1-8.

¹³ The private ‘Victorian’ attitudes towards sex that remained or ‘lingered’ during a period of ‘sexual revolution’ are explained in Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 348.

¹⁴ Trevor Fisher had argued that ‘permissiveness’ was not a narrowly 1960s phenomena, but instead of investigating the concept into the 1970s and 1980s he traces the antecedents of permissiveness from the 1890s to the 1960s. Trevor Fisher, ‘Permissiveness and the Politics of Morality’, *Contemporary Record* 7:1 (1993), pp. 149-165. The ‘permissiveness’ of the 1960s is explored in Marcus Collins (ed.), *The Permissive Society and its Enemies* (London, 2007).

¹⁵ Marcus Collins, ‘The Pornography of Permissiveness: Men’s Sexuality and Women’s Emancipation in Mid Twentieth-Century Britain,’ *History Workshop Journal* 47:2 (1999), pp. 99-108.

¹⁶ Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Social and Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, 1958-1974* (Oxford, 1999). Jonathan Green, *All Dressed Up* (Oxford, 1999). There are oppositely loaded impressions of the 1960s from the right as well, such as Dominic Sandbrook’s *White Heat* (London, 2006).

¹⁷ This is a problem that is associated with Foucault’s conception of morality, which is the basis for the conceptualisation of morality in this thesis and is discussed later in the introduction. It could be argued that Foucault is appropriating a more positive incarnation of Theodor Adorno’s concept of ‘pseudo-individualisation.’ This is argued by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas states that ‘narcissistically overinflated’ autonomy is isolated or privileged social action ‘rendered independent of the communicative structures of the lifeworld, that is, from the intersubjectivity of relationships of mutual understanding relationships of reciprocal recognition.’ Lois McNay further argued the idea of, ‘aesthetics of existence...amounts to an amoral project for privileged minorities.’ In much the same way that Dick Hebdige used

which attempt to rectify this and question **the** 1960s' myths. Most explicitly Nick Thomas has demythologised the period and, by puncturing some of the narratives surrounding the British student protest movement, has suggested the notion of a 'media Sixties'.¹⁸ Similar suspicions have been articulated by Adrian Bingham who views permissiveness as a 'journalistic cliché' in response to a rise in sexual imagery and discourses in the popular press.¹⁹ Indeed Mark Donnelly made the apt distinction between a 'permissive state' and a 'permissive society' when trying to disentangle unambiguous and insufficiently complex readings of the 1960s.²⁰ As repressive, moralist legislation was replaced, as Mort, Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis have argued, a discursive space was opened for the potential articulation of alternative sentiments.²¹ The music press was adamant that it would not censor possibly controversial debates on contemporary topics. It brought isolated 1960s narratives into the public domain, but in a way that was discerning and subtly questioning. Indeed it also enabled these discourses and new categorisations of the self to be codified and controlled by those in authority or those in thrall with 'traditional' morality.

This thesis goes beyond the ethical negotiations of the 1960s. Despite challenges to affluence and permissive liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s a greater proportion of society – informed by technologies such as the press – participated in moral conversations. Mark Donnelly, taking heed from counter-cultural participants such as Mick Farren and Germaine Greer, has noted that the most prominent causes

Genet's thief as a heroic outsider, Foucault relied upon Walter Benjamin's study of Baudelaire. I argue that the music press, however, through being inexpensive, readily available and widely read enabled a much wider section of society to access the elite discourses on morality and potentially enable a greater section of society the chance to affect the behaviours or attitudes that they read about. Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life* (Cambridge, 2006). Michel Foucault, *The Technologies of the Self* (Amherst, 1988), p. 15. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 167. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), p. 2. Louise McNay *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (New York, 1994), p. 154.

¹⁸ Nick Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest in Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History* 13:3 (2002), p. 278. In turn Thomas borrowed the concept from Robert Murphy, *Sixties British Cinema* (London, 1988), p. 1, and from Peter York, *StyleWars* (London, 1980), p. 182. This theory is also put forwards in Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs: The Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties* (London, 1969), 7–11.

¹⁹ Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* (Oxford, 2009), p. 121.

²⁰ Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, p. 116.

²¹ Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis "A Field for Private Members": The Wolfenden Committee and Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1950-67,' *Twentieth Century British History* 15:2 (2004), pp. 175-176. Frank Mort, 'Mapping Sexual London: The Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution 1954-57,' *New Formations*, 37 (1999), p. 95. Frank Mort often makes a link between post-War changes in metropolitan urban sexuality and changes in morality in 'Scandalous Events Metropolitan Culture and Moral Change in Post-Second World War London', *Representations* 93:1 (2006) and, *Capital Affairs*, p. 4-5. A longer history of this can be found in H.G. Cocks's work such as H.G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences* (London, 2003), p. 80. Chris Waters, 'Disorders of the Mind, Disorders of the Body Social: Peter Wildeblood and the Making of the Modern Homosexual', in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945-1964* (London, 1999).

of the 1960s only gained momentum in the 1970s.²² There is ample evidence of this: Gay Liberation's first pride march was in 1972, by the 1970s the limits on who could reasonably get contraceptive pills were curtailed, and Kenneth Tynan might have said 'fuck' on television in 1965, but Felix Dennis had mustered much worse on *The Frost Show* in 1970. Nevertheless, the 1970s witnessed a significantly different material context and the intensification of decline narratives.²³ Following the 'Oil Crisis' of 1973 there was a two year recession in which Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined between three and four per cent and inflation rose by around twenty per cent.²⁴ It took nearly four years and an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan which undermined Keynesian economic policies for the GDP to recover. With maintaining full employment no longer the chief political priority, by 1978 unemployment had reached 1,500,000, a post-war high, rising further as manufacturing declined in the 1980s to nearly 4,000,000.²⁵ Youth employment was a serious problem: it had risen 120 per cent between 1972 and 1977, compared to a 45 per cent increase in the general working-population; by 1981, in some regions youth unemployment was over 30 per cent.²⁶ This exacerbated an ill-tempered and polarising period of political instability, urban unrest and industrial action.²⁷ If this was not symptomatic of a general decline, it was a short, sharp shock.

Voices in the music press, however, expected the same right to autonomy of the self during the 1970s and 1980s as they had begun to express in the 1960s despite the more tempestuous context. Actually youth had never been so well positioned to debate morality as following the *Robbins Report* there had been a large extension of higher education. The *Robbins Report* aimed to increase the amount of university students to 560,000 by 1980. This cohort of students was ardently courted by the

²² Mick Farren, *Give the Anarchist a Cigarette*, (London, 2001), p.234; Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, p.xv. This is also argued by Adam Lent, *British Social Movements since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 135-137.

²³ The basis for such a decline is arguable; George Bernstein's *Myth of Decline* (London, 2004) posited that Britain underwent a post-war cultural renewal. However economic uncertainty, decolonisation and industrial issues did stoke a potent discourses of decline and crisis. This can be found in Jim Tomlinson, 'The Decline of Empire and the Economic "Decline" of Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 14:3 (2003), pp. 201-221; Michael Dintenfass, 'Converging Accounts, Misleading Metaphors and Persistent Doubts: Reflections on the Historiography of Britain's "Decline"' in J. Dormois and M. Dintfass (eds), *The British Industrial Decline* (London, 1999), pp. 7-10.

²⁴ B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 741.

²⁵ S.N. Bradbury, 'Unemployment', in N.F.R Crafts and Nicholas Woodward (eds), *The British Economy Since 1945* (Oxford, 1991), p. 217.

²⁶ Michael H. Banks and Philip Ullah, *Youth Unemployment in the 1980s* (Beckenham, 1988), pp. 8-9.

²⁷ Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London, 2010), pp. 170-190. Paul Ward, Graham Hellawell and Sally Lloyd, 'Witness Seminar: Anti-Fascism in 1970s Huddersfield', *Contemporary British History* 20:1 (2006), pp. 119-133.

music press.²⁸ The music press became increasingly brazen, literary and exciting, even employing former underground press writers to satisfy progressively more educated readers. Music papers broached taboo topics and championed causes. Moral questioning did not appear overnight with the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or the first bars of 'Love Me Do' nor did it disappear following Altamont, the decline of the underground press or the 1973 recession. During the 1970s and early-1980s the music press recorded private vice – as tolerated by 1950s and 1960s reform – enacted for public consumption. More aggressive and prickly modes of self-expression countered those who made utopian assumptions in the late-1960s, often to be distracted by infamy's commercial rewards. By the latter half of the 1970s the music press rejected the trappings of affluence and became a platform for sometimes conceited, but often intellectual, theoretical and, moreover, bleak nihilistic narratives. It critiqued society and only offered support to campaigns with limited aims rather than pretensions to the fundamental transformation of society.

Compared to more excitable 'cultural revolution' or 'permissive moment' accounts of post-war British values metropolitan histories provide a more persuasive approach. They are more modest and do not presuppose an unlikely and universal permissive deluge. Instead it is evident that transgression was localised and, still into the 1970s, transgressing normative moral tenets were only partially tolerated and rarely accepted. The 1960s legal changes and resistance granted greater recognition to narratives and behaviours that had existed illicitly in shadowy bohemian enclaves or, as Helen Smith argues, very specific provincial locales.²⁹ London, for instance, provided a geographical space where elites could access a range of transgressive possibilities. Matt Houlbrook's *Queer London* or Matt Cook's *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* explain how London provided a space for non-heteronormative sexuality.³⁰ Houlbrook reads Soho and other elite spaces as sites for gay men to socialise illicitly before the Wolfenden report and the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Similarly in *Capital Affairs* Frank Mort explained Soho's cultural-geography in relation to late-1950s moral discourse. Mort explains the negotiations and transgression of sexual norms in Soho, integrating concerns over racial mixing, the establishment's propriety and increasing access to bawdy leisure.³¹ Yet whilst this

²⁸ Home Office, *Robbins Report on Higher Education* (1963), Education in England, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins20.html> [accessed 10 November 2011].

²⁹ Helen Smith, 'A Study of Working-Class Homosexual Experience in the North of England 1895-1957' Ph.D. thesis (University of Sheffield, 2012), pp. 8-20.

³⁰ Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-57* (London, 2005), p. 3. Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885 - 1914* (Cambridge, 2003), 7-11.

³¹ Mort, *Capital Affairs*, pp. 352-353. Soho's role as a 'potent incubator for metropolitan change' is discussed in Judith Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, 2012), p. 3.

underground was tolerated in private it was only by the 1970s, the heyday of the music press, that formerly taboo deviant behaviour was expressed publically. The late-1960s Notting Hill counter-culture was similarly influential, especially in the music press: John Davis argues that it influenced the way in which government controlled drugs; through the music press subcultures communicated underground metropolitan values to an impressionable cohort of British youth.³² In the music press the censure that underground urban periodicals such as *Ox* elicited with its ‘Schoolkids Issue’ could be circumnavigated. In some respects the music press was under less scrutiny; it was less ideological and radical sentiments were ‘reported’ rather than presented to subvert; Editors rarely intervened unless there was sufficient risk of triable obscenity. As the site of possible sociability and the culture industry’s hub, the city is a crucible for morality, commerce and consumerism. Harry Cocks has traced the permissive sex industry’s antecedents to the 1870s, arguing that sexual deviance was ‘consumerised’ in the city through the assiduous manifestations of capitalism.³³ Sexuality, popularly consumed, as a ‘lifestyle’ choice shows both a profound change in modern moral predilections and the ability to symbolically consume, *to construct*, the morality of the self.³⁴ The music press provided a platform where values that were incubated by bohemian or radical milieux within urban spaces, mainly London, could be communicated to a wider audience. Music papers were a suitably polyvalent product that could inform and symbolise multiple niches within conversations on morality within each issue. This was particularly startling around 1976 when British punk became popular; younger music fans ostentatiously rejected social values and the commercial music industry’s hegemony that had been entrenched since the late-1960s. Punk enabled people across the country to build their own spaces of moral autonomy outside their imagination or, as Angela McRobbie argued when analysing *Jackie* magazine, the adolescent’s bedroom.³⁵

The adolescent’s bedroom was a vital site for the music press as papers and magazines was mostly read by teenagers and young adults: it helped create an

³² John Davis, ‘The London Drugs Scene and the Making of Drugs Policy,’ *Twentieth Century British History* 17:1 (2006), pp. 32-59. This milieu is well represented in Jonathan Green’s *Days in the Life. Voices from the English Underground, 1961–1971* (London, 1988).

³³ H.G. Cocks, ‘Saucy Stories: Pornography, Sexology and the Marketing of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, c. 1918-70,’ *Social History* 29:4 (2004), p. 465. Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1-7.

³⁴ Organised consumption can be found in Mark Hilton, ‘Social Activism in an Age of Consumption: the Organised Consumer Movement,’ *Social History* 32:2 (2007), pp. 121-123. Hilton, ‘the Fable of the Sheep, or, Private Virtues, Public Vices: the Consumer Revolution of the Twentieth Century,’ *Past and Present* 176:1 (2002), pp. 222-229.

³⁵ Angela McRobbie, ‘Jackie Magazine: Romantic Individualism and the Teenage Girl,’ *Feminism and Youth Culture* (London, 2000), p. 71. Albeit I argue against McRobbie’s contention that magazines have a specific ideological agenda.

imagined youth community.³⁶ Whilst there were, of course, youth subcultures and debates on youth morality before and during the Second World War, from the late-1950s the improving economic situation of youth and the notion of the teenager caused greater attention to be focused upon young people. Donnelly has argued that as ‘fifties prosperity was carried to new heights in the sixties’, youth consumed cultural products and media which solidified the leisure economy that Bill Osgerby has traced to the mid-nineteenth century.³⁷ I argue that leisure’s role as a potential terrain for narrating individual selfhood and moralities was communicated particularly efficiently by mass popular media such as the music press. The music press explained the significance of British music and the surrounding culture of fashion and nightlife as a place that allowed individuals to express their opinions, tastes and proclivities.

Greater affluence, a wider range of influential consumer goods and access to ideas resulted in an increased ability to publically deviate from the norms of older generations. This behaviour frequently provoked a strong reaction from the media and the state, with concerns about perceived deviancy, troubling sexuality and ‘alien’ behaviour and morality. As Louise Jackson has argued, youth have often been constructed as a barometer of society’s health since the nineteenth century.³⁸ Youth’s morals have been scrutinised and engineered with increasing intensity ever since. Children and youth were constructed as innocent and cosseted: the music press rejected this assumption and provided youth with unabridged information, representing the society’s most pressing moral debates. Jazz, folk, rock ‘n’ roll and pop music had often been related to concerns about youth. Popular music could communicate transgressive messages and open up deviant spaces. Jackson and David Fowler have studied how older generations paid close attention to 1950s teenagers gathering around a jukebox.³⁹ Jackson argues that the coffee club ‘menace’ was constructed by adults in positions of authority to defend ‘an older imagined social order.’⁴⁰ This included police surveillance. But Fowler and Gillian Mitchell argue that

³⁶ The idea of an imagined community in the sense of a nation was coined by Benedict Anderson, but the concept can be reused for smaller scale, more atomised communities. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991), pp. 4-8.

³⁷ Andrew Davies traces youthful street gangs known as ‘Scuttlers’ to Victorian and Edwardian Manchester in *The Gangs of Manchester* (Preston, 2006); as did Robert Roberts in *The Classic Slum* (London, 1971).

³⁸ Louise A. Jackson, ‘Youth and Modernity’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 42:4 (2007), pp. 639-640; *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2000) pp. 1-2. This has parallels with Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocation: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 51-63.

³⁹ Louise A. Jackson, ‘the Coffee Club Menace’: Policing Youth, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-War Manchester,’ *Cultural and Social History* 5:3 (2008), pp. 289-309. David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 166-170. Fowler, ‘From Jukebox Boys to Revolting Students: Richard Hoggart and the Study of British Youth Culture,’ *Journal of Cultural Studies* 10:1 (2007), pp. 173-184.

⁴⁰ Jackson, ‘the Coffee Club Menace’: Policing Youth, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-War Manchester’, p. 289.

early rock and roll elicited tolerance and curiosity as well as control and discipline; Mitchell uses the example of rocker Tommy Steele who coyly navigated aristocratic, working-class and youth cultures to create a suitably acceptable pop product with mass appeal setting a 'moral standard' for rock 'n' roll musicians.⁴¹ This moral standard was contested in the late-1960s as the rebellious youth 'other' jarred with ameliorant tendencies.

Young people have, nevertheless, prompted stronger action from agents of social control when 'moral standards' were breached. One of the major flaws in David Fowler's account of British youth is that he discounts the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies's (CCCS) *Resistance through Rituals*.⁴² *Resistance through Rituals* considered those who were marginalised and found solace in subcultures; following the election of the Conservative government in 1970 these groups provoked an authoritarian response, they were demonised by moral panics, media amplification and heightened social concerns regarding youth, morality and permissiveness. It should be noted, nevertheless, that Stanley Cohen's concept of the moral panic is just one way the press interacts with morality; it is apparent in this study that the press has a variety of strategies in response to transgression.⁴³ John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts argued that adult authority responded with attempts to control youth transgression.⁴⁴ This is substantiated further by the CCCS's work on the media construction of mugging and ethnographic studies by Richard Hebdige, Tony Jefferson, Paul Clarke and Paul E. Willis which delineate a relationship between youth's cultural symbolism and resistance.⁴⁵ There are also insights into how subcultures are integrated into popular culture: as much as the music press was a radical device, it contributed to how the culture industry commoditised deviant style and ideology. Hebdige's work on Mods, an excerpt from his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, outlines how subcultural commodification can mitigate its 'self-sufficiency' from adult culture, left to be 'cheated and exploited at every level'.⁴⁶ In popular music culture record labels, promoters, advertisers, publishers, editors and journalists (to name a few of the music industry's tendrils) were complicit. Nevertheless subcultures are closely related to musical expression and identity: music, along with the music press, could communicate subcultural discourse and provide a place to enact subcultural identities. *Contemporary British History*'s autumn 2012 special

⁴¹ Gillian A.M. Mitchell, 'A Very 'British' Introduction to Rock 'n' Roll: Tommy Steel and the Advent of Rock 'n' Roll Music in Britain', *Contemporary British History* 25:2 (2011), p. 219-221.

⁴² Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through Rituals* (London, 1991).

⁴³ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Abingdon, 1972), pp. 1-4.

⁴⁴ John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class', in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals*, pp. 11-16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 75-167.

⁴⁶ Richard Hebdige, 'The Meaning of Mod' in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals*, p. 94.

edition explores the close relationship between music and youth subcultures at the ‘end of consensus’. It is correctly argued that youth culture and popular music is underexplored and the key to uncovering the missing histories of British youth outside of the family, workplace and school.⁴⁷ This thesis contributes to that project by reading how the youth oriented music press constructed morality.

Newspapers and periodicals were central to popular culture in affluent Britain: they spread and explained discourse on youth and subcultures. This thesis is fundamentally a press history which adds to the undernourished field of press histories and introduces the music press to scholarly analysis; it seeks to meet the challenge set out by Frank Mort in his recent *History Workshop* article.⁴⁸ This is especially relevant to reading morality. As Mort has argued regarding sexuality, the ‘key to historical interpretation [of sexual morality] centres on the way the press codified social and sexual change within the confines of its operation as a marketable commodity.’⁴⁹ The music press presented a range of discourses – permissive, prudish, radical and traditional – that could be found within society’s discursive parameters. It helped to construct moral taxonomies, not just pertaining to sexuality, but defining and describing myriad transgressions and new assemblages of morality.⁵⁰ Adrian Bingham’s histories of popular newspapers provide the most useful model for analysing the popular press. Bingham argued that arguments supposing popular papers expressed a coherent ideology are incorrect; newspapers were ‘arenas in which a variety of different opinions and images existed’.⁵¹ The same is true of the music press. Editors gave journalists the freedom to be distinctive and unguarded. Corporate ownership and investors granted editorial independence if circulation levels and advertising were not interrupted.⁵² For instance it could be assumed that the music press evangelically celebrated illicit substances – a sometimes loud proportion of music journalists, musicians and readers took drugs – but the discourse on drugs is complicated, rarely congratulatory and in some statements purposely contributed to increasing social knowledge in order to limit potential dangers. Similarly Bingham’s *Family Newspapers?* reads discourse on sex and sexuality into the 1970s. It carefully

⁴⁷ John Garland, Keith Gildart, Anna Gough-Yates, Paul Hodkinson, Bill Osgerby, Lucy Robinson, John Street, Pete Webb and Matthew Worley, ‘Youth Culture, Popular Music and the End of “Consensus” in Post-War Britain’, *Contemporary British History* 26:3 (2012), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Frank Mort, ‘Intellectual Pluralism and the Future of British History’, *History Workshop Journal* 72 (2011), pp. 215-216 .

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The sprawling range of moralities is diverse; its capacity for multiplicities and instability is redolent of Gilles Deleuze’s rhizomes. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, 1987), pp. 1-26.

⁵¹ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford, 2004), p. 12.

⁵² Richard Williams, personal interview (2012); Jon Savage, personal interview (2012); Mick Farren, personal interview (2010); Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011). There is some evidence to the contrary, but it usually related to extremely isolated incidents which are discussed later in the thesis.

analyses both the mass market interest in prurient and titillating content with worries about indecency; again it is evident that the popular print press's content is complex and littered with competing accounts of morality, decency and appropriate content.⁵³ In the 1960s and 1970s the music press was not just superficially similar to titles such as the *Sun* and *Star* in layout, but music press titles also had to balance mass interest in the legacy of permissiveness and the anxiety that 'it had gone too far'. In some music journalists' opinions, of course, it had gone nowhere near far enough!⁵⁴ The music press was not a perfect reflection of social mores, but a place where morality was constructed and debated.

There have not been similarly rigorous studies of the music press's contribution to British culture and social norms. The music press has often been used as a source in popular music studies, but it has rarely been analysed in its own right. Martin Cloonan has looked at the relationship between popular music and the press at large. He argues that the relationship was characterised by the controversial introduction of rock music in the 1950s, its acceptance in the 1960s, a backlash in the 1970s and then uses the framework of 'moral panics' to read the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁵ Nevertheless this is a brief overview chapter that lacks the detail of his work on popular music and obscenity laws.⁵⁶ In the same edited volume Gestur Gudmundsson, Ulf Lindberg, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisthaunet have suggested 'turning points' in British rock culture.⁵⁷ They correctly identify a shift around 1970 from 'news and gossip' to 'fully-fledged criticism'. They explain how articles became longer, more complex and concerned with the wider social significance of music and the messages it transmitted. Again, however, this study is rather inward-looking, if useful in describing British music critics' myriad influences and comparisons with their US counterparts. Studies such as Helen Davis' gendered reading of the music press – which finds the 1980s and 1990s music press 'homosocial' – male dominated – are useful, but again she is reluctant to relate her findings to a wider social and historical context.⁵⁸ Nevertheless popular music studies have made two observations that are relevant to this study. First is Simon Frith's observation that US rock critics were American culture critics: this thesis argues that British journalists of this period performed the same role as they gradually combined

⁵³ Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* (Oxford, 2011), p. 2-5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Martin Cloonan, 'Exclusive!: The British Press and Popular Music,' in Steve Jones (ed.) *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 114-133.

⁵⁶ Martin Cloonan, *Banned!: The Censorship of Popular Music in Britain, 1962-1997* (Aldershot, 1996).

⁵⁷ Gestur Gudmundsson, Ulf Lindberg, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisthaunet, 'Turning Points in British Rock Criticism', 1960-1990 in Steve Jones (ed.) *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 41-64.

⁵⁸ Helen Davis, 'All Rock and Roll is Homosocial: the Representation of Women in the British Rock Music Press,' *Popular Music* 20:3 (2001), pp. 301-319.

music and cultural criticism.⁵⁹ Second is Lawrence Grossberg's argument that young people invest profoundly in the discourses presented by the music press: music's role in identity formation is so vital, to some, he argues that interpretations of musical texts are also interpretations of its audience.⁶⁰ He uses the public response to rock songs as evidence that musical messages are constructed as representative of fan's identity and behaviour. Grossberg argues that media such as music have a potency that causes fans to affect their messages: 'these maps tell us where and when we can be absorbed – not into the self into the world – as potential locations to our self-identifications, and with what intensity.'⁶¹ Listeners take messages from music: the music press articulated and explored these meanings for around a third of British youth. This mix of deep cultural criticism and a highly receptive audience gave the music press a significant voice in British youth culture which incubated vibrant moral debates.

Conceptualising Morality

Morality (or moralities) is the socially constructed codes of conduct within a society. Whilst it is often taken to mean a doctrine which refers to conformity to a certain system of conduct, morality is actually an unsettled and contested field which constantly negotiates behaviour, sexuality and personal views in relation to personal character, right or wrong. Michel Foucault's histories of sexuality offer insights that are especially relevant to the period this thesis studies and offer a working concept of morality. *The History of Sexuality* is predicated upon a profound reflection on sexuality that had 'swept through our societies over the last decades; it has chastised the old order, denounced hypocrisy, and praised the rights of the lyrical, immediate and real; it has made people dream of a New City.'⁶² In post-war western societies repression was questioned, and this work elucidated the complicated interplay of power relations within society. Resistance's target was prudish Victorian morality that demurely codified a proliferation of sexualities.⁶³ The social dialogue that had encouraged Foucault's inquiry was not limited to academic thought, but had a much wider base in the youth and countercultural circles that were represented in the music press. The sexuality debate, to *some* a revolution in sexual mores simply through candid public

⁵⁹ Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York, 1981), p. 176.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Grossberg, "Rock and Roll in Search of an Audience", *Popular Music and Communication* in James Lull ed. (London, 1987), p. 176.

⁶¹ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Popular Culture* (New York, 1992), p. 57.

⁶² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), pp. 7-8.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 1-2.

expression, gained notoriety and demanded public interest. But a more comprehensive discussion of twentieth-century British morality is undermined by sex's predominance as the focus of discussions on social habits and mentalities.

To move to a broader history of morality does not mean that we must forget Foucault. Foucault offered a way to consider negotiations of discursively constructed morality that can transcend sexual morality alone, and this begins with the questions: why did morality become a topic for such vehement discussion in this period and why did a subculture of young people contest, along with a number of other arenas for debate and resistance, as an arena to oppose 'traditional' morality and try to construct their own version?⁶⁴ The music press is an ideal text for this question. Furthermore in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2* Foucault explored the interplay of the individual actor and moral discourse. Foucault explained morality as a system of explicit and implicit rules and codes which are moulded by the ways individuals relate to these rules.⁶⁵ By stretching the parameters of his broader project Foucault introduced further matters to consider: how discourses on morality are constituted and considered, how specific issues become arenas for moral debate and the relationship between moral discourses and selfhood. The final point related to how narratives that determine 'ethical substance' alter the enactment of the self. Put simply, how whether one's behaviour is deemed good, bad or in-between makes one act.⁶⁶ This is especially relevant to the music press when expressed as narratives on aesthetic reinvention of the self according to particular discourses, or *askēsis*. Such autonomy has often been associated, for instance by Mark Donnelly and Richard Hebdige, with the self-confident youth cultures that emerged since the 1950s.⁶⁷ This is supported by the claims to autonomy and enactment of deviant style in the music press.

Sources

This thesis contends that knowledge is discursively constructed. Discourse is constructed by 'a group of sequences of signs': statements or discourses which belong to larger discursive formations 'as sentences belong to a text, and a proposition to the deductive whole.'⁶⁸ Discourses produce an object whereas discourse refers to the

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume Two*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1985), pp. 25-32.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 26.

⁶⁷ Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, p. 28. Hebdige, *Subculture*, p. 101.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972), p. 116.

space in which objects ‘emerge and are continuously transformed’.⁶⁹ The music press operated in a complicated field of discourse: a network of other texts that referred to and represented signifying practises in music, fashion and photography for instance.⁷⁰ The music press was not a certain or homogenous unity (albeit it is subject to some specific characteristics such as its music-oriented content) but a place in which statements could be made and recovered. In the period examined the music press reproduced statements within society’s discourse. Accordingly this thesis has attempted to identify the narratives that have constructed individual or social morality and located them within a broader discourse. It is evident that statements in the music press could be related to traditional, permissive, metropolitan or feminist moral narratives that formed British post-war moral discourse.

This analysis has been guided by Adrian Bingham’s use of Stuart Hall’s three ‘moments’ of any cultural form: encoding, how the text is created; the text; and decoding, how the text is received and interpreted.⁷¹ The texts’ production – ‘encoding’ – is informed by oral history interviews that I carried out with key journalists – Keith Altham, Ian Birch, Chris Charlesworth, Caroline Coon, Mick Farren, Paul Rambali, Jon Savage and Richard Williams. These provided key new insights into the period and the music press. Foremost they provided information that would have been more accessible if there had been surviving editorial archives: indications of news values, working habits and the paper’s relationship to corporate ownership. This information was either unavailable or only partially available in the public domain. For instance IPC’s hands-off attitude when monitoring the content of *Melody Maker* and *NME* was both a surprise and extremely important to understanding the way the music press engaged with transgressive themes. The oral history interviews underlined that the journalistic freedom given to music journalists was unlike any situation previously encountered in a mainstream mass market publication. Furthermore the interviews provided detailed information on the background and working history of journalists. This allowed greater understanding of a subject that had not been approached by Paul Gorman in great detail.⁷² This **enabled** clear and detailed distinctions to be made between those who came from underground writing or the counter-culture and more traditional journalists. It also

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁰ As Stuart Hall argued that discourse is ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment. [However,] since all practices entail meaning and meanings shape and influence what we do - our conduct - all practices have a discursive aspect.’ Stuart Hall ‘Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse’, in Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, Simeon Yates (eds) *Discourse, Theory and Practice: A Reader*, (London, 2001), p. 72.

⁷¹ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, p. 16. Stuart Hall, ‘Encoding/Decoding’ in *Culture, Media, Language*, Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Hobson (eds) (New York, 1980), pp. 107-110.

⁷² Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write* (London, 2001).

uncovered some unique personal histories. Finally the oral history interviews made it possible to ask journalists to contextualise specific articles that they wrote.⁷³ This was useful in understanding the pressures that surrounded the encoding of the articles, personal ideological agendas and the historical context.

The oral history interviews were guided by workplace oral history methodologies.⁷⁴ The interviews were semi-structured with a standard chronological framework starting from a journalist's personal background to how they were employed in the music press to their working life.⁷⁵ Due to the missing editorial archives I asked them to explain their relationship with co-workers, editors, their work schedule and attitudes towards readers. I then offered them articles or sections of articles to contextualise or to use as memory aids when discussing themes that they referred to in articles or interviews.⁷⁶ Respondents were allowed to talk at length without further questioning if keen to discuss a certain topic. Of course there were issues with subjectivity and memory but these reminiscences were taken as discursively produced; respondents shared attitudes that gave their work and lives social meaning.⁷⁷ It was also important not to use the interviews in an exploitative way

⁷³ There are many journalists who I could not meet due to various constraints or a lack of access: for instance Mick Watts, Vivian Goldman and Garry Bushell.

⁷⁴ Most oral history in Britain has been focused on recovering the testimonies of forgotten groups but as Robert Parks has pointed out there have been works focusing on the organisational aspects and work histories of 'declining 'heavy' and traditional industries ... , about political organisations and trade unionism, and interview-based research has investigated public corporations, particularly hospitals and other National Health Service bodies' (for instance, The British Library Sound Archive's (BL) holdings relating to the Labour movement, the Cooperative movement, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Conservative Party, trade unions and pressure groups): Robert Parks, "'Corporations are People Too!': Business and Corporate History in Britain,' *Oral History* 38:1 (2010), pp. 36-37. Jon Savage has released his extensive collection of oral testimonies of protagonists from the 1976 wave of British punk. This included interviews with ex-music journalists Chrissie Hynde, Neil Spencer, Caroline Coon, Jonh Ingham and Mark Perry: Jon Savage, *The England's Dreaming Tapes* (London, 2009). In the US there have been oral history studies of black journalists and journalists in Iowa that conformed to a similar methodology to that used in this thesis: Wallace Terry, *Missing Pages: Black Journalists Of Modern America: An Oral History* (New York 2007). The Iowa Journalist Oral History Project, <http://collections.uiowa.edu/oralhistory/> (accessed March 2013).

⁷⁵ Some of the interviews were face-to-face others were recorded using Skype (a voice over IP software) and Audacity (a music recording software). Similar methodologies for oral history can be found in: Louise A. Jackson, *Woman Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 14-15; Callum Brown, *Secularisation in the Christian World* (Farnham, 2010), p. 177-178.

⁷⁶ Some journalists asked for copies of articles in advance, others, however, had limited amounts of time for interviews and preparation and were given copies or read sections in interviews.

⁷⁷ Issues of memory have been approached using the idea of 'subjective composure' in Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, Michael Roper (eds) *Commemorating War: The politics of Memory* (New Jersey, 2004); Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918-1963* (Cambridge, 2010); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London, 1994); Michael Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000), pp. 181-204; Penny Summerfield, 'Dis/Composing the Subject: Intersubjectivities in Celia Lucy, Tess Cosslett and

(preventing the possibility of a libel for instance) and protect sources with due awareness of the interpretive role of the interviewer.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding these difficulties there were findings about the workings of the music press which would not have been recoverable without interviewing. I have also used published recollections such as interviews and occasionally memoirs. Despite the absence of any editorial archive I have been able to reconstruct an accurate impression of the news values, pressures and working environment of the music press, especially *Melody Maker*, *NME*, *The Face* and *Smash Hits*.⁷⁹

Of course the music papers themselves represent the texts. A detailed content analysis of the music press was used to demonstrate how music papers provided a forum in which moral narratives were stated, negotiated and modified. This content analysis was divided into concurrent digital and traditional archival projects. Both were focused upon identifying statements that could be grouped into discursive formations, themes and conversations regarding the historically significant debates on morality which eventually formed the thesis's chapters and sections within chapters. The digital element of the project used Rock's Backpages for broad keyword searches. For instance when studying attitudes towards gender, sex and women in music papers key words such as 'sex', 'women', 'woman' and 'girl' were used to create a sample of articles that approached gender. It was soon apparent that gendered assumptions were present in some moral discourse and that the debate regarding the role of women in society was often supported by moral rhetoric. When it was clear that sexist tropes were frequently stated more acute searches were carried out ('groupie', 'sexy', 'sex object') and any opposition was identified ('feminist', 'women's liberation', 'gender equality'). This allowed a broad selection of titles to be searched from Britain (and also the US) that spanned the period. To advanced searching was used to pinpoint articles from certain publications, authors, focusing on specific musicians or groups or within a certain period to support their systematic survey of sample years. The archival element of this project was focused upon the British Library's extensive collection of music press titles and issues. Four samples were examined (1967-1969, 1972-1974, 1976-1978, 1981-1983) in which I looked at the entire content of *Melody Maker*, *NME*

Penny Summerfield (eds) *Oral History, Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, (London, 2002), p. 91-106.

⁷⁸ Valerie Yow, 'Do I Like Them too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa', *Oral History Review* 24:1 (1997), pp. 55-79. David H. Mould, 'Legal Issues', in David A Ritchie (ed.) *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History* (Ohio, 2001), pp. 56-81.

⁷⁹ I made enquiries to IPC Media, current owner of *NME* and the owner of *Melody Maker*'s content before it was closed. I also asked journalists during oral history interviews. If an editorial archive did exist it is no longer available.

and *Sounds*.⁸⁰ I selected the samples to find a collection of articles from the most widely read papers that were balanced throughout the period. I transcribed articles from the British Library into a database in order to search the content using key words. Again I searched for common themes and recurrent conversations. To supplement this I followed up stories, events or themes that were pertinent to the research in other magazines and outside of the sample periods (for instance the music press's debate on mainstream politics in the lead-up and aftermath of the 1979 election). I sampled a number of articles from each magazine outside the sample periods.

Whilst I could not use all the sources gathered by my research in the thesis itself – the music press is an unfathomably rich source for a variety of topics and I have read around 1,500 issues – I have selected sources that are indicative of frequent tropes and attempted to illustrate them with sufficient depth to be informative but not overwhelming. As music papers are not newspapers with conventional news values it was important to appreciate that a close and comprehensive reading was required as stories which have not gained retrospective prominence demanded great attention at the time. Indeed events which may have been indulged with close attention in the contemporary press may have only been referred to in passing at the time.

The final source is contemporary responses: the audience's 'decoding'. This can be found in the text itself through the letters pages, albeit any letters were selected by the journalist assigned to compile a page of content and respond to readers. The most important empirical survey of music press readership was the *NRS*. The *NRS* recorded those who read the music press's age, gender, geographical location, reading habits and consumer habits. It is a valuable source that was used by editors at the time.⁸¹ There were also responses to debates that emanated from music culture that reached the popular daily or broadsheet press, politicians and notable social commentators which I have included when appropriate. In Chapter Two I have specifically compared the music press to an underground press title – *Oz* – and a popular daily – *the Daily Mirror* – to situate the music press meta-textually. Future studies of the music press should interview readers to better understand responses to statements in the music press but a systematic study of this sort was beyond the means of this project.

Limits of research

⁸⁰ Give or take a few missing issues. When issues were missing from the British Library's collection or Rock's Backpages I approached private collectors or sellers. There were, however, some issues that I have not been able to find.

⁸¹ Richard Williams, personal interview (2012).

Melody Maker and *NME* were the most enduring and popular weekly music press titles in Britain. They had the highest circulation and were frequently emulated. *Melody Maker* was a long established ‘trade paper’ for musicians which started in 1926. It contained a great deal of advertising as well as features on musical instruments and those who worked in the music industry. Its issues could be as long as 92 pages in the early-1970s. *NME* was a pop paper that was guided by the vicissitudes of the chart until 1972 when, in response to declining circulation, it self-consciously revised its content to be more radical, promoting Alan Smith to editor and employing underground press writers. Both were owned by The International Publishing Corporation Ltd. (IPC). *Sounds* was the most well-known non-IPC competitor, it launched in 1970 as a ‘left-wing alternative to *Melody Maker* by ex-*Melody Maker* editor Jack Hutton. It was similar to the two main IPC papers and many journalists wrote freelance articles for *Sounds*, *Melody Maker* and *NME*. *Sounds* had a lower circulation, but this often meant that it was innovative and open to new musical trends such as punk. *Record Mirror*, an innovator in four colour printing, *Record Retailer* and *Disk & Music Echo* also competed but were significantly less influential. *Melody Maker*, *NME* and, to a slightly lesser extent, *Sounds* form the basis of this study; they dominated the music press in the 1970s and frequently covered extra-musical debates with moral dimensions.

I have considered Other titles, but they are considerably more ephemeral or reached a smaller audience. *Rave* was a bright and in-depth eighty page monthly magazine that lasted from 1964 to 1971. *Let it Rock* was an influential, but short-lived, paper that ran between 1972 and 1975 which championed serious music journalism by writers such as Simon Frith, Lester Bangs and John Peel. Semi-regular monthly *ZigZag* ran from 1969 to 1986. Its more niche avant-garde and ‘hippyish’ interests are reflected by its name which references a Captain Beefheart song – ‘ZigZag Wanderer’ – and cigarette papers associated with smoking cannabis. *ZigZag* championed punk from 1976. *ZigZag* and *Let it Rock* were akin to the underground press. Underground press titles such as *Oz*, *International Times* and *Friendz* also included music writing that I have considered for analysis in light of the subsequent employment of their writers – Caroline Coon, Mick Farren, Nick Kent, Charles Shaar Murray, Penny Reel – at major music press titles. Considering their increase in renown following punk, I have used fanzines when possible. By 1982, however, they were hugely popular and numerous as fanzine consumer guide *Factsheet 5* exemplifies.⁸² I have also paid considerably less

⁸² The fanzine press needs a sustained academic study, but it may well be difficult to find an exhaustive archive. *Factsheet 5* was an almanac of fanzines which might be the place to begin. There are some fanzines in the British Library and the Bishopsgate Archive.

attention to niche publications such as *Black Music* which published reggae charts and articles between 1973 and 1977.

Titles that entered the music press in the very late-1970s and early-1980s include *The Face* an influential independent lifestyle monthly run by Alan Smith's former assistant Nick Logan. East Midland Allied Press (EMAP) helped finance Logan's venture in return for help with *Smash Hits*, the hugely successful pop bi-monthly that quickly eclipsed the mainstream music press in terms of circulation.⁸³ It was emulated less successfully by IPC's *Number One*. EMAP also launched heavy metal paper *Kerrang!* I have considered these titles in the final chapter.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter One provides a general explanation of the music press in this period. It explains circulation, readership characteristics and the relationship between ownership, editors and journalists. It also takes into account the writing style and background of music journalists. It argues that the music press was read by a large section of British youth and, also, that the content of the music press was mostly unconstrained by commercial pressures which enabled writers to cover a range of subjects that may have usually been deemed censorious or inappropriate for a young audience.

Chapter Two illustrates the discursive opening for moral discussions in the music press and the tensions between articulations of alternative moralities and traditional values during the late 1960s. It analyses the *NME*'s coverage of the 'controversial' Rolling Stones and the disparity between underground musicians and easy-listening 'entertainers'. It argues that editorial foresight enabled the music press to be an influential voice in communicating the counter-culture's calls for moral autonomy and attitudes on drugs.

Chapter Three explores the Vietnam War, protest and the music press's position within the British press. Britain only offered tacit support to the US in Vietnam, but the war was a galvanising issue for global youth. I argue that the media discourses on Vietnam ensured a multivocal debate that encouraged individual interpretation of moral and ethical dilemmas. The analysis takes into account the wider music press and makes comparisons with the underground press and *The Daily*

⁸³ Nick Logan manually stuck together the pilot issue of *Smash Hits* on his kitchen table. Paul Rambali, personal interview (2012).

Mirror to situate the music press meta-textually within the British print press. The music press was relatively unconstrained, but also non-ideological.

Chapter Four focuses first on *Melody Maker* from 1972 to 1975. *Melody Maker* was the market leader by circulation and in this period made a significant contribution to mainstream discussions of homosexuality and bisexuality. *Melody Maker* was the preferred medium for David Bowie to come out as bisexual. In arguably the most important music press article of the early 1970s, Bowie articulated a challenging construct of gay selfhood that relied on a range of historically extant narratives defining the queer subject.⁸⁴ This infiltration of an aberrant topic – Bowie was popular music’s first publically and openly ‘out’ bisexual man rather than a tacitly non-heterosexual performer – resulted in a host of discourses and counter-discourses being stated in response to the challenge to the previous notion of private, closeted vice for gay men.⁸⁵

Chapter Five is a thematic analysis which takes into account how attitudes towards gender and constructions of femininity were constructed with moral narratives. This was often expressed in reference to sexual conduct or sexual longing by male journalists. Then analysis will take into account music press titles from 1967 to 1983 in this section. Femininity was constructed using a range of titillating or condescending narratives that defined the limits of behaviour for women.⁸⁶ The music press was a ‘boys club’.⁸⁷ It is evident that despite conventional assumptions that the

⁸⁴ Matt Houlbrook has mapped the genealogies of many narratives that are used to taxonomise the queer subject that often refer to effeminacy and camp that can be recognised in the music press’s treatment of Bowie, for instance in Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London*. Houlbrook, ‘A Pin to See the Peep Show: Culture, Fiction and Selfhood in the Letters of Edith Thompson’, *Past and Present*, 207:1 (2010), pp. 215-149 Houlbrook, ‘The Man with the Powder Puff in Interwar London’, *Historical Journal*, 50:1 (2007), pp. 141-171. Houlbrook, “‘Lady Austin’s Camp Boys’”: Constituting the Queer Subject in 1930s London”, *Gender and History*, 14:1 (2002), pp. 131-161.

⁸⁵ Yet this notion of decriminalised, but private vice created a ‘more erotically sophisticated sexual world, based on the the ‘natural laws’ of supply and demand rather than moral surveillance’. Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p. 196. The Wolfenden Committee’s notion of private vice that was prompted by Peter Wildeblood is covered in pp. 184-186. Other genealogies of this this notion has been explored by T.W. Jones, ‘The Stained Glass Closet: celibacy and Homosexuality in the Church of England’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20:1 (2011), pp. 132-152.

⁸⁶ It has been argued by Adrian Bingham that women do have ability to resist ‘unwelcome images,’ thus, tempering the ‘coercive’ power of the press with a notion of an autonomous self. Albeit in the case of the music press the moments of resistance are not sustained and arguably migrate to the independent fanzine press. Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, p. 246.

⁸⁷ It is argued that this problem has endured to the present, H. Davis, ‘All Rock and Roll is Homosocial: the Representation of Women in the British Rock Music Press’, *Popular Music* 20:3 (2001), pp. 301-309. And with an international (mostly US) perspective in Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (Aldershot, 2007). Every personal oral history interview I have undertaken in which gender was part of a question the idea of a male dominated workplace has been expressed. The notion of male control of the music press is covered extensively throughout Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write* (2001). Problematic representations of women aimed at a similar audience were also deconstructed in Sarah Jane

music press was a public space for radical discourses, more robust and immobile social attitudes to sexuality, as well as narratives which demeaned or objectified women dominated. The morality of sexism was challenged, but infrequently.

Chapter Six explores a rather stark change in the focus of the mainstream music press. From 1976 the British wave of punk challenged post-1960s' rock with rhetoric of violent transgression and do-it-yourself authenticity. Contested narratives emerged that critiqued the music industry, which had commercialised previous methods of resistance, whilst also advocating freedom to behave in a way which self-consciously challenged social norms and the ideologies or methods used by previously transgressive subcultures. The language and behaviour used by punk musicians resulted in moral panics and censure.

Chapter Seven, however, shows that punk shared many values with its predecessors. This is a thematic section on anti-racism, a long-held moral imperative of the music press. Using attitudes towards race and racism as a crucible for comparing discourses on morality it is evident that punks rehabilitated their public image by appropriating rhetorics that had existed in the music press before. The music press narrated a degree of a respect, not universal, but profound where it existed, between white and black youth.

Chapter Eight begins with a thematic section on drugs. Whilst drugs were introduced as a topic for discussion in 1967, by 1983 a variety of narratives had emerged. Drugs had been symbolic of a new rational autonomous morality, but the morality of drug use and its effect on the body, and the question of whether it was proper to communicate the more seductive charms of hard substances, became more important as drugs became more prevalent within their readership. The music press, most notably *NME* whilst Neil Spencer was editor, saw it as their role to provide greater knowledge to their readership.

Finally Chapter Nine investigates the decline of the mainstream music press as it had existed. As mainstream music press titles wilted and Conservative government ruled, rhetorics of urban decay and economic malaise created a genre of pessimism. This led to nihilistic narratives that rejected many of the progressive moral tenets that had been incubated in the music press. Those who remained committed to music's social transformative capabilities, rather than its ability to describe a bleak present, were moved to a more pointed mode of expression. At the same time more egalitarian, sophisticated and less outspoken titles challenged *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Sounds*' market hegemony and began their inexorable decline.

Aiston, "A Woman's Place...": Male Representation of University Women in the Student Press of the University of Liverpool, 1944-1979,' *Women's History Review* 15:1 (2006), pp. 3-34.

Chapter One

Cheap Thrills: The Music Press and its Readers

This chapter explains the general characteristics of the music press. This encompasses descriptions of the music press's ownership, geographical location and the history prior to 1967. It argues that the papers' metropolitan cultural and geographical context made them ideally placed to narrate British social and cultural change. The chapter then explores the relationship between the corporate ownership of the two most popular music titles – *NME* and *Melody Maker* – and the paper's content and news values. According to oral evidence IPC and its owners Reed International had a mostly laissez-faire approach to controlling the music press's content. Subsequently, the chapter makes comparisons with other titles that competed with the most prominent titles and, ultimately by the early-1980s, threatened their market superiority. The chapter explains the music press's changing writing styles: for instance interpreting (amongst others) the New Journalism, counter-cultural or punk discourse alongside more traditional music reporting. This is explained in reference to journalists' background and prior experience before becoming music journalists. Finally the chapter explores the music press's circulation and readership. According to the *NRS* the music press's readership was large, youthful and predominantly middle-class male. The readership was concentrated in the south-east of England. However there were a significant numbers of women and readers across Britain which increased in the 1980s.

IPC, Britain's largest periodical publishing company of the period, owned both *Melody Maker* and *NME*.¹ IPC can be traced back to 1799, but assumed the name The International Publishing Corporation Ltd. after George Newnes, Odhams Press and Fleetway Publications merged in 1963. IPC was sold to Reed International Ltd. in 1970. *Melody Maker* was a trade magazine for those in the music industry, part of the IPC Trade and Specialist division. It was founded in 1926 and had offices near Fleet Street, in central London, and then King's Reach Tower in Waterloo.² *NME* was in IPC's general weekly division. IPC had bought *NME* from Maurice Kinn in 1963. Kinn, a music promoter, had saved the paper, then titled *Accordion Times and Musical Express* at the eleventh hour in 1952.³ *NME* was a pop paper that slavishly followed

¹ *NME* is still published by IPC Media and they also hold the rights to the title *Melody Maker*.

² A more detailed discussion of *Melody Maker* alone can be found in Nick Johnstone, *Melody Maker History of 20th Century Popular Music* (Bloomsbury, 1999).

³ The history of *NME* can be found in Pat Long, *The History of the NME* (London, 2011). The success of The Beatles was such a boost to the music press that IPC launched a magazine called *Fabulous* in 1963 which for a short period sold around a million copies per week. Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write* (London, 2002), pp. 31-32.

the singles chart, until albums such as The Beatles 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' incrementally increased the profile of pop albums from around mid-1967. As proprietor and then executive director and editor Kinn made *NME* a legitimate competitor to *Melody Maker* by having its singles chart accepted and reproduced by popular daily newspapers. He also promoted the highly successful *NME* Poll Winners Concerts. The Beatles' huge success from 1964 increased demand for pop products, this feverish consumption waned slightly but it helped establish a mass market for music papers and supported Kinn's innovations.⁴ *NME* was situated in Denmark Street, London's 'Tin Pan Alley', on the border of Soho and Covent Garden, then King's Reach Tower and finally back to New Oxford Street in central London. When IPC moved its music magazines into King's Reach Tower, as Chris Charlesworth commented, '*Caged Birds Weekly* was just down the bloody corridor' as were circulation behemoths *Women* and *Women's Own*; the incongruity provided much scope for culture clashes and pranks, but at least the magazines were not divorced from central London.⁵ IPC had considered moving *Melody Maker* to Surrey in the early-1970s but editor Ray Coleman successfully resisted their plans. *Sounds*, the less established mainstream competitor formed in 1970, was also based in central London. Jack Hutton founded *Sounds* after resigning as *Melody Maker's* editor to initiate a left-wing music paper with Peter Wilkinson. Rupert Murdoch's City Newspapers funded the venture. The music press was embedded in the geographical centre of metropolitan bustle, bohemian cliques and the British culture industry.⁶

Large publishing conglomerates saw music papers as a savvy investment. From around 1964 until the early 1990s the weekly readership of the music press was in the millions (figure 1.1).⁷ In 1974, the first year that *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Sounds* all submitted circulation figures to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the papers sold on

⁴ *NME* readers voted on a number of accolades such as best group, singer, etc.

⁵ Mick Farren commented that Nick Kent was a fearful figure to the writers at many of the other IPC titles: Mick Farren, personal interview (2011). Paul Rambali recounted the following anecdote, 'There were lots of fun and games there. There was the famous Sex Pistols party at the *NME* that was in 1977 during the Queen's walkabout, in her Jubilee year, Sex Pistol's 'God Save the Queen' was the number one record. She was going to go walking around the Embankment and I think it was *Women's* magazine, which was a huge mass market publication, and I think they were on the same floor . . . or, they commandeered, that's it, they commandeered the *NME* office because the *NME's* office would have a view of the Queen's walkabout, ok. It was supposed to happen in the evening, the early evening in the summer. So I remember I wasn't on staff but I came in that afternoon and I found the whole office decorated for a Sex Pistols party. They'd all spent the whole afternoon decorating the office for a Sex Pistols party, a *putative* Sex Pistols party, then they sloped off without waiting to see the looks on the faces of all the staff members and readers who wanted to watch the Queen go by. That was the typical kind of prankish behaviour that we had common license for. If we had it we took it, that's kind of what we used to do.' Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

⁶ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

⁷ *Record Mirror*, *Disc and Music Echo*, *ZigZag* and *Let it Rock* contributed to the music press's ubiquity in British newsagents, but the *NRS's* did not analyse their readership. Indeed *ZigZag* and *Let it Rock* rarely submitted *ABC* circulation figures. *Sounds* only did so later by 1974.

average 209,782, 198,615 and 164,299 copies per week respectively.⁸ However these figures belie a larger readership: magazines were often shared. The number of readers who read each issue of any music press title was remarkably high, often as many as nine or ten (figure 1.2). The number of readers per copy was only regularly surpassed by *Country Life* and *New Statesman*, mainstays of waiting rooms and libraries.⁹ Most popular and broadsheet newspapers, high circulation general interest magazines – *Radio Times* for instance – or high-selling women’s weekly periodicals were read by between two and five readers per issue.¹⁰ Other youth oriented titles were also read by fewer readers per issue. In 1977 magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *19* and even schoolboy favourite *Shoot!* were only shared between four or five readers.¹¹ It is clear, therefore, that the music press reached a substantial number of people. In 1979, when *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Sounds*’ readerships were all scrutinised by the NRS, the potential readership (circulation multiplied by readers per copy) of the mainstream music press was 3,193,374.¹² In 1979 it is feasible that around five to six per cent of British people read the music press, of course this was even higher in key market demographics such as young, middle-class men in London and the South East.

⁸ *ABC Consumer Magazines Report* (January-July 1972), p. 3.

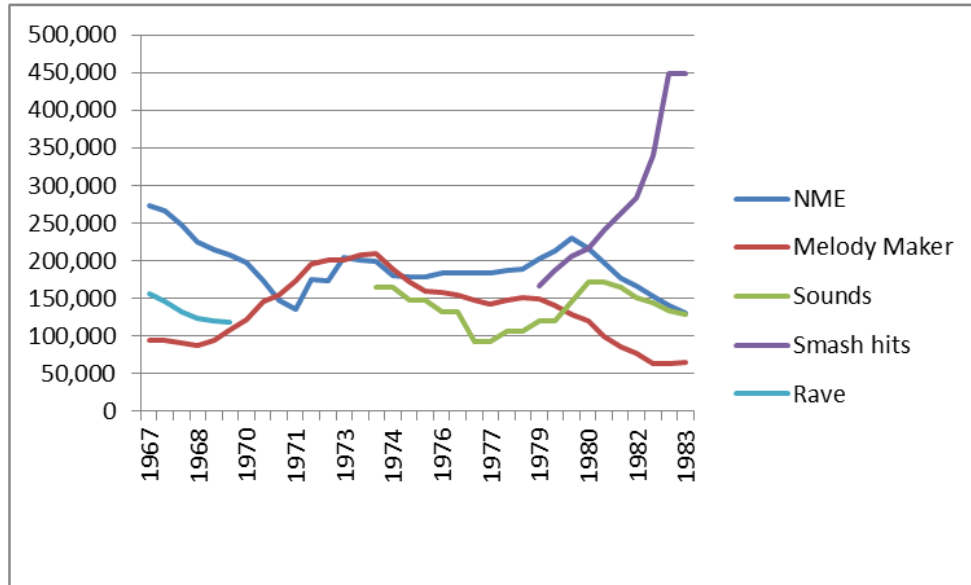
⁹ *NRS* (January-July 1972), p. 3. *NRS* (January-July 1974), p. 3. *NRS* (January-July 1977), p. 3. *NRS* (January-July 1979), p. 3. *NRS* (January-July 1981), p. 3. *NRS* (January-July 1983), p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *NRS* (January-July 1979), p. 3. This figure is inflated; some readers read a range of different music papers every week.

Figure 1.1: The Average Circulation of a Selection of Music Papers.



Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation (IPC's private collection of yearly *ABC* figures for *Melody Maker* and *NME* [2010] and *ABC January-July Consumer Magazine Report* [1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983]).

Figure 1.2: Music Press Readers Per Copy.

	1972	1974	1977	1979	1981	1983
<i>Melody Maker</i>			10.7	9.8	9.5	7.4
<i>NME</i>	9.1	9.1	9.5	6.3	6.7	5.6
<i>Smash Hits</i>						4.1
<i>Sounds</i>				6.1	5.7	4.8

Source: *NRS* (London, January-July 1972), p. 3. *NRS* (London, January-July 1974), p. 3. *NRS* (London, January-July 1977), p. 3. *NRS* (London, January-July 1979), p. 3. *NRS* (London, January-July 1981), p. 3. *NRS* (London, January-July 1983), p. 3.

The music press's circulation was not, however, stable. Following the economic uncertainty of the mid-1970s music press titles, at best, plateaued in circulation, but more likely declined. This can be attributed to economic constraints, acute youth unemployment and, more speculatively, a general distaste for the excesses of the post-1960s music industry. *NME* was more successful, but after 1972 when it was threatened with closure its editors and proprietors had been careful to re-launch it

as a lively, underground press-influenced youth periodical. For instance it added a music news section that transcended the usual prosaic mix of upcoming releases, concert dates and intra-band intrigue (the remit of more conventional journalists such as Derek Johnson). Underground journalists such as Mick Farren of *International Times*, Charles Shaar Murray of *Oz* and later Paul Rambali – a former record shop clerk and fanzine writer with New York’s *Trouser Press* – edited ‘Thrills’. They imbued it with their catholic interests that often wandered away from music. *Sounds* maintained success by clinging to the legacy of punk for longer as well as featuring lively prose and outspoken journalists. It was the most concerned with negotiating discourse on punk authenticity and represented the scope for post-punk’s varied new sounds and musical mutations.¹³ In general it was more accessible and took advantage of turmoil at *Melody Maker* to gain an early-1980s peak in circulation. Problems at *Melody Maker* also prompted Felix Dennis to launch the characteristically anarchic, but short-lived, *New Music News*.¹⁴ Nevertheless from the beginning of the 1980s mainstream music press as it had existed in the 1960s and 1970s declined into a terminal phase; *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* ceased to exist past the 1990s, *NME* was buoyed by Britpop, but waned, ultimately selling around a tenth of its 1970s weekly circulation by the 2000s.¹⁵

The mainstream music press’s decline contrasted with successful new titles that entered the music press’s market in the late-1970s which defined the early-1980s’ youth periodical press.¹⁶ Ex-*NME* editor Nick Logan masterminded the most successful examples. Logan helped EMAP launch *Smash Hits*, a monthly, then bi-monthly magazine. *Smash Hits* appeared in 1979 and by 1983 rose meteorically to command a circulation unsurpassed by a music press title since the heyday of The Beatles. In return EMAP financed Logan’s influential monthly independent lifestyle magazine *The Face*. Whilst *The Face*’s circulation was modest by 1983 it offered a template for more all-inclusive magazines that could attract the countless interests of youth away from a solitary focus on music. *The Face* also used glossy paper and fashion photography; it made the music press’s traditional visual style seem dated. By 1972 all of the mainstream music papers had appropriated the visual style of the popular daily

¹³ Simon Reynolds, *Rip it Up and Start Again* (London, 2006), pp. xvii-xxx. Paul Worley ‘Shot by Both Sides’, *Contemporary British History* 26:3 (2004), pp. 333-354.

¹⁴ Ian Birch sincerely enjoyed his time at *New Music News*: ‘I went to this thing called *New Music News* which was an insane meteor-like ascent which broke and burnt itself out. It was a fantastic escapade by Felix Dennis so it was completely mad, but amazing fun. It was a bit like a certain TV sitcom of the day ... Felix took advantage of the strike when *Melody Maker* and *NME* weren’t coming out at all. He saw a potential hole to fill. You have to give it to Felix: he is a pretty impressive entrepreneur. He just let us do it and enjoyed the madness of it, because he’s quite mad himself – there is a puckish quality to him. So we all knew it would fall apart and it did, but it was a fantastic type of moment.’ Ian Birch, personal interview (2011).

¹⁵ *ABC Consumer Magazine Report* (January-June 2004), p. 6.

¹⁶ Nevertheless few of these titles survived into the late-1990s as music writing migrated online, into monthly magazines such as *Q* or *Mojo* and was more prominently featured in newspapers.

newspaper press that had first been used by *Melody Maker*, albeit with a more striking graphic style of photography that fitted the hyper-absorbent tobacco-hued paper.¹⁷ This was unsurprising as Reed International owned both IPC and Mirror Group, who published the highly successful *Daily Mirror*. Yet Jack Hutton had implemented the tabloid style at *Melody Maker* before Reed's takeover of IPC and had used a variation of the design at *Sounds*.¹⁸ By the 1980s magazines, rather than papers, harnessed modern glossy colour printing that made the music press's combination of bold monochromes and splashes of red seem antiquated.¹⁹ The mainstream music press attempted to emulate the visual style of their new competitors, but less successfully.²⁰ The music press's changing style is illustrated in figures two to six. The following front covers show how the *NME* used full-page advertisements during the 1960s only to revert to full page photography by 1972 (figures 1.3 and 1.4); figures 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7 show the tabloid style that the three major papers had adopted by 1973; figure 1.8 shows how *Smash Hits* contributed to the music press's new visual style in the 1980s.

¹⁷ This paper lent the music press one of its nicknames, 'inkies'. The particular paper and ink used was prone to leaving black smudges on readers fingers.

¹⁸ With Jack Hutton at the helm as Editor, *Sounds* almost entirely copied the format of *Melody Maker*: the paper was the same, the pictures were similarly striking, it had recognisable typesets, and it was set out with the same structure of news, then features and interviews, then reviews, advertising and readers' letters. The only superficial differences were a much more aesthetically pleasing logo that recalled the bold graphic style of the 1970 Mexico World Cup's emblem.

¹⁹ Paul Rambali explained that the number of colour pages in *The Face* was a pressing concern that warranted a significant proportion of each issue's budget. Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

²⁰ This is discussed in the final chapter.

Figure 1.3: NME, 28 June 1967, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Figure 1.4: NME, 12 January 1972, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Figure 1.5: *Melody Maker*, 20 December 1971, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Figure 1.6: *Sounds*, 18 March 1972, p. 1.



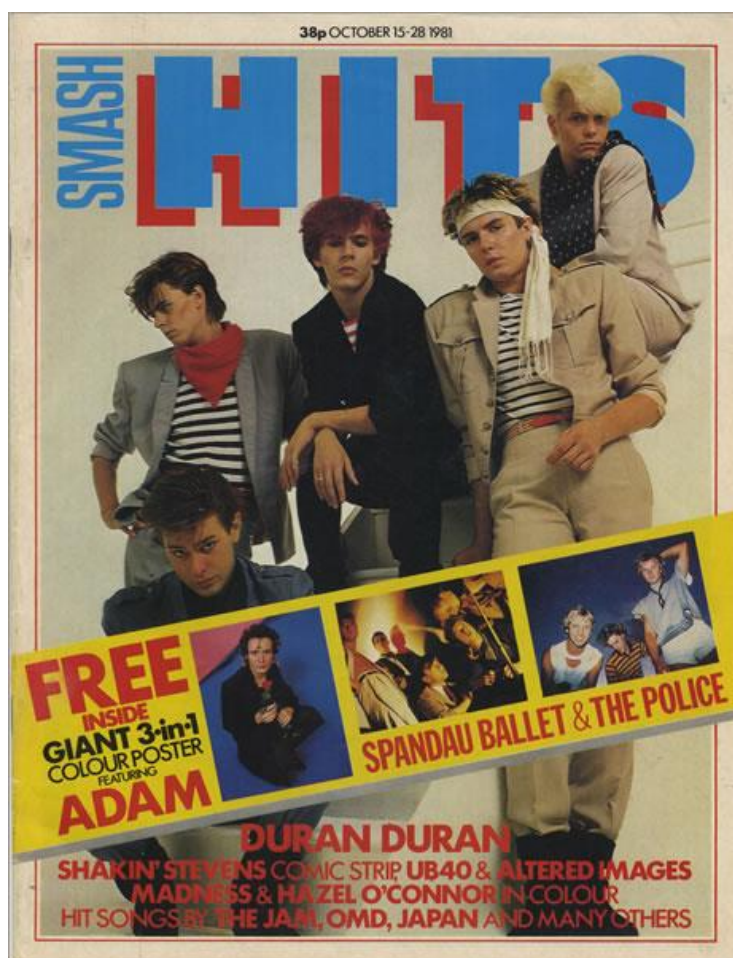
Source: British Library.

Figure 1.7: NME, 28 July 1973, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Figure 1.8: *Smash Hits*, 15 October 1981, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Music papers had a relatively healthy circulation despite intermittent vicissitudes. They were also an extremely lucrative platform for advertising records, concerts, youth-focused goods and, in *Melody Maker's* case, industry classifieds and musical instruments.²¹ Until 1972 *NME* had large advertisements that dominated the front page of each issue in contrast to how it mechanically included artistes by chart position in the rest of the paper. It is, however, difficult to find exact advertising rates and revenue. IPC did not disclose these figures to Richard Williams when he was editor of *Melody Maker* or, as far as I can gauge, any other music press staff. Yet it was commonly known that advertising provided generous revenue.²² As IPC took close

²¹ There is a wealth of information to be gleaned from the advertisements in the music press which deserves a study in its own right. Music press classifieds that were often used by gay men in the way Harry Cocks describes in *Classified: The Secret History of the Personal Column* (London, 2009). Musicians used the papers start new groups, solicit acts for concerts or sell second-hand instruments. There were also adverts for consumer goods, cosmetics, clothes, alcohol, confectionary, the Army, banking and in the 1970s, following the expansion of further education or degree courses.

²² All the journalists I have interviewed have been unaware of advertising revenue figures, even those in editorial roles. It is a consensus that there was a lot of advertising revenue. Richard Williams who served as both Editor and Deputy Editor of *Melody Maker* was never given

control of the music press's economics it could be expected that this would have resulted in a degree of control over *NME* and *Melody Maker's* content, tone and ideology. This was not the case. Music papers were given great autonomy over content. As former *Melody Maker* editor Richard Williams explained, IPC were only concerned when a paper's circulation declined; *NME* re-launched in 1972 and ten years later Williams oversaw an abortive effort to re-launch *Melody Maker*:

They didn't tinker. The content of the paper was entirely up to the editorial staff and there were no – on a regular basis – there were no focus groups or market research or page traffic surveys, you know the kind that Condé Nast were doing already. A publication like *Vogue* would be subject to those stringent page traffic surveys, we didn't have anything like that. It was driving by the seat of the pants stuff and they did have the right ability to come up with the right formula. Of course, by the time I got back there the *NME* had overtaken the *Melody Maker* and there was quite a lot of concern about that, but it was still very, very profitable because of the classified ads and so on, and there was room for two at the top of the market because there was still so much record company advertising at the time as well. So they weren't seriously concerned, but the re-launch, they took a lot of interest in the re-launch, and we did do some market research and some focus groups. When I did the redesign – which never saw the light of day – they knew the market research was all favourable towards it.²³

In turn editors bestowed the autonomy that they were granted by proprietors on their journalists. Every journalist that I have interviewed has been unequivocal that they were free to write what they wished, some were even offended by the suggestion that editors would intervene in their expression. These assertions cannot be countered systematically. The music press *was* a forum for free expression: the ideologies or whims of proprietors or editors did not constrain papers, in fact writers were more likely to convey their ideologies.²⁴ *NME* under Maurice Kinn and deputy editor Andy

information regarding the magazine's turnover or advertising revenue, 'No we were never shown. I mean, we did know what the circulation was, but the advertising was separate. We had no idea of the actual revenues. They didn't get the balance sheets out. That wasn't really seen as part of the type of thing the editorial team needed to know, even the editor, as far as I know, it was a long time ago.'

²³ Richard Williams, personal interview (2011).

²⁴ Albeit occasionally editors would ask journalists to provide unflattering reviews or features if an artiste had previously been given unqualified praise, it provided controversy. Ray Coleman's Editorship at *Melody Maker* has been subject to these accusations by Chris Brazier – which is discussed in Chapter Three – and Caroline Coon: 'I naively thought that if somebody was reviewing an album their position was genuinely held, whether they liked it or they didn't like it. So imagine my amazement when I was at a *Melody Maker* editorial meeting to discuss who we were going to interview for the paper. There was the pile of albums to review ready to be doled out and the editor says to ex-journalist let's give this a bad review because he's had good reviews for the last two albums. My mouth just drops open! I thought that's interesting, there is a kind of policy here that if a band is successful and written two brilliant albums the music press, journalists, the wannabe musicians, those people who are absolutely jealous of the

Grey exercised the most control over content, but this editorial method declined from mid-1967 to near extinction by 1972. Between 1952 and c.1967 *NME* only covered artistes in the top thirty of the singles chart. Keith Altham explained the weekly *NME* meeting: 'Every week [Grey] would call a meeting and come in carrying the chart. Then he would ask, "who knows The Beatles? Ok, go interview them. Who knows the Animals? OK. A new one, Otis Redding, who knows her?" He was a sweet man and very well liked, but not involved.'²⁵

Redding was, of course, a man. The mistake is indicative of a shift in musical sensibilities in the music press around this period. Kinn, Grey and Derek Johnson were almost archetypal Soho men-about-town rather than rock acolytes or music obsessives. They had almost fallen into music journalism rather than be compelled to write about music as a vocation. There were strong links – that would wane slightly with time, but never become absent – with music industry public relations writers and music journalists. On the other hand *Melody Maker's* staff were more likely to be avid 'musos'; the ability to read sheet music was a prerequisite for all writers until around 1976. 1960s *Melody Maker* writers such as Max Jones and Val Wilmer were Soho jazz club habitués who frequented Club Eleven, the Cy Laurie Jazz Club or beat hubs The Macabre or The Goings On. But Soho was changing. At *Melody Maker* journalists such as Chris Welch and, at *NME*, Keith Altham built close relationships with the purveyors of new brash sounds that filled new Soho venues beginning with The 2i's Coffee Bar and then the renowned Marquee. The Marquee hosted early performances by Rolling Stones, the Who, the Animals, the Move or the Small Faces. Manfred Mann played the Marquee 102 times between 1962 and 1976. Despite a changing soundtrack central London's capacity for nocturnal urban leisure and the affectation of alternative mores was still intact even as the underground spread to create new hubs of music and subculture. The nascent Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove counter-culture, that had links to the U.S. and European counter-culture, renegotiated lifestyles and morality. These narratives were imbibed by the music press and propelled by punk's narrative of egalitarian involvement and mass negation.²⁶

The late-1960s provided the context for a plurality of messages to be permitted in the music press. But in the early-1970s the mainstream music press settled on the characteristics that would define it for the next decade. Music papers reassembled and interpreted typically 1960s libertarian discourses and New Left politics through serious and literary music criticism. Yet *Melody Maker's* early-1970s

brilliance of the people that they're living off, have just decided to give the album a bad review. Luckily I didn't have to do that.' Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

²⁵ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

²⁶ This is covered at length in Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London, 1991). And Alan O'Connor, *Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy* (Lanham, 2008), p. 19.

'Golden Age' was not spurred on by counter-cultural types. Instead *Melody Maker* employed precociously intelligent grammar school boys who had gained experience at provincial local newspapers and were seduced by London's excitement and glamour.²⁷ As many journalists had left *Melody Maker* in 1970 to join Jack Hutton at *Sounds* these young journalists were granted a rapid ascent.²⁸ Unlike Maurice Kinn's *NME*, at *Melody Maker* journalists pitched ideas for features and records to review in editorial meetings. Caroline Coon, who joined the paper at the end of this period (1975) to add some counter-cultural bite, argued that this could result in quite a 'competitive' and macho environment.²⁹ Nevertheless these young men inspired by *Melody Maker's* jazz and folk writers, New Journalism, Beat writers and US journalists at Jan Wenner's *Rolling Stone*, *Creem* and *the Village Voice* – such as Lester Bangs, Robert Christgau, Hunter S. Thompson, Ben Fong-Torres, Richard Metzger – changed the style of British rock journalism.

Chris Charlesworth, Roy Hollingsworth, Mick Watts and Richard Williams were the first generation of mainstream journalists who wanted to be rock journalists, rather than cover jazz, folk or blues. They did not fall into pop music writing through ancillary work in newspapers, teen publishing or the music industry. Their articles were often 15,000 words long and issues, also packed with advertising, could contain up to 92 pages, perfect for an educated and interested youth and the increasingly complex music that complimented the rise of the album as the key musical format, rather than the single. They wrote about the social dimension of music; journalists subsequently reported what music communicated rather than dwelling on the lifestyles of artistes, unless a musician saw their lifestyle as part of their performed public identity such as David Bowie.³⁰ Musicians were constructed as auteurs with influential

²⁷ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011). Richard Williams, personal interview (2011).

²⁸ Richard Williams explained the situation, 'I was hired by Jack Hutton who was editor of the *Melody Maker* at the time and then after only four-five months Jack left to found Spotlight Publications and *Sounds*. What Jack said he wanted to do with *Sounds* was to start a left-wing *Melody Maker*, he was fed-up with IPC and he wanted to start his own company. He took quite a few of the writers and some production staff with him and in fact he made offers to almost all of us, including me, but I didn't want to; I thought, actually I have come to write for the *Melody Maker* not for some other publication – even though I liked Jack and trusted him – I was not concerned by another publication, I stayed-put as did Chris Welch and two or three others. Obviously Jack had taken a lot of staff, Ray Coleman succeeded him as editor and Ray had to do a lot of emergency hiring and a lot of emergency promoting and he promoted me – I think – in successive weeks to Features Editor and then to Deputy Editor, or maybe it was called Assistant Editor? I can't remember. But anyway, during that round of hiring he did very well, he also got Michael Watts, Roy Hollingsworth, Chris Charlesworth and a few others. Jerry. . . No, Jerry Gilbert had gone to *Sounds*.' Richard Williams, personal interview (2011).

²⁹ Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

³⁰ Charlesworth explained in reference to drugs, 'Well, we, as far as drugs were concerned we never really mentioned it, we just didn't. We didn't mention sex and drugs at all. We were concerned primarily with the music. Everybody knew that everybody was taking drugs – including us – and everyone was behaving, er, fairly promiscuously – including us, but you just took it for granted you didn't write about it. This is probably one of the reasons that the musicians were very open to *Melody Maker*. We had a pretty good relationship with many of the

opinions. This ensured close relationships and a move towards candid in-depth features. In this period the heroic, artistic quasi-rock star celebrity writer ideal was defined. Roy Hollingsworth's review of art-rock act Suicide, from IPC's much coveted Manhattan apartment, exemplifies the freedom to be expressive and construct mythologies.³¹ He produced an immersive and personal account utilising journalistic fiction techniques reminiscent of Tom Wolfe or Norman Mailer,

There are only a handful of people in the room. They don't talk, and the strobe just flicks. Its electrical flick is hypnotic.

Then two figures appear – one is dressed lazily in casual clothes, the other is dressed to kill. His face is covered in glitter. His clothes are shoddy, and black, and on the back of his jacket is jewelled "Suicide."

Yes, this is Suicide, a two-piece that make appearances every now and then. They are appearances to remember.

The only music – as such – comes from the manipulations of the keyboard, the power and effect is startling. First a drone, keeping both there, and then ingeniously spinning more webs on the top. It's loud – but needs to be for the song about to be delivered only consists of two chords.

It's a heady, stark trip.

The starkest trip I've ever seen.

The singer stalks the stage, and at full volume shouts words about love through the speakers. The chords just ooze up, and down, and they are sludgy, and dirty, and the texture gained is so right as to be richly exciting.

It's like having a claw rip down your back. It lurks onwards, and the singer jumps off the stage, and crawls on the floor. "I love you" he sings in this evil voice.

It was fascinating. How two people could create such a thick wall of sound and atmosphere was an unbelievable achievement. It roared, and groaned, and the singer smacked himself on the head with the mike a couple of times and then fell in a heap in the corner – and whimpered.

Was this the end of music as we know it?³²

big acts: we went on the road with Led Zepplin, the Who and we saw everything that went on behind the scenes and what went on behind the scenes was probably illegal, but we didn't report upon it. There was none of the prurience of today's tabloid press.' Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

³¹ The apartment is illustrative of *Melody Maker* and the music industry's early-to-mid-1970s wealth.

³² Roy Hollingsworth, 'In New York City, Rock has Created Things that Reach Obscenity to Musical Vomit', *Melody Maker*, 21 December 1972, pp. 20-21.

Melody Maker utilised a mode of journalism that could romanticise rock music and contribute to the mythology and mystery of *rock stars*. It drew in casual readers to obtuse and challenging music that was supported by individual journalists.

At the same time *NME* was in a perilous position that threatened its existence: it had been haemorrhaging readers since the late-1960s and IPC threatened to shut the paper entirely. Other music journalists ridiculed *NME*. *Melody Maker* staff mocked *NME*'s out-dated headlines and even began to pin-up copies as an example of 'poor layout and terrible coverage'.³³ This resulted in IPC sacking the editorial staff and promoting a younger music journalist, Alan Smith, from his position as a staff writer. Publisher Colin Shepherd warned Smith that he had six months to reverse the magazine's fortunes.³⁴ Smith, and his deputy Nick Logan, overhauled the front cover. Smith and Logan changed *NME*'s logo italicising 'New', they reduced the level of clutter and changed clashing typefaces throughout the magazine. Smith and Logan appropriated some of *Melody Maker*'s working practices: for instance they assigned journalists to genres rather than artistes ensuring strong relationships and expert coverage.³⁵ In a move that would define the paper until the 1990s, the editorial team used the underground press's decline to harvest a new group of writers. Their new recruits' distinctive writing styles and uncompromising perspectives were genuinely entertaining, independent of the music they covered. Charles Shaar Murray described the revamped *NME* as, 'pretty much an underground rock weekly published by a major corporation.'³⁶ Members of the Notting Hill underground now had a regularly paid role and high circulation to propagate their self-consciously ideological agendas alongside pop journalism, as Mick Farren explained,

My apprenticeship in papers was with underground papers, so when the underground press wore itself out Nick Logan was pretty swift in beginning to hire. He hired Charlie Murray away from Oz, he hired Nick Kent and there was Ian McDonald (well, that was kind of half and half). Then later on down the pipe Charlie met me at a party, Charles Shaar Murray that is, he said: you know man, if you want to make some money why don't you come in and see Logan. So I did and ultimately he offered me a job editing the front section after I had some writing for them and I became quite closely involved at the *NME*.³⁷

Writers such as Farren and Caroline Coon at *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* unashamedly pushed an ideological agenda, in Farren's case a brand of leftist-libertarianism and

³³ Paul Gorman, *In Their own Write*, p. 165.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-172.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³⁷ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

Coon's left-wing radical feminism.³⁸ The new, provocative underground writers caused some tension with existing music press writers and IPC colleagues.³⁹ But Smith and Logan's changes proved a success: they precipitated a long climb towards regaining the music press's highest circulation and kept them attuned to construct and identify British punk.

Sounds' content spanned that of *Melody Maker* and *NME*. It had both *Melody Maker's* scholarly detail – albeit with less coverage of jazz, folk and the outer limits of contemporary music – with *NME's* left-wing radicalism. On the front cover it proclaimed 'Music is the Message' conjuring the 1960s socio-musical values that informed 1970s rock. *Sounds* also subtly hijacked a headline that the IPC titles had battled over and cleverly subverted it: *Sounds* was 'Britain's Best Weekly Rock Paper', not 'pop' as *NME* claimed or 'music' as *Melody Maker* claimed. This was a carefully constructed statement that defined *Sounds'* market position succinctly. Furthermore Jack Hutton had appropriated something *NME* could never wrest from *Melody Maker*, actual *Melody Maker* journalists. In March 1971 twelve ex-*Melody Maker* writers and photographers contributed to a single issue of *Sounds*.⁴⁰ *Sounds* was a credible mainstream rival to the IPC titles. Despite a circulation that at its peak was 164,299 copies per week, about 35,000 fewer copies than its next rival *NME*, it made a great impact on 1970s music journalism.⁴¹ It was simultaneously more innovative, adopting full front cover photography in a more stylish manner, and generally less pretentious. It persuasively covered the socio-political dimension of music; the other papers also covered the social and communicative element of music, but overall *Melody Maker* excelled at the aesthetic and industrial element, whereas *NME* was the most politically literate and keen to flaunt its radical chic.

Punk rock brought the so-called 'Golden Age' of rock journalism to an abrupt end, but the music press's journalistic developments were ideal to represent punk's discussion of class, behaviour and resistance. *Melody Maker* suffered most. Caroline Coon quickly supported punk and established an influential socio-musical writing style. Yet she suffered apparently rare editorial censure for including independent or self-released artistes in *Melody Maker's* singles column. This highlights

³⁸ Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011). Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

³⁹ 'We had nothing but contempt for the guys who had come up through the Beaverbrook papers, like Steve whatshisname, except for Roy Carr because we had known Roy, he had been around everywhere. He was sort of a huggable old guy anyway. Oh and Julie Webb. It was basically the IPC people; we kind of gave them a hard time. So that was the tension, it wasn't that we ran in to any from our end. Well the employees of *Bride Magazine* did not like to be in the same elevator as Nick Kent and there was a move to try and ban us from the executive dining room when they moved us down to King's Reach Tower. That was solved when they moves us back to the West End which is what wanted to do anyway. There was some conflict.' Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

⁴⁰ *Sounds*, 3 March 1971.

⁴¹ *NRS* (January-June 1979), p. 3.

the potential clash between alternative sentiments and commercial prerogatives that framed the music press.⁴² Letters from *Melody Maker* readers were often pointed, journalists and artists offered condemnations of the new genre from a musical perspective. *Melody Maker* reacted by employing younger writers such as Ian Birch from *Time Out* and talented Cambridge graduate and *Sounds* writer Jon Savage. Nevertheless *Melody Maker* was behind a burgeoning trend. Previously *Melody Maker* had only employed journalists who could read sheet music and had palpable established journalistic experience. Yet by the late-1970s music obsessed writers with literary flair could found their own small-circulation, independent fanzine. Independent fanzines exhibited strong opinions rather than a grasp of rondo tonal structures and the nuances of musical notation. *Sounds* had employed Savage in 1977 due to his 1976 fanzine *London Outrage*. Fanzines, an unconstrained forum that rewarded the conscientious but allowed indiscipline and self-indulgence, introduced new narratives that were cogent to punk discourse. Other writers at *Sounds* had also been instrumental in fanzines, for instance John ‘Jonh’ Ingham had set up *Who Put the Bomb!* in the US. Former fanzine writers were complimented by acerbic cartoonists Alan ‘Curt Vile’ Moore and Edwin ‘Savage Pencil’ Pouncey and writers who shared the same values but had a more conventional career trajectory, such as Vivian Goldman (who had been a PR for Island Records). The influx of writers from unconventional journalistic backgrounds reinvigorated the music press. The literary flourishes of the early-1970s were less apparent, but the scholarly detail in which music and its cultural context was deconstructed, and the vividness of the portrayal of the period’s scattershot anger, rebellion and negation, was spectacular.

NME had a slightly different relationship to punk. *NME* has often been perceived as slower to include punk acts, but it had close links to ‘proto-punk’. The 1976 British punk movement was a fragment of a wider socio-musical construct that was reported previously. *NME* complemented its existing roster of underground lunatics – punks who were too old to be punks – with hand-picked teen punks – Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons – and fanzine writers such as Danny Baker. It redesigned its cover in 1978 to suit the new wave of punk music’s visual flair. Writers from unconventional backgrounds brought a new range of influences. Of course some influences were journalistic and common with the previous cohort of music writers. Paul Rambali had been captivated by Tom Wolfe and *Rolling Stone*. *Melody Maker*’s Ian Birch was an avid *Rolling Stone* reader. Jon Savage, Paul Morley and Ian Penman – to name a few – were all voracious readers. As Rambali argued:

⁴² Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

One of the things I have to say is that we were very conscious of journalistic tradition. We took it seriously, even though we were kind of adolescent. We all had our heroes and we knew what journalism was and what we wanted it to be.⁴³

Matthew Worley argues that the theoretical-left of the late-1970s, influenced by ‘Althusser, Barthes, Benjamin, Gramsci, Mao and Marcuse’ also held great sway with the punk and post-punk subcultures.⁴⁴ This is palpable in the music press. Indeed adherents of Adorno, Baudrillard, Foucault and fiction writers such as William Gibson, Phillip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon and William S. Burroughs should not be ignored as music criticism became denser and more reliant on post-structuralist terminology or post-modernist experiments with form, verisimilitude and language. Yet despite the interesting contribution that more complex critical theory and left-wing cajoling made to writing about music, it challenged the notion that mainstream music papers were pop papers. In fact, some of the writing reached a level of abstraction that rendered it rudderless and pseudish: some articles took on the extravagant characteristics that punk had sought to purge from rock music. This left a great market opportunity for *Smash Hits* and ultimately harmed the long-term health of music papers. Nevertheless the quality of the music criticism and social commentary, and the vividness and passion of the writing conveyed by the music press from the 1960s onwards, was testament to a talented and committed pool of writers.

These writers and the musicians that they reported upon enthralled a significant proportion of British youth. This was helped by the relatively low price of music papers: in 1967 *Melody Maker* cost 9d and *NME* was 6d; by 1983 both IPC papers cost 35p, *Sounds* cost 40p, whilst bi-monthly *Smash Hits* was 38p. In 1972 fourteen per cent of fifteen to twenty-four year olds who responded to the *NRS* read both *Melody Maker* and *NME*.⁴⁵ *Melody Maker* had a few older readers, but its readership was fundamentally youthful. By 1977 eleven per cent of those between fifteen and twenty-four read *NME*, twelve per cent read *Melody Maker* and seven per cent read *Sounds*.⁴⁶ Two thirds of their readership was in this age cohort. By 1983 *Sounds* and *Smash Hits*’ readerships were dominated by teens and young adults: 82 and 84 percent respectively.⁴⁷ This accounted for between eleven and twelve per cent of all young readers, which was impressive in an expanding periodical publishing market: the following year the *NRS* scrutinised 56 new titles. *Melody Maker* and *NME*’s readership became slightly older; 70 percent of readers were between fifteen and

⁴³ Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

⁴⁴ Matthew Worley, ‘Shot by Both Sides: Punk, politics and the End of Consensus’, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ *NRS* (London, January-June 1972), p. 16.

⁴⁶ *NRS* (London, January-June 1977), p. 24.

⁴⁷ *NRS* (London, January-June 1983), p. 21.

twenty-four, but twenty per cent of readers between twenty-five and thirty-four still read the more established music press titles. So as *Melody Maker* became less lively and *NME* became more obtuse there was still a large demand from youth for music publications. This is unsurprising. Between 1967 and 1983 the music press was a key source of information for youth on issues that would not usually be covered in the popular daily press or more vacuous teen periodicals. It is striking that papers whose readers were sometimes deemed ‘impressionable’ and which broached transgressive or controversial themes were not under more scrutiny. From around 1972 *NME* and *Sounds* printed profanities by the dozen; in the later-1970s leftist messages typified by *Rock Against Racism* were common; by 1981 Neil Spencer had decided to educate readers on safe drug use rather than urge prohibition; and bad behaviour was usually seen as rather good fun, even if the thrills were vicarious.

Figure 1.9: Class Composition of Readership (by Percentage).

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
1972						
<i>Melody Maker</i>	2	13	26	36	21	2
<i>NME</i>	2	11	25	36	26	2
1977						
<i>Melody Maker</i>	4	13	28	33	20	2
<i>NME</i>	1	6	20	40	27	6
1983						
<i>NME</i>	2	14	26	33	19	5
<i>Melody Maker</i>	1	15	26	36	18	5
<i>Sounds</i>	2	13	23	38	21	3
<i>Smash Hits</i>	2	13	22	33	22	6

Source: *NRS* (January-June 1972), p. 11. *NRS* (January-June 1977), p. 13. *NRS* (January-June 1972), p 17. *NRS* social grades categorise an individual’s social class from ‘A’, upper middle class, to ‘E’, impoverished.

Figure 1.10: Regional Distribution of Readership (by Percentage).

Publication	Region						
	London and South East	South West and Wales	Midlands	North West	North East and North	Scotland	Greater London
1972							
<i>NME</i>	44	12	15	10	12	8	12
<i>Melody Maker</i>	37	10	15	13	15	10	15
1977							
<i>NME</i>	40	10	15	10	15	10	17
<i>Melody Maker</i>	46	11	13	9	13	9	21
1983							
<i>NME</i>	40	12	17	11	12	9	15
<i>Melody Maker</i>	44	9	18	10	9	9	17
<i>Sounds</i>	30	8	19	11	16	16	10
<i>Smash Hits</i>	32	13	19	12	16	8	10

Source: *NRS* (January-June, 1972), p. 13. *NRS* (January-June, 1977), p. 15. *NRS* (January-June 1983), p. 19.

The readership of the music press was mostly young men. For *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Sounds* men accounted for around two-thirds of its readership in 1972 and this rose to three-quarters of all circulation in 1983. This was a marked difference from the early-1960s Beat boom which was spurred on by adolescent women. Women were the largest demographic for record sales; despite the music press valorising the LP, more singles were sold in 1973 than 1964.¹³⁵ By 1972 Ray Coleman, Jack Hutton and Alan Smith were all aware of the burgeoning demographic of young men, and to a less extent women, who were about to undertake or currently undertaking further education: they were seen as rock's audience. Papers battled for readers in the sixth form common room and shared student dwellings (a highly probable site of consumption and sharing magazines). This group's likely capacity for future earnings was a tempting possibility for advertisers. *Smash Hits* and *The Face* challenged this conceit by gaining advertising revenue and solid readership with a roughly gender-equal readership; the music press may have excluded the interests of a huge number of potential readers due to their male dominated discourses and aesthetic socio-musical bias.¹³⁶ It is foreseeable that new music press titles would enter the market try to attract both sexes. There had been a glut of new youthful women's titles launched in 1980 and 1981 that indicate a perceptible niche in the market. As well as a gender imbalance the readership of the music press was superficially dominated by the middle-class and, to a lesser extent, skilled working-class (figure 1.9), which undermines many music press discourses of authenticity and claims to be advocates of the poor working-class. It is feasible that there was a hidden unskilled working-class readership that evaded the *NRS* who were more likely to share papers. But in a similar way to the anti-corporate sensibilities that were elucidated despite corporate ownership, the music press's middle-class readership did not prevent left-wing class conscious narratives from being discussed. The mainly middle class and skilled-working class readership was reflected in the regional bias towards the south east and London, which was exacerbated by London's population density, its domination of the music industry and the location of the music press. The only slight change was a marginal increase in provincial readers following a greater focus on regional music making following 1976 (figure 1.10). This was due to a discourse that encouraged readers that they too could be musicians regardless of skill, location or any other previously limiting factor.

¹³⁵ David Simonelli, *Working Class Heroes: Rock Music and British Society in the 1960s and 1970s* (Plymouth, 2012), pp. 191-211.

¹³⁶ *NRS* (London, January-June 1984), p. 3. *The Face* did not appear in the *NRS* during this period, but Paul Rambali recalled that the gender of the readership was split equally. Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

This chapter has demonstrated the characteristics of music papers in terms of their industry, style of journalism, content and readership. It is evident that a settlement of contradictory and competing pressures forged the music press's content. Music press titles were commercial ventures competing in a mass market. They were usually backed by large corporations such as Reed International, EMAP or City Newspapers. Proprietors expected a return on their investments. Papers were closely embedded in a central London music industry too: they were symbiotically related to the success of the artistes they covered. It would be reasonable to assume that the industry that sustained the music press ensured papers were duly moderated to accommodate content that was accessible and comprehensible to the overwhelming majority. Accordingly artistes would be protected from criticism and exalted, even unduly if necessary. Indeed this was sometimes the case. Yet the owners of the music press were usually distant and unconcerned about content if circulation and advertising revenue was not interrupted. Consequently when writers were drawn from the underground press, the fanzine press or driven to propagate conversations in the US rock press, the New Journalism or draw from academic theorising, a style of journalism that drew on a cacophony of more unorthodox rhetoric emerged. It established a novel scope for music writing which encouraged extra-musical debates of British society and culture which ruminated on personal and collective morality. This enabled engagement with the on-going and significant debate of society's morals. For a number of years – before the music press fragmented and older titles faded – the increasingly varied and often subversive narratives that accompanied music reporting and interviewing was attractive to readers. This chapter establishes that young middle-class men were most enticed by these conversations, but there were a number of women, working class and upper class readers. As a result a large number of young people consumed music papers that, unlike any other mainstream youth periodicals of the period, systematically discussed contemporary debates on morality thanks to a combination of hands-off management and the changing style and focus of British music journalism.

Chapter Two

Questioning the Basic Immoralities?

This chapter's purpose is to explain and analyse the music press's shift in focus that occurred around 1967. In 1967 the music press changed its editorial position and started to explore the heated moral discussions that gripped society and the musicians it interviewed. The music press renegotiated an artist's role from entertainer to archetype of a generational division in mores. Increasingly popular bands contributed to this by sharing narratives from the trans-Atlantic counter-culture, metropolitan discourse and the nascent rock underground. Editors and journalists sought to balance the music press's commercial focus and its new role as a platform for moral controversy. This chapter begins by explaining how the music press constructed a divide between 'entertainers' and more vociferous artistes who sought a social voice. It then establishes the key narratives and debates that artistes and journalists brought to the fore by using the Rolling Stones as an example. The Rolling Stones were integral to debates on 1960s permissiveness in the music press; their guitarist Brian Jones had set a precedent in an *NME* interview by rejecting the music press's commercial focus and delineating youth morality's parameters. The chapter analyses how the debate gestated across the music press and intensified as the Rolling Stones were arrested for drug possession. The music press constructed the trial as a set-piece battle between youth and 'the Establishment's' values. Yet the music press's detailed coverage of the 'Redlands Bust' – reproducing many newspaper responses and readers' letters – also problematized permissive ideas regarding generational cultural change. The music press, unlike the BBC, refused to ignore drugs' place in youth culture. Drug use became a central issue in permissive debates and symbolised changing values.

Contrary to the serious, almost scholarly tone the music press would take in the 1970s, late-1960s music journalism was light-hearted. Keith Altham explained, 'Nobody was taking it seriously ... We were all the same age as the bands. It was a bunch of mates with guitars in clubs.'¹ The 'clubs' were the Soho and West End club

¹ Keith Altham was employed by *NME* from 1964 until he left in 1969 to manage public relations for the Who and work as a freelance music journalist. Altham was an engaging and highly competent journalist, who displayed a pragmatic flexibility in line with the needs of a commercial publication. He had been a sports writer before moving to teen magazines where he began covering British 'trad' jazz in 1960. Here Altham was mostly employed to interview artistes and was well aware that *NME*'s remit in 1964 was 'catering for screaming teenage girls,' and to be a platform for 'iconic images and stars'. He explained these 'girls' as those providing

scene: the music press's workers, embedded in the British culture industry, had privileged access to the leisure district frequented by metropolitan elites. Those involved in the music press were close to the underbelly of sophisticated British transgression. *NME*'s offices in Covent Garden enabled its employees to be men about town. Despite the potential for transgression Altham and his peers used a language of leisure and reflected the music industry's commercial concerns. 1970s music writing's dominant characteristics –revolutionary posturing, dry social analysis, literary pretensions or provocation – were absent from 1960s music writing. Altham was clear that he wrote for a mainstream audience, but he also attributed his relative innocence to 'a moral arbiter lurking in the shadows, if you crossed the line you were in trouble.'² He suggested that those who crossed it – including artists, writers and editors – would harm their career. Nevertheless due to his relationship with the controversial Rolling Stones, Altham was more likely to report deeper conversations with musicians on contemporary moral issues than his colleagues.

By 1967 the paper's deference to the chart as a means to guide content enabled challenging statements which contradicted 'traditional' values. Altham argues that visceral and 'authentic' blues based pop music's popularity from 1964 onwards introduced broader topics of conversation. Altham explained, 'The boys were getting in with the R & B boom. Then sexually explicit things crept into the music. It was political as well, the politics of the poor and oppressed.'³ This came to fruition in 1967. Narratives that argued liberation for marginalised groups and the individual were powerful themes. The music press was obliged to report the chart topping artistes' preoccupations even if they broached hot moral topics and contradicted their elders. Even so a musician defying social conventions was not unique to the late-1960s,

I had always wanted to interview Elvis, I was a great fan of his, and I knew the Maurice Kinn had interviewed Elvis many times. The only problem was his ideal singer was Mel Tome. I asked him, what did you think of Elvis? And his response was simply, "vulgar". He thought he was vulgar! All I could think was Jesus is that all you saw! Although, for a generation brought up on Nat King Cole, Elvis was probably vulgar.⁴

the Beatles with 'screaming adulation'; unfortunately making the Beatles, 'the worst live band [he had] ever seen.' Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Altham used a typically 1960s rhetorical device, a narrative of generational dissonance, to explain the changing acceptance of sexually suggestive themes and behaviour in music. Statements such as these represented morality that was predicated upon individual moral choice rather than pre-determined social codes. Music papers permitted greater discursive space that conflated generational divide and reformulating values: it argued individual autonomy to explore new ways of living.

In late-1960s Britain, talk of rebellion against an older generation was widespread: it had been brewing since the late-1950s. The great edifices that had conferred prestige on the British government as an imperial power were being relinquished under great scrutiny. Right-wing polemicists such as Enoch Powell agitated as imperial and economic power declined – albeit this decline was discursive and subject to whether one believed imperial prestige was worth saving – and Britain joined the European Community. It was a persistent and gloomy narrative. The friction was often articulated as symptomatic of a divide between a beleaguered ‘establishment’, old both physically and mentally, and a flourishing media-savvy youth culture. This encouraged some youngsters to question the validity of conventional moral thought backed by rational or new age discourses. This debate drew on Soho’s metropolitan narratives and US counter-culture. As youth culture transcended national boundaries the music press described a trans-Atlantic counter-culture to its readers – at first coyly.

Up to 1967, other than a few brief interjections from individuals such as Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones, the music press usually deemed popular musicians as simply entertainers. Even the Beatles were reluctant to discuss anything other than their career and publicise upcoming releases.⁵ Outspoken artistes were few and sometimes attracted derision. Chloe Twist, from Sussex, wrote a letter to *NME* that was similar to many others,

I am sick and tired of ex-bricklayers and electricians who become pop stars and start preaching about the “Tibetan Book of the Dead,” and Zen and other rubbish.

⁵ The Beatles barely mentioned anything outside of discussing their music and career progress to Alan Smith in *NME*. For instance: Alan Smith, ‘Newcomers To The Charts: Liverpool’s Beatles Wrote Their Own Hit’, *NME*, 26 October 1962; Alan Smith, ‘Throat Sweets Keep Us Going Say Beatles!’, *NME*, 19 April 1963; Alan Smith, ‘The Beatles: Ringo Played Cards As Others Sang ‘Paperback!’’, *NME*, 17 June 1966. Albeit Paul McCartney cheekily referred to an “x” certificate’ dream in Alan Smith, *NME*, 29 July 1966. And even when John Lennon hit out at critics he was only reported as speaking about his music and career: Alan Smith, ‘John Lennon Slams the Critics’, *NME*, 6 August 1965. These articles were found in Rock Backpages digital archive of music press articles [RB], accessed June 2010.

The fans aren't interested in the stars' intellectual aspirations- and anyway who do these people think they're kidding? They just spout like this because it's "in"- we would respect them more if they were sincere in their endeavour to please the fans.⁶

Luckily for Chloe, there were ample musicians out to please fans and solicit money. For example Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck viewed their role as part of an entertainment industry whose employees did not have the right to comment on politics or wider social issues. Their music was pleasant, but undemanding easy-listening, even if Jones was a little more libidinous in the manner of a *Carry On* film.⁷ Jones was particularly deferential and skilfully evaded chances to be outspoken,

I don't think too much about politics, to be honest. People vote for a government and can't grumble at what they do. It seems to me that the Prime Minister is doing what he thinks best for the country, and that's good enough for me. Anyway- we're not starving- are we?⁸

Jones was conservative and acquiescent. The rewards for being an unchallenging artist were considerable: he had become extremely affluent following his austere South Wales mining background. Humperdinck, a less sympathetic character, boasted that his career had provided him with 'a home in the country, a Rolls-Royce...and a Jaguar'.⁹ The article explained that Humperdinck was popular with, 'the older generation of record buyers and Mums and Dads who find his records an acceptable and worthy alternative to the electronic music of the long haired, garishly dressed groups.' There were many less successful performers who, like Jones and Humperdinck, realised that having uncontroversial inter-generational appeal was a potential way to reap commercial rewards. Papers pictured Jones and Humperdinck with cars, evening wear and in large houses: their values were aspirational and materialistic, but they did not relate this to discussions on British social morality.

When Graham Nash left the Hollies, a Lancashire based pop group, he illustrated the split between 'entertainers' and those who sought to imbue their music

⁶ Chloe Twist, 'From You to Us' *NME*, 4 February 1967, p. 13.

⁷ Carry on films mixed bawdy humour and cheesecake sexuality for a mass audience. For instance *Carry On Doctor* [DVD Film], directed by Gerald Thomas (originally released 1967, digitally remastered ITV Studios Home Entertainment).

⁸ John Wells, 'Don't Confuse Me With Him', *NME*, 6 May 1967, p. 11.

⁹ Tony Wilson, 'Explaining Englebert, Singer who splits the pop world', *Melody Maker*, 22 February 1969, pp. 14-15.

with deeper meaning. It is unusual that a single group demonstrated the controversy between entertaining and including more mature themes, but here two of the most trenchant narratives on pop music's meaning clashed. Alan Smith interviewed Allen Clarke, a member of the Hollies, leading with the comment, 'I have news for Hollies fans who think the whole group has suddenly become all psychedelic and way out of sight, baby! It hasn't.' Clarke added,

Graham [Nash] talks a lot about the inner mind and psychedelic things, but to tell you the truth, I don't understand half of what he's on about. It's just weird. Sometimes he gets too deep for me, and I can't listen to him anymore. I'm more interested in U.F.O.s.¹⁰

A surprisingly candid conversation between Nash and colleague Tony Hicks further outlined the problems of satisfying personal creativity and accommodating a mass audience. Nash recited post-materialist values that denigrated commercialism, whereas Hicks equated success with pleasing and communicating with an audience who could potentially misunderstand sophisticated messages,

Graham: "Carrie Anne" is going to be the last of our really commercial singles. We are getting so commercial we are becoming un-commercial. It's time for the Hollies to grow up. I want to make records which say something.

Tony: I think it does say something. It says something very simple- it's a boy-girl relationship which anyone can understand. I'm frightened of going over the heads of the kids. It's no good being progressive if people cannot understand you.¹¹

Later Nash publicly told the 'screamers' to 'shut up', thus estranging teenage record buyers. In 1968 Nash left the Hollies as the difference in opinion proved too divisive. He relocated to California and indulged his less obviously commercial taste by forming Crosby, Stills and Nash. The split between the Hollies illustrates a friction that appeared in the music press frequently. Some argued music was an unfettered aesthetic pursuit to express ideas and indulge creativity. This was antithetical to the music industry that assumed their market required straightforward, traditionally

¹⁰ Alan Smith, 'We're as psychedelic as a pint o' beer wi' t' lads', *NME*, 18 March 1967, p. 4.

¹¹ Keith Altham, 'The Young Hollie (21) and the Old Hollie (25)' *NME*, 17 June 1967, p. 3.

recognisable or asininely novel music. At the debate's extremes some came across as elitist and self-obsessed others as condescending and exploitative.

The Rolling Stones constructed themselves as embodying new morality and generational conflict. When Altham interviewed Brian Jones in February 1967, Jones ranted in a way that was incongruous to *NME*'s normal content.¹² Altham attempted to return 'the conversation to any kind of level related to pop' and brought up Gene Pitney's recent marriage.¹³ He established that Jones' rhetoric contravened the pop matters *NME* would traditionally report. Altham, however, was not speaking explicitly about music either, just a more acceptable type of small-talk. Jones replied, 'You've been trying to reduce conversation to that level all afternoon!' Personally Altham was pleased Jones was being so open: he had interviewed the Rolling Stones so often that he was running out of topics for conversation.¹⁴ Yet Jones' statements were outside the intended message that the *NME* encoded for the young pop consuming audience. There was an apparent tension between providing pop content and indulging Jones' underground pretensions. The difference between Altham, working in his employer's interest but sympathetic to Jones' ideas, and Jones' radicalism, is stark.

Jones seemed unconcerned about the wider market and the music industry's commercial lexicon: he preferred to talk about his 'real followers'. In 1966 musicians such as the Rolling Stones, The Animals, The Who and The Hollies had travelled in the US. They had experienced a heady year for the counter-culture. Those born in 1948 were turning eighteen and were threatened by the Vietnam War, but at the same time the Fillmore concert hall had championed psychedelic rock, and LSD had been popularised in elite counter-cultural circles. By 1967 Brian Jones had affected the philosophy and expanded range of behaviours suggested by counter-cultural and permissive discourses.¹⁵ Jones had embraced LSD and although Altham argues he was 'bright when not drugged out of his mind', Jones had 'seemed to have believed that his experience was reality and lost objectivity'.¹⁶ Jones imposed a narrative that celebrated his experience with the US counter-culture: it denoted his place in a sophisticated elite who were prepared to initiate moral debate,

¹² Keith Altham, 'Our Fans Have Moved With Us', *NME*, 4 February 1967, p. 14.

¹³ Artistes relationships was a common topic of conversation. The partners of musicians were featured in a weekly column called 'Pop Star Girlfriends'.

¹⁴ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

¹⁵ Possibly contributing to his exit from the Stones and his premature death in July 1969, suspiciously drowning in his swimming pool.

¹⁶ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

Our real followers have moved on with us – some of those we like most are the hippies in New York, but nearly all of them think like us and are questioning some of the basic immoralities which are tolerated in present day society – the war in Vietnam, the persecution of homosexuals, illegality of abortion, drug taking. All these things are immoral. We are making our own statement- others are making more intellectual ones.¹⁷

Intriguingly Jones offered a check list of many of the most pertinent issues in the negotiations surrounding the ‘permissive’ society, setting a precedent for these debates in the music press. Jones introduced counter-cultural radicalism in a way that had not been attempted before; he was candid and despite communicating a degree of elite self-importance the statement is not condescending or moderated for a young audience. Bob Dylan, for instance, was outspoken as a supporter of civil rights, his music critiqued society and promoted new consciousness, but on the rare occasions that he granted interviews with the music press he was terse and mumbled ambiguous statements.¹⁸ One of Dylan’s body guards confessed to Altham that he had invited the British press to a reception in 1966, ‘so we could hear how ridiculous and infantile all reporters are.’¹⁹ Brian Jones was less guarded and contemptuous. He explicitly related underground topics to a mass audience.

Jones substantiated his counter-cultural and youth focused narrative by criticising the institutions ‘traditional’ morality was derived from. Jones, with a *reductio ad absurdum*, questioned ‘the wisdom of an almost blind acceptance of religion compared with an almost blind disregard for reports related to things like unidentified flying objects.’ Disparaging religion was a useful ploy with church attendances declining, especially amongst youth, and critiques of contemporary Christian thought such as *Honest to God* reaching a large audience.²⁰ It differentiated Jones from pop stars such as Cliff Richard. Richard was avowedly Christian and promoted Mary Whitehouse’s National Viewers and Listeners Association.²¹ Jones was positioning himself, a notable, young musician, as an alternative source of moral guidance. He was evangelical or even messianic: he advocated revolution. By threatening revolution

¹⁷ Keith Altham, ‘Our Fans Have Moved With Us’, *NME*, 4 February 1967, p. 14.

¹⁸ Altham attempted an article in the 1966 *NME* article with very little material. Keith Altham, *NME Annual* (London, 1966), p. 8; Dylan’s general standoffishness is explained by Karl Dallas in Karl Dallas, *Melody Maker*, 17 August 1968 (RB, accessed August 2010).

¹⁹ Keith Altham, ‘Dylan Press Reception’, *NME*, 13 May 1966 (RB, accessed July 2010).

²⁰ John A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London, 1963).

²¹ Papers frequently reported Richard’s religious views and activities. For instance Alan Smith reported how Richard might retire following ‘the result of [his] ‘o’ level examination in religious instruction’; one can only speculate that Richard’s continued career in entertainment is a reflection of his aptitude as a religious instructor. Alan Smith, ‘Cliff’s Retirement Depends on his “O” Level’, *NME*, 14 January 1967, p. 2.

Jones commanded rhetorical authority: 'there is a young revolution in thought and manner about to take place'. Jones relied on a personal-political, libertarian revolution vocabulary rather than violent insurrection. The word 'revolution' is a repeated cliché of the period, but it reflects the elite milieus in which Jones circulated. His bandmate Mick Jagger was a student at LSE, symbolic of student radicalism, the other members had attended or attempted to attend art college and the band gained prominence at the Marquee club at 90 Wardour Street. Unlike 1960s radicalism's Marxist wing, Jones advocated a new 'thought and manner' rather than political revolution or insurrection.²² Even if it was a cliché that would be repeated throughout the 1960s media, revolution was a powerful notion to introduce to the music press, its seditiousness was eye-catching.

Altham used Jones' polemic as evidence of a generational schism. This gave the statements gravitas and contextualised them as part of the contemporary debate on youth autonomy:

The Stones became "the defiant ones"- representative of the eternal struggle between youth and the aged; champions of the "it's my life and I'll do what I like with it" school. The parents spotted the declaration of war upon their authority and rejected the Stones- the Stones quickly rejected their parents.

Altham poetically stoked the generational divide narrative and defined the statements that contradicted 'traditional' values; he mentioned 'parents', his language of 'defiance,' 'struggle' and 'war'. But Altham asked Jones if the generation gap would have to be bridged in order to 'appeal to a wider market'? Altham offered Jones the topical 'generation gap' to comment upon, but was constrained by the music press's conventions so he related generational conflict to a conversation of music industry sales. Thus he reiterated the music press's commercial focus. The friction between Altham's attempt to write for *NME's* audience and Jones' impatience to speak his mind is palpable. Nonetheless Brian Jones was undeterred and propagated the narratives surrounding a rebellious youth subculture's lifestyles and moral values. Humperdinck or Tom Jones would have balked at the thought of alienating consumers in this way.

Brian Jones' interview with Keith Altham is significant because it heralded a more complicated discussion of social change in the music press and illustrated the

²² Keith Altham, 'Our Fans Have Moved With Us', *NME*, 4 February 1967, p. 14.

tension between these narratives and the pre-existing way that music was discussed. It was unusually forthright compared to *NME*'s usual content and this encouraged other musicians, journalists and fans to be less guarded. It became fashionable to be controversial. Bands such as The Move and The Who became more outspoken. If one compares *NME* articles that feature The Who in 1966 and 1967, for example, there is a distinct change. In 1966 they discussed topics such as their record label, musical equipment, and influences; they provided the stimulus for a slapstick tour diary and a Christmas appearance on the BBC's *Ready! Steady! Go!*²³ But by 1967 Keith Altham headlined an interview, 'Who Ready To Hit You With New Ideas.'²⁴ Like Graham Nash and Brian Jones they saw the US counter-culture as inspirational. They wanted to communicate new values and entertain. Like Jones they believed, 'our fans are broad-minded – they have to be!' Articulating broadmindedness was a vital trope. The music press were compelled to include individuals, discourses and acts that were previously intolerable. If popular musicians and their fans debated morality the music press were compelled to respond, they needed to retain relevance and circulation.

Yet groups used unruliness and provocation to gain attention and success through infamy. The Rolling Stones' blues heroes were often constructed as outlaws and sung of brushes with authority.²⁵ Altham argued that the Rolling Stones had knowingly invoked rebellious imagery: 'they were affecting it themselves. The notes of 'Satisfaction' gave them the opportunity to cover a wider remit of topics.'²⁶ The Rolling Stones' rebellious image, aided by their Soho based, maverick manager Andrew Loog-Oldham, grated with the conventional approach of attracting mass inter-generational appeal that saw, for instance, the Beatles removing their leather jackets following their Hamburg-Teddy-Boy early years. Rolling Stones songs referred to a lack of 'satisfaction', Satanism, depression, illicit drugs, prescription drugs and, as Andrew August suggests, this was coupled with a smattering of misogyny.²⁷ Despite their shortcomings August argues that they portrayed a rebellious 'other' that youth could imitate. The Rolling Stones courted the controversial generational divide. In 1965 Loog-Oldham prompted a moral panic with the press campaign for a US tour. He used the slogan, 'would you let your daughter marry a Rolling Stone?', which

²³ Keith Altham, 'With Who And 'Birds At Paris Allez-Oop!', *NME*, 8 April 1966; Keith Altham, 'Who's for a Merry Xmas', *NME*, 24 December 1966 (RBP, accessed September 2010).

²⁴ Keith Altham, 'Who's All Ready to Hit You with New ideas', *NME*, 28 October 1967, p. 5.

²⁵ The creator of influential U.S. rock magazine *Crawdaddy!* covered this in a book. Paul Williams, *Outlaw Blues: A Book of Rock Music* (New York, 1969).

²⁶ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

²⁷ Andrew August, 'Gender and 1960s Youth Culture: The Rolling Stones and the New Woman,' *Contemporary British History* 19:1 (2005), p. 80.

played on an instantly recognisable snobbish, patrician discourse.²⁸ It suggested the *Lady Chatterly's Lover* obscenity trial where chief prosecutor Mervyn Griffiths-Jones' inquired whether the book was something, 'you would wish your wife or servants to read?'²⁹ To fans the Rolling Stones communicated the unspoken assumption that daughters were free to marry whom they liked. Eventually papers related the Rolling Stones to moral discussions and ideas of individual autonomy so habitually that it became a bore to them. For example, Altham interviewed Mick Jagger in late 1968 to publicise his starring role in the film *Performance*. Altham asked if the film made 'any moral statement?' To which Jagger sarcastically replied, 'Oh yes – a moral statement a line Keith!'³⁰

Throughout 1967 Altham presented the Rolling Stones as the generation gap incarnate. Similarly other groups such as the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who and many US counterparts were portrayed as youth spokespeople, despite their relative isolation through wealth, elite connections and access to urban leisure. Despite a privileged social position Altham and the Rolling Stones made extremely bold statements in comparison to middle-of-the-road platitudes of 'entertainers'. It could have proved costly. In June the Rolling Stones' refused to play on the BBC's 'At the Palladium' variety show's revolving stage. This was described as an explicit stand against 'the Establishment'.³¹ Again Altham repeated the previous Brian Jones interview's rhetoric, albeit he misleadingly traced the outspoken youth movement's genealogy to 1963 and The Animals' 1965 single 'It's My Life', 'For approximately four years now the "it's my life and I'll do what I want" school – symbolised by the rebel Rolling Stones – have been fighting a bloody battle with the Establishment's motto: "It's not your life and you'll do what you're told!"³² Altham relied on a rhetoric that was violent and divisive to explain the Rolling Stones. He then added a moral dimension to this divide in society to escape empty nihilism: 'The Rolling Stones in more simple terms are a reflection of the perpetual difference between children, with all the impatience of youth, warring against the intolerance of their "aged" parents.' Nevertheless there were limits to the Rolling Stones non-conformism; they were pliable when confronted with economic opportunities in the vast U.S. market. They changed their new single's ('Let's Spend the Night Together') implicitly sexual lyrics for inclusion on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, a US television institution. This led Jagger to comment, 'some people would read obscenity into the National Anthem!' Even so the Rolling Stones did

²⁸ This can be found across a range of US press sources.

²⁹ Mervyn Griffin Jones is quoted in Cecil Hewitt Rolph, *Lady Chatterley's Trial* (London, 1961), p. xii.

³⁰ Keith Altham, *NME*, 9 November 1968, p. 3.

³¹ 'Jagger-Richard in Drugs Search', *NME*, 25 February 1967, p. 5.

³² Keith Altham, 'The Stones say "Too Late For Us To Reform"', *NME*, 24 June 1967, p. 6.

cancel their music. The rebelliousness that captured attention in British music papers may have potentially limited their success in the lucrative US market.

Nevertheless a few weeks later the police had become interested in the Rolling Stones and the rhetoric of their 'new generation, especially regarding drugs. The event crystallised the debates surrounding individual autonomy, the social influence of musicians and generational frisson, but also highlighted that a generational divide in values was a contested and artificial construct. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were arrested for possessing drugs at Richards' home, along with art dealer Robin Fraser, on 14 February 1967. In July Judge Leslie Block sentenced Jagger and Richards sternly, the former Naval officer deemed them role models and wanted to make an example of them. The police had found Jagger with Benzedrine pills that had been prescribed in Italy. The judge sentenced Jagger to three months' imprisonment. When caught Richards, an enthusiastic and burgeoning addict, possessed heroin and marijuana. He was sentenced for a year. Both were granted bail of £7,000 and appealed to the High Court, an appeal they would win. Block argued that the punitive sentence responded to their ability to corrupt the morals of youth.³³ Surprisingly in this instance many Establishment figures supported Jagger and Richards, famously, *The Times*' William Rees-Mogg who asked, 'Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?'³⁴ Rees-Mogg argued that the trial's fairness had been compromised by the defendants' fame and rebellious image. Indeed there was also a rumour, which has never been substantiated, that the police had attempted to frame the Rolling Stones. The raid was definitely planned and targeted the band: Brian Jones' house was raided on the same night. *Oz* magazine were convinced that corruption was involved. They included an insert titled 'How I Jailed Jagger' accusing the *News of the World* of 'amorality' as they had planted the drugs on 'Mr David Henry Sniederma, alias Brittan' with his consent.³⁵ In retribution *Oz* published the editor's home address. Keith Altham was also adamant this theory is true, 'they were busted and persecuted. Sent to jail – and it was a set up – just because of how they looked.'³⁶ The unsubstantiated claims of the Rolling Stones contemporaries did not spare them in court, but they illuminated mistrust towards authority's disciplinary tendencies. Keith Richards was not impressed with the raid, case or verdict: when asked whether women should be embarrassed about being undressed in his presence by the Crown Prosecutor he exhorted a recognisable line, 'We are not old men. We are not worried

³³ Jonathon Green, *All Dressed Up: the Sixties and the Counterculture* (London, 1999), p. 167.

³⁴ William Rees-Mogg, 'Who Breaks a Butterfly on the Wheel', *The Times*, 1st July 1967, p. 26.

³⁵ *Oz* 4, June 1967. Pull-out leaflet.

³⁶ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

about petty morals.³⁷ The case was easily constructed as trying a generation's morals as much as it tried a drugs charge.

Drugs had caused quite a discussion in the music press. It was a current issue that was gaining widespread attention. Drugs legislation was amended in 1967 and 1968, with Dangerous Drugs Acts, before British drug laws became significantly less liberal with the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act. In 1967 drug addiction was discussed in parliament and Patrick Gordon-Walker, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, wrote to inform chief education officers and principal school medical officers to be watchful of 'youthful experimentation'.³⁸ In January 1967, *NME* published a rare editorial responding to a censored episode of the BBC's *Juke Box Jury* due to the Game's song, 'the Addicted Man'. The music press would not ignore the drug debate. Maurice Kinn argued,

Directly or indirectly, drugs are playing an increasingly prominent part in pop lyrics and in last week's show the BBC had a golden opportunity- in the hands of five acknowledged pop authorities- to dismiss this trend as distasteful rubbish. But Auntie funk'd (sic) the chance.³⁹

He argued that was necessary rather than the subject being 'whitewashed'. Kinn even resorted to a capitalised proposition, 'IF THE BBC IS GOING TO TURN A COLD SHOULDER TO ALL DRUG-TAKING IMPLICATIONS IN POP MUSIC, IT MIGHT AS WELL SCRUB JBJ IMMEDIATELY.' *NME* had deemed drugs songs necessary, news worthy, topics, even if the editorial stance was fundamentally against the use of illicit drugs. This was a necessary stance: by summer psychedelia and the so-called Summer of Love had arrived. Altham explains, 'psychedelia was the polite form of drug use', although it was, 'short lived'.⁴⁰ Regardless when 10,000 'hippies, flower children and beautiful people' descended upon London's Alexandra Palace for the 'International Love-In' the association between the event's drug connotations were not hidden. Altham was reported the nascent counter-culture and resorted to the *NME*'s commercial language, a necessity to cover such an overtly subversive event.

³⁷ Christopher Sandford, *Keith Richards* (London, 1980), pp. 116-117.

³⁸ 'Youthful experimentation' was the phrase used by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, Denis Howell, in the parliamentary debate when the issue was broached. Dennis Howell, 'Drug Addiction' House of Commons British Parliamentary Papers DCCLV (London, 1967)

³⁹ Maurice Kinn, 'The BBC and Drug Songs', *NME*, 14 January 1967, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

He quipped, ‘At £1 a potential acid head that was a lot of £SD for someone!’⁴¹ This was quite a provocative comment, especially the flippant tone. When debating amendments to the 1967 Criminal Justice Act, the House of Lords had deemed LSD dangerous and likely to prompt further drug use by users.⁴² Newspapers printed scaremongering stories, but *NME* referred to drugs in a knowing, but vague and humorous manner. This humour was disarming. Through the writing’s whimsy and editorial tolerance the music press became a popular, mass market and nationally available, arena for discussions on drugs to an audience that were considered likely to experiment.

Similarly *Melody Maker* defended its right to discuss drugs in music. *Melody Maker* ran into trouble due to an article by young reporter Nick Jones the following May.⁴³ He reported on the West Coast psychedelic subculture that vaingloriously touted LSD and marijuana use. West Coast U.S. music gained a great deal of attention: it was sonically powerful, expressed generational disjuncture and outspoken drug use.⁴⁴ This, however, resulted in a reader, A.M. Harris, complaining to the Press Council. Harris was perturbed by Nick Jones’ apparently enticing support of drug use, but in reality Jones had been careful not to advocate drug taking.⁴⁵ Jones *had* argued that ‘the younger generation have seemed to find a spiritual home’ full of ‘rebellion, revolution, freedom and fun’. Furthermore Jones had prefaced his explanation of the drugs scene with the passage, ‘Drugs, mainly LSD and marijuana, are an integral part of the scene ... There has always been a link between drugs and music. It is not our job to moralise or anything else.’ It echoed the moralism and rational thought narratives that underpinned Kinn’s argument, Abortion Law Reform or Homosexual Law Reform. It was hardly a public testimonial on the benefits of chemical experimentation. Nevertheless Harris argued that the statement was ‘dangerously irresponsible, immorally untrue’ and asked, ‘on which stretch of the imagination was it based?’ Even worse was Jones’ wish for a Monterey Pop Festival in England: Harris claimed that if editor Jack Hutton did not ‘interpret the article as an open and explicit encouragement to drug-taking, then the English language had been completely debased beyond all understanding.’ Stringent anti-drugs letters followed for two

⁴¹ Keith Altham, ‘Keith Altham goes to the Love-In Plus’, *NME*, 5 August 1967, p. 12.

⁴² House of Lords, ‘Criminal Justice Act’, CCLXXXIII (1967).

⁴³ *Melody Maker*, 27 May 1967.

⁴⁴ This music scene is explained in greater detail in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (eds.) *Imagine Nation: the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (London, 2002). Nady Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope: Musicland Cultural Perspectives on Late-Sixties San Francisco* (Michigan, 2002). James E. Perone *Music of the Counter Culture* (Westport, 2004).

⁴⁵ *Melody Maker*, 7 October 1967, p. 1. A.M. Harris’ complaint was reprinted in part when the Press Council had ruled in favour of *Melody Maker*. The complaint was not mentioned in the paper before the verdict.

weeks.⁴⁶ This was perhaps a ploy that deflected the notion that music fans would take drugs like the ‘conformist non-conformism’ Jones had seen in California. Two music industry professionals complained: one was made ‘sick’ by Jones and the other refuted the link between music and drugs as rehashed jazz cliché. Despite this caution when the Press Council ruled that *Melody Maker* had not printed any illegal content the paper celebrated on the front page. It reprinting the verdict. Jack Hutton argued ‘any foundation’ to the claim that the article encouraged drug taking was false, despite agreeing that he should not have allowed quotes from LSD guru Timothy Leary. *Melody Maker* and *NME* were not going to ignore drugs’ role in music culture, but they would moderate their writing to prevent public criticism.

The Redlands case and verdict, like the Press Council controversy at *Melody Maker*, stripped the humour from *NME*’s vernacular when discussing drugs. The response to the High Court’s verdict was so important to *NME* that editor-in-Chief Andy Grey took on Keith Altham’s usual role. A two page article followed that framed a large picture of Jagger in a garden, possibly signifying innocence through pastoral connotations, leaning into his girlfriend Marianne Faithful. Both pulled hangdog facial expressions. Grey defended Jagger, making a ‘sharp criticism’ of ‘British justice’ and used the ‘ frankest of all criticism’ from *The Times* to corroborate his argument.⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly Grey used a commercial rationale to defend Jagger and Richards: ‘Because Mick Jagger has earned many, many thousands of much needed dollars for Britain, because he has become famous, he should not be treated differently.’ Grey portrayed British justice as vindictive, especially when the balance of trade and value of sterling was such a pressing concern to the Wilson government. This was a bold decision by *NME*, defending the Rolling Stones was counterintuitive to older notions of creating commercial success. For instance the Troggs’ manager put his band under curfew to prevent any association with drugs.⁴⁸ It was a widely held belief that associating with drugs was bad for business: it was feared that clubs would be shunned by a public that could not differentiate dens of impropriety and drug-free venues, while musicians were being shunned in the street and harassed by police and customs.⁴⁹ *NME* was nominally a pop paper that had previously paid little attention to politics or legal issues, but the Rolling Stones’ entanglement prompted a sustained discussion of the incongruity of the legal judgement and contemporary values. This destabilised the paper’s normal commercial narratives and placed it in a position to advocate values overwhelmingly associated with youth.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Andy Gray, ‘Jagger-Richard Sentences Cause Press Storm’, *NME*, 8 July 1967, p. 10.

⁴⁸ ‘Manager bans Troggs from London Clubs’, *Melody Maker*, 1 April 1967, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Dawn James, ‘Glamour? I’m the Target for All the Lies and Digs’, *NME*, 8 April 1967, p. 8.

What may have encouraged *NME*'s defence of Jagger and Richards was wider support in the media that was not just limited to Rees-Mogg at *The Times*. Grey made the unprecedented decision to include extracts from newspapers that substantiated his own editorial. First he quoted John Hayes of the *Evening News*: 'Would Mick Jagger be in jail if it he had not been the lead singer of the Rolling Stones? For the good name of this country, we should remember that all men are equal before the law.'⁵⁰ Grey also drew upon an extended extract in the *Sunday Express* from 'dour veteran Scottish writer' John Gordon. Grey embellished Gordon's conservative tendencies. Despite arguing that 'drug taking is a national menace', Gordon argued that Jagger's Benzedrine use was perfectly respectable,

Benzedrine is the normal 'pick-up' of innumerable people who work at high tension. It is prescribed by doctors...Yet Jagger goes to prison because he had four Benzedrine tablets. I repeat have we lost our sense of proportion? Because he was convicted of having these tablets, Jagger was conveyed handcuffed across the country on public exhibition. It wasn't a performance of which those responsible can be proud. It was, in fact, an outrage which the Home Secretary should make sure is never repeated.

Gordon used a rational argument about useful drugs prescribed by doctors across Britain rather than the narrative that argued individual autonomy to experiment with drugs. Contemporary drug discussions were more nuanced than legislation and prohibitionist tendencies could cope with. Some drugs were less of a 'national menace', especially those used on Fleet Street as deadlines approached and coffee ceased to be effective. *NME* articulated a tolerant, rational dialogue towards Richards and Jagger, but the paper's statements still required validation from more established social commentators. They certainly did not articulate the counter-culture's preferred 'consciousness expanding' drugs rationale.

The controversial verdict prompted a lively and mixed response from the public. Three letters were published to accompany Grey's article, one from Peter Howe from London, another Hill Smith from Ilford, and the third from Kane Berulzeu from Mosjøen in Norway, a small town only sixty-two miles from the Arctic Circle.⁵¹ Each took a similar view and were likely selected to augment Grey and his media counterparts' consensus. All argued that they disagreed with drugs and the sentences passed on Jagger and Richards. Hill commented on the generation gap,

⁵⁰ Andy Gray, 'Jagger-Richard Sentences Cause Press Storm', *NME*, 8 July 1967, p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

‘what the law has done is to make martyrs out of two public idols and widen the gap between teenagers and police’. Berulzeu argued, ‘I do not condone their behaviour but I do believe on the matter of drugs each individual should be allowed to make his own decision.’ To merit inclusion, it seems that letters which commented on drugs needed to underline their opposition to drug use in general. But each response referred to the generation gap and a recognisably ‘permissive’ narrative of tolerance towards individual behaviour. Their statements were in keeping with the private vice narrative that according to Frank Mort shaped the post-Wolfenden reforms.⁵² Nevertheless the Rolling Stones occupied a challenging position, they had opened their sometimes deviant lifestyles as part of their marketable appeal, but they had transgressed in private. It blurred the line between tolerable private deviance and imitable public transgression.

However the *NME* was an arena for multiple poles of opinion. In subsequent weeks other readers argued that pop stars’ influence on fans was so persuasive that Jagger and Richards deserved stiff sentences. John Wynne, from Ripon, Yorkshire, was disgusted by the Rolling Stones,

By being in any way connected with drugs they endanger the many fans over whom they have so much influence. Far from being too stiff, in my opinion the sentences were not stiff enough.⁵³

This was seconded by S. Crisp from Romford:

Obviously, it is impossible to expect them to keep their lives completely scandal free (this would be asking too much from a pop star) but they must realise that to many fans what they do or say is law.

It is the job of the judge in cases such as this to take all these things into consideration and pass sentences accordingly.⁵⁴

Crisp’s deferential is conspicuous in comparison compared to the Rolling Stones’ generational disjuncture narrative. These letters were probably written by individuals

⁵² Frank Mort, *Captial Affairs* (London, 2010), p. 192. This is expressed in relation to discussing sex and sexuality in Fisher and Szeleter, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 384-387.

⁵³ ‘From You to Us’, *NME*, 15 July 1967, p. 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

under twenty-five which suggests that youth were not entirely enamoured by the generation gap and retained some traditional sentiments. It would be naïve to expect that British youth was uniformly allured by personal autonomy, liberal, libertarian or leftist narratives.

A reader who believed in the appeals process' power to right an incorrect sentence managed to traverse both youth narratives and deference to traditional structures of authority. I.M Birkenfield of County Durham, a police officer and member of a 'young set' commented,

I congratulate you on not taking any stand over the Stones and agree with reader Bill Smith's remarks that the Stones are public idols. Maybe the sentences were a little excessive but the appeals come before Lord Chief Justice Parker, who will come to the correct decision.⁵⁵

It is intriguing how Birkenfield's position as a young person and a police officer required him to reach an agreeable compromise. He highlighted the specific how specific narratives on morality were pliable in relation to factors such as age, gender, occupation, class and location. Whilst narratives that prescribed views on social debates were potentially influential when it came to an individual's narration of their moral self the narratives were adaptable, open to reinterpretation and could be used partially. Birkenfield exemplifies the complex range of views within *NME*'s readership. He was also correct. Jagger and Richards' sentences were reduced substantially on appeal.

In response Keith Altham again interviewed the Rolling Stones. The band was photographed parodying Oscar Wilde's sodomy trial for a promotional video.⁵⁶ Altham gave them ample opportunity to comment on the case. In stark contrast to Jagger's rather polite television appearances to plead sympathy for his cause, the Rolling Stones were belligerent again. Jagger questioned the conventional adult knowledge of the time and the pervasive commercial focus,

I don't think that it is any good having devoted your life to the pursuit of money, finding that you have found no spiritual insight at all and all that you are left with is money.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Keith Altham 'Sensational Rolling Stones', *NME*, 12 August 1967, p. 14.

Young people are trying to size the world up and get into perspective all those misconceptions they were taught at school.

My advice is don't be an engineer because your father was an engineer, don't go to University because your father wants you to go to University, and don't accept things at face value. Think. And try to size the world up.

Emboldened by the Redlands furore Jagger continued to further espouse the generational clash narrative. He advocated – somewhat ironically in hindsight – spirituality over wealth and individuality before revering parental advice. Jagger's socially divisive and provocative view was again radically different to those who sought to entertain rather than communicate values and meaning. He alienated potential customers and remained forthright, troubling the law but retaining economic success. To this Altham concluded, tongue-in-cheek,

And so to sum up Michael Philip Jagger- you plead guilty to living your life in the manner you like, to saying what you like, thinking what you like and doing as you like.

You have in the past been convicted of indiscretion, bad language, insulting behaviour, fighting and refusing to conform.

You have been abused, criticised and mis-judged. You are found guilty of belonging to the most heinous sect of all- the human race. Your sentence is commuted to experience.

The Rolling Stones were not the only outspoken band of this period, but they did engender the most intense attention. The Redlands case exemplified how *NME* presented negotiated subjects that were potentially controversial but part of popular music's current discussions. Maurice Kinn and Jack Hutton were adamant that the audience should not be protected by censorship, but informed by discussion. This gave generational rupture and individual autonomy narratives scope to be articulated. When their colleagues, the Rolling Stones, were threatened the papers did not toady to authoritative opinion but carefully defended them. At the same time they allowed a debate to gestate. The music press provided a platform many viewpoints were able to circulate. This contributed to a wider conversation that affected drug discourse and legislation and thus youth's role in the polity. Stephen Abrams has argued that the furore surrounding the Rolling Stones drug arrest was significant in changing attitudes

towards drugs, specifically cannabis.⁵⁷ The 'Wootton Report' had attempted to soften the government's stance on cannabis.⁵⁸ Callaghan rejected the report and toughened legislation, but by broadly accepting drugs youth culture promoted less severe sentencing. Accordingly on 26 January 1970 Jagger was fined a relatively meagre £200 for cannabis possession. When the Misuse of Drugs Act was given royal ascent in 1973 Lord Chancellor Hailsham instructed magistrates, to 'Set aside your prejudice, if you have one, and reserve the sentence of imprisonment for suitably flagrant cases of large scale trafficking'.⁵⁹ The new rational narratives of personal autonomy influenced wider society and artistes such as the Rolling Stones were key agents whom represented this information for youth.

This chapter has shown how the music press and musicians constructed a distinction between artistes who were uncontroversial 'entertainers' and artistes who attached greater meaning to their music and represented youth by critiquing society's morals. This renegotiated the pop musician's role in British popular culture and shaped music press reporting for the following decades. Jack Hutton and Maurice Kinn steadfastly supported journalists covering topics that were previously seen as dangerous or inappropriate to introduce to 'impressionable' youth, such as drugs. These topics were previously seen as barriers to commercial success. However, the music press framed these topics as part of music culture, balanced them with the commercial language that had dominated the music press previously and justified transgression with moral rationalism. The Rolling Stones adopted the underground, counter-cultural and metropolitan credos earlier than most; they argued that there was a generational divide in values. The music press gave them space to narrate their views. Following the Redlands arrests Jagger and Richards allowed the music press to construct and complicate the Rolling Stones' rhetoric. This developed 'permissive' debates and showed that there was no clear-cut division between youth and adult responses in the music press, but instead a range of narratives and strategies in the moral conversation. The music press was tentatively justifying itself as a pole of social commentary: it was increasingly unafraid to represent debates on society's morals.

⁵⁷ Stephen Abrams, 'Soma, the Wootton Report and cannabis law reform in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s' in Sharon Rodner Sznitman, Borje Olsson, Robin Room (eds), *A Cannabis Reader: Global Issues and Local Experiences*, (Lisbon, 2008), pp. 72-73.

⁵⁸ Sub-committee on Hallucinogens of the United Kingdom Home Office Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence, 'The Wootton Report on Cannabis' (London, 1969).

⁵⁹ *The Times*, 16 October 1973, p. 2.

Chapter Two

Fortunate Sons?: The Music Press and the Vietnam War.

This chapter explains how the music press embroiled artistes in the Vietnam War debate. The conflict provided the music press with an emotive topic which stimulated discussion on the morality both of war and direct protest against it. Papers constructed musicians as social commentators as journalists gradually became more confident questioning individuals on pertinent contemporary issues. *Melody Maker* even created a current events interview column called ‘Think In’. These discussions developed the music press’s role as a forum for socially commentary, encompassing morality, protest and politics. First, the chapter compares the *Daily Mirror* and *Oz* magazine to the music press to read the music press’s Vietnam War conversation meta-textually. It then focuses in greater depth on the music press, explaining how music papers were able to accommodate the Vietnam War debate. Music papers represented pro-war and anti-war views even-handedly, but usually agreed with anti-violent protest narrative that dominated the *Daily Mirror* reporting rather than *Oz*’s radical anti-war arguments. Accordingly the chapter examines how music papers reported narratives that discussed the War whilst navigating popular appeal, American patriotism, commercial concerns, and notions concerning the role of the artiste. It is evident that the music press was able to represent narratives that were aimed at a ‘family’ audience and also the radical left. This indicates the music press’s increased confidence when discussing relevant contemporary issues that asked moral, ethical and political questions.

The relationship between musicians and the Vietnam War has not gone unnoticed. Mike Foley has noted that when the Rolling Stones played the Boston Garden in 1969 Jagger sported: ‘a tight long sleeve T-shirt emblazoned with a hand painted omega symbol, the mark of resistance’.¹ Jagger was showing solidarity with a city where draft resistance was a hot topic. Jagger’s anti-draft symbolism epitomised the prevailing British sensibility concerning military conscription. In 1959 the Conservative government had removed National Service and in 1963 the last recruit was demobbed; in Britain both universal and selective military conscription was unpopular from the late-1950s.² But like other British musicians Jagger was

¹ M.S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, 2003), p. 15.

² Roger Broad, *Conscription in Britain: The Militarisation of a Generation* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 56-76.

commenting on the Vietnam debate. In the U.S. there was a strong tradition of left-wing folk musicians whose anti-establishment rhetoric and peace advocacy had stemmed from the Beats and left wing groups.³ Altham commented that the Vietnam War was a pertinent issue that troubled musicians and journalists alike. Touring America spiked the British bands' interest:

There was a split between the U.S. and the U.K., but Vietnam was the thing to change that. It was the real issue to stir people up. We didn't have quite the same feeling in Britain. But, if you were eighteen and sent to Vietnam it concentrated the mind- politically and morally. We shared their abhorrence though. When English bands went to America – no one had had a hit until the Beatles (well maybe Lonnie Donegan) – the wash of bands after that had heard about Vietnam and were made of opinions.⁴

The British musicians' widened horizons elevated Vietnam into the music press. Indeed papers also asked U.S. musicians – who had travelled to Britain for decades – for their views. In 1967 and 1968 a number of international protests placed the War highly in the contemporary agenda: students in Britain, France and Germany all protested against the War. U.S. concerns could reach the music press, mingling with British perspectives and the European protest movement. The cultural exchange triggered varied interpretations for and against the War. Thomas correctly highlighted the divide between direct action protestors and newspaper reportage: the newspaper press 'over-reacted' to provocative protestors, thus demonising them as threats to British democracy.⁵ Mark Donnelly argued likewise that, to justify the police's coercive actions, protestors were labelled hooligans.⁶ The underground press used recognisable tropes too. Underground papers questioned the War's moral basis and legality, they promoted direct action. Underground papers constructed themselves as a threat to the established order. Though these narratives dominated the *Daily Mirror* and *Oz*, they were accompanied by a range of other viewpoints. Conversely the music press's

³ John Greenway, *American Folksongs of Protest* (New York, 1970). Serge Denisov, *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left* (Urbana, 1971). Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada*, p. 56-9. John Greenway, 'American Folksongs of Protest' in Simon J. Bronner (ed.) *Folk Nation: Folklore in the creation of American Tradition* (Wilmington, 2002), 177-188. James Dunlap, 'Through the Eyes of Tom Joad', *Popular Music and Society* 29:5 (2006), pp. 549-573. Even an established mainstream star, Johnny Cash, expressed his concerns on television: he referred to himself as 'a dove with claws'. M.S. Foley, 'Jonny Cash and the Vietnam Lyric', paper to Historians for the Study of the Twentieth Century United States (University of Reading, 2011).

⁴ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

⁵ Thomas, 'Protests Against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: the Relationship Between Protestors and the Press', p. 337.

⁶ Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture Politics and Society* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 150.

unusual position, open to debate, but not demonstratively ideological or cautious, gives us access to a unique forum for moral debates and individual concerns about the War in popular culture.

The music papers differed from the underground and newspaper press in that they did not report the Vietnam War as news. The Grosvenor Square protest was attended by musicians but was not reported. As a result discussions concerning the War often concerned the War or protest's moral or political basis rather than a specific issue, such as the use of napalm or casualty reports, or an event such as the My Lai massacre. Music culture had not previously defined itself as a means to mobilise political opinion. From the 1950s *Melody Maker* supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). CND had profound links to jazz and folk, similarly in the US artists such as Phil Ochs or Joan Baez would play for the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, but until the 1970s musicians played auxiliary roles.⁷ The intense discussion of Vietnam, however, guided future advocacy by narrating a general relationship between music and protest: musicians were increasingly required to comment on issues from a moral or political perspective. Whilst music papers, like the popular daily press, critiqued dogmatic, violent or superficial protesters, they questioned musicians and reported upon their beliefs regardless of their views. Music papers narrated and expanded musicians' social and political role following the example set by U.S. folk.

The two earliest musical responses to activism were the 1970 Amchitka Concert organised by activist Irving Stow, featuring Phil Ochs, Joni Mitchell and James Taylor, which paid for Greenpeace's first boat; then the 1971 Concert for Bangladesh, organised by George Harrison and Ravi Shankar. This musical protest set a precedent for future advocacy such as Rock Against Racism or Live Aid and further eroded the sensibility that musicians were just entertainers. The late-1960s, however, was a transitional phase as extra-musical discussions appeared in the music press. From 1972 *NME*'s news section 'Thrills' placed musical and extra-musical news side-by-side in a way reminiscent of the underground press.⁸ By the later-1970s non-musical matters were reported in features. For instance the music press advocated anti-racism and anti-fascism, reporting events such as the Battle of Lewisham in 1977.⁹ The inclusion of extra-musical content solidified the changes that occurred in

⁷ Jodi Burkett has written on the role CND had in changing British morality in the face of a lessening international role. Jodi Burkett, 'Redefining British Morality: 'Britishness and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament'', *Twentieth Century British History* 21:10 (2002).

⁸ From 1972 to the 1980s 'Thrills' was around pages 3-10 in the *NME*.

⁹ Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, 'Dedicated Followers of Fascism', *NME*, 20 August 1977, p. 11.

the late-1960s: the narrative of greater youth autonomy and voice compelled the music press to represent and negotiate issues of wider significance.

The *Daily Mirror* reported the Vietnam War in a more conventional sense, reporting events rather than opinions in interviews. It did so to a large market, the circulation often surpassing five million copies daily between 1967 and 1969. It was the most popular newspaper of the 1960s. Vietnam was mentioned in 69 issues in 1967, 112 in 1968 –boosted by protests and peace talks – and 47 issues in 1969.¹⁰ The *Daily Mirror* advertised *Melody Maker* and *NME*, and they had some shared readership. From the 1930s the newspaper had developed a language with populist political appeal for a broad target audience.¹¹ The paper articulated a vague anti-Vietnam War, or at least pro-peace narrative. For example in 1967 the paper complained, ‘the Vietnam War is damaging exports of British sports cars to America’.¹² The War was at best an economic inconvenience to British exports and the troubling balance of trade. At worst the *Daily Mirror* stoked apocalyptic fears of a nuclear War. Its front page featured the Australian Labour Leader’s concerns that the H-bomb would be dropped on Vietnam.¹³ Even more worrying for the 1960s public was the September 1967 headline, ‘Vietnam Threat to Soccer Stars’.¹⁴ Luckily this was a tabloid journalist’s trick: George Best, Jimmy Johnstone and Bobby Moore were not at risk. The article reported unsubstantiated rumours that British players who might sign for U.S. teams were potentially eligible for the US Army draft. There was no chance a British person with a work permit would have been drafted. These reports represent a residual negativity towards the Vietnam War in the popular left-wing press. It was based on concerns that the War would affect people in Britain and its weaponry could have international consequences.

Oz covered popular music like the music press but it had a severely different manner, controversial counter-cultural content and lysergic layout. In 1967 editors Richard Neville and Martin Sharp brought the magazine to Britain from Australia. It was published until 1973 with a circulation of (around) 50,000. *Oz* was famously

¹⁰ *Daily Mirror Digital Archive via UKPressonline*, <http://www.ukpressonline.co.uk.eresources.shef.ac.uk/ukpressonline/search> [accessed 10 May 2010], searched for all articles where the articles included ‘Vietnam’, between 1 January 1967 and 31 December 1969.

¹¹ Adrian Bingham, and Martin Conboy, ‘the Daily Mirror and the Creation of a Commercial Popular Language,’ *Journalism Studies* 10:5 (2010), p. 641.

¹² *Daily Mirror*, 5 April 1967, p. 5.

¹³ ‘US will use the H-Bomb Forecast’, *Daily Mirror*, 10 January 1967,

¹⁴ Tony Delano, “Vietnam” Threat to Soccer Stars’, *Daily Mirror*, 11 September 1967, p. 2.

prosecuted for obscenity after publishing a 'School Kids' issue in 1969.¹⁵ Almost every issue of *Oz* contained an advertisement for *Melody Maker*, but not *NME*. *Melody Maker's* older readership would have overlapped with the underground press. Barry Miles and Richard Meltzer's articles, particularly 'Rock Aesthetics', influenced later music press writing.¹⁶ Though the music press had not moved to literary, existential criticism such as this yet, 'Bob Dylan's greatest dive into the Rock 'n' Roll domain, Like a Rolling Stone, represents an attempt to free man by rescuing him *from* meaning, rather than free man *through* meaning.'¹⁷ The sophisticated music criticism indicates the general freedom granted to *Oz* writers to do as they pleased. There seemed to be little editorial control. Notwithstanding this creative freedom, *Oz's* content was ideologically against the Vietnam War. It typically lampooned the futility of the War and the U.S., for example describing a fictional machine at the Pentagon:

The machine will be programmed to take in soldiers at the same rate as the average death rate in the Vietnam War. Thus the machine will be in every way a substitute for the U.S. commitment in Vietnam and- best of all- her soldiers will not have to leave their homeland to die.¹⁸

Unlike the mainstream press, *Oz* opposition remained steadfast and diligent. In June 1969 for example Sebastian Jorgenson interviewed Jann Wenner, *Rolling Stone's* editor and an outspoken critic of the War.¹⁹

The Grosvenor Square protest demonstrates the how these publications reported the Vietnam War. In 1968 the *Daily Mirror's* mildly anti-war stance did not translate into support for protestor's methods or ideologies. The March 1968 front page reporting the Grosvenor Square protest exclaimed: '80 Police Injured in "Peace" Riot'.²⁰ The headline ridiculed the Orwellian connotations of war – or at least violence – for peace. The front page referred to the police's injuries as more numerous than those suffered by protestors (81 to 43), although the Pathé newsreel suggests that the

¹⁵ 50,000 is a widely quoted figure. However, I am unsure if anyone was counting (or was able to) and an actual record is unlikely to exist. This figure is usually attributed to Carol Sarler, 'A Moral Issue' *Sunday Times Magazine* 9 June 1991, p. 3.

¹⁶ Richard Meltzer, 'Rock Aesthetics', *Oz* 15, September 1968. The microfilm version of *Oz* is extremely disorganised and I was unable to find a better version. It was possible to discern which issue an article came from but it was impossible to find accurate page numbers so they have been omitted. I was able to source a few copies through private collections such as the one held by Soho's Vintage Magazine Shop.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ 'Killing Machine', *Oz* 2, March 1967.

¹⁹ Jann Wenner, *Oz* 20, April 1969.

²⁰ 'Hooligans on Rampage at Big Peace Rally', *Daily Mirror*, 18 March 1968, p. 1.

protestors were violently assaulted.²¹ The article used heated language and described protestors more damningly than its veiled criticisms of the War: it referred to the protestors as a ‘mob’ causing a ‘violent storm’. Later in the issue, Lee Howard’s editorial supported protest but castigated the actions of violent protestors in moral terms: ‘they degraded themselves. They degraded a legitimate protest against the Vietnam War.’²² The paternalistic tone is apparent: ‘Bird brained hooligans who transform peaceful demonstrations into howling mobs should be put behind bars to cool off.’ This language was repeated in October when the LSE was occupied.²³ The photograph on the front page was startling: the students were pictured in a vocal debate, they look like revolutionaries. Again protestors were described as ‘hooligans’. The paper’s liberal left tendencies were shown in the column below which asked whether Roy Jenkins, the instigator of ‘permissive’ legislation, was ‘Man of the Year?’ Yet this left-liberalism did not extend to accept anti-war protest. The paper portrayed violent protesters as dangerous and violent extremists, both morally wrong and ‘degraded’.

Oz’s most focused critique of the Vietnam War supported the Grosvenor Square protest. In the issue that preceded the protest *Oz* included ten pages of anti-war content.²⁴ Its revolutionary brio explains why popular daily papers were perturbed by protestors. The issue used political commentary, Amnesty International reports on torture, United Nations statutes that arguably made the War illegal, quotations from Rousseau and officers in the U.S. Army, transcripts of BBC documentaries and Liberation News Service updates. It was a sophisticated and righteous denunciation of the War. For example, it made ethical arguments explaining that the U.S. military had cynically replaced poison – that the Geneva Convention deemed ethically unsound – with napalm to reduce Vietnamese rice stock-piles. *Oz* accused the U.S. government of exploiting the lack of legislation surrounding napalm. This was contrasted with violent imagery. The cover showed a U.S. soldier executing a supposed Viet Cong soldier (figure 3.1) and inside there were satirical cartoons. Unlike the *Daily Mirror*, *Oz* constructed the Vietnam War as a categorical moral imperative to protest against the War and revolt against society. *Oz* argued for direct action: a prominent image in the Vietnam exposé pictured an angry young man with a speech bubble, he implored: ‘NIHILISTS! One more enemy if you want to be REVOLUTIONARIES!’ It

²¹ ‘London Riots – Anti-War Demonstration Ends in Chaos’ [newsreel], British Pathé, (21 March 1968) (<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/london-riots-anti-vietnam-demonstration-ends-in/query/Vanessa>, accessed 31 April 2010).

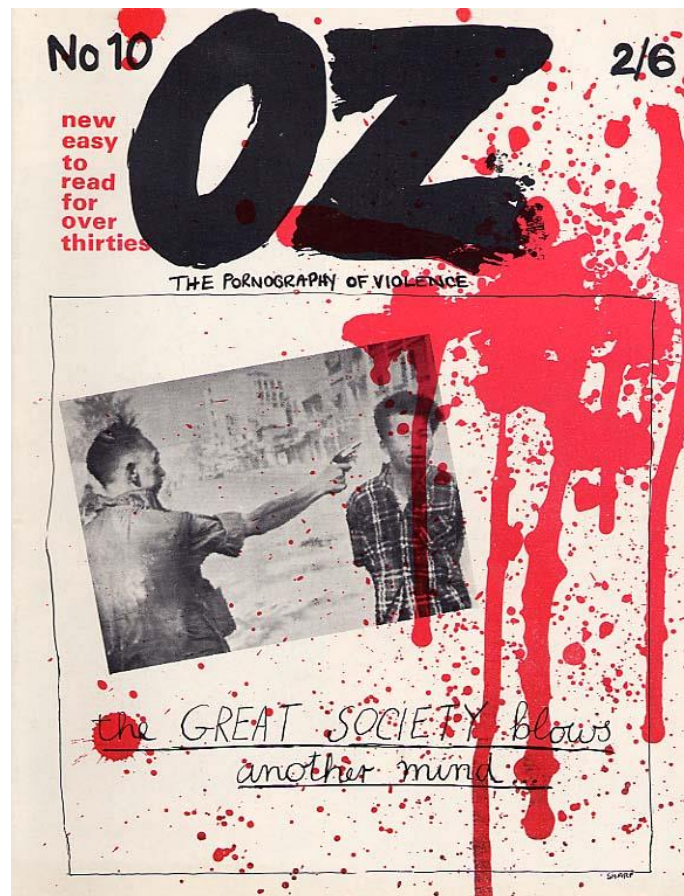
²² Lee Howard, *Daily Mirror*, 18 March 1968, p. 9.

²³ David Thompson and Howard Whittall, ‘Students Take Over LSE in Vietnam Protest’, *Daily Mirror*, 25 October 1968, p. 1.

²⁴ *Oz* 10, March 1968. Pull-out anti-war sections.

portrayed revolution as near and righteous. There were instructions for direct protest: the red paint campaign instructed people to keep the War in the public's imagination by daubing 'Vietnam' on walls. *Oz* did not openly advocate storming the American embassy or punching a police horse, but it communicated aggressive disdain.²⁵ *Oz* was much more explicit in its criticism of the Vietnam War than the *Daily Mirror*, it had much more scope to criticise U.S. actions. A popular tabloid could ill afford to alienate its readership by discussing the Geneva Convention and complex international law. *Oz* also provided protest with a platform to advocate direct action.

Figure 2.1: *Oz* 10, March 1968, p. 1.



Source: private collection.

Oz protested against the Vietnam War until it ended, but the *Daily Mirror*'s moral panic on Vietnam protest was short-lived. By 1969 the paper still responded

²⁵ Mick Farren recalled this in 'Days in the Life: The Battle of Grosvenor Square' [DVD film], directed by Nick Goodwin (Blast Films, 2000).

negatively to the War but British protests had lost their ferocity and Vietnam was a secondary issue. In late-1969 the fear of protesting youth appeared as a convoluted cliché. In June a front page featured, ‘Teenagers in Vietnam Suicide Pact’.²⁶ The narrative of youth acting irrationally or immorally against the war was abided. Nevertheless in this instance the *Daily Mirror* took a more sombre tone: two teenagers from New Jersey, disillusioned by the lack of ‘serious demonstration’, had killed themselves. Thus after the explosive headline they were afforded empathy as conscientious objectors when it was – to British popular newspapers at least – deemed that direct protest against Vietnam was spent.

The music press had a less defined position on the Vietnam War than the *Daily Mirror* and *Oz*. Unlike a newspaper, the music press was not required to report current events; music papers did not encourage activism or critique the war systematically like the underground press. The music press mentioned Vietnam less frequently. *Melody Maker* mentioned the war most: at least ten times in 1967, twenty in 1968, and eleven in 1969.²⁷ Though some had strong pro- or anti-war opinions, others discussed the war conversationally or as a shared reference point that denoted an entrenched or catastrophic situation. For example, Chris Welch’s review of Elvis’ ‘U.S. Male’ joked, ‘Elvis making good records? If miracles continue at this rate we can expect the end of the Vietnam war and a competent British government by Christmas.’²⁸

Conspicuously, neither *NME* nor *Melody Maker* mentioned the Grosvenor Square protest despite musicians such as the Social Deviants, a prominent underground band, and Mick Jagger (who had managed to get ‘backstage at a riot’) attending.²⁹ However, an image from the protests did adorn *NME*’s front page the following month.³⁰ It accompanied a full-page advertisement for the Small Faces’ single ‘Lazy Afternoon’. This omission was unlikely to have been an editorial decision: news reporting was not the papers’ remit. Keith Altham explained that when Vietnam was discussed, ‘it was a normal topic of conversation that had been in the news’.³¹ Editorial reticence to discuss the protest was outweighed by the business sense to not question a lucrative full front-page advertisement’s imagery. Nonetheless, the *Daily Mirror*’s narrative on violent protest was frequently articulated. In October 1968 for

²⁶ ‘Teenagers in Vietnam Suicide Pact’, *Daily Mirror*, 17 October 1969, p. 1.

²⁷ These are estimates based on the papers I have examined. I imagine the actual number is slightly higher.

²⁸ Chris Welch, *Melody Maker*, 11 May 1968, p. 7.

²⁹ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

³⁰ *NME*, 7 May 1968, p. 1.

³¹ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

instance, *Melody Maker* asked Dave Clarke to explain his views on Vietnam war protests: 'I'm very anti-war and if I thought I was going to stop Vietnam by sitting down on my backside outside Downing Street then I'd do it- but it won't stop it.'³² He ridiculed the protestors despite being against the war. Paradoxically Clarke, avowedly 'opposed to all forms of violence', joined the Royal Navy and served in the Falklands war. The Beatles' John Lennon, an anti-war protestor, had a slightly different perspective, but similarly condemned violent protest. He preferred the absurdist non-violent values of 'bagism',

The world is in a dangerous state because it is swinging to the Right. That's dangerous. It's getting too violent, too intellectual, too serious. Don't forget the peaceful protest – it's gone by the wind.'

'Okay, the "all you need is love" and all the acidheads- where have they gone? It's all gone back to "Let's have the revolution now" and "Let's smash the scene down." Nobody bothers with the non-violent thing, and that's what I'm for.'³³

Whilst Lennon advocated activism he balked at violence (his 1971 exchange with Tariq Ali in Trotskyist journal *The Red Mole* exemplified this).³⁴ It could be argued that, by castigating protesters, Lennon supported the notion that protest was not an entertainer's mission. But Lennon's view is subtly different: some 1960s musicians aligned to the 'underground' were suspicious of party lines, they sought personal autonomy. Country Joe McDonald voiced similar concerns despite being an 'evangelist' in opposition to the war, a Yippie and contemporary of the Fugs and Allen Ginsburg. McDonald was reported as saying,

What do these kids know? They've seen a few French Underground movies and they envision themselves wearing berets, wearing a row of bullets across their chest, carrying a banner crawling about in the rubble, throwing Molotov cocktails. But who needs Che Guevara?³⁵

Tony Wilson, the *Melody Maker* journalist rather than the founder of Factory Records, commented: 'Country Joe seems to have changed from political revolutionary to being

³² *NME*, 5 October 1968.

³³ *Melody Maker*, 19 April 1969.

³⁴ Robin Blackburn and Tariq Ali, "'Power to the People": John Lennon and Yoko Ono', *Red Mole* 2:8 (22 March 1971), p. 7-10.

³⁵ Tony Wilson, 'Country Joe and the Fish' *Melody Maker*, 23 November 1968, p. 11.

almost overwhelmed by the complex and seemingly insurmountable problems of the world'. Like John Lennon, Joe McDonald was ethically against both the war and the protest movement's revolutionary posturing. Their wariness towards violent direct action and the doctrinaire left's systematised knowledge is analogous to the Rolling Stones claiming personal autonomy from 'the Establishment'.

Unlike *Oz* or the *Daily Mirror*, the music press included narratives that supported the Vietnam War. Jimi Hendrix was in an uncomfortable position: he was an ex-soldier and a risqué pop icon. In 1967 *Melody Maker's* weekly 'Pop Think-In' asked Hendrix comment on Vietnam, he responded, 'After China takes over the whole world, then the whole world will know why America's trying so hard in Vietnam.'³⁶ This was a common trope in the U.S.³⁷ However in 1969 Hendrix dedicated a song to a deserters' organisation in Stockholm.³⁸ He had left the army by either feigning homosexuality – a contested claim in a highly mythologised life – or simply by being an 'unsuitable' soldier, so he may have supported both the war and their decision to desert.³⁹ Nevertheless the anti-communist narrative that Hendrix used was not isolated. After folksinger Karl Dallas encouraged protest against the war and publicised his 'Folksingers for Freedom' tour in *Melody Maker*, two aggravated readers' responses were published. A.J. Davis from Weybridge in Surrey argued:

Folksingers for Freedom in Vietnam should remember the atrocities carried out by the Viet Cong against Vietnam as well as the US Napalm raids. Also the brutal suppression of the way of life in Tibet by the peace loving Chinese. Which would Mr Dallas prefer- our way of life or a monolithic totalitarianism?⁴⁰

Fearing communism was a powerful rationale that supported the war. Hopefully Ho Chi Minh did not have a *Melody Maker* subscription as the view that China dominated the Vietnamese was commonplace. Concerns regarding totalitarianism and the benefits of democracy were commonplace. Invoking totalitarian foreboding assuaged concerns about the war's more uncomfortable realities.

³⁶ 'Think In', *Melody Maker*, 28 January 1967, p. 7.

³⁷ M.S. Foley *Dear Dr. Spock* (New York, 2005) pp. 13-34.

³⁸ 'Astro-Man' [CD recording], Jimi Hendrix (Remastered by Alchemy Records, 2003).

³⁹ Steven Roby and Brad Schreiber, *Becoming Jimi Hendrix* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 24-25. Roby and Schreiber note there is no mention of the word 'homosexual' on Hendrix's army record, but the term 'unsuitable' may have been euphemistic.

⁴⁰ 'Mailbag', *Melody Maker*, 25 February 1967, p. 24.

Some musicians supported the war by entertaining troops. Artists could support war without using political language or aggressive arguments against the Vietnamese and international communism. U.S. artists could seem patriotic and humanise the war. Dolly Parton supported U.S. troops unabashedly, *NME* reported her as saying,

She'd just done a photo session and that this was the dress she always wore on her tours to Vietnam.

‘I’m a flag waver,’ she admitted. ‘I like everything in red, white and blue. I get tired of this anti-American stuff. I decided anyone who walks in here is going to know where I stand.’⁴¹

Despite her patriotism and service, Parton eschewed negativity or political scaremongering. She did not use the loaded term ‘pro-war’, there was no clues whether she morally agreed with armed conflict. She negotiated her role as entertainer and American skilfully. But supporting the troops did not correspond with accepting U.S. actions. The Beach Boys unambiguously opposed the war. Carl Wilson narrowly avoided conscription by conscientiously objecting. Mike Love explained, ‘Carl is a conscientious objector on religious grounds...but, unlike others, he is being made an example of by the press and by the American authorities.’⁴² The Rolling Stone’s response to Redlands was a similar trope. Still The Beach Boys were ‘thinking’ of a trip to Vietnam in the capacity of entertainers. This balanced their moral convictions with their mass popularity and deflected Carl Wilson’s negative press. But there was a distinction between supporting the conscripted troops and the actions of the US. Their road manager Dick Duryea explained that practical concerns stymied the trip, ‘the only difficulty is that the authorities insist you spend at least 17 days there. We would be flown round the bases by helicopter.’⁴³ The Beach Boys’ busy schedule prevented a tour, but the suggestion was good publicity. The publicity that Vietnam could command was not lost on The Troggs, who were craving attention as their career floundered.⁴⁴ Their moral views on the war, if they had any, were negated by the will to be a successful group. Keith Altham found this idea of The Troggs performing in Vietnam particularly hilarious, which may underline that some musicians were hardly professorial in their knowledge of world events,

⁴¹ Laurie Henshaw, *NME*, 1 June 1968, p. 6.

⁴² Keith Altham, ‘Two Things Make Beach Boys Sad’, *NME*, 27 May 1967, p. 14.

⁴³ *NME*, 30 November 1968, p. 6.

⁴⁴ ‘Troggs want to go to Vietnam’, *NME*, 16 March 1968, p. 6.

I can remember the Troggs wanting to go, but only in the capacity of entertainers. Priceless! If only Reg had gone in his capacity as an expert on corn circles he would have ended the war!⁴⁵

Not all artistes were pro-war and anti-protest, this became more obvious in 1968. In *Melody Maker* the mostly anti-war writers questioned artists on current events in their new 'Think In'. More social commentary appeared in *NME* too. Altham even asked Michael D'Abo, 'what is your opinion on the situation in Biafra and Vietnam?'⁴⁶ In retrospect Altham is perplexed why he asked a sheltered public schoolboy this sort of question.⁴⁷ Increasing indignation towards the Vietnam War was palpable even if it was sometimes articulated using the *Daily Mirror's* self-interested rather than moral trope. Even 'Teenyboppers' became agitated when it seemed that the War threatened the Monkees. The Monkees were contrived as a group to rival the Beatles, 'promoted with all the expertise of Madison Avenue' and they had gained a large following of mainly young girls.⁴⁸ Throughout the war British musicians were unnecessarily wary that U.S. work permits could make them eligible for the military draft. For example, in 1968 Miles Davis' band offered twenty-one year old jazz bass player Dave Holland a place in his band. Eventually Holland joined Davis. Holland, however, was reticent to emigrate and chance conscription,

The big problem about taking up the opportunity is that I could be drafted to Vietnam if I went to America with a work permit. I'm very annoyed and aggravated by the situation. I feel that this state of affairs whereby one trying to create as an art form can be so restricted is the product of a very sick world.⁴⁹

Likewise when *NME* photographed the Monkees' Davy Jones – a long term British exile in the U.S. – in army uniform panic ensued. Jones was being called for an Army medical.⁵⁰ The Monkees fans' anguish was captured in the *NME* 'mailbag', they turned on the war and the U.S. military as this example demonstrates:

⁴⁵ Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

⁴⁶ Keith Altham, 'Penny Farthing Records', *NME*, 15 November 1969, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Keith Altham, personal interview.

⁴⁸ Bod Dawbawn, 'The Monkees' *Melody Maker*, 1 June 1968, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Melody Maker*, 4 May 1968, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Altham regards this incident as being a publicity stunt. Keith Altham, personal interview (2010)

Our picture of Davy Jones in uniform (NME March 25) gave Monkees fans yet another reason to give their views:

Marge and Sue (Redcar): The picture to “amaze” Davy Jones was not taken as a joke by Monkee fans. We girls with Monkee madness will not allow our English born, heart-throb to have his career ruined by the war-mad Americans.⁵¹

Marge and Sue could not be much older than eighteen to fit the Monkees’ fan demographic and Redcar was (and still is) far from cosmopolitan. Their fierce anti-American rhetoric suggests that trenchant radical protest narratives were accessible across Britain from source such as the music press. Jones was not conscripted: a British citizen would not have been drafted.⁵² Thus Jones was free to argue stringent anti-communist narratives that questioned why communists were allowed to live without restrictions in Britain.⁵³

Marge and Sue’s anti-war arguments rehearsed the concerns that British people would be affected by the war, but others suggested unambiguously moral anti-war arguments. In May 1968 for example, *Melody Maker* interviewed Andy Williams, a gold-selling pop singer and Bobby Kennedy campaigner.⁵⁴ Williams canvassed for Kennedy (shortly before Kennedy’s assassination), ‘It’s important to me because I realise that, for the first time in American history, we are not well liked in Europe, I see signs saying, “Yanks go home.”’ Laurie Henshaw sheepishly, for someone who had interviewed many international stars, asked, ‘Because of the unpopularity of the Vietnam war? We ventured.’ Henshaw’s awkwardness suggests discussing Vietnam with American artistes was seen as discourteous. He carefully mentioned the war’s ‘unpopularity’ rather than U.S. unpopularity. But Henshaw’s reticence was unfounded, Williams unguardedly criticised the US and the war,

It’s an immoral war. Something that goes against what America stands for.

They’re becoming so obsessed with the fear of Communism. There was a time when they wouldn’t allow school students to read about Marxism.

⁵¹ ‘From You to Us’, *NME*, 1 April 1967, p. 9.

⁵² He was too short as well.

⁵³ ‘News’, *Melody Maker*, 21 January 1967, p. 6. His bandmate Micky Dolenz became a prominent anti-war protester.

⁵⁴ Laurie Henshaw, ‘Andy Williams’, *Melody Maker*, 25 May 1968, p. 17.

It's different now. But that's what democracy is all about- to read and be able to make up your own mind. If it's a free choice between Communism and Democracy, Democracy will win. But everyone was running around scared.

Williams denounced the war morally and critiqued anti-communist hysteria's political blindness. Few established mainstream performers were so candid.

The underground movement was less established than Williams. Without respectability and mainstream political affiliations they could use the counter-cultural press's aggressive anti-war language and narratives. The music press, at first, struggled to understand the 'underground'. *Melody Maker* asked feminist academic and underground press writer Germaine Greer to clarify. Greer argued that defining the underground was difficult, but proposed an underground pop group's central characteristics: they needed 'guts', they had to 'radicalise their audiences', and either 'opt out or use the Establishment'.⁵⁵ Greer made the common distinction that the U.S. underground was more intense: 'The underground in New York is much stronger because there are stronger pressures to react against.' The most persuasive anti-Vietnam voices were often American. For example folk singer Peter Sarstedt gave a rationale for protest, '[the Vietnam War] has got to stop somewhere or we will be blown to hell.'⁵⁶ Being 'blown to hell' is more tailored and urgent to a young American than a Briton. Whilst the Cold War unsettled the British they were not involved in a direct war, the threat of nuclear war was less acute. Fellow U.S. folksinger Phil Ochs believed that 'the establishment' controlled the mass media therefore 'as a counter to the mass media...the very act of making a record enables you to make a revolutionary statement.'⁵⁷ U.S. musicians were espousing similar narratives to *Oz*. However interviewees did not engineer acts of protest, they explained their personal views. The music press would not promote protests and advocacy for a few years, but protest was entering the agenda.

The underground's radicalism was entwined with anti-Vietnam sentiment. Yet some British counter-cultural types recognised the media's panic about violent protest. This underground was split, broadly speaking, between left-wing radicalism and libertarianism. For example, underground-oriented DJ John Peel criticised the war, but agreed with John Lennon's peaceful protest rather than the left's didactic pressure,

⁵⁵ Tony Wilson, 'Germaine Greer: Understanding the Underground', *Melody Maker*, 12 July 1969, p. 16.

⁵⁶ 'Think In', *Melody Maker*, 29 March 1969, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Tony Wilson, 'Fear not for the death of Phil Ochs', *Melody Maker*, 12 July 1969, p. 17.

I hope that after the Vietnam War there will be a Nuremburg trial. Several months were spent discussing the shape of a peace conference table at Paris by the people who control our destinies. I'd sooner be directed by John Lennon.⁵⁸

Peel's underground ethic encompassed anti-war sentiments, but he mocked ironically rather than supported revolution. Some U.S. underground figures also clashed with the protestors. The LSE asked Frank Zappa to speak at their Student's Union. He almost started a riot by facetiously answering the student's 'asshole questions'.⁵⁹ Knowing Zappa's contrarian reputation, *Melody Maker's* Chris Welch 'asked him about the LSE lecture, and whether he had gone there with the intention of upsetting them?' Zappa adamantly denied this and denounced the students,

It's difficult to sit in front of people who don't like a thing you say. It makes you a little bit nervous. It's disturbing to see people in colleges so impressed by such a lot of dogma.

If you think I was too patronising in my answers to questions I would say the questions were idiotic.

I think it's horrible that people can talk about a revolution in carnival terms. They want to be heroes and go out and WIN. Infiltration – that sounds like work. That's the hard revolution.

I told them that I thought street violence is now just last year's flower power. They wanted to know about Berkeley so they can imitate it. But the students made me feel as if I was some old creep talking.

I just think a violent revolution doesn't change a thing. Don't forget that the Establishment are very well armed.⁶⁰

Individuals in the rock underground who categorically opposed the Vietnam War still clashed with the protest underground. Perhaps surprisingly, Zappa, like Lennon, was closer to the *Daily Mirror's* position. Even so when he spoke about 'infiltration' he used a term that was associated with Trotskyism, but it is more likely that he meant 'infiltration' by subverting mainstream culture; Zappa admired Dadaist subversion. Zappa's politics exemplify the music press's ability to narrate the politics and morality of war and protest in a sophisticated way which restated and reinterpreted established commentators', such as *Oz* and the *Daily Mirror's*, key narratives.

⁵⁸ Richard Williams, 'It's a shame that nobody listens', *Melody Maker*, 25 October 1969, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Chris Welch, 'The Truth is, They're Not as Ugly as their Pictures' *Melody Maker*, 7 June 1969, p. 11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

This chapter illustrates how the music press exercised the late-1960's greater discursive freedoms and further reconstructed the musician's role to stoke a multivocal discussion on the Vietnam War and violent protest. Individual statements often evaded neat categorisation but mostly developed prominent tropes that spanned the *Daily Mirror* or *Oz*'s content. The chapter establishes how artistes negotiated anti-war and anti-violent protest or pro-troops views to balance their moral and ethical opinions without eliciting undue public scorn. Indeed underground counter-cultural narratives, which were much less concerned about offending consumers, were also rehearsed and renegotiated in the music press. The music press offered a multitude of ways to narrate or renegotiate support or opposition to the war. This indicates the music press's increasing sophistication regarding wider non-musical issues and how key narratives were constituted meta-textually. To some extent the music press discourse on Vietnam further constructed the 'generation gap' and anti-establishment antipathy, but complicated the notion that these sentiments stimulated violent conflict. These debates underline youth's claims to autonomy and popular culture's right to intercede on topical matters. Thus the music press tentatively established its role – one that would be reinforced in the 1970s – as an arena for popular culture figures and youth to comment on the morality and politics.

Chapter Four

Ziggy Stardust: Negotiating transgressive Male Sexuality

This chapter argues that when David Bowie came out in *Melody Maker* in 1972 he caused a debate on homosexuality that was previously absent in the music press despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967. The discussion of Bowie's coming out epitomised the frictions that surfaced when the music press represented non-heterosexual sexuality. Bowie blurred gender distinctions and constructed himself as 'bisexual' and 'camp'. Heterosexual journalists struggled to narrate Bowie's claim: they tried to mitigate the potential commercial cost of coming out with a 'tolerance' narrative and used homophobic tropes. Nevertheless they occasionally described homosexuals sensitively and publicised how Bowie's tour brought a spectacular and theatrical queer space to gay men nationwide. Indeed non-heterosexual artistes argued that Bowie's coming out, and the associated publicity given to queer themes and symbolism, had enduring implications: Elton John and others invoked Bowie when coming out, while Tom Robinson and Boy George described him as a comforting example in their youth. The chapter examines the narratives and meanings ascribed to Bowie by discussing the historical context and key tropes that constructed homosexuality in public. It compares queer constructs and issues in *Gay News* and *Gay Liberation's* public voice, with the music press to exemplify the music press and music industry's simplistic and prudish attitude towards open homosexuality. Then the chapter explores Bowie's coming out in detail, demonstrating how Bowie and Mike Watts negotiated Bowie's sexuality using common narratives. Next it analyses strategies used to report on Bowie after he came out. Finally the chapter examines how Bowie's lasting significance was explained in music press and popular culture.

David Bowie proclaimed that he was 'bisexual' in an interview with journalist Michael 'Mick' Watts headlined 'Oh You Pretty Thing'.¹ The newspaper press did not

¹ Michael Watts, 'Oh You Pretty Thing', *Melody Maker*, 22 January 1972, p. 19. Bowie's *actual* sexuality is contested, he claimed to be bisexual, he also claimed to be gay, yet there have often been suspicions that he was lying and it was part of the construction of a theatrical identity, 'Ziggy Stardust'. Of course Bowie was married and had a young son; he has subsequently been in exclusively heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless this thesis does not attempt to find out whether Bowie was gay, instead it focuses upon the construction of Bowie's gay self in the music press, the content of narratives pertaining to this and, to some extents, the reception of these narratives. Bowie's live show's performance of homosexuality is analysed in Phillip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor, 2006), pp. 106-149. Auslander's contextualisation of Bowie from Lindsay Kemp's to Andy Warhol's Influences and Bowie's relationship with the music industry is extremely insightful. He argues

report the story. This was unusual: Adrian Bingham argues that celebrity private lives had become an acceptable subject for the popular press by the 1970s.² However, as the Rolling Stones proved, aligning oneself with narratives that contradicted ‘traditional’ morality could gain the music press’s attention and promote records, concerts and various other ephemera. The music press narrated Bowie’s coming-out using a range of narratives with a longer historical grounding. Bowie constructed himself as camp, stressing his ‘gender-bending, wit and aestheticism’.³ He narrated his transgression from sexual morality and masculinity. Bowie performed a role in the way Judith Butler would have it: he enacted a ritual of gender and sexuality that clashed with conventional mores.⁴ Aided by the music press’s role, representing pertinent debates to a mass audience, Bowie’s coming-out contributed to gay selfhood’s popular construction and communicated gay subcultures outside metropolitan circles. Previously the music press comprehensively ignored homosexuality. Homosexuality was not seen as ‘natural’ or moral even if this was being contested in works such as Wainwright Churchill’s 1967 book *Homosexual Behaviour among Males*.⁵ The music and popular press narrated homophobia or to use Churchill’s term ‘homoerotophobia’. Due to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967 (homosexuality was decriminalised in Scotland in 1981 and Northern Ireland in 1982) and the music press’s widened conversation Bowie was able discuss his behaviour and identity in the public sphere rather than have it shrouded by innuendo, euphemism and secrecy even if critics, notably in *Gay News*, believed Bowie and the music press’s construction of homosexuality was hackneyed. Bowie created a template for others to come-out and helped ensure homosexuality a public platform. Bowie’s coming-out occurred in the same year as the first Gay Pride parade. Both constructed homosexuality in public, yet through the music press Bowie gained much more public

that Bowie challenged ‘the ideology of authenticity’. Nevertheless he does not take into account how the music press represented Bowie’s symbolism and mediated it to music fans. He also fails to account for Bowie’s coming-out in the music press and the discursive construction of the queer subject.

² Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 250-262.

³ Camp has been seen as a way for gay men to navigate social interaction. Camp allows homosexuals to conceal and reveal themselves, because as Marty Roth argues, ‘homosexuality has lacked a sanctioned discourse of its own’. Marty Roth, ‘Homosexual Expression and Homosexual Censorship: The Situation of the Text’ in David Bergman (ed.), *Camp grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst, 1993), p. 268. However as Mark Booth argued ‘troglydites sometimes confuse [male] sexuality with camp’. M. Booth, *Camp*, (London, 1983), pp. 156-7. Pamela Robertson argues that Oscar Wilde’s trial triggered an epistemic shift that resulted in camp becoming the dominant public impression of the ‘homosexual-as-type’. The music press often exhibited similar prejudices which conceived of camp as heterosexual cliché which undermined homosexuals differences. Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (London, 1996), p. 6.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London, 1990), pp. xiv-xv.

⁵ Wainwright Churchill, *Homosexual Behaviour Between Males* (London, 1967).

attention. Neither the march nor Bowie were featured prominently in any mainstream newspaper, but the music press reported Bowie's coming-out. *Gay Liberation*, *Gay Pride* and Bowie's aims and politics were very different to the more modest, private aims the late-1950s and 1960s law reform who viewed radical gay groups as undermining their efforts.

Bowie became the first pop musician to take advantage of *de jure* tolerance publically, even if social sensibilities had remained static. Bowie exemplified another possible sexual orientation and became fodder for categorising homosexuals' norms and self-identity, as Chris Waters argued that Peter Wildeblood's 1955 book *Against the Law* did before decriminalisation.⁶ Like Wildeblood, Bowie rewrote his life for public consumption and constructed a 'homosexual persona'.⁷ Thus Bowie's statements empowered a public space for homosexuals whilst constraining them by reinforcing dominant tropes that defined their selves and behaviour. Bowie's coming-out relied on arguing tolerance rather than a morally rational egalitarian acceptance of homosexuality.⁸ Bowie was tolerated, or at least indulged, in the music press and was commercially successful, but this is arguably due to his narrative of recognisable, 'pre-liberation' camp. Lucy Robinson notes that *Gay News* argued that Bowie was the reason that the Gay Liberation Front failed.⁹ There was a tension between Bowie's conciliatory, populist queer construct, and openly gay activists that sought acceptance, equality and radical social transformation.¹⁰ When homosexuals appeared in the *Daily Mirror* as part of an examination of the 'Permissive Society' – the paper had mocked Bowie for wearing a dress but never mentioned his sexuality – the only named homosexuals were Gay Liberation Front activists.¹¹

In *Gay News* Bowie was a divisive figure. To some he was a hero: he was described as 'the best rock musician in Britain now' who gave 'gay rock a potent spokesman'.¹² However his hackneyed queer identity grated with the more multifarious experiences articulated, often in the letters page, and the way he was

⁶ Chris Waters, 'Disorders of the Mind, Disorders of the Body Social: Peter Wildeblood and the Making of the Modern Homosexual', in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945-1964* (London, 1999), p. 139.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸ T.W. Jones, 'The Stained Glass Closet: Celibacy and Homosexuality in the Church of England', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20:1 (2011), pp. 132-152.

⁹ Lisa Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain* (Manchester, 2007), p. 104.

¹⁰ It has been argued that sexually explicit or 'gender-bending' behaviour opens gay men up to admonition from right-wing or prudish journalists: this is indeed the case with Bowie in the music press whose behaviour was often lampooned. Frederick Roden, 'Becoming Butlerian: On the Discursive Limits (and Potentials) of *Gender Trouble*', *Butler Matters: Judith Butler's Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies*, Margaret Soenser Breen and Warren J. Blumenfeld (eds.) (Burlington, 2005), p. 33.

¹¹ Don Short, *Daily Mirror*, 24 April 1973, p. 7.

¹² Peter Holmes, 'Gay Rock', *Gay News*, July 1972, p. 13.

tolerated jarred with the most coming out narratives. Music press journalists were also a target for ire; they were seen as unenlightened. *Melody Maker's* portrayal of gay selfhood lacks complexity compared to *Gay News*.¹³ *Gay News* contributed to the conversation on enacting a queer life in an individualistic and intricate way. It scornfully denied Bowie's construction of a single accepted urban 'liberated' homosexuality. For instance an anonymous letter by 'the rural homosexual' argued that his experience was 'the opposite extreme to the "liberated" city gay' 'running around London' with 'liberated friends'.¹⁴ Indeed *Gay News* reported stories that undermined the 'liberated city gay's' uncomplicated existence. It reported Lindsay Kemp, Bowie's friend and former mime teacher, being severely beaten in Central London following a performance, for instance.¹⁵

The more radically inclined went further, disparaging the type of 'camp' Bowie represented. 'Normal Gay' Philip argued:

I am writing this note to gay brothers and sisters everywhere, with small hope of change.

I am simply fucking fed up with being classed as a screaming queen. It is simply to say the queens who prance about, drag up and fucking let down the gay side of life when they go to those stupid GLF marches should be shot.

...

Please don't get me wrong I'm gay and jolly well proud of it.¹⁶

Camp queens had a place in gay culture. However few accepted their construction of selfhood as dominant. *Gay News* frequently stressed the wider heterosexual public's intolerance: jobs were lost, family relationships were strained. *Gay News* interviewed violent 'gay bashers' and detailed the physical intimidation that was meted out on gay men. It is understandable that the subtle and personal narratives that *Gay News* published and the GLF's radicalism could jar with Bowie's unproblematic coming-out and theatrical camp. Paul Pollard made the first mention of Bowie in a review of Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album:

¹³ For instance issue ten had letters titled 'Forces to be Free', 'Truer Homosexuality', 'Scandalous Behaviour' and 'Bigoted Letters', each rigorously examined queer identity. *Gay News* 10, October 1972, pp. 6-12.

¹⁴ 'The Rural Homosexual'. *Gay News* 6, August 1972, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 'First Class Male', *Gay News* 8, June/July 1972, p. 2.

After the blurb about a “new superstar” and bringing back glamour into “rock-and-roll” I was prepared for the worst. Not so. This album manages to be entertaining and fairly intelligent at the same time.¹⁷

It made no mention of homosexuality. It was rather acerbic when compared to the other reviews of ‘Ziggy Stardust’. Pollard was not entirely convinced.

Gay News did not entirely scorn Bowie. He was artiste of the year in 1972 and his performances were lauded. Nonetheless music journalists were criticised for how they described Bowie and his sexuality. A 1972 *Gay News* article argued,

Bowie’s theatrical, uninhibited professionalism when giving a ‘live’ performance has broken through many social barriers and taboos. And everywhere audiences have reacted enthusiastically to his assaults on accepted conventions and narrow minded morality. Mind you he has brought out the worst forms of imbedded puritanism from many rock journalists. But make no mistake if Bowie is *limp-wristed* then Mohammed Ali is *queen of the fairies*.¹⁸

In 1973 *Melody Maker*’s gay friendly credentials were further undermined when IPC refused to print a *Gay News* advertisement.¹⁹ It was IPC who controlled advertising rather than *Melody Maker*’s staff. But *Melody Maker* disappointed *Gay News* who saw *Melody Maker* as similar in writing style and layout. *Gay News* tried to place a small, understated advertisement. *Melody Maker* was supposed to have a large gay readership. Previously *Melody Maker* had printed classified adverts for men seeking men, the pithiest being, ‘Attractive Guy, 18, seeks similar’.²⁰ But advertising manager John A. Jones responded that ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ were unacceptable terms: it seems that only ambiguously worded private classifieds were tolerable.²¹ Other press titles had also denied *Gay News* advertising space which shows the mainstream press’s institutional unease with homosexuality.

The music industry was uneasy with open homosexuality. In an oral history interview *Melody Maker*’s former assistant editor Chris Charlesworth claimed that musicians did not come-out before Bowie because of music industry pressure on

¹⁷ David Pollard, ‘Reviews’, *Gay News* 2, April 1972.

¹⁸ ‘David Bowie; Artist of the Year’, *Gay News* 13, December 1973, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Gay News* 8, August 1973, p. 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

artists to conceal their sexuality.²² It was assumed that alienating a musician from their market's prevailing sexual orientation would lead to lower sales. Caroline Coon said, in another oral history interview, that there were parallels with how The Beatles had concealed their girlfriends to seem sexually available to teenage girls (who disproportionately bought pop records).²³ For instance Freddie Mercury was reticent when Coon asked about sexuality in Queen's songs. Artistes who transgressed or approached taboo themes in songs lost the record industry's trust or were made to defer to norms in public. Compliance with the music industry could deliver financial rewards. Advertising and other less savoury business practises could boost the careers of artistes or groups.²⁴ Homosexuality was apparently less acceptable than the Rolling Stones' drug arrest or U.S. folk's fervent anti-war sentiments. In spite of the press and music industry's prejudices, the music press reported homosexuality. Around twenty five per cent of teenagers read the *Melody Maker* at this point which was a substantial section of the record buying public.²⁵

When Bowie came-out he already had metropolitan affiliations and seemed sophisticated. He narrated his difference to provincial Britain, who had rejected his first attempt at stardom in the late-1960s,

He was appearing at Meccas in front of teenage kids who wanted whatever the current biggest artist was, and were unaware that David Bowie was of more refined inclinations.

“At one point I had cigarettes thrown at me”.²⁶

Bowie constructed himself as part of a sophisticated central London milieu despite his working-class to lower-middle-class upbringing. Bowie was a mime artist with Lindsay Kemp's troop, he knew actors, underground writers, filmmakers, musicians and

²² Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

²³ At the end of the 1950s teenagers in general consumed 25 per cent of all records. Mark Abrams, *the Teenage Consumer* (London, 1959), pp. 10-11. By the end of the 1960s records accounted for 0.2 of all UK spending, but singles sales slumped from 1967 to 1972 as the Beatles became more concerned with album releases. There is 'an absence of any sustained empirical work' on record consumers, but evidence such as concert videos suggest a great proportion were teenagers and female. Dave Harker, 'Still Crazy After all these Years: What was Popular Music in the 1960s?' in Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed (eds), *Cultural Revolution*, (London, 1992), p. 186-191.

²⁴ 'Hype' entered the dictionary in 1978 meaning, 'the practise of buying a record into the charts, or generally using any illegal or unethical method to get it there.' Bob Woffindon, *NME*, 4 March 1978, p. 2.

²⁵ *National Readership Survey* (London, January-June 1973), p. 12.

²⁶ Michael Watts, 'Rock Giants from A-Z, Bowie; the Darling who put Glam into Rock', *Melody Maker*, 19 August 1972, p. 37.

artists. He was part central London's cultural elite with ties to the culture industry and British society's upper echelons.

By 1972 Bowie and his band were preparing to release a science-fiction concept album, 'Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars'. He scheduled interviews and ensured his pre-album release concerts received close attention. Chris Welch interviewed him first, but purposely omitted Bowie's discussion of bisexuality,

Before Mick Watts' story, I had interviewed Bowie when he was wearing the dress for 'The Man Who Sold The World'. I think David was trying to get across to me that I should be writing about his new look and attitude – he was sort of coming out – but I wasn't taking the bait, so rather foolishly I tried to cover up in the piece by pretending he wasn't camp and gay.²⁷

Bowie picked the West End theatre district, a metropolitan enclave not far from Soho and *Melody Maker's* offices, for the interview. Welch, a central London and music press veteran, was not perturbed by Bowie's homosexuality but adhered to the music press's more conservative values.

Therefore Bowie's 'coming out' story fell to Mick Watts, a younger and more precocious writer. Editor Ray Coleman had recruited Watts because of his local newspaper experience. Colleague Richard Williams commented that Watts was a more mature writer who stood out from his co-workers.²⁸ Watts reported Bowie's sexuality in detail,

Even though he wasn't wearing silken gowns right out of Liberty's, and his long blond hair no longer fell wavy past his shoulders David Bowie was looking yummy. He'd slipped into an elegant - patterned type of combat suit, very tight around the legs, with the shirt unbuttoned to reveal a full expanse of white torso ... I wish you could have been there to varda him; he was so super.

David uses words like "varda" and "super" quite a lot. He's gay, he says. Mmmmmmm. A few months back, when he played Hampstead's Country Club, a small greasy club in north London which has seen all sorts of exciting occasions, about half the gay population of the city turned up to see him in his massive floppy velvet hat, which he twirled around at the end of each number ... As it happens, David doesn't have much time for Gay Liberation, however. That's a particular movement he doesn't want to lead. He despises all these tribal qualifications ... The paradox are that he still has what he

²⁷ Paul Gorman, *In Their Own Write: Adventures in the Music Press* (London, 2001), p. 156.

²⁸ Richard Williams, personal interview (2011).

describes as "a good relationship" with his wife. And his baby son, Zowie. He supposes he's what people call bisexual.²⁹

Watts recounted that Bowie was 'gay' and conspired to construct a narrative of gay selfhood: Bowie was fashionable, shopping at Soho department store Liberty; he had effeminate dress and hair; Watts played on polari – theatre or gay slang. Watts framed Bowie as a metropolitan sophisticate and alluded to his personal intimate knowledge as a man-about-town music writer.

Nevertheless Watts qualified Bowie's queerness. He droned 'mmmmmmmm' sarcastically to Bowie's coming-out and stated Bowie's opposition to 'Gay Liberation'. By not supporting Gay Liberation, Bowie made a qualification similar to the conciliatory trope, 'I'm not a feminist but. . .'. Bowie eschewed radicalism and pursued acceptance by the public. The Gay Liberation Front that had fought to express liberated gay-selfhood had now lost its monopoly. Watts suggested Bowie's ameliorant characteristics further by revealing he was a married father. Therefore although a gay following patronised Bowie, and he identified as gay, his transgression is mitigated by his traditional relationship and by political moderation. Watts' caveats resolved some of the tensions that surfaced when a commercial recording artist with a broad audience revealed their complicated non-heteronormative sexuality. The article continued,

David's present image is to come on like a swishy queen, a gorgeously effeminate boy. He's as camp as a row of tents, with his limp hand and trolling vocabulary. "I'm gay," he says, "and always have been, even when I was David Jones." But there's a sly jollity about how he says it, a secret smile at the corners of his mouth. He knows that in these times it's permissible to act like a male tart, and that to shock and outrage, which pop has always striven to do throughout its history, is a ballsbreaking process. And if he's not an outrage, he is, at the least, an amusement. The expression of his sexual ambivalence establishes a fascinating game: is he, or isn't he? In a period of conflicting sexual identity he shrewdly exploits the confusion surrounding the male and female roles. "Why aren't you wearing your girl's dress today?" I said to him (he has no monopoly on tongue-in-cheek humour). "Oh dear," he replied, "You must understand that it's not a woman's. It's a man's dress."

Watts relied on 'effeminate' and 'camp' narratives, possibly coining the phrase 'camper than a row of tents'. Watts used homophobic humour caricaturing Bowie's gender

²⁹ Michael Watts, 'Oh You Pretty Thing', *Melody Maker*, 22 January 1972, p. 19

blurring as a pastiche of contemporary trends, for instance unisex clothing. Bowie's humour was disarming, but there was a homophobic, disbelieving undercurrent. Albeit some doubted the truth of Bowie bisexual claim: inspired by Warhol, Bowie was famous for manipulating his image and the press.³⁰ Later as The Thin White Duke, Bowie's performances were inspired by Fascism and hyper-masculinity. But Bowie's future performance does not undermine his significance in introducing the music press's debate on homosexuality.

Bowie espoused an individualistic narrative that posited that his behaviour and sexuality was tolerable to counter Watts' scepticism. When Watts pressed Bowie on drag, Bowie argued,

I just don't like the clothes that you buy in shops. I don't wear dresses all the time, either. I change every day. I'm not outrageous. I'm David Bowie.³¹

He was indignant. He asserted his right to individual autonomy: he did not contradict contemporary mores. Albeit the arrogant inflection 'I'm David Bowie' implied that Bowie inhabited a privileged position which enabled him to act as he pleased.³² Even so Bowie reiterated an individualist agenda: he wanted the public's tolerance, restating the dominant private vice narrative, rather than Gay Liberation's out and proud radicalism.

Watts responded by justifying Bowie's music in spite of his sexuality. Watts compelled the reader to judge Bowie upon his music not his image,

Despite his flouncing, however, it would be sadly amiss to think of David merely as a kind of glorious drag act ... Don't dismiss David Bowie as a serious musician just because he likes to put us all on a little.³³

Watts tried to save Bowie from 'commercial suicide' but it was unnecessary, 'Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars' reached number three in the UK album charts and, as Ziggy Stardust, Bowie performed across the country to packed venues.

³⁰ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

³¹ Michael Watts, 'Oh You Pretty Thing', *Melody Maker*, 22 January 1972, p. 19.

³² Bowie's arrogance may have been compounded by his contemporaneous enjoyment of cocaine. Christopher Sandford, *David Bowie: Loving the Alien* (New York, 2005), p. 130.

³³ Michael Watts, 'Oh You Pretty Thing', *Melody Maker*, 22 January 1972, p. 19.

'Oh You Pretty Thing' was an unusual article. Watts admitted knowledge of gay subcultures, but was occasionally homophobic; he mediated Bowie's sexual 'otherness' to a presumably less aware readership but was aware of the associated commercial concerns. In comparison subsequent reporting on Bowie conveyed confusion mixed with schoolboy sniggering. For instance, Chris Welch reviewed Bowie's 1972 single 'John, I'm Only Dancing',

What's going on over there? "That's Morris dancing." Yes I'm getting rather worried about Morris. And we're all getting a bit worried about David. What is the poor chap on about now? He is a great song writer, a fine singer, and one of nature's gentlemen. But this somewhat strangled vocal style sounds a bit of a put on. Over to Rachael Hartesbeete for a fans eye view: 'Nobody expects YOU to understand. This is a MARVELLOUS song from David, with a terrific boogie shuffle beat. And the echo on his voice shows a sheer mastery of production," Quite so, I merely said that... "Well, don't. This will be a massive hit, and I won't hear a word of criticism." Oh, very well. Yes the guitar is quite good. John I'm Only Dancing, la, la, la. I am beginning to enjoy it already.³⁴

Welch disarmed the 'outrageous' queer theme with a gay joke. Then the vastly experienced reviewer deferred to a teenage girl to review the single. 'John I'm Only Dancing' was no musical quantum leap in any sense, even the bisexual lyric but the lyric and Bowie unsettled Welch's usual way of reviewing. Welch defined his heterosexuality forcibly by playing up his bewilderment and reinforced Bowie's difference. Nonetheless Welch, a usually enthusiastic supporter of recording artists, enjoyed the single reluctantly, despite using sarcasm and belittling Bowie's authenticity. He furthered the narrative that it was possible to enjoy Bowie's music despite of his sexual orientation.

Whilst Welch was perturbed by Bowie's sexuality there was also opposition to Bowie's coming out, his camp and his homosexuality. Bowie's musical genre was defined derogatorily as 'fag-rock' and 'rouge-rock'.³⁵ Some fans were uncomfortable with rock stars embracing queer symbolism, as were rock stars who had appropriated glam rock fashion without realising camp's symbolic connotations. In a 1972 interview Dave Hill of Slade was so mortified that he confirmed his heterosexuality,

³⁴ Chris Welch, *Melody Maker*, 2 September 1972, p. 20.

³⁵ 'Fag rock' first printed use -- 'Mailbag', *Melody Maker*, 4 April 1972, p. 15. An early example of 'Rouge-rock' can be found in *the Daily Mirror*, 20 January 1973, p. 22.

Well I've got a designer called Steve working with me... He came up with the idea of the "superyob" thing – now me car's "YOB 1" – and we designed the clothes to fit the idea.

My idea of a really flashy yob is to make it look butch – not poufy. You see big blokes looking like pouffes now – they may have glitter or make-up on, but the thing is that they look at it in a different way now.

When I first did it, it was "He must be queer," but people have now accepted the fact that it's not true – so, therefore, the situation has matured.³⁶

Hill's working-class 'yob' credentials and flashy style created a conflict with the 'camp' performance that his sequined jumpsuits implied. His appropriation of 'glitter' and subsequent statement of heterosexuality confirmed homosexuality's elite and effeminate connotations. This narrative might have posed a problem for working class homosexuals as they were excluded from the press's construction of homosexuality, but allowed Hill to counter the assumption that he was gay.

Despite music journalists' reticence to accept or comprehend Bowie's sexual preferences there were others who fully understood and accepted Bowie's chosen narratives and symbolism. His live concerts featured theatrical drag and elements of mime which appealed to London's gay community. Subsequently when Bowie toured outside of London the music press had publicised a social space that gay men who had felt isolated could frequent.³⁷ *Melody Maker* reported gay men meeting at a Bowie concert. For instance Mick Watts reviewed Bowie's concert in Dunstable and described 'Jim and Phil's' first meeting,

It was raining the night Jim met Phil. They were total strangers to each other, but Phil had asked Jim for a cigarette and well... one thing led to another. They've become very good friends. Phil still recalls how Jim's hand had trembled, though.

They'd gone along to see David Bowie in Dunstable. Great fans of Bowie they were, and Jim had almost to pinch himself when he first heard such a grand person was coming to THAT place. He hated it. Privately his mother confided that he found it difficult to make friends at work.³⁸

³⁶ Rob Randall, 'Yob Number One!', *NME*, 16 June 1973, p. 26-27.

³⁷ The music press was main medium, other than posters and local newspapers, which advertised concerts.

³⁸ Michael Watts, 'Bowie: Waiting for the Man', *Melody Maker*, 1 July 1972, p. 28.

Watts was sensitive towards Phil and Jim unlike his contemporaries such as Welch who were somewhat silly. Nevertheless Watts could not avoid trite narratives: Phil was close to his mother, thus he was implicitly defined as effeminate; Watts was also prudish when referring to Phil and Jim's physical relationship, 'one thing led to another'. But significance of Bowie's visit to Dunstable is not obscured. Bowie provided a public meeting point which provided respite from being an alienated gay man in a supposedly repressed provincial area. It confirmed the wider allure of Bowie's metropolitan camp and extended initiation into queer cultures as related to consuming 'camp' popular culture rather than moving to London.

Watts used specialist knowledge and a specific symbolic language to describe the camp spectacle,

But something rather strange was happening on stage. During the instrumental break Bowie began chasing Ronson around the stage, hustling him, trying to press his body close. The attendants at the exits looked twice to see if they could believe their eyes. The teenage chickies stared in bewilderment. The men knew but the little girls didn't understand. Jeesh-us! It had happened.

It should be recorded that the first act of fellatio on a musical instrument in the British Isles took place at the Dunstable Civic Hall. How do you top that? You don't. You get offstage.³⁹

Watts and 'the little girls' were both shocked, but the young women did not understand Bowie and Ronson's pantomime fellatio. It was a ham-fisted but nonetheless empowering message. Bowie and Ronson's actions were described with popular queer narratives – Watts implied 'campness' and 'outrageousness'. But Bowie's appearance was a seismic event for Bedfordshire's gay men. After the show a group remained waiting outside the stage door in true West End fashion, 'Moist-eyed boys still hung around. After a while Jim and Phil left together.'

Due to Bowie's popularity, his concerts' role as a site for gay men to socialise was eclipsed in the music press by live music performance's customary conventions. In 1973 Bowie performed before 18 000 fans at Earl's Court. Music papers reported how the audience mixed a warped notion of camp display with the simian hyper-masculinity that had marred many contemporary pop concerts. Roy Hollingsworth reported,

³⁹ Ibid.

Yes readers – it was then that I had the delightful vision of four Australian youths in tender, and fashionable faded denim, remove their garb, and dance naked on their seats – their Antipodean genitals on view to all.

One little girl didn't like it, and slapped the face of one youth. He retorted by ripping her blouse off and then fisting her in the head. Now, it becomes no joke, my friends. Now it becomes horrible.⁴⁰

Bowie 'transgressive' queer symbolism was assimilated into a rowdy display by heterosexual men. Youth culture's violent underbelly took prominence despite the glitter aesthetic and male nudity. The violent behaviour that accompanied Slade concerts or other performers that attracted an occasionally disorderly following reinforced rather than challenged social norms.⁴¹ It became a benign marketing ploy – as many had feared when Bowie came-out – which stripped its queer significance. This undermined the powerful public statement of normatively private sexuality.

Bowie's confession, however, had enduring significance. Bowie and *Melody Maker* had constructed a way for musicians to come out whilst retaining commercial success. For instance when Elton John officially came out in 1976 (*Gay News* had unofficially outed him already), coming out engendered the music press's ambivalence. By 1976 a public figure's homosexuality elicited less disconcertion in British culture, even if prejudice remained. For instance, ITV aired *The Naked Civil Servant* in 1975 which documented Quentin Crisp's private life. Chris Charlesworth explained that John feared losing sales in the United States despite his sexuality being an open secret.⁴² Charlesworth admits using innuendo to allude to John's homosexuality. In 1973 Charlesworth reviewed Elton John at Hollywood Bowl, he suggested John's camp characteristics, 'This was showbiz in the true sense of the world; all the glamour and glitter that typifies the Hollywood of old oozed from Elton John this evening'.⁴³ He reported the compere's introduction, an unsubtle *double entendre*, 'In the tradition of old Hollywood let me introduce you to . . . the Queen of England.' Amusingly someone dressed as the Queen emerged on the Hollywood Bowl stage, but many were in on the joke.

But by 1976 *NME* paid scant attention to the story. Mick Farren wrote a quarter-page response. It was buried in a typically dense and eclectic 'Thrills' section,

⁴⁰ Roy Hollingsworth, 'Driveout Saturday', *Melody Maker*, 19 May 1973, pp. 21-22.

⁴¹ Chris Charlesworth, 'All the Bad Girls Love Slade', *Melody Maker*, 3 June 1972, p. 8.

⁴² Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

⁴³ Chris Charlesworth, 'Elton's Finest Hour!', *Melody Maker*, 15 September 1973, p. 8.

So Elton John has confessed to being bisexual. Well, that's no big deal, but on the other hand it's never been much of a closely guarded secret. Most definitely not the kind of *Shock-Horror-Probe-Pop-Star-Reveals-All* lead story that the tabloids seek as their life blood.

"The only reason I haven't spoken about it before," revealed Elton in a frank interview with a New York magazine, "is that nobody asked me." Truthfully, most journalists who interview E.J. aren't interested in that particular line of questioning. Indeed, before their tete-a-tetes I'm sure that most of them knew the state of play and Elton knew that they knew.

...

"I don't see why it should affect the fan worship that I've got," insisted Elton, "It hasn't hurt David Bowie and I don't see why it should hurt me."

The chairman of Watford Football Club adamantly denied that he had anything other than a professional working relationship with his lyricist Bernie Taupin. He opined that 'I don't think there's anything wrong with going to be with someone of your own sex,' and argued, 'it's not just me – I think *everyone* is bisexual,' but he also pointed out, 'I think I'd rather fall in love with a woman eventually. I think a woman lasts longer than a man!'

However, the chairman was somewhat perturbed as to how the Watford footballers would react to his disclosures: 'I think'" he said, "all this is going to be terrible with my football team. Those guys are so hetero.⁴⁴

Farren was weary of pop star confessions, but he implied that questioning Elton John about his sexuality was not allowed rather than just an uninteresting subject. John's managers and record company might have withdrawn advertising or blocked access to artistes. Farren argued it was *'de rigueur'* to come-out in the press and that John was following the trend. Even so John prominently explained that Bowie's continued commercial success had empowered him. Furthermore, before John had officially come-out, Bowie had prompted him to reconsider his performing image and perform camp. Yet Bernie Taupin's uneasy support and Elton John's fear of his football club's reaction show the varying acceptance of homosexuality in everyday life. However, it is vital to stress that Elton John was unambiguously emulating Bowie: Bowie was the first commercially successful publically 'bisexual' pop star. It is also significant that Elton John uses the term 'bisexual' rather than the more binary division of gay. Bisexuality straddled a range of sexualities and encompassed elements of heterosexual sexuality.

⁴⁴ Mick Farren, 'Reg is Out of the Closet', *NME* 25 September 1976, p. 9.

Others also invoked Bowie when coming out to the public. It became commonplace. Artistes as diverse as Tom Robinson and Boy George described Bowie as an inspiration, a comforting reference point in their youth and proof that a gay musician could be successful. Ironically, in the latter years of the 1970s and into the 1980s, some imbued Bowie's coming out with more revolutionary meaning as the Gay Liberation Front became more modest in its aims. Openly gay punk-associated singer Tom Robinson was a Gay Liberation Front activist who saw Bowie as a vital role model. Robinson explained how Bowie's example had encouraged him to reveal his 'truthful' sexual identity; he argued this to Chris Brazier in an extensive two page *Melody Maker* interview,

The time's come for people to stop beating around the bush, whatever they're into in life. Either you put up or shut up. For me personally, the hint of it was enough to please me, as a self-oppressed, self-hating, acne-ridden youngster as I was at the time . . . to actually hear a guy singing songs that you suspect might be about some other guy. . . you know, for the first time, that song could be about you.⁴⁵

Jon Savage used a similar narrative in an article for *The Face* in 1980.⁴⁶ This narrative has endured to the present. In a recent documentary *Boy George*, a prominent gay pop star from 1980s group Culture Club, and his brother sat down to listen to *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* in a painstaking reconstruction of their childhood living-room.⁴⁷ George explained the meaning of Bowie's claim to gay men and the significance of Bowie's queer language. He described how Bowie was a role-model and had given him self-confidence. George understood the subtle queer themes, whilst his heterosexual brother, a working-class Anglo-Irish East End builder, blushed and explained how he thought the album was *just* a work of science fiction.⁴⁸ Bowie provided gay men with an aspirational figure and a public space. He was not criminalised like Wildeblood or challenging heterosexual society like the Gay Liberation Front. But his music was widely accepted. He presented gay men with a figure they could identify with and negotiated wider cultural repression and homophobic sensibilities.

⁴⁵ Chris Brazier, 'United We Stand', *Melody Maker* 22 October 1977, pp. 44-46.

⁴⁶ Jon Savage, 'David Bowie: The Gender Bender' *The Face* November 1980. (RB, accessed June 2011).

⁴⁷ 'The House that Made Me' [television documentary], directed by Michael Ball (first broadcast on Channel 4, 9 December 2010).

⁴⁸ This difference in interpretation has been analysed before and it has been argued that it was accountable for Bowie's queer and heterosexual allure in Fred Vermorel and Judy Vermorel, *Stardust: the Secret Lives of Fans* (London, 1985).

This chapter demonstrates how Bowie provided a commercial gay identity and a public example for gay men. His concerts created a space for fans to meet and make open gay networks that were outside metropolitan or large provincial cities. Bowie empowered others to come out and comforted younger non-heterosexual fans. By gaining popular cultural prominence Bowie exemplified that homosexuality was no longer limited to private vice. Yet journalists in the music press were uncomfortable with narrating homosexuality and his camp performance was tetchily assimilated into heterosexual popular culture. Contemporary mainstream accounts rarely deemed Bowie's sexuality acceptable, merely tolerable in light of his musical prowess. This was underscored by a less flamboyant vernacular that mocked and belittled homosexuality. It supposed that gay men adhered to specific traits. Bowie was feminised, stylised and softened rather than discussed as an individual with a complex and fluid sexuality that destabilised commonplace assumptions. The music press only tolerated a narrow construct of queer selfhood. Homosexuality was regulated in discourse almost as rigidly as the law had done before.

Chapter Five

Oh Bondage! Up Yours!: Representations of Women

This chapter argues that the 1970s music industry was highly sexualised and overwhelmingly controlled by men. The music press transmitted righteous moralising and individual values, but did not systematically argue for sexual equality in line with Women's Liberation. 'Traditional' or sexist representations of femininity and expectations of women's behaviour permeated the music press. The music press constructed women using a number of negative tropes, the most apparent was the contested but stubbornly superficial sex object ideal. Due to the music press's male readership, resistance to women's subjugation was limited although most of the rest of the press gave a fairly limited welcome to feminism. Alternative femininities and images of liberated womanhood were articulated sporadically, but women were hampered in comparison to men when narrating unconventional perspectives on other subjects. The music press became less misogynistic in the later-1970s but media such as independent fanzines were more fertile for feminist thought in music. By the 1980s, however, *Smash Hits* and *The Face* were able to provide music journalism without the 1970s music press's leering. These titles attracted a large female following and an equally gender-balanced readership.

The chapter starts by comparing the U.S. and British music press's roundtable discussions on women in music which highlighted the British music press's problems discussing women and femininity. These issues are explored by looking at the coverage of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and by using oral history interviews to learn more about women's roles in the music press. The chapter then examines sexist tropes and resistance to sexist assumptions in the music press: it focuses on constructs such as groupies, 'sex objects' and constructions of permissible feminine behaviour. Finally the chapter explains how the 1980s music press undermined conventional gender assumptions and therefore captured a larger female readership.

It would be simplistic, however, to expect that women were always viewed negatively: there were female readers and musicians who were interested in Women's Liberation and feminism and rejected lazy sexist clichés. They brought negotiations of gender, gender roles and gendered behavioural expectations to the foreground. In 1973 *Melody Maker* appropriated a topic and format from US publication *Record World*. *Record World* featured a roundtable discussion – an infrequent format used by many music press publications to debate music industry talking points – inviting prominent

women artistes to discuss gender.¹ Loraine Alterman, a U.S. music journalist and *Melody Maker's* Los Angeles correspondent, chaired *Record World's* feature. Alterman hosted three musicians: Carly Simon, Dory Previn and Mary Travers. The article constructed their music as mediating a new relationship between men and women and claimed that they had 'provocative thoughts on the women's movement'. The three interviewees personified the 'independent role women are assuming in society'. This format and language resembled the Women's Liberation Movement's consciousness-raising efforts where small groups discussed the personal politics of patriarchal society which had provoked public interest and discussion.² These meetings compounded the popularity of Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminist Mystique* and the National Organisation for Women's formation in 1966. Feminist ideology was more accessible in the US compared to Britain.³ Feminist institutions and discourse was more established in the public sphere. The movement had captured popular attention earlier: in 1970 British feminists protested at the Miss World pageant at the Royal Albert Hall but US feminists had disrupted the Miss America pageant two years earlier. In 1969 Mary Daly gave feminist ideas religious justification and a year previously Coretta Scott King introduced feminist tenets to the African American Civil Rights Movement. The British feminist experience was one of small-scale middle-class groups. Eve Setch argued that these middle-class groups were in constant flux and competed with underground sexual liberation narratives that were tinged with sexual exploitation.⁴ Canonical texts from the British movement such as Shelia Rowbotham's *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* arrived six years later than Friedan's influential text and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* was published in 1970. British feminists communicated through small circulation newsletters.⁵

Alterman's questions were similar to themes that directed consciousness rising. She asked Previn, Simon and Travers how being women affected their music, the renegotiation of gender roles, sex discrimination and whether they were influenced by women's liberation. There was little consensus regarding the relationship between

¹ Loraine Alterman, 'Record World Forum: Three Artists on the New Consciousness', *Record World*, 19 May 1973 (RB, accessed April 2011).

² Ginette Castro, *American Feminism: A Contemporary History*, trans. Elizabeth Loverde-Bagwell (New York, 1990), p.23 and 227. Kathleen Weiler, 'Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference,' In Colin Lankshear, Peter McLaren (eds), *The Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire* (New York, 1994) p. 20. Christina Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change* (Chichester, 2000), p. 136-139.

³ Betty Friedan, *the Feminine Mystique* (New York, 1963).

⁴ Eve Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969-1979', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:2 (2002), pp. 189-190. Andrew August, 'Gender and 1960s Youth Culture: The Rolling Stones and the New Woman,' *Contemporary British History* 19:1 (2005), p. 97.

⁵ Shelia Rowbotham, *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* (Nottingham, 1969). Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London, 1970). Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism', p. 172.

gender and artistic expression. Simon and Previn disagreed with Travers that their music was influenced by being a woman. Simon said she tried to 'de-condition' herself and Previn stressed she was 'a human being who happened to be a woman'.⁶ They agreed on women's liberation's general influence, despite not being involved in activism. This was testament to the accessibility of U.S. feminism, and the music industry's discrimination towards women. The women's liberation movement had influenced them differently. Women's Liberation had made Travers aware of the 'machinations [she] was going through and being put through by men'. She described structural patriarchy and the lack of women in the music industry. Simon said she the industry treated her well – being careful not to bite the hand that fed her – but resented being labelled a 'sex object'. Whilst Previn complained that she had been told she was paid less because she was a woman and that journalists condescendingly described her in the 'diminutive' form. None perceived a positive change in men's contemporary attitudes.

Later in the year a man, Robert Partridge, chaired *Melody Maker's* roundtable. He supported the record industry more obviously, asking question such as, 'But do you think that the record industry is any more sexist than the rest of society?'⁷ The article was given front page prominence, it was accompanied by a picture of singer Marsha Hunt and the lure mentioned feminism to draw parallels between the subjugation of women and racism. But conspicuously more column space and a bigger headline advertised the forthcoming Bob Dylan tour. The roundtable reached broadly similar conclusions to *Record World's* roundtable. Other major grievances were also discussed: the lack of male groupies, limited opportunities for women to prove themselves, disrespect towards female singers and sexual exploitation. Yet the roundtable did not explore 'feminism' in detail despite the front cover's claims and unlike Alterman's questions on Women's Liberation. This was surprising as alongside Hunt, Susie Watson-Taylor, the manager of the Incredible String Band, as well as musicians, Maddy Prior, Yvonne Elliman and Elkie Brookes, was feminist periodical *Spare Rib's* Marion Fudger.

Susie Watson-Taylor defended the music industry by arguing that women with talent could find a place. But the others, despite no direct opportunity to speak about Women's Liberation, critiqued the music industry with feminist and sexually liberated narratives. Female groupies were viewed supportively as being women who

⁶ Loraine Alterman, 'Record World Forum: Three Artists on the New Consciousness', *Record World*, 19 May 1973 (RB, accessed April 2011).

⁷ Robert Partridge, 'Dialogue *Melody Maker* Special on Women in Rock', *Melody Maker*, 27 October 1973, pp. 36-38.

had ‘caught the bug’ of rock music but the chauvinistic male dominated industry excluded them. They argued that sexuality could partially redress the industry’s gender imbalance. Fudger furthered this radical counter-cultural feminist viewpoint, ‘as soon as a woman enters the record business virtually everyone in authority is a man...So she is in a corner with only one thing she can use – her sexuality.’ This received comment in the following week’s Mailbag as Dave Burgy from Kent argued, ‘It’s her own sex she should worry about! Male stars are more numerous and more successful, not because they make thousands of girls throw their knickers at them, but because they draw massive support from both sexes.’⁸ Burgy’s trite narrative undermined sexism’s complexity. Like previous music press debates on contentious issues, those who criticised society were seen as undermining broad commercial appeal. In comparison to *Record World*’s discussion, *Melody Maker*’s roundtable illustrates the British music press’s problem discussing women’s issues both in music and society.

A January 1976 *Melody Maker* editorial reignited music industry sex discrimination as a topic. Ray Coleman facetiously titled the editorial ‘Women: No Longer Nigger of the World’ which played on John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s ‘Women is the Nigger of the World’.⁹ On 29 December 1975 the *Sex Discrimination Act* had been passed.¹⁰ In a tongue-in-cheek display of feminist rhetoric, Coleman described it as a ‘bitter pill to swallow’ for ‘male chauvinist pigs’. He canvassed views from women in the industry. Sue Brown, a twenty-four year old press officer for the United Artists record company argued, ‘Executives in general are not always ready to train a woman for a job. Often the attitude is: ‘What’s the use – she’ll only get married and have a baby.’ Sue then deferentially explained how IPC had helped her career after the editor of *Film Review* had promoted her from ‘dogsbody’. This was apparently an unusual situation that belied a ‘tendency for men to regard girls as sweet young things just fit for making tea.’ Doreen Davies and Nikolas Powell denied that sexual discrimination occurred at the BBC or Virgin records, although Davies admitted that the BBC had no women producers. Finally two women viewed the Act negatively: Lillian Bron, head of Bronze Records’ record division, and Ann Dex, a folk agent, constructed themselves as self-made women who had earned individual success and denied the need for legally enshrined equality. Dex narrated traditional gender roles, which might have helped her success in the male dominated music industry. She argued,

⁸ ‘Mailbag’, *Melody Maker*, 3 November 1975, p. 31.

⁹ Ray Coleman, ‘Woman is No Longer Nigger of the World’, *Melody Maker*, 3rd January 1976, p. 2.

¹⁰ This legislated against gender based discriminatory behaviour or harassment towards men or women in education, training or the workplace. Sex Discrimination Act (1975).

I've been successful without it and have been for eleven years. I'm not a Women's Libber because I think people are only because they're not successful and they need it.

"I still believe men are the dominating sex and I like my men to be men, and I think of myself as being feminine."

The music press was allowing women to respond freely on women's issues in the workplace. The conversation had the space afforded to other issues. Even so the debate was limited and polite. The passing of the Act was a rather quiet affair.¹¹ It is intriguing, however, when compared to the US example, that feminism was so stifled and views that discounted structural barriers to women's equality were narrated without caveats. Men's entrenched position in the music industry and music press's upper echelons was stifling more vociferous feminist statements and the most successful women in the industry deferred to prevailing conventions.

Music papers frequently featured female artists, but it was rare that their music or moral and political ideas were concentrated upon. Journalists were less likely to solicit women's views on contentious issues. There are notable exceptions: the music press valued some highly respected U.S. artists' opinions and intelligence. For instance the music press described Nina Simone or Joan Baez more respectfully by virtue of their fame, exoticness and links to protest.¹² Until the late-1970s British women were constructed shallowly and rarely voiced their opinions. When *NME* uncharacteristically asked Lulu to comment on her friend Paul McCartney's drug use she argued against drugs, but remained courteous to McCartney: Lulu did not want to be 'nasty'.¹³ This is typical of how women in pop music were more often bound to the more established norms of acquiescence from debate and politeness. Women were constructed as pop stars rather than the vociferous and, as Sheila Rowbotham argued, 'nasty', morally ambiguous or oppositional rock stars.¹⁴

The music industry sexism outlined in the roundtable discussions was not isolated even if some argued otherwise. The early-1970s music industry was unmistakably sexist in attitude and behaviour. Women were often degraded and

¹¹ However the Act was often seen as a victory for Women's Liberation. This was described in *The Guardian*, 29 December 1975, p. 2.

¹² There are numerous examples in which Baez or Simone were asked to represent wider social movements, few British women were granted a similar capacity to speak for others.

¹³ Norrie Drummond, 'I'd Never Betray My Friend Paul', *NME*, 5 August 1967, p. 3.

¹⁴ Rowbotham's contention and her contemporaries' abilities to counter gender roles expressed by male musicians was argued in August, 'Gender and 1960s Youth Culture: the Rolling Stones and Youth Culture,' pp. 79-100.

sometimes cynically used as currency to gain favour. For instance Chris Charlesworth explained an exploitative episode at an early-1970s Status Quo concert:

I was invited to this gig and I wasn't that keen to go and their publicist said I'll provide a girl for you, 'provide a bird for you', right? He wasn't saying a chicken supper, I'm sure of that. I'll get a bird for you, yeah. I went anyway right and I didn't say, I'd have said nah, nah, I didn't need him to provide a bird for me I had a girlfriend of my own and I hadn't bothered to accept his offer of this. So he came up to me and said, 'do you want a girl then? Do you want a girl? I've got you one.' He's only gone and, it could have been a hooker for all I know and I said, 'No, no, I've got a girlfriend anyway, I don't want her, I'll watch the band anyway.'¹⁵

He also mentioned artiste manager Tony Brainsby's lavish parties with abundant alcohol and cannabis. They were a ruse: Brainsby told attractive female employees to manipulate 'mellow' journalists into reporting upon his newest signings. He duped journalists into positive reporting using women. These women were almost faceless and entirely objectified when serving the music industry.

Advertising imagery exacerbated the music press's negative ideas of women's roles. Advertising's role in constructing gendered identities has been well documented.¹⁶ Its heteronormative male focus is abundantly clear in the mid-1970s music press by the frequency of alluring topless or nearly-topless women used to sell products. Advertising repeatedly featured young, slim, but buxom women with long hair and cheesecake smiles, or if a more sophisticated product, sultry pouts. It was aimed at heterosexual men, the dominant audience. For instance, in accordance with the period's sexist humour, an advertisement for band Skin Alley featuring a woman in advanced undress was placed next to the 1973 dialogue on women in rock.¹⁷ Nudity in advertising was often pushed close to taboo representations of women. Most notably, 1960s super-group Blind Faith's album cover featured a naked pre-pubescent

¹⁵ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

¹⁶ This argued by Erving Goffman in *Gender Advertisements* (New York, 1979). Pamela Hyde has analysed this in reference to women in 1950s New Zealand, Pamela Hyde, 'Managing Bodies—Managing Relationships: the Popular Media and the Social Construction of Women's Bodies and Social Roles from the 1930s to the 1950s,' *Journal of Sociology* 36:157 (2000), p. 151-171. A reading of advertising as part of consumer society that takes in the urban, metropolitan dimension of its production and effect on masculinities can be found in Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 1996), p.10.

¹⁷ *Melody Maker*, 10 November 1973, p. 36.

teen. Both *Melody Maker* and *NME* reproduced the image as an advertisement.¹⁸ Women in general appeared in advertisements more than men. In the 1973 *Melody Maker* dialogue on woman in rock issue twelve women were featured in articles or photographs, in comparison there were fifty-four images of men alone (and none were sexually titillating). But advertising imagery had an equal gender split.¹⁹ The women in the music press predominantly used their physical features to sell products and had no voice. Men were principally photographed as musicians and were able to explain themselves in articles. Similarly David Bowie's gender blurring made the music press construct him in terms of image rather than substance.

The disparity between the numbers of women journalists compared to men affected the music press's warped coverage. Administrative support roles were available to women in the music press. Chris Welch married a *Melody Maker* secretary, yet in retrospective accounts of the music press she is nameless. There were some female music journalists before the 1975 Act: for example, from 1959 Valerie Wilmer worked for *Jazz Journal* and then *Melody Maker*. Wilmer also wrote for *Spare Rib*. But then Wilmer was partially extricated from the music press office's sexual politics. Chris Charlesworth argued that her sexual orientation – Wilmer is a lesbian – seemed to grant her privileged access to the boys club.²⁰ Many women in the music press had a quirk that appealed to male colleagues or a privileged social or educational background, but this should not undermine their journalistic talent. Indeed few escaped the hostile male dominated workplace's pitfalls. Caroline Coon explained the dire situation for women journalists in the mid-1970s music press:

When I was at *Melody Maker* I was the only one, but there was a generation of young women coming up underneath me, Viv Goldman, for instance, is six or seven years younger than me, Roz Raines was there. We used to go home after our experiences in the office and weep. That discrimination, being called whores and bitches, was very bad and not something that men have to deal with. It undermines one's self-confidence, it undermines one's ability to write, and it undermines one's ability to live. It feeds in to any other insecurities one

¹⁸I have chosen not to reference where this image can be found in the music press as it is a naked pubescent girl and there may be legal ramifications related to viewing the image. It is rather unpleasant and exploitative to my personal taste and I believe most would feel the same.

¹⁹The same has been found regarding issues of US music magazine *Rolling Stone* by Donallyn Pompper, Suekyung Lee, and Shana Lerner, 'Gauging Outcomes of the 1960s Social Equality Movements: Nearly Four Decades of Gender and Ethnicity on the Cover of *Rolling Stone* Magazine,' *the Journal of Popular Culture* 42:2 (2009), pp. 273-290.

²⁰ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

might have so we would gather together and have consciousness-raising-arm-yourself-morale-boosting-meetings. We would have to take a deep breath and arm ourselves to allow ourselves to go back out into the fight again; that was just daily life.²¹

Male journalists today are, in my experience, contrite about sexism and, as the 1970s proceeded, more women musicians and writers worked in the music press. The journalists who followed Caroline Coon – who used her infamy from the 1960s counter-culture and her class status to gain access as a star reporter – were afforded more opportunities. Vivian Goldman became Assistant Editor of *Sounds*, Julie Burchill and Barbara Charone became prominent celebrity journalists. However sexual equality in equal numbers of journalists or the rejection of traditional sexist narratives were not forthcoming until the late-1970s, if ever. Also, even though women were more noticeable in music papers and magazines, male musicians were still the primary focus of attention.²² Male dominance undoubtedly influenced the encoding of gender narratives.

Nevertheless women as journalists were able to sporadically counter explicit misogyny and they were, in some cases, supported by their male colleagues. In a 1978 *Melody Maker* interview Vivian Goldman audaciously confronted ex-Wailer and reggae star Peter Tosh.²³ Despite her reticence to undermine or offend Tosh's religious beliefs Goldman argued that reggae artists made 'more overt' sexist statements than rock bands. Goldman blamed Leviticus 15.19.24 which some Rastafarians, including Tosh, interpreted as declaring menstruating women unclean. Goldman quoted feminist Eve Figes to add expert academic authority to her contention that religion instructed patriarchal views. She believed Tosh's sexism was incongruent with his critique of 'politricks' and the 'shitstem', drawing parallels with Stokely Carmichael's flippant contention that the position of women in revolution is 'prone'. What ensued was a remarkable exchange,

MM: "...you could almost think you hated women..."

²¹ Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

²² The front covers of music magazines remained overwhelmingly male dominated. *NME*'s front cover never had more than one in five of its covers featuring a woman or a musical group with at least a single women in the band between 1969-1983. (Source: British Library's collection of music papers).

²³ Vivian Goldman, 'The Bush Doctor's Dilemma', *Melody Maker*, 9 December 1978 (RB, accessed August 2011).

Tosh: "I? Hate women!? You think when I go to bed you think it is not woman I kiss, caress and touch?"

MM: "That's hardly the point – it doesn't prove anything."

Tosh: "So how can I hate women? Western philosophy makes a woman dominate a man every time. You'd rather I called you a man, te blaad claat! [Jamaica] is run by a *Queen*. I&I don't see no King here. In my house is a *King*!"

MM: "Apart from what's wrong with being headed by a woman, the country isn't actually *run* by the monarch, anyway, you know that."

Tosh: "I know that, because of my intelligence, but what happens to the people they call the illiterate and the underprivileged?"

At this point, Peter's voice broke into an uncanny representation of an old-style, musical-hall-type woman-hating homosexual imitating a mincing stereotyped 'silly woman': "You want me should sit by you and hug and kiss you?"

MM: "Tell me, Peter, what would you do if you had to work with some Rolling Stones Records employee when she had her period?"

Tosh (draws himself up to his full, imposing height, eyes flashing): "I have things that protect me spiritually when there is things my physical eye does not see."

MM: "Evil elements like what, exactly?"

Tosh: "*Evil elements*. Did you know that woman is the channel of the Devil? Every time!"

Tosh continued making religiously tinged claims about women's inherent immorality until his colleague Doctor Alimantado tried to calm the situation. Alimantado failed, Tosh continued to rudely interrupt Goldman when she tried to question Tosh and Alimantado's logic. Goldman exposed Tosh's intense sexism despite being an avowed fan of his music. Goldman could have ignored his discriminatory views and concentrated solely on his aesthetic role as an artist. Goldman's method encapsulated the music press's role in moral debate and the idea that musicians should have views and be accountable for them: Tosh was not protected from making contentious comments: the argument was neither pacified at the time nor excluded from the text.

Some male journalists countered sexism too. In the late-1970s this was more frequent. For instance, The Stranglers, contemporaries of the British new wave and punk movement, were prone to making belligerent comments. In the context of punk's bellicose posturing this was not unusual, but The Stranglers reserved some of their most challenging statements for women. Phil McNeill argued that their song

'London Lady' defamed a music press colleague and used sexist language. McNeill invoked 1960s egalitarian narratives,

Evidently the niceties of the late '60s social humanism – women's lib, gay lib, and the respected terminology that seemed such an essential basis for their fragile advances (not calling women "peaches" or gays "faggots" like you don't call blacks "nignogs" unless you have an NF armband and a crowd of thugs around you) – all this seems to have gone by the board with the emergence of a generation seemingly devoid of self-respect and thus, by trite extension, devoid of self-respect for others.²⁴

Many in the 'blank' generation accepted 1960s 'social humanism' but there was an up-swell in symbolic offensiveness. Negotiations of punk morality and politics countered the worst excesses of 'punk attitude', such as fierce sexism. McNeill questioned singer Jean-Jacques Brunel's definition tolerable female behaviour: Brunel's defence of his putdown of his Dingwalls groupie is that "that's no way for a chick to be." No way for *what* to be? This fits 1960s liberation narratives. However Brunel was nonplussed and replied with a rather unfunny attempt at a non sequitur: 'We were drawing lots on who was going to screw this female column writer, and someone said "But it'd be like chucking a sausage up the Mersey Tunnel"'. McNeill argued that the Stranglers did not have 'a sense of morality'. McNeill borrowed from Nick Kent's review of The Clash that defined their 'sense of morality' as central to their musical value: punk was not so far from 1960s values as one would expect.²⁵ There were also instances when musicians themselves, such as Jonathan Richman and the appropriately named Modern Lovers, tried to distance masculinity from 'Don Juan' misogyny.²⁶ Yet many journalists and men in bands had an objectionable attitude towards women.

However from the mid-1970s onwards there were few discussions of women's liberation, despite the increased number women working as journalists or appearing as musicians. Many women were unwilling to be described as feminists. Artists from Lindsay de Paul to The Slits shirked the feminist tag, although The Slits played with gender performance and enacted liberated femininity unlike de Paul's

²⁴ Phil McNeill, 'Women are Strange when you're a Strangler', *NME*, 30th April 1977, p. 35.

²⁵ Nick Kent, 'London's Burning Out', *NME*, 19 March 1977, p. 41.

²⁶ Ian Birch, 'In Love with the Modern World', *Melody Maker*, 17 September 1977 (RB, accessed September 2011).

conventional gender performance.²⁷ The Slits embraced feminism more openly later, after they had gained initial success. The Slits' reluctance was evidence of punk's antipathy towards non-punk identities, rather than tension with feminism's aims and ideas. X-Ray Spex's Poly Styrene, for instance, argued,

"IF SOMEBODY said I was a sex symbol, I'd shave me'ead tomorrer," cackled Poly Styrene. 'Oh Bondage Up Yours' ain't about sex particularly. In fact I don't even think of myself as a girl when I'm on stage. I think I'm sexless. Girls that go and flaunt themselves on stage are using the oldest and the cheapest trick in the book. I'm just me. I just do what I feel like. Do Anything You Wanna Do. Individualism.²⁸

Styrene, otherwise known as Marianne Joan Elliott-Said, asserted that she evaded any particular gender identity but castigated those who used their femininity to allure. The narrative was vaguely feminist: it rejected normative gender roles, but this was expressed in terms of individualism rather than Women's Liberation or sexual liberation narratives.

Bands with feminist sentiments often downplayed their views in interviews. Delta 5 included feminist themes in their music. In 1980 Phil Sutcliffe interviewed them in *Sounds*. He described them as 'artsy-feminist Leedsites', and they argued their music, specifically the song 'Alone', 'could apply to gays of either sex too, by the way!²⁹ Delta 5 responded by stressing their inclusivity and 'pleaded' with Sutcliffe to stop questioning them about feminism, 'We have our own views privately, but the band as such doesn't work like that', and asked him to concentrate on their music. Nevertheless, Delta 5 did hold strong feminist views: it may have been the case that they did not see the music press as an appropriate forum for their ideas. In comparison, during an interview with early-1980s Newcastle post-punk 'zine *Eccentric Sleeve Notes*, Delta 5 and Au Pairs both discussed feminism and sexuality.³⁰ Delta 5 were happy to clarify that they wanted to 'break down the barriers between the sexes'. The Au Pairs argued that their problem with being labelled feminist by the music press was that, 'we can't be put in a bag, because the music press can't decide whether

²⁷ Laurie Henshaw, 'Lynsey, separating the men from the..er...?', *Melody Maker*, 2 December 1972, p. 3. Kris Needs, *ZigZag*, August 1977 (RB, September 2011).

²⁸ Chas de Whalley, 'Oh Bondage! Up Yours!', *Sounds*, 22 October 1977 (RB, September 2011).

²⁹ Phil Sutcliffe, 'The Delta of Venus: Delta 5', *Sounds*, 2 August 1980 (RB, accessed October 2011).

³⁰ *Eccentric Sleeve Notes*, July 1981, pp. 1-10.

we are commercial or political, which to me is a ridiculous (sic) distinction.³¹ Thus there were forums for musicians to narrate resistance and counter-argument against discriminatory or anti-feminist narratives, but the music press was at best only a partial ally, and instances like Goldman and McNeill's opposition to sexism were conspicuously rare.

There were subtle differences in how women artistes were described and questioned depending on whether the reporter was female or male, as well as if the publication was independent or allied with the music industry. This was apparent when Dory Previn complained that journalists described her condescendingly in the *Record World* roundtable. Bernard Barry interviewed Previn from her Los Angeles home in 1972 for *Melody Maker*: he described her as 'Mrs. Andre Previn' wife of a music 'genius'.³² This jars with how Loraine Alterman had described Previn as independent in the roundtable discussion. Furthermore Barry portrayed Previn as a psychological introvert who had suffered a hysterical collapse. Barry trivialised the problems that had left her institutionalised in a mental hospital, he claimed that she was a 'difficult' interviewee who, until her recent album, had masked her tumult with 'sugar sweet lyrics'. Barry then explained how Previn's new musical content had transgressed: 'many were stunned by the incredible intensity of the rest of it, songs about sexuality, incest, songs about fear, loneliness, religious hangups, songs of war and madness'. He described this transgression in terms of Previn's character, rather than her music's aesthetics and message. He pompously described her as 'brave'.

Nevertheless, when Penny Valentine interviewed Previn for *Sounds* the tone of the interview was less condescending and Previn was more forthcoming in her responses.³³ Valentine gave Previn the hyperbolic portrayal and respect that her male peers were indulged with: 'For a start, Previn is no ordinary songwriter. How many times have you heard the term "poet" attached to the most flimsy writer of more than the trite lyric? Well, Previn is a poet. That she put her poetry to music is almost coincidental.' Valentine imbued Previn with characteristics that subverted the underwhelming description Barry constructed. Valentine reinterpreted Previn as an active agent controlling her life, not affected by her environment. She was bestowed with a 'wry biting humour that showed she saw through their games with a vitriolic clarity'. Notably Valentine allowed Previn to have the last words, 'I will, I will accept myself', rather than giving an authoritative conclusion as Barry did. This is

³¹ Ibid.

³² Bernard Barry, 'The Agony and the Ecstasy', *Melody Maker*, 6 May 1972, p. 11. Andre Previn had composed acclaimed film scores, theatre scores, classical music and jazz.

³³ Penny Valentine, 'Surviving All Odds', *Sounds*, 16 December 1972 (RB, accessed December 2011).

representative of the pervasive problem that male journalists failed to take women artists as seriously as their male contemporaries. Male journalists were more likely to develop mostly non-sexual fraternal relationships. Women were more likely to be prejudged according to their gender and conferred with a range of limiting narratives.

Such fraternity between male journalists and musicians had a bearing on the constructions of women. It also prevented many scurrilous, maybe even darkly entertaining, events from being reported in the music press. Even though the music press was increasingly confident in discussing wider non-musical issues and even taboo themes, there were limits to what exactly would be included in articles. Chris Charlesworth explained that music journalists did not report the more extreme episodes of private behaviour.³⁴ This was governed by a bond of trust between the mostly male musicians and journalists. Especially in the early- to mid-1970s musicians indulged in lavishly transgressive behaviour. They embraced bacchanalian sex, drugs and rock and roll as the well-worn cliché defines it, but it was not reported. Instances of underage sex that were indulged by managers, roadies, musicians and potentially even the journalists themselves went unreported.³⁵ For instance, the music press never mentioned Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page's retrospectively documented relationship with fourteen year-old 'groupie' Lori Mattix. Mick Farren witnessed underage girls being brought to a hotel by band management in Los Angeles.³⁶ In the music press underage sex seemed to begin and end with Jerry Lee Lewis' thirteen-year-old second-cousin wife.

Despite no editorial code, there were unspoken parameters within which musicians' personal behaviour were reported: often the details of the sexual indiscretions of musicians were not included in tour stories, interviews, live reviews or features to ensure access to top musical acts.³⁷ The music press's few accounts of sexual promiscuity by men on tour did stand out. For instance in 1973 Ian MacDonald interviewed Robert Fripp and discussed sex, but typically they favoured innuendo and leering to discussing actual sex acts,

³⁴ Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011).

³⁵ The story of Maddox and Page is covered in the controversial memoir, Stephen Davis, *Hammer of the Gods: Led Zeppelin* (New York, 1985), p. 164-168. Michael Walker, *Laurel Canyon: Inside Rock-and-Roll's Legendary Neighbourhood* (New York, 2006) p. 190.

³⁶ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

³⁷ Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011). Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011). Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

I find myself drooling, my tongue hanging out, my mouth snapping together involuntarily, twitchings – obsessive thoughts – the lewd imagination develops.

In fact, I've never seen so many delightful young bodies, both quantity and quality, within such a short space of time as the last month in America. I was overwhelmed. By the end of the tour, I came back unfit for anything, completely exhausted on every level of my being. Oh! Oh!³⁸

Sex was often referred to in a more detached sense: mostly male longing or sexual enjoyment. Rock stars were constructed as sexually liberated. Thus they coyly celebrated their conquests as part of sexual revolution and permissiveness. There was no explicit sexual detail, but sex with attractive women was implied as desirable and part of rock star masculinity. This reticence to be explicit in a public forum has many antecedents. Even after the *Lady Chatterley* trial, *Oz* magazine had been taken to court in a long and acrimonious case for 'conspiring with certain other young persons to produce a magazine containing obscene, lewd, indecent and sexually perverted articles, cartoons and drawings with intent to debauch and corrupt the morals of children and other young persons and to arouse and implant in their minds lustful and perverted ideas'.³⁹ IPC would not have enjoyed this sort of scrutiny considering the music press's youthful readership. Specialist pornographic publications for adults provided the only space for unambiguous sexual content.

Narratives of heterosexual sex were on the whole impersonal, part of commonplace sexual activity in the music industry. Men would often sing 'of sex' in a fanciful or unrealised way. For example when Jerry Gilbert reviewed Alan Hull's 1973 album *Pipedream* he was typically coy:

He writes only about the things to which he can relate and to which he can attribute basic values so we hear about his days on the road with a band. And he sings about booze and dope and sex and temptation. Then he has a bash at money and the aristocracy in a neat little cameo called 'Country Gentleman's Wife' when he blows his high moral upstanding in the final verse by giving himself to the good lady for the sake of food and unlimited booze.⁴⁰

³⁸Ian MacDonald, *NME*, 1 September 1973.

³⁹ Tony Palmer, *The Trials of Oz* (London, 2011), p. 21.

⁴⁰ Jerry Gilbert, *Let it Rock*, July 1973 (RB, Accessed, January 2011).

Gilbert's review repeats the dominant narratives that surround the music press, 'booze and dope and sex and temptation'. However the language surrounding sex is extremely staid: he 'gives himself' and he is under the duress of 'temptation' with its biblical connotations of moral transgression. Yet this interview destabilises the conventional narrative: Hull received the relationship's material benefits, rather than being presented as the material provider. In the music press references to women were more typically coloured by a rather adolescent male sexual longing: they celebrated men having sex and were suspicious or even spiteful towards women who did not submit to objectification. Representations of women were often focused upon their appearance – their clothes, whether or not they are sex objects. Papers defined women by reporting familial bonds – that are absent in accounts of men. Papers also stereotyped women by using a limited spectrum of characterisations: shy, naïve innocents, to hysterics, to sexually precocious 'sluts'. Gendered moral judgements were abundant. Women's moral choices were scrutinised, whereas men were the more likely recipients of 'permissiveness'. Instances in which women tried to resist these categorisations and second-class status are limited.

One of the most widely known clichés of women in music was the groupie, which in the absence of any complex representation of women artistes became a pertinent focus for constructions of femininities in the music press. Journalists often portrayed groupies negatively for adopting the sexual promiscuity lauded of men in the music industry.⁴¹ The music industry hid groupies from the public. Caroline Coon argued that groupies shared many aspirations with musicians,

I remember saying to the editor of the *Melody Maker* that I think groupies are a very interesting and ambitious group of women, because after all, if you are in Doncaster and your life is probably doomed to going out with a factory worker, or an electrician, the idea that these women are going to have a fun a joyous experience by having sex or making love to one of the musicians they adore it is surely very commendable.⁴²

Of course casual sexual relationships between musicians and fans was not a specifically 1970s issue. The first highly explicit media representation of this phenomena occurred in 1968. It was constructed as a moral panic with fallen young women losing their innocence to rapist male musicians. Rape narratives have often

⁴¹ The way groupies have been constructed has been analysed by Norma Coates, 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s', *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15 (2003), pp. 65-94.

⁴² Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

been used to construct the pitfalls of transgressive sexual morality and steer individuals towards normative behaviour.⁴³ There may have been instances of sexual assault and rape, but the archetypal pop-culture rapists at the time were a reaction to narratives of sexual revolution and promiscuity. On 17 February 1968 *Melody Maker* printed a letter from a ‘concerned mother’ which accused rock bands of raping young girls who sought to enter the back-stage area at concerts.⁴⁴ The following week two letters defending pop and rock stars were printed. One was from David Greer, the vocalist of New Zealand band Human Instinct. Greer sought to mollify the situation and normalise the backstage area,

Mrs F.J.’s remarks about rape attempts among pop groups were ridiculous (MM February 17).

Girls who “hang around dressing rooms” are usually nice kids who just want an autograph, and perhaps a little talk with their favourite in the group—nothing more.

In our group we don’t have anything to do with girls at all (we don’t have anything to do with boys either), and if they come to see us, they are treated with respect.⁴⁵

Despite a smattering of homophobia, Greer defended his profession and constructed relationships between male musicians and fans as mutually respectful and innocent. However Greer’s view was an anomaly, other letters were more comparative. A letter authored by another mother, Mrs S.H. of Middlesex, followed Greer’s. She argued that pop musicians were exposed to dangerous situations and that girls should not approach touring musicians:

Recently a mother accuses a group of musicians of practically raping young girl fans (MM February 17). I’d like to know why parents allow young girls to stay out all hours of the night with groups?

As the mother of a saxophone player I’d like to let people know how young musicians are treated these days.

⁴³ This was recently explored with a focus on the US by Lisa Lindquist Door, ‘The Perils of the Back Seat: Date Rape, Race and Gender in 1950s America’, *Gender & History* 20/1 (2008), pp. 27-47. The use of rape as an exercise of power is discussed in, Joanna Bourke, *Rape* (London, 2007).

⁴⁴ ‘Mailbag’, *Melody Maker*, 17 February 1968, p. 24.

⁴⁵ ‘Mailbag: Rape? What Rubbish?’, *Melody Maker*, 2 March 1968, p. 28.

My son has been robbed of equipment and clothes by so-called fans and fiddled out of money. He has even been beaten up until his face was unrecognisable and I have fainted at the sight.

Music is still his love, but after three years of hard work in the pop business he has nothing but heartaches and debts.

Mrs S.H. subverted the rape claim and instead asserted it was the 'girls' who had transgressed by entering a space – the private sphere of touring pop groups – which was forbidden. She blamed their parents who had not exerted appropriate control. No women were asked or allowed to substantiate rape claims or to justify their position socialising with male musicians. Papers did not report any rape cases where musicians were accused. These claims and counter-claims illustrate a gender divide of professional and fan and a broader cultural response to gender relationships in a period when sexual habits were subject to intense discussion.

A few weeks later Chris Welch reignited the controversy. He asked Carl Wayne, the lead singer of the Move, 'Mothers tend to warn erring daughters to steer clear of the Move. What did Carl think of a recent correspondence in Mailbag on the subject of rape attempts on young girls by groups?'⁴⁶ Given the leading question and sensitive subject Wayne was unbelievably candid. He blamed women and parents rather than men for the sexual promiscuous 'girls' and strangely situated the rape debate alongside immigration and drugs issues:

Girls do knock on dressing room doors and later boast who they have slept with. But they're not all the same. Some are just nice kids who want to have a talk. Some wear tight sweaters and dance up close to the group. It's bad for the business sure, but males are more frustrated than females and you can't blame groups for what happens. They live on nerves anyway. I'm not saying they should go around taking advantage of every little scrubber, but some of them just ask for it.

It's a sign of the times. The rift between parents and children now is incredible. Even fifteen years ago there was more respect between them. Today's kids are completely independent. Marriage isn't what it used to be and sex isn't what it used to be. Yet people always tend to judge 1968 by 1938 standards or whatever the year is. You can't do that. The time will come when illegitimate births will exceed legitimate births and more people will live with each other than marry.

⁴⁶ Chris Welch, 'Despite what You may Think, The Move are Really Five Nice Guys- or so They Say' *Melody Maker*, 2 March 1968, p. 9.

...

Drugs and immigration are all things helping to undermine accepted morals in Britain.

But as far as rape attempts among groups go, these letters must refer to isolated cases. Parents are to blame. Their kids are an embarrassment to them and they resent their freedom and money. Most parents are fixed in a rut and just do their jobs without thinking. Kids rebel against this.

Wayne highlighted the entrenched view that parents and so-called 'little scrubber[s]' were to blame. He assumed that the generation gap had undermined the capacity of parents to transmit and share a moral code unlike others who argued that the generation gap had allowed young people to redefine morality on their own terms. He used the narrative of moral decline that had romanticised 'Victorian' gender roles since the interwar period. He conservatively portrayed illegitimacy and unmarried couples as threatening. Wayne's moral distinctions are steeped in distinctions of the moral and immoral: immigrants, drug users, women who seek out sexual opportunities are all immoral; men who take advantage of sexually precocious 'girls' are bound by their nature and blameless. His contention that sexualised women undermine the music industry is simply hypocritical compared to his assertion that male musicians were predisposed to sexual activity due to their 'frustration'. The idea of Move acting as guardians of the music industry's morality is highly ironic given that, after circulating a postcard of Harold Wilson in bed with his secretary Marcia Williams in 1967, Wilson had sued them for libel. Nevertheless Wayne's statement illustrates how the music press printed negative portrayals of sexually active women straightforwardly. Welch did not argue against Wayne's statements. The narratives of autonomous behaviour and liberalism that men enjoyed were qualified to control the sexual behaviour of young women.

There were still defined limits to women's behaviour and participation in the music business. This was infrequently challenged, but when it was it caused quite a stir. For example Geri Miller, one of Andy Warhol's muses, wrote that she had been on a date with Ringo Starr, amongst other musicians, due to the mutual interests that she shared with pop and rock musicians:

Hi! My name is Geri Miller. I have been in two Andy Warhol movies – one was *Flesh* and the other one was *Trash*. I was the first girl to show oral sex in a movie nicely, instead of with bad taste like pornographic movies show.

...

What I am trying to say is that I usually hang with people who are original and ahead of their time and I try to be that way myself.⁴⁷

Miller was an unusual case, especially because she mentioned, and was published after mentioning, oral sex and argued that it can be done 'nicely' and implying that it is mutually enjoyable. Without the link to Warhol this would have been unlikely. She also subverted the male expressions of lustful: Miller desired Lou Reed, 'Lou Reed is fabulous because he wears faded jeans and a black tee shirt. He looked sexy as hell at that show'. Similarly Caroline Coon mentioned how sexually liberated groupies could turn the tables on male rock stars. For instance whilst backstage at a concert a groupie showed The Clash's Joe Strummer Polaroid pictures of her notable sexual conquests. To Coon's amusement Strummer's face turned 'absolutely white'. Coon argued that, like their male counterparts, groupies were 'adventuresses seeking thrills, asking for sex, fantastically liberated behaviour'.⁴⁸ It was much harder to be accepted by the music industry if you were a woman, but groupies could be immersed in the rock and roll lifestyle using their sexuality to evade gendered social barriers. Coon also commented that a certain male journalist had been keen to divulge his affairs with a famous pop star. He expected congratulations not condemnation as a groupie: there is no doubt that gendered assumptions shaped moral values regarding sexual behaviour.

Groupies were, however, mentioned to corroborate the male musicians' sexual potency. But groupies were still mocked and dehumanised as disposable and vacuous. Journalists used groupies to describe the liberated behaviour of ogling male stars. One example is when Nick Kent's *NME* interviewed Roxy Music in Amsterdam in 1973. Ken reproduced a conversation with Brian Eno that arose over fan mail,

One letter started out: "Hi, I am 18-years-old and a good screw."

"I wish these girls would send photographs", sighed the man who has already been described in the press as "a self-confessed musical illiterate" and a "balding eunuch look-alike."

"In fact, I would like to take this opportunity to exhort, through the auspices of *New Musical Express*, all these young girls who have a definite sexual interest in me to enclose photographs of themselves. I would be more than grateful."

⁴⁷ 'Mailbag', *Melody Maker*, 23 February 1974, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Caroline Coon, personal interview (2011).

This said, he pulled a pair of op-art undergarments sent by a panting fan over his exquisitely balding pate and grinned obscenely. What was it like to be Roxy's sex symbol?" I asked.

"Marvellous, particularly as I'm totally useless at playing music."⁴⁹

Eno and Kent constructed groupies as sex obsessed, shallow and a little crazy. These negative tropes were exacerbated by Eno who asked fans to objectify themselves by supplying a photograph for his titillation and potential selection as a sexual partner rather than writing him a fan letter. Eno's narrative objectifies explicitly. On the other hand Eno was elevated as an unusual sex symbol with an intellect and voice; he was an aspirational figure of longing from women in 'op-art' briefs. The overall idea is a beguiling fantasy for young men: despite being unattractive and untalented, entering rock culture and becoming a successful pop star or journalist gives rise to sexual opportunity.

Similarly journalists described women artistes as 'sex objects'. This concept had been transferred from male artistes such as Elvis Presley, Tom Jones or P.J. Proby. This reflected the change from the 1960s female teenage record consumer and the later male-dominated music press market. Jones disliked his 'sex symbol' status:

Q. Proby has been quoted as saying you copy his style and that you will never be a sex symbol. Your view?

A. I am what I am. I have never tried to be what is popularly conceived as a modern sex symbol. Take a look at these sideburns and the curly hair – brushed back. Do you see any sign of the idol a la fringe and velvet pants?⁵⁰

Jones refused the categorisation, but illustrated how sexual symbolism was defined by physical characteristics and clothes rather than anything inherent in musical output (although doubtlessly raunchy music could support sex symbol status). Men were mostly described as sex symbols into the early-1970s. It was applied to artistes such as Tim Buckley, for instance; in 1974 Chrissie Hynde subversively appropriated her male colleagues' yearning in an article headlined, 'How a Hero Hippie became a

⁴⁹ Nick Kent, 'Of Launderettes And Lizard Girls' *NME*, 9 June 1973 (RB, accessed January 2012).

⁵⁰ Keith Altham, 'Tom Jones', *NME*, 12 March 1965 (RB, accessed December 2011).

Sex Object'.⁵¹ Similarly in 1975 Jonh Ingham described Queen as sex objects in *Sounds*: 'There have been sex objects and sex bombs, superstar potency and the arrogant presentation of this all-important area, but never has a man's weaponry been so flagrantly showcased.'⁵² Women were not regularly described as 'sex objects' yet. This is not to argue that women were not represented in terms of their appearance, clothes and heterosexual desire. Almost every article that focused upon a female artist referred to her appearance.

Some women artists were happily complicit and made anodyne statements that amplified their sexuality in a manner to attract a young male audience. Susie Quatro spoke to Michael Benton in 1973, the article was illustrated by Quatro posing in a tight fitting leather jumpsuit, holding her bass suggestively.⁵³ Benton was aware his questions were potentially sexist but continued regardless, 'Risking accusations of male chauvinism, I asked the little lady why she'd elected to play such a beefy instrument?' How so many layers of sexism were combined in a single question is a feat of misogyny. Her answer was very enlightening. It restated many narratives that permeated the music press, and focused on her sexuality:

Well, it's so horny, guitar gets you in the head, drums in the arse and bass right between the legs. To tell you the truth, I don't know if I play it right. Most people use a pick, but me, I just pull on the strings real hard.

Suzi's greatest characteristic however is her inexhaustible energy. She rarely sleeps or eats. Her views could easily be related to Women's Lib, but the burning bras bit is "just crap" she told me. "I'm just myself. Sure I ain't no lady. I can be dressed like one, but I'd soon spoil it by saying something like --

--.

"You know the men are prettier than the women these days. Take Bowie for instance, he makes me feel real ugly."

She made herself sexually available, but in a safe way: Quatro combined guitar lust with a slight implication of masturbation. She made the equation of rock music

⁵¹ Chrissie Hynde, 'How a Hippie Hero became a sultry Sex Object', *NME*, 8 June 1974 (RB, accessed December 2011).

⁵² Jonh Ingham, 'Wimpy and Quips', *Sounds*, 29 November 1975 (RB, accessed December 2011).

⁵³ Michael Benton, 'Suzi Q', *Melody Maker*, 2 June 1973, p. 3.

and sexuality. Quatro was sexually liberated but not feminist; She constructed herself as a tomboy making her fantastically attainable to teenage men, and the implicit assumption was that there are women who are not so much fun. Her gender was threatened by Bowie's gender blurring but women often made this recurrent, slightly homophobic, in-joke. Susie Quatro's safe bawdiness and mildly sexually provocative image was a contrived version of cheesecake pin-ups reimagined for teenage rock fans.

Nevertheless, there was a watershed around 1976 when *Sounds* introduced a male and female 'Sex Object of the Year' write-in vote for its readers.⁵⁴ The female 'sex object' had taken precedence on the page and subsequently mostly women were referred to as 'sex object'. Women *had* been sex objects before, yet now it was acceptable for journalists to label individual women 'sex objects' rather than just describe their appearance or refer to nameless, unknown women as sexual beings. Some artists accepted it, such as Pauline Murray from punk band Penetration, 'There's no harm in it. You don't have to be all tits and suspenders. People can like your character you know.'⁵⁵ Being a sex object could increase a band or musician's profile. Artistes as diverse as Kate Bush, X-Ray Spex, Tina Turner, Diana Ross and The Runaways were all described as sex objects to differing levels of acceptance. Heterosexual male journalists characterised women by their appearance and sexual desirability rather than their music. The negotiations of genre and musical genealogy that usually roused lively discussion were suspended: it was rarely asked, for example, what canon of music did Kate Bush fit into? But journalists frequently explained how they were smitten by her good looks and personality.

Debbie Harry was one artist who resisted journalist's categorisations. Harry, of New York new-wave band Blondie, had come second in *Sounds*'s 'Sex Object of the Year' and was *The Sun*'s 'Top Sexpot of the Year': she was continually objectified. Chris Stein, her bandmate and husband, spoke out in her defence, and discussed narratives of sexual abuse, objectification and women's liberation,

I don't think Debbie has ever presented herself as a woman being abused. She has an open sexuality, but I don't think we're selling sex. In fact I think Debbie represents a certain amount of power on stage. She's also showing that women can get to the top."

⁵⁴ *Sounds*, 22 December 1976, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Phil Sutcliffe, 'Going Underground', *Sounds*, 5 April 1980 (RB, accessed December 2011).

She presents sex from a woman's viewpoint, the non-dependent woman who doesn't need a man for his car, his house, his job, anything that women of previous generations needed a man's validation for.⁵⁶

NME writer Tony Parsons backed Stein's assertions. Parsons raged against the sexist excesses of the music industry: 'Welcome back to the sexist pig show! Excessive hypocritical bliss is the ultimate rock 'n' roll lifestyle. And so it goes, so it goes, and where it's heading everyone knows, a Swiss wank account.'⁵⁷ Both Stein and Parsons defended Harry, but the response was formulated by men. When Harry did respond in Parsons' article she was more worried about upsetting her parents: 'When I first started getting interviewed and talked about being a junkie and a groupie – which is the truth, right? – when my Mum and Dad saw that in print it *really* hurt them and I hated it more than anything.' Yet the music press discussing sexuality with Debbie Harry was symptomatic of the need to identify women in music as sex objects and then ask for their comments on sexuality, sexual histories or femininity. Men escaped similar questions. To Harry sexually probing questions became a frustrating and hurtful experience: Blondie were overshadowed by Harry's pin-up status and the publication of her past that disobeyed the more conservative values of her family.

Nasty sexism, limited lines of questioning for women and few opportunities to resist sexist clichés are factors which contributed to the music press's decline in the 1980s. New titles such as *The Face* and *Smash Hits* gave women a higher profile and asked women the same questions as men. *The Face* had a gender equal readership and *Smash Hits'* huge readership could be attributed to its success in attracting young female music fans that had been ignored since the early-1970s.⁵⁸ Paul Rambali, editor of *The Face*, even used male interviewees' preconceptions of female journalists such as Fiona Russell Powell to gain greater cooperation.⁵⁹ *The Face's* urbane and sophisticated journalism was rarely sexist. This was a conscious decision to react against previous subcultures and their adolescent values. As assistant-editor and editor Paul Rambali argued,

⁵⁶ Gary Bushell, 'Harrykiri', *Sounds*, 12 January 1980 (RB, accessed January 2012).

⁵⁷ Tony Parsons, 'Gentlemen Prefer Blondes', *NME*, 4 February 1978, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011). It is impossible to get verified data regarding *The Face's* readership.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 'We had a great girl called Fiona Russell Powell who did great interviews for us because she was so cheeky and people thought she was dumb, but she wasn't. She would come on like she was a dumb blonde so people would say the most amazing things to her. So she would get these great interviews from people.'

Look at the way [the music press] talked about sex, it's not very sexy is it? There was a lot of leering in it; it was really – talking about punk – male adolescent sexuality of a basic kind you know. There was an attempt to be sexually even handed, again in accordance with Leftist politics at the time and that just came out even more dryly if you like. It wasn't very sexy and one of the things that I liked at *The Face* was that I liked to include kind of sexual content and a bit of sexual flair, I hope. It made it a lot more fun and a lot warmer. Again, the thing is having and being happy to have fifty-fifty male/female readers, we thought it was a progressive thing and we were really happy with that.

The Face would describe women and men's attire and body type, it was of course a fashion magazine that also covered music. As Frank Mort has argued *The Face* used fashion and consumption to construct masculinities.⁶⁰ Mike Stand described Ian Dury's appearance, 'Cropped short his greying hair gives him a suitably arid appearance, emphasising stone-like slabs of cheek and brow.'⁶¹ Chris Salewicz described Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet, in an article that knowingly shared the name of George Melly's 1971 article *Revolt into Style*, as healthy and tanned: he discussed how his Dad – a former Ted – accepted his stylishness.⁶² Thus men's bodies were now a subject of discussion. It went against an assumption that fashion was inauthentic and not a male pursuit. Now even anarchist punks Crass fretted over buying boots: Dr. Marten's were made of leather, but were cheaper, sturdy and had punk connotations.⁶³ Men and women were both objects of style: they were subject to a similar visual language and narratives. The front covers below highlight the similarity between *The Face*'s covers featuring Siouxi Sioux and The Human League's Phil Oakey (as illustrated in figures 5.1. and 5.2), indeed there were similarities with imagery featuring Adam Ant and Anabella Lwin from Bow Wow Wow. If an artist's face was fashionably androgynous, headshots looked gender neutral. *The Face* downplayed conventional gender distinctions and allowed men to express themselves fashionably in a way that had been more subversive when employed by Bowie, Glam rockers or punks. Yet these constructions were narrated as commonplace rather than subversive,

⁶⁰ Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space* (London, 2006), p. 24-27.

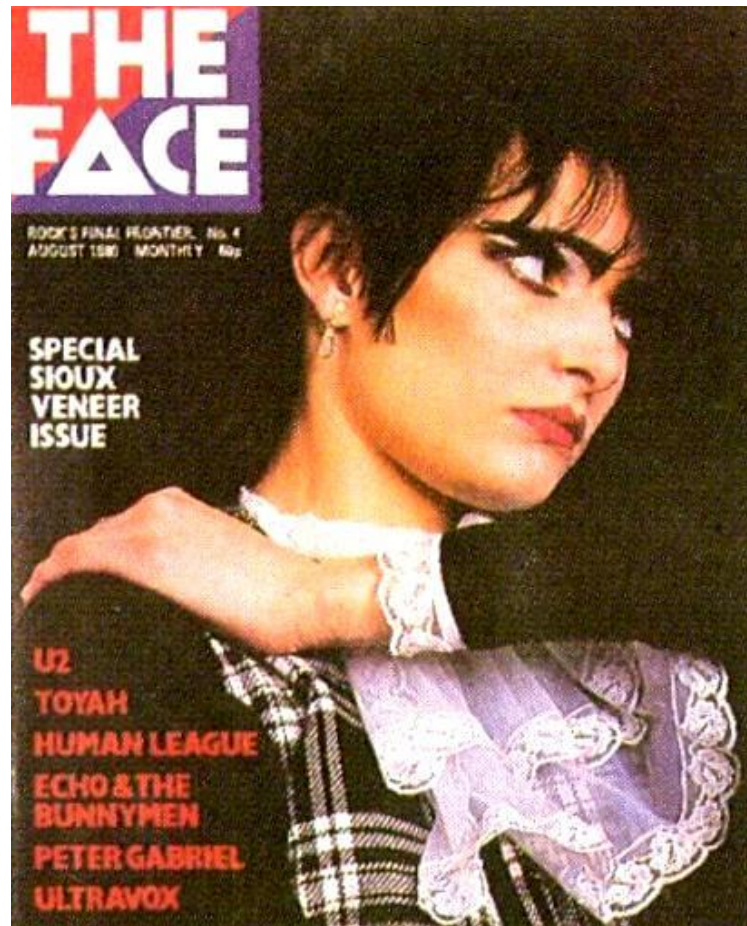
⁶¹ Mike Stand, 'The Royal Academy of Jacktheladery', *The Face*, December 1980 (RB, accessed February 2012).

⁶² Chris Salewicz, 'A Revolt into Style', *The Face*, August 1981 (RB, accessed February 2012).

⁶³ Mike Stand, 'The Aesthetics of Anarchy: A Report from the House of Crass', *The Face*, December 1981.

which illustrated a greater ease with deconstructed or neutral gender representation in the music press.

Figure 5.1: *The Face*, August 1980, p. 1.



Source: British Library

Figure 5.2: *The Face*, May 1982, p. 1.



Source: British Library.

Smash Hits was aimed at a younger audience than *The Face*. It retained the traditional music press's adolescent longing. Desire was self-consciously narrated but it was less lecherous than its predecessors. Sexuality was often subtly subverted. Mike Stand declared that he was 'in love' with Kate Bush, but 'not just because of the way she lit up an EMI office with those eyes or because of her obvious physical attractions to a male.'⁶⁴ He was attracted to her skills as an artist. Stand was the affectionate groupie. Stand narrated Bush as rebellious, independently minded and autonomous, 'while the image-makers have been pushing the myth of the innocent from the convent school, Kate Bush has been flouting every convention she's been faced with.' Women's achievements were celebrated more often. There was of course a female Prime Minister and a longer legacy of more equal working practices. Toyah Wilcox was feted for appearing in four films, numerous television shows and having a

⁶⁴ Mike Stand, 'Things Mother Never Told You', *Smash Hits*, 18 October 1979 (RB, December 2011).

successful music career.⁶⁵ The paper noted that Annie Lennox studied music at the Royal Academy of Music.⁶⁶ The construct that women in music, like Dory Previn or Suzie Quatro, were subservient to male counterparts was rejected. Pete Silverton reported how Girtalk ordered around their ‘30-year-old, bearded roadies’.⁶⁷ *Smash Hits* could not avoid mentioning Kim Wilde’s family, her father was film star Marty Wilde.⁶⁸ Despite family links that would have aided her career, Wilde was described as an independent individual who had ‘outspoken opinions and a range of interests beyond music that runs from Japanese Koi fish to cookery and Impressionist painting.’ *Smash Hits*’ younger, predominantly female readership read narratives of independent femininity and successful women. Understandably this encouraged more women and girls to read the music press.

This chapter demonstrates that the music press had an uncomfortable relationship with women. This can be attributed to a combination of limited opportunities for women to work as journalists or musicians and entrenched sexist assumptions that were used to describe women. Male journalists often narrated femininity in a belittling way. They reported women according to a variety of glib categorisations. Music made by women was reduced to a secondary topic after titillating discussions of physical characteristics: this intensified the conflation of rock music and sexuality. Men narrated femininity in reference to sexual attraction or gratification. Yet journalists and male musicians frequently deemed women immoral if they exhibited similarly ‘sexually liberated’ behaviour. There was resistance to the music press’s sexism, especially in the later-1970s but in comparison to the U.S. music press Women’s Liberation narratives were few. Conscious-raising had less of an impact in Britain whilst personal and commercial reasons occluded feminist discourse from discussions. Nevertheless other mediums such as fanzines enabled feminist musicians to narrate their views and by the 1980s the music press became more palatable to a female audience. Yet the music press’s claims to representing ‘permissive’ morality in the aftermath of 1960s debates afforded liberation to men, but supported women’s subjugation by reporting male-dominated heterosexual constructions of femininity that were blind to feminism’s 1960s rejuvenation.

⁶⁵ Mike Stand, ‘Toyah’, *Smash Hits*, 27 November 1980 (RB, accessed February 2012).

⁶⁶ Dave Rimmer, ‘Eurhythmics’, *Smash Hits*, 3 March 1983 (RB, accessed February 2012).

⁶⁷ Peter Silverton, ‘Girtalk’, *Smash Hits*, 30 April 1981 (RB, accessed February 2012).

⁶⁸ Johnny Black, ‘Wilde Life’, *Smash Hits*, 28 May 1981 (RB, accessed February 2012).

Chapter Six

Banned from the Roxy: Punk Violence

Punk used violent transgression to reject normative behavioural standards and gain popular attention. Music papers narrated and, originally, embellished punks' misbehaviour despite many precedents for badly behaved musicians and prior calls for direct, raw musical simplicity. The music press used a more sociological style of reporting to construct punk as a genre with greater meaning in accordance with ideas that music has a social role and represents social issues. However this was disrupted by the moral panic that responded to the Sex Pistols appearance on *The Gill Grundy Show*. The Sex Pistols and Grundy had an expletive-laden, 'offensive' exchange which led the popular daily press to construct punk as seditious, sick and dangerous. Subsequently music papers reported how people attacked punks in the street and how, in an unprecedented move, local councils banned punk performances. But eventually the music press justified the genre through a narrative of egalitarian involvement that invited British youth to participate in punk performance, cultural politics and morality. The music press then reported their exploits. The chapter illustrates these points by discussing punk's social, cultural and economic context. It then discusses antecedents to punk musicians' performance of mischief and shows how commercial concerns and notions of violent appeal had previously assuaged concerned onlookers. Subsequently the chapter discusses how the music press constructed punk's emergence and added complexity to the genre's mythology through detailed reporting. It then takes into account how moral panic disrupted the music press's complex reading of punk and how it responded to justify punk and its moral voice. Therefore the music press played a distinctive and different role from the mainstream press by not just conforming to the moral panic narrative. Instead music papers incubated the punk challenge and facilitated a long-term negotiation of 'punk' values.

If, as Foucault argues, morality is best understood through debates concerning the definition, expression and negotiation of transgression, the advent of British punk rock is a vital moment. Punk reinvigorated moral debates in the music press. The music press narrated passionate resistance to traditional morality and renegotiated the morality of popular music.¹ Much scholarship has attempted to

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), pp. 25-26. He argues, 'one must determine how and with what margins of variation or transgression individuals or groups conduct themselves in reference to a

explain punk: it was a complex genre that changed quickly, and most recently it has been seen as a response to the 'end of consensus.'² In the music press, the early stirrings of British punk's key characteristic was the threat, which in some cases was taken quite seriously, of violent delinquency by (apparently) working-class youth to spite wider society.³ In addition, the music press argued that punk music could appeal to those who felt excluded by increasingly aloof and affluent musicians. Punk did this by breaking industry conventions of professionalism and taste. Writers added sociological theorising to the dominant style of new journalism which complemented Punk's ability to command attention. Indeed, this new journalistic style helped journalists define punk as a social phenomenon that reflected British economic problems (that hit youth disproportionately). Nevertheless, narratives of musical transgression, coupled with violence, illegality, immorality and nihilism, often obscured how punks engaged in reformulating of humanist, socialist, libertarian and liberal narratives.

The music press narrated how much of punk's expression of difference was stylistic. Dick Hebdige described how images such as the swastika, military and bondage clothing were détourned as part of the subcultural style whose 'graffiti' scarred the canvass of the 'straight' world.⁴ Some individuals even enacted the discourses of violence and bad behaviour, but the media amplified transgressive behaviour to such an extent that 'punk' performance elicited censorship and provoked a sinister reaction from some members of the public. Yet punk accompanied a moral critique of the music industry's excesses. In response it popularised a do-it-yourself template for music making that offered the tools, both conceptual and practical, that countered the culture industry's commercialisation of leisure. The spread of these notions emboldened those outside of the capital to challenge London's musical hegemony. Nevertheless violence, anger and bad behaviour dominated early media

prescriptive system that is explicitly or implicitly operative in their culture, of which they are more or less aware.'

² Matthew Worley 'Shot by Both Sides', *Contemporary British History* 26:3 (2004), p. 333-354.

³ Scholars have explained punk using a variety of rationales for its existence and motivation It has been read as a reassertion of class based narratives and working class values: D. Simonelli, 'Anarchy, Pop and Violence: Punk Rock Subculture and the Rhetoric of Class, 1976-78' *Contemporary British History* 16:2 (2002), p. 121-144; a pluralistic movement that linked sexual subcultures: Tavia N'Yongo 'Do You Want Queer Theory (or Do You Want the Truth)? Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s' *Radical History Review* 100 (2006), pp. 103-119. Lawrence Grossberg had argued that the origins of punk were much more middle-class than has been given credit: Lawrence Grossberg, 'Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life,' *Popular Music*, 4 (1984), pp. 229-230. The canonical text is Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London, 1991).

⁴ There were some 'Nazi punks' who associated with the National Front and were courted by fascist and racist punk fanzines, but this will be covered in the second half of the chapter. The punk use of the swastika is found in Richard Hebdige *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), p. 117.

discussions of punk to an extent that unprecedented control was exerted on the subculture by politicians, the music industry and livid members of the public.

British punk intensified a crisis narrative in the music press. The crisis was a moral panic over the behaviour of youth that emanated from economic, social and political crises and even crises within the music industry. Colin Hay argued that the formulation of crisis in the press was significant to understanding the 1978-1979 'Winter of Discontent'.⁵ However whilst the late-1970s press's intensified crisis narratives are important to take into account, decline narratives had been brewing for longer. Nevertheless Hay's insight is a useful, especially given that historical scholarship on this period is in its infancy.⁶ Accordingly the music press represented crisis within the broader tradition of debates on Britain's post-Imperial decline. However the material basis for crisis narratives in the late-1970s was more acute.

Economic turbulence and a rupture in economic ideology supported notions of crisis. By 1973 the British economy, run by political consensus according to Keynesian demand management theory, suffered its first recession since 1945. The recession lasted until 1975 and GDP declined 3.9 per cent.⁷ This destabilised British politics as Thatcherism, a more left-wing incarnation of Labour under Michael Foot and Tony Benn, and more prominent extremist factions on the left and right emerged. The economy's decline was accompanied by intense speculation on global currency markets. The end of rising oil prices and the Bretton Wood system of currency exchange resulted in troublesome inflation: the music press grumbled as vinyl prices crept upwards.⁸ In December 1976 the government borrowed from the International Monetary Fund in order to stabilise the pound and fight inflation. This undermined the former metropole's pretensions and exacerbated the idea of a crisis. Significantly for the music press's readers, the loan was predicated upon the adoption of some key tenets of monetarism. Most importantly, full employment was replaced as the vital economic policy objective by inflation control and public spending cuts. Inflation had lessened the worth of real wages, agitating unions who were charged with representing workers. But many of the teenagers and young adults that formed the readership of the music press were not even able to gain union representation: punk articulated and the music press mediated an unemployment crisis. Youth unemployment reached

⁵ Colin Hay, 'Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the "Winter of Discontent"' *Sociology* 30:2 (1996), pp. 253-277.

⁶ The idea of a crisis has been denied and confirmed in popular histories: George Bernstein, *The Myth of Decline* (London, 2004). Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun* (London, 2012).

⁷ Crafts and Woodward, 'The British Economy since 1945: Introduction and Overview' *The British Economy Since 1945* (Oxford, 1991), p. 8.

⁸ It was front page news in *Melody Maker*, 4 January 1973.

thirty per cent.⁹ Albeit it is an enduring misconception that punk's 'working-class' discontentment excluded affluent youth.¹⁰ Punk music was an immediate response to economic and social problems but it also provided a space to enjoy oneself despite economic realities. Indeed punk's narrative of divergence from moral norms interested a broad spectrum of 'deviants' regardless of their class. The music press made the most detailed examination of punk's multifaceted critique and rejection of society's norms.

However misbehaviour was not just a reaction to economic malaise; music had long provided a platform for individuals who sought notoriety, who wanted to push back the boundaries of decency, or who indulged the idea that rowdiness corresponded to having a good time. The music press delighted in reporting bad behaviour. The Who's Keith Moon became an archetype of mischievous rock and roll behaviour. Albeit the music press ultimately constructed Moon as a cautionary example due to years of alcohol and drug addiction and his premature death from an overdose of the clomethiazole which was proscribed to deter him from drinking. The music press forged Moon's mythology. Moon was the first public relations representative for The Who and, keen to gain attention, he would often parade his 'Moon the Loon' persona to the press. In 1969, for instance, he displayed his finely attuned troublemaking at a Track Records Christmas party,

All was peaceful during a splendid drag show with genteel piano accompaniment. But as the champagne took effect, a sausage roll was somehow flicked between rival pop writers, and within seconds a maelstrom of food blitzed the office, leaving the floor, ceiling, walls and guests coated in inches of sausage, pastry and cake.

One pop man received a custard tart full in the face, directed by Keith Moon. Seconds later Steve Marriott finished the job by emptying a bowl of beetroot on his head. Another reporter was hit on the head by a piano, and Townshend and Moon danced a dervish between letting off exploding 'whoopie' bombs.¹¹

The music press did not construct Moon's behaviour as a threat to society. Even though this article was accompanied by a picture of Moon in Nazi *Schutzstaffel* garb, the caption 'custard pies' flippantly counteracted any threat. Moon was simply

⁹ Michael H. Banks and Philip Ullah, *Youth Unemployment in the 1980s* (Beckenham, 1988), pp. 8-9.

¹⁰ Jon Savage argued that one of the benefits of punk was the opportunity it afforded to cross-class mixing. Jon Savage, personal interview (2011).

¹¹ 'Splat! Went Custard Pies and Beetroot', *Melody Maker*, 4 January 1969, p. 6.

upsetting staid industry conventions of behaviour to ensure coverage.¹² Others behaved in a similar way to Moon and provoked similar attention.

Concerns had, however, been voiced about violent fans and misbehaving musicians well before the onset of punk. Rock and roll had announced itself to the British public in cinemas from 1956 and had elicited concerns about youth behaviour.¹³ George McKay argues that the 1960 National Jazz Festival – in the genteel setting of Lord Montagu’s Beaulieu House – which ended in a riot, was the culmination of a summer of fractious jazz meets.¹⁴ Violent lyrics in pop music and the media amplification of ‘deviant’ music subcultures (such as the Mods and Rockers) supported narratives of seductively exciting violence in music. Thus the music press often constructed the behaviour of young music fans in terms of violence, anarchy and misbehaviour. Yet many accounts were reflexively aware of media amplification and moral panics. For instance in 1968 Chris Welch wrote in *Melody Maker*,

You see kiddies, rock was more than the pop of the days. It was a revolution and a way of life.

To young people starved of glamour and excitement in the ration-book post-war years of austerity, rock was a revelation.

It horrified the older generation and shocked established musicians, but for the first time here was music that was the personal property, the badge and the emblem of young people earning their first real money and able to buy the records and clothes of their choice.

It meant pure freedom and a degree of anarchy never before possible.

....

But although teddy boys and violence were unfortunate fellow travellers with the new music, then as now, a lot of it was due to newspaper incitement.¹⁵

Welch’s comments predate Stan Cohen’s *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* but do not preclude music papers from ‘newspaper incitement’ and negative labelling.¹⁶ Nevertheless narratives of violence were exaggerated further by 1976. Concerns about youth intermingled with wider social issues, recession and supposedly endemic crisis.

¹² As Chris Charlesworth and Keith Altham, close confidants of the Who argued in oral history interviews. Chris Charlesworth, personal interview (2011). Keith Altham, personal interview (2010).

¹³ Andy Bennett, *Cultures of Popular Music* (London, 2001), pp. 11-12.

¹⁴ George McKay, *Circular Breathing* (Durham NC, 2005), pp. 73-86.

¹⁵ Chris Welch, ‘A Brave New World – Through Pop’, *Melody Maker*, 6 April 1968, p. 6.

¹⁶ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Abingdon, 1979), pp. 38-39.

In fact this discussion predated punk. Slightly before punk 'broke', *Melody Maker* printed a dialogue on violence in music. They reported a music promoter as saying:

That reflects what's happening outside rock. There's no doubt that the late Sixties were, we can now see, a very prosperous era for kids here and in America. Now it's not nearly so prosperous. It's now, altogether, a very much more uptight world.

Everything isn't groovy now.¹⁷

The promoter exhibited unease with the younger music fans and their behaviour. By using the term 'groovy', so identifiably of the 1960s, he constructed a rupture in youth's behavioural norms. He extended the 1960s generation gap to the post-1960s generation. However the leader of the government's working group on pop festivals, Lord Peter Melchett, rejected the idea that youth had become more unruly. The music press often represented the idea of an epochal shift from the 1960s into a darker and more tumultuous period. In the early-1970s papers reported a number of riotous concerts. In 1973 *Melody Maker* described how 40,000 fans rioted at a Deep Purple show in Ithica, New York, whilst the Dome Theatre, Brighton banned Bowie and Led Zeppelin 'following extensive damage'.¹⁸ In 1976 *Melody Maker's* Chris Welch and *NME's* Mick Farren saw The Who's 1976 concert at the Valley, home of Charlton Athletic Football Club, as illustrating a malaise engulfing the music industry which was exacerbated by abhorrent event planning and the crowd's alcohol fuelled mayhem.¹⁹ *Melody Maker* reported The Who's roadie Gerry Horgan, who had received a facial scar at a previous concert at the Valley, as saying, 'There were guys kicking the s--- out of each other. I mean, there was violence in that crowd that I have not seen in England for a long, long time.'²⁰ *Melody Maker* censored Horgan's industrial language but the crowd violence was described in detail. Yet papers described violence in music as captivating as well as stimulating disgust. Evidently the violent scenes provoked condemnation, but at the same time in *Sounds* Barbara Charone, a huge fan of The Who, glamorised the concert. Like Moon's misbehaviour, crowd trouble was viewed as part of The Who's dangerous appeal.²¹

¹⁷ 'Curb Rock Threat', *Melody Maker*, 19 February 1972, p. 1 and p. 8.

¹⁸ *Melody Maker*, 23 June 1973, p. 5.

¹⁹ Chris Welch, 'Who-Ray!', *Melody Maker*, 5 June 1976 (RB, accessed March 2012). Mick Farren, 'The Titanic Sails at Dawn', *NME*, 19 June 1976, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Allan Jones, 'Festivals: Too Much Blood on the Tracks', *Melody Maker*, 26 June 1976, pp. 28-29.

²¹ Barbara Charone, 'The Real Thing – Accept No Substitute', *Sounds*, 12 June 1976 (RB, accessed March 2012).

However contrite industry-platitudes usually cloaked trouble at concerts. Promoters and record labels were powerful commercial interests who commanded support in the Commons and Lords. For instance, on 14 June 1977 The House of Commons discussed punk rock in a debate on regulating safety measures at rock concerts. MPs who had been fans of raucous or anti-establishment music happily relayed their experiences.²² Bruce George, Labour MP for Walsall South, began the debate with a history of his musical interests to show, 'I am not an old dodderer who is urging an attack on pop concerts or pop fans'. Rather he preferred that music fans, 'emerge unscathed from their attendance' at concerts. He argued for legislating on peak volume levels, more toilets and provisions to prevent crushing. George used similar language that *Melody Maker* used when protesting against the Night Assemblies Bill in 1972.²³ George explained that he represented his constituent Raymond Dyke, an experienced local concert promoter. George outlined the practical issues required to ensure safe concerts and argued that punk rock, at that point a media chimera, should not be victimised specifically. He attacked a report in the *Sunday People*,

It may have overstated the case, but the paper said that the verdict of its investigators on the cult was: 'It is sick. It is dangerous. It is sinister. And their findings are a warning to every family. Our investigation has uncovered a creed which glorifies violence, filth, sadism and rebellion. Unemployed young people or those with limited job prospects provide a fertile ground for the proponents of punk rock.' As one who attended a number of concerts given in the late 'fifties by singers such as Eddie Cochrane and Gene Vincent, who could be regarded as fore-runners of punk rock, perhaps I should not throw too many stones at youngsters who are doing the same sort of thing 20 years later.

This statement highlights a pervasive media construction of punk whilst also showing that these media narratives were not entirely accepted. George drew on a language that the music press had developed to protect 'outrageous' but commercially successful music. Amusingly, David Mudd, a Conservative MP, responded first in the debate to add the Kirchin Band to the 'forebearers of punk' and reminisced how their musical energy did not provoke crowd trouble. However Labour's Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Kenneth Marks, concluded the debate. He agreed with

²² British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons Debate, 'Pop Concerts' CMXXXIII 1977 (http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/jun/14/pop-concerts#S5CV0933P0_19770614_HOC_378, accessed April 2012).

²³ The Night Assemblies Bill had attempted to prevent outdoor meetings over 1,000 people for three hours following midnight, thus stymieing music festivals. It was discussed in the music press, mostly by *Melody Maker* for instance in *Melody Maker*, 11 March 1972, p. 2.

many of George's practical recommendations and explained existing legislation that could be invoked to alleviate problems. Nonetheless Marks argued that punk was 'something rather more frightening'. Marks referred to an article in *The Economist* – a publication that he pronounced was significantly more trustworthy than the *Sunday People* – that had highlighted the 'the "blank generation", "hate" and "destroy"' slogans, as well as artiste backgrounds punctuated with tales of urban anomie (bar privately educated son of a diplomat Joe Strummer) as specifically troubling and worthy of 'a great deal of investigation' by his own department. In parliament punk was defended and criticised. Music industry professionals who gained economically from the music's popularity could reach and influence MPs, but the media discourses on punk critically altered many people's perceptions. Using the term 'punk' a specific subculture of young people could be labelled as transgressing conventional notions of youth bad behaviour, as being almost inhuman, definitely unemployable. The misbehaviour of youth was once again scrutinised to measure the health of wider society. Violent youth had been recently portrayed in Stanley Kubrick's rendering of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*: it seemed to some that the ultra-violent 'droogs' had escaped the acetate.²⁴ However the music press's mediation of punk was significantly more complex: papers could contribute to myths, but more often than not they contextualised punk behaviour and explained how violent attitudes and acts were a single aspect of a more nuanced genre.

Like ex-rocker MPs, punk's ill-mannered forbears had, in many cases, assimilated into the music industry. In the mid-1970s the music press began to complain about how a 'rock aristocracy' had left young music fans with little representation from their peers. Mick Farren explained,

You've got Mick Jagger swanning around with personal bodyguards behaving like bloody Caligula. Yeah, it was, you know, the gulf was, and still is, the gulf in entertainment between the haves and the have-nots was vast, I mean it was totally unconscionable.²⁵

In January 1976 Farren wrote an article exploring contemporary rock music's lack of 'relevancy'.²⁶ He argued that a 'corporation mentality has taken over' causing rock to lose touch with fans. Musicians, he argued, were 'hothouse'd' like 1930s music stars,

²⁴ *A Clockwork Orange* [DVD film], directed by Stanley Kubrick (1971, rereleased by Warner Home Video in 2001).

²⁵ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

²⁶ Mick Farren, 'The Kids are Not Necessarily Alright', *NME*, 1 March 1975 (RB, February 2012).

but instead of Mulholland Drive musicians had chosen Los Angeles's Hyatt House hotel. In June 1976 Farren famously repeated his concerns in an article headlined 'the Titanic Sales at Dawn'.²⁷ Farren was concerned that both *NME* and 'modern seventies style super rock' – exemplified by a recent swanky *NME* awards gala – had become isolated from its fans. He asked,

Did we really come through the fantasy, fear and psychic mess of the last decade to make rock and roll safe for the Queen, Princes Margaret or Liz Taylor? Was the bold rhetoric and even the deaths and imprisonments simply to enable the heroes and idols of the period to retreat into a gaudy, vulgar jet set that differs from the Taylor/Burton menace or the Sinatra rat pack only in small variations of style?

The article was based on no consensus at *NME*. The editor, Nick Logan, frequently interjected into the article with sardonic one-liners. For instance when Farren insisted that underground values antithetical to the 'affluent society' were reinstated in rock, Logan quipped, 'AH-HA! NOW WE GET DOWN TO IT. FARREN'S TRYING TO TURN THE CLOCK BACK TO THE SIXTIES UNDERGROUND SCENE.' In the following issue Max Bell argued that Farren was responding to a specifically British problem of 'bona fide superstars and debased rich kids crying all the way into the tax exile'.²⁸ Actually, Bell argued, 1976's music fans could identify with 'authentic' US artistes such as Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, Todd Rundgren and Alex Chilton. However the idea that, in Britain, an increasingly disengaged entertainment hierarchy had left music fans behind was rife. The music press were brave to cover this assertion: stars were popular musicians who sold music papers. It exemplifies the music press's estrangement from the music industry and its increased profile as a social and cultural commentator in its own right. Farren argued that complaining fans were behind him, 'the letters that get themselves printed in *Gasbag* (or *Dogbag* or *Ratbag* or *Scumbag* or whatever jiveass name we've dredged out of our collective misery that particular week) are only the tip of an iceberg.' Farren noted it was a pretty vicious iceberg, young people had even been turned-off the once anti-establishment Rolling Stones and needed their own response: 'The aforementioned iceberg cometh. And that iceberg, dear reader is you. Dig? I'm talkin' 'bout you.'

Bell's comments were not sufficient to counter the anger with the formerly anti-establishment rock aristocracy. The letters pages published indignant letters every

²⁷ Mick Farren 'The Titanic Sales at Dawn', *NME*, 19 June 1976, pp. 5-6.

²⁸ Max Bell, 'The Titanic might be Sinking, but there are Plenty of Lifeboats Left', *NME*, 3 July 1976, pp. 5-6.

week and even journalists with underground credentials were not safe. For example, Paul Crosby from Liverpool wrote to ‘Gasbag’, *NME*’s letters page, to complain about Charles Shaar Murray’s article on Patti Labelle. He argued: ‘Let’s hope for a change of policy and attitude in ’76 – it really isn’t enough to just ridicule and put down this trash tacky side of rock (i.e. about 90 per cent of it) – *ignore* it and try to write about the few people who still have something to say.’²⁹ Murray responded with droll self-mockery, lampooning the self-serving press junket culture, ‘Hey, young *maaaaaaan* – you cats are so like *serious*, man. Would *you* turn down a trip to Hollywood if you were a Labelle freak?’ Crosby articulated a key concept used to express discontent with the music press and music industry: he stressed Labelle’s inauthenticity and the music press’s complicity in such a contrived business. The discussion was not limited to *NME*. In *Melody Maker* Chris Durston from Reading expressed his disgust with Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant who had complained about Britain’s tax laws and, like many of his peers, gone into exile in the U.S. Durston wrote,

Is Plant seriously trying to tell us he could not live and work in Great Britain and earn as much after tax as the average coal worker or nurse, who works just as hard, and performs just as useful service for the community as he does? If self-centred superstars feel they must live abroad for tax reasons all you can really say is – good riddance.³⁰

The music press constructed, with the help of its readers, a fertile space for punk musicians, by narrating annoyance with rock excess the music press justified including new music. It was a mutually beneficial relationship. The music press needed a generation of musicians who were happy to communicate with the music press, rather than avoid interaction as they already had a loyal fan base. For instance, Plant and Led Zeppelin had become aloof and the music press, especially titles other than *Melody Maker*, had little to lose by attacking them. Papers argued that an artistically bereft and boring corporate music industry had driven the commercial successes prominent musicians, the concerns and values of wealthy musicians and increasingly hard-up fans had diverged. Musicians were no longer heroes of a new morality as they had sometimes portrayed themselves in the late-1960s and into the 1970s. They had been

²⁹ ‘Gasbag’, *NME* 17 January 1976, p. 46.

³⁰ ‘Mailbag’, *Melody Maker*, 21 February 1976, p. 15.

assimilated into the structures that the 1960s counter-culture or underground had previously critiqued.

Yet punk was not the first attempt at reviving 1960s notions of local, independent music making. The music press, especially *Melody Maker*, reported on underground music acts such as Cambridge educated anti-capitalist avant-rockers Henry Cow. Henry Cow's members followed a stringently independent, if musically opaque ethos. Henry Cow came from an avant-garde and jazz music background that had often been served by a collective ethos. The music press, particularly *NME* and *Sounds*, had also devoted coverage to bands such as Essex's Dr. Feelgood, who were described as Pub rock. Pub rock referred to vaguely blues influenced bands that, at first, had performed in pubs and inspired much British punk. It had very few pretensions. In June 1975 Mick Gold interviewed Dr. Feelgood in *Let it Rock*. The interview illustrated the discrepancy between journalists seeking to construct 'authentic' rockers who engaged fans and a more pervasive public perception of musicians as gilded superstars:

They began gigging around the pub-rock circuit, and Wilko [Johnson] learnt something about audience attitudes: to believe you were any good, they needed to believe you were making money.

Even in a pub, they thought if you was whizzing around on stage, you must be making it. If you told 'em you were only clearing two quid each for the evening, they started to think you must be rubbish.³¹

The article exemplified how journalists constructed 'normal' people as authentic and morally superior to the debased and distant rich. For instance, the article stresses how Dr. Feelgood were neither wealthy, nor did they court wealth. Furthermore Gold stressed guitarist Wilko Johnson's estuary accent and 'Neanderthal persona' to denote Johnson's working-class origins. Nevertheless the article slips from this rhetoric by mentioning that Johnson was a former teacher, thus it took journalistic licence to portray Johnson as working-class. The narrative was not entirely British. Influential U.S. journalist Lester Bangs had used a similar narrative to valorised bands that predated the popularity of 'progression' in music: Bangs had celebrated The Troggs; their name was a play on the term 'troglodytes', and Gold's use of the term

³¹ Mick Gold, *Let It Rock*, June 1975.

'Neanderthal' hints towards a similar advocacy of musical missing links.³² Bangs was not the only journalist who felt alienated by the 1970s music industry and constructed a romantic image of a return to working-class values and simple music. In 1973 Slade were often celebrated as working class heroes, just as The Beatles had been constructed as representing working-class folk:

In an age when rock stars drive around in Rolls-Royces and live in country mansions, Noddy [Holder, Slade's singer] is the exception. A true working class hero whose successes lie in his ability to identify with the fans who play Slade records as fast as they can roll off the presses.

Noddy's fans like football, beer, sex and Slade in any order. Noddy likes the same.³³

The notions of class and distance from the music business were expedient. Pub rock could be constructed as simplifying the music industry's bourgeois flourishes. It courted younger music fans, who were tired of 'progression', to read the music press. This is exemplified by *Sounds* who earned a more youthful readership through reporting punk rock in detail.³⁴ In Gold's *Let it Rock* feature on Dr. Feelgood he asked, 'How can anyone be so basic in 1975? Are they really four zombies who fell asleep in the early Sixties and snored happily through the 'progressive' rock era?'³⁵ This was a recurrent dialectic that stated corporate musical and economic excess in opposition to the masses that were sick of fancy music and conspicuous affluence.

In comparison to the more workmanlike pub rockers, the music press's reporting on punk was much more flamboyant, but journalists and musicians still used the same anti-commercial distinctions. It was akin to the 1960s assertion that popular music was supposed to communicate values rather than engage in economic exploitation. Yet the first few articles that discussed punk narrated the transgression of behavioural norms, class or anti-commercial rhetorics echoed in the background. This violence was a discursive phenomenon as much as a physical reality: neither Ian Birch nor Jon Savage experienced much violence. Savage argued:

I think it tended to be seen as theatrical; none of the Sex Pistols were hard men. I think that there was violence at the shows, there certainly was a

³² This is found in one of Bangs' most influential essays. Lester Bangs, 'Psychotic Reactions and Carburettor Dung', in Greil Marcus (ed) *Psychotic Reactions and Carburettor Dung*, (New York, 1988), pp. 56-61.

³³ Chris Charlesworth, 'In the Land of Nod', *Melody Maker*, 17 February 1973, pp. 30-31.

³⁴ *National Readership Survey* (London, January-June 1981), p. 12.

³⁵ Mick Gold, 'Maximum R&B', *Let It Rock*, June 1975 (RB, March 2012).

volatile atmosphere. I didn't see a lot of violence at shows, but there was always a volatile atmosphere compared to today.³⁶

Birch, for instance, took a group of U.S. tourists to a punk concert at Camden's Dingwalls Club, a second home to outrageous musicians such as Hawkwind and Motörhead's Lemmy; they were shaken but Birch was not intimidated.³⁷ Yet violent transgression gained the music press's initial attention, even if more complex narratives emerged later as punk was constructed in more detail. Coverage began with eye-catching and, if Svengali Malcolm MacLaren is to be believed – yes, in most cases he should not be – stage-managed acts of symbolic aggression by the Sex Pistols.³⁸ In February 1976 Neil Spencer described The Sex Pistol's theatrical violence in *NME*.³⁹ Spencer wrote that he was greeted at the door by an unnamed individual calling, 'HURRY UP, they're having an orgy on stage'. He described how he rushed downstairs to see a chair thrown at the public address system. He wisecracked, 'Well I didn't think that they were *that* bad on first earful – then I saw it was the singer who'd done the throwing.' Spencer narrated violence, sexual obscenity and unprofessionalism to construct the Sex Pistols. He supported these themes by reporting a quote from singer Johnny Rotten. Rotten had argued that the Pistols were into 'chaos' not music. From the outset music papers constructed the Sex Pistols, the most famous early British punks, as wilfully transgressive and destructive. The review was noticeably placed next to Richard Meltzer's review of Alice Cooper, the previous hawker of shocking live music. Cooper was now playing at a casino in Lake Tahoe on the border of California and Nevada edging towards the credibility vanishing point of Las Vegas. There Cooper could indulge in his new pastime; he was working towards an impressive golf handicap (5.3). *NME* was constructing another generation gap.

the Sex Pistols were desperate to present themselves as the violators of contemporary morals for the vicarious pleasure of fans. With no releases or radio play the music press was the only medium in which the Sex Pistols could communicate to a wider audience. *NME* and *Sounds* happily obliged; the Sex Pistols provided them with provocative events to report. Jonh Ingham secured the first interview in April 1976 in seedy Soho strip club El Paradise.⁴⁰ It was constructed as a transgressive venue:

³⁶ Jon Savage, personal interview (2011).

³⁷ Ian Birch, personal interview (2011).

³⁸ MacLaren, as it has been noted, was heavily influenced by Situationist ideas and the notion of 'creative destruction'. However he revised his story as a capitalist scam in the *loosely* factual and somewhat scattershot 'documentary' *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle* [DVD film], directed by Julien temple (1978, rereleased by Sony Music in 2005).

³⁹ Neil Spencer, *NME*, 21 February 1976, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Jonh Ingham, 'The Sex Pistols are Four Months Old,' *Sounds*, 24 April 1976 (RB, accessed February 2012).

When you're trying to create the atmosphere of anarchy, rebellion and exclusiveness that's necessary as a breeding ground, what better place? Name one kid who will tell their parents they'll be home really late this Sunday because they're going to a strip club to see the Sex Pistols.

Even if the band were not responsible for specific acts of violence, they were furnished with violent metaphors: they played like 'Lockheed Starfighter' military jets. The Sex Pistols did, however, begin to set a precedent for less superficial punk values: they argued that they did not use drugs, therefore (dishonestly) differentiating themselves from the 'rock aristocracy'. They further underlined the divide between two generations of musicians by imploring readers to 'start something'. This went against how music papers had previously constructed musicians as 'savants' and 'auteurs'.

By the following April the moral panic had spread from the music press, leading Jon Savage to comment,

It must be conceded that Malcolm McLaren has a first-class media brain with a perfect instinct for theatre.

He can now have his cake and eat it - the media hype around the Pistols is so entangled that people will now believe anything. Always there are two or three different explanations for any given event or stroke pulled.⁴¹

NME missed another early concert that stoked the narrative of punk violence, but luckily future *Smash Hits* writer and Pet Shop Boys founder Neil Tennant sent in an unsolicited review.⁴² The review accompanied a Mick Farren article headlined 'Terrorise Your Fans Your Own Way' rather than appearing on the letters page. This is unprecedented and underlines *NME's* will to report the Sex Pistols. Contrary to readings of punk that overplay its working-class connotations, which nonetheless emerged as a powerful narrative, especially in *Sounds*, Tennant described the Pistols as, 'three nice, clean, middle-class art students, and a real live dementoid, Johnny Rotten'. He complicated the usual representation of punk. Tennant then used the narrative of Clockwork Orange-like violence. He described what ensued after a friend of the Pistols became embroiled in an altercation,

⁴¹ Jon Savage, *Sounds*, 9 April 1977 (RB, accessed March 2011).

⁴² Mick Farren and Neil Tennant, 'Terrorise Your Fans Your Own Way', *NME*, 8 May 1976, p. 11.

Seven or eight of the band's chums leap over to the scene of the crime from all over the Nashville and proceed to beat the shit out of this bloke. Fists aren't the only weapons.

Johnny Rotten comes alive.

While the reaction of the rest of the band is a little confused, Mr Rotten joins in the fight and has a few kicks at the victim. He cackles, he leers, the amps are turned up. He's pleased. The Pistols finish another unforgettable act.⁴³

The picture of the *mêlée* that accompanied Tennant's description was underwhelming as a portrayal of an ultra-violent scene. The fact that Tennant's article was printed compounded the narrative that punk was an inclusive, authentic youth movement.

Further articles such as Charles Shaar Murray's review of a punk showcase at Islington's 'Screen on the Green' exemplified how, at this point, the Sex Pistols' violent rhetoric dominated media representations of punk music. He famously considered The Clash, 'the kind of garage band who should speedily be returned to their garage, preferably with the motor running'.⁴⁴ The Clash would soon be feted for giving punk meaning. Some tried to resist commenting on the Sex Pistols masquerade. Geoff Hunt simply referred to the Sex Pistols' 'attitude' and argued that they could *actually* play their instruments.⁴⁵ Nevertheless journalists continually restated the Sex Pistols' violent tendencies and constructed the notion of a punk mob who enacted the worst results of anomie. It stoked the imagination with literary flourishes and, of course, ensured publicity for both bands and music papers. Eventually this symbolic transgression spiralled into pastiche that prompted Johnny Rotten to renounce his past, wear a suit and revert back to being called John Lydon. His fellow members, however, embraced the grotesque: they boasted about their criminal backgrounds, befriended the great train robber and, when Sid Vicious replaced Glen Matlock on bass, heroin, self-mutilation and eventually suicide and an unresolved murder charge became an enduring mythology of the band, able to match any of their musical successes. They even boasted that their equipment was stolen from David Bowie.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Charles Shaar Murray, *NME*, 4 September 1976 (RB, accessed May 2011).

⁴⁵ Geoff Hunt, 'Punks' Progress Report, 101'ers/Sex Pistols', *NME*, 17 April 1976, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Paul Cook and Steve Jones explained "It was me and Wally, as it happens. We got backstage, sussed it all out, like – got the mini-van round the back – and waited for this one geezer who was oin charge to nod off. Which he did after a while. Then we sneaked onstage with wire cutters and all you could hear was the snip, snip. Ended with these 13 microphones plus . . . they were recording live that night, so we nabbed these big deluxe Newman jobs. Didn't know what the fuck they were at the time – looked like a bleedin' gorilla's dildo! Also we nabbed Ronson's Sun Amp and some other amp too." Nick Kent, 'We were Just in it for the Piss-Up and the Birds After the Show', *NME*, 19 August 1978, pp. 25-28.

However at the end of 1976 Miles argued that there was little radical threat to the Sex Pistols' behaviour, but their fans were affected and embellishing the narratives of harmful performance:

A young couple, somewhat out of it, had been nibbling and fondling each other amid the broken glass when she suddenly lunged forward and *bit his ear lobe off*. As the blood spurted she reached out to paw it with her hand tastefully clad with in a rubber glove, and after smashing a Guinness bottle on the front of the stage she was about to add to the gore by slashing her wrists when the security guards finally reached her, pushing through the trance-like crowd who watched with cold, calculated hipitude.

Creepy, but not the much exaggerated violence that is rumoured to attend the new wave bands. I've seen rumbles at everything from the Who concerts to pacifist folk singing sessions.⁴⁷

Melody Maker was slightly slower to include punk musicians. Ultimately *Melody Maker* had to employ younger writers such as Ian Birch. The paper had long cherished musical pluralism and ideological autonomy for young people. *Melody Maker* also had to ingratiate punk fans for economic reasons. Ian Birch commented,

[*Melody Maker*] had problems adjusting to the whole kind of new wave, punk, new wave . . . just the different way of thinking. So it was kind of uneasy. I mean it was interesting at *Melody Maker* in retrospect, it had these very, very different cultures that all got beside each other and weren't that comfortable with each other. But at the same time gave each other enough space that they could express themselves.⁴⁸

In August 1976 Caroline Coon commandeered an issue of *Melody Maker* to rectify the near blackout.⁴⁹ *Melody Maker* had previously included letters denigrating the musicality of punks compared to professional musicians: Rick Wakeman, keyboardist and former member of 'prog' band Yes, who had melded ice dancing and keyboard solos, complained alongside Keith Emerson and numerous ireful fans who wanted acts such as Henry Cow to command the space given to punks.⁵⁰ Punk enraptured Coon, a 1960s counter-culture veteran and with a journalistic style that had been

Then there were the guitars . . .

"I reckon I must've swiped about 16. At least."

Paul Cook: "Fuck, more than that Steve!"

Jones: "Yeah you're right – make that 30."

⁴⁷ Miles, 'Cannibalism at Clash Gig', *NME*, 6 November 1976, p. 43.

⁴⁸ Ian Birch, personal interview (2011).

⁴⁹ Here investigations began in the *Melody Maker*, 1 January 1977 issue and spilled over into the 26 March 1977 issue.

⁵⁰ Punks in this sense were more likely to be Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Television or Iggy Pop as British punk had not gained *Melody Maker's* attention.

heavily influenced by the legacy of an interrupted Sociology degree. Her background and enthusiasm enabled her to begin a more academic investigation of punk that would add greater complexity to the violent anger trope. Yet the issue was dominated by a discussion of whether punk music deserved *Melody Maker's* attention. The Sex Pistols were pictured on the front cover of *Melody Maker* and the lure argued, 'Sex Pistols: *no time for elitism . . . their music is beyond considerations of taste and finesse*'. The lure raised musical elitism as much as elitist class division. Coon then argued in a review that 'punk' singles like 'Blitzkrieg Bop', 'Roadrunner', 'Mainline', 'Anarchy in the UK' and 'Horses', 'is music and worth of the same critical respect you would apply to, say, er (smelling salts, please) Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells."'”⁵¹

Later in the issue, in a more detailed article, Coon argued punk's deeper meaning.⁵² She constructed Rotten as the head of a 'cultural movement scything through the grassroots disenchantment with the present state of mainstream rock'. Coon described the simplicity and vitality of the music, the Sex Pistols' revolutionary influence on other bands and the effect of Malcolm McLaren's King's Road boutique, 'Sex'. She justified them as significant in the context of a transformation in music culture. Coon also described the nascent punk scene in Manchester and provided an empowerment narrative for young people:

Participation is the operative word. The audiences are revelling in the idea that any one of them could get up on stage and do just as well, if not better, than the bands already up there. Which is, after all, what rock and roll is all about.

Coon undermined the idea that musicians were an impossibly talented elite and, by extension, implied that the alternative values the musicians espoused could be applicable to anyone. The article was countered by Allan Jones who wrote,

But the notion of Johnny Rotten beating up his audience, showering them with petty abuse and stubbing out cigarettes on his arm strikes me as being pathetically nihilistic. It is true, however, that such an expression of disgust is reflective of the times, but it is, nevertheless, something less than a rebellion and symptomatic of the lack of idealism and adventure which afflicts so much contemporary rock music.

Punk naysayers narrated disgust towards punk's contrived aggressive transgression. Some, like Jones, saw punk as undermining the 1960s reformulations of morality. Jones was unaware of punk's obscured idealism. However, significantly, Coon had

⁵¹ Caroline Coon, 'Bopping to the Punks', *Melody Maker*, 7 August 1976, p. 3.

⁵² Caroline Coon, 'Punk Rock: Rebels Against the System' *Melody Maker* 7 August 1976, pp. 24-25.

vindicated punk as within *Melody Maker's* critical discourse which ensured it would be reported.

It would take Coon a few more weeks to publish a more thorough and sociologically inclined discussion of punk. She developed a style of punk reporting through interviewing teenagers at the 100 Club punk festival, reporting on a punk festival in Paris – featuring the brilliantly named Stinky Toys – and interviewing Johnny Rotten and The Clash respectively.⁵³ She argued that there was more to punk than attention-grabbing violence. Coon probed punks' varied backgrounds – deconstructing the simple working-class stereotype – to discern how their personal experiences affected their music and ideology. Coon examined the basis for 'do it yourself' narratives: fanzine production, cross-class inclusion and the idea that something intangible, but exciting, was 'happening'. This gave punk an enduring history, inspired many and helped construct punk moralities, rather than characterising all associated with the genre as nihilistic. Probing and academically minded questions prompted answers from punks that constructed meaning around resistance, rather than just provocation and disparagement. For instance, Coon prompted the Clash's Joe Strummer to explain if nihilistic statements such as 'hate and war', rather than the hippy idiom 'love and peace' were meant to provoke action rather than prompt destruction:

But what's so different about youth today then? Silence. Joe stands up and, relishing the drama, he turns to reveal the stark, hand-painted graffiti on the back of his boiler suit. HATE AND WAR glare letters in red and white across his shoulders. It's the hippy motto reversed.

'The hippy movement was a failure' is Joe's explanation. 'All hippies around now just represent complete apathy. There's a million good reasons why the thing failed, O.K. But the only thing we've got to live with is that it failed.'⁵⁴

The Clash's will to both suggest and provoke antidotes to apathy, through social commentary and utopian ideas, would endear them to older journalists. Narratives that described punk as a space for free thinking, independent anti-corporate resistance and positive solutions to social problems was influential as the genre mutated into the new wave and post-punk. It re-established and intensified moral debate in the music press.

The music press subsequently reported punk in a more nuanced manner and stressed its diversity of opinion. However the national press were fixated on punk's

⁵³ Caroline Coon, 'Parade of the Punks', *Melody Maker*, 2 October 1976, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁴ Caroline Coon, 'New Faces', *Melody Maker*, 13 November 1976, pp. 32-33.

'offensiveness'. This was in most part due to the Sex Pistols whose taboo breaking behaviour, as ever, commanded attention. The national press were incited on 1 December 1976 when Thames TV invited the Sex Pistols to replace Queen on the 'Tonight Show' with a tired and emotional Bill Grundy.⁵⁵ The Sex Pistols agreed and brought along 'Bromley Contingent' (including Siouxsie Sioux). The show was live and unedited. Grundy quarrelled with the Sex Pistols and, although the first obscenity was missed, Steve Jones responded 'we fucking spent it' to a question about record label payments; there were more to come. Grundy's question that asked whether Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Brahms should be accepted as, 'suppose they turn other people on?' led the interview towards farce. Rotten replied, 'That's just their tough shit.' Grundy mocked Lydon's bad language and leered at Siouxsie Sioux, prompting a flurry of obscenities finishing with Steve Jones calling Grundy a 'dirty bastard', a 'dirty fucker' and 'fucking rotter'. Grundy mouthed, 'oh, shit' as the program ended. These words were contrary to the usual standards of decorum on early evening, pre-watershed light entertainment, despite their presence in music papers other than *Melody Maker*. This was a period where the standards of language were being negotiated. As such the 'filthy' language elicited a huge reaction.

The music press had been swifter to accept 'bad' language into its lexicon than other media. Few words had not been spoken on television, yet Kenneth Tynan's 'fuck' in 1965, which had elicited four motions in parliament, and Felix Dennis' use of 'cunt' in 1970 had been broadcast after the watershed. Swearing was not accepted before the watershed. Even by 1986 a BBC documentary based on R. McCrum's *The Story of the English Language* had ignored cursing.⁵⁶ BBC Radio Four's management discussed bad language for a decade to carefully negotiate listener and press scrutiny: they concluded that swearing would harm their reputation and were cautious.⁵⁷ Newspapers printed obscenities either sparingly or, in the right wing press, not at all. Thus there was widespread unease with potentially offensive language in broadcasting and print media despite the transition towards a less censorious approach to novels and theatre. According to Nick Kent's memoir IPC had attempted to curtail *NME*'s most extreme bad language during a two month strike in 1972. This resulted in a compromise which Kent described, 'we could use 'fuck' in moderation, as well as 'asshole' and 'bugger'. But any word for genitalia – male or female – was strictly out of bounds.'⁵⁸ IPC may well have been worried by the obscenity charges against

⁵⁵ 'Today Show' [television production] (Thames TV, 3 December 1976).

⁵⁶ 'The Story of the English Language' [television series] directed by William Cram (BBC, 1986).

⁵⁷ David Hendy, 'Bad Language and BBC Radio Four in the 1960s and 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 17:1 (2006), pp. 74-102.

⁵⁸ Nick Kent, *Apathy for the Devil* (London, 2010), pp. 151-152.

underground papers such as *Oz*, especially given the perception that language with the potential to corrupt youth was more becoming of censure. The proprietors and editors were most at risk from prosecution as Richard Neville, Jim Andersen and Felix Dennis had been in 1970. In light of these concerns the music press wrote little in direct response to the Sex Pistols and Grundy's conversation.

The popular daily press's reaction to the Sex Pistols' language was startling. The show was only broadcast locally in the Thames TV area that encompassed little more than today's Greater London. Regardless most tabloids featured the show on the front cover. The Sex Pistols had successfully relegated strikes and hand-wringing over the proposed IMF loan to page two. The *Daily Mirror* notoriously printed the headline 'the Filth and the Fury', although a second edition on the same day ran the less ambiguous and inflammatory headline, 'TV Fury Over Rock Cult Filth'.⁵⁹ By using the word 'filth' the *Daily Mirror* was employing a narrative of 'moral pollution' that was similar to Mary Whitehouse and the NVLA's typical tropes: the Sex Pistols were constructed as offensive, subversive, childish and 'debased culture'.⁶⁰ Both editions reported that a *Mirror* reader, one of two hundred that had telephoned the newspaper to complain, 'was so furious that he kicked in the screen of his £380 colour TV'.⁶¹ It then went on to describe punk in more detail on pages nine and twenty-one respectively. Punks were described as 'obnoxious, arrogant, outrageous', illustrated with images of a cache of 'weapons' – kitchen scissors, studded leather bondage clothing and a bike chain – confiscated by police from a concert and a picture of Rotten looking somewhat pathetic. It restated derogatory punk narratives and the idea that punk was a reaction to unemployment. In response Malcolm MacLaren provided an inflammatory quote influenced by Situationism, 'we don't think violence is a bad thing because you have to destroy to create', and the article then described a famous punk rock concert in which a young woman lost an eye after being struck with a glass, an extreme example to support the narrative.

Below was a human interest article in which a seemingly amused and tolerant mother patronised a band of fifteen-year-olds named Eater. With punk having such popular appeal with youth it would have been both injudicious and commercially naïve not to investigate the human face of their readers' children. The following day the *Daily Mirror* ran the headline 'OFF! OFF!' and reported local authority bans on punk music and Grundy's two week suspension.⁶² Siouxsie Sioux, who took the place of a pin-up on the cover with an uncharacteristic cheesecake grin, opined, 'I can't see

⁵⁹ 'TV Fury Over Rock Cult Filth' *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1976, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Tony McEnery, *Swearing in English* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 108.

⁶¹ *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1976, p. 1.

⁶² 'Off! Off!', *Daily Mirror*, 3 December 1976, p. 1.

what all the fuss is about. . . I knew all those words when I was in kindergarten and they are harmless'. Punk had elicited an archetypal moral panic to give the narrative of economic crisis a convenient cultural bedfellow. It was constructed as a cultural response by those who were hit hardest by unemployment and inflation. The greatest fuss was not in response to violent acts committed by punks, but when the Sex Pistols 'perverted' regional mainstream television with belligerence and apparently intolerable words. Elements of the public were terrified by the media furore: Ian Birch reported an instance in Dublin whilst on tour with The Clash,

Getting into the lift were two chambermaids who worriedly confided in me: 'Watch out. There are punk rockers on this floor. Mind you don't get beaten up.'

I replied that they didn't want to beat anyone up. 'They do,' the girls rushed back at me. 'Are you one?' Do I look like one? 'You can't tell by looks. They're a terrible lot. They put safety pins through their cheeks and even babies cheeks.'⁶³

He clarified in an oral history interview that the police had consigned the band to a hotel to protect them from over-enthusiastic fans that had gathered outside. Unlike the previous generation of rock stars, The Clash had a close relationship with their fans and allowed them – rather than just a very specific section of their support – into hotels. In this instance it had got out of hand.⁶⁴ The punk musician's communicative role was more direct and personal which was reflected in their conversation on morality. But the concerns that the 'two chambermaids' expressed to Birch were not isolated: punks were often constructed as savage youth.

The music press closely narrated the aftermath of punk's national scrutiny, despite the scant coverage of the Grundy furore. This was most palpable in *Melody Maker* as the more established elements of the music industry – those punks had sought to undermine – were concerned with the impact punk would have on its reputation. In the first few months of 1977 record labels, local councils and ordinary members of the public meted out punishment. The Sex Pistols were dropped from their record label under the auspices of safeguarding the corporate morality of EMI and its customers. Sir John Reed was reported in *Melody Maker* explaining EMI's concerns. He argued that although the music industry was not a moral arbiter, it reacted to public opinion:

⁶³ Ian Birch, 'Clash Lose Control', *Melody Maker*, 29 October 1977, pp. 30-32

⁶⁴ Instances of The Clash's close relationship with fans is a frequent topic in a memoir by their two long-suffering roadies Johnny Green and Garry Barker, *A Riot of Our Own* (New York, 1999).

Our view within EMI is that we should seek to discourage records that are likely to give offence to the majority of people. In this context, changing public attitudes have to be taken into account.

EMI should not set itself up as a public censor, but it does seek to encourage restraint. The board of EMI certainly takes seriously the need to do everything possible to encourage the raising of standards of music and entertainment.⁶⁵

Reed's rhetoric prudishly bastardised Hugh Carlton-Greene's aims at the BBC in the 1960s and the sentiments Maurice Kinn expressed regarding the music press's role in debates. It is unlikely that EMI had such lofty concerns: they had signed controversial acts such as The Move, The Rolling Stones, David Bowie and John Cale, and in the late-1980s and 1990s they would have a considerable amount of gangsta rap artists. *Melody Maker* reported an open letter to EMI from Robert Adley, Conservative MP for Christchurch and Lymington, after a member of the Sex Pistols had allegedly vomited and spat on a flight from Amsterdam to Heathrow Airport. Adley argued, 'The fact is that [EMI] is providing funds for a bunch of ill-mannered louts who seems to cause offence wherever they go. Surely a group of your size and reputation could forego the doubtful privilege of sponsoring trash like the Sex Pistols.'⁶⁶ Adley used a Mary Whitehouse tinged narrative of moral degradation. Soon EMI did drop the Sex Pistols, although they were promptly signed by Virgin Records.

Many local authorities banned punk concerts. Promoters made assuaging statements in *Melody Maker* but faced trenchant opposition. Punk was banned by local authorities in Greater London, Blackpool, Blackburn, Leeds, Southend, Nottingham, St Albans and Torquay. Rumours of a GLC blacklist abounded, which was not far from the truth, as Bernard Brook-Partridge, Conservative member for Havering-Romford carefully explained to the *NME*:

Let's be very clear about this," he explains. "I didn't say there is a GLC ban on the Sex Pistols. I would like to think there was, but I'm not suggesting that.

⁶⁵ 'Pistols Approach Crunch', *NME*, 8 January 1977, p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Melody Maker*, 15 January 1977, p. 10.

There are two members of this authority, Mr. John Branagan of the Labour Party and myself, who would do anything they could within the law to stop them ever appearing in London again.⁶⁷

Brook-Partridge perceived the Sex Pistols to be generally 'blasphemous and seditious' and haughtily refused to 'preside over a state of affairs where general standards of decent behaviour are going to be deliberately subverted'. Even more troubling to the music press was the physical violence some members of the public delivered. Rotten was attacked in the street and articles frequently referred to attacks on punks, musicians and those who were simply punk in style. After Rotten was attacked in a Highbury pub, MacLaren was interviewed and explained, 'After the Grundy thing on television I remember seeing people jump out of taxis in Soho and attacking people who looked like Johnny Rotten. That sort of thing has been happening a lot, and it has not just been with group members'.⁶⁸ MacLaren blamed members of the National Front and royalists irked by the Sex Pistols' 'God Save the Queen' single. Reports of inter-subculture rivalries between punks and skinheads also emerged, following a conventional trope of moral panic.⁶⁹ It is abundantly evident that the music papers' construction of moral challenge was distorted by newspapers and the wider mass media. The press's inflammatory reporting elicited a violent response that dwarfed punk's play fighting.

Nevertheless punk had an enduring influence in regional, independent creative scenes which gave people access to new poles of moral influence, expanding the influence of metropolitan moral autonomy. Punks appeared across the country. From the second half of 1977 onwards *Melody Maker's* new feature 'Street Heat' narrated the establishment of punk scenes in British cities. The story that emerged described musicians making hubs of provincial rock and pop. They resisted the allure of London. Younger more punk inclined journalists such as Ian Birch became both anthropologist and musical travel journalist. For instance Birch vividly described the youth of Glasgow.⁷⁰ He argued that punk had enraptured them, altering their attitudes and behaviour. Some individuals had taken unspontaneous offensiveness to the extreme, such as the Backstabbers' 15-year old bass guitarist Colin McNeil whose poem 'For The Fuhrrer' ended,

⁶⁷ Chris Salewicz and Phil McNeill, 'Summer Punk Toll Mounts' *NME*, 9 July 1977, p. 5. It had emerged around January that there were barriers to punks concerts gaining a license that was mentioned in all mainstream music papers, for instance 'Local Censors out in Force to Ban Punk Rock Groups', *Melody Maker*, 4 June 1977, p. 4.

⁶⁸ John Orme, 'Why the Pistols will Now Travel by Taxi', *Melody Maker*, 2 July 1977, p. 3

⁶⁹ 'Thrills', *NME*, 1 April 1978, pp. 20.

⁷⁰ Ian Birch, 'Alex Harvey's Nae Real' *Melody Maker*, 24 September 1977, p. 49.

Ah how I remember the old days
The war in 1977, the world was a tangled maze of debris
The Fuhrer's last words as he killed himself
---- F----- OFF.
Heil Rotten.

Birch described how the Glaswegian youth danced like 'wee crazy head bangers', as they propagated the central discourses of punk for *Melody Maker's* readers, a fanzine was quoted, 'You c---- reading this, get off your lard arses and grab society, which has thrown you onto the dole queue, by the neck and choke out the s-----.' 'Street Heat' communicated how a notion of musical empowerment had been transmitted across Britain. The music press began to pay increasing attention to how the readers were interpreting and imitating the narrative, even if *Melody Maker* censored the Anglo-Saxon inflections that many punks used as a prerequisite of their authenticity.

Ian Birch explained the significance of local punk and alternative music scenes:

It was just that interrelationship between new music and those different social scenes, it was very liberating if you were nineteen or twenty at the time. I mean all this stuff you know, but it was a genuine voice for them, it was exciting, it was liberating. It was pretty grim economic times, it felt like it was their own voice because of the weight of the '60s and early-to-mid-'70s was so significant. It was obvious that they wanted something for themselves. They wanted something of their own.⁷¹

He used the examples of Liverpool and Belfast, two cities that were troubled by economic neglect and, in Belfast's case, intensifying friction between sectarian paramilitary groups. In Liverpool Eric's Club had provided a hub for local music fans to come together. It was opened in October 1976 by Roger Eagle, a promoter, Ken Testi, a road manager, and graphic designer Peter Fulwell. Robert Strachan has argued that Eric's provided a fertile environment for bands such as Echo and the Bunnymen, OMD, The Teardrop Explodes and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. Its influence, however, transcended music as it became the focus for 'a particular and interdisciplinary local scene': independent record shops, boutiques, art galleries,

⁷¹ Ian Birch, personal interview (2011).

theatres and cafes sprung up around Matthew Street mimicking the ad hoc and d-i-y emphasis of punk.⁷² This was found, amongst other places, in Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Sheffield and Leeds. Outside of London there were new spaces emerging to enact selfhoods informed by the music press's longstanding interest in morality. The music press communicated values of democratised musical expression, autonomy, personally guided morality and the ability to create a community of shared views which aided local scenes.⁷³

Yet there is some irony that the music press transmitted these values. As Paul Rambali explained,

Yeah well this was another contradiction of the music press. We all had this attitude to the musicians and the music industry, along comes punk and this do it yourself attitude and create your own culture, don't just buy culture that is produced for you, invent your own style and culture, that was one of the ideas that was strongly promoted by punk – fair enough we were all linked to that. There we were – we weren't creating our own culture at all. People like Mark P at *Sniffin' Glue* and Adrian Thrills – he had a fanzine called *48 Thrills* – he did that for a while and then packed it in for a job at the *NME*. So we were asking this and we were asking groups to be original and inventive, but we weren't doing it ourselves, although some of us were being inventive with language such as Ian Penman and so on. But we weren't really putting our money where our mouths were in that respect, and that was – like I said – was when I learnt the structure of production through the strike and I threw my lot in with Nick and we did it ourselves: it was one of the things that influenced *The Face*.⁷⁴

Whilst music fans were creating independent culture, *Melody Maker* and *NME* were controlled, of course, by IPC and *Sounds* was funded by City Newspapers. Yet the music papers navigated these tensions and enabled a mutivocal discussion to flourish which narrated punk's complexities. Tensions between resistance and corporate compliance, meeting deadlines, communicating in a way that was accessible, and not overstepping the limits of obscenity, ensured a settlement in which unconventional ideas and ideologies could be expressed in a popular periodical. The ownership and underlying conventions of music papers were not entirely in the punk spirit of independent free expression that tended towards curt vileness, but they did have the scope to mediate the genre to a wider public. This ability to balance competing pressures was represented in the nuanced and balanced handling of punk following

⁷² Liverpool's alternative scene is described in great detail in Rob Strachan, 'Liverpool's 1970s Bohemia: Deaf School, Eric's and the Post-Punk Scene' in Marion Leonard and Robert Strachan (eds) *The Beat Goes On* (Liverpool, 2010), pp. 124-142.

⁷³ Without the music press's classifieds these scenes could not have found a musical community. The music press was the only source for these types of advertisements.

⁷⁴ Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

the early violent introduction. Despite the fierce information flow that enabled punk a degree of notoriety it was underpinned by a narrative that encouraged creativity regardless of talent, sophistication or taste: later this would be more systematically applied to moral thought. This empowered members of a generation that was establishing itself in the wake of a thoroughly depressing economic situation.

This chapter shows how the music press narrated punk rock with great complexity and countered notions that the genre was musically uninteresting and morally debased. In fact punk's transgression, musically, rhetorically and behaviourally, had many precedents in the music press. These predecessors elicited less reaction from adults in authority and the non-music press due to a bleaker historical context where the behaviour of youth was viewed more acutely as an indicator of society's health. Journalists exposed the wider cultural clichés found in the popular daily press's post-Grundy Show moral panic – that focused on violence and depravity – as shallow in the face of punk's empowering values. It also narrated and countered the sometimes violent and often censorious response to punk transgression. This was aided by a sociological style of reporting that put punk in its social, cultural and historical context. This style of sociological reporting helped construct the notion that anyone could become involved in punk performance, community and, indeed, begin to negotiate punk's morality. The music press then expanded its previously London-centred focus to report on regional music making which subsequently, and as the following chapters prove, expanded the scope of autonomous, rational morality that had been to some extent limited to metropolitan elites.

Chapter Seven

You Can Get it if You Really Want?: Racial Unity

Melody Maker had a significant and long-established history of opposing racism in music which the music press has sustained to the present day. Its first editor, Edgar Cohen, had liberal sympathies and resisted racial prejudice. Liberal owners, who believed society should protect minorities and located their businesses in the vicinity of Soho's an increasingly multicultural bohemia, were significant factors that lead to the music press's anti-racist stance. In the 1930s *Melody Maker* had supported black and Jewish jazz musicians and critiqued publications that saw 'black' or 'negro' music as a degenerative influence upon British culture.¹ From the 1930s *Melody Maker* regularly included world music (not from Britain, the US or Western Europe), even if it was only given modest attention towards the back pages around the classifieds. By the 1950s *Melody Maker* had published articles that were reflexively aware of the friction experienced by white British jazz musicians playing jazz to a black audience and the problems of performing in apartheid South Africa – all music papers supported the Musicians Union ban in 1961.² Compared to the rest of the mass media the music press reported upon, interviewed and pictured an unusual number of black people. Thus the papers were able to print the narratives and constructions of race and the controversies that existed in Britain in a way other publications could not.

In the late-1970s the music press hosted a sustained conversation concerning race. The debate had intensified as reggae gained mass popularity and its adherents sparked an unlikely kinship with punk and post-punk musicians and fans. Both subcultures criticised society and their 'otherness' united them. Punk musicians and fans used anti-racism to counter the nihilist tropes that had gained the genre rapid notoriety. Indeed by advocating anti-racism punks countered those who sought to equate punk anger with right-wing causes. By advocating Rock Against Racism those associated with punk added greater complexity to the ideas that defined the genre, the more meaningful representations of punk negated some of the moral panic that the first wave of rhetorically – sometimes *really* – violent punks had provoked. *NME*

¹ George McKay, *Circular Breathing: the Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham NC, 2005), p. 62.

² This support was reiterated regularly and until the fall of apartheid. The music press made a stand against apartheid again in the late 1960s, questioning issues as diverse as Engelbert Humperdinck's decision to perform to a segregated audience and famously in 1984 when Queen performed the Sun City complex. Still in 1985 Paul Simon was subject to a great deal of criticism for breaking the cultural boycott of South Africa to perform with black South African Musicians on his album *Graceland*. *NME* and *Sounds* also opposed apartheid vociferously.

coupled 1960s radicalism and punk forthrightness to reinvigorate a range of protest causes from marijuana legalisation to saving the whales but Rock Against Racism was the most celebrated. Rock Against Racism's festivals commanded multiple pages of coverage. *Sounds* and *Melody Maker* also supported the causes that brought about a politicisation of pop. Whilst Rock Against Racism has been subject to scholarly scrutiny, by Ian Goodyer and Jude Davies, both have failed fully to investigate the genealogy of their anti-racism which was rooted in the music press.³

This chapter will analyse the music press's long-established advocacy of multiculturalism and anti-racism. It discusses how *Melody Maker* argued against Enoch Powell's anti-immigration rhetoric: the paper argued that 'racialism' was unsophisticated and morally wrong. Indeed unlike the popular daily press *Melody Maker* allowed black people to narrate their experiences of racism. Next the chapter shows that despite the music press's anti-racism the paper often adhered to culturally or biologically deterministic views to understand 'black' music and negotiate authenticity. The chapter then discusses how the music press constructed black musicians as representatives of their race. This is analysed in reference to reggae's rise in popularity around 1976. The music press used some biologically or culturally deterministic assumptions about Jamaican reggae artists which caused tensions when black or multiracial British bands gained attention. Yet the music press constructed and reported reggae's moral contentions with society thus framing them in a similar way to punks. This relationship reinvigorated the music press's opposition to racism, set a precedent for the music press to organise protest, counter the National Front's rise and gave punk moral meaning. This is evaluated in reference to how the music press supported and reported Rock Against Racism.

Non-white migrants' increasing visibility in Britain made notions of Britishness, the morality of race relations and the construction of race pressing popular issues. From the late-1950s a number of colonial subjects – South Asians and West Indian migrants – arrived, as was their right, on the British mainland. By the 1970s the narratives that had accompanied the conspicuous immigration of the 1960s and post-war period, as described by Chris Waters and Marcus Collins, stoked suspicions of black deviance and prompted a re-evaluation of notions of British identity, questioning who exactly was the 'host' and 'stranger'.⁴ This was both a

³ Ian Goodyer, *Crisis Music* (Manchester, 2009). Jude Davies, 'The Future of No Future', *Journal of Popular Culture* 29:4 (1996).

⁴ Chris Waters, "'Dark Strangers' in our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963', *Journal of British Studies* 36:2 (1997), p. 208. Marcus Collins, 'Pride and Prejudice: West-Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 40:3 (2001), p. 393.

political and social issue: whilst some saw racial differences as positive or at least a benign issue, others were threatened by cultural differences polarising the political discussion surrounding immigration, and they restated a quasi-biological notion of racial difference and fanned spurious notions of economic competition between races. Gilroy argues that the popular friction caused by immigration caused the 1968 Immigration Act which ‘codified [a] cultural biology of “race” into statute law as part of the strategy for the exclusion of such Black settlers’ and this was compounded in 1981 as the law was ‘rationalised’ and based on the nationality of parents and grandparents: patrials were potential British citizens, ex-colonial subjects were not.⁵ Sometimes the music press unthinkingly used similar logics of the cultural biology of race, but these allusions were most prevalent in the radical right.⁶ Between 1970 and 1974 the National Front had harnessed racial fears efficiently to become a credible force: in 1970 they had ten council candidates and by 1974 they had 94 candidates and attracted 113,884 votes.⁷ These logics of difference contributed to how black Britons were marginalised by the government and society: they were legislated against as an unwanted aberration and denigrated by bogus racial assumptions. This situation was aggravated as ethnic minorities became the subject of moral panics, unsympathetic policing and victimisation by the right – a potentially fruitful vote-winning strategy or at least a way for the far-right to mobilise those who perceived themselves as being threatened by immigration.⁸ The music press consistently protested against racism in politics, society and culture, but sometimes well-meaning articles could descend into becoming panegyrics to exoticism and otherness. As Stuart Hall argued, the media often imbued black people with racial stereotypes and ‘white’ assumptions and even if explicit racism or any racism at all was unintended, archetypes of the native, entertainer and social problem abounded.⁹ Contrary to Hall’s general observation of the mass media, the music press did allow ethnic minorities a platform for their views even if they were mediated by white journalists and interviewers, enabling the morality of racism and the negative discursive constructions of race to be contested.

⁵ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (London, 2007), pp. 44-45.

⁶ Alan Sykes, *the Radical Right in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 8-9.

⁷ Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, p. 151.

⁸ It is however arguable that the 1960s Wilson government had allayed fears that Britain was to be ‘swamped’ by immigrants and tried to downplay public fears through the 1964 White Paper, challenging ‘old restrictive attitudes’. Nevertheless as Dennis Dean argues the popular rhetorical of immigration as a problem re-emerged it created a tense situation from 1968 onwards. Dennis Dean, ‘The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government’, *Twentieth Century British History* 11/3 (2000), p. 282-284. Joe Street also argues that immigration was politically expedient when courting some voters citing the 1964 general election campaign of Peter Griffin in Smethwick, Joe Street, ‘Malcolm X, Smethwick, and the Influence of the African American Freedom Struggle on British Race Relations in the 1960s’, *Journal of Black Studies* 38/6 (2008), p. 935.

⁹ Stuart Hall, ‘Gramsci’s relevance for the study of ‘race’ and ethnicity’, in D. Morley and K-H. Chen (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996), pp. 411–40.

The music press's journalists were almost entirely white. Don Letts occasionally contributed articles and Linton Kwesi Johnson briefly wrote reggae reviews in 1976 but they were exceptions. When pressed on this lack of inclusivity Mick Farren, a former White Panther himself – the organisation that supported black liberation and commanded attention in the music press due to the MC5 and poet John Sinclair – argued that there was simply not enough interest from prospective writers.¹⁰ Even the monthly paper that focussed on black music, *Black Echoes*, was – in its infancy – authored by white journalists. Only very marginal fanzines such as *Pressure Drop* had many black writers. Therefore white journalists, notably Vivian Goldman, Chris Salewicz and Penny Reel, but also the wider journalistic staff, represented 'black' music to the British audience. A small group of white journalists who had experienced reggae through encounters with immigrant communities, Hackney nightclubs, the Ladbroke Grove import reggae shops and later patronage by Virgin Records, established reggae as popular music in Britain.

Opposition to racism was a crucial long-established element of the music press's writing of morality. Journalists deemed the colour of an artist's skin as unrelated to their music talent, but it could determine their music's authenticity. In the aftermath of mass immigration the much rehearsed rhetoric had a poignant opportunity to be deployed. In 1968 the music press responded to Conservative MP Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech which advocated the repatriation of immigrants. The week before Powell's statement *Melody Maker* had opened the recurrent controversy that stimulated a quasi-biological, but mostly cultural, notion of race: the article asked 'can white men play the blues?'¹¹ It concluded yes, with some partial caveats. The following week a more stringent statement was made. *Melody Maker* featured Powell's statement, which was entirely unrelated to music, prominently on the front page. Both Laurie Henshaw and the Raver – the weekly gossip column – criticised Powell. The Raver argued that the East End dock workers who had downed tools in support of Powell were not 'jazz or pop' fans,

Nobody connected with showbusiness – and that goes for 99 per cent of the fans from 13 to 60 – could believe one word of this racist rubbish.

¹⁰ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

¹¹ 'Can White Men Play the Blues?', *Melody Maker*, 28 April 1968, p. 8.

In this business people may take note that you are a goodie, a baddie, a looner, a nutter, a nice guy or a crook. But they wouldn't even notice if you were a Negro, a Jew, a Catholic, a Chinese or even an atheistic Peruvian.¹²

The raver presented 'Racialist' arguments as contrary to the inclusive ethos of 'showbusiness'. The Raver positioned 'racialism' as an aberrant view only held by those outside of pop and jazz's more sophisticated circles. The music press had long been based in central London near Soho, the multicultural locale whose nightclubs were filled with those rapt with musical genres, such as jazz and rhythm and blues, with a history of black virtuoso musicians.

Laurie Henshaw's article conveyed a mood of grave concern. Henshaw worried that 'racialism' would 'hit' the music business where 'racial harmony has long been a byword' and referred to how the Musician's Union forbade members from performing in South Africa. He sought the advice of Black musicians who represented varied experiences: black people who were born in Britain and abroad, those who performed in all black groups or racially mixed groups, men and women. This was extraordinary because the daily newspaper press mostly ignored black people's opinions, papers did not attempt to gauge the views of a partial cross-section of the black community. The week following Powell's speech the popular press had few statements about Enoch Powell or racism from ethnic minorities: *The Daily Mirror* argued against Powell, but those threatened were invisible.¹³ The newspaper press's anti-racist position was derived from a moral absolute rather than any specific experience. Instead Henshaw's remarkable article focussed upon two fundamental questions for Black musicians, using their experience to formulate conclusions,

Is there any racialism in Britain's world of music, which includes a large quota of coloured musicians, often appearing in 'mixed' groups? And is there any racialism against coloured musicians outside the business?¹⁴

Some artistes, for instance Geno Washington, described as the 'only coloured member of the seven-piece Ram Jam Band... born in Evansville, Indiana', dismissed discrimination as non-existent in Britain, 'Discrimination, man? What's that? It's never

¹² 'The Raver's Weekly Tonic: Who's Backing Enoch? Well, it ain't Showbiz,' *Melody Maker*, 4 May 1968, p. 6.

¹³ *Daily Mirror*, 21 April 1968. This issue reported on Powell's comments and solicited reactions but only from white British people.

¹⁴ Laurie Henshaw, 'Racialism: will it Hit the Music Business?' *Melody Maker*, 4 May 1968, p. 5.

affected me in Britain in spite of my permanent sun-tan, I've never had any trouble. Discrimination is just something I hear about in the press.' Whilst it is a nice idea that Washington had not experienced racism, it may well be that his vulnerable position as a minority in society, a minority within his band and speaking to the mostly white music industry meant that he purposely gave a jocular, positive response. Washington's response was also be tempered by the discrepancy between U.S. and British racism: the lack of segregation and Civil Rights controversies may have made Britain seem more palatable. Jazz musician Selena Jones commented, 'to get the same sort of attention at back home I'd have to do a striptease in the middle of 42nd street – then I'd have made the papers for indecency!' The musicians came to an improbable consensus that there was no discrimination at all in the music industry. Folk musician Cliff Hall argued a common narrative regarding the virtue of music, 'Music is a great help. Musicians work together and travel together. Music has done a lot to break down the barriers.' Kenny Lynch, a London born singer and songwriter, did offer a qualification, 'It's true to say people who are celebrities meet with less prejudice than a coloured person in an everyday working job. Probably because people like to be identified with artists who have appeared on TV.' Nevertheless, be it down to commercial pressures from the music industry as employers of black artistes, a genuine spirit of mutual tolerance and fraternity, or the public's want to fawn over celebrities regardless of their ethnicity or race, the notion that racism did not exist in the music industry was unwaveringly argued.

Some of the musicians that Henshaw questioned, however, did express concerns about racial discrimination in wider society. Though Jamaican musician Eddie Thornton blamed Powell for 'racialist' troublemaking, Thornton argued that that racial prejudice was not a typically British trait, 'it made me very depressed to read Mr. Powell's speech, because people will climb on his bandwagon. I've found the British people are the most tolerant in the world'. Others had experience occasional instances of racism. The inflammatory and long-standing grievance regarding housing surfaced. Selena Jones, Joy Marshall and Madeline Bell complained that they had been subject to discrimination from landlords or prospective landlords.¹⁵ In doing so Marshall exemplified how making comments that belied racial assumptions were not limited to the white majority exclaiming, 'as soon as the landlords found out I was coloured, they said I couldn't have it. Strangely, the person who said this was Jewish!'

¹⁵ Race and housing has long been an issue. In the United States housing discrimination was only legislated against in 1968. John Davis has analysed the uncomfortable conflagration of race and housing, especially in London, John Davis, 'Rents and Race in 1960s London: New Light on Rachmanism,' *Twentieth Century British History* 21:1 (2001), pp. 62-92.

Jimmy James of the Vagabonds also implied discrimination regarding lodgings. He explained how he was careful when approaching hoteliers: 'if we phone for accommodation, I say: "this is Jimmy James and the Vagabonds- four white and three coloured boys". Just to avoid any embarrassment later.' Others had experienced racially prejudiced language and racist individuals, but again racism and racists, or 'racialism' and 'racialists' to be more precise, were explained as the exception to everyday life: Bell called those who called her 'an unprintable name ... just weirdies', Hall 'ran into some little incidents in one or two small places, but it was nothing to worry about' and Marshall had only heard the 'odd remark'. Henshaw confidently concluded, 'SO MR. ENOCH POWELL, IT SEEMS THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER- TAKE UP MUSIC.' Nevertheless, tellingly, Joy Marshall narrated the discourse of immigration being a 'problem' in Britain and used the language of degradation and overcrowding: 'I believe immigration into Britain should be controlled, because it is a small island and in danger of being swamped. But control should be applied to everyone.' Despite fears of racial prejudice and anti-immigration scaremongering, some racist anti-immigration views were accepted as common-sense.

British music fans both welcomed and celebrated black U.S. musicians. Yet the fetishisation of black artistes, and some musicians' possibly cynical courtship of white fans, was often mocked by journalists. For instance, in 1973 Charles Shaar Murray wrote of Issac Hayes, 'If it wasn't for the vast number of black people at the concert, one would imagine that ol' Ike aims at honkies who want some soul music in the house but find Aretha too high-energy and rough and nasty and Sly too mind-snapping.'¹⁶ The idea that black musicians had to temper their music in order to appeal to a white audience, thus extinguishing their all-important authenticity, was also bemoaned by Dave Marsh in a January 1974 issue of *Let it Rock* when writing about Otis Redding,

Otis was the Black Man mass bohemia could love. He had none of Sly Stone's natural arrogance; he walked loose from the hip, but it was all sex, no threat. He wasn't a Tom, he was a black entertainer before Stokely Carmichael and that bunch got wise and started making long hair honkies uncomfortable. Admit it, then: Otis is safe, because he's dead. He will never turn on us. Sly Stone did. Hell, even Buddy Miles did. Even Hendrix was going to.¹⁷

¹⁶ Charles Shaar Murray, 'Issac Hayes, Roundhouse', *NME*, 3 February 1973 (RB, accessed August 2011).

¹⁷ Dave Marsh, 'Otis Redding', *Let It Rock*, January 1974 (August 2011).

The argument that Otis Redding's less confrontational music and his death rendered him admissible and unthreatening inverted the racist argument that black music could degenerate white culture: here it is suggested that white support threatened to 'sterilise' black culture. The notion that black musicians could 'turn people on' is, however, significant. Black artistes were rhetorically conferred with a mystical ability to communicate a more painfully gained and therefore 'authentic' reality. In early 1977 Mick Farren and Charles Shaar Murray were sent to interview their American Blues heroes. They reported how mass white support had a bearing on black musicians feted for their authenticity. Fats Domino was playing to white audiences in Las Vegas whilst Muddy Waters complained to *NME* that white people discovering the blues in the 1960s, whilst making him a great deal of money, had fundamentally undermined his connection to the black U.S. market who were now more likely to consume Soul, Funk and Disco.¹⁸ However Waters was willing to narrate the relationship between music and racial harmony, citing English blues fans as sparking the interest of white Americans. He perceived a seismic generational change that correlated with the wider ideas of a 1960s generation gap:

There was a time when a kid couldn't bring that music into a father and mother's house. *Don't bring that nigger music in here. That's right!*

Those kids didn't give a damn what your colour is; they just want to hear the records.

Nevertheless, the problem of whether white people could play 'black' music rather than simply listen to it often prompted concerns of cultural theft. In 1976 *Melody Maker* reignited the debate as Soul group Muscles complained that they had been the subject of racial discrimination: allegedly a promoter at the Porter House in Retford did not book them because they were white.¹⁹ Muscles' manager, Mr Tully, complained to the Race Relations Board. Geoff Brown gave the story a sardonic post-festive season introduction,

This being the season for warming Christmas pud and tearing the last possible shred of cold poultry from the crumbling carcass of a hapless fowl, it is most appropriate that one of modern music's most venerable chestnuts has been given a fresh roasting.

¹⁸ Charles Shaar Murray, 'Woke up this Mornin', Six Blues Albums Round Mah Bed', *NME*, 12 March 1977, pp. 31-32. Mick Farren, 'Diamonds and Domino', 30 April 1977, p. 17.

¹⁹ Geoff Brown, 'Can Whies Sing Soul', *Melody Maker*, 3 January 1976, p. 3.

Brown set out the two sides of the dispute, ‘the ayes’ referred to Soul influenced artistes such as Joe Cocker, Robert Palmer, Frankie Miller and Rod Stewart, ‘the nos’ argued that Soul ‘is a product of history and environment, they say, which is something that cannot be duplicated in Britain and cannot be learned parrot fashion from records’. Even so this argument was not straightforward as it did not legislate for white Americans who had close personal ties to ‘black’ music. The confusion confirmed underlying racially deterministic assumptions regarding musical influence and authenticity. Brown’s conclusion mixed the two main narratives: first he invoked anti-racism, ‘the question of race and colour as the lodestone of talent and quality is odious and repulsive’; but then he explained how cultural experiences, closely bound to race, translated into musical characteristics, ‘Nearly all of it is American, no matter the colour. It is my personal feeling that the best Black vocalists bring greater depth of emotion to bear when they sing.’ The question of whether white men could sing soul engendered a confused response. Brown tried to be tolerant but still represented underlying racial assumptions (even if they were constructed as a cultural experience rather than the result of inherent biological characteristics). Two weeks later Dave Rossiter, manager of CBS’s Classical Department, eviscerated ‘the no’ argument in an impassioned letter:

I would think it abhorrent if we had a recurrence of the days when Hitler banned Jews and blacks from singing Wagner or Bayreuth under the misguided belief that “Wagner comes from an essentially Aryan experience and can only be interpreted by Aryans for that reason – a product of history and environment ... Obviously nonsense.”²⁰

Despite inverted concerns about cultural miscegenation, by the early 1970s ‘black’ music was an established part of British popular culture.

The *Sunday Times Magazine* featured black musicians from around 1972. Philip Norman’s interview with Stevie Wonder illustrates popular interest in black musicians and ‘black’ music.²¹ The article had many similarities with contemporary music writing which also indicates music journalism’s impact on the cultural mainstream. Norman reiterated ‘the nos’ discourse that Brown had described. Philip Norman implied that

²⁰ ‘Mailbag: can Blacks Sing Italian Opera?’, *Melody Maker*, 17 January 1976, p. 17.

²¹ Philip Norman, ‘Soul On Fire’, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 1972. (Rock’s Backpages reference is incomplete, accessed May 2011).

'black' music represented a wider cultural and racial experience rather than the more personal, or at least complex, determinant factors – age, underground or mainstream, class and regional background – that were ascribed to white musicians. In the *Sunday Times Magazine* article Norman gave a rosy, but slightly patronising history of Blues and Soul:

The history of Soul is of one people's determination that they were not, as they had previously been taught, inferior. Blues was the solitary pain of being a Negro. Soul music is exaltation of the state of being black.

Unlike white artistes, black musicians were constructed as emissaries for their race. Journalists imbued black artistes with a specific authenticity and ability to represent the struggles of a whole race in their music. This could be seen as a rhetorical artefact from the 1960s music press's infatuation with the blues. Yet there is a slight to race's primacy as the dominant signifier of the music press's social and cultural assumptions. Gender also had a significant bearing. Journalists reported black man and black woman differently but still alluded to a singular 'black' experience. This can be seen in interviews with Aretha Franklin or Nina Simone who were constructed as spokespeople for black femininity, albeit music papers used familiar narratives of heterosexual lust to describe artistes such as Tina Turner.

Black Power compounded the music press's narratives of exoticism and a sense of wonder towards black musicians. Denise Sullivan has described the confluences between movements for the liberation and empowerment of black Americans and popular music: music was a subversive and unifying communicative device for those denied access to mainstream mass communication.²² The relationship she described is valid. The music press explored Black Power narratives of empowerment, radicalism and militancy. White writers underscored their cosmopolitan anti-racist values by narrating black liberation. In the mid-to-late-1970s the music press often featured black American radical Gil Scott-Heron. The music press disseminated radicalism that black Britons had been privy to since the visit of Malcolm X in 1965, nevertheless the music press's coverage dwarfed that of 'black' newspapers in terms of readership and its discussion was sustained longer than the

²² Denise Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing: Black Power Music from the Blues to Hip Hop* (Chicago, 2011), pp. 1-5.

BBC's few televised debates.²³ Nevertheless journalists often naively characterised Scott-Heron's music as having generic 'black' characteristics. For instance in 1975 Roger St. Pierre wrote in *NME*:

THERE'S NOTHING NEW about black anger. It's run through the whole of black music from the blues onwards, finding perhaps its most forthright expression (in soul at least) in the several uncompromising and not surprisingly, underexposed, albums of 'The Last Poets'.²⁴

Yet despite these credulous narratives that posited a singular 'black' experience, Scott-Heron and his contemporaries used the music press to spread a politicised message that argued for black equality. In 1976 Scott-Heron argued to *NME*,

So primarily using the constitution of the United States as the basis of where I'm coming from, which indicates that there should be justice, liberty, and equality for each and every citizen, we try to focus the attention of the people on the inequities that exist within that document.

The thing we'd most like to do is make America live up to all of its advanced publicity, so that it becomes the democracy and the multi-racial society it has always boasted to the world about.²⁵

The resistance and thoughtful criticism offered by black radicals such as Scott-Heron was influential. Cliff White described his responses as a lecture. This confirmed the music press's enthusiasm to include outspoken social criticism and confirmed that race was not a barrier to expressing moral reservations about inequality. Indeed when Vivian Goldman described Scott-Heron and the Last Poets as 'THE thinking person's act', the idea of anti-racism and multiculturalism as sophisticated had echoes of the Raver's construction of cosmopolitan music fans' rejection of 'racialist' discourses.²⁶

Black Power and radical discourse empowered black musicians to protest against racism within the music industry. In 1976 eccentric American disco-funk musician Jimmy Castor argued to *NME* that the U.S. music industry was entirely racist:

²³ Joe Street, 'Malcolm X, Smethwick, and the Influence of the African American Freedom Struggle on British Race Relations in the 1960s', p. 939.

²⁴ Roger St. Pierre, 'Gil Scott Heron', *NME*, 2 August 1975 (RB, accessed May 2011).

²⁵ Cliff White, 'And Now, for a Fascinating and Demanding Dialogue...' *NME*, 6 March 1976, pp. 36-37.

²⁶ Vivian Goldman, *Sounds*, 28 February 1976 (RB, accessed May 2011).

A certain prominent Los Angeles club run by record people recently made enquiries about a possible booking for me based on “Birtha Butt”. They frankly asked, right out, whether *Jimmy Castor was white or black!*

Curiously, when they found out I *was* black, they said, “Why don’t I try a club downtown on Crenshaw Blvd., or something?” recounted Mr Castor.

...

But I’ll tell ya, racial bars, closed doors at key stations kept ‘Birtha’ from breaking properly. It went from one region at a time, instead of one fell swoop. And I owe most of the attention it did get from the discos.²⁷

Castor advocated self-sufficiency and independence from the record industry: with future technological advances his idea proved to threaten the whole major label system. Castor held a degree in business from the City College of New York and throughout the interview mixed black radical rhetoric with a pragmatic and fundamentally capitalist outlook, as did many of his contemporaries. Radical anti-racism narratives were often combined with more conventional ideologies.

In the later-1970s the music press increasingly reported black British people’s experiences of racism. In a 1977, for example, *Melody Maker* interviewed Erskine T. [Thomas], a local radio personality and DJ at Mother’s Club, as part of a feature on Birmingham’s music scene.²⁸ T. argued that a local promoter segregated customers:

Eddie Fewtrell wants to keep all the reggae in Rebecca’s, which is a s--- hole. These club owners say it will not encourage the nice punters, but there are no f----- nice punters in Birmingham.

The blacks want to go into town and get dressed up and boogie, there is no place for the middle-class black to go and get dressed-up at. There is no club in town where if you are black you can take your girlfriend. The Elbow Room (a club with a reputation for a good sound system)? No way I and a few other blacks can get in, but it’s mainly for the ‘nice people.’

The spaces for autonomy and transgression that music venues provided and which allowed entry into music subcultures were sometimes blocked on racial grounds both in the U.S. and Britain. Yet British and U.S. artists or those affiliated with the music industry were not frequently outspoken regarding race if they were not steeped in an immediate culture of radicalism.

There was, however, an alternative voice for black consciousness. Reggae and ska ensured that the subaltern spoke directly to both white and black British

²⁷ Stan Findelle, ‘Jimmy Castor Discotext’, *NME*, 1 May 1976, pp. 28-29.

²⁸ Richard Williams, ‘The Man Who Worked Miracles’ *Melody Maker*, 1 October 1977, pp. 34-35.

music fans. Rastafarian men narrated how white society subjugated them with their insidious system – or ‘shitstem’. Reggae had not always been so outspoken. It had first been imported to Britain as ‘bluebeat’ and provided novelty songs such as the version of ‘My Boy Lollipop’ recorded for Millie Small in 1964, the first major hit by a black artist in the official chart era.²⁹ From an early stage the narrative of music bridging a racial divide was applied to the genre: in 1969, as reggae flirted with mainstream success, *NME* briefly explained how ‘reggae stops race prejudice’.³⁰ In the mid-1970s, however, the music press’s construction of reggae changed as it mediated Jamaica’s violent political strife, Rastafarian morality and harsh inequalities.

In 1976, aided by the success of Virgin Records and a charismatic, rather messianic, star in Bob Marley, the music press and its readers’ interest in reggae swelled to the extent that *Melody Maker* gave reggae its own section of the pop singles chart. Even so racist remarks and mockery still appeared, for instance a fake record review in *NME* claimed, ‘Baden Powell’s “Dib Dat Dob (Dub)” is a shattering attack on colonialism, based on the earlier “Wiggle Dat Woggle” by Rudie “Jah” Kipling.’³¹ The construction of a cultural divide was further demonstrated when *Melody Maker* printed a glossary to explain terms such as ‘Jah’, ‘ganja’ or ‘bloodclaat’ so readers could decipher interviews.³² Even by 1978 when Chris Salewicz was sent to Jamaica to immerse himself in reggae culture –

resulting in a stunning two-part 15,000 word article in *NME* – his article restated recognisable narratives of the exotic native.³³ To a young British journalist, however, Jamaica would have offered an experience far removed from normal life: indeed a limited lexicon, underpinned by older structures, existed to express his experience. But the peripheral difficulties with exoticism did not entirely impinge on reggae musicians’ ability to explain the Rastafarian morality and their critique of ‘Babylon’ to music journalists. -Jamaica’s Rastafarians had forged an underground identity in the context of a fierce political struggle between Michael Manley of the People’s Socialist National Party and his right-wing opponent Edward Seaga. Chris Lane described reggae’s new generation as, ‘rebels, the underground Rasta youth of the Kingston ghettos and any

²⁹ Albeit this obscures hit songs recorded by black artistes in the pre-chart and dubiously compiled early-chart era, for instance Trinidadian Edric Connor’s ‘Manchester United Calypso’ [45inch single] (Argo, 1956).

³⁰ ‘Reggae Stops Race Prejudice’, *NME*, 29 November 1969, p. 4.

³¹ Bob Edmonds, ‘Platters: Reggae or the New White Liberal Explosion?’ *NME*, 20 March 1976, p. 19.

³² ‘Inside Reggae’, *Melody Maker*, 9 October 1976, pp. 36-40.

³³ Chris Salewicz, ‘Jamaica: The Young Lion Roars’, *NME*, 27 May and 3 June 1978 (RB, January 2011).

other place for that matter'.³⁴ This romantic narrative justified and demanded that music papers mediate social commentary from Rastafarians musicians. Like punks or bluesmen they were seen as natural and unaffected.

The music press featured Bob Marley most frequently: *Melody Maker*, *Sounds*, *Smash Hits* and *NME* all pictured Marley on their cover; this was a rare feat for a black musician.³⁵ In June 1976 *Melody Maker* deemed the first extended feature on Marley so important that editor Ray Coleman travelled to Jamaica for the interview. ³⁶ Coleman described Marley as authentic: he drew parallels with Marley's values, the 1960s underground and punk: '[Marley] does not seek success, which would be at odds with his Rastafarian beliefs'. Even so Coleman noted that Marley had a BMW car and had annoyed members of his local community by flaunting his accomplishments. By mediating reggae music's anti-commercial narratives Coleman contributed to drawing parallels with 'white' subcultures. Thus Coleman constructed black Jamaicans as an authoritative voice on 'black' issues. Previously black Americans had a near monopoly when debating or representing 'black' issues. Marley was also mixed-race and half-British; it has been argued – and refuted – that he had included prominent guitar in the mix of his albums to attract white fans. He could charmingly diffuse situations where racism arose. For example, in 1975 Karl Dallas retold an anecdote in which a French Journalist asked Bob Marley if he intended to 'free the niggers?':

'Niggers?' asks Marley. 'Niggers?' he repeats, a little more loudly. 'Nigger mean doom. I a rasta. You can't free death. I life.'

And then, a little humorously: 'Where you get that word nigger from?'³⁷

Whilst Marley's Rastafarianism was a potentially separatist doctrine he used humour and life affirming positivity, unlike the more abrupt American radicals, to charm. This is not to say he was incapable of his own brand of radicalism. For instance, Vivian Goldman reported Marley's views in frequent, detailed interviews: in May 1977 her *Sounds* interview with Marley reproduced a monologue that was capitalised for emphasis:

OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK WITHIN, ARE YOU SATISFIED
WITH THE LIFE YOU'RE LIVING, WE KNOW WHERE WE'RE

³⁴ Chris Lane, 'The World of Reggae', *Melody Maker*, 28 February 1976, p. 42

³⁵ It has been alleged that some individuals used the phrase 'too much ink on the cover' to deter black musicians being pictured on the front cover of music papers.

³⁶ Ray Coleman, 'Root Strong in Funky Kingston', *Melody Maker*, 12 June 1976, pp. 27-28.

³⁷ Karl Dallas, 'Bob Marley: Wailin' *Melody Maker*, 26 July 1975 (RB, accessed May 2011).

GOING, WE KNOW WHERE WE'RE FROM, WE LIVE IN BABYLON,
WE'RE GOING TO OUR FATHER'S LAND – SEND US ANOTHER
BROTHER MOSES FROM ACROSS THE RED SEA ...
MOVEMENT OF JAH PEOPLE!³⁸

But Marley's call was not entirely predicated on the delivery of black people alone, the music press narrated how Marley demanded freedom for all oppressed groups, they stressed the links he made to the Israelites of the Old Testament. Goldman used capitals to convey his sincerity and strident belief. Capitals in the music press, as has been noted before, conveyed only the most important propositions. Goldman represented Marley as part of a socially conscious musical tradition that had been 'lost' in early-1970s rock due to its aesthetic abstractions and commercial orientation.

Nevertheless the music press did not entirely accept Goldman's construction of Marley. Journalists often lampooned aspects of his behaviour for comic effect or to evoke his exoticism. Few articles, for instance, failed to mention that Marley smoked cannabis, or 'ganja'. Coleman's article described Marley as an exotic native, vague and stoned,

Bob Marley pondered awhile, gazed at the sky, drew hard on his spliff and replied with the utmost economy:

'Him no understand words – him no understand at all.'³⁹

In February 1978 Chris Brazier wrote the most unflattering article on Marley: it was a racist character assassination.⁴⁰ Brazier has since argued that he was simply not a Bob Marley fan but his editor, Coleman, had encouraged him to describe Marley in a negative way. He explained:

I once interviewed Bob Marley. My editor's idea was to send someone who wasn't a fan, who wouldn't write in hushed tones about the latest insights of the man who put Third World music on the popular map. And I obliged with a piece that poured incredulous scorn on Marley's head for his faith in Rastafarianism and even slightly ridiculed the way he talked - he was spicing his speech with Jamaican *patois* and I found it quite difficult to understand. The editor loved it, naturally – but it was shot through with racism. Yet at the

³⁸ Vivien Goldman, 'Movement of Jah People', *Sounds*, 28 May 1977.

³⁹ Ray Coleman, 'Root Strong in Funky Kingston', *Melody Maker*, 12 June 1976, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁰ Chris Brazier, 'Punks not Rasta but Them Fight Down the Babylon System an' Love Black People', *Melody Maker*, 11 February 1978, pp. 34-35.

time I would have considered myself a passionate opponent of racism, campaigning against it both in print and on the streets.⁴¹

Brazier's article described Marley as 'nothing short of crazy' and referred to his adherence to Rastafarianism as 'monomania' that bordered on insanity. He mocked Marley's speech, 'his words tumble over and slur into one another in careless defiance of conventional tense and syntax'. Then after revealing Marley's inauthentic Kensington flat Brazier exhorted, 'Everything was just so, with different shades of brown fusing tastefully, One small step for a white rich kid, perhaps, but a giant leap for an illegitimate half-caste from the slums of Trenchtown.' Brazier undermined Marley's beliefs, intellect and authenticity. Finally Brazier goaded Marley into a rage. He questioned Marley about British politics knowing that Marley was uncomfortable with the subject. Brazier then failed to report part of Marley's response and doing so he, again, mocked Marley's speech:

What do you think of the National Front?

"Some prejudiced people who no want the black man here. Let me ask you something who encourage this t'ing?

I no wanna talk 'bout English Government you know why? The English Government is good an' it bad." (Totally incomprehensible rant for at least a minute).

And now them come an' say we gonna kick you out an' it's them who brought you to that bloodclaat land as slaves. Them'll get fokked. Them can't deal wit' black people loke that, they gon' fok themselves.

Y'know, England should go on better than that, that's bloodclaat dumb – why them no work as slaves for us in return? Really bad men bad people, bullies."

Cultural curiosity was a key component of Marley's allure, but narrating his difference insensitively could repel, confuse and even inspire racism.

When the music press featured black British people similar frictions were evident. Most often the music press narrated black British people as troublemakers at reggae concerts rather than the performers. In a June 1977 *NME* article Nick Kent

⁴¹ Chris Brazier, 'The White Problem', *New Internationalist* 145, 5 March 1985 (<http://newint.org/features/1985/03/05/keynote/>, accessed May 2011).

made a symptomatic comment that was flecked with the racial preconceptions regarding criminality that Thatcher would employ following the 1981 riots. He argued,

The Rainbow should be commended for acting so sensibly over the tricky matter of security (bearing in mind previous London reggae gigs, full of jive boy vandals and pickpockets). All bodyguards inside the building were black, thus averting any inter-racial strife, and they handled themselves with marvellous restraint.⁴²

The negotiations of young Black men's cultural and social position – and it was mostly men, the sons of West Indian migrants who had travelled to Britain in the late-1950s and 1960s – skewed the narratives that the music press imposed upon black people. It was difficult for the music press and black community to adjust their preconceptions of 'black' music to explain British reggae artists such as Steel Pulse. In *NME* Steel Pulse's David Hines explained that first generation immigrant elders reacted negatively to their songs such as 'Ku Klux Klan' and 'National Front' because they were, 'too heavy, too outspoken'.⁴³ He argued that older immigrants 'want to avoid any trouble with the white community . . . want to keep the peace and don't think Natty Dread helps keep the peace. See, the truth only stirs up trouble!' Black British artistes were denied the leeway that Jamaican black musicians were given to be polemical and resist. Hines also complained that the black community was not backing black British bands such as Aswad and Black Slate (who had been supported by punk fans). He argued that it took Jamaican artists to pass judgement on whether a British reggae act was worthwhile for people to take notice:

'The only time when our own community start to take us seriously is when we are backing well known JA [Jamaican] artistes and those artistes turn round on stage and say we compare favourably with other JA artistes.' But, he says sadly, 'they have to be told that you're O.K. – the respect isn't there to begin with.'

Multiracial bands also complained of problems. In 1981 Tailsman argued that being multi-racial alienated a 'potentially large coloured audience'.⁴⁴ The music press often deemed musical genres as mostly the domain of a group. This enduring trope was

⁴² Nick Kent, 'Jahve Mon', *NME*, 11 June 1977 (RB, accessed January 2011).

⁴³ Roy Carr, 'The Handsworth Clan' *NME*, 10 June 1978, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Steve Sutherland, 'Perfection Before Profit', *Melody Maker*, 22 August 1981, p. 22.

applied to gender, sexuality and race. Music papers argued that it was difficult for black or multi-racial British reggae performers' bands to navigate mass appeal and retain a black audience. Talisman's drummer Des Lazarus explained how his double consciousness, skewed by commercial considerations and notions of authenticity, troubled him:

If the point you're trying to get at is whether the music aims to attract a black audience – no, in a word. But I think they'll come around when we finally make it up and say, "Yeah, Talisman ARE a black band and they've made it" and they'll be proud.

Multi-racial Coventry ska band The Specials prompted less consternation, but were also subject to discussions of authenticity. For example, in 1978, shortly after they had changed their name from the Automatics, Garry Bushell reviewed The Specials in support of The Clash at Aylesbury Friars Club.⁴⁵ He explained, 'Whereas Clash play punk songs and reggae songs, The Specials' ditties combine elements of the two.' Bushell followed this with quite a loaded statement, 'Yeah it sounds a phoney not to say disjointed formula but, surprise, surprise, it worked. Song titles that stuck in mind included 'Its Up To You', 'Dawning Of A New Era', 'Wake Up' and 'Concrete Jungle' which give an idea of stance even though I couldn't make out the lyrics from where I was standing.' Bushell responded with reservations towards The Specials' amalgamating two musical genres. He restated the narrative that defined musical authenticity as earned through a single cultural or racial experience. Luckily for The Specials, Bushell found their new musical assemblage palatable and enjoyed that they had a 'stance' that supported his common-sense socialism. Others narrated The Specials as authentic because they expressed their own socio-political experience. In 1979 Tony Stewart used this narrative when he reviewed their debut album. He argued, 'From Coventry, featuring two blacks and five whites, The Specials instinctively 'feel' the true realities of Britain's multi-racial youth, and they too are subject to the same emotions.'⁴⁶ The idea of 'feeling' the situation of British youth drew on older tropes but defined the band as representing youth rather than a specific racial group. Thus The Specials escaped musical ghettoization like Talisman or Steel Pulse who were framed similarly to 1950s 'race' music. Stewart, however, was less equivocal in his support than Bushell, 'It's the kind of album that's musically fathomless and it will probably establish The Specials as true hopes for the '80s.'

⁴⁵ Garry Bushell, *Sounds*, 8 July 1978 (RB, accessed January 2011).

⁴⁶ Tony Stewart, *NME*, 20 October 1979 (RB, accessed January 2011).

Narratives of punk rock and reggae's union inspired multicultural optimism and contributed to the music press's most sustained attack on racism. The music press and its readers advocated Rock Against Racism in response to the fervent minority of right wing anti-immigration, and often racist, individuals and groups who had gained popular attention. Previous histories of Rock Against Racism have neglected that Rock Against Racism drew on the music press's anti-racism position. Rock Against Racism subtly restated the music press's anti-racist narratives to appeal to punk rock fans. In addition due to the National Front's encroachment on music culture and society at large, the racial strife of the Notting Hill Carnival Riot (1976) and the Battle of Lewisham (1977) elicited more combustible rhetoric. In 1976 a small group of activists in London's multicultural East End founded Rock Against Racism in response to Eric Clapton endorsing Enoch Powell's anti-immigration views. *Melody Maker* printed Peter Bruno's letter:

When I read about Eric Clapton's Birmingham concert when he urged support for Enoch Powell, I nearly puked.

What's going on, Eric? You've got a touch of brain damage. You are going to stand for MP, and you think we are being colonised by black people.

Own up. Half your music is black. You are rock music's biggest colonist. You're a good musician, but where would you be without the blues and R & B?

You've got to fight the racist poison, otherwise you degenerate into the sewer with the rats and all the money men who ripped off rock culture with their cheque books and plastic crap.

We want to organise a rank-and-file movement against the racist poison in rock music. We urge support. All those interested, please write to Rock Against Racism, Box M, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN. – Peter Bruno.⁴⁷

The letter won an LP voucher, but more importantly Rock Against Racism positioned their rhetoric expertly: it expressed aggression towards rock's old guard and brashly hinted punk sympathies. The music press and Rock Against Racism supported immigration, denigrated colonialism and defended black people's contribution to music. They encouraged racial unity, albeit they occasionally implied culturally and biologically deterministic tropes. Punk musicians enthusiastically harnessed their anger into a specific cause: in London The Clash and Tom Robinson were at the forefront of Rock Against Racism; The Buzzcocks supported the movement in

⁴⁷ 'Mailbag: Clapton Colonist of Black Music', *Melody Maker*, 28 August 1976, p. 13.

Manchester; and in Leeds The Mekons and Gang of Four became involved. The music press narrated how Bernie Rhodes, The Clash's manager, personally contacted the Anti-Nazi League to play Rock Against Racism's 1978 Victoria Park concert. Albeit such commitment was not universal: guitarist Mick Jones – who had once been in a band called the London SS – was reportedly more concerned with reaching fans than advocating anti-racism, 'We are doing it because it is a free concert'.⁴⁸ *NME* eagerly reported how Rhodes undermined the fascist connotations that punks engendered by wearing swastikas, he joked, 'Swastikas are not in this year!' However punks, as Brian Jones had done in the past, were rarely signifying Nazi sympathies, punks used the swastika to provoke. Mick Farren argued, 'The confusion between Nazi image and Nazi regalia has, over the years, produced a good deal of misconceptions'.⁴⁹ Farren, a contemporary of Nazi regalia enthusiast Lemmy, argued that if one used swastikas apolitically, however offensive to some, it did not correlate with Nazi views. Caroline Coon clarified The Clash and Mick Jones' convictions in *Sounds*.⁵⁰ She pictured The Clash, Sex Pistols, Steel Pulse and Sham 69 picketing National Front leader Martin Webster's house. Anti-racism added meaning to punk which countered the banal moral panics and pantomime anger.

In a 1977 issue of *Sounds* Vivian Goldman narrated the confluences between punk and reggae.⁵¹ She used a Rock Against Racism gig at Hackney Town Hall featuring Billy Idol's Generation X as a backdrop. She combined a range of persuasive narratives into a cohesive, rich construct. Goldman argued that reggae's relationship to punk was analogous to the 1960s relationship between r'n'b and beat groups, for instance, 'The Rolling Stones cut the Valentinos' "It's All Over Now", the Beatles cut Barrett Strong's "Money", the Clash cut Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves", and Generation X do a reggae-style dub version of their own song "Listen." Thus she gave the relationship historical grounding. Secondly she referred to Patti Smith's unabashed excitement when Lenny Kaye introduced her to Tapper Zukie, 'her favourite toaster'. This gave reggae arty credibility. Goldman also noted the relationship's personal and fraternal ties. Don Letts DJ-ed at Soho's infamous punk club the Roxy, Lee 'Scratch' Perry recorded with The Clash, Johnny Rotten idolised reggae artistes and worked as an A&R for Virgin Records following The Sex Pistols' dissolution. Bernie Rhodes – The Clash's manager and former owner of a Kilburn reggae shop – perpetuated the narrative that the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival riot

⁴⁸ 'Clash Fight Nazis', *Melody Maker*, 15 April 1978, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

⁵⁰ Caroline Coon, *Sounds* 22 April 1978, p. 11.

⁵¹ Vivian Goldman, 'Jah Punk: New Wave Digs Reggae', *Sounds*, 3 September 1977 (accessed January 2011).

brought black and punk youth together to battle the police's authority. Yet most importantly Goldman relayed how the hugely influential Bob Marley gave his blessing to the relationship: 'The punks are the outcasts from society. So are the rastas. So they are bound to defend what we defend.' Goldman constructed a meaningful, equal and radical relationship of outsiders with Rock Against Racism as a cause to unite behind.

Yet the music press did not accept this romantic theory of multicultural unity without caveats. There were frequent anecdotes that illustrated racial tension, for instance *Melody Maker* printed a letter from a young white man who entered a 'black' music shop:

As I entered (sporting an obvious RAR badge) everyone inside – who were all blacks – turned and stared at me. I walked self-consciously to the counter and as I approached the assistant he turned the background Musak up loud. I asked if they had the record and before I finished my sentence he said sharply 'No' (for 'No', read: 'We don't serve whites here').

The only way to smash racism is for blacks and whites to join together. And if us whites are prevented from listening to black music, what hope is there out there? Pleases, RAR, come out of London. Love music, hate racism. – MARK ALLERTON, Ellerborough Road, Wendover, Bucks.⁵²

It is strange that a supposedly ardent music fan was not familiar with the behaviour of rude record shop staff. However it does show that Rock Against Racism did not cause an immediate cessation of racial tension, even for well-meaning, if slightly naïve, activists.

The music press also relayed how some punks argued that both society and the art-school, politically-correct post-punks alienated them. This resulted in music papers representing a quasi-socialist working-class identity that had little time for trendy politically-correct platitudes. This narrative appeared frequently in *Sounds* even though working-class readers were thoroughly outnumbered by middle-class readers. Ex-*Socialist Worker* journalist Garry Bushell was a spokesperson for some fairly brusque views that whilst leftist and anti-racist had little room for niceties.⁵³ Indeed his anti-fascist and anti-racist statements did not guarantee support for Rock Against Racism: Bushell had reservations about its middle-class leadership.⁵⁴ Similar

⁵² 'Mailbag', *Melody Maker* 29 April 1978, p. 10.

⁵³ For instance, 'Linton Kewsi Johnson' Garry Bushell, *Sounds*, 14 April 1982 (RB, accessed November 2011).

⁵⁴ Garry Bushell, 'Angelic Upstarts', *Sounds*, 21 April 1979 (RB, accessed November 2011). He argued that working-class movements for jobs were a much more importance social issue.

articulations of 'working-class anger' had attracted the more mephitic National Front in the first place. The National Front was enjoying its peak electoral success and sought young disillusioned punks to bolster their numbers. To the music press's derision the National Front founded *The Punk Front* fanzine. In *NME* Phil McNeill deconstructed *The Punk Front*. He mocked how an article castigated Tom Robinson for being gay and made a crude jibe about Vaseline. McNeill pointed out the author's illiteracy: a cartoon featured Paul Simonon of The Clash with a misspelled speech-bubble saying, 'I hat eh National Front because they don't like me turning the new wave into commie propaganda'.⁵⁵ McNeill undermined the fanzine's logic, imagery and spelling:

In the middle of the sheet is a cartoon of a Jewish-looking guy with long hair, glasses and a moustache. His talk bubble: 'We in the Anti-Nazi League tell you the NF eat black babies for breakfast and gas their own mothers – we haf (sic) pictures already.' In the corner, a cut-out picture of four men carrying Anti-Nazi banners: three black, one white with a huge nose drawn on and glasses again (why do they think all Jews wear spex?) – and underneath the caption:

'British' people stand against the National Front.

Opposite them, a couple of punks are positioned to gaze malevolently at the picture of the demonstrators. 'If that lot's against the National Front,' says one, 'then me and my mates are joining.'

McNeill's deconstruction made similar assumptions to the Raver's 1968 article that rebuked dockers: McNeill reiterated that intelligent music fans do not accept racism. This long established narrative was supported by journalists who argued that racism had no place in working-class culture either. Bushell frequently penned articles that criticised racism and scorned the putative link between Oi! punk, skinheads, the working class and racism.⁵⁶

The music press also began to report The National Front's actions that were unrelated to music. This demonstrates how the music press was no longer bound to report on music alone. Music papers organised advocacy in a way that, even during the Vietnam War, it had previously shirked. Ex-underground journalists and those influenced by the underground press had played an important role in changing the

⁵⁵ Phil McNeill, 'NF Prints Punkzine', *NME*, 17 June 1978, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Garry Bushell, *Sounds*, 27 February 1982. However this was often countered by ideas of white hypocrisy, for instance when Lynton Kwesi Johnson and Bushell discussed punk anti-racism: Garry Bushell, 'Demob Rules', *Sounds*, 14 April 1979 (RB, accessed November 2011).

music press's news values. In August 1977 *NME* reported the Battle of Lewisham National. The National Front had clashed with anti-fascists and the police – who were using riot shields for the first time. Tony Parsons observed the riot and argued, 'If [the National Front] isn't banned it must be crushed.'⁵⁷ Parsons article exemplified how the *NME* constructed the National Front as violent idiots. For instance *NME* reported how the National Front threatened to stab radio DJs with distain: the threat had followed a live broadcast that was interrupted by a National Front supporter asking Michael Aspel, 'Will you stop playing all that 'woggy' music?'⁵⁸ The music press systematically countered the National Front's ideology and constructed them viciously.

A multiracial gathering of between 50,000 and 100,000 at Victoria Park in Hackney people undermined the National Front's claims to represent white youth.⁵⁹ Paul Rambali publicised the concert in *NME*'s 'Thrills' section:

The carnival will begin with a rally at Trafalgar Square, followed by a march to Victoria Park, East London, where the fun includes stalls, side shows, some Asian bands and, of course, the big three. It's free, which means you don't pay the bands and the bands don't get paid.

The purpose of the carnival is simple. First and foremost, it is designed to show – through music – a stand of multi-racial solidarity. Secondly, to disprove the brick throwing image of the Lewisham confrontation some foisted on anti-fascist demonstrations – if you want to be violent then stay away. Thirdly, to prove that there are people who feel that NF policies are sickening racist sloganeering, designed to prey on the current confusion over the real problems.⁶⁰

Even if some young people found the link between Rock Against Racism, middle-class activists and the Socialist Workers' Party problematic, the overwhelming majority of the music press's readers advocated racial solidarity.⁶¹ The gathering was a success: this can be seen in Jack Hazan and David Mingay's footage of Tom Robinson and the Clash performing 'White Riot' to a raucous for crowd *Rude Boy the Movie*. It is an overpowering scene. Indeed The Clash's backdrop which featured a Nazi Stukka 96

⁵⁷ Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, 'Dedicated Followers of Fascism', *NME*, 20 August 1977, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Steve Clarke, 'Knifing Threats for 'Woggy' DJs', *NME*, 18 February 1978, p. 11.

⁵⁹ There are a range of estimates, most based on anecdotal eyewitness accounts. Love Music Hate Racism, the modern day offshoot of Rock Against Racism estimate 100,000 (http://www.lmhrcarnival.com/RAR_carnival_background/, accessed January 2011).

⁶⁰ Paul Rambali, 'Anti-Nazi Rally – Free Gig', *NME*, 8 April 1978, p. 42.

⁶¹ Again Bushell is the best example of this *Sounds*, 27 February 1982 (RB, accessed January 2011).

aircraft bereft of swastikas demonstrates how punks folded a strange diversity of 'offensive' symbolism and anti-racist, egalitarian morality together.⁶²

The music press reported Rock Against Racism's festival prominently. Every front page featured the event and inside journalists were keen to include all racial minorities – the music press often overlooked Asian people. In *NME*- Chris Salewicz covered the festival. He quoted Tariq Ali, Labour MP Ian Mikardo, Peter Hain, Ernie Roberts, the Chairman of the Anti-Nazi League, Tom Robinson and – the utterly delighted – Vishnu Sharma, President of the Indian Workers' Association. Salewicz narrated how music encouraged unity but he hesitated to argue the typically 1960s notion that musical radicalism could transform British society:

Optimistic he may have been but Sharma's mood was reflected in the amazing cross-section of people on the carnival march: young and old, hippies and punks, blacks and whites. Together they marched alongside effigies of the NF leaders, while punk and reggae bands played in the sunshine from the backs of trucks moving at walking pace. Only certain backstage shenanigans at the Victoria Park concert suggested that perhaps anyone who really does believe rock'n'roll can change the world whilst it is the multi-corporations themselves who control the vast majority of the music is operating under almost [Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young]-like delusions.⁶³

Salewicz's scepticism towards 1960s' counter-cultural idealism demonstrates how the music press's more radical voices no longer expected music to transform society's mores, but by identifying more modest and focussed aims music papers contributed the National Front's decline. The late-1960s the music press contributed to the sentiment that defined youth's right to judge and interfere in social issues on their own moral grounds. Rock Against Racism translated pre-existing values of resistance into punk's vernacular and it imbued the genre with more than the previous moral panics suggested. The music press's support for racial unity was a significant reason for Rock Against Racism's success. Of course there are complex reasons for the National Front's decline but the music press was the main forum for Rock Against Racism to mobilise youth and construct anti-racist values.

This chapter establishes how the music press systematically countered racism in British society and music culture. Music papers frequently characterised racism as unsophisticated and implied that music fans would not be swayed by racist agitation.

⁶² This footage is best viewed in *Rude Boy* [DVD film], directed by Jack Hazan and David Mingay (1980, rereleased by Prism Leisure Corp, 2004).

⁶³ Chris Salewicz, 'Carnival' *NME*, 6 May 1978, pp. 31-33.

Furthermore compared to other publications the music press allowed an unusual number of black people to narrate their experiences of racism from 1960s jazz musicians to Black Power influenced artistes and reggae stars. Yet, despite many journalists' best intentions, music press articles often used culturally or biologically deterministic tropes to explain black artistes and their music. This illustrated how ingrained racist assumptions permeated the music press. Despite the music press's anti-racist protestations it was unable to avoid insensitive representations of black people, and sometimes crudely stereotypical constructions of exotic 'otherness' were used to undermine black artistes. Nevertheless, the music press's anti-racist sentiments were bolstered in the late-1970s in response to the National Front. The music press supported Rock Against Racism and through anti-racist advocacy renegotiated punks' meaning from violent transgressors to morally attuned, if aggressively indignant, activists who shared profound similarities with reggae fans and artistes. This exemplified the music press's shifting ideas regarding social change: whilst some had claimed a coming revolution in the 1960s, the 1970s music press had more modest aims but set a precedent for music cultures to organise sustained activism in response to a defined issue.

Chapter Eight

Poison Ivy: Debunking Rock's Chemical Mythology

The historiography of drug use in Britain has usually focussed on the medical, legal and political response to addiction, alongside issues of supply and control.¹ Historians have analysed medical controversy, political paternalism and occasionally expedience, with reference to mostly faceless users who navigate secretive networks of supply and sale – subcultural doyens, casual consumers, debased, pathologised addicts and Burroughsian chemical voyeurs mixed with a varied criminal, or at least criminalised, underbelly.² The way in which the press discussed drugs has largely been ignored. Whilst other titles oscillated between moral panic and curiosity, the music press often favoured candour: it contributed to a rational debate and public knowledge of drugs.³ It is surprising that little sustained attention has been paid from this perspective of pop and rock musicians and the music industry. Music subcultures attracted some of the post-war period's most infamous drug users. Indeed fans emulated stars or, at least, sought to join in with the debate. Music papers were positioned to print testimony, opinion and reaction to notorious cases of drug use, but they also communicated less prominent vernacular drug discussions. Music journalists narrated drug taking and suggested a language to discuss drugs. Between journalists, musicians and readers the music press resisted representing drugs as a moral panic but did not shirk reporting upon deviant drug consumption.

The music press associated drugs with musicians. Whilst long-established as a bohemian interest, jazz musicians had been associated with illicit drug use.⁴ In 1956

¹ Alex Mold has written at length about medical, social and political responses to illicit drugs, with heroin focused upon in great detail: "Grave Cause for Concern"? Private Practise, Professional Disputes and the Treatment of Heroin Addiction in Britain During the 1980s,' *Contemporary British History* 22:1 (2007), p. 67-88; The "British System" of Heroin Addiction Treatment and the Opening of Drugs Dependence Units, 1965-1970,' *The Society for Social History of Medicine* 17:3 (2004), pp. 501-517; Mold's article on Release is important as groups such as Release informed later music press narratives regarding drug education, "The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?": the Work of Drug Voluntary Organisation Release, 1967-1978,' *Twentieth Century British History* (2006, 17:1), pp. 50-73. Alex Mold and Virginia Berridge, *Voluntary Action and Illegal Drugs: Health and Society in Britain Since the 1960s* (Basingstoke, 2011);

² This is especially notable in Richard Davenport-Hinds, *The Pursuit of Oblivion* (London, 2002). The medical and social response has a longer history, for instance, Susan MacGregor, *Drugs and British Society: Responses to a Social Problem* (London, 1989).

³ This is discussed in general terms in the preface to the third edition of Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Abingdon, 1972), p. xxii. He also offers additional reading that applies his framework to a variety of other Western societies.

⁴ Harry Shapiro has found references to jazz and drugs in *Melody Maker* in 1936. Harry Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music* (London, 1999). Elliot Hicks' forthcoming Ph.D. will argue that of fears of racial miscegenation fuelled a sort of reefer

the Metropolitan Police responded to worries about drug fuelled racial mixing by raiding Soho jazz clubs.⁵ In the music press drugs were sometimes assumed to have a direct effect on musical creativity or at least soothed musicians from the industry's pressures: this countered narratives that presented drug taking and drug takers as deviant. By the late-1960s music press constructed drug use as symbolising a divide between the 1960s generation's counter-culture and wider society. But papers rarely described the consequences of using drugs dangerously. Mostly musicians, but some journalists, argued that drugs invoked notions of defiance, difference and revolution: they connected cannabis and LSD with narratives of expanded consciousness that argued a new generation had gained greater spiritual insight. Notoriously in the mid to late-1960s The Rolling Stones and The Beatles admitted to and advocated drug use. Indeed the Redlands case could be seen as a watershed in which popular opinion softened on drug use. The music press was a key source for these myths about illicit substances: this went from tentatively discussing lyrical allusions to more explicit reporting. The music industry tolerated elite artistes' drug taking but drugs remained symbolic of an adversarial moral code. Nevertheless the narrative that stressed that drug taking was radical was reconsidered as social knowledge developed and the number cautionary public drug casualties increased. Destructive addiction made people more conscious of self-preservation and at *NME*, following Sid Vicious' death from an international overdose, editor Neil Spencer stressed his duty of care to inform readers about dangerous drugs and dissuade readers from using substances recklessly.

From around 1976 the music press's discussion of drugs included readers more frequently. Journalists and readers redefined drugs as more than a musician's leisure pursuit. They often described drugs as a social problem. They conflated drug use and British society's malleable narrative of crisis to frame a 'crisis in drug misuse'.⁶ The music press printed statements from the drug policy community; Alex Mold argues that this 'pluralist, multi-disciplinary response to drug use' emerged by the early 1980s and built on developing epidemiological knowledge.⁷ Yet unlike the 'expert' psychiatrists of the 1960s who had only interviewed a handful of addicts, music press journalists were often drug takers, contemporaries of drug takers and frequented

madness and sanctioned political control of drugs using a medico-moral basis; Elliot Hicks, 'The London drug culture, 1930-1971' [PhD thesis] (University of Essex, 2012). This is also covered in Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls: the Making of the British Drug Underground* (London, 1992), p. 178.

⁵ Elliot Hicks, 'The London drug culture, 1930-1971'.

⁶ Mold, A., "Grave Cause for Concern"? Private Practise, Professional Disputes and the Treatment of Heroin Addiction in Britain During the 1980s', p. 69.

⁷ Alex Mold, 'Illicit Drugs and the Rise of Epidemiology during the 1960s,' *Journal of Epidemiology Community Health* (2007, 64:4), p. 278. Mold, A., "Grave Cause for Concern"? Private Practise, Professional Disputes and the Treatment of Heroin Addiction in Britain During the 1980s,' p. 69.

arenas of drug taking. In 1969, for instance, Mick Farren had smuggled a cache of drugs including ‘enough LSD to kill a mule’ into the Isle of Wight festival.⁸ Yet there were broader social factors which enabled this change. Drug addiction had been rising steadily throughout the period and prompted panic-stricken media scrutiny, especially regarding youth.⁹ From 1978 this intensified when greater access, police knowledge and government scrutiny contributed to startling rises in ‘narcotics addicts known by the Home Office’: between 1980 and 1981 there was a remarkable 31% rise.¹⁰ In a break from music press tradition the discourses on drugs were not cautiously against drugs. Neither were they explanations of the psychological effects of drugs nor the influence on musical creativity, nor was support canvassed for legalisation of certain substances. Instead papers accepted that readers were likely drug users and educational information was provided to ameliorate drugs use’s worst possible ramifications. The music press provided a nuanced perspective that was often informed by direct experience, and *NME* specifically attempted to make drugs, specifically glue and barbiturates, safer and demystify alluring rock myths.

This chapter illustrates the music press’s changing conversation on drugs by first examining how the music press constructed drug use and drugs in the 1960s and early-1970s. In this period it is apparent that music papers defended musicians who used drugs by making reference to their commercial success and glamour which distinguished drug using musicians from ‘impressionable’ fans. The chapter then explains events such as prominent cases of addiction or death by drugs that undermined the music press’s drugs narratives. Whilst the music press were able to apply their well-established tropes to Jimi Hendrix’s death or Eric Clapton’s heroin addiction, the idea that punk fans and punk musicians did not have the same star and fan distinctions made Sid Vicious’ death harder to narrate. Thus the chapter then demonstrates how the music press described Sid Vicious’ addiction and death by overdose. It shows how Vicious’ death was constructed as a warning to fans. Finally the chapter examines how the notion that music papers should warn fans about the worst effects of drugs and the assumption that music press readers would take drugs became established in the 1980s. Thus music papers, especially *NME*, stopped obscuring their readership’s potential drug use and assumed a duty of care to educate and inform.

⁸ Mick Farren, personal interview (2011).

⁹ Stanley Cohen *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, p. xxii. Adrian Bingham has noted that these moral panics have existed in newspapers for much of the twentieth-century, in 1923 there was fears that people would affect the deviant drug taking of Hollywood stars, Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* (Oxford, 2009), p. 248.

¹⁰ Narcotics addicts known to the Home Office (1970-1985) quoted in Martin Plant, ‘The Epidemiology of Illicit Drug-Use and Misuse in Britain’, in Susan MacGregor (ed.) *Drugs and British Society: Responses to a Social Problem in the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 57.

In the 1960s a smaller and better connected stratum elicited condemnation and defence rather than concern. The Rolling Stones' drug taking was scrutinised following the Redlands drugs bust. However, despite softening with age, The Rolling Stones presented themselves as the *bête noires* of mainstream society. On the other hand The Beatles were, at first, publically submissive, but later became subversive and discussed drug use. The Beatles were almost inconceivably popular making their pronouncements weighty: by 1967 if a music paper featured a single Beatle – yes, even Ringo – it was a special occasion. However from around 1966 the Beatles were closer to the underground press. Miles interviewed Paul McCartney in *International Times*. He reported that they smoked joints and how McCartney talked about the hypocrisy of classifying alcohol separately from illicit drugs.¹¹ Yet the music press would still defend The Beatles' drug taking. Of course, The Beatles provided considerable impetus to the music press's 1960s success. In 1969, due to the Beatles' importance and a general sense of camaraderie, *NME* defended the Beatles transgressions, including drugs:

SHOCK: the Beatles let their hair grow and sprout beards, wear strange, brightly coloured clothes- "My God, they look like Hippies."

Offence: The Establishment hates Hippies.

SHOCK: The Beatles follow the Maharishi into an obscure Eastern Philosophy.

Offence: Against the Judeo-Christian Mystique of the West.

SHOCK: They take drugs – and admit it!

Offence: Against the Law.

SHOCK: John Lennon commits adultery, makes that weirdo Yoko pregnant and then actually says they're glad.

Offence: Is there anything that isn't against.

¹¹ McCartney told Miles, 'And pot is just that, pot is "just drugs" and LSD is "just drugs" and every form of drugs is "just the pit of iniquity, the black pit of terrible decadent disgusting people always fall into." There is no thought on anyone's part WHY anyone takes drugs but there's thought on their part why they take drink. They're quite willing to think about why they take drink, why they need a drink though they're not maybe willing to admit that they take a drink to get drunk!' Miles, 'A Conversation with Paul McCartney', *International Times*, November 1966 (RB, accessed February 2012).

THE ESTABLISHMENT'S JUST WAITING FOR THE STARS TO FALL.¹²

NME republished an argument that was first made by Jo-An Jenkins, a journalist from the London Bureau of a US publication, *Woman's Wear Daily*. Her reservations about the Establishment were anchored in contemporary transatlantic debates.¹³ However *NME* went further than Jenkins. Andy Grey argued that the Establishment was a bullying, intolerant entity whose example encouraged taboo behaviour. Furthermore Grey argued that the Beatles' drug use was counterbalanced by the economic benefits that the Beatles provided, 'far outweighing all these things is that the latest LP, a double-the-money effort because it was two LPs in one sleeve, is bringing double the dollars to Britain. Their music amasses vast amounts of foreign loot for our sagging exchequer.' In this article transgressive behaviour – including drug taking – was posited as being permissible if it resulted in material reward. Grey restated the music press's classic commercial defence for transgressive behaviour. Furthermore, perhaps knowingly to prevent accusations of corrupting his readership, Grey constructed drugs as an elite pursuit for precious dollar earners to unwind.

In 1967 *Melody Maker* questioned Alan Price, an ex-civil servant and the keyboard player in the Animals, on the drugs debate in a 'Think In' article.¹⁴ It went further than *NME* and set a precedent for what would mutate into the public health drugs discourse of the later 1970s. Price argued against callous media amplification by the press and stated that drugs could provide stimulus following the dearth of liberal arts education in Britain. He then argued that drugs could act as a crutch for the decline of religion. Price's summary brought together a range of narratives: he expressed notions of protecting youth, responded to permissiveness and hypocritical social prurience:

¹² Andy Grey, 'The Establishment Must Not Drive the Beatles Out' *NME*, 15 March 1969, p. 3.

¹³ Within the article Grey had stoked the controversy surrounding the Conservative government's attempt to curb late night open air festivals with the 1972 Night Assemblies Bill. He argued the Bill was linked to unfair stop and search practises undertaken to find drugs on young people, 'Too often MPs seem bent on introducing legislation like the Night Assemblies Bill of two years ago, which appear anti-youth. There's often discrimination, it appears, ranging from the way in which police exercise their right to stop and search young people for drugs to the fact of taxes being kept from other art forms such as books while being imposed upon records and musical instruments.'

¹⁴ 'Think In' *Melody Maker*, 18 March 1967, p. 7.

People who make the laws will have to come to terms with this. Publicising scandals doesn't absolve corruption. The Profumo thing was a typical example. It didn't cure anything. It was supposed to be a defence scare, but it did destroy somebody's life. The drugs scene publicity isn't going to solve anything. It can only be done by stricter controls and education for younger people who should be shown an alternative to drugs.

Price was not questioning the illegality of controlled substances but was in favour of drug education for younger people. He explained that drugs were not only used by stars and suggested the effects that drugs could have on an individual. However this article stands out from others at the time. Other than Keith Altham's article describing the crowd at the Alexandra Palace Love-In and their lysergic adventures, music papers made it clear that it was stars who were subject to scrutiny.¹⁵ It was a long time until the music papers mediated drug education ideas again.

For instance, from the late 1960s onwards Eric Clapton was a frequent protagonist in the discussions of drugs. The way the music press narrated his drug addiction illustrates the shifting emphasis in conversations on drugs. First Clapton reinforced the elitist connotations of drug use, yet by the late-1970s he was drawn into a conversation that had wider relevance. In 1968, before large scale coverage of Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison or Janis Joplin's deaths by drink and/or drug overdose, music papers reported drug incidents with relative innocence. For instance, the police arrested Clapton whilst having fun with Buffalo Springfield, a group operating with a noted drug taking milieu including David Crosby, in the verdant and sunny Topanga Canyon, California. *NME* saw the funny side when they were arrested by the police,

Eric was at a party at Steve Still's (of Buffalo Springfield) Topanga Canyon home where about 25 revelled it up! Sheriff Deputies raided the home when neighbours complained of a too-loud party. Newspapers alleged the lawmen also found six ounces of marijuana.¹⁶

The article was light-hearted and focused more on Cream's successful West Coast tour. Again drugs were made permissible by success. The reporting downplayed the significance of being arrested for 'marijuana' possession. The article suggested that it was just a party and the comedic element of celebrities being caught with six ounces of cannabis – a considerable amount – trumped any greater concerns. Nevertheless

¹⁵ Keith Altham, 'KA goes to the Love-In Plus' *NME*, 5 August 1967, p. 12.

¹⁶ Ann Moses, 'Trouble For Eric', *NME*, 30 March 1968, p. 12.

many journalists were aware that Clapton was addicted to heroin.¹⁷ In 1970 Keith Altham skirted the subject for *Fusion*.¹⁸ He pressed Clapton to clarify his position on drugs. Clapton defended his drug use: he rejecting the notion of addiction,

Pot to most people is a kind of crutch but what really requires stronger definition is the word "addiction" and the word "habit-forming" – I mean I'm addicted to this rocking chair I'm in. People escape with pot and who says that they have no right to do so.

The question was oddly invasive. It reported how Clapton spuriously argued that he could take drugs and remain sentient. Clapton argued that he did not want drugs to cloud his senses: instead he wanted to try to 'share [his] music with the people'. He imposed the division between artists and consumer. Clapton narrated acceptable drug use that posited that the famous were impervious to detrimental side-effects.

Yet by 1974 it was clear that Clapton was not impervious to addiction. Chris Welch referred to Clapton's 'self-imposed hibernation' and Steve Turner explained Clapton's return to public life with 'a habit kicked' as Clapton returned to entertain a joint-waving crowd in Copenhagen.¹⁹ However by 1977 music papers narrated Clapton's addiction and rehabilitation more discerningly. The narrative demonstrated improved knowledge about drug taking and addiction. It was less celebratory. Steve Turner explained the change in *Sounds*,

At one time drug involvement as a badge marking you out as part of an elite was almost as big a high as the drug itself but those days seem to be past. Most people now seem to know, or know of, at least one person who's been strung out on heroin and the conclusion is always the same – the high at the beginning just isn't worth the lows that follow.²⁰

Greater knowledge had led to increased wariness of heroin. Turner spoke to Dr Meg and George Patterson. George was a documentary film maker who had filmed opium

¹⁷ Chris Chalesworth, personal interview (2011).. They did not seek to out his addiction, it would have broken the confidence that enabled close access.

¹⁸ Keith Altham, 'Another Corssroad', *Fusion*, 6 February 1967 (RB, accessed March 2012).

¹⁹ Chris Welch, 'Danish Blues Power', *Melody Maker*, 29 June 1974 (RB, accessed March 2012). Steve Turner, *NME*, 14 December 1974 (RB, accessed March 2012).

²⁰ Steve Turner, 'Give Me Strength', *Sounds*, 19 February 1977 (RB, accessed March 2012).

smuggling in Hong Kong whilst Meg was a doctor who had developed a treatment for opiate addiction which Clapton had used. Meg argued for the decriminalisation of drugs to cut out unscrupulous drug dealers and reduce the illicit allure of drugs. She also argued that record companies had a 'moral responsibility' to take care of their employees and provide addiction treatment. She denounced the government for using methadone prescription to treat heroin addiction:

I wonder how many more will close now that one unit has spoken out and said that they think they're achieving nothing by methadone maintenance. We know that there is money available if you could only find it. I believe that £3 million was set aside for alcoholism and, as far as we know, that money hasn't been touched but we can't find out who the money's going to be given to, where it is or, what's going to be done with it.

The article's discussion of drugs had a view to wider society and public policy article, it assumed greater public knowledge and drug use. But Dr Patterson's statement still hinted towards more imbedded preconceptions regarding drugs. She implied that heroin's link with the elite rock establishment remained in addiction provision: Dr Patterson's successful treatment was too expensive for the NHS. Indeed the notion that restricting controlled substances and not alcohol was hypocritical still resonated.

Notable musicians and pop stars provided ballast for the music press's lurid tales of addiction and death. The Velvet Underground – and following its untidy dissolution, Lou Reed, John Cale, and collaborator Nico, individually – provided a soundtrack of a twilight world where drugs and transgression irradiated a seedy, electric decadence.²¹ Music journalists clung to their musical legacy like sacred scrolls and celebrated their arty New York credentials.²² In 1973 Reed's solo single 'Walk on

²¹ Lou Reed's has often claimed that his discussion of drugs was literary, neither for nor against or glamorising the subject. Vincent Bockris and Gerard Malanga, *Uptight: The Velvet Underground Story* (London, 2003), p. 64.

²² The Velvet Underground were patronised by Andy Warhol and John Cale, a founder member, had been a student of avant-garde classical musician and forefather of drone music LaMonte Young. Nevertheless the Velvet Underground did not gain immediate success or mainstream commercial success, in some part due to problems with their record label, the relatively extreme nature of their use of feedback and racy subject material. This is explained in Victor Bockris and Gerard Malanga, *Up-tight: the Velvet Underground Story*. This was bemoaned in 1967 by reader Paul Barrett of Holcombe, Lancashire: Why is it that many of the best American records are not released over here? I have managed to get hold of two fantastic records, neither of which are available in this country. "The Grateful Dead" and "the Velvet Underground and Nico," both LPs. The records are produced by one of the greatest

the Wild Side' had escaped censorship and broached subversive topics on British airwaves. Nick Kent exemplifies how some journalists deemed Reed's depiction of sex and drugs 'cool', 'any song that mentions oral sex, male prostitution, methedrine addiction and an up-front avocation to take valium and still get air-play on Radio 1 must be truly cool'.²³ Kent, a heroin addict himself, went on to explain how The Velvet Underground's 1967 album, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, depicted heroin use,

Songs dealing with sado-masochism, heroin, amphetamine and any amount of decay, and in the year of the Summer of Love.

...

'Waiting For The Man' is already a classic, a punk street gem, remains the only song to deal relevantly with the theme without unwittingly romanticising the drug or getting involved in some kind of shallow denunciation.

Kent did not mention 'The theme' of buying heroin, it was too much of a taboo. But still Kent explained how heroin had its merits and potentials; he glamorised heroin. Kent enthusiastically narrated how Reed's subversive stage act encouraged his fans to take drugs, 'In the toilets, the kids barter for reds, quaaludes and cocaine'. He relished how a local Detroit paper reviewed the performance with an article headlined, 'Obscene Rock Star Performs in Vulgar Show.' Well into the 1970s and 1980s journalists seemed compelled to ask The Velvet Underground's former members to discuss 'outrageous' songs such as 'Heroin' and 'Waiting for the Man'. For instance, after the band's original nucleus had dissolved and no original members remained, Tony Stewart questioned Doug Yule – the usurper of the Velvet Underground name – about 'Waiting for the Man'.²⁴ In 1981 when Cynthia Rose wrote three articles that reappraised the Velvet Underground the notorious songs were mentioned in two of the articles. The third article interviewed former drummer Maureen 'Mo' Tucker: she was married with children which seems to have made hard drugs an impermissible topic.²⁵ Kent and many of the other journalists equated drug use and addiction with

comprehensive artists alive today, Andy Warhol, and would sell in enormous numbers if released here.' 'From You To Us' *NME*, 3 June 1967, p. 2.

²³ Nick Kent, 'A Walk on the Wild Side of Lou Reed,' *NME*, 9 June 1973 (RB, accessed August 2010).

²⁴ Tony Stewart, 'Lowdown on the Underground', *NME*, 30 October 1971 (RB, accessed August 2010).

²⁵ Chris Bohn also mentioned 'Heroin' in an interview with Lou Reed in the same year: Chris Bohn, 'Clean Living and Dirty Looks', *NME*, 6 March 1982 (RB, accessed August 2010).

glamour and excitement. They were influenced by the legacy of the Beat generation, Hunter S. Thompson and the New Journalism. Journalists constructed artistes like Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and Keith Richards as unburdened by normative attitudes towards drugs and narrated their contravention of safe drug taking as cool rather than castigating them as ‘junkies’.

At least The Velvet Underground had lived to tell the tale of drug use. Others had not been so lucky. The select group of Hendrix, Joplin, Moon and Morrison loomed large over mid-1970s rock culture. Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix had died within weeks of each other in 1970. The music press mythologised Hendrix’s death by drugs, choking on vomit in a barbiturate stupor, rather more than Joplin’s death. The narrative was more simplistic, the glamour, rather than the human cost, was brought to the fore, even if it was accepted that Hendrix’s outré public persona belied a more introverted private individual. *NME* was nervous when discussing his death. Hendrix’s did not elicit front page coverage: the front page was dominated by an advert for Melanie’s cover of The Rolling Stones’ ‘Ruby Tuesday’.²⁶ Inside Richard Green wrote a brief article. He alluded to expert status: in some undeclared capacity he had ‘once worked with [Hendrix]’.²⁷ Green tried to justify how Hendrix used drugs to alleviate stress,

But it was Jimi who felt the effects most. He sought a release of a kind through drugs. But it is useless to pretend that this is anything new for musicians. Jimi just seemed to be the one who got the most publicity.

The article compounded the idea that star musicians were subject to a different morality: the narrative posited that musicians need drugs to function and that the public’s voyeurism was the gravest concern. Green’s elegy became more hyperbolic at the end: ‘Only his memory and his music live on as an everlasting monument to a truly great man of music and person.’ Green constructed Hendrix’s ‘everlasting’ music as a sacred reminder of Hendrix’s ‘greatness’ which corroborated the divide between consumer and star. Yet, despite the kind words, *NME*’s limited coverage of Hendrix’s death, considering his fame and musical significance, implies that papers were uneasy with covering death by drugs.

²⁶ ‘Ruby Tuesday’ *NME*, 26 September 1970, p. 1.

²⁷ Richard Green, ‘Goodbye, Jimi’, *NME*, 26 September 1970, p. 2.

Melody Maker perceived of their audience as more sophisticated, more interested in Hendrix and less afraid to discuss drugs. It devoted the cover, pages twenty-four and twenty-five and a readers' letters column to commemorate his death. The banner headline on the front cover read, 'Hendrix Blues' and accompanied a full page picture of Hendrix playing guitar and looking sombre.²⁸ Below the image the paper reported comments from notable guitarists who stoked Hendrix's legend. Ritchie Blackmore, Deep Purple's guitarist, stated, 'There are two inspirations as far as my music goes, one is my wife, the other Jimi Hendrix. He was above all other.' Jeff Beck and Stevie Winwood also edified Hendrix, they invoked the narratives of genius and 'otherness'. As much as the paper represented how Hendrix's death was mourned, it also presented a romanticised impression of Hendrix as a person and a musician. Inside Chris Welch focused on 'the story', Richard Williams focused on 'the music' and Roy Hollingsworth on 'the man'. Again the idea of otherworldliness was put forward. Welch wrote that Hendrix 'was little short of phenomenal, and his reputation spread like wildfire.' Welch, as per usual, obscured the more provocative aspects of Hendrix's background and explained that Hendrix had left the army after he had, 'broke an ankle and injured his back'. Williams, on the other hand, attempted to objectively analyse Hendrix's music: 'THE IMPORTANCE of Jimi Hendrix as a musician was sometimes forgotten behind the man's sexuality and the flamboyance of his act and appearance.'²⁹ Hollingsworth concurred that there was more to Hendrix than the persona, 'That was Jimi Hendrix, electric citizen, wild man, freak, monster almost, and yet off-stage, as gentle and nervous as a young kid facing his headmaster.' The paper reproduced many letters from Hendrix's fans. Their letters stoked the Hendrix mythology more brazenly than *Melody Maker's* journalists or musicians. P. Ives from Surrey wrote, 'He was a "child of God", a minstrel of our time. The world won't miss him, but we will. I shall never forget him.' Gerard Berridge from Cardiff also used Religious imagery, 'Jimi Hendrix was, and always will be the only "God."' *Melody Maker* did little to counter narratives that glamorised Hendrix's life and by proxy drug taking. For instance it did not mention Hendrix's cause of death in advance of the coroner's verdict as the more constrained *NME* had done so. Yet even *NME* did not construct Hendrix's death by drugs as a caution to readers: music papers did not connect drug use by star musicians and drug use by fans.

The following week when the coroner's verdict was returned *Melody Maker* briefly highlighted the contention that Hendrix was not an addict nor suicidal, but had

²⁸ 'Hendrix Blues', *Melody Maker*, 26 September 1970, p. 1.

²⁹ *Melody Maker*, 26 September 1970, pp. 3-5.

died by drugs.³⁰ It was a brief article subtly placed at the bottom of page six surrounded by small music news articles. Within a few days Janis Joplin died of a heroin overdose. Again *Melody Maker* referred to the coroner's report: Joplin had been found with 'the paraphernalia that goes with a drug user' and 'fresh needle marks on her left arm'.³¹ The paper fleetingly narrated drug use in a more disturbing and knowledgeable way. The combined shock of their deaths and the integral part that drug use played could have provided further space for questioning the glamour and danger of drugs in music. It could have shifted the narrative from protecting and glorifying Hendrix's reputation. However music papers paid little further attention to Joplin's death: perhaps combined with Hendrix's recent death it was too depressing and potentially damaging to associate the music industry with drugs. Furthermore the papers made no reference to the possibility that fans might imitate their heroes by experimenting with drugs.

It took a while for a detailed discussion of Joplin's death to be printed in Britain. In 1972 Mick Farren wrote a retrospective of Janis Joplin's career in *International Times* rather than a music paper. Farren, in contrast to other musicians' attempts to romanticise Joplin's death, deconstructed notions of desirable drug taking and was candid about the potential harms of drug use.³² The article indicates the disparity between *NME* in 1971 and 1972 as writers with an underground ethos interrupted its formerly banal pop writing. Farren accepted that the failure of Joplin's first band – Big Brother and the Holding Company – was to some extent due to drug addiction: 'It never quite seemed to gel properly and at the same time Janis was experiencing serious drug problems. Within a year the band had fallen apart.' This contradicted the normal trope that drug taking resulted in an opened mind and unfettered musical creativity. Farren presented 'serious drug problems' as a hindrance. However, he quoted others who were less circumspect such as the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia: 'It was the best possible time for her death. If you know any people who passed that point into decline, you know, really getting messed up, old, senile, done in. But going up, it's like a skyrocket, and Janis was a skyrocket chick.' Garcia stoked the embryonic rock star mythology of dying young – there was already a modicum of this in song lyrics, 'don't fear the reaper', 'I hope I die before I get old' as the genre fetishized youth – but now it was being enacted by stars. However Farren

³⁰ 'Earlier this week a coroner recorded an open verdict on Hendrix's death at the London inquest, where it was stated that there was no evidence to suggest that Hendrix was a drug addict, or that he had ever been depressed. Medical evidence was that death had been caused by inhalation of vomit, due to barbiturate intoxication.' *Melody Maker*, 3 October 1970, p. 3.

³¹ *Melody Maker*, 17 October 1970, p. 4.

³² Mick Farren, 'Janis: A Look at a Jet Age Red Hot Mama on the Second Anniversary of Her Death' *International Times*, 18 September 1972 (RB, accessed March 2012).

immediately negated Garcia's romanticism in terse and journalistic prose: 'Janis was found with four dollars clutched in her hand, and signs of recent heroin use.' Farren's portrayal sapped the glamour from Joplin's death by describing Joplin slumped dead whilst clutching the funds for another hit. The tension between a morose Farren, who anchored his prose in realism, actively trying to steer the death from a rumoured possible suicide to accidental overdose, with the myth of a spectacular early death, preordained by unearthly qualities, competed throughout the article. However other journalists frequently explained the demise of other valorised artistes using an overly romantic narrative. Nick Kent's heartfelt but exaggerated elegy to Nick Drake in 1974 portrayed him as a quiet auteur, detached from earthly worries.³³ This pervasive music press cliché posited that those who died by drugs were barely temporal beings, it 'othered' them, so a detailed discussion of the drugs that aided their deaths was not forthcoming. The music press used this narrative to distinguish elite and popular drug taking. The notion protected the music industry by mitigating the notion that the public might imitate stars. Nevertheless this was a false construct. Music press readers did, of course, take drugs (albeit it could not be argued that the music industry was entirely to blame). In 1972 a *Melody Maker* advertisement alluded to drug problems in the music press's readership. The advertisement offered counselling services:

"Help" Adoption, abortion, contraception, drugs, educational problems, loneliness, marriage, pregnancy testing, psychiatric help, venereal disease.

For free help and advice phone 402 5231 or write to "HELP", 10 South Wharf Road, London, W.2.³⁴

However usually the music press did not report fans taking drugs nor did they perceive it their remit to educate readers.

In contrast, by 1977 the music press assumed and accepted that fans had more knowledge of drugs. Thus the music press narrated Sid Vicious' heroin addiction, the murder of his partner Nancy Spungen and his eventual overdose as a warning to readers.³⁵ Journalists did not imbue Vicious with the ethereal qualities that earlier stars had been granted. Punks, specifically those like Vicious, claimed to be of

³³ Nick Kent, 'Requiem for a Solitary Man', *NME*, 8 February 1975 (RB, accessed March 2012).

³⁴ 'Help', *Melody Maker*, 1 April 1972, p. 2.

³⁵ This did not completely replace the previous glorification drugs, when Nick Kent interviewed Iggy Pop in 1977 the only lyrics he directly quoted was a song about heroin overdose. Nick Kent, 'Iggy said it, Iggy had the Power, Iggy had the Disease', *NME*, 12 March 1977, p. 28-29 and 41.

the street, embellished negative working-class tropes and often denigrated the idea of music talent. Vicious had rudimentary musical ability and posed as a destitute street urchin. *Melody Maker's* coverage of the 100 Club Punk Festival made first mention of Vicious. Caroline Coon lauded his links to the punk subculture and his amateur attitude, 'Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten's friend and inventor of the Pogo dance, was on drums. He had one rehearsal.'³⁶ Coon argued that punks were establishing a 'new cultural identity' by accepting a lack of professionalism and offering each other mutual support. Narratives such as this constructed Vicious as more the product of cultural forces than a mystically talented rock star. After replacing Glen Matlock as the bassist for The Sex Pistols and on tour in Stockholm, *NME* interviewed Vicious and Johnny Rotten.³⁷ The interview reported how Vicious was arrested for a knife related crime. The interview reported Rotten contributing to the unflattering representations of Vicious. He questioned Vicious' ability to think for himself: 'Vicious: "I'm an intellectual." Rotten: "He's also an oaf. He listens to what everybody else says and thinks, 'How can I get in on this?'"' The interview reproduced Vicious' comments as unflatteringly and stressed his rambling half-baked punk clichés, such as, 'the trouble is that the general public are so contrived themselves that they can't imagine how anybody else could *not* be contrived. Therefore, if you're not contrived, they have to find some way of justifying their own contrivance...' He was not described unflatteringly and his comments were reproduced to stress his ignorance. He was infamous and admired nefariously as a distortion of social realism and a cypher for society's ills – not a deific prodigy.

More often than not journalists portrayed Vicious negatively. For instance Mick Watts reported that during The Sex Pistols tour in the U.S. Vicious was grossly homophobic – calling the crowd 'f---- faggots' –, that he stabbed himself with a knife and that he openly solicited heroin with 'gimmie' written in black ink across his chest'.³⁸ *Melody Maker* had neglected to report that 'gimmie' had been carved into his chest with a knife and followed by the words 'a fix' and unsurprisingly elected to print the word 'faggot' but not 'fucking'.³⁹ However his addiction was hardly a secret. When The Sex Pistols broke up during their American Tour *Melody Maker* alluded to Vicious' problems by using the music industry's main euphemism for drug addiction. The paper reported Bob Reghr of Warner Records saying that Vicious was suffering from

³⁶ Caroline Coon, 'Parae of the Punks', *Melody Maker*, 2 October 1976, pp. 26-27.

³⁷ 'Quest for the genius Punk', *NME*, 6 August 1977, p. 49.

³⁸ Michael Watts, 'Pistols Shock the Rednecks', *Melody Maker*, 14 January 1978, p. 3. At this point the Pistols public infamy was such that an incorrect rumour circulated in which President Carter had intervened in order for them to gain US Visas.

³⁹ This is clearly visible in the recording of The Sex Pistols's Dallas concert. *Live at the Longhorn* [Film VHS Tape] Sex Pistols (Spot Films, 1978).

'tour fatigue'.⁴⁰ The article added comments from Richard Branson, their British label owner. Branson was reported as saying that The Sex Pistols might reform but without Sid Vicious because he was a "very sick man." Chris Salewicz described Vicious' drug addiction in terms of 'illness' when he reported on an interview with Vicious and Spungen in New York. Salewicz reported how Vicious was unpleasantly intoxicated,

SWAYING CRAZILY, Sid Vicious clammers up off the bed. He manages the three or four steps to where, obeying live-in-lover Nancy's instructions, he removes the "God Save The Queen" tablecloth from the top of the colour TV and turns to his visitor. He doesn't appear to notice that he should first have removed the two glasses of fresh orange juice resting on top of the cloth.⁴¹

Salewicz mixed more traditional notions – his use of the term 'live-in-lover' is remarkably old-fashioned – with contradictory attempts to make light of Vicious' addiction and masochistic self-harm. Salewicz remarked that, 'Sid's not going to die,' and constructed the violence inflicted on Spungen and Vicious as, 'closer to post-adolescent angst'. Salewicz tried to excuse Vicious' addiction in light of his strange behaviour, 'The drug abuse doesn't help, of course, but then legally prescribed Valium can screw your head up just as much as anything you score in the street.' This was a narrative that harked back to the Redlands bust. Yet Salewicz narrated Vicious' incoherence unfavourably. He reported how Vicious repeatedly fell asleep whilst drinking medicine, which was most likely methadone, and how Spungen scolded Vicious constantly. Salewicz presented the interview as ending with Sid commenting, 'Oh well. It'll be a funny interview. I'm not capable of talking intelligibly. Can't you do it?' It was hardly an advertisement for opiate addiction.

The music press were on hand to present the gory details and analyse the final twist in Vicious' increasingly disturbing story. Each music paper reported that Nancy Spungen was found dead in the Chelsea Hotel, New York. They reported how Vicious was accused of murder, then allegedly confessed and was sent to the notorious Rikers Island Prison to await trial. *NME* sent Joe Stevens to the prison with Malcolm McLaren and Vicious' mother Ann Beverley.⁴² Stevens narrated how Vicious was

⁴⁰ 'This Could Be the Last Time', *Melody Maker*, 28 January 1978, p. 3.

⁴¹ Chris Salewicz, 'The End of the Affair', *NME*, 4 February 1978, pp. 28-30.

⁴² Joe Stevens, 'The Vicious Affair', *NME*, 21 October 1978, p. 3.

adamant of his innocence, “When the fuck did I make a confession?” he retorted “I was well out of it, mate!” Stevens retold Vicious’ story that he was asleep and that the knife used in the murder was ‘to protect themselves from junkie scavengers who hung around the methadone clinic Sid frequented’. This was hardly a narration of the Velvet Underground’s New York heroin chic. This was Vicious’ final music press interview: at Rikers Island he underwent methadone withdrawal treatment and was subsequently granted bail. But he died of an overdose a few hours later when at a party with his mother. None of the major music press titles featured Vicious prominently on the cover. Tellingly *Melody Maker* featured Bob Geldof on the cover.⁴³ Geldof was a more acceptable incarnation of punk. *NME* had a small memorial in the top corner.⁴⁴

Melody Maker provided the most visually striking obituary.⁴⁵ In the centre a cartoon by Peter Till depicted Vicious in distressed black ink, with his features blank and slightly obscured, pogoing atop a giant syringe. The needle impaled Vicious through the abdomen. John Orme’s article flanked the cartoon. Orme stressed Vicious’ age, twenty-one, and the furore over whether he should have been granted bail and released from his treatment before there were ‘enough people around to support him’. Orme narrated Vicious as pathetically dependant on others. The article discussed Vicious’ planned new album which was needed to pay exorbitant legal costs. Orme reported how Malcolm McLaren denied he was to blame for Vicious’ death, as his manager, blaming ‘the gross negligence’ of people at the party.⁴⁶ McLaren pleaded ignorance, ‘If I had the necessary knowledge of drug abuse, I would have liked to know how he was likely to react on coming out of prison detoxified – he would have headed, as he did, straight for a fix. If I’d known that, I would have made sure he stayed in jail.’ The article explored the potentially fatal pitfalls of drug addiction and implied that greater knowledge and care would have saved Vicious. The following week there was scant mention of Vicious, even in an interview with Johnny Rotten. *Melody Maker* reported how U.S. critic Stanley Mises commented in a *New York Times* obituary that Vicious had been perceived ‘part as a poor slob with a death wish’ and rather uncharitably called him an ‘avant-garde proponent of peristalsis’.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Melody Maker*, 17 February 1979, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *NME*, 17 February 1979, p. 1.

⁴⁵ John Orme, ‘The Last Pogo’, *Melody Maker*, 17 February 1979, p. 9.

⁴⁶ McLaren was never a universally popular figure, to say the least, he was often blamed for stoking an outlaw myth concerning The Sex Pistols that Sid Vicious was naïve enough to enact unquestioningly and embellish to gain acclaim.

⁴⁷ Stanley Mises, *Melody Maker*, 26 February 1979, p. 5.

Sounds quoted Bruce Springsteen's 'Jungleland' and Delmore Schwartz as epitaphs.⁴⁸ Schwartz's read, 'In dreams begin responsibilities'. The anonymous article reflected on the 'horrific inevitability' and deemed the affair, 'just another squalid end to another squalid junkie, only warranting front-page treatment because of the corpse's fame – he was once a SEX PISTOL.' It quoted the *Daily Express* at length; they had interviewed Ann Beverley and uncovered that she was a registered drug addict. On the basis of this information *Sounds* displayed developed knowledge, 'you can't help wondering why an ex-junkie put a possible OD to bed.' Despite this critical reportage, *Sounds* was the only publication that printed a letter in defence of Vicious:

Sid Vicious knew he'd end up wasting his life in prison and that's surely why he did it? But remember what he said in the Pistols' book: "I'll probably die by the time I reach 25 but at least I'll have lived the way I wanted to". So forget the newspaper crap and let's remember Sid as we knew him. God save Sid Vicious! – Welling punks on behalf of all Pistols fans.

The young acolyte, at least young enough to purchase a 'Pistols book', granted Vicious the agency he was often stripped of, giving him a rebellious allure. In *NME*, editor Neil Spencer tried to counter Vicious' magnetism.⁴⁹ Spencer uncompromisingly narrated and speculated upon Vicious' death. Spencer suspecting that drug treatment had reduced Vicious' heroin tolerance making him susceptible to New York's street heroin. Spencer reported Vicious' death in reference to Vicious' relatively normal upbringing from Clissold Park School to punk gigs. Spencer then suggested the wider issues that Vicious' death stimulated. He argued that music should not be blamed: Vicious' death was a warning about the ultimate futility of heroin addiction, 'and the responsibility cannot be laid at the door of punk rock'. Spencer referred to Janis Joplin and Charlie Parker and how their deaths did not have a direct relationship to their genres of music. Furthermore he argued that *fewer* punks used hard drugs than those 'among the echelons of rock's so called "old guard"'. He argued that rock must not 'propagate heroin addiction' as it and cultural allies such as William Burroughs had done in the past. Spencer finished the article with an ominous statement: 'the equation that Heroin = Death has been enacted enough times for it to be obvious to all.'

Spencer was integral to the music press's more socially conscious mode of writing about drugs. He encouraged comments from experts and treatment agencies. This was a controversial move; some older writers such as Nick Kent were not

⁴⁸ 'No Tears, By Request', *Sounds*, 17 February 1979, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Neil Spencer, *NME*, 10 February 1979, p. 19.

impressed, but Spencer was constructing drugs as a problem that afflicted the music paper's readership.⁵⁰ In January 1981 for instance, *NME* received a number letters from readers that claimed growing barbiturate use.⁵¹ This prompted an article by Andrew Tyler that was representative of an increasingly pervasive discursive framework that accompanied drugs. The language was comparable to the quasi-sociological lexicon that had accompanied punk: it focused upon 'ordinary' people, not stars, and acknowledged that drugs were a national issue that now transcended previous narratives that represented drugs as an elite issue. Tyler reproduced the most verbose recent letter as a starting point. It came from Bradford poet Joolz Denby:

Denby, on her travels with musical group New Model Army, says she has witnessed sights to make her heart 'quail'. She referred to 'children 14, 15, 16 hurtling headlong to death by their pathetic, ignorant use of barbiturates, especially Turinal.'

On the Bradford streets, she wrote, £1 used to get you three or four barbs, but lately there have been so many chemist break-ins that the asking price has plummeted to 100 for £1. 'And the poor stupid ignorant bastards have been swallowing them by the handful, literally. In the last 18 months we have had 18 in hospital with colossal overdoses and three in intensive care. They seem to regard this as some kind of test of street credibility, of how cool they can be.

A hospital overdose bracelet is the latest fashion. They flirt with death as if it was nothing.'

Neil Spencer responded emotionally to Denby's letter and demanded its inclusion. That the editor would deem a story on youth drug abuse as an essential story in a music paper illustrates how the music press's drugs discourse had shifted. The article's main protagonist was from Bradford, a city far from London and not even a larger provincial node, which illustrates the music press's increasingly national perspective. These characteristics appealed to punk's egalitarian narrative rather than its nihilistic discourses. However the article retained some distinctions between the elite and masses. *NME* constructed its journalists as having an expert, instructive role: from this starting point it informed readers about the risks of drugs and the travails of problem users. By presenting himself as a public servant Tyler avoided stoking moral panic or glamorising barbiturate users. He coldly explained that Barbituric acid was

⁵⁰ Nick Kent describes Spencer as a faux-patois speaking school teacher who simplified rock writing and ousted difficult voices – such as Kent, Lester Bangs, Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons. This was apparently 'symptomatic of the 'jobsworths' who now worked in the music press. Nick Kent, *Apathy for the Devil* (London, 2010), pp. 333-335.

⁵¹ Andrew Tyler, 'Do You Know the Most Dangerous Drug in Britain is Still Legal?' *NME*, 24 January 1981, pp. 9-10.

actually a useful substance in alleviating stress or aiding sleep. It was useful for doctors and nurses rather than prime for recreational use. The article situated the discussion within a troubling context: it blamed drug corporations and the 'heartless Thatcherites who just want the streets tidy and will be cutting back in every area that is not mathematically proven lucrative'. Tyler described hopelessness and government callousness as a leitmotif for the time: 'That's 1981 for you.'

The transition in the way the music press discussed drugs is noteworthy. By 1981 music papers openly assumed that readers were possible addicts rather than only mentioning drugs in reference to stars. For instance Tyler's article asked the reader ten questions in the style of a tabloid or lifestyle magazine,

1. Are you miserable on your drugs?
2. Are you spending more money on Friday nights than you can afford?
3. When going for a prescription do you lie about symptoms, exaggerating or inventing ailments?
4. Do you take more than it says on the bottle?
5. Do you get intoxicated?
6. Do you do them at work or other situations where you shouldn't?
7. Do you drive on them?
8. Do you use drugs to counter the effects of other drugs?
9. Do you miss work because of too heavy a dose taken the night before?
10. Do you put off things you meant to do because of the drug's effects?

'The *NME* drugs squad' and drugs councillor Brian Langley recommended that readers sought help if they answered in the affirmative more often than felt comfortable. The article, seemingly hell-bent on uniting the miscellaneous strands of alternative advice printed since the 1960s, signed off with the phrase, 'The solution is in your own hands.' 1960s radicals, early advocates of drug education, used this counter-cultural apothegm. However by the 1980s a new language of despair and inclusivity was established. Music papers acknowledged, constructed and educated a subculture of drug-using music fans who had previously been deprived of frank and calm information. Music papers developed older methods to discuss drugs by using descriptions that made the skin crawl, featuring social dereliction and death to fit the 1980s trope of social and urban dereliction.

The following week the continuity between the underground press and music press's ways of discussing drugs was made clear. Alan Griffey from the *Legalise*

Cannabis Campaign, representing the older pole of drug advocacy, wrote in to praise Tyler's article:

Fifty pence is a lot of money for a pint of beer for a young kid on the dole. Is this why other cheaper (more dangerous) drugs are sought out by young people? Yet politicians are talking of putting up the price of alcohol yet more. Are we playing into the drug pushers' hands?⁵²

The response was telling: Griffey wove together nondescript drug dealers, vulnerable kids and the hierarchy of illicit drugs. He hinted towards the music press's more developed understanding of different drugs having different properties. Charles Shaar Murray knowingly responded, 'Someone's coming from the solution.' Murray's choice of words presented a telling, well-rehearsed dichotomy. It tacitly assumed that those who were unversed in the politics of drugs and safe drug use were part of 'the problem'.

Tyler wrote a similar article to dissuade readers from glue sniffing.⁵³ The article referred to previous moral panics regarding glue, in the early-1960s and 1975. Tyler was disapproving of uncritical drug supporters, he argued that some 'progressive elements' referred to glue as 'the cannabis of the modern age', but he dismissed this as 'fanciful'. Actually cannabis was 'the fillip of a class of bourgeois consumers' and glue was punk, it was 'done in all the worst circles, by kids who seem dangerously without a social niche, without prospects, heads full of bad teaching and narkiness.' He presented cheap, dangerous drugs as correlating to class divisions. This contextualised the elite support for the substances that Griffey and Murray represented. Glue precipitated 'brain haemorrhages and acts of vandalism'. More soporific cannabis was too expensive: black hash was £50-60 per ounce, toluene glue 50p. Tyler sought expert advice and Nick Dorn of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency interjected that there were cynical politics and a conservative cannabis debate that undermined the wider British drugs debate. The organs of government control asked, 'Do you fit? Do you consume? Are you employable? If the answer is three times no – and for sniffers that is frequently the case – then you and your drug are deviant.' The article further argued that drugs affected people differently and some were less resilient to drug use: it stated that 'pre-teen sniffers' were not supported by expensive institutional detoxification centres, instead muddled 'control agencies' left addicts 'sick and warped and in need of treatment'. Tyler presented the situation as constructed by an immoral government for political convenience, 'Glue, as opposed

⁵² 'Gasbag', *NME*, 31 January 1981, p. 46.

⁵³ Andrew Tyler, 'Glue a Message to You, Stupid', *NME*, 21 February 1981, pp. 23-24.

to “other factors”, becomes the demon vapour, rotting the culture as well as the kidneys and livers, causing violence, madness and suicidal leaps.’ He left the reader with practical advice to survive the situation, five ‘don’ts’ provided by drugs charity Release:

Don’t sniff in dangerous places.

Don’t sniff alone.

Don’t put glue directly on the face or the mouth. You could suffocate.

Don’t use a large bag, especially a large polyurethane bag.

Don’t mix glue with other drugs, especially alcohol.

This type of reporting, focused on the behaviour of readers rather than musicians, was a distinct change. Previously papers focused on fans and readers when their admiration of musicians became particularly noteworthy. They narrated fans as the crowd at a live performance, as record buyers or when music harnessed them for wider causes, such as Rock Against Racism. This new focus fitted a punk narrative that competed with nihilism, it was argued that the boundaries between fan and performer had been levelled; the lack of deference to musical professionalism and the efforts of punk musicians to be accessible contributed to this; anyone could be a punk or engage with post-punk music. Papers consciously debunked rock’s mythology and thus rock and roll’s drug myths were deconstructed. Music papers increasingly narrated practical drug knowledge that accepted that readers might take drugs to enable informed drug taking. It assumed less of a distinction between rock culture and wider society than had existed before. Nevertheless the 1980s music press retained some similarities with its predecessors: it trained a critical eye on government, wider society and agents of social control. Nevertheless *NME* sought to counter negative social forces rather than simply critique them.

From the later-1970s music papers discussed drugs with greater complexity. They narrated how there were many transgressive or critical musicians that would not take drugs for medical, moral or even economic reasons. Even Nick Kent was a convert; apparently free from addiction, he regretted contributing to the idea that heroin was cool especially as it was ‘getting very widespread at the moment.’⁵⁴ He argued,

⁵⁴ Chris Salewicz, ‘The Almost Legendary Nick Kent Story’, *NME*, 10 January 1981 (RB, accessed April 2012).

I take a very moral stance against heroin in something close to the Biblical understanding of the word. I just think that it's something that is completely *evil*, and no benefit whatsoever can be gained from having anything to do with it.

Some bands explicitly used a moral rationale to counter the myths of rock and roll. Bono of U2 argued in *NME*, 'There are a lot of untruths in rock 'n' roll, the word itself conjures up certain standards to conform to and certain morals'.⁵⁵ Bono later conformed to early-1970s rock's moral crusade against paying taxes, but then he was clear that 'you can't get drunk every night and do loads of drugs.' This discourse had been taken even further by young straight edge hardcore punks in the US.⁵⁶ Indeed the music press narrated further cautionary tales that connected drug taking and early death. It implied that taking drugs destructively to conform to rock's myths was an immoral waste. Martin Fry of ABC told *NME* how he turned to music rather than substances, unlike his friends, who became 'dead beat guys' whose 'lives were leading nowhere fast because of drugs'. He wrote a fanzine ironically titled *Modern Drugs*.⁵⁷ His ex-flatmate Jud, of Sheffield band Clock DVA, had succumbed to heroin addiction, which he reflected on as 'so tragic and so stupid when people start filling up holes in their lives with drugs'. He praised musicians who stood up against drugs: 'It was something that needed saying for so long because for so long drugs have been an accepted part of The Method; y'know, nudge, nudge drugs!' Barney Hoskyns even grilled notorious heroin addict Johnny Thunders with questions like, 'do people idolise you in the wrong way?' Thunders feared popularising heroin, but defended his heroin use, he was still part of a bohemian drug taking elite subculture:

Er, yuh... they think, like, it's glamorous to take drugs... that's the only part they see... I mean, I don't take any more drugs than a normal entertainer does... I don't think. A lot of 'em take a lot more'n I do an' you don't hear nuttn' about it. Drugs are good for me, not good for everybody. The kids over in the States, like in suburbia, they're tryin' to change heroin into a social drug, they don't see what happens afterwards... sure isn't a pretty sight.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Gavin Martin, 'King of the Celtic Fringe' *NME*, 14 February 1981 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁵⁶ Barney Hoskyns, 'Black Flag in the California Scum', *NME*, 20 November 1982 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁵⁷ Gavin Martin, 'Romancing Tongue in Chic' *NME*, 6 March 1982 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁵⁸ Barney Hoskyns, 'You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory', *NME*, June 1982 (RB, accessed April 2012).

Musicians often presented themselves as open to describing their drug use but embarrassed when questioned. In 1983 for instance, Paul Rambali asked Elvis Costello: ‘were you taking a lot of drugs?’ Costello was reported as responding: ‘I was taking enough drugs. Too many. Any is too many.’⁵⁹ When *NME* asked The Clash’s Paul Simonon about drugs he coyly answered that he only smoked ‘a bit’ of cannabis.⁶⁰ However Thunders was part of a stratum of drug using musicians who were conflicted by more pervasive anti-drugs narratives and rock mythology. Ian Penman’s 1981 interview with James Chance exhibited similar frictions.⁶¹ Penman framed Chance’s drug addiction within hypocrisy ‘in the rock press treatment of drug taking’. Penman arguing that the ‘demystification of the drug(ged) subject is probably impossible’. He argued that Chance’s drug use was controlled and reasonable, despite not wanting to make drugs seductive, ‘I think *concentrated flirtation(s)* is probably a more appropriate phrase than *addiction* and – trying my hardest not to be coy or codified or to slip into chic ‘glamorisation’ – *inhalation* more than *injection*.’ Despite Penman’s caveats he relayed how some methods of drug taking could be justified as less dangerous and ‘glamorous’. However the appeal of drugs and their aspirational, radical magnetism was contested. Indeed some contested the appeal of drugs using more practical terms. The expense of illicit drugs had elite connotations, as Billy from The Milkshakes told Ralph Traitor, ‘Whisky is very important in writing a song, but no drugs yet, we can’t afford them.’⁶²

Nevertheless many of the old values remained in part. A lunatic fringe of psychedelic experimenters - often described as in quasi-oriental mystical terms – remained adamant that some drugs were great. Salewicz reported in *The Face* how Julian Cope had a ‘terrible desire’ to try drugs but ultimately ‘really got into it and loved it.’⁶³ It was argued that Cope was enacting rock lore by consuming acid with The Teardrop Explodes, a group whose name and music conjured psychedelic connotations: ‘We tried to get a bit of a legendary thing going about it, because we’ve *always* been so much into bands that have legends about them: The Velvet, Doors, Love – all those sort of groups.’ Across the Atlantic The Cramps extolled the virtues of psychedelics to *NME*, ‘plastic and acid were my big influences when I first met Ivy in California’.⁶⁴ The article described how singer Lux Interior ‘appointed himself a psychedelic guru’ using the motto ‘all you need is enough drugs’. Whilst

⁵⁹ Paul Rambali, ‘Get Happy!’, *The Face*, August 1983 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁶⁰ Paolo Hewitt, ‘The Clash’, *Melody Maker*, 6 June 1981 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁶¹ Ian Penman, ‘Save the Last Chance for Me’, *NME*, 20 June 1981 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁶² Ralph Traitor, ‘A Spanner in the Works’, *Sounds*, 30 April 1983 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁶³ Chris Salewicz, ‘Julian Weirds Out!’, *The Face*, November 1981 (RB, accessed April 2012).

⁶⁴ Cynthia Rose, ‘Zip Guns in the Junkyard’, *NME*, 13 August 1983 (RB, accessed April 2012).

NME railed against drugs, *Sounds* and Sylvia Simmons were narrating a scene of decadent misbehaviour with Los Angeles-based metal. Mick Jones of Foreigner explained to Simmons that his motivations were, ‘women and drugs – I mean there wasn't that many drugs around at that time when I was a kid. I guess it was the dream of just doing something that somebody would recognise, not run of the mill.’ Simmons reported how Tommy Lee of Mötley Crüe was conflicted when asked whether pleasing fans was better than sex and drugs, ‘At times. When I'm onstage. Offstage I don't know.’ The message was drugs are fun. Despite encompassing more nuanced viewpoints, the music press still incubated enduring rock mythologies and long established industry behaviour. Papers reported these tropes despite the trenchant challenge to dangerous drug taking and duty of care that some editors and journalists felt for impressionable readers. The older subcultural assumptions were, however, subject to serious scrutiny. When faced with the Grateful Dead Paul Morley moaned, ‘what a long and predictable trip it has been.’⁶⁵

The music press debate on drugs changed significantly between the late-1960s and 1980s. In the 1960s the music press described drugs as an elite pursuit, available to the right musicians, which were connected with the new ‘permissive’ lifestyles and counter-cultural ethos. Journalists defined stars’ drug use as a creative support and, whilst rarely permissible in a moral sense, journalists framed drugs as a reward for economic and commercial successes. Indeed music papers cautiously narrated or ignored the contention that musicians encouraged fans to use drugs. This was especially evident when discussing musicians’ drug addiction or deaths. Nevertheless by the 1970s the music press’s discussions of drugs began to include fans more often. The music press reported a closer relationship between fan and musician to explain punk and did so in light of empirical and anecdotal evidence that posited more widespread drug use in Britain. Thus the death of Sid Vicious by overdose destabilised existing conventions for discussing drugs. *NME* established that they were morally bound to inform their readers that drug use could be dangerous. The music press’s more complex explanations of drugs demonstrate a greater social knowledge of drugs and less reticence to communicate the idea that music press readers were prospective drug takers. By the 1980s the music press supposed a duty of care and thus contributed to a complex range of narratives and debates that made conversations on drugs more multifaceted. In interviews even notorious drug users were likely to add caveats to their own drug use to dissuade readers: the assumptions that drugs were counter-cultural, glamorous and creatively stimulating were countered. Therefore

⁶⁵ Paul Morley, ‘What a Long and Predictable Trop It's Become’, *NME*, 28 March 1981 (RB, accessed March 2012).

music papers moved from reporting the behaviour of musicians to also taking an instructive moral position to take care of its readers, whom it was assumed would affect rock's mythological, symbolic behaviours. Thus when music papers discussed the morality of drugs they could be seen as developing a constructive new morality, as they had been in the 1960s. By the 1980s papers could narrate drug use outside traditional notions of propriety and deviance. They could be constructed as 'permissive' but also as a public health issue. Therefore drugs opened up a different moral question in the music press: despite evident unease when narrating a link between musicians taking drugs and fans emulating musicians, music papers conveyed the notion that they were morally bound to protect their readers. Therefore music papers became more entwined in navigating the ramifications of 'permissiveness' on behalf of individuals.

Chapter Nine

Vertical Slum: Alienation, Fragmentation, Dissent and Fame

In the late-1970s and early-1980s the music press's discussion on morality fragmented. In *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Sounds* the overriding notion that musicians could or should critique social mores and propose new codes of behaviour was less evident. Music papers regularly constructed Britain as a dystopia. Thus writers and musicians narrated how they negotiated morality within supposedly derelict urban space. The music press's increased reporting on non-metropolitan musicians provided the ballast for striking descriptions of decaying towns and cities.¹ Papers mediated concerns that were based on issues such as the – ultimately socially inappropriate – post-war use of modernist design in social housing. Additionally international uncertainty and post-industrial insecurity encouraged music papers to represent music within an alarming context.² These representations were exacerbated by urban unrest, unemployment, alienation and aloof government which had afflicted British youth.³ The bleak

¹ Other 1980s media represented similar bleak themes. Tony Shaw shows how cinema contributed to this in 'From Liverpool to Russia, With Love: A Letter to Brezhnev and Cold War Cinematic Dissent in 1980s Britain', *Contemporary British History* 19:2 (2007), pp. 243-262.

² A wider discussion of the post-War debates on the benefits and pitfalls of modernist planning is found in Clara Greed, *Social Town Planning* (Abingdon, 1999), pp. 31-35. There are slod critiques of the modernist design that arguably social ills in Peter Saunders and Lionel Escher who blamed planning as part of a social decline that was exacerbated by recession and unemployment: Peter Saunders and Lionel Escher, *Social Theory and the Urban Question* (London, 1985), p. 236; and Lionel Escher, *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England, 1940–1980* (London, 1981). More recently this has been approached by Peter Shapely's *The Politics of Housing: Power, Consumers and Urban Culture* (Manchester, 2007); and Peter Larkham, 'Rebuilding the Industrial Town: Wartime Wolverhampton', *Urban History* 29:3 (2002). The genealogy of 1970s 'industrial dereliction' is well served by Simon Gunn study of Bradford: Simon Gunn, 'The Rise and Fall of Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford c. 1950-1970' *Journal of British Studies* 49:4 (2010), pp. 849-869; as well as, Frank Mort, 'Fantasies of Metropolitan Life: Planning London in the 1940s,' *Journal of British Studies* 43:1 (2004), pp. 120-151 and Frank Mort, 'Cityscapes: Consumption, Masculinities and the Mapping of London since 1950,' *Urban Studies* 35: 5–6 (1998), p. 889-907. The experience of the people of Birmingham is charted by David Adams, 'Everyday Experiences of the Modern City: Remembering the Post-War Reconstruction of Birmingham', *Planning Perspectives* 26:2 (2011), p. 237-260/

³ International Uncertainty is well covered in Nicholas Thompson, 'Nuclear War Fear in the 1970s and 1980s' *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:1 (2010), p. 136-149. However much of the research is focused on the 1960s, for example, James Chapman, 'The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game* (1965)', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:1 (2006), pp. 75-94. Holger Nehring, 'Diverging perceptions of security: NATO and the protests against nuclear weapons', in Andreas Wenger, et al. (eds) *Transforming NATO in the Cold War: Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (London, 2006); Holger Nehring 'National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957–1964', *Contemporary European History* 14: 4 (2005), pp. 223-241. Holger Nehring, 'Politics, Symbols and the Public Sphere: The Protests against Nuclear Weapons in Britain and West Germany, 1958-1963', *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 2:2 (2005), <http://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/site/40208411/default.aspx>.

narrative of decay coupled with the music press's increasingly literary and linguistically experimental style constructed a mythological cityscape. The narratives of decline and decay framed moral tumult, even if some preferred to concentrate on more optimistic hedonism. Nihilist, existentialist and absurdist narratives denied universal morality and set debates of morality as a second order question: rather than being guided by ideas of autonomous morality to elect causes to support or to advocate social change it was often asked whether morality could exist, even subjectively. Uncertainty afflicted *NME* worst: it was in-keeping with the intense internal strife afflicting their staff.⁴

This chapter begins by examining the music press's response to the Labour party's advertising campaign prior to the 3 May 1979 election. This is situated within the music press's narrative of British decline, alienation and hopelessness which was in some part prompted by Cold War anxieties and also post-industrial economic problems. The fragmentation and uncertainty surrounding the music press's moral conversations is then explained in reference to the changing market for music papers. The chapter argues that new titles that aimed for a niche audience undermined the readership of established music papers and decreased their authority as social commentators. Indeed they set a new agenda for less didactic music journalism. Subsequently the chapter analyses how the so-called 'post-modernist noir' genre of music writing, which proliferated in the *NME*, represented the music press's move to a more sceptical, intellectualised moral debate. This takes into account how the ability to exercise or execute moral reasoning was questioned, how a metaphor of the decaying industrial city was used to convey ideas of moral uncertainty and how ideas of dystopian technological influences were used to narrate dehumanised subjects that either sullied or rejected morality and moralising. Furthermore the chapter explores how the music press's self-constructed role in moral conversation – that it could narrate a moral debate that described or even suggested social change – was questioned by existentialist, post-modernist and misanthropic narratives. These narratives are compared to 'working-class punk' narratives that retained the right to activism and moralising. Finally the chapter analyses *Smash Hits* to establish that, whilst the magazine expressed a certain morality in regards to sex, sexuality and sexism, it was more concerned with narrating famous artistes' lives and lifestyles in a significantly more accessible manner.

Urban unrest was covered in John Benyon and John Solomos, 'The Simmering Cities: Urban Unrest During the Thatcher Years', *Parliamentary Affairs* (1988). However analyses the discursive construction of supposedly unruly and decaying cities in the 1970s and 1980s do not exist, pp. 202-422.

⁴ The toxic atmosphere and intense factional rivalries is covered at in Paul Gorman, *In their Own Write* (London, 2001), p. 275-282.

These discourses were shaped by disillusionment with mainstream politics and a dose of apocalyptic nuclear war fear. The 3 May 1979 election was a disaster for the Labour Party in many ways and a misjudged advertising campaign in the music press added to this. Music papers represented any viewpoints, but the majority were scornful towards Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party. For instance *Sounds* reported that The Ruts expressed despair following the Conservative Party's election victory:

Paul: 'And I tell you it's gonna get worse now Maggie Thatcher's in. The Tories are in government for five years right? In five years time it's 1984. Five years to build up.'

Segs (out window): 'BASSTARDDSS! BASTARRDDSS!'⁵

There were numerous instances of this sort of dissent. Before the election Labour had sought to capitalise on anti-Thatcher and anti-Conservative Party sentiments. They purchased advertising space in the 21 April 1979 issues of *Melody Maker*, *NME*, and *Sounds*.⁶ Eighteen year-olds had been able to vote since 1969, but political parties had never previously advertised in music papers. Labour's advert joined advertisements from artistes selling new albums: Ian Hunter, Iggy Pop, Gary Numan, Rush, Magazine, Dennis Brown and Vangelis; a curious mix. The advertisement proclaimed, 'Don't just Rock Against Racism... vote against it.' This was controversial, Rock Against Racism responded by arguing that 'growing racism and fascism under Labour' meant that they would only vote Labour if they made changes to immigration and 'Sus' laws.⁷ *NME* argued that party politics infiltrating the music press was problematic.⁸ A week later *NME* lampooned mainstream politics by 'electing' Joe Strummer as the new Prime Minister on the front page.⁹ *Sounds* was the only paper to print a further advertisement for Labour. This advert made a more light-hearted jab at the Tory Party's recent *faux pas* that was coupled with Garry Bushell denouncing Rock Against Racism's middle-class activism.¹⁰ Despite general leftist support, the Labour

⁵ Garry Bushell, 'The Ruts Bleed for You', *Sounds*, 16 June 1979 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶ *NME*, 21 April 1979, p.33. *Sounds*, 21 April 1979, p 35. *Melody Maker*, 21 April 1979, p.34.

⁷ *NME*, 5 April 1979, p. 1.

⁸ 'Whether you think it is a good thing or not depends on your politics and whether you think rock musicians have no business poking their noses into politics or whether they are in, some perhaps mysterious way, publically accountable figureheads.' 'Politics in Music,' *NME*, 28 April 1979, p. 3.

⁹ Strummer argued for the legalisation of graffiti and 'ganja', affordable rent, no more families in high rises, no defence spending, youth on parole to meet 'lifers', to pay MPs the same as coal miners, ban police from demonstrations, and to 'deport Mary Whitehouse and send Maggie to Uganda' *NME*, 5 May 1979, p. 3.

¹⁰ Garry Bushell, *Sounds*, 28 April 1979, p. 16 and 60.

Party seemed somewhat out of touch: since the later-1960s the music press had constructed political issues in terms of personal moral judgement rather than party political affiliations. Labour could not bridge this 'generation gap'. This was especially true in *NME* where nuclear paranoia was intensifying. The election was constructed as insignificant in the face of nuclear disaster. Over the course of three weeks the magazine had explained that British nuclear power stations had the same cooling mechanisms as Three Mile Island, warned readers about an 'inevitable accident' and printed the ominous statement that:

If the spread of nuclear power means a growing threat of nuclear terrorism, the other side of that dark coin is the security forces of the Nuclear State. That, for many, is the nuclear nightmare.¹¹

A troubling reality was constructed and the idea of a 'nuclear nightmare' trumped domestic political concerns.

It is important, however, not to overstate a single narrative's dominance as the music press's content was so varied and open to contrasting viewpoints. By the 1980s the music press represented narratives that were varied and personal. Journalists, musicians and fans reassembled countless tropes as the fashionable values that had been incubated since the 1960s onwards were reappraised, negated or mutated. Whilst a significant proportion of writers framed their accounts in self-consciously intellectual or post-modernist argot, others appropriated the residue of 1960s radicalism, socialist rhetoric or framed punk as a brusque working-class cabal kicking against pretention and privilege. Papers contested monolithic 'rock' or 'punk' moralities just as the tenets of 'traditional' or 'Victorian' morality had been deconstructed before. And in contrast, new titles entered the market which abjured from frequent social proselytising and intellectual abstraction. They often contained strong opinions and instructive ideas, but not in the depth that their predecessors had done. *Smash Hits* and *Kerrang!*'s content was centred upon fun and as former writer Ian Birch observed that the writers enjoyed each other's company.¹² *Smash Hits*' mainly reported on 'New Pop' by combining easy humour with vivid fashionable imagery; this ensured the highest music press circulation for a single title since 1964.

During the early-1980s the traditional music press declined. *NME*'s circulation went from an average of 230,939 copies per week in the first half of 1980,

¹¹ Dick Tracey, 'Thrills', *NME*: 21 April 1979, p. 12.

¹² Ian Birch, personal interview (2012).

to 130,272 copies per week between July and December 1983: this was the start of a longer decline. Circulation stagnated at around 100,000 in the 1990s, down to 2011's paltry 29,020.¹³ *Melody Maker's* decline was even more marked. It lingered at around 150,000 copies per week in the late-1970s, but by the start of 1982 it dropped to 63,000, this was *Melody Maker's* lowest circulation since 1949.¹⁴ However people still read about music. The market had split, other titles disrupted *NME* and *Melody Maker's* dominance and authority. Even *Melody Maker* and *NME's* readers mocked the papers and specific writers (albeit this had been a well-established but peripheral scuffle for years). Now, however, new titles afforded disgruntled fans more opportunity to read a paper, magazine or fanzine that was tailored to their interests. *NME* suffered less than *Melody Maker* as it had specialised more and, whilst still including a broad range of music, it was focused on post-punk. Post-punk subcultures complimented *NME* attempts to be simultaneously cerebral, caustic and flippant. Remarkably in 1980 *Sounds*, previously the major music press titles' sickly progeny, outsold *Melody Maker* with peak sales of 172,509, but by 1983 this waned to 129,204. This could not secure *Sounds'* longevity. From 1983 circulation declined and in 1991 *Sounds* folded. *Sounds* specialised, featuring the less self-important punks, Los Angeles metal and the new wave of British heavy metal (that was given the awkward acronym NWOBHM). However these genres only had fleeting popular appeal. *Melody Maker* remained true to its remit as a broad musician's paper, despite a disastrous aborted attempt at a re-launch that resulted in Richard William's resignation as editor. It could not maintain mass appeal in a crowded and increasingly specialised music press.

New titles such as metal oriented *Kerrang!* and pop magazine *Smash Hits* attracted potential *Melody Maker* readers who were less interested in the superficially dated folk forums or jazz columns and not grabbed by ten page discussions of amplification. So could Nick Logan's new monthly magazine. *The Face* emerged as a suave lifestyle magazine with high quality music writing.¹⁵ The *NME* and *Melody Maker* had crept towards such a level of intellectual abstraction that flashy, visceral thrills could easily attract the casual consumer, and light-hearted hagiographical coverage could thrill devotees. *Smash Hits* was bright and brash with contrasting colours framing artistes shot in close-up – *Smash Hits'* stars made eye contact with the reader

¹³ *Audit Bureau of Circulation* (IPC titles figures supplied by IPC media, figures for other titles come from *ABC Circulation Review* [London, January-June 1979; London, January-June 1980; and London, January-June 1983]).

¹⁴ By 2000 IPC Media withdrew the title, merging its staff with *NME*. The *NME's* circulation fell regardless of the change.

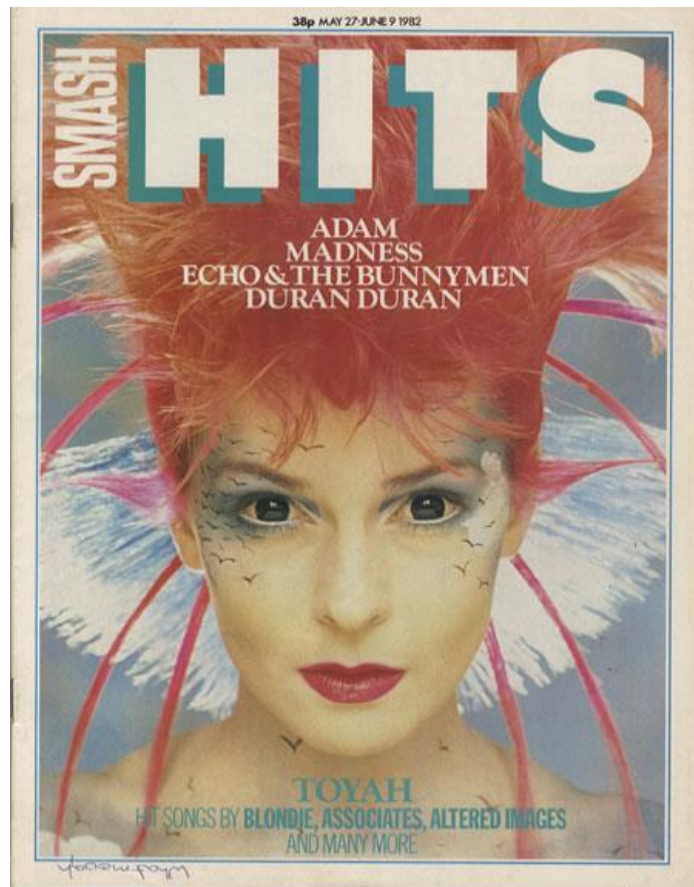
¹⁵ *The Face* was not strictly a music magazine and was a monthly publication but had some overlap in readership as the National Readership Survey shows. *The Face's* role in constructing masculinity and its niche in the magazine publishing market is focused upon in greater detail in Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption* (London, 1996), pp. 22-28.

like a model's headshot – or occasionally a whole group would pose. *Smash Hits* presented cover stars as young, attractive, blemish free and styled with trendy clothes and ornate hairstyles (see figure 9.1). *Smash Hits* innovated with an ever changing cover, in stark contrast to the hand-wringing that design changes had elicited at *Melody Maker*.¹⁶ In the magazine's first three and a half years people with musical instruments only featured on the cover three times: Haircut 100 had an ukulele, Orange Juice's Edwyn Collins held a guitar that was cropped out of the shot and Nigel Planer played a sitar in character as 'Neil' from BBC sitcom *The Young Ones* with the headline 'What's This Hippie Doing Here?' *Smash Hits* was quick to pun, joke and indulge the ridiculous. In a less arch way than *the Face*, *Smash Hits* blurred the line between fashion and music as dual components in how lifestyles were aesthetically constructed. The onomatopoeically titled *Kerrang!* – which channelled the sound of a power chord – was also bright and brash, but the musicians they focused upon *rocked* rather than pouted: *Kerrang!* illustrated how their chosen musicians clutched their guitars intensely on front covers. The guitars served an important function on the cover as *Kerrang!* championed somewhat less conventionally aesthetically pleasing individuals (see figure 9.2). Nonetheless *Kerrang!*'s circulation was strong: it launched in the summer of 1981 and by the following year had a circulation of 86,552, by the end of 1983 this had increased to 143,151. However *Smash Hits*' circulation was more noteworthy. It sold 166,198 copies per issue in the first six months of its existence, but by the end of 1982 its circulation was 449,121.¹⁷ *Smash Hits* reached a level of ubiquity similar to mass market women's titles; women's titles were the cash cow of the magazine publishing industry.

¹⁶ Richard Williams explained the predicament in an oral history interview, explaining one of the few instances in which IPC took an active interest in decision relating to the style or content of a music paper: 'Of course, by the time I got back there the *NME* had overtaken the *MM* and there was quite a lot of concern about that, but it was still very, very profitable because of the classified ads and so on, and there was room for two at the top of the market because there was still so much record company advertising at the time as well. So [IPC] weren't seriously concerned, but the re-launch, they took a lot of interest in the re-launch, and we did do some market research and some focus groups. When I did the redesign – which never saw the light of day – [IPC] knew the market research was all favourable towards it.' Richard Williams, personal interview (2011).

¹⁷ *ABC Circulation Review* (London, January-June 1979), p. 8. *ABC Circulation Review* (London, January-June 1983), p. 12.

Figure 9.1: *Smash Hits*, 27 May 1982, p. 1.



Source: private collection.

Figure 9.2: *Kerrang!*, January 1982, p. 1.



Source: private collection.

The older music press's discussion of morality still preoccupied journalists, musicians and readers even if it was less certain. They combined the maudlin preoccupations of writers and musicians and the genre's commercial decline to sincerely report a sense of decay and decline. Papers recast the city, once dominated by representations of 'Swinging London', as a dystopian space in which the behaviour of humanity had become debased and grotesque. If music papers accepted the foundation of any morality, journalists argued that the city provided a site of multiple personal resistances from the norm that were justified by various moral assemblages. The music press started to pay attention to the provinces. The most explicit example was *Melody Maker's* 'Street Heat' which investigated regional music scenes every week and found a variety of punk influenced sounds. The partial shift in focus away from London prompted journalists to narrate new literary visions of the city which avoided tropes of sophistication and metropolitan allusions. Overall they presented a hallucinatory and perverse image of the city. This oeuvre has been described as

‘postmodernist noir’.¹⁸ The loose movement even engendered a handbook, strikingly similar to 1930s futurist manifestos: it set out post-industrial life’s skewed parameters by arguing a post-holocaust perversion framed morality:

By ‘industrial’ we mean the grim side of post-Industrial Revolution society- the repressed mythology, history, science, technology and psychopathology.

There is no strict unifying aesthetic, except that all things gross, atrocious, horrific, demented, and unjust are examined with black-humour eyes. Nothing is (or ever again will be) sacred, except a commitment to the *realization of the individual imagination*. These are not gallery or salon artists struggling to get where the money is: these are artists *in spite of* art.

The values, standards, and content that remain are of a perversely anarchic nature, grounded in a post-holocaust morality. Swept away are false politeness, etiquette, preoccupation with texture and form- all the niceties associated with several generations of art and about other art.¹⁹

Around the time the more metropolitan 1976 wave of British punk began to dissipate, papers relayed dystopian narratives more frequently. Jon Savage often constructed British cities in decline. In 1983 Savage included London in his narrative of social decline when reflecting on 1977’s ‘atmosphere’:

In the *superheated* atmosphere in London 1977, where 1984 (if not Armageddon) appeared around every crumbling corner; when the fabric of English society appeared to be unravelled, by punk rock, into vicious threats of sectarian in-fighting, fascist and leftist violence on the streets, and financial crises: anything seemed possible, indeed necessary.²⁰

Savage frequently relied upon the idea of decay in post-industrial Britain when explaining the factors that compelled musicians to make dissonant music. In 1978 for instance he argued that the nocturnal clatter made by Sheffield’s factories had infiltrated Cabaret Voltaire’s minds and thus their music. Savage wrote, ‘Sometimes the factories work at night- the noise can be heard in the night, *flittering into dreams*: dull percussive, hypnotic.’²¹ Savage portrayed a turbulent and declining society that

¹⁸ Patrick Novotny, ‘No Future! Cyberpunk, Industrial Music, and the Aesthetics of Postmodern Disintegration’, in Donald M. Hassler and Clyde report (eds) *Political Science Fiction*, (New York, 1997), p. 104.

¹⁹ V. Vale, ‘Introduction’ in V, Vale, and A. Juno (eds), *Re/search Industrial Culture Handbook*, (San Francisco, 1983), p. 2.

²⁰ Jon Savage in *Re/search Industrial Culture Handbook*, p. 4.

²¹ Jon Savage, ‘Something Strange is Going On in Sheffield Tonight’, *Sounds*, 15 April 1978 (RB, accessed May 2011).

affected its citizens in their sub-conscious. Yet musicians were not entirely convinced by the music press's deterministic dystopian mythology. In *Melody Maker* Adam Sweeting reported Cabaret Voltaire as saying,

Mal: 'The press are the mythmakers more than the groups in a lot of ways. It's the press that creates the myth for groups like us, it is the press that creates the image and the pigeonhole, cos we set off with no myth, no image. We never called ourselves "industrial", we never called ourselves "grey", we never called ourselves "bleak" or "inaccessible" – we never set out to do that, so the press does it for you.'

Richard: 'If you don't present an image, someone will make one up for you. That's usually the case.'²²

Yet despite the media's undoubted overstatements when incorporating noir imagery the construct was a mainstay of music press discourse. It was transnational: reporters applied the trope to the Ohio 'Rust Belt' and Cleveland's Pere Ubu: 'to imagine Ubu through this review, without hearing them, you *could* say that these two elements [inherited from Cleveland] — rock tradition/bleakness — are at Ubu's core', producing 'harsh urban noise, industrial drones'.²³ Post-industrial cities across the west were permeated with unflattering imagery. It was suggested that such an intense atmosphere conditioned the minds, values and music of those exposed. Music papers constructed a metaphor for the unravelling of certainties in a post-industrial society.

Those who argued that these dystopian narratives were, in fact, sympathetic representations of cities illustrate the extent to which 'postmodern noir' was accepted. In *Sounds* Paul Morley argued that Cabaret Voltaire were realistically representing Sheffield,

Imagine a musical soundtrack for November Sheffield, for a decaying symbol of crumbling capitalism, for the lonely hearts and lost souls of city dwellers, for reason ... imagine the turbulent, tense, obsessive Cabaret Voltaire sound. An integration and aggregation of stern rhythm, rigid sound, unexpected noises, ghostly bumps, news reels, snatches of conversation, screams, wails, unspecified signals ... a sound of our times. The sound for our times.²⁴

²² Adam Sweeting, 'Cabaret Voltaire', *Melody Maker*, 26 June 1982 (RB, accessed May 2012).

²³ Jon Savage, 'Dub Housing', *Sounds*, 11 February 1978 (RB, accessed March 2010).

²⁴ Paul Morley, 'The heart and Soul of Cabaret Voltaire', *NME*, 29 November 1980 (RB, accessed March 2010).

Morley used Cabaret Voltaire's music in both a representational way portraying their psycho-geographical experience and to imply a moral polemic by symbolising a lonely, fraught and authoritarian present. There were, of course, some real stimuli for these discourses. When Paul Rambali arrived in Manchester to interview Joy Division in 1979 the themes of alienation and confusion were at the forefront:

And one more thing...All over Manchester the sewers have collapsed, the sewage pipes choosing the moment almost to the day to simultaneously end their century-long lifespan and fill the streets with a foul stench. But what you make of that is up to you...²⁵

Rambali alluded to a greater meaning foreshadowed by Manchester's collapsing sewers. Rambali and his colleagues stressed the grim state of Britain in this period, but they made a jump in logic by assigning urban malaise such deterministic powers on music making. Yet the narrative was a poignant metaphor for the decline of moral certainties and questions regarding the music press, musicians and music fans' ability to affect social change by executing their moral intuitions. Joy Division offered extra stimulus to corroborate the wider discourse and provide a human dimension. Savage explained Joy Division's rejection of utopian ideas by drawing parallels with bleak modernist literature,

They restate outsider themes (from Celine on in): the pre-occupations and reactions of individuals caught in a trap they dimly perceive – anger, paranoia, alienation, feelings of thwarted power, and so on. Hardly pretty, but compulsive.²⁶

The descriptions that framed the 1980s turbulence were, however, hyper-real and literary, even if corresponding social cleavages were depressingly real and the music was full of angst and despair. These narratives were intensified by the way papers constructed artistes who claimed to come from an urban wasteland as authentically representing contemporary British society. This undermined the link between urban sophistication, metropolitan social mores and music culture that had been celebrated before punk. When Vivien Goldman interviewed Daniel Miller of Mute, his dystopian imagery – 'I don't need no TV screen, I just stick the aerial into my vein' – she dismissed his authenticity because his imagery 'suggested a marginally

²⁵ Paul Rambali, 'Take No Prisoners, Leave No Clues', *NME*, 11 August 1979 (RB, accessed March 2010).

²⁶ Jon Savage, *Melody Maker*, 21 July 1979 (RB, accessed March 2010).

less bourgeois origin than Daniel's bedroom in Golders Green'.²⁷ However Goldman did celebrate Miller's incongruity as part of his music's charm. He knowingly spouted the rhetoric of dehumanising mechanisation and future insecurity. Society, machine, man and animal were often mixed as a motif for critiquing the morality of society and government. Devo did this in the U.S. Devo sarcastically lampooned the apparently 'devolutionary' trajectory of American military-industrial capitalism. Barney Hoskins described them as 'embedded within the insidious webs of American ideology, and implanted as a fatally slow virus in the nerve-system which spreads and devolves the ideology ... 'Middle America's "small towns" must yield up "young alien types" who are prepared to stand up and declare that they're "through being cool"'.²⁸ Fiery rhetoric and resistance was eschewed for subversive methods, 'no need for invasion of the body snatchers', Devo 'sunk into the miasma' a urban nightmare populated by 'a nation of Zombies'. These narratives questioned the stability of the body and nature, and the possibility of moral agency denigrated the masses' ability to navigate accepted behaviour. If previous writers had been influenced by Jack Kerouac, Lester Bangs or Hunter Thompson, Hoskins's prose exhibits how existentialists, the science fictions of Arthur C. Clarke, Phillip K. Dick and other dystopian writers such as George Orwell and J.G. Ballard were now influential. Paul Rambali used the immense megacity, a dystopian science fiction staple, to describing Ohio's Cuyahoga river delta. He described, 'the dark sprawl of heavy industry... the steam burst from the safety valves of a gleaming tangle of pipes that run for square miles, between the stockyards and diesels and giant foundries that smelt the raw materials.'²⁹ Narratives had the potential to construct beauty in a tableau of ailing industry and environmental degradation whilst presenting industry and post-industry as symbolic of society and humanity's debasement. However the construction of an uncertain and ugly present left little scope for optimism and undermined the universal claims to progressive social morality or individual freedom that had existed before.

The music press frequently narrated the idea that human qualities, including morality, which had previously been constructed as essential or taken for granted, were undermined by the post-industrial mire. Richard Cook argued that Cabaret

²⁷ Barney Hoskyns, 'New Traditionalists', *NME*, 12 August 1982 (RB, accessed March 2010).

²⁸ Jon Savage also used the language of exposure to industrial waste that correlates nicely with Hoskins cyber-spatial virology, 'Exposure (concentrated) to Devo occurs in Manchester – which is contracting /after expanding over square miles of country/to match expansion of empire based on industrial revolution (and more besides)/on which the sun never sets'. Well now it's set/and everything is devolving/leaving miles and miles of vacant lots like broken teeth...Location chance – could be *any* major city: suggest limits of expansion under present system/attitudes have occurred....' Jon Savage, *Sounds*, 26 November 1977 (RB, accessed March 2010).

²⁹ Paul Rambali, 'Hi! We're Devo and We've Come to get Your Toilet Ready for the 1980s' *NME*, 18 November 1978, p. 8.

Voltaire's 'jackhammer assaults of urban pressure', such as their 'post-futurist mutation' of The Rolling Stones' 'Street Fighting Man', elicited the question, 'what use is environmentalism without insinuating the vulnerability of the flesh?'³⁰ Thus the spoiled environment, frail body and decaying city were presupposed to affect people's ability to navigate life along existing ethical lines. Resistance was still celebrated as subversive but regularly deemed pointless as man was dehumanised. Journalists relished using Berlin's Cold War connotations as a foil to project dystopian narratives onto musicians. Barney Hoskyns reviewed *Einstürzende Neubauten* in 1983 at Acklam Hall in Notting Hill: 'I've not been to Berlin so cannot vouch for its urban decay being different from urban decay anywhere else, but *Einstürzende Neubauten's* (sic) approach to sounding out their cracked, ravaged environment is one of indisputably Germanic glee.'³¹ Hoskyns argued that *Neubauten* objectified man because Blixa Bargeld close-miked his bones to harness their percussive qualities. He argued that this objectified Bargeld as a primal human animal,

Their attack on urban debris takes the form of savage copulation, a frenzied caress of man on metal. They are the sound of compression of things driven into each other and into human skin. They are also the noise of man himself as an object (hence the miking of Blixa's bones for 'Thirsty Animal').

The end of this is that *Neubauten* treat cities not within civic parameters, as spaces to be cleaned up, *organised*, but as battlefields, human constructions that have lost their use, their meaning. They reverse futurism. And they are right to say their music goes beyond tone. They excite through a kind of balletic brutality, concentrating and exhausting themselves as a mass: a sonic meltdown, a black whole. It won't collapse on itself but will continue to expand and contract like a Möbius strip.

The humanism that had prompted a reimagining of morality was being eroded as journalists constructed humanity as debased. Journalists such as Hoskyns used post-modernist, absurdist and existentialist ideas. Hoskyns and his peers framed humanity as stripped from their positive characteristics: they argued that a herd mentality prevailed in a city that had been failed by utopian visions of space and thus perverted the modernist zeal that had informed post-war planning.

Journalists argued that the anomic society was prompting a resurgence of existentialism. In some respects this can be attributed to the widening access to university education offering a range of texts to situate disquiet. Existentialism was an attractive prospect: it was fashionable and associated with Gallic sophistication. Steven

³⁰ Richard Cook, '2X45', *NME*, 5 June 1982 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³¹ Barney Hoskyns, *NME*, 4 August 1983 (RB, accessed March 2010).

Crowell argues that Simone De Beauvoir's observation that young people could easily become existentialists – requiring simply black clothes, a shared space and a sense of *ennui* – was an enduring late-twentieth-century phenomena.³² The post-punk music press definitely support Crowell's contention. *Altered Images* explained to Paul Morley that they enjoyed the music of Nico because, "I think a time of existentialism, of having nothing in your heart any more, is coming back."³³ Bands such as The Birthday Party were framed within a 'surreal junkyard of forms and images' and as such poked fun at the 'desensitised mediocrity of our lives', 'a terrible void'.³⁴ Emptiness replaced value, worth and the myriad narratives that the post-1960s counter-cultures had used to justify social reform. Indeed the paper's optimistic moralising was further undermined by Nietzschean nihilism. For instance Barney Hoskyns reproduced Flipper's lyrics at length in a review: 'I have sung death's praise ... but I'm not going to sing that song anymore!' He made the grandiose claim that the perversely pleasure-seeking Flipper had, 'inferred almost the entire tragedy of the human race against time'.³⁵ Flipper were a somewhat unique case though, deeming themselves free of social responsibilities and the progressive optimism the music press had mustered in the past. It was all very bleak.

Narratives of youth and class alienation and the idea that cities were ailing undermined the claims to moral agency and 'permissive' social reform that had abounded in the music press ten years earlier. It was symbolically significant that by the late-1970s even London could be grim. In an interview with PiL London was described as 'dirty, colourless and insidiously threatening', 'insular and stupefied' as 'the slow dizzy hum of city life drags a cast of factory fodder, office workers ..., tramps and delinquents into its monotony and anonymity.' It was 'ruthlessly disunited' and definitely not swinging as it had been.³⁶ Music papers frequently discussed 'demoralisation' and a loss of idealism. For instance Nick Kent invoked the concept of 'demoralisation' to explain agit-punk-funk group Gang of Four's Marxist politics.³⁷ Gavin Martin reported how PiL's ex-Sex Pistol John Lydon laid the blame on the 'TV', but the city was also granted a chimera with nefarious powers, Margaret Thatcher.³⁸ Lydon blamed 'Thatcher's England' for 'mass unemployment ... renewed

³² Steven Crowell, *the Cambridge Guide to Existentialism* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 3-4.

³³ Paul Morley, 'The Altered State of Pop Art' *NME*, 13 February 1982 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³⁴ Barney Hoskyns, 'Sometimes Pleasure Heads Must Burn - A Manhattan Melodrama starring the Birthday Party' *NME*, 5 February 1983 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³⁵ Barney Hoskyns, *NME*, 8 May 1982 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³⁶ Gavin Martin, 'Company Lore and Public Disorder: The PiL Memorandum' *NME*, 14 March 1981 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³⁷ Nick Kent, *NME*, 28 February 1981 (RB, accessed March 2010).

³⁸ John Lydon was formerly known as Johnny Rotten.

interests in nationalism and defence ... a recipe for disaster compounded by the illusion of a “solution.” He mixed ‘postmodernist noir’ and counter-cultural rhetoric. However when direct critiques of Thatcher’s government and the immorality of the social ills that her government had exacerbated were required the literary and post-modernist approaches, no matter how vivid and tangentially critical, often annoyed those who wanted more straight-talking. Those, unlike Lydon, who clung most fundamentally to ‘punk’s legacy’, had more established, blunt and less articulate modes of dissent.

NME and *Melody Maker*’s letters pages rarely hosted punk straight-talking. The discourse in these papers had taken a very pretentious, or to some highly intellectual, turn. This was most evident in a 1981 issue of *NME*.³⁹ The letters page had the subheading, ‘Got those post-paradigm blues again?’ The page was adorned with a Kandinsky-esque abstract painting and the caption, ‘Tribalist totems, post modern (sic) cubist neo classical intellectual proto fascist rockabilly’. The writers mocked their very earnest readers.⁴⁰ Some of the readers were in on the joke, Mark the Shark commented:

You see, I have been losing sleep over a tormenting doubt: aren’t groups like the Fall or Killing Joke completely and utterly clashing with Schopenhauer’s notion that the essence of musical emotions is to evoke sentimental images in the listener and Nietzsche’s notion of *the* role of music is to *create* a world of dreams that should make one forget the present? Knowing this, doesn’t that make them null and void, totally useless? I’m afraid it does . . .

In comparison a letter from David S. Chambers, Dept. of Logic & Scientific Method, LSE, was somewhat indicative of why *NME* was losing readers,

How does Ian Penman expect us to take seriously his claim that Elvis Costello is performing a vital task – namely the “resuscitation of words, ideas, meanings” – when he himself shows a singular lack of understanding concerning the meaning of various words he uses e.g. ‘paradigm’. In his use of ‘paradigm’ (in his rejection of ‘paradigm one’ for ‘paradigm two’) he ignores the fact that by definition paradigms are incommensurable frameworks and hence one cannot – as he does – simply compare by ‘stepping’ from one to the other without adopting a ‘hermeneutic idealist’ or ‘relativist’ position which accepts the self-justificatory nature of *all* paradigms. To put it simply, one (Ian) cannot apply a universally valid criterion for truth

³⁹ Paul Rambali confirmed in an interview that the readers were often figures of fun for the journalists. Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

⁴⁰ ‘Gasbag’, *NME*, 31 January 1981, p. 46. I have investigated whether this letter was a joke, but David S. Chambers has since written a rather impenetrable book with Donald J. Wheeler titled *Understanding Statistical Process Control*. Their use of ‘(sic)’.

(in this case his subjective judgement) to conceptual systems whose incommensurability denies the possibility of any such criterion's existence. On top of this he continues to misuse '(sic)' and is oblivious to the fact that a 'phenomenological shortlist' (in fact, 'list' of any kind) is a contradiction in terms if you can really think about it.

Penman dismissed Chambers and told him to 'Get pissed, get a copy of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and then get back to us.' The influx of academic ideas from philosophy, cultural theory, history, sociology and associated disciplines had permeated *NME* and was evident to a lesser extent in *Melody Maker* and *Sounds*. In these publications music was increasingly a conduit for high-minded ideas and the debates were pointed.

The letters page often accused *NME* of moving away from its punk preoccupation and becoming inauthentic. For instance Smelly Jimmy and the System Haters argued,

You have disowned punk rock. Have you forgotten that all those arty farty bands you give space to – especially your own poser, Nick Kent – were all punks once? So were all your writers once, after they were hippies.

Thankfully there are those who keep the faith: Discharge, Poison Girls, Crass, Killing Joke, etc. But there are more: in Birmingham there's GBH and The Drongos, in Derby, Anti Pasti. All these bands deserve support from your posey, influential rag. Print this letter, because I bet that when it appears you'll have articles on all these great new bands, just loads of crapp (sic) posers. *Smelly Jimmy and the System Haters, Camden*.⁴¹

Monty Smith replied to Smelly Jimmy:

Well, Smell, you won't believe this but on pages 23-36 there's a giant spread on Punk '81. You won't believe this, because I'm pulling your leg. No, we're going to stick awhile with the Post-Modernist, Pre-Holocaust baubles and bubbly brigade, because they add so much joy to our miserable little lives and they're fun, fun, fun! See you by the make-up counter in Boots. –Mort Smith

NME's response was not enough; those who claimed to be the 1976 wave of punk's 'authentic' followers were to be found in *Sounds*. In *Sounds* punk was not dead – despite the protestations of Crass.⁴² The movement that formerly valued narcissistic and nihilistic values was now deemed a 'faith', it was far too dogmatic and moralistic

⁴¹ There are many other examples. 'Gasbag' *NME*, 7 February 1981, p. 50.

⁴² In their song 'Punk is Dead' Crass questioned punk's lasting significance. 'Punk is Dead' [musical recording] *Crass* (Crass Records, 1978).

for *NME*'s miserable and relativistic 'post-modernist, pre-holocaust baubles and bubbly brigade'.

Sounds, mainly through Garry Bushell's writing, constructed punk as an outpouring of authentic working-class attitudes that opposed bourgeois society. It attracted younger punk fans. This incubated the more brash elements of punk music journalism. Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill had mediated an argumentative blend of working class politics and spite towards societal entropy during British punk's heyday. At the same time they played a key role in mobilising support for leftist causes and anti-Fascism. Their politics, however stripped of their colleagues' pretensions, were often undermined by their put-on rebellion and acerbic prose. They played up to ideas of unintellectual rebellion. Burchill, for example, glamorised an act of adolescent insurgence in a tube station following a trip to see *Jubilee*, a 1978 punk film directed by experimental film director and gay rights activist Derek Jarman:

We found ourselves completely alone, walking along looking at the immortal billboards advertising films and clothes and records. Passing a *Star Wars* poster, I made a feeble grab at a loose corner, for moral reasons. It came away easily, like fate, so we ripped it in half.

Just a few steps later we stopped at a *Jubilee* poster. It seemed only natural to do the same.

Wild youth, huh? But in that moment, ripping down the poster, I felt like we were tearing away all the phoney muzicbiz egalitarianism, the "down on the street/we're all in this together/my music right or wrong" trash. It was a sentimental moment, real roots stuff – dumb ineffectual proles destroying the fat, ugly face of opulence as best they could.⁴³

This heavily romanticised imagery of scattershot transgression against a very abstract notion of society was an ingrained trope that informed the 1980s reboot of punk, but it was inconsistent with the social solidarity based on liberal-left values that many contemporaries called for. Yet they were still able to support causes. Burchill and Parsons were key exponents of anti-racist narratives, but they were more piercing and argumentative. The morality of punk was here defined by an empowering, but slightly condescending, notion of working-class rebellion bereft of a direction and channelled into individually defined small-scale acts of sub-political resistance against society.

Bushell constructed the persona of a man of the people infiltrating the media, a standard-bearer for the remains of punk values. Even when he interviewed rock

⁴³ Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, 'Me and My Shadow Bag', 2 September 1978, p. 50.

‘aristocracy’ he was an outsider. For instance when he interviewed Ozzy Osborne in 1981 he included a telling preamble,

NEW YORK'S Plaza Hotel is so posh you wouldn't be at all surprised to turn round and catch the Queen Mum sliding down the bannisters between courses, or James Cagney in a top-hat and tails tap-dancing down the stairs singing 'Yankee Doodle Dandy' at any given moment.

Myself, I enjoy being here immensely, not least because I know the likes of me shouldn't be here, and *they* know the likes of me shouldn't be here, but there isn't nothing in the world they can do about it. Ozzy Osbourne doesn't seem anywhere near as chuffed.⁴⁴

Bushell communicated an earthy working-class authenticity by using contractions such as ‘ain’t’ and an approximation of an east London brogue. Bushell was not a jaded rock star: he portrayed his presence in such a lofty setting as transgressive and unusual. The simple ‘us and them’ dichotomy was present despite Osbourne’s working-class background. The bands which Bushell championed described themselves as ‘Oi’, ‘reality’ or ‘street’ punks. Bushell constructed the bands as authentically working class and thus more ‘punk’ than the post-punk ‘poseurs’. The complexity that described the fragmenting values and genres that other journalists described was absent: this is one potential reason why *Sounds* captured many young readers in the wake of punk.⁴⁵ Whilst this offered a means to critique Thatcherite England, it was framed within the increasingly doctrinaire lexicon of punk clichés:

His well-known Olive-Oil-with-anorexia frame is housed inside a regulation hooligan green combat jacket. Add DM boots, crop and left-ear earrings and that makes him just about yer identikit all-purpose Media Bogeyman.

‘Fick fascist fugs’ scream the sick Tory mugs. Micky Fitzsimmons is none of these. Like all the very best people involved in today's street-punk Mick is proving that being working class doesn't mean acting dumb and meekly accepting your allotted place at the bottom of the heap (and none of the other things prole punk is painted as by craphead critics who never give it a listen either).⁴⁶

Intriguingly, despite the well-worn narratives such as ‘media bogeyman’, Tory bashing and ‘prole punk’, Bushell was attempting to construct Fitzsimmons as a social climber and assumed that working-class people were deemed as being ‘at the bottom of the

⁴⁴ Garry Bushell, ‘Insanities in Ten Cities’, *Sounds*, 6 June 1981 (RB, accessed May 2012).

⁴⁵ *NRS* (London, January-June 1979), p. 8. *NRS* (London, January-June 1981), p. 8. *NRS* (London, January-June 1983). P. 9.

⁴⁶ Garry Bushell, ‘Minding Their Own’, *Sounds*, 27 February 1982. (RB, accessed may 2012).

heap'.⁴⁷ Bushell's attempts at empowering messages were actually confirming negative tropes. It was a heady mix of punk narratives, self-aggrandisement and unconstrained suppositions about the working class. Unlike the existentialists, however, the critique of society was coupled with a means and rationale for action. These punks would support causes such as Right to Work's 'Jobs Not YOPs' march; they were not aesthetes who had rejected their ability to come together and engender social change according to agreed values.⁴⁸ Yet Bushell was antagonistic towards the middle-class method, if not the aims, of Rock Against Racism, and stressed an empowering mix of realism and grassroots class action.⁴⁹ The 'punk poseurs' were much more likely to be ruminating on the possibility and hopelessness of nuclear conflict. Nevertheless the warped notion of working-class identity and aggressive punk puritanism was artistically uninteresting, cabalistic and relied on the superficially foreboding viciousness of punk. This was a successful trope and an influential legacy of punk which did attract a greater proportion of younger readers to *Sounds* compared to *Melody Maker* and *NME*.⁵⁰

Yet music papers also reported on artistes who managed to appropriate and simultaneously reject the tropes of urban decay, punk, existentialism and the simplistic suppositions surrounding any 'prole art threat'. The Fall and their leader Mark E. Smith named themselves after Camus' *La Chute*. They came from working-class, post-industrial Manchester and, although Smith referred to his troupe as the 'white crap that talk back' and despised conventional education, he was self-consciously intellectual.⁵¹ Smith provided a stimulating foil for the music press bringing together and often rejecting many of the narratives that framed punk. In January 1981 he imparted some of his fiery rhetoric to Andy Gill.⁵² Gill began the article with a list of proclamations that Smith had made, each introduced with the phrase 'DO YOU KNOW?' in capitals. The music press was mimicking its educational role deliberately. This question was followed by nuggets of information and opinion ranging from

⁴⁷ It was not just Tory bashing, Bushell was unsure of the left as well, 'Tonight's gig was just part of a whole wider campaign, the Right To Work's 'Jobs Not YOPs' march round London. It's something most people support, to cop a cliché, 'unconditionally but critically'. Unconditionally because the Youth Opportunities Programme is undoubtedly a big slave labour rip-off and critically because they fear the whole campaign is just a recruiting front for the ultra-left.' *Ibid*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ Garry Bushell, 'Gonna Be a Prison Break-In', *Sounds*, 28 April 1979 (RB, accessed May 2012).

⁵⁰ *NRS* (London, January-June, 1983), p. 16.

⁵¹ Mark E. Smith is explored at length and in greater detail in Michael Goddard and Benjamin Halligan (eds) *Mark E. Smith and the Fall: Art, Music and Politics* (Farnham, 2010). The irony of academics discussing Mark E. Smith is not lost on the writers.

⁵² Andy Gill, 'The Wit and Wisdom of Mark E. Smith', *NME*, 10 January 1981 (RB, accessed June 2012).

Manchester being more dangerous than New York to Liverpoolian jealousy of the Beatles. Smith outlined the right to debate issues, moral or otherwise, that the music press had introduced to pop music during the 1960s. But his outspokenness was informed by a context of widespread pessimism, he was intense and critical, rather than having a recognisably dystopian or utopian vision:

'IT'S TYPICAL of the 'rock' sort of thing today. I want to be didactic, I want to be opinionated, I don't think because we're having a fucking hard time everybody should stop having opinions and start getting into good-time stuff. I think people in hard times need brain stimulation more than anytime.'

Right! Mark Smith's commenting on the way certain music journalists have turned against The Fall's staunchly anti-escapist stance because the vagaries of fashion at present dictate that 'having a good time till the bomb drops'.

The Fall's music and Smith's interviews coupled humour with social commentary and absurdism whilst countering the narratives that the music press and wider society relied upon: in terms of dystopian narratives he abjured from claiming that his songs were anything other than science fiction rather than representing a post-industrial reality.⁵³ Compared to Bushell and the Oi! punks, Smith critiqued the social processes that created class divisions whilst also accepting neither idealised visions of the working class nor implicit clichés. Within two paragraphs of Gill's article Smith was reported as saying:

'England is just so full of hypocrisy – go round liberating the slaves, and all this, and then treat the northern people, the working population, like fucking scum, y'know – they always have. And recruiting armies and sending them over to other countries to terrorise the people – I mean, they're real brutes!' He subsequently commented, 'I'm northern, we're all northern as well, and I don't like the way northern people degrade themselves; 'cos it's not even a poverty factor, y'know? I've been places where there's worse poverty – the Mexican people aren't like that, and they live on rice, y'know?'

Smith was controversial, outspoken and sometimes wilfully offensive or insulting. He offered few easy answers. Smith was reported as scornful of moral hypocrisy but offered few answers. Barney Hoskins summed up Smith's position well, as an 'angry young singer':

He does not reduce the obscenities of the English class system to the slogans that idiots perpetrate in the name of awareness. He simply kicks us head first

⁵³ Ibid.

into the *shit* of proletarianism – booze, barbiturates, bingo parlours, slates, slags, etc. – and rubs us in it. In re-inventing the north of England, he has only shown us that it has been a grotesque fantasy all along.⁵⁴

Smith's complex narratives and morality were uncommon amongst musicians whose exclamations were often a component of a certain contrived image. Papers reported Smith had little sympathy for rock posturing and openly alienated fans: 'We're like a law unto ourselves, and that's something that's very easy to slip away from. Like at the start of this year we were everybody's darlings – we'd had a big upsurge, big audiences that we'd never had. I'd had enough of it.'⁵⁵ The battlegrounds of social morality and the need to speak to disillusioned youth were acerbically quashed,

I disagree with your point about The Jam having our audience. If we had that audience I'd top meself, y'know. Have you ever seen a Jam audience? Pseudo-mods. They're not even teenage lads any more, they're people who used to buy Virgin albums, Ruts albums with nice covers. They're like, dullards. The Jam did get a lot of disaffected youth but what does that fuckin' mean?⁵⁶

This had ramifications when the topic turned to morality. The Fall and Smith were too confusing and contrary to present an agenda or overarching philosophy. In *Sounds* Sandy Robertson compared Smith's dissenting lyrics and persona to Marshall McLuhan and Jesus Christ within a single paragraph, although she did quickly renege from the Christ-like claim.⁵⁷ Roberts illustrated how the clearest tenet of Smith's philosophy was do not say or do unquestioning, stupid things. Roberts reported Smith as saying, 'There's a thing nowadays where people can't shut up if they don't know what they're talking about. A great disease of the modern age.' Smith then complained about dogmatically non-ironic criticisms of his lyrics,

"Did you see *Flexipop*, where this Swiss guy from Krokus said he could have done a better production on a four-track when he was pissed, said we were racist because I sing '*obligatory niggers*'..."

⁵⁴ Barney Hoskyns, 'Anti-Social Workers', *NME*, 31 October 1981 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁵⁵ Richard Cook, 'The Curse of The Fall' *NME*, 15 January 1983 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Sandy Robertson, 'Hex Education' *Sounds*, 8 May 1982 (RB, accessed June 2012). Robertson wrote, "'There is no culture is my brag' – "The Classical", a song on the *Hex* LP. Cue for coincidence number ONE(1). Me quoting O'Brien quoting people at cocktail parties quoting Marshall McLuhan quoting a Javanese: "*We have no art. We do everything as well as we can*". This prompts a line of thought. Very contrary to those in opposition, The Fall are anything but pretentious. Seen those newspaper ads saying "CHRIST IS NOW HERE"? He's supposed to be some public figure about to reveal his true identity. Maybe some fans and a few writers would nominate Mr Smith for the gig, but I'm certain he'd decline (and Fall). Christ is *nomber*, y'know? They take Mark *so* seriously.'

We laugh. What else can you do in the face of such malign ignorance?’

The reviewer had taken the line out of its original context, the song, ‘the Classical’ was lampooning mass culture that began, ‘There is no culture is my brag, your taste for bullshit reveals a lust for a home or office’.⁵⁸ To Smith morality was linked to thinking for yourself and scepticism of accepted norms, it adhered to much that had come before in the music press, but rejected the herd mentality. He narrated resistance to membership of a subculture as much as those who resided in the home or office. The subculture was presented by Smith as being as callous and objectionable as mass culture.

Smash Hits were less inclined to narrate curmudgeonly nay-saying: the magazine provided relief rather than social critique. The music press’s moral discourse existed, but narratives were tempered by an easy-going agenda that was more interested in the origins, lives – including sex lives – and most importantly fame and personality of stars, rather than polemics. Ian Birch, who had moved from *Melody Maker* to *Smash Hits*, explained that the aim was to be inclusive and fun, compared to the increasingly obtuse competition.⁵⁹ David Hepworth went even further. He argued that *Smash Hits* offered ‘a little bit of revenge’ on the intimidating and hipper-than-thou attitude that *NME* had cultivated.⁶⁰ *Smash Hits* engendered inclusivity by stressing the humble beginnings of stars: they were not alien, inhuman or wraithlike. For instance, it was stressed that Buggles – described by Fred Dellar as, ‘purveyors of clean-machine pop, living in the plastic age and making the most of their environment’ – were ordinary people from Durham and Stockport who had dreamed of moving to London for a pop career.⁶¹ The paper framed Honey Bane as a redeemed troubled youth, the magazine mentioned her east London nuclear family, her misbehaviour at school and institutionalisation: she was one of the ‘Kids that were just a bit mad, kids who just nicked cars all the time, kids that were just promiscuous or just ran away all the time’.⁶² Finally Honey Bane’s life was saved by rock and roll. These narratives implied the morality of acceptance and tolerance which levelled the distinctions – similar to punk – between star and fan. Even when artistes had become extremely successful it was explained that they ‘took stock of their history’.⁶³ In 1982 Ian Birch interviewed Duran Duran, he reported how John Taylor reminisced, ‘I’d be the first to admit it. We didn’t look good at the time. Compared to what Steve Strange

⁵⁸ The Fall, ‘The Classical’ [LP Record], *Hex Education Hour* (Kamera, 1982).

⁵⁹ Ian Birch, personal interview (2011).

⁶⁰ Gorman, *In their Own Write*, p. 291.

⁶¹ Fred Dellar, ‘Buggles’ *Smash Hits*, 21 February 1980 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶² Peter Silverton, ‘Honey Bane’, *Smash Hits*, 14 May 1981 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶³ Ian Birch, ‘On a Wing and a Prayer’, *Smash Hits*, 19 August 1982 (RB, accessed June 2012).

and Spandau wore, we looked like poor old boys from *oop north* who couldn't quite afford all the gear.⁶⁴ Albeit some were less than impressed with journalists prying into their family: Kirsty McColl complained, 'Don't ask a lot of questions about me (sic) Dad!' However this inclusive framework dominated many *Smash Hits* features and was reflexively acknowledged in a playful manner. Here pop was portrayed as the catalyst for transforming a normal person with a normal life into a star: the notion that anyone could join in was an aspirational mantra that clashed with the pessimism in the conventional music press.

The most eccentric stars were framed as normal people with everyday families. This gave *Smash Hits* the opportunity to narrate stars' moral decisions as empowering examples for readers. For instance, Mary Harron reported how Grace Jones was 'the only six foot tall Jamaican high fashion model turned disco star in the room'. However, her 1980 interview began with a description of eating with her infant son and a discussion of her 'clergyman' father and seven siblings.⁶⁵ Then the article discussed Jones' journey to fame and fame itself. Grace Jones' interview also mentioned how her Christian upbringing had affected her sexual behaviour. She had sneaked out to meet boys. She happily described herself as looking for something perverted unlike the jaded Parisian intellectuals she had encountered. Nevertheless the fight over defining acceptable sexual mores was less terse in *Smash Hits*. Sex was fashioned as part of personal enjoyment and only constrained by older social disapproval that was easily ignored. Taboo breaking was not transgressive in a shocking sense, but empowering and pleasurable. Even when this was not the case, bands were seen as naïve; the Jam were described as being 'protected' from sex by their manager, Paul Weller's dad, John Weller.⁶⁶ In 1979 Mike Stand made an early statement of principles for the magazine regarding Kate Bush: 'Taboos? She makes a principle of breaking them. They offend her independent spirit ... unacknowledged, Kate Bush is singing to millions about matters most of us find it difficult to talk about in our family homes. That's healthy.'⁶⁷ Bush's themes of incest and positive homosexual relationships were being extrapolated and explained to a potentially young audience. Stand argued that Bush's renunciation of puritanism was good because, 'most teenage sex education still comes through half-truths from embarrassed parents, cold facts from biology teachers and giggling sessions in some hideaway with a dirty book.' These narratives cheerily combined the music press's

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Mary Harron, 'This Year's Model'. *Smash Hits*, 4 September 1980 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶⁶ Mike Stand, 'Riding Waves and Setting Standards', *Smash Hits*, 6 March 1980 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶⁷ Mike Stand, 'Things Your Mother Never Told You' *Smash Hits*, 18 October 1979 (RB, accessed June 2012).

instructive role with notions of Women's Liberation and sexual freedom. By 1983 artistes as diverse as Madness, UB40, XTC, Toyah Wilcox, Spandau Ballet, Duran Duran and Meatloaf agreed, like Mike Stand and Bush, that sex was fine and should be discussed candidly. However this was a more minor concern in comparison to *Smash Hits*' obsession with fame.

In *Smash Hits* the worst excesses of the music industry were not mentioned frequently, artists did not 'sell-out' nor did they have to require any great substance or message. They wanted to be famous. There was room for the old guard of musicians. Strangely Tom Waits found his way into *Smash Hits* in 1981 and after discussing Kerouac and Greyhound Buses he argued against fame and for privacy, observing that, 'the Devil's Dictionary defines being famous as being "conspicuously miserable"'. I like to feel I can move around without being noticed.⁶⁸ Most artistes were described like Spandau Ballet. In 1981 Mike Stand headlined a feature, 'Journey to Glory'.⁶⁹ It played the 1980s' aspirational rhetoric. In the article the band were open about their newfound wealth and fame, and explained how they refused to play outside of glamorous locales. They were not men of the people or campaigners for social equality:

If your mum and dad are working (*a big 'if' these days, mind*) they're not going to ask you much for your keep ... I don't see how kids can moan at that, it's brilliant. You don't have to be down in the dumps because you're on the dole. After all the best days of the week are when you're not working!

The editorial interjection illustrates the friction between older leftist music press sensibilities and Martin Kemp's comments. Others had more recognised subcultural values but still lusted for attention: Dave Rimmer, for instance, noted Boy George's delight when a black fan approached him in New York and noted the reaction, 'It's great ... that ordinary people like it.'⁷⁰ Statements of this sort could be found in almost every issue. Artistes were no longer trying to be, expected to be or constructed as spokespeople who represented a certain subculture. Instead an inclusive narrative – perhaps falsely – hinted that everyday people could be famous. Yet when fame was gained these stars represented the famous: the key tenet of staying true to one's background as defining a musicians' authenticity was undermined. So were their wider

⁶⁸ Johnny Black, 'Waits and Double measures Society', *Smash Hits*, 18 March 1981 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁶⁹ Mike Stand, 'Journey to Glory' *Smash Hits*, 20 August 1981 (RB, accessed June 2012).

⁷⁰ Dave Rimmer, 'The Boy in New York City', *Smash Hits*, 23 December 1982 (RB, accessed June 2012).

claims to challenging society's morals. The construction of music as an agent of social change was atomised into individual politics.

By 1983 the music press was transformed. In an interview with Paul Gorman, Mick Farren, one of the key instigators of the music press's social conscience explained his rationale for leaving *NME* and Britain,

I left England for New York because I thought that, if I had to listen to Margaret Thatcher's voice on television for God knows how many years, I would probably strap dynamite on myself and kill the bitch. Reagan was coming, corporatism was Studio 54-ism. The 80s weren't short of cocaine, but it wasn't Warners doling it out.⁷¹

The optimism that had imbued a vigorous dialogue with society and older generations was waning. The range of narratives, controversies and conceptions of society were, however, as broad as ever. In some part this was due to the fragmentation of the press and that fact that the near monopoly that *Melody Maker* and *NME* had once commanded was gone. In 1983 the two titles were in disarray. A more diverse and unruly settlement remained as counter-cultures were questioned in a great amorphous arena of debate. While the residue of intense debates remained, the music press did not discuss morality with the former certainty that made them describe themselves as agents of social reform and sources of suppressed knowledge.

This chapter demonstrates that from the late-1970s onwards the music press's convictions when representing moral debates were undermined or at best atomised into certain subcultures. This was partly due to increased competition within the music press's market. New titles, to some extent self-consciously, did not have a history of activism, a focus on extra-musical issues or moralistic tendencies. For instance *Smash Hits* eschewed *Melody Maker* and *NME*'s more severe inclinations and focused on the lives of artistes and attractive photography. This was highly successful. The loss of a near monopoly therefore weakened *Melody Maker* and *NME*'s claims to be guiding and reflecting youth's morality. *NME*'s 1980s music journalism exhibits a reaction to the paper's more uncertain role in youth culture and a historical context that was less fertile for optimistic notions of moral reform. *NME* constructed a bleak reality of rusted cities with polluted inhabitants that coincided with fewer claims of idealistic moral reform, less confidence in youth's ability to affect matters of specific moral concern or general social transformation, and intellectual contentions that undermined the foundation of morality. Whilst there were some, such as Garry

⁷¹ Gorman, *In their Own Write*, p. 279.

Bushell in *Sounds*, who continued to advocate a moral approach to affecting social change which he mixed with a construct of 'working-class authenticity', the overwhelming majority of the music papers ceased to assume that they spoke for a specific audience. The music press's late-1960s and 1970s confidence in negotiating 'permissive' social change had been lost, and was replaced by a reluctance to reflect deeply on morality or even scepticism towards the existence of morality entirely.

Conclusion

The reason [for merging *Melody Maker* with *NME*], apparently confirmed by both IPC's and EMAP's research, is that the basis of both the magazines' readerships and the music they consume is shrinking fast. 'Alternative' culture is founded on stereotypical outsiders: the kind of non-conformists who express their youthful dissent via records, magazines and the formation of rock groups.

The generations that have grown up in the slipstream of Thatcherism have no such pretensions - for them, the adult world seems to be something to engage with not reject. A prolonged economic boom is one factor; their liberal parents are another.¹

– John Harris, *The Independent*

At various times both *NME* and *Melody Maker* have positioned themselves as the vanguard of an alternative, politicised youth culture with music as its cornerstone. The generations that have grown up in the slipstream of Thatcherism and dance culture have no such coherent political aspirations. For them, the adult world seems to be something to engage with, not reject. The generation gap of the late 1970s has been supplanted by the Gap Generation. Today's teenagers prefer to apply their sophisticated critique to the consumption of brands rather than bands.²

– Anon, *The Scotsman*

In 2000, when IPC merged *Melody Maker* with *NME*, national newspapers revealed many popular preconceptions about the music press. They narrated how an 'alternative, politicised youth culture with music as its cornerstone' full of 'stereotypical outsiders' had been replaced by the blue and brown conformity of the economically pampered 'Gap Generation'. These articles, and others, correctly explained how the music industry's periphery had changed as the media split into smaller units – MTV, radio, glossy magazines, websites, as 1960s and 1970s youth grew up, broadsheet newspapers – which on a mass level privileged the image over

¹ John Harris, 'Melody Maker Closes to Join NME Supergroup', *The Independent*, 15 December 2000 (Newsbank, accessed May 2013)

² 'Melody Maker Finally Silenced', *The Independent*, 19 December 2000 (Newsbank, accessed May 2013).

the text, style and consumerism over message and substance.³ This left more niche media – fanzines and websites – to host rock’s moral debate and committed esotericism. The elegies for *Melody Maker* encapsulated and reinforced the widely-held belief that the music press played an important role in conveying moral and political values to a generation of British youth. This role was based on an impressive combined circulation which put the music press right at the heart of youth culture, and the presence of talented and high-profile journalists determined to record and interpret social change. This thesis has contributed the first and long-overdue sustained academic analysis of the music press.

Yet this thesis has questioned the assumption that a generation had incubated such monolithically similar values to be characterised as ‘liberal parents’. These newspaper journalists made a great, but unsubstantiated, claim about a generation’s moral discourse and the extent to which their morality was affected by the music press (especially since music press readers were previously described as representing the ‘alternative’ or ‘outsiders’). It is an overstatement similar to the contention that the 1960s counter-culture, liberal law reform and music scene had triggered a torrent of permissiveness. Instead this thesis offers a different interpretation of the music press’s conversations on morality and its wider significance. It has argued that whilst the music press represented ‘permissive’ or ‘liberal’ morality that was based on rejecting ‘traditional’ or ‘Victorian’ standards for more relativistic or rational values, these views were not universally accepted nor were they universally applicable.

Through an analysis of the music press this thesis has complicated notions of permissive morality and social change. Many viewpoints were narrated, debated, negotiated and contested within the music press. ‘Permissive’ morality was sometimes absent from debates with a moral dimension, was often contested – some even sought to arrest social and moral change – and by the late-1970s was moderated to assuage the negative possibilities of an elite morality being enacted by credulous young people. For instance it is evident that papers narrated Women’s Liberation and homosexuality using tropes that pre-dated the 1960s. Thus papers did not accept Women’s Liberation and open homosexuality unequivocally. The music press’s anti-racist stance was similarly deep-rooted even if it was rejuvenated by punk narratives. Furthermore, 1960s and 1970s musicians’

³ Will Straw, ‘Pop Music and Postmodernism in the 1980s’ in Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader* (Abingdon 1993), p. 3-5.

transgressions were justified by commercial concerns and visions of them being an elite that was distinct from readers. But when punk emphasised egalitarian involvement and activism, *NME* was compelled to impart advice on how to avoid the pitfalls of drug use as music culture and its supposed mores were narrated as attainable to youth at large. The legacy of permissiveness and the idea of a single ‘liberal’ youth morality are, when read through the music press, very dubious. The music press represented a moral debate to their readers which encompassed liberal and radical viewpoints but this was part of a more contested, nuanced and often illiberal conversation.

This thesis has expanded academic understanding of the music press as an industry. When systematically researching the music press, as a collection of texts, it is evident that they represented an array of narratives on morality, politics and, of course, music. Papers presented their readers with an arena for debate like the popular daily press rather than a broadly similar ideological perspective like *Oz* or *Spare Rib*. The study of the forces that affected the music press’s production illustrated the competing values that informed the moral narratives and opened the space for moral debates in the music press. It is clear that the context from which the music press emerged informed the plurality of messages that papers encoded. In the absence of an editorial archive or internal correspondence these insights had to be gleaned from the occasional editorial column that stated a paper’s news values. Oral history interviews with key protagonists were also integral to uncovering the tensions that coloured each paper’s encoding. These investigations exposed music papers’ attitude to journalistic freedom which precipitated the inclusion of more extra-musical debates that discussed society’s morals. It is apparent that in 1967 editors such as Jack Hutton and Maurice Kinn, influenced by metropolitan social mores and rational moral debate, were keen to allow journalists to mediate musicians’ interests and solicit their opinions even if readers or other commentators deemed the conversations as unnecessary additions to the music press’s content. The metropolitan context clearly influenced the papers’ enlarged moral conversation: editors and journalists resisted IPCs attempts to move *NME* and *Melody Maker* from London; they represented London – mostly – flatteringly and as a beacon of sophistication; and their central London offices – located at the heart of the culture industry – enabled them to circulate in social scenes that had unhindered access to metropolitan moral narratives and behaviour. The music press’s ownership had a distant and hands-off approach to running music titles which allowed editors and journalists to cover moral topics with relative impunity.

Oral history interviewees responded with great certainty that IPC, EMAP and City Newspapers rarely pressurised editors to drop topics, although they told them to watch their language, and therefore editors scarcely censored journalists' articles. However IPC's or City Newspapers' lax oversight does not indicate their general corporate values, if one can speak of such things. It actually reveals how IPC were not seriously concerned by the music press if papers had not provoked legal action, lost readers or threatened future advertising revenue.

Nevertheless investigating the music press's production makes it clear that, despite the music papers' ostensible moral openness, music papers were commercial ventures. Commercial concerns required journalists to include some narratives which protected the music industry, artistes and music papers from undue scorn. For instance reporting that excessively critiqued the music industry could result in less cooperation and access to stars. This observation is particularly pertinent at a time when the 1960s and 1970s entertainment industry's sexual culture is being examined and the press are being accused of protecting famous men by not reporting – in articles or to the police – illegal sexual penchants. The music industry's moral values, shaped by commercial behaviour, affected the way moral debates were presented in the music press. For example the music industry's sexism – in discursive terms, in the way it used women to sell products or influence men in prominent positions, and how it excluded women from many jobs – was represented in how the music press negotiated the negative portrayals of Women's Liberation, femininity and individual women. Furthermore music fans and the music press's readers were, as the *NRS* shows, teenagers and young adults. Thus it was often assumed that the music press's readership was impressionable. Consequently when the music press narrated views that were likely to be characterised as permissive, transgressive or obscene, journalists often used a commercial rationale to protect musicians and constructed transgressors as sophisticated and distinct from young readers. Music papers often used readers' letters to underline their readership's conservative tendencies and quash claims that pop and rock music was a bad influence. The typically punk contention that the barrier between musicians and fans had been removed destabilised these assumptions but music papers navigated their commercial, editorial and proprietorial concerns by assuming a duty of care for its readers that countered 'permissiveness's' negative hangovers.

The emergence of the music press's moral debate supports the observations which challenge existing presumptions about both the music press and post-war

British morality. Primarily, the debate arrives late in the ‘permissive’ decade despite the assumption that music was a significant transmitter of moral conjecture and even change. Despite ‘permissive’ narratives in records, sonic transgression and symbolic rebellion, until 1967 musicians rarely explained their musical messages to fans unambiguously. Moral debates were highly unusual in music papers up to this point and similarly the BBC – whose music coverage was stupefyingly uncontroversial – did not want to narrate music or musicians’ moral commentary. Chapter Two demonstrated how music papers usually presented musicians as ‘entertainers’. It illustrated how music was described in terms of being an industry which rewarded lowest common denominator, inoffensive music. The music industry and music papers were not, up to 1967, vociferous moral commentators.

Furthermore, as Chapters Two, Three, Four, Seven and Eight show, metropolitan mores, moral relativism and underground or counter-cultural values were framed with a language that feted sophistication and elite lifestyles. Papers also negotiated deviance with the caveat that economically successful artistes had earned tolerance. Papers suggested that the bohemian milieu that ‘questioned the basic immoralities’ were youthful but detached ‘hippies’, ‘underground’ artistes or the ‘it’s my life and I’ll do what I like with it school’. Likewise musicians could comment on the Vietnam War but protesters were usually constructed as unsophisticated and naively aping radical chic. Indeed racists were constructed as morally inferior, simple and unworldly. Moreover papers implied that un-closeted homosexuals were Soho aesthetes, thus papers represented homosexuals using tropes that had pre-existed and shaped 1960s law reform, and were rejected by Gay Liberation. These distinctions were, in drug debates for instance, commercially expedient and saved papers from the allegation that journalists and musicians were a malignant influence on impressionable youth. Yet they also show that the music press’s discussion of morality was influenced by narratives of metropolitan lifestyles and social change, which were situated within central London’s pre-1960s culture of potential transgression, and then expanded to counter-cultural niches. The music press narrated morality with these elite distinctions to their readers.

Yet it would be misleading to conclude that metropolitan morality and ‘permissive’ values were uncontested in music papers. One of the thesis’ most significant findings is the sometimes chaotic multiplicity of moral narratives and statements. Chapter Five exemplified how the music press’s moral discussions on

gender incubated some of the less egalitarian elements of 'permissive' or metropolitan heterosexual culture and represented women in sexist, condescending or demeaning ways. Yet there were opportunities – albeit limited – for journalists, musicians and fans to contest these representations and state the case for Women's Liberation and equality. Indeed there was a space for some highly sexist statements. Furthermore, whilst the debate on homosexuality was stymied by limited and clichéd ideas of homosexual identities, and tolerance rather than equality, music papers communicated that there were new places emerging for gay people to socialise. The music press's moral discourse encompassed narratives that were fragmented, contested, frequently reformulated and renegotiated across texts: it was rare that a debate on morality was resolved into divisions of right or wrong. For instance the debate on drugs was relativistic; drug users were rarely right or wrong, rather addicted or glamorous, impressionable or debased. In this case the music press's accounts of an individual drug taker's morality were implicit even if many were compelled to narrate, again somewhat expediently, an anti-drugs stance. Instead the music press narrated its own moral obligation to educate their younger, putatively less experienced readers about the pitfalls of dangerous drug use. This decision compelled *NME* to negotiate narratives from a rational public health morality perspective, underground notions of policing the counter-culture and 'permissive' ideas that drug experimentation was tolerable. The way papers previously represented drugs as glamorous and the domain of rock stars was disturbed by how papers narrated and accepted the involvement of 'normal', 'authentic' youth in drug cultures. The only topic which the music press presented as eliciting moral accord was the construction of anti-racism. Nevertheless this did not prevent articles from sometimes including racially insensitive tropes to describe non-white artistes.

The music press's metropolitan and commercial focus was challenged in the late-1970s. The punk challenge changed the moral debate's emphasis as papers described fewer distinctions between musicians and fans. Papers described punk musicians and punk fans equally as 'punks' and *Smash Hits* explained how pop stars had come to fame from humble 'normal' beginnings. These narratives countered the fan and professional divisions that mirrored elite and mass moral differences. Nevertheless this thesis found that the music press's discussion of drugs, for instance, was underpinned by similar justifications that framed 1960s youth's moral debates. Despite rhetorics of youth rebellion and egalitarian do-it-yourself involvement, the music press presented punk's supposed challenge to elite

music and morals as reliant on the re-appropriation of notions such as the generation gap, autonomy and the right to a moral debate. Within the mid- to late-1970s economic and social context, the narratives that framed youth's claims to moral autonomy were, of course, less optimistic, but music papers represented punk's common expectations with their 1960s predecessors. Papers used sociological, radical and nihilistic reporting to represent and counter the moral panic that punk elicited and transfer punk's 'filth and fury' into more socially minded interests. The music press and punk musicians suggested meaning to extricate punk from its supposed nihilism. For instance the music press constructed punks and post-punks as a bulwark against the National Front and allowed some to narrate feminist views. Nevertheless the music press used a sociological language to report the narrative that equated punk with the aspirations and health of British youth (and thus society). Therefore the music press were compelled to comment on youth culture's position in society, include social experts rather than just musical commentators and make a moral obligation to protect punks from metropolitan and elite rock culture's drug experimentation. The inclusion in a popular periodical – available at all good newsagents - of representations of British youth as privy to and enacting transgressive moral values was subversive. The music press's expert voice had shifted to contextualise the idea that it was youth, rather than a distinct subculture, who were affecting taboo behaviour. For instance, at *Melody Maker* journalists were no longer required to read sheet music, a sign of musical expertise, but instead had to understand new musical movements and their social context. Yet the increasingly sophisticated and theoretically informed reporting undermined the longevity of moral debates as, especially in *NME*, post-structuralist ideas questioned the foundation of moral thought and new, less intense, more specialised papers emerged to challenge the authority the music press had commanded and their claims to represent the views of youth.

Whilst this thesis has made significant findings regarding the music press's production and content, and how it represented moral conversations to youth, there are avenues for further research which were beyond the project's scope in terms of economic and time constraints. Further studies on how music papers, popular and rock music's moral debates were received and perhaps affected by music fans are necessary. A large scale study of music fans and music's place in culture and society would help clarify popular music's contention that it is an agent of social change, rather than simply representing social or moral change. This could take the form of a pilot study that uses questionnaires to probe fans and non-fans'

relationship with music. This would lead into a large-scale oral history project. This project could be useful in examining the extent to which metropolitan, counter-cultural, underground or punk mores were affected in provincial urban spaces. This would problematize and interrogate metropolitan accounts of social change. A project of this sort would also clarify how fans received messages through music and music papers and constructed identity and meaning. Furthermore music journalists and editors' personal histories are worthy of further study; the wealth of detail revealed indicates that more work is required on journalists and editors. Whilst oral history interviews with music writers have helped mitigate the lack of an editorial archive they also uncovered a great deal more about the often exciting lives of journalists, their personal mythologies and the culture they perceived themselves as representing and writing from.

In addition, whilst this thesis has situated the music press within the wider culture of journalism, more work could be done to contribute to a relatively skeletal field. Comparing popular daily and broadsheet newspapers' coverage of debates on youth, morality and popular music culture with the music press's representations would benefit general understandings of the British press. It would also be interesting to see if periodicals concerned with film, literature and art had parallels with the music press and has such an outspoken voice when it came to issues of morality. Indeed it would also be worthwhile to add an international dimension to this study. The U.S. music press – with titles such as *Rolling Stone*, *Crawdaddy!*, *Who Put the Bomp*, *Creem* and *The Village Voice* – influenced many British writers. A comparative study is needed to refine academic knowledge of the relationship between British and U.S. music papers. An analysis would equip scholars with new perspectives on the transatlantic counter-culture and cross-cultural exchange. The U.S. music press, notably *Rolling Stone*, included more overtly political analysis more did so more openly than the music press in Britain. The disparity is significant because, unlike most British papers, U.S. music papers were – originally – independently owned. Indeed the British music press's relationship with the French and German music press is uncharted territory.

The music press's moral enunciations were not consistent, and they vacillated between a variety of viewpoints rather than simple binary opposites. However between 1967 and 1983 the music press represented a moral debate to a significant, if predominantly male, subculture of British youth. Relaying moral debates that described transgression and often questioned social mores were previously seen as commercially poisonous. Papers, influenced by metropolitan,

underground and counter-cultural discourse, defined the right for young people to have an opinion on individual morality and critique the underlying moral assumptions that informed society and politics. Yet whilst papers narrated a 'generation gap' they also initially distinguished between elite and mass youth morality. But the music press's debate ultimately changed to include youth at large, thus it moderated its reportage to counter the unchecked assumptions and consequences of 'permissive' or 'metropolitan' morality. Thus this thesis has demonstrated that the music press, a previously unstudied sector of the commercial press, navigated commercial concerns and corporate ownership to represent debates on morality to a proportion of British youth. At some points papers even advised youth on how to enact taboo behaviour without suffering excessive consequences. Furthermore the thesis has established that the music press undermines arguments that view 'permissiveness' as the central tenet of post-1960s morality, especially in metropolitan or counter-culture influenced milieux. This has added to the existing historiography of post-war British social change by showing that moral narratives drew from many sources, including pre-existing historically noted tropes, and that youthful journalists or musicians were just as capable of denouncing moral or social change. For a relatively brief, but significant, period, the music press embraced moral debate – but, despite later preconceptions, it reached no easy consensus about 'permissiveness'.

Appendix

Biography of Oral History Participants.

Keith Altham

Altham joined *NME* in the mid-1960s, previously working as a sports and teen magazine writer as well as at music fan magazine *Fabulous*, and by 1969 he was *NME*'s Features Editor. From 1972 he also wrote for *Melody Maker*, *Record Mirror*, *Disc*, *Sounds*, *Fusion*, *Rave*, *The Daily Express*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian*. Altham was the last journalist to interview Jimi Hendrix in 1970. He went on to become one of the most prominent British public relations representatives for bands in the 1970s and 1980s working closely with the Who.

Ian Birch

Birch was born and raised in Belfast. Following university he had worked for *Time Out*. Birch was employed by *Melody Maker* at the end of 1976 in response to their concerns about not reaching the younger punk audience. Following his time at *Melody Maker* he wrote for *Smash Hits*. He subsequently moved to New York and works in magazine publishing. He still contributes music journalism to *Q*.

Chris Charlesworth

Chris Charlesworth was employed in 1970 by *Melody Maker* after working at the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*. At *Melody Maker* he became News Editor and, in 1973, as their US Editor, based in New York. After a brief period working in artist management and for RCA records he authored rock biographies and ultimately replaced Miles as the head of Omnibus Press.

Caroline Coon

Coon had moved to London in the early-1960s where she trained as a painter at Central St. Martins and modelled. She became involved in the underground movement and in 1967 founded drug charity *Release*. Coon also contributed to *International Times*. In 1975 Coon joined *Melody Maker*. In 1976 she was integral in introducing British punk to the readers of *Melody Maker*, working closely with The Clash – sometimes as manager. She subsequently wrote for *Sounds* and in 1988 wrote *The Punk Rock Explosion in 1977*. She is still politically active and working as an artist.

Mick Farren

During the 1960s Farren edited underground periodical *International Times*, was the doorman at the Roundhouse's UFO club and formed proto-punk group The Social Deviants. He has collaborated with Lemmy and Wayne Kramer. Farren was a prominent activist with the British chapter of the White Panthers and is associated with the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang. In 1970 he organised the Phun City festival. He began to write for *NME* in 1975 becoming news editor. He moved to the US in the early-1980s where he wrote for *Village Voice* as well as authoring novels on sci-fi and horror themes and books on music, history and politics. He has continued to write and blog since his return to Britain.

Paul Rambali

Rambali worked in a London record shop until a chance encounter with the editor of New York's *Trouser Press* fanzine led to him contributing to the fanzine. Following this he wrote for *NME* during the late-1970s, editing the 'Thrills' news section. From 1980 to 1987 he was a co-editor for *The Face*. Rambali, now based in Paris, is an author of books such as *Barefoot Runner* the

acclaimed biography of Abebe Bikila the first black African to win an Olympic gold medal.

Jon Savage

After graduating from Cambridge University, Savage moved to London and began writing *London Outrage*, a punk fanzine. He was quickly picked up as a freelance writer for *Sounds*, *Melody Maker* and *NME*. In 1979 he began contributing to *The Face*. He now contributes to *Mojo*, *New Statesman* and *The Observer*. He published *England's Dreaming*, an influential history of punk, in 1991 and in 2007 wrote a historical account of the coming of the teenager *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*.

Richard Williams

Williams began as a journalist at *The Nottingham Evening Telegraph*. He was recruited by Ray Coleman at *Melody Maker* in 1970 and within a few months was deputy editor. He then wrote for *The Times* and worked as an A&R for Island Records. He was also London editor of *Time Out*. Between 1978 and 1980 he returned to *Melody Maker* as editor to try and prevent a circulation design, his plans for a re-launch were stymied by management and he resigned when asked to break a strike. He went on to write for *The Sunday Times* and *The Independent*. Williams is now the sports editor at *The Guardian*.

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