Reconfiguring Authenticity in the Music Press

1978 to 1988



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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the role of authenticity in the music press. It focuses specifically on the British titles *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q*, and considers the way in which these titles reconfigured the role of authenticity in popular music during the period 1978 to 1988. It challenges the hegemony of American rock ideology and attempts to reframe the way in which authenticity operates in British popular music. In this direction, it is argued that there is a distinctly British approach to the aesthetic evaluation of popular music informed by the UK's subaltern position in relation to American rock ideology. However, the contribution this thesis makes to existing work in Popular Music Studies is partly historical. The work on *Smash Hits* focuses on a liminal moment after punk and disco, which is often left out of dominant histories of popular music. This period is important not least because it represents the height of single sales in the UK to date. Conversely, in its analysis of *The Face* and *Q*, the thesis considers the role of consumer discourse in the music press and how this might inform understanding of popular music. In particular, the proliferation of the CD towards the end of the decade encapsulates a moment of consumer retrospection in the commodification of the rock canon. However, the most important message arising from the investigation concerns the role and purpose of authenticity. Within the Academy, consideration of the authentic tends to stress the genealogy of romantic and modernist traditions. This can also be configured within narratives emanating from both the Social Sciences and Musicology. This thesis puts forward the argument that such a conception of authenticity is extremely restrictive. Although changes to the music press during this period did not dispense with the notion of authenticity all altogether, they did demonstrate the ways in which the concept may embody a more post-modern cultural paradigm. Central to this, it is argued, was an acceptance and indeed celebration of pop's commoditised status. The corollary of this reconfiguration, however, is that authenticity remains a highly persuasive, albeit less singular, deconstructive motif, which continues to routinise the exclusion of certain kinds of music.

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Methodology and Structure

Underpinning this project is the belief that music press is a commercial culture in which a system of ideas about popular music are encoded: an ideology of pop if you will. As Simon Frith argues in his introduction to Craig McGregor's *Pop Goes the Culture* (1983), consumer culture is intrinsically ideological:

> The starting-point for all pop criticism must be that pop is a culture of consumption – we're dealing with commodities. McGregor's point is that the idea of passive consumption is misleading. Pop critics are employed as consumer guides, intervening in the marketplace. Their task is to persuade people to consume in certain ways, for specific reasons. Consumption is an ideological act. (Frith, 1983, 1)

In this direction, the work of both Frank Mort and Sean Nixon has been particularly influential in shaping the direction of the thesis. In particular the work on *The Face* in Nixon's *Hard Looks* (1996) and Mort's *Cultures of Consumption* (1996) has been useful in providing a wider historical context to the culture of masculine consumption in the 1980s. From a methodological perspective, the way in which both books focus in detail on the written word and presentational devices suggested a modus operandi. While these ways of thinking about consumer culture draw upon the work of French thinkers like Jean Baudrillard (1970) and Pierre Bourdieu (1979), my work also falls into the classic Cultural Studies perspective pioneered by Stuart Hall in 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980), whereby the meaning embedded in the text can be viewed as a 'circuit of communication' (Hall, 1980, 128). Clearly this strategy draws upon Ferdinand de Saussure's posthumous *Cours du Linguistics* (1912) and Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' (1967); while I concede that the relationship between the signifier and signified is indeed arbitrary, like Hall I acknowledge that there are preferred readings that betray the ideological agenda of the ruling class. From this perspective it is of course necessary to acknowledge the ideological constraints of consumer culture: the Gramscian notion of hegemony and Marxist anxiety that consumer culture is not so innocent.

One of the biggest problems I had over the course of the research was obtaining exact sales figures for each of the titles during the period in question. The Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) do not have archive data going back that far and neither do the British Phonographic Industry (BPI). Though I had good contacts at EMAP and subsequently BAUER, neither holds records going back that far. Nevertheless, I have tried to gesture towards the institutional structure of the music press during the 1970s and 80s in my citations of other research projects. For example, both Eamonn Forde (2001) and Gunter Gudmundsson et al (2002) offer an excellent overview of the broader contours of change, in particular the corporatisation of the music press during the 1980s and the increased sophistication of its branding. The same can be said of the biographies of the personnel involved, which as I have suggested revolve around a restricted panel of journalists and editors. Though for the purposes of the thesis I have been able to speak with David Hepworth, Mark Ellen, Ian Cranna, Bev Soutar and Vicci MacDonald, Nick Logan and Stuart Williams, these interviews cannot compete with Paul Gorman's definitive tome *In Their Own Write* in terms of scope. However, they have provided interesting nuggets of information with regards to specific moments and points of departure. And indeed they corroborate the view of this period as a time of transition. Likewise, Chris Fouracre's Channel 4 documentary *25 Years of Smash Hits* (2003) was a platform for the various personnel involved in the music press during the 1980s to reflect upon the significance of the era. In this direction, within the popular domain, *Q* has not been historicised with the same vigour: in part because the title is still a going concern, unlike *Smash Hits* and *The Face,* which both closed in 2006. Indeed, their sudden demise brought forth a surfeit of magazine and newspaper articles considering their legacies. In particular, Mark Ellen's "obituary" in *Word* was extremely insightful.

Where I have found work on the music press that mirrors my own approach this has been necessarily restricted to specific moments or titles. For example, Diane Railton concentrates on *Smash Hits,* but this is focused on the late 1990s. Likewise, Forde's account of *Q* is framed by the business infrastructure of the 1990s. More useful has been work that touches upon key themes. Where the music press is mentioned in broader terms neither *Smash Hits* nor *Q* are considered in great detail; for example, both Gudmundsson et al (2002) and Roy Shukar (2001) mention both titles only in passing. More constructive has been the work that focuses on the issues and debates that are common to my project. In this direction Steve Jones' anthology *Pop Music and the Press* (2002) has

been particularly helpful. Chapters by Brenda Johnson-Grau and Kembrew McLeod on the relationship between gender and rock criticism were extremely valuable in framing my own methodological approach. Johnson-Grau's chapter, for example, is expansive in its scope, focusing on print and moving image texts between 1968 and 1999. By contrast, McLeod focuses on the winners of the *Village Voice's* 'Pazz and Jop' awards. The span of my own work hopefully falls somewhere between the two. On the one hand, what I hope I have achieved in this thesis is a brief wide enough to allow the music press space to breathe. On the other hand, by restricting my investigation to the UK, a specific time frame and titles connected by personnel and ownership, I feel there is a focus tight enough to harness its historical significance. However, the methodology is also intrinsically connected with my own subject position: not least because I was born in 1978.

While the work of some academics within Popular Music Studies is focused on periods of which they have personal lived experience (Ian Inglis, for example, writes most eloquently on The Beatles: a band whose music formed the soundtrack to his youth), the pop music scene of the 1980s is not something I have strong memories of. Though both my parents were heavily interested in pop music, nobody bought music magazines until I purchased *Q* at the age of 14 in 1992. And, indeed, it was my own disillusionment at the music scene of the mid-1990s (the soundtrack to my formative teenage years) that lead me seek out musical experiences from the burgeoning cannon of popular music that had been reissued on CD: though it has to be said that, on my limited budget, it was the second-hand cassette tape that provided the most accessible source of recorded music. While this very retrospective sensibility was no doubt nurtured by *Q*, the corollary of reading the magazine's fairly sophisticated brand of rock journalism was that I excelled at English sufficiently that I convinced myself that it was a good idea to pursue the subject not just at degree level but in the form of an MA too. Things came to a head in 2001, when faced with the decision about what to write about for my post-graduate thesis the only answer for me was the music press; and so began this research.

When I began the PhD in 2003, I had already completed a major project under the supervision of Nicola Marsh at the University of Southampton. This focused on narratives of gender and consumer culture in *Q* and *The Face*. Though the end result courted controversy in a fairly traditional English department, I benefited tremendously from Nicola's dedication and commitment to doing something

different. Clearly my subsequent decision to work with Andrew Blake in the then Cultural Studies Department at what was King Alfred's College was a sensible next step. However, it was also the concurrent development of my own professional identity as a teacher of English and then Media Studies that proved most definitive in shaping my approach. In the first instance, working with the National Curriculum and Literacy Strategy encouraged me to reflect upon the development of my own ability in English as a teenager and the role that reading *Q* played in shaping this. To this end, in the early stages of the research, I spent some time looking at the pedagogy of Media Education. While the general thrust of educational theorists that included Keith Swanwick, Alan Bullock and David Buckingham was that media texts could be used across the curriculum as a way of turning intuitive knowledge into a ritualised strategy for learning, the exchange was one sided. There seemed to be minimal thinking about the ways in which the subject knowledge could be used to extend thinking about media texts. Inspired by this, I resolved to apply the pedagogy of English teaching to print based material, focusing not just on presentational devices and text level understanding of what was being said but also the ideological structures embedded in word and sentence level meaning.

The second event that shaped the methodological focus was getting a job teaching GCSE and A-level Media Studies. This provided me with a new conceptual framework in which to think about the music press: specifically the concept areas of audience, institution, forms and conventions and representation. Moreover, it gave me a second vocabulary for deconstructing the visual language of the music press: encouraging me to think about shot types, camera angles, lighting and framing etc. The combination of these two approaches has been pivotal in grounding the thesis in textual analysis. Not because I think that other approaches are less worthwhile, but because I am confident from my own experience that the explicit acquisition of these two pedagogical approaches by someone working in the domain of Cultural Studies is atypical and therefore worthy of exploration. In the proceeding section, therefore, I attempt to give a succinct overview of the thesis and an explanation of its structure.

Chapter 1

In chapter 1 I have attempted to address the key issues raised by the notion of authenticity in the wider context of popular music in both Britain and American. I have suggested that there are two distinct traditions of authenticity, which are compatible but none the less distinct. This distinction is marked by the use of the term rock in America to describe music of generalisable importance, of which authenticity is the key talisman of worth. By contrast, in the UK, pop is less of a pejorative term and the preference for authentic modes of address is tempered by the playful sensibility of the carnivalesque. This difference is the backdrop against which I will argue that *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* reconfigured the notion of authenticity in the music press. Focusing as this thesis does on the time period 1978 to 1988, I have also attempted to delineate in this chapter the time period immediately preceding the launch of *Smash Hits* with consideration of the way in which authenticity operated in disco and punk, the two most significant music movements of the late 1970s. Indeed, as I will go on to consider in chapter 3, it was the collision of disco's dance floor rhythms and the de-constructivist sonic template of punk that made the mainstream of pop at the end of the 1970s a diverse and interesting space.

Chapter 2

In chapter 2 I have attempted to place the discussion of authenticity within the specific context of the music press that preceded *Smash Hits*. This begins with a generalisable discussion of the way in which authenticity operates within popular music culture in the latter part of the 20th Century before focusing on the role of the press. The chapter is sub-divided, focusing in turn on specific epochs in which I discuss the way that key titles shaped and reflected the role of authenticity in popular music culture. This begins with a survey of the music press in the UK during the 1950s and focuses specifically on the *NME*. Contrary to received thinking, the *NME* during this period was in fact a very mainstream publication: like *Smash Hits*, its editorial cohered around the vagaries of the singles chart. Other teen pop magazines of the period include *Disc* and *Record Mirror*, both of which are striking in their use of colour and emphasis on the visual culture of pop. By contrast, *Melody Maker,* with a

history stretching back to the 1920s, was a more earnest affair, orientated towards musicians as opposed to consumers and focused principally on jazz. With the proliferation of the British bands in America from 1964 onwards, *Melody Maker* did start taking pop music seriously and during the mid-1960s both *NME* and *Melody Maker* were arguably at the vanguard of the music scene. However, by the late 1960s the balance of power shifted towards new American titles including *Creem*, *Rolling Stone* and *Crawdaddy.* Although each had a unique style, they employed a revolving cast of writers (influenced by beat writers) who would pioneer the new journalism style with which Tom Wolfe's 1973 anthology is synonymous. The influence of this on the music press in the UK, particularly *NME,* can be felt in the polemic style of 'personality writers' like Charles Shaar Murry and Nick Kent, whose privileged the authenticity of their own subjective attachments. This culminated during the punk era, which festishised the authenticity of both the live performance and alienated social position of the working class.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 I focus specifically on *Smash Hits*. I begin by considering the way in which the magazine sits within 1980s popular music culture. On the one hand, this is characterised by the propensity to focus on the authenticity of the alternative scene during the post-punk period, from which *Smash Hits* is excluded. On the other hand, when considering more mainstream pop artefacts there is a tendency to spotlight issues of gender and representation, which we can loosely term Madonna Studies. In addition to this, there is a tendency to view *Smash Hits* as Thatcherite: part of the cultural consent to the economic reforms of the 1980s. By reframing *Smash Hits,* and locating analysis at the end of the 1970s the intention is not simply to bi-pass these temporal problems but to refocus consideration of the magazine on a very interesting moment in the mainstream of pop. Not only is the period 1978 to 1980 marked by diversity and innovation in the singles chart, but 1979 is also the height of single sales in the UK. In particular, the longevity of the 'star groups of punk' (The Jam, Blondie and The Police) and the fact that, in terms of single sales, they far outsold their new-pop forebears (Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, Culture Club etc) also suggests this period is due for review. From an institutional perspective, the decision to focus this chapter on *Smash Hits'* footprint in the 1970s is significant because this was a period in which the magazine was edited by Nick Logan and Ian Cranna. Logan had previously been editor of *NME* and went on to have great success with *The Face*

and also *Arena*. His legacy at *Smash Hits*, however, is often over-looked. This is important because it challenges the view of *Smash Hits* as separate to the evolution of the music press that preceded it. Moreover, insofar that it represents a point of departure, the blueprint laid down with *Smash Hits* can be seen to have influenced not only Logan's subsequent ventures and *Q,* but the development of consumer journalism in the 1990s and beyond. Though it is beyond the scope of this research, it could be argued that *Smash Hits* encoded the DNA of a number of succeeding mainstream lifestyle titles including *FHM*, *Heat*, *OK*, *Zoo* and *Bliss*. In particular, its playful take on popular culture and its irreverent use of language have been particularly influential. It is for this reason that, in the second part of this chapter, time is spent textually analysing the way in which the magazine communicates both visually and in terms of language. What this reveals is a magazine that was more sophisticated in its mode of address than popular histories imply; in particular the magazine assumed high levels of cultural capital on the part of the reader and deployed an ambitious lexical set. Likewise, in its use of presentational devices the magazine is refined: the selection and composition of cover shots, for example, imply specific strategies for listening: reacquainting popular music with what Simon Frith has described as its televisual sensibility (2002).

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the role of consumer discourse in the music press in relation to *The Face* and *Q*. This is a contentious battleground in the understanding of Anglo-American notions of authenticity because commoditised forms are so often viewed as synonymous with artistic compromise. However, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, in British popular music culture, the combination of both Art school sensibilities and a more carnivalesque aesthetic means that the relationship between Art and the commercial world need not be so problematic. In this sense, by embracing a more corporate vocabulary for talking about pop *The Face* and *Q* reacquainted British music journalism with the mainstream emphasis of *NME*, *Record Mirror* and *Disc* in the 1950s. Moreover, their mannered and ironic style chimed with the more playful character of British popular music culture. That is not to say, however, that these titles were without critical perspective: embedded within their more anodyne register were some powerful strategies for talking about popular music. For example, this chapter looks at the way in which *The Face* and *Q* built upon the less-singular notion of authenticity invoked by *Smash Hits* at the end of the 1970s. In particular, it explores

the way in which both titles reconfigured authenticity as a more plural construct inextricable from the lifestyle aspirations of the reader. Central to this is the way in which the magazines address their readers as consumers. In the case of *The Face*, consumer culture is always on the brink of the mainstream, reflecting the more metropolitan demographic of its readership. While *Smash Hits* addressed a provincial community of consumer, whose interaction with popular music culture was confined principally to the bedroom, readers of *The Face* were assumed to be first hand participants in pop culture: perhaps working in the media and engaging the London-centric club scene. Authenticity in *The Face* was avant-garde: the cutting edge of culture. And, in this sense, the magazine could be said to embody a more modernist conception of authenticity. By contrast, *Q* addressed a very middlebrow demographic of consumers. Like *Smash Hits,* the magazine was provincial in its readership, but addressed an older demographic of consumers. Central to this was the concomitant success of the CD and the re-release of pop's back catalogue in the form of 'classic albums'. It could be said, therefore, that while *Smash Hits* re-introduced a 1950s teen pop sensibility to the music press of the period, *Q* reprised elements of the more adult style that characterised rock writing in the 1960s and 70s: not least in the inclusion of work by Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray. While the magazine eschewed the polemics of its new journalism ancestry, *Q* reconfigured heritage as a potent symbol of cultural authenticity. Though the magazine addressed a relative mixed gender split of consumers, by the end of the decade the magazine had compiled a more singular history of popular music. Authenticity in *Q* then is contingent not only upon historical significance but also patriarchal authority. In the same way that *The Face* re-inscribed a more modernist conception of authenticity, *Q* reconfigured romantic notions of authenticity as a specifically masculine consumer project.

Chapter 5

The final chapter focuses specifically on *Q* and the way in which encoded in the magazines use of language are some powerful strategies for thinking about popular music. Central to this, I will argue, is the issue of cannon formation, which is an important part of *Q*'s legacy. Indeed, while the magazine's retrospective sensibility was key to its contemporary appeal, the account of rock history presented in *Q* between 1986 and 1990 has had considerable perpetuity. Cross referencing the covers of *Q* with the work of Appen and Doehring (2006) on rock-lists it would seem that in the first four years of its

publication *Q* established a rock canon that has yet to be revised significantly. Moreover, that canon was typical of subsequent rock lists for the way in which it excluded black and female artists and therefore invoked a white masculine authenticity as a key barometer of aesthetic worth. And yet, in its dealings with the contemporary music scene *Q* was less fixated on authenticity as measure of success. Focusing specifically on the reviews section, I consider the way in which *Q* mediated the achievements of recording artists during the period 1986 to 1988. Though authenticity emerges as a key concept around which a diverse system of beliefs about the value and purpose of popular music are cohered, *Q* retains the quixotic sensibility characteristic of *Smash Hits.* By contrast, in its dealings with older music recording, re-leases, classic albums and compilations Q invokes a more fixed notion of authenticity that is characteristic of the music press before *Smash Hits*. In part, this can be attributed to the personnel involved, many of whom like Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent had worked on the *NME* and *Melody Maker* in the 1970s. Likewise, it is also a function of the aesthetic form of the long play album, which privileges a sustained musical statement over the fleeting brilliance of the pop single. However, perhaps the most significant feature of authenticity in *Q,* is the sensibility of the white middle aged male and in this sense judgements of taste and the objectication of heritage are linked very much to the role of *Q* as a men's lifestyle title discussed in chapter 4. Within these parameters there is further contradiction, not least the ambiguity between the aesthetic forms of the compilation album versus the classic reissue. However, transcending this complexity is the way in which authenticity emerges as a plural construct: embedded in the reflective construction of consumer identity and contingent upon the shifting frontiers of musical invention. In this sense, *Q* invokes a less singular vision of authenticity, compatible not only with both romantic and modernist traditions, but also the endemic contradictions of postmodernism.

Chapter 1 - Reconfiguring Authenticity

> Authenticity is probably simultaneously the most invisible and most opaque of the concerns that occupy the popular-music critics, yet it is referred to or implied in almost all popular-music criticism. It is also the most frequently debated topic and one that brings popular music's inherent elitism to the fore.
>
> (Jones and Featherly, 2002, 31)

In this thesis I will explore the way in which the UK music press has played a significant role in reconfiguring recent understanding of authenticity in popular music. In using the term popular music I am referring to the body of Western music recorded and performed after the Second World War up until the present day that includes but is not restricted to rock 'n' roll, rhythm and blues, pop, rock, disco, dance and hip hop. The timeframe of investigation are the years 1978 to 1988 and the titles *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q*. To put the study in context it has been necessary to gesture towards a number of other titles that both precede and follow-on from the magazines in question. However, it is worth emphasising that the three titles considered are connected by the personnel involved and the business infrastructure underpinning them. For example, both *Smash Hits* and *The Face* were launched by Nick Logan, who previously had been editor of IPC's *NME*. Likewise, *Q*'s launch team of Dave Hepworth and Mark Ellen had both been employed by EMAP as editors of *Smash Hits*. Though *The Face* is, in this sense, the odd one out, in that it was not an EMAP venture, but an independent project financed by Logan himself, in a curious twist of fate the magazine was eventually bought by EMAP in 1999. As with *Smash Hits*, *The Face* became a victim of the decline of print based media in the early 21st Century; unable to compete with the internet and other digital technologies, the magazine closed in 2004 preceding the demise of *Smash Hits* by less than two years. Though *Q* continues as a multi-platform brand (web-site, TV and radio station), the sale of EMAP at the end of 2007 and subsequent re-organisation of the business saw the bock sale of all consumer magazines to Bauer including the music titles *Kerrang, Mojo* and *Q*. Thirty years on from the launch of *Smash Hits* then, it would seem there is a real genealogy to the development of the music press in this period, a

period in which the notion of authenticity was reconfigured in terms that are of potential value to Popular Music Studies. In particular I will argue that *Smash Hits* challenged the myth of authenticity that has underpinned the music press since the 1920s, while *Q* reconfigured authenticity as a more plural and more commoditised construct. However, before we can begin to delineate what we mean by 'authenticity', we first need to be clear about what is meant by the term 'the music press'.

The Music Press

In Robert Strachan and Marion Leonard's contribution to *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Popular Music* (2003), music journalism is defined as:

> The practice of reporting or writing about music for publication in specialist or non-specialist print media including the music press, life-style magazines, newspapers, biographies and histories. (Strachan and Leonard, 2003, 253)

This definition stresses the importance of the music press in the 'ascription of popular music meaning' and the adherence to 'certain stylistic conventions' to the way in which popular music has been 'valued and judged' (253). Certainly, it is the aim of this thesis to explore the relationship between the forms and conventions of the music journalism and construction of authenticity. However, it is also a function of the history of the music press as a discrete category of magazine publishing: it is this form of music journalism that is the focus of this thesis. On the history of the music press, Dave Laing's 'Anglo-American Music Journalism: Texts and Contexts' in *The Popular Music Studies Reader* (2007) offers a clear outline of the development of the genre and the ways in which it has been conceptualised within Popular Music Studies. Laing foregrounds the importance of specialist jazz and popular music titles in the 1920s and 1930s in both the UK and US. Singled out as particularly significant is the UK title *Melody Maker* (1926), the American publication *Down Beat* (1934) and the French magazine *Le Jazz Hot* (1935) (Laing, 2007, 334). In this direction, the dates at which other key titles emerge include *New Musical Express* (*NME*) in 1952, *Rolling Stone* in 1967, the proliferation of US titles *Vibe* and *The Source* in the 1990s and British publications *Mixmag* and *Muzik* during the same period. Notably absent from Laing's account, therefore, are not just the British titles *Smash Hits* (1978) and *Q* (1986), but American ventures including *Crawdaddy* (1966) and *Creem* (1969).

However, Laing's account is useful in his outline of the way in which the music press has been theorised within Popular Music Studies.

In Laing's logic, when 'scholarly writing' (Laing, 2007, 335) focuses on the music press, it is characterised by the tension between the concepts of the music journalist as 'gatekeeper' and 'cultural intermediary' (335). With reference to accounts that draw upon David Manning White's 'The "Gate Keeper": a Case Study in the Selection of News' (1950), Laing rejects the idea that music journalists solely exclude certain kinds of music 'because the critical function of such writing demands the recognition of 'bad' music as well as 'good' music' (335). Although, it has to be said, as Roy Shukar points out in 'On the Cover of Rolling Stone' (2001), 'gate keeping' does play a significant role in those magazines, like *Q*, which shape the way rock 'n' roll has been historicised (Shukar, 2001, 96). Instead, Laing proposes that the concept of the 'cultural intermediary' (a term used by Keith Negus in *Popular Music in Theory* (1996)), which draws upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu, is much more fitting 'for those mediating practices that collude with the culture industries' definition of listeners as consumers' (335-336). For Laing the role of 'cultural intermediary' is synonymous also with the legitimization of certain histories and the process of canonization. In this direction, Bourdieu's consideration of the relationship between education and taste in *Distinction* (1979) has been particularly formative in my own consideration of *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q*, not least because all three titles explicitly embrace popular music as a consumer culture. That encoded in this commercial milieu are some very specific strategies for listening to popular music is central to this research. How to go about extrapolating their meaning, however, requires careful consideration.

In understanding the complexity of the way in which the music press makes meaning John Stratton's article 'Between Two Worlds: Art and Commercialism in the Record Industry' (1982) is extremely useful. Stratton argues that while the music press is 'active in the development of ideological rationalisations of popular music' (Stratton, 1982, 274) there is a tension between art and commerce in the production of 'popular music discourse' (274). On this matter, Stratton states:

> Art and commercialism are articulated as two separate domains by music journalists. Consequently one domain may be discussed without the intrusion of the other. The result is an ideological resolution of a real economic conflict. (Stratton, 1982, 283)

The music press is, in this sense, what Timothy Taylor describes as a 'metatext' (Taylor, 1995, 504 - 536): a space in which language frames the meaning of popular music. The difficulty with this paradigm in relation to the new UK music press of the period 1978 to 1988 is that the narrative it imposed upon the music did not seek to resolve the 'economic conflict' but rather the way in which it framed popular music clarified this endemic ideological contradiction between Art (aesthetic value) and commerce (economic value). In attempting to explain this shift it would be tempting, therefore, to foreground the role of consumerism in the way in which popular music was conceptualised by *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q*. Certainly, each addressed the reader as 'consumer', positioned pop music as 'product' and in this sense burst certain mythologies surrounding the transmission and exchange of popular music culture. However, as Laing, citing the work of R. G. Weyburn (Weyburn, 1985, 120 - 129), points out, the *Gramophone* magazine of the 1920s took the form of a consumer guide with a star rating system, just as did Robert Christgau's reviews for *Creem* in the early 1970s. Throughout the history of the music press, it would seem that the division between the aesthetic and the economic is less than clear-cut. The mythologies of rock are, in this sense, complex and understanding them requires a more careful delineation of popular music history than just that of the music press.

The Mythologies of Rock

In understanding the way in which the mythologies of rock frame contemporary understanding of the music press, for the purposes of this thesis, Keir Keightley's essay 'Reconsidering Rock' in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (2001) has proved particularly instructive. For Keightley rock ideology is based on a 'constitutive paradox' (Keightley, 2001, 125) that emanates from two competing histories of popular music. On the one hand, rock is steeped in the counter-culture sensibility of the folk music scene, which according to Keightley perceived itself to be 'the serious alternative to the mass mainstream' (Keightley, 2001, 121). In this respect, rock echoes the sentiments of both Frankfurt School anxiety about mass culture (Adorno, 1942, 211 - 224) and David

Riesman's work on minority listeners (Riesman, 1950, 4). On the other hand, Keightley argues that rock has been shaped by the Top 40 mentality and the 'strong belief that the best music not only had the potential to find a mass audience but, in fact, ought to reach that audience' (Keightley, 2001, 123). The issue here, of course, is that of postmodernism: the collapse of the distinction between a belief in genuine artistic value (as symbolised by folk) and its simulated Top 40 counterpart (as represented by mainstream success). As Keightley points out:

> Rock's mythical, originating 'elsewhere' is neither a time nor place, though. Instead, it designates the distinctive identity rock carves out of the centre of mass culture. In celebrating authentic individualism via electronic mass media, rock seeks to produce a virtual cultural space outside of consumer capitalism – a space that is, ironically, up for sale. Rock proffers musical shelter from the complexities and contradictions of capitalism and consumerism by conceiving of itself as a 'special case' of mass consumption (Keightley, 2001, 127).

In this sense, rock can be viewed as the ultimate simulacrum of the copy without an original because its anti-commercial authenticity is a product solely of commercial imaginings of itself. And, indeed, recorded music from the gramophone disk to the mp3 would seem to embody this paradox: recorded on multi-track recording facilities, the end product is often much greater than the sum of its individual parts. Even live recordings are engineered and tweaked to produce a version of the text distinct from the original performance. In this sense Keightley's virtual space could be read as the 'reverse fiction' of Jean Baudrillard's account of Disneyland in 'Simulations' (1981):

> The Disneyland imaginary is neither true or false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It's meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster the illusion of their real childishness. (Baudrillard, 1981 (2001), 428)

Mass culture is, in rock terms then, the 'deterrence machine' vilified to rejuvenate the fiction of rock's unsullied aesthetic purity. And, in this sense, the pejorative identification of 'pop' as a separate ideological domain is a necessary function of that process. As Keightley suggests: ''Pop', is of course, that area of popular music said to be marked by ethical compromise and capitulation' (Keightley, 2001,128). The problem with this binary is that it does not move us beyond contradictions in our understanding of the role of the music press. And indeed, Keightley echoes Stratton's approach in his attempt to reconcile an ideological schism. For him the key agent is not the music press per se but the conception of 'youth' opposed to mass culture with a longstanding association of purity and innocence (124).

The trouble with applying this model to the *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* then is twofold. In the first instance, these magazines did not make the distinction between art and commerce problematic. Secondly, they were not exclusively orientated towards youth culture. It is interesting to note, however, that it was the second coming of that 'massive youth demographic' (126) that shaped the ideological formation of rock in the 1960s, in middle age, which *Q* and the CD addressed in the 1980s. However, to attribute the 'gate keeping' practices of the music press that underpinned the formation of the rock canon in the 1980s to the extended cultural prerogative of middle-aged 'baby-boomers' (Jones, 1980) is to oversimplify the process. Instead, this requires a more complex understanding of the way in which authenticity is constructed in rock mythology.

Authenticity

To fully understand the changes the British music press underwent during the period 1978 to 1988 it is necessary to consider the way authenticity has traditionally operated within popular music history. In Kembrew McLeod's analysis of the discursive strategies used by writers of the music press in 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place' (2002), 'authenticity' emerges as key concept:

> Many rock critics find authenticity suspect as a concept, but it nevertheless seeps into their writing – even of those identified as anti-authenticists. For instance, Lester Bangs writes of Patti Smith's *Horses*: 'Each song builds with inexorable seethe, a penchant for lust and risk

> that shakes you and never lets you forget you're listening to real rock 'n' roll again', (McLeod, 2002, 105)

In this direction, Steve Jones' analysis of the coverage of the death of Kurt Cobain in 'Covering Cobain: Narrative Patterns in Journalism and Rock Criticism' (1995) is particularly instructive. Jones argues that in the aftermath of his death, the narrative structure imposed by music writers upon Cobain cohered themselves around the notion of authenticity:

> The narratives that formed in the wake of Cobain's suicide were themselves part and parcel of that mythology. They focused around authenticity and served to solidify and stabilize Cobain's and Nirvana's place in the continuum of popular music's history. As one critic put it Cobain's suicide stamped not only his music with the mark of the authentic (for he lived, and died, by the beliefs he seemed to espouse in his lyrics) but it stamped all popular music (and attendant subcultures) of the era and style as authentic (Jones, 1995, 108)

While Jones looks at this in relation to a specific moment, Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor's *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (2007) looks at ten moments when issues of authenticity were pivotal in the development of popular music. These include:

1. 1928, Memphis: Folk, Blues, and the Segregation of Southern Music
2. 1931, San Antonio, The Story of the Autobiographical Song
3. 1956, Nashville, The Art and Artifice of Elvis Presley
4. 1967, Los Angeles, Faking It in the Age of the Singer-Songwriter
5. 1973, Los Angeles, Neil Young and Being 'More Real'.
6. 1975, Munich, Disco and the Mechanization of Music
7. 1978, London, Punk's Paradoxes of Authenticity
8. 1993, New York, Nirvana, Leadbelly, and the Allure of the Primeval
9. 1996, Havana, The Recreation of Cultural Authenticity
10. 1998, New York, Moby, the KLF, and the Ongoing Quest for Authenticity.

Though Barker and Taylor's collection is very American in its emphasis and completely neglects the 1980s, for the purposes of this research their work on disco and punk will frame arguments developed later on in the thesis. The premise upon which they begin their investigation is worthy of repetition:

> (I)n the last fifty years, the quest for authenticity, for the 'real', has become a dominant factor in musical taste. Whether it be the folklorists' search for forgotten bluesmen, the rock critic's elevation of raw power over sophistication, or the importance of bullet wounds to the careers of hip-hop artists, the aesthetic of the 'authentic music experience' with its rejection of music that is labelled contrived, pretentious artificial, or overly commercial, has played a major role in forming musical tastes and canons, with wide-ranging consequences (Barker and Taylor, 2007, ix)

For Barker and Taylor it would seem that the motivation for the book is to explore the way in which the quest for authenticity in popular music has 'limited the music that musicians aspire to make and that critics and listeners appreciate' (xi). Clearly this is a sentiment I share in my enthusiasm for the less restricted codification of music during the early days of *Smash Hits*.

For all its good intentions, however, the occlusion of the 1980s from Barker and Taylor's book not only limits its usefulness for this thesis but is endemic of the wider prejudice against this period of which the problematisation of new pop is potent symbol. Consequently, it is the work of Keir Keightley that is most useful and it is his model that, with the insertion of one or two caveats, I will use to frame the broader contours of this research project.

In the first instance, it is worth mentioning that Keightley's definition of rock is very nebulous: encompassing as it does an 'eclectic set of performers' that includes 'Bob Dylan. Motown, Otis Redding, Kraftwerk, P-Funk, salsa, Run DMC and Squirrel Nut Zippers' (Keightley, 2001, 109). Although Keightley is clear that both 'seriousness' and 'significance' (109) are definitional of the rock credential, he does also concede that rock culture has the tendency to embrace 'performers who author their own songs' (134). Central to this is the notion of authorship: 'like authenticity the word

'author' is etymologically related to the self'. In this sense rock's authenticity can be said to draw upon folk's tradition of singer songwriters epitomized by artists like pre-electric Dylan and Joan Baez. By the same token, authenticity can also be conceptualised in relation to rock's Top 40 origins: 'rock culture embraces authentic success as a validation of artistic quality' (132). Although, as Keightley suggests, this success is vetted very thoroughly by the music press and other 'intermediaries': a rock artist may soon lose favour if they are seen to compromise their seriousness and significance for mainstream commercial appeal. In this sense, rock authenticity mixes 'aesthetic evaluation' with 'ethical judgements' (133). And so it is with good reason that Keightley argues that 'authenticity can be thought of as the compass that orientates rock culture in its navigation of the mainstream' (131). Where Keightley's work is most useful, however, is in the identification of two distinct but complementary modes of authenticity within rock: romantic and modernist.

In Keightley's logic romantic authenticity echoes the sensibility of the folk counter-culture and draws upon a pre post-modern ideal of popular music as a 'valued tradition' that originates in 'rural communities where life could be lived close to nature, and where people's labour was integral part of their identity' (135). In this sense romanticism 'locates authenticity principally in

Romantic authenticity tends to be found in	*Modernist authenticity tends to be found in*
Tradition and continuity with the past	Experimentation and progress
Roots	Avant-gardes
Sense of community	Status of artist
Populism	Elitism
Belief in a core or essential rock sound	Openness regarding rock sounds
Folk, blues, country, rock 'n' roll styles	Classical, art music, soul, pop styles
Gradual stylistic change	Radical or sudden stylistic change
Sincerity, directness	Irony, sarcasm, obliqueness
'Liveness'	'Recorded-ness'
'Natural' sounds	'Shocking' sounds
Hiding musical technology	Celebrating technology

Fig 1 Keir Keightley's definition of romantic and modernist forms of authenticity.

the direct communication between artist and audience' (136). By contrast, modernist modes of authenticity can be said to exist at the 'aesthetic level, so that the authentic artist is one who is true to the modernist credos of experimentation, innovation, development and change' (136). Keightley uses the table (fig 1) above to clarify this distinction.

The application of this binary to popular music history is, of course, open to interpretation. For example, Keightley offers a convincing reading of the polarity between Blur and Oasis delineated in these terms. While Blur are clearly operating within a more modernist paradigm than Oasis, as Keightley points out, 'Oasis use the studios as much as anyone' while 'Blur 'rock out' with noisy, classic, 1960s guitars' (Keightley, 2001, 138). The point he is making is that romantic and modernist tendencies help identify genre and difference:

> Romantic and modernist tendencies can help us discern differences between performers or genres, they also can be and often are combined or mixed up in a single genre or performer. (138)

However, where Keightley's work is really interesting is the suggestion he makes that rock culture tends to privilege those artists who deploy both strategies simultaneously. Illustrative of this duality in his logic are 'the Sex Pistols in the 1970s and Suede in the 90s' (138).

Keightley's model works very well for the music press up until the mid 1970s. US titles like *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* are indeed steeped in the romantic folk sensibility of the counter-culture, while the jazz orientation of the British music press, particularly *Melody Maker*, could be said to embody a more modernist aesthetic rationale. That this fractured history, which mirrors, not un-coincidentally, the division in Popular Music Studies between modes of deconstruction emanating from the Social Sciences and those informed by Musicology, reached a climax in the 1970s is significant. As Eamon Forde notes in 'From Polyglottism to Branding' (2001) the influence of 'new journalism' and the emergence of personality writers like Lester Bangs emphasised both authorship and authenticity (Forde, 2001, 23 - 43). The perceived high point, then, in the history of the British music press, is, of course, punk. And it is easy to see why. Unlike preceding moments in popular music history, punk

was catalogued by a more sophisticated and authoritative music press: learning lessons from US publications, the *NME* in particular was quick to hire 'personality journalists' like Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill. More importantly, however, punk worked within both romantic and modernist conceptions of rock authenticity. On the one hand, the movement was about a reconnection between artist and audience, and indeed one of the key points of punk was that audiences could form bands. One the other hand, punk was aesthetically very modernist, seeking to reconfigure the mores of popular music. Like the avant garde of British classical music in the 1950s, punk challenged the pompous virtuosity of progressive rock and the 'dinosaurs' left over from the 1960s. As Howard Goodall suggests: 'often the only way to see or hear thing afresh is to do away with the old and traditional' (Goodall, 2004).

Of course the same process can be recouped within sub cultural notions of authenticity. As Dick Hebdige suggests in his consideration of early punk couture in 'Subculture and the Meaning of Style' (1979), punk style conflated the romanticism of the working class with a parodic celebration of material paucity that was more modernist in its critique of bourgeois living:

> (W)e can say that the early punk ensembles gestured towards the signified's 'modernity' and 'working-classness'. The safety pin and bin liners signified a relative material poverty which was either directly experienced and exaggerated or sympathetically assumed, and which in turn was made to stand for the spiritual paucity of everyday life. (Hebdige, 1979, 1071)

The limitation of this approach for this thesis at that it does not account for the more mainstream inversion of this binary, which I will argue is central to the ways in which *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* reconfigured authenticity in the music press. However, given his American focus, before we appropriate Keightley's model completely a number of revisions need to be made in light of the emphasis of this thesis on the British music press. That is not to say that American popular music culture has not influenced British audiences, rather the complexity of that relationship requires some negotiation. In addition to this it should be acknowledged that there are a series of other conceptual relationships that define the way in which authenticity operates in popular music, which draw upon issues of national identity, gender and sexuality.

America and the Conceptualization of Authenticity in British Pop Culture

Though this thesis focuses on the British music press, there is, as I have already suggested, a very transatlantic component to this. This can be said to exist in the influence of 'new journalism' on the British music press in the 1970s and of course the legacy of those North American bands and artists who made a significant impact upon the British music scene: the Doors, the Grateful Dead, the Beach Boys, Simon and Garfunkel, Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Joni Mitchell etc. Within the parameters of this investigation the influence of American popular music culture can also be felt in both the Warholian Pop Art aesthetic of *Smash Hits* and the position of certain key American artists in *Q*'s emerging rock canon. Indeed, although it may have privileged British artists, it could be said that *Q* embodied a very American sensibility in the delineation of rock ideology. That is not to say British music did not influence the development of rock aesthetics in America, and indeed Keightley does make mention of British artists, including The Beatles, Blur, Oasis and Suede. Likewise his account of the British Invasion of 1964 (The Beatles, The Who, The Kinks, The Rolling Stones) is very relevant. For example, he observes that one of the ways in which the Invasion bands were assimilated into the dominant narrative of American rock history is that they were 're-presenting a lost musical spirit' (Keightley, 2001, 118). However, there is a clear disparity in the way in which music historians have considered what for the purposes of this thesis we will define as 'first' and 'second wave' Invasions: 1964 and 1982 respectively. Illustrative of this is Keightley's failure to mention the large number of British artists who enjoyed success in the US charts in the 1980s including Duran Duran, Culture Club, Eurythmics, Wham and Spandau Ballet: what Dave Rimmer (1985) defines as 'new pop'.

Perhaps one of the reasons that new pop is problematic for pop music historians is that it does not fit easily with existing American rock ideology. Second generation invasion bands did not present what Keightley defines as a 'lost musical spirit' (Keightley, 2001, 188). That is not to say that bands like Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran were any less explicit in their celebration of American culture than The Beatles or The Rolling Stones. But rather that the heritage they re-presented was not compatible with the fetishisation of authenticity and the regulation of mainstream success. In particular the use of synthesisers and the way in which second wave invasion bands embraced the new format of the music video challenged traditional (American) notions of rock authenticity. Certainly this is something

David Hepworth reflected upon when considering the revisionist nature of the rock canon, which I will consider in more detail in chapter 5:

> I think there is a certain production fingerprint in the 1980s that didn't do music any great favours, that it tends to sound thin and synthetic and the classic music of any ere – music lasts in inverse proportion to the amount of production lavished on the music I think. The simpler the music is - whether it's Hank Williams or something made last week - the simpler it is the more it will last. And, you could say that pop in the early 1980s was engineered for the time rather than for posterity. (David Hepworth, 2009)

There was also a strong ideological component to 'new pop'. As Rimmer suggests, what marked out 'invasion bands' from their post-punk and new wave antecedents was the explicit celebration of art and commerce and the conflation of business and entertainment: 'It cares more about sales and royalties and the strength of the dollar than anything else and to make matters worse, it isn't the least bit guilty about it' (Rimmer, 1985, 13). In this sense, new pop has perhaps been annexed from American rock history because it made explicit the 'reverse fiction' of authenticity. The occlusion of second wave Invasion bands like Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet from dominant histories can also be attributed to their pop sensibility. Taking Keightley's thinking to its logical conclusion, the exclusion of new pop can perhaps be explained by their incompatibility with the function of the pop mainstream in American rock ideology with regards to Baudrillard's concept of the 'deterrence machine' (Baudrillard, 1981, (2001) 428). What we can extract from this, therefore, is a process whereby popular music culture in Britain has not simply been influenced by the US but also framed by its compatibility with American rock ideology

Of course, the influence of America on the development of popular music in the UK is well documented. It is no coincidence, for example, that The Beatles grew up in Liverpool: one of Britain's largest ports and a major hub for transatlantic travel right up until the 1960s. For example, in *The Quiet One: A Life of George Harrison* 1996) Alan Clayson chronicles in detail the Americanisation of post-war adolescence throughout the UK with specific reference to Liverpool and Harrison in particular:

> Still a principal port of embarkation for the Americas, Liverpool was more prone to such a metamorphosis than other cities. Many teenagers within the Merseyside hinterland knew transatlantic seamen – "Cunard Yanks" – who would import Davy Crockett caps, otherwise unobtainable records, checked cowboy shirts and other treasures long before they filtered even to London. George's source was Arthur Kelly's sister Barbara, whose fiancée, Red Bentley, was a ship's engineer. (Clayson, 1996, 31)

However, that is not to say that the British music press has always been so enthusiastic about American cultural forms. As Martin Cloonan suggests, the 1950s was characterised by hostility in the music press (*NME*, *Melody Maker*) towards the import of American rock 'n' roll. Citing *Understanding Rock n Roll* (1992), Dick Bradley's account of popular music in the UK between 1955 and 1964, Cloonan states that there were no favourable reports of rock 'n' roll before 1962. Instead, it is suggested that British journalists promoted British appropriations of the rock 'n' roll sound performed by Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard (Cloonan, 2002). And, in this sense it could be argued that British pop has always embodied a mimetic quality in its relationship to US music culture. As Jon Savage argues in 'The Enemy Within: Sex, Rock and Identity' this parodic quality is connotative of some very specific narratives of gender:

> Imitations of Presley's sexual leer and sallow pout were thus projected in a diluted camp version onto working-class boys rendered passive for mass consumption. A good example was Cliff Richard, who moved quickly from being the best homegrown rocker into an industry plaything: in the words of one of his biggest hits into a 'Living Doll'. (Savage, 1990, 151)

New pop is perhaps, in this sense, operating within the same highly stylised pop idiom: reflecting for American audiences a very British fantasy of glamorised Hollywood lifestyles and disrupting the metonymic connection between normative masculinity and blue-collar workers.

One British band that are seldom included in definitions of new pop are Dire Straits, in spite of considerable singles charts success during the period 1979 to 1986. However, it is their 1985 chart

topping US single 'Money for Nothing' (with the falsetto refrain 'I Want My MTV' sung by Sting) that expresses the duality of new pop more eloquently than their more airbrushed contemporaries. On the one hand, the song is an ironic paean to the yearning of American audiences for music television: expressing frustration at the music industry's fixation with this new 'intermediary'. On the other hand, for British audiences, the song can also be read as an exhortation of US cultural privilege over a European market that would be deprived of MTV until much later in the decade (MTV did not launch in Europe until 1987). In defining the aesthetics of British popular music then, what the occlusion of new pop precludes is understanding of the way in which 'cultural intermediaries' accessible to American audiences have influenced the consumption of pop in the UK.

Musical Video and New Pop

Though Dave Rimmer's definitive *Like Punk Never Happened* (1985) is cohered around analysis of Culture Club, the most commercially successful band of the new pop era was Duran Duran. The band did not have a hit in the US until late 1982, however, the release of a controversial video for the single 'Girls on Film' (directed by Kevin Godley and Lol Creme), preceded the launch of MTV in August 1981 by just two weeks and brought them considerable media attention. This and other high budget videos for tracks like 'Careless Memory' and 'Planet Earth' were played heavily on MTV, culminating in their US Hot 100 breakthrough at the end of 1982 with 'Hungry Like a Wolf' (US 3 January 1983). On subsequent releases budgets got more lavish and locations more exotic in videos for singles that included 'Is There Something I Should Know?' (US number 4 in August 1983), 'Union of the Snake' (US number 3 in October 1983), 'New Moon on Monday' (US number 10 in January 1984), 'Wild Boys' (US number 1 in April 1984), 'The Reflex' (US number 2 in October 1984) 'A View To A Kill' (US number 1 in May 1985) and 'Notorious' (US number 2 in October 1986). What is significant about Duran Duran's success is not so much that they embraced the music video format but that they raised the profile of music video in the UK long before the launch of satellite and cable TV shows in Europe. Indeed, by the time MTV launched in Europe in 1987, Duran Duran's 'imperial' phase at the top of the charts was over (1986's 'Notorious' was band's last top ten hit in the UK until 'Ordinary World' in 1993).

As Mark Ellen recalls MTV was very influential on *Smash Hits* in the late 1980s.

> MTV was a key factor for *Smash Hits.* It didn't actually arrive here until the late '80s and it changed the way teenagers approached pop music. Before it they tended to make decisions by listening to the radio and thus a wide variety of different types of acts got into the charts because they were responding to the sound not the look of the band. They often only discovered what a band looked like after they'd helped make the record a hit and it was thus on *Top of the Pops* - either live or on video. (Mark Ellen, 2009)

However, what is interesting about *Smash Hits* in the late 1970s and early 1980s is that it encapsulates a liminal moment in the influence of pop music video in which the success of US MTV and new pop in America was very important for the UK music scene. As Ellen observes, the magazine's ascendancy over traditional music titles developed because video stars 'did not work on horrible old inky smudgy broadsheet paper… It only really works pin sharp printed in colour'. (Mark Ellen interviewed in Chris Fouracre's *25 Years of Smash Hits,* 2003). To understand this process more fully, therefore, we need to turn to the proliferation of satellite technology in America at the end of the 1970s.

While the launch of MTV opened up the American market to bands like Duran Duran from 1981 onwards, it is interesting to note that Time Warner were experimenting with interactive music television as far back as 1975. For example, *Pop Clips*, a show pioneered by ex Monkee Mike Nesmith, was a direct precursor to MTV and ran continuously from 1979 through to 1981. The influence of this can be seen in the steadily rising production values in music videos made by mainstream stars from Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' (1975) through to Blondie's 'Rapture' (1981). The assumption, however, that British audiences did not have access to these is inaccurate. Alongside *Top of the Pops*, terrestrial shows that broadcast music video includes BBC's *Swap Shop*, ITV's *Tiswas* as well as numerous other magazine shows and regional programming. High budget productions for British artists that precede the launch of MTV include Rod Stewart's 'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?' (1978), Roxy Music's 'Angel Eyes' (1979), The Rolling Stones' 'Miss You' (1978) and Paul McCartney's 'Wonderful Christmastime' (1979). The increased importance of pop music video for the American music industry and by default, therefore, for the success of British artists in the American

market from the late 1970s onwards, is central to understanding the success of *Smash Hits*. The magazine explicitly celebrated the visual culture of pop and frequently included still images from promotional clips. However, as the invocation of the term 'pop' implies, understanding of what is meant by the term authenticity needs some adjustment when talking about the popular music scene in the UK.

American Rock and British Pop

In Britain the term rock is less singular than it is in America. As Simon Frith suggests in *Sound Effects* (1981), this can be attributed to the stability of American rock culture in America, where a 'visible rock generation weaned on rock 'n' roll' was still 'serviced by new music as it moved into affluence and parenthood'. For him this is epitomised in the 'detached' and 'patronizing' tone of *Rolling Stone* (Frith, 1983, 10). Around this American rock hegemony, a set of contradictory values cohered, which anticipate Keightley's sentiments nearly twenty years later:

> Rock, in contrast to pop, carries intimations of sincerity, authenticity, art – non-commercial concerns. These intimations have been muffled since rock became the record industry, but it is the possibilities, the promises that matter… Rock is a mass-produced music that carries a critique of its own means of production; it is a mass-consumed music that constructs its own authentic audience (Firth, 1983, 11)

In particular, Frith's suggestion that the process of reading the text is reciprocal (i.e. the text constructs the listener as much as the listener constructs the text) is useful, not least because it predicts the way in which *Q* would market rock heritage in the 1980s, but also because it presents authenticity as something fluid and contingent. However, where Frith's work is most useful is his assertion that in the UK rock is 'an aspect of pop' (11).

This is a sentiment with which Andrew Blake concurs: since Brit-pop, he argues, 'pop' has become a blanket term in the UK 'to label a music that everyone agreed at the time was of great cultural significance' (Blake, 1999, 1). Likewise, Keightley shares the view that 'pop' in the UK 'refers in a more neutral fashion to the wider field of popular music', attributing this to the facts that the term

'never underwent the sustained critique it did in the United States and Canada' (Keightley, 2001, 127). In part this can be attributed to Britain's subaltern economic position to the US after the Second World War and the decline of Empire. While Disneyworld may have existed to distract Americans from the fact that their cosseted everyday existence was not particularly real, post-war austerity in Britain meant audiences for popular music were less pre-occupied with the relationship between 'aesthetic evaluation' and 'ethical judgement' (133). As Michael Bracewell suggests in his discussion of the influence of The Independent Group on Roxy Music, for artists like Richard Hamilton, America was the 'promised land of modernity':

> (H)e joined that generation of art students who had grown up during the quietude and ruination of the 'Austerity Years', and whose tertiary education coincided with the accelerating new culture of the youth-fixated, mass media, mass age. This was a generation for whom America - and New York in particular – would be the promised land of modernity. (One might image the contrast, for example, to the eyes of a restless eighteen-year-old from the north of England, between the bright, breezy New York of *Pillow Talk* or *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and the soot-blackened brick, melancholy was memorial and terrace end of their own home towns. (Bracewell, 2007, 85)

According to Bracewell, in Roxy Music's case, this 'deluxe elegance' and Hollywood style glamour would be received most enthusiastically in the working-class industrial towns of the North (Bracewell, 2007, 288). That is not to say that British audiences did not make distinction between different genres. And, as Keightley argues, the music scene can be read off against the same binary whereby types of music that could be classified as rock 'consisted of superior, authentic music' while pop music was 'inferior, alienated music' (Keightley, 133). However, to translate this directly is an over simplification of the relations of Anglo-American culture in the post-war period. In this direction it would seem that, to a British audience, the term 'rock' is a very American word, intimately connected with the way in which US 'cultural intermediaries' framed British Invasion bands in the 1960s. Ironically, therefore, for British audiences, part of the allure of the term rock was perhaps about nothing more than its superficial association with America, as opposed to a deep-seated ideological rationale.

Gender, Sexuality and the Construction of Authenticity

Within Popular Music Studies, there are some very specific discourses attached to genre terms rock and pop. For example, in Mary Harron's 'McRock: Pop as Commodity' (1988) she suggests that while pop stands for 'mutability and glitter', rock believes in 'geniuses and heroes' (Harron, 1988, 209-210). In her logic this can be read off against the notion of authenticity whereby in every instance it would seem that pop testifies its own artificiality while rock proclaims its authenticity. Building on Harron's binary, Norma Coates' suggests that the terms 'rock' and 'pop' are not only connotative of particular narratives of authenticity but also gender:

> (R)ock is metonymic with 'authenticity' while 'pop' is metonymic with 'artifice'. Sliding even further down the metonymic slope, 'authentic' becomes 'masculine' while 'artificial' become 'feminine'. Rock, therefore, is 'masculine', pop is 'feminine', and the two are set in binary relation to each other, with the masculine, of course, on top (Coates, 1997, 53)

Likewise Gareth Palmer posits authenticity in rock as a specific function of heterosexual masculinity. For example, he suggests that 'the E-Street band articulate and play out a series of masculine fantasies that make strong connections to the blue-collar milieu of the songs' (Palmer, 1997, 109). However, as Palmer suggests, this is a very specifically American masculinity: 'mapping the signifiers of the Western onto contemporary blue-collar culture'. By contrast, masculinity in British popular music is perhaps less singular, as Sheila Whitely suggests in her analysis of Mick Jagger in *Sexing the Groove* (1997):

> The songs may imply a heterosexual mode of address. There is generally an emphasis on the penis as the absolute insignia of maleness, but live performances disrupt any notion of 'normative' masculinity. Rather, they involve a self-presentation, which is, at one and the same time, both masculine and feminine. As 'the king bitch of rock', and with a performing style derived largely from careful scrutiny of Rudolph Nureyev and Tina Turner, Jagger promised fantasy gratification of both the heterosexual and the homosexual (Whiteley, 1997, 67)

Of course, as Whitely implies, Jagger's 'self-presentation' was not in itself very British because it drew upon the performance style of early rhythm and blues singers and Russian ballet. Likewise, the musical style of the Rolling Stones drew upon recording stars of an earlier era of American rock 'n' roll: Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly. And, as Keightley implies, like The Beatles, the assimilation of the Rolling Stones into American rock ideology can be attributed to this re-presentation of a lost music heritage. However, it is perhaps Jagger's less singular presentation of masculinity that is perhaps the key to understanding the ideological difference between American 'rock' and British definitions of the term 'pop'.

In delineating the ideological distinction between American 'rock' and British 'pop' then, there is a temptation to read this off against some very specific narratives of gender. As Jon Savage argues British pop has always acknowledged the 'sign of gayness'. For him, this can be attributed to the very specific history of Britain early music industry:

> Early English pop was riddled with homosexuality and that sensibility which we would now call camp: partly this was due to homosexual familiarity with those areas of human activity which were now being exploited, and partly to the early music industry's seedy beginnings on the fringes of established show business (Savage, 1990, 169)

And clearly there is a long line of popular music stars in the UK who acknowledge the sign of gayness, for example, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Elton John, Marc Bolan, Freddie Mercury, George Michael and Morrissey. Whether or not there is something intrinsically British or, indeed, more specifically English about this is a complex issue. Clearly there is a paradigm that draws upon the representation of the 'the Dandy' in popular cultural forms from the 19th Century onwards that could be used to frame Englishness in relation more plural representation of gender and sexuality. And, in specific relation to both the hippy era in the 1960s and the new romantic movement of the early 1980s, this works very well. However, it would seem that it also over-simplifies the process. As Whitely states, for Mick Jagger the mode of address implies heterosexuality. In this direction, what interests me is the complicity of this 'sign of gayness' with the broader contours of Keightley's definition of 'rock': Freddie Mercury, Morrissey, David Bowie etc are all 'rock' stars. This not only

subverts the metonym between rock and heterosexuality, but demands a re-think of the way in which authenticity might be configured into popular music history in Britain.

The Aesthetics of British Popular Music

Clearly the model of authenticity outlined by Keir Keightley in 'Reconsidering Rock' (2001) is exceptionally useful in conceptualising the way in which British artists fit into the dominant narrative of American popular music. In the case of The Beatles, their mainstream success is configured as a re-presentation of a lost musical heritage: their acceptance predicted on a romantic authenticity to American musical genealogy and their perpetuity guaranteed by the modernist innovation of their subsequent records. By contrast, the synthesized sounds of new pop have been less easily assimilated into American rock ideology because they are more European in influence (yet dislocated from an identifiable musical heritage) and arguably less naturalistic in their sonic template. The repudiation of pop, in this instance, confirms the ideological structure of American rock aesthetics. By logical extension, therefore, it would seem reasonable to see this as further confirmation of the gender politics of popular music genre, whereby the subaltern position of pop is the corollary of patriarchal law. And yet, British, and perhaps more specifically English, popular music throws-up countless examples of musicians who fly in the face of this metonymic connection between rock ideology and normative heterosexual masculinity.

Clearly the less fixed correlation between gender and genre in the UK could be viewed as a function of the looser definition of pop in the UK: what in effect Americans call 'rock' (music that, as Keightley suggests, can be recouped within the parameters of that term). The key issue perhaps is 'seriousness'. Though British popular culture may well celebrate what Harron defines as the 'mutability and glitter' of pop (Harron, 1988, 209-210) and is often performed by musicians whose 'self-presentations' challenge normative masculinity, it is united by the seriousness of the project. While American music culture may give us examples of musicians that challenge gender stereotypes, they are not usually taken seriously as artists: Kiss, Alice Cooper, Aerosmith's Steven Tyler. There is of course an exception to this rule in a line of black American artists that include Little Richard, Michael Jackson and Prince: a product of what Kobena Mercer (1994) views as the colonial discourses that festishize the corporeality of the black man (Mercer, 1994, 141). Perhaps, what

singles out authenticity in British popular music then is the contradiction of this seriousness with the endemic carnivalesque quality of pop. Interestingly, Mercer uses the term 'carnivalesque' in his description of Little Richard and this is something I will consider presently in relation to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. For the moment though, let us focus on the seriousness of British pop.

The seriousness of British popular music can be attributed to a number of factors. In the first instance, it could be argued that the musicological sensibilities of jazz critics imbued British music journalism with a weightiness not found in US titles like *Crawdaddy* and *Creem.* As Gustur Gudmundsson et al argue, the music press of the 1960s was pre-occupied not just with the rejection of commercial cultures but refined musical connoisseurship (Gudmundsson et al, 2002, 47). In this direction, it could be argued that jazz as opposed to folk formed a cornerstone of the ideological rationalisation of British modes of authenticity in popular music: supplanting the romantic aesthetic with a more modernist sensibility. Secondly, popular music culture in the UK has been shaped by what numerous critics have identified as the Art School aesthetic. The definitive account of this is, of course, Simon Frith and Howard Horne's *Art into Pop*, which starts with this bold manifesto:

> We began this book with a commonplace observation and a simple hypothesis. The observation was that a significant number of British pop musicians from the 1960s to the present were educated and first started performing in art schools. The hypothesis was that its art school connection explains the extraordinary international impact of British music since The Beatles. In musicological terms the history of post-war pop remains a history of Afro-American sounds. What British musicians have added is style, image, self-consciousness – an attitude to what commercial music could and should be. (Frith and Horne, 1987, 1)

Clearly this challenges received thinking about American rock ideology on a number of levels. In the first instance, Frith and Horne use the term 'pop' unreservedly. Secondly they do not seek to make problematic pop's intimate connection with 'style, image' and 'self-consciousness': in effect the 'self-presentation' that Whitely identifies as distinct in Mick Jagger's performance and the Rolling Stones' 're-presentation' of American pop history. Thirdly, the British Art school aesthetic challenges US rock

ideology's pre-occupation with 'ethical evaluation' in relation to 'aesthetic judgement' (Keightley, 2001, 133):

> (V)irtually all general sociological accounts of capitalist societies assume a clear distinction between 'high' and 'mass' culture, between the bourgeois world of fine arts, academic music, serious literature, etc., on the one hand, and the popular world of TV, the tabloid press, Radio 1 music, etc. on the other. Art schools cross these divisions in terms of both class and ideology; art school graduates are petit-bourgeois professionals who, as pop musicians, apply 'high art' skills and identities to a mass cultural form. (Frith and Horne, 1987, 1-2)

In this sense, the British Art school aesthetic challenges the carefully constructed ideological formation of American rock by calling into question the high/mass culture divide. The issue here of course is that of post-modernism. While American rock ideology frames mass culture as a Baudrillardian 'deterrence', a decoy that distracts from its ethically compromised foundation, the Art school aesthetic views commoditised processes as an integral part of pop music's cultural milieu. In effect, British popular music takes seriously the artifice American rock ideology denounces in its rejection of mainstream pop. That is not to say that British pop is any more post-modern than American forms of popular music, but rather there is a self-consciousness about the commoditised nature of the process that is arguably more honest than its American counterparts.

If, as Frith and Horne are suggesting, the contribution of British popular music to the Afro-American sounds of contemporary popular music has largely been a seriousness about style, image and self-presentation, this reframes the gender debates endemic to consideration of the terms 'rock' and 'pop' discussed previously in this chapter. In the first instance, it would seem evident that there is a clear connection between the serious treatment of artifice that underpins the art school aesthetic and Susan Sontag's definition of camp. As Christopher Isherwood (1954) proclaims in his novel *The World in the Evening*:

> You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it. You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance. (Isherwood, 1954, 12)

Sontag is less impassioned, viewing camp, somewhat detachedly, as a Foucauldian semiotic event. In 'Notes on Camp' (1964), she describes it as a 'private code, a badge of identity' (Sontag, 1964, 2). In helping to frame our understanding of what marks out British pop then from its American counterpart, this definition is useful in a number of ways. Firstly, in a very obvious sense it accommodates what John Savage calls the 'sign of gayness'. Secondly, it is compatible with Frith and Horne's view of British pop's art school sensibility. However, it also describes the strategic position of British pop music culture on the periphery of the Afro-American version of contemporary popular music. Britain's campness is its 'otherness', its 're-presentation' of 'musical heritage'. That this parodic quality is so very definitional of British popular music culture requires the careful consideration of what we mean by the term authenticity.

Another way of conceptualising the difference between British pop culture and its American counterpart is the European folk tradition of the carnival. It was of course the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's who originally defined the term carnivalesque in a manuscript he wrote during the Second World War and published much later under the title *Rabelais and His World* (1965). Reading translations of his work it is apparent that there is parity in the way in which Bakhtin views the carnival and Keightley's view of 'rock'. While 'rock' carves out a 'virtual cultural space outside of consumer capitalism' (Keightley, 2001, 126) the carnival too operates outside of the boundaries of everyday existence:

> The laws, prohibitions and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is non carnival, life are suspended during the carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it – that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality among people (including age). All distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people (Bakhtin, 1998, 250)

In this direction, it is easy to see how Bakhtin's emphasis on the non-hierarchical inter-personal contact can be read off against audience interaction at a modern rock concert. The notion that everyone is an 'active participant' (250) echoes the mimetic behaviour of the crowd: singing along, waving arms and applauding loudly. As Bakhtin states: 'everyone communes in the carnival act' (250), just as everyone communes at a rock concert. Likewise, the identification of kings and queens of the festival mirrors the way in which rock stars are venerated as 'gods'. Clearly the duality endemic to 'self –presentation' of gender in British popular music could be said draw upon this tradition: the ambivalence to normative gender roles complimenting the parodic sensibility of the carnival. This parodic quality is pivotal in the construction of the carnival. As Bakhtin states: 'Parodying is the creation of a de-crowning double; it is that same 'world turned inside out' (254). The world British pop turns 'inside out' then is not so much normative masculinity but the hegemony of Afro-American rock culture: an ironic commentary on our habitual role as the re-presenters of a cultural heritage from which we are dislocated. Of course this fits very well with Frederic Jameson's conception of parody and its 'satiric impulse':

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated to the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exits. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs. (Jameson, 1991, 17).

However, Bakhtin's conception of the carnivalesque has a number of clear advantages. In the first instance, unlike parody, the carnivalesque is not a generalisable feature of post-modern culture: it is rooted in a very specific European history, which Bakhtin traces back to the medieval festival 'the Feast of Fools'. Secondly, reflecting Bakhtin's interest in semiotics, he conceptualises it as a 'language of symbolic concretely sensuous form – from large and complex mass actions to individual carnivalistic gestures' (Bakhtin, 254). In this sense, the carnivalesque is useful because it can be used as a descriptor for both individual performance and an over-arching milieu. Moreover it is not alien to

the mass culture sensibility intrinsic to decoding the aesthetic grammar of contemporary popular music.

Of course, Diane Railton's work on mainstream chart pop explores the carnivalesque with specific reference to narratives of gender and the music press (Railton, 2001). However, for the purposes of this thesis I want to suggest that there is specific strand running through British popular music that is defined by a more playful sensibility. To assume that there is no humour to the way in which British stars of the 1950s aped the moves and sounds of American rock 'n' roll is misleading. While the business infrastructure of the British recording industry of the 1950s may have been aggressive in its promotion of British artists, stars like Tommy Steele and Marty Wilde were real fans of American rock 'n' roll: though their image might have been calculated, there is nothing cynical about their actual performance. Likewise, there is humour to the way in which The Beatles presented themselves to American audiences. Interviewed back stage at a concert in Bournemouth in November 1963, the first time The Beatles appeared on US television (prior to the Ed Sullivan show) Paul McCartney immediately draws attention to their haircuts in response to a question asking them why they have been so successful (The Beatles on CBS News 18/11/1963). This lightness of touch is characteristic of the playful way that the pop process is assimilated into the mainstream sensibility of British pop: the surface culture is presented as integral to the meaning of the musical text. Testimony to this is not only the very flamboyant nature of British stars, but also the seriousness with which their performance identity is treated. David Bowie's various incarnations in the 1970s as the Space Oddity, Ziggy Stardust and the Thin White Duke are exemplary of this. Likewise, the very visual nature of punk reinforced what both Dick Hebdige (1979) and Stuart Ewan (1988) have defined as the politics of style. In this sense, the carnivalesque nature of *Smash Hits* could be said to have reacquainted British pop culture with one of its core values: a mischievous sensibility that can be traced through a lineage of subsequent artists that include the Pet Shop Boys, Blur, Pulp and Saint Etienne.

Authenticity and the Aesthetics of British Popular Music.

At this juncture there is a clear temptation to re-configure the aesthetics of British popular music with Keightley's highly persuasive model of romantic and modernist authenticity. For example, as Keightley suggests, the seriousness of British 'pop' is very compatible with American rock ideology. In

this direction it is possible to frame its more avant-garde sensibilities within an entirely modernist rationale. And, indeed, as Gudmundsson et al (2002) suggest, the jazz origins of the British music press have been pivotal in the formation of a meta-narrative that privileges musical virtuosity as a cornerstone of musical authenticity alongside the rejection of commoditised forms. On the surface, the seriousness with which the British Art school sensibility treats pop also corroborates this modernist view and indeed the use of what Keightley defines as 'irony, sarcasm and obliqueness' (Keightley, 2001, 137) are characteristic of those performers and artists who apply high art theory to the popular music. Likewise, both Savage's conception of British pop's homosexual sensibility and the appropriation of Bakhtin's model of the carnivalesque fit with Keightley's description of modernist concerns with the status of the artist: British pop's parodic quality is central to this. On the other hand, British pop can be configured within a very romantic paradigm. For example, in *Sound Effects*, Simon Frith talks about the way in which the British music writers are 'isolated in a cult world' (Frith, 1983, 10). He suggests that British writers have an 'acute sense of their young readers and their needs' (Frith, 10). Likewise, in *Rip it Up and Start Again* (2005) Simon Reynolds explores the idea that the gradual stylistic changes of popular music after punk were in fact more interesting than the revolutionary moment in 1977.

This sense of continuity with tradition and the past permeates Frith, Straw and Self's consideration of David Bowie, the most carnivalesque of English stars:

> He explicitly admired Anthony Newley but in the end, he was less influenced by the British music hall or variety traditions than by the European tradition of chanson and German cabaret (he was to cover songs by both Jacques Brel and Brecht/Weill) (Frith, Straw and Self, 2001, 198)

And of course, Hebdige (1979) explores the way in which the stylistic codes of popular music are cohered around discrete audience communities. As an approach to popular music audiences this strategy has been very influential as Keith Negus observes (Negus, 2001,15). Angela McRobbie's article 'Settling Accounts with Subcultures: a Feminist Critique' (1980), for example, is exemplary of work that explores the cultural providence of British pop's visual signifiers. What we're left with then,

in the identification of authenticity within British popular music, is a very fluid set of discourse markers. Now, of course, as Keightley suggests, this duality between the romantic and the modern is not exclusive to British pop but is treated as the zenith of aesthetic innovation in American rock ideology. On the surface, this duality is of course symptomatic of post-modern culture: the collapse of the distinction between the real and the simulated, and lack of belief in grand narratives. However, as Keightley makes clear, there is a level of false consciousness endemic to American rock ideology: the denial of rock's position as a commercialised mass culture manifest in the repudiation of pop and other commoditised forms. What marks out British pop ideology then is not so much a different system of values and beliefs, but an easiness with pop's status as a product: its post-modern sensibility. That on occasion British pop can be seen to operate within both romantic and modernist paradigms does not undermine this. And, indeed, there is no sense in which Keightley denies that American rock is a form of post-modern consumer culture. However, where British pop culture differs is that it is much more sophisticated in its understanding of its own subject position(s). This can, of course, take the form of irony: in which discordance between the meaning of a text and the way in which it is understood becomes part of the pleasure for an audience. An example of this could be the Blur hit 'Girl and Boys' (1994): both a sarcastic commentary on the hedonistic attics of British people holidaying abroad and an unreconstructed anthem, adopted by the exact group of people it satirises. In other instances it might simply be an awareness of the multi-accentuality of the text. Saint Etienne are typical of this. On the one hand, the band adhere to a strict pop as Art aesthetic rationale: they have a devoted fan base and their eclectic musical style and references to wider popular culture assumes high levels of sophistication on the part of the audience. By contrast, in their frequent collaborations with hit producers Richard X and Xenomania - on singles like 'Method of Modern Love' (2009), 'Burnt Out Car' (2008), Good Thing (2005) and 'He's on the Phone' (1995) - they are acknowledging the importance of another more mainstream audience for whom such inter-textual playfulness is immaterial. Authenticity in this sense is, to borrow a phrase from Butler, a 'contingent foundation' (Butler, 1995, 3 – 19): a concept; an idea, around which relative notions of cultural values are cohered and through which texts make meaning.

In theory, Popular Music Studies struggles with authenticity because such a concept is incompatible with the broader contours of post-modern theory. Throughout the thesis the sentiments of Lawrence

Grossberg recur as the talisman by which authenticity is judged: 'the only authenticity is to know and even admit that you are not being authentic, to fake it without faking the fact that you are faking it' (Grossberg, 1993, 205). There is of course a slippage here between the aesthetic rationale and the provenance of the text. And, indeed, Andrew Goodwin questions whether we need a post-modern theory of the aesthetic in order to understand post-modern cultural forms (Goodwin, 1990, 271). Likewise, in his definition of hyper-reality, Baudrillard argues that a simulacrum is not a copy of the real but something that becomes a truth in its own right (Baudrillard, 1981, 488 – 508). In this sense, the 'authenticity' of a musical recording is determined by its audience reception rather than its mode of production. The inscription of authenticity then is something to be accomplished by the listener, what Barthes describes as the text's 'destination' (Barthes, 1977, 148). The pertinence of this debate in the consideration of 1980s popular culture is that the success of sample based dance music suggested a more post-modern sensibility amongst audiences. As Andrew Blake suggests, dance music was explicit in configuring audiences as authors of the texts they consumed (Blake, 1999). Commenting on the Art of Noise's 'Close to the Edit' (1985) he suggests that the track was 'pure prophecy':

> (S)ignalling the way in which dance music was to go in the following dozen years: away from the purity and material reality of the originary, authentic, finished owned and copyrighted product towards the fluid and immaterial, the perpetually unfinished, always-to-be remixed, the property of all who mix or can mix. (Blake, 1999, 71).

While this may have been the case within discrete communities of dance music aficionados at the time, as that music ensconced itself in the mainstream with top 40 acts like Coldcut, S-Express and C+C Music Factory, the mode of reception was somewhat less avant-garde. Writing in 1990 Anthony Goodwin suggested that while sampling culture may superficially embody post-modern cultural practice 'producers appear to be working within fairly traditional notions of creativity and authorship' (Goodwin, 1990, 271). He suggests that contemporary pop musicians have often 'learned to program every bit as skilfully as earlier generations learned to play' (271). Most interesting of all is Goodwin's use of the terms ideology and aesthetic: 'Pop might be eating itself,' he argues, 'but the old ideologies

and aesthetics are still on the menu' (271). What exactly the old ideologies and aesthetics are, however, is left hanging.

On the curiously aesthetic nature of British pop then, it is perhaps the work of Fred Vermorel that is most instructive. He is optimistically holistic in his view of popular music as the vanguard of cultural production

> Pop is the only art which really counts today. Our most progressive – responsive, mutable, hungry and eclectic – form. The taskmaster and pacemaker of all the arts. It stands now where painting stood in the early century, as the focus of problems and innovation: our leader art. (Vermorel, 1983, 55)

Like Hamilton and his collaborators in The Independent Group, Vermorel invokes the surrealistic ideas of Dada, Duchamp and the vernacular of consumer culture in a vision of Art that embraces the multi-accentual contradictions of late capitalism. However, perhaps where he is most instructive in his assertion that pop, in the broadest sense, is a collision of the romantic and the modernist:

> Pop in fact is the romantic movement of our consumer civilisation. And just as the Romantics put heaven and hell on earth by imagining the fantastic social and personal possibilities opened up by the unprecedented power and creativity of the first Industrial Revolution, so pop's impetus and imagination comes from its projection of the second, electrical, petrochemical and consumer-based industrial revolution, which began at the turn of this century and became especially apparent from the twenties. Dada (which is where pop really begins), jazz, Surrealism and rock 'n' roll proclaimed the riot of 'lifestyles': the manifesto of consumerism, which shook, shocked, blasted and rocked away the anti-consumerist opposition. A relentless global tattoo, conscripting and drilling millions into a previously avant-garde modernism. (Vermorel, 1983, 56)

Though Vermorel's work here is extracted from a slim biographical publication about Kate Bush, it seems to encapsulate 'the strange art of pop' (to which its title eludes) in a way that is succinct and

apposite. Indeed, in this respect Vermorel's ideas echo the sentiments of Michael Bracewell in his discussion of the way in which Hamilton and the Independent Group influenced Roxy Music:

> Like other pioneers of the mass-age culture, such as Marshall McLuhan or Roland Barthes, by the mid-1960s Hamilton had defined a critical acuity and an artistic language which not only anticipated the flamboyance of postmodernism, but has already assigned such thinking to its place in a white, chilled, museum of contemporary thought and culture: the coming to term with the supremacy of immediacy of surface; the conversion of the artist into an ambiguous brand; the identification of glamour as perhaps the most determined form of peace-time social energy; the usefulness of transgressive or absurd imagery, its potency increased by the meticulous punning on materials and contexts; the adaptation of technology to aesthetic purpose; the role of selective vision in a culture of information anxiety and visual stress; the seductions of colour and the erotics of form. (Bracewell, 2007, 77).

More so than the cool application of fine Art skills to a mass-cultural form implied by Frith and Horne, what is attractive about both Vermorel and Bracewell's accounts is the way in which they foreground not simply the collision between romantic and modernist narratives, but the subliminal power of glamour in peacetime. In this sense, what marks out British pop aesthetics from their American counterparts is perhaps the quixotic contradiction of celebrating the ephemeral and stylish while recognising also the futile essence of beauty.

Conclusion

In the history of popular music there is, it would seem, a period between the success of The Beatles in America and the end of punk that is regarded as sacrosanct: a period in which popular music embodied both romantic and modernist modes of authenticity. For example, though The Beatles may have re-presented US audiences with their own Afro-American musical heritage, from a Euro-centric perspective they can be configured within a more modernist sensibility. As Howard Goodall suggests in '20th Century Greats' (Goodall, 2004), by 1967 The Beatles use of the studio had re-acquainted pop with the musical avant-garde, not least in their use of the studio as an instrument. Equally, while punk's deconstructive sonic template may have challenged the hegemony of American rock

authenticity (in its rejection of instrumental virtuosity and musical accomplishment) it also sat very comfortably with romantic ideas about core sound, community and populism.

That this period (1967 to 1977) is also regarded as something of a high point in the development of music journalism is widely acknowledged in the work of Forde (2001), Gudmundsson et al (2002), and Toynbee (1993). Indeed, Toynbee argues that this period was very influential right up until the late 1980s (Toynbee, 1993, 296). While I agree with this to some extent (Shaar Murray and Kent both wrote for *Q* for example), what this overlooks is the way in which that mode of address had been reconfigured as a consumer product in its own right. Likewise, Forde's suggestion that the success of *Smash Hits* can be attributed to the fact that the new journalism style had 'run its course' (Forde, 2001, 28) over-simplifies things: *Smash Hits'* accomplishment can also be attributed to the use of presentational devices that reflected the concurrent proliferation of pop music video and satellite television at the end of the 1970s.

This lack of attention paid to both *Smash Hits* and *Q* is reflected in the way in which they are both marginalized within the restricted body of academic work on the music press. For example, Roy Shukar's chapter on the music press in *Understanding Popular Music* (2001) is succinct in its dealing with both titles. *Smash Hits* is considered as part of the omnibus phenomenon of 'teen glosses': titles aimed at girls that make 'stars accessible to adolescent fantasy' (Shukar, 2001, 90). Likewise, *Q* is claimed to be a 'new tabloid': 'a high quality 'glossy' magazine, aimed squarely at affluent consumers, usually in their twenties, with a strong interest in contemporary popular music and its historical antecedents' (Shukar, 93). While others, including Forde and Gudmundsson et al have written in more detail on *Smash Hits* and *Q*, neither account has added significantly to the viewpoint offered by Shukar. All three tacitly imply that the more corporate register of both *Smash Hits* and *Q* make them less significant in the development of popular music criticism. It is the aim of this thesis to confront that viewpoint: to challenge the idea that *Smash Hits* and *Q* are less interesting than other fractions of the music press. Instead, I will argue that the changes they instituted were at the vanguard of cultural production: part of a revolution in the way in way society thought about culture, art, history and identity. At the core of this is the notion of authenticity. While rock culture may embody post-modern culture practise, at its centre is the denial of its own commoditised stratus: a Baudrillardian

'deterrence' mechanism used to distract us from popular music's intrinsically capitalist sensibility (Baudrillard, 1981 (2001) 428). As Keightley suggests, authenticity is, in this sense, the lie rock tells in order to maintain the illusion of its own aesthetic integrity. It is my contention that both *Smash Hits* and *Q* reframed that narrative: by embodying consumer culture, both magazines exposed the myth of rock's authenticity and reacquainted pop music coverage in the UK with a more Art school orientated understanding of its own commodity status.

This thesis takes as its premise that the more ephemeral aspects of pop culture embodied by the seven-inch single, the bedroom poster, radio broadcasts and television performances are as valid as more authentic modes of interaction. As Nick Logan argues, in age before the internet, for the isolated pop fan the music press was a vital lifeline:

> It's what I was trying to do with *NME*, reach out to people who couldn't be a part of the scene, I did with *Smash Hits* and also with *The Face* and it was very much what I was trying to do, to reach out to people and creating a community of people who were in the same situation as me. I was the only one who was into that sort of thing, I was the only one who got it. There was nowhere to get the information, whereas today it is everywhere. (Nick Logan, 2009)

Commensurately, the importance of the wider commercial culture of pop is the backdrop against which Simon Frith writes in 'Look! Hear! The uneasy relationship of music and television' (2002). He argues that, in the latter half of the 20th Century, pop aesthetics were defined by the forms and conventions of the television performance (Frith, 2002, 277 – 290). It is then a commitment to both the visual and commercial culture of the music press that has framed this research: a belief that the visual culture of *Smash Hits* is not a less authentic expression of pop meaning than the experience of seeing a band perform live. Likewise, I argue that the polished consumer journalese and more corporate register of *Q* are just as meaningful as the polemics of personality journalists in the 1970s. On the one hand, therefore, I am arguing against dominant concepts of authenticity, which marginalise certain kinds of performers and certain kinds of stars. Indeed, for all its good intentions, the occlusion of the 1980s from Baker and Taylor's volume highlights the pertinence of this debate. On the other hand, I am suggesting that although changes in the music press between 1978 and 1988 challenged the

primacy of authenticity as a mode of aesthetic deconstruction it did not destroy it. Instead, I argue that authenticity emerges towards the end of the decade as a series of discursive markers: a plural construct that embodies the ideological contradictions of its own commoditised cultural form. In this sense this thesis is not just about authenticity but, as Keightley suggests, the role of postmodernism in popular music.

Chapter 2- Authenticity in the Music Press.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the ways in which the concept of authenticity has been framed and shaped by the development of the music press since the end of the Second World War. By tracing the development of the music press in the UK and America I hope to set the scene for the ways in which *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* challenged received thinking about authenticity in popular music. I will begin by looking at the British music press of the 1950s, with specific reference to the *NME, Disc* and *Record Mirror*. I will gesture also to the teen magazines at the time like *16* and *Valentine*. These, I will argue, embodied a more ambivalent attitude towards issues of authenticity, which I will draw upon in chapter 3; as Gudmundsson et al have commented, *Smash Hits* re-invoked the teen mag idea of 'pop as magic' (Gudmundsson et al 2002, 56). However, in re-presenting this history, which both Steve Jones (2002) and Paul Gorman (2001) offer fairly exhaustive accounts of, the emphasis of my analysis will be on the way in which American rock ideology framed understanding of popular music in the UK (Keightley, 2001, 136). In this sense I will build upon the arguments set out in chapter 1: that the aesthetics of British pop are defined by its subaltern position in relation to America; an otherness, which is manifest in a sensibility that is very carnivalesque.

The influence of American rock ideology on traditional conceptions of authenticity in the music press is central to this chapter, as is the development of the American music press in the 1960s. In this direction, the legacy of titles like *Crawdaddy, Rolling Stone* and *Creem* are extremely important, and so are Lester Bangs, Robert Christgau and Greil Marcus. It is not possible, however, to mention this epoch in American rock writing without talking about influence of beat writers from the 1950s and the emerging new journalism style. Though the American music press was informed by the music press in the UK, it was the literary sensibility of US beat writers that gave it gravitas not traditionally associated with pop journalism. By the same token, the influence of new journalism on a generation of what Eamonn Forde has defined as 'polyglottic' British writers in the 1970s is another key cultural exchange (Forde, 2001, 23-43). The complexity of this process is manifest in the intricacy of the relations between British and American journalists. On the one hand, William Burroughs and Jack

Kerouac directly influenced the style of Lester Bangs and Greil Marcus; Bangs and Marcus, in turn, were also inspirations to the likes of Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murrey. On the other hand, Kerouac himself published in *Rolling Stone* and Bangs' work also found its way into the *NME*. Likewise, Tom Wolfe's anthology *The New Journalism* (1975) was also a direct influence on young British writers at the time like Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons.

Defining the 'new journalism' style of the polyglottic era, Forde suggests that 'personalism' was a touchstone: 'features were written in the first person with the writer centrally positioned as participant' (Forde, 2001, 24). In this sense authenticity is presented as metonymic with the subject position of the author and clearly this is something that the more corporate register of *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* challenged. However, as I will go on to discuss in chapters 3, 4 and 5, the less polemic style of the new music press did not preclude these titles invoking both romantic and modernist conceptions of authenticity. Indeed, unlike the music press that preceded them, these titles made no false claims about their own commodity status but rather borrowed aspects of consumer journalism. In short, *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* challenged the role of authenticity in the music press by embracing the contradictions endemic to post-modern cultural forms. However, before we can begin to understand the significance of the way in which these titles reconfigured authenticity as a more plural construct, it is necessary first to gesture towards the ways in which the concept has traditionally operated.

Authenticity in the Music Press

As I have already discussed in chapter 1, authenticity is a key concept in any discussion of popular music. On the music press itself, however, it is perhaps Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly's 'Re-Viewing Rock Writing' (2002) that is most useful. Tracing the text level meaning embedded in the writing of Nat Hentoff, Ralph Gleason, Robert Christgau and Lester Bangs, they explore the complex relationship between race, mass culture and authenticity in the construction of meaning. Jones and Featherly argue that for Hentoff authenticity was about protecting the validity of the musical heritage (Jones and Featherly, 2002, 32). By contrast, they suggest that for Christgau authenticity is about the negotiation of history, while for Bangs authenticity is about gritty brutality and savage honesty (33-34). Though Jones and Featherly are at pains to point out the inter-connectedness of these discourses with narratives of race and mass culture, a limitation of this analysis for the purposes of my research

is their focus on writing that took place before punk. Indeed, the book completely ignores the music scene of the 1980s. Likewise, Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor also avoid any commentary on the period between 1978 to 1993. By jumping directly from punk to grunge, what is left out is any consideration of the ways in which audiences embraced new ways of thinking about musical authenticity in the intervening years, influenced by consumer journalism, music television and the pop music video. Moreover, though Jones and Featherly's analysis is rooted in the music press, if we cross reference this with the somewhat broader scope of Keir Keightley's consideration of the way in which authenticity operates within American rock culture, it would seem that the definitions of authenticity they are working with are very romantic in their sensibility (Keightley, 2001, 136). In focusing on the period 1978 to 1988, therefore, I am identifying a 'liminal moment' of transition: from a more singular notion of authenticity to a more plural construct, in which the key elements of 1970s rock writing were re-configured as a more consumer orientated project. However, before we can begin to proceed with this very Anglo-American history, it is necessary first to outline the way in which the music press developed in the UK after the Second World War.

Authenticity in the Music Press in the 1950s

For the purposes of this chapter a sensible starting point is the first publication of IPC's *New Musical Express (NME)*. Although it is preceded by *Gramophone* (1923) and *Melody Maker* (1926), the publication of sales charts in the *NME* marks the beginning of pop's explicitly commoditised sensibility that I will draw upon in subsequent chapters. The rise of *NME* is concurrent also with the proliferation of television in the UK and the development of what Simon Frith defines as rock 'n' roll's 'televisual sensibility' (Frith, 2002, 277 - 290). It was also, as Chris Welch has observed, 'very much a pop paper' (Welch cited by Gorman, 2001,



Fig 2 *Melody Maker* circa 1926

19) in comparison to *Melody Maker*, which was more interested in the jazz scene. For example, the mainstream focus of *NME* is evidenced in the titles preoccupation with the charts; Maurice Kinn, owner of *NME* in the 1950s states:

> I'd noticed that they had this chart but they weren't doing anything with it. There were these names in there like Johnny Ray or Frank Sinatra or Nat 'King' Cole, but they weren't getting the coverage. Instead, it was all about the big-band scene, which was beginning to fade away. So I got hold of the chart and said, "Theses are the people we should be covering, and the chart should be the reason why people buy the paper". (Kinn cited by Gorman, 2001, 19)

It is interesting to note that the artists cited by Kinn were all American, John Bovan argues that the focus of *NME* in the 1950s was on British stars. He suggests, the reason for this was what he describes as a 'collusion' between 'the publishers and the *NME* to ensure that British artists covered the American hits and charted here' (Broven cited by Gorman, 2001, 22). And, indeed, Bradley argues that there is no favourable report of rock n roll in the press until 1962 (Bradley, 1992, 90). Whether or not this is accurate is beyond the scope of this research. However, surveying the covers of *NME* from the mid-1950s there are considerable numbers of American stars featured, including Frank Sinatra (July 1956) Elvis Presley (August 1956) and Bill Haley (January 1957). These were,

however, exceptions rather than the rule: reflecting their commercial success in the singles chart. More typical was homegrown talent like Dickie Valentine (May 1956), Tommy Steele (October 1956) and Cliff Richard (January, 1959). Anxiety, however, about the Anglo-American relations is reflected in a headline from January 1958, which asks 'Does Tommy Steele copy Presley?'. Often considered the first 'teen star', Steele, like Ronnie Hilton and many 1950s British pop acts, would record known hits by American artists and release them in the UK before the original version had the opportunity to make an impact. His 1957 number one 'Singing the Blues', for example is a cover of a Guy Mitchell song. The determination of UK record producers to beat US releases in the UK market is evidenced in John Repsch's biography of the British record producer Joe Meek:

> Cover versions were made at the speed of sound. Everyone was copying American records, so the trick was to rush your own cover version into the shops before the original arrived and before anyone else had the same idea, and that meant getting the skates on. Last minute sessions were sometimes held at 9 o'clock at night for a song that was hot from the publishers; then at midnight the tape was raced down to the disc-cutting room; two hours later it was cut and off to the factory to be on their doorstep that morning and on sale twenty-four hours later (Repsch, 1989, 75).

Overshadowed by the cultural changes in the 1960s it is easy to forget that American rock 'n' roll was seen as dangerous in the UK in the 1950s. Martin Cloonan, for example, talks about the scandal caused by Jerry Lee Lewis who toured Britain in 1958 accompanied by his 13-year-old wife (Cloonan, 2001, 115). Likewise, he mentions the way in which an article in *Melody Maker* urged the BBC to be wary of rock 'n' roll's 'cheap and nasty' lyrics (Cloonan, 115). So, while *Melody Maker* eschewed rock 'n' roll until the 1960s, the version of rock 'n' roll presented in *NME* was somewhat watered down: an expurgated version that could be more easily assimilated into the mainstream of light entertainment. Testimony to this the



Fig 3 *New Musical Express* in the 1950s

number of radio and TV stars featured on the pages of *NME*: both Max Bygraves and the Beverley Sisters, for example, had careers with the BBC before they made any records. *NME*, was not, however, the only magazine to cover pop music during this period. Other British titles included *Record Mirror* and *Disc. Record Mirror*, launched in 1956, is particularly significant in that it was the first magazine to publish the album chart: predicting the significance of the long player as a the medium for serious music in the 1960s and of course the way in which pop music history would be canonised in the 1980s. *Disc* is also interesting because it featured a single cover star on each issue: resembling early *Smash Hits*, the magazine foretells of the way in which the music press would develop in later years. Likewise the magazine had a preference it would seem for American stars: Marvin Rainwater (April 1958) Nat King Cole (July 1958) and Harry Belafonte (August 1958). Once again, however, the gulf between the British and American pop scene is fore-grounded in the strap- lines 'Welcome to Britain Charlie Grace' (April 1958) and 'Heading for the top in the *British* Hit Parade: Buddy Holly' (September 1958).

The British music press of the 1950s is a fascinating starting point for this research for a number of reasons. In the first instance, it embodies an explicitly commercial sensibility: the charts, both singles and albums, are central to editorial decisions about content and cover stars. Secondly, the magazines are very mainstream in their emphasis. While in retrospect we may criticise their scepticism about American music, this is essentially revisionist: framing British pop through the lens of the American rock hegemony that had yet to established itself.



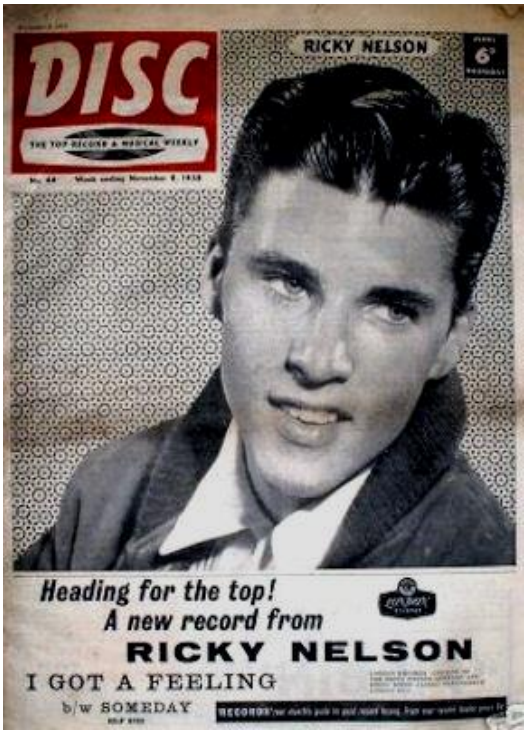


Fig 4 *Record Mirror* and *Disc.*

Instead, these magazines provide a snap shot of a diverse mainstream: like *Smash Hits*, *NME* in this period does not distinguish between genres providing they were selling well in the charts: hence the number of jazz and big band stars also featured on the front cover. Thirdly, the magazines are very visual in their style. The cover of *NME* is crammed with sometimes as many as six or seven feature article photographs, while *Disc* preferences the gloss of the stylised record company promotional photo. The use of colour is also evident on the cover of *Record Mirror*: for example the Dec 1957 issue features cover shots of Tommy Steele, Pat Boone, Elvis Presley, Bing Crosby and Teresa Brewer in colour. However, above all, the music press of the 1950s is significant because it represents a period in which authenticity was not yet its primary concern. How we frame this is of course open to interpretation.

When talking about British pop of the 1960s it is possible to recoup its distinctness from the hegemony of American musical authenticity within narratives of Britain's Art school aesthetic, as both Simon Frith and Howard Horn claim in *Art into Pop* (1987) and John A Walker suggest in *Crossovers: Art into Pop/Pop into Art* (1987). However, whether or not this can be applied to the 1950s seems doubtful. While the late 1950s was a period in which musicians like John Lennon, Ray Davis and

Keith Richards attended Art school, this sensibility had yet to influence the mainstream. Likewise, I have a problem with the notion that 1950s pop was what Sontag defines as camp (Sontag, 1964, 53-65). Jon Savage, for example, suggests that 'early English pop was riddled with homosexuality and that sensibility which we would now call camp' (Savage, 1991, 158). He attributes this to 'homosexual familiarity with those areas of human activity which were now being exploited, and partly to the early music industry's seedy beginnings on the fringes of established show business' (Savage, 1991, 158). In particular, he suggests that from 1956 onwards the influence of Elvis Presley inaugurated a particularly camp sensibility in stars like Tommy Steele and Cliff Richards, who copied the way in which the American singer's masculinity was self-consciously objectified by the music industry. Later on in the same article Savage refers to this trope as the origin of the 'sign of gayness' that runs through British pop (Savage, 1991. 169). And, certainly this is a very convincing argument. However, I would argue that what is significant about 1950s pop is the tight line it walks between parody and pastiche in its relationship with the American pop mainstream. Though much of British pop of the 1950s may be formulaic and standardized, it is perhaps the 'carnivalesque' (Bakhtin, 1998, 250) mimicry of American rock 'n' roll that is defining in the British pop aesthetic. It is this celebration of artifice and the rejection of Afro-American modes of rock authenticity that I will argue in chapter 3 is particularly significant to *Smash Hits* invocation of the 1950s music press at the end of the 1970s

Authenticity in the Music Press in the 1960s

Prior to the 1960s popular music coverage in the UK was divided into two camps. On the one hand, there was the serious music coverage of mainly jazz by *Melody Maker* and other titles that included *Jazz Monthly* and *Jazz Journal*. On the other hand, there was the pop press: titles like *NME, Record Mirror* and *Disc,* which were focused on the mainstream as denoted by sales in the singles chart. That these magazines shaped as well as reflected consumer taste is evidenced in the preference for the appropriation of American rock 'n' roll by British stars up until the early 1960s. British stars having hits with rock n roll inspired songs during



Fig 5 The *NME* and *Rolling Stone* in the 1960s

this period included Adam Faith, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury. While the domestic charts were augmented with hits by American stars like Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley and Del Shannon, the exchange was not mirrored on the other side of the Atlantic until February 1964 when The Beatles took the number one spot with 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand'. There after the number of British groups securing hits in America increased dramatically. Following The Beatles came the Animals in September 1964 with 'House of the Rising Sun', succeeded by Manfred Mann in October with 'Do Wah Diddy Diddy' before the The Beatles returned to the top on December 26th with 'I Feel Fine'. Other British artists with number one hits between 1965 and 1970 include the Rolling Stones, The Dave Clark Five, Petula Clark, The Troggs and Lulu. However, it is the period 1964 to 1966 that is often characterised as the British Invasion: a period in which the chart was dominated by white male British artists, including The Kinks, The Who, The Hollies, The Dave Clark Five, The Zombies etc. Arguably, the way in which the British Invasion re-presented American musical heritage for a mainstream US audience was pivotal to their success. Prior to this, as Keightley suggests, it was felt that the American pop mainstream had lost its way. And, indeed, he notes this was a period of time in which both black and female artists enjoyed considerable chart success (Keightley, 2001, 117). The

British Invasion then reversed the view of British pop as inferior and alienated, and re-framed it within a dominant narrative of Afro-American rock authenticity: a narrative that was coincidentally very white and very male.

The way in which the British Invasion is considered within Afro-American rock ideology is not the whole story and, before we begin to delineate the very complex relationship between Anglo and American music journalism in the 1960s and beyond, a number of caveats need to be inserted. In the first instance, it should be made clear that it was the British pop press that championed The Beatles from the end of 1962 onwards, long before they visited America. Maurice Kinn, for example, recalls the role of the *NME* in promoting The Beatles:

> I first met The Beatles at the 1962 Christmas party EMI threw at Abbey Road. They'd just had their first hit, and even then it was obvious they were going to be huge. The *NME*'s was the first chart they'd entered, and we'd done a feature on them right away (Kinn cited by Gorman, 2001, 29).

That The Beatles went on to expand beyond the remit of Mersey-beat sound could not, however, have been predicted at this stage. Arguably, it was not until the release of *Beatles For Sale* at the end of 1964 that the band began to really embody a more modernist musical aesthetic in their experimentation with musical form. And while much of their early work can be configured with romantic notions of authenticity, not least in their influence from skiffle and r&b, they were at this stage very much in the image of 1950s teen pop stars. Secondly, while The Beatles may have been seen to represent a lost musical heritage, their stardom was dependent on the power of television in America. Their appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show in February 1964 was instrumental in breaking The Beatles in the US: 74 million people watched the broadcast and almost immediately 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand' reached number one (www.liverpoolecho.co.uk). To suggest, therefore, that the British Invasion was antithetical to rock as commodity is therefore impossible to substantiate. However, it was their difference perhaps, *their British-ness,* that concealed from American rock critics the fact that The Beatles celebrated the mainstream. It is in this direction that the work on British pop's Art school sensibility is perhaps most useful (Frith and Horne, 1987) (Walker, 1987): The

Beatles and The Rolling Stones were able to cross the division of class and ideology and 'apply high art skills' to 'mass cultural form' (Frith and Horne, 1987, 1-2). However, neither *NME* nor the Invasion bands rehearsed narratives of authenticity but rather this is something that has been imposed retrospectively and in the light of the way in which the music and the music press would develop in the latter half of the 1960s.

In tracing the development of authenticity in the music press in the 1960s there are it would seem two major lineages to follow-up. In the first instance, authenticity draws upon the serious writing about jazz with which IPC's *Melody Maker* in the UK was synonymous. Secondly, authenticity draws upon the stylistic conventions of American beat writers of the 1950s who influenced a generation of journalists writing for the newly launched *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*. Though clearly, there was a distinction between the British music press in the 1960s and its American contemporaries (not least in the latter's use of colour), the confluence of British and American music scenes at the end of the 1960s meant there was also a real parity. Articles by American journalists were often published in the UK press and, in 1969, *Rolling Stone* launched a UK edition. However, for the sake of clarity I will consider British and American strands in separately.

***Melody Maker:* Authenticity and the British Music Press of the 1960s.**

Launched in 1926 by Lawrence Wright, *Melody Maker's* emphasis was as a magazine for musicians rather than music listeners. In its first thirty years the magazine developed a reputation for its jazz coverage and even as late as 1963 was noted in the *Writers' and Artists' Year Book* for providing 'Technical, instructional and informative articles on jazz and pop music' (cited on magforum.com). Although this changed in the mid-1960s with the beat explosion and emergence of progressive rock, the magazine had a long-standing skepticism of rock 'n' roll sounds. According to Gudmundsson et al, the emergence of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s was seen as a threat to 'good taste' and 'integrity' (Gudmundsson et al in, 2002, 45). Tellingly, in Alan Jones' compilation *Melody Maker Classic Rock Interviews* (1994), the



Fig 6 *Melody Maker* shifted from jazz to rock over the course of the 1960s.

earliest entry is 1971, for a conversation with John Lennon. The 1960s were, in this sense, a liminal time for *Melody Maker*, in which the magazine was in transition from serious jazz journal to contemporary rock magazine. As Ian MacDonald suggests, even in the mid-1960s, the long-standing writers were reticent about new American music:

> The *Melody Maker* old guard – respected jazzers like Max Jones and Bob Dawbarn –were still prominent in the mid-1960s. I remember Bob Dawbarn's scathing review of 'Like A Rolling Stone'. It was actually quite exciting that he hated it; the controversy turned it into even more of an event (MacDonald cited by Gorman, 2002, 38).

However, from mid-1963 onwards, the magazine was hiring new writers like Chris Welch and Nick Jones who took the magazine in a different direction. Jones in particular was a fan of bands like The Who and Eric Clapton. While the *NME* had championed The Beatles as a pop band, *Melody Maker* configured these new groups as serious musicians. Gudmundsson et al (2002), for example, suggests that only after the success of The Beatles and the breakthrough of 'progressive rock' (Traffic, Pink Floyd etc) did writers for UK titles like *NME* and *Melody Maker* start taking rock 'n' roll seriously. They argue that for *Melody Maker,* in particular, rock 'n' roll was viewed as a threat to the taste and integrity of jazz. Consequently, it is suggested that in their interpretation of rock 'n' roll, for

journalists like Chris Welch, Richard Williams and Steve Lake, ‘authenticity’ became a cornerstone of musical connoisseurship:

> The most important tendency in this formative period (1964- 1969) was the emergence of a discourse in which popularity and sales numbers were no longer the decisive factors for critical acclaim. As in jazz criticism, the contours of an autonomous pole emerged that opposed what considered commercial, and the quest for authenticity became the central issue around which this discourse emerged. (Gudmundsson, 2002, 48)

Authenticity in this sense can be seen to operate in two ways. On the one hand, it is romantic in its rejection of commercial culture and belief in roots and community. On the other hand, in its celebration of experimentation and progress it is defiantly modernist. This opposition to what was considered commercial could also be said to reflect the sensibilities of a generation of musicians pre-occupied with self-expression, authorship and musical virtuosity i.e. music as an expression of counter-cultural values focused on individuality and non-conformism. For example, in an interview with Eric Clapton on the break-up of Cream in 1968, the way in which Welch frames the dialogue foregrounds issues of musical authenticity:

> Eric told me last May that the Cream were breaking up. But it was to be kept secret until business problems had been sorted out. At the time he said: "I went off to do a lot of different things since the Cream formed. I went off in a lot of different directions all at once it seems, but I find I have floated back to straight blues playing. I’ve returned to what I like doing as an individual, and that is playing exploratory blues. You get really hung up and try to write pop songs or create a pop image. I went through that stage and it was a shame because I was not being true to myself. I am and always will be a blues guitarist." (Chris Welch, 1968, 1)



Fig 7 The American press in the 1960s: *Crawdaddy*, *Creem* and *Rolling Stone*.

Here Clapton is articulating a classic romantic vision of musical authenticity in which tradition and continuity with musical past is central to his own sense of musical integrity. The rejection of the 'pop image' is also significant as is the re-presentation of musical past in the form of 'straight blues'. In this snap-shot it is easy to see how, by the second half of the 1960s, *Melody Maker* was invoking its traditional jazz emphasis on musicianship, while at the same time corroborating a very American version of rock ideology.

Authenticity and the US Music Press of the 1960s.

In the second part, authenticity draws upon the development of rock criticism in the US. This came much later to the US than it did the UK. As Robert Christgau recalls, while the *NME* covered the British invasion in the UK, there was little pop music editorial in America:

> There was no music press to speak of when I was coming up, although I read Ralph Gleason in The San Francisco Chronicle when I lived in the Bay area in 1964 and Al Aronowitz in The New York Post later' (Robert Christgau, cited by Gorman, 2001, 28).

According to Harvey Kubernik, radio was a far more important medium than the music press during this period: 'We were slaves to the AM radio dial. That's where you got your information about pop' (Kubernik, cited by Gorman, 2001, 28). . Though specialist titles like *Blues Unlimited* and *R&B Monthly* served niche markets, according to John Broven these 'stuck to the authentic American

artists' like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf and ignored British bands (Broven, cited by Gorman, 2001, 35). It was not until the second half of the 60s, therefore, that the US got its first mainstream rock periodical in the form of *Crawdaddy* Named after the infamous club in London where the Rolling Stones played their first gig, *Crawdaddy* was launched by Paul Williams in 1966 in New York. As Jim Derogatis recalls: 'the publication was the first to bill itself as 'a magazine of rock n roll criticisms' (Derogatis cited by Gorman, 2001, 48). Likewise, Lenny Kaye suggests: '*Crawdaddy* was a revelation because it was the first time I'd seen writing about this music with some depth' (Kaye cited by Gorman, 2001, 48). The magazine launched the careers of Jon Landau and Richard Meltzer and as Kaye suggests introduced audiences to the new journalism style that would shape its forebears: *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*. Looking at a review of the Animals fifth album *Animalization* (1966) by Jon Landau from issue five of the magazine, there is self-consciousness at odds with the written style of the British music press:

> The Animals. What can one say about the Animals? Out of sight? That's old. That they fly? They've been flying since they began. That they're great. This record proves it. Well, if one were looking for things to say one could say that the difference between Tom Wilson producing this album for them and Mickey Most producing the previous ones is the difference between their fine albums of the past and this really tremendous one. In terms of recording, everything is better about this one, especially the recording of vocals and drums (Wilson, of course, was formerly Dylan's producer) (Landau in Williams, 2002, 56)

Landau assumes intelligence on the part of the reader: rendering them complicit in his reflection upon the process of writing a review. The mannered style engages the reader with a mix of short and long sentences and rhetorical questions that Landau then proceeds to answer. This quixotic manner is emphasized by his repeated use of the preposition 'one'. Though this includes the reader, its impersonal style emphasizes an ironic reach and detached sophistication that is a significant departure from both the more earnest style of *Melody Maker* and the pop sensibility of *NME*. For all its playfulness, however, underpinning

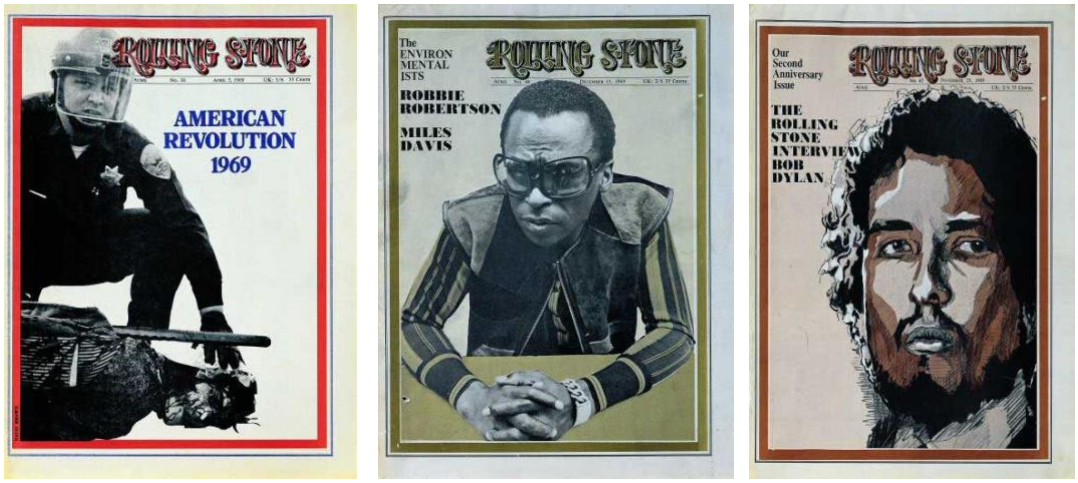


Fig 8 *Rolling Stone* in the 1960s

the sentiments expressed by Landua is a very modernist rationale for decoding popular music: invoking narratives of innovation and progress, which as Keightley suggest connote a particular strand of American musical authenticity. It was therefore, perhaps the urbane manner of *Crawdaddy* that shaped and framed the way in which musical authenticity would be configured into Jann Wenner and Ralph Gleason's San Francisco based title *Rolling Stone*.

Launched in 1967, *Rolling Stone* set out with the intention of positioning the politics of the counter culture within the attitudes and values of the music. Where *Rolling Stone* differed from UK titles was the seriousness with which it treated its subject matter. Co-founder Gleason was an established Jazz critic and brought with him a gravitas not traditionally associated with rock 'n' roll. As Ben Fong-Torres argues, the written style of the magazine broke the mould of the pop music press that preceded it:

> For one thing it came from San Francisco, but with its correspondents in London, New York and Los Angeles it was clearly out to be a national publication. It didn't appear to be either a newspaper or a magazine but a hybrid. It was printed on newsprint, in black and white, with a single splash of colour on the *Rolling Stone* logo. It didn't even open like a magazine; it was quarter-folded – that is, folded twice. The first issues didn't have covers but a newspaper-styled front page that was knowing, critical, good humoured and hip, neither fawning like teen and fan magazines nor crude and condescending like so much of the mainstream press when it deigned to cover rock 'n' roll (Fong-Torres, cited by Gorman, 2001, 55)

Clearly in *Rolling Stone* we can see the formation of the sophisticated style of journalism that *Q* would draw upon in the 1980s. Moreover, its hybrid format and use of colour differed from the newspaper style of both *NME* and *Melody Maker*. However, perhaps the most significant legacy of US rock journalism of the 1960s was the idiosyncratic style of its writers. Like *Cawdaddy,* there is a self-consciousness at work in *Rolling Stone* that is different to the UK music press. For example, in his review of The Beatles' *Abbey Road* (1969), John Mendelsohn comments directly on the process of writing the review ('so much for the prelims') in a manner that would characterise *Smash Hits* self-reflexive house style ten years later. However, drawing upon the jazz sensibility of Ralph Gleason, Mendelsohn also works hard to analyse the musical structure of the record:

> Simply, side two does more for me than the whole of *Sgt. Pepper,* and I'll trade you *The Beatles* and *Magical Mystery Tour* and a Keith Moon drumstick for side one. So much for the prelims. "Come Together" is John Lennon very nearly at the peak of his form; twisted, freely-associative, punful lyrically, pinched and somehow a little smug vocally. Breathtakingly recorded (as is the whole album), with a perfect little high-hat-tom-tom run by Ringo providing a clever semi-colon to those eerie *shooo*-ta's, Timothy Leary's campaign song opens up things in grand fashion indeed. George's vocal, containing less adenoids and more grainy Paul tunefulness than ever before, is one of many highlights on his "Something," some of the others being more excellent drum work, a dead catchy guitar line, perfectly subdued strings, and an unusually nice melody. Both his and Joe Cocker's version will suffice nicely until Ray Charles gets around to it. (Mendelsohn, 1969, 1)



Fig 9 *Creem* in the 1960s

Like Landau, Mendelsohn configures The Beatles long player within narratives of romantic and modernist musical authenticity. He stresses both the technical ability of Lennon's vocal and the musicianship of the drums: fetishising the avant-garde sensibilities of the music in his proclamation that Ringo provides a 'clever semi-colon to those eerie shooo-tas'. And, yet there is a populism to the register of the language: Mendelson is playful in his description of music. The notion that the vocal on 'Come Together is 'twisted, freely-associative, punful lyrically, pinched and somehow a little smug' does not require a specialised musical vocabulary on the part of the reader to understand what is being said. Likewise, the emphasis on The Beatles as individual musicians conforms to a very romantic vision of musical authenticity. This dexterity in the application of complex ideological formations within a populist yet urbane lexical set is perhaps, therefore, the key to the *Rolling Stone's* position at the vanguard American popular music's ideological formation. And, indeed, it was this very mainstream sensibility that Barry Kramer and Tony Raey were rejecting when they launched *Creem* in 1969.

Based in Detroit, *Creem* was defined in opposition to *Rolling Stone*. According to Charles Shaar Murray 'Creem was edgy where *Rolling Stone* was mellow' (Shaar Murray, cited by Gorman, 2001, 63). It was also very different from the *NME* and *Melody Maker*:

> Where the British pop weeklies of the era treated their readers like besotted teenyboppers and their rockier equivalents addressed their punters as if they were aspiring roadies, Creem talked to you as if you were smart, adventurous and passionately committed to the music as a source of both fun and redemption, as were – or thought we were (Shaar Murray, cited by

> Gorman, 2001, 63).

For many, *Creem* came to symbolise a more rebellious strand of music journalism than either *Crawdaddy* or *Rolling Stone*. Though all three employed a revolving cast of writers (that included Richard Meltzer, Jon Landau and Griel Marcus), *Creem*, as Mick Farren suggests, was the most 'corporate-unfriendly' (Farren, cited by Gorman, 2001, 63). It had its roots in an edgier Detroit music scene: preferring bands like MC5 and the White Panthers over mainstream favourites like Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. As Lester Bangs recalls, it was this rejection of the mainstream that was key to the success of *Creem*:

> I edited *Creem* magazine for five years and we had, like hundreds of thousands of readers who really dug it that we were telling Dylan and the Stones and all these people to go jump in the lake. They weren't idiots that just swallowed any hype that was shovelled to them. I hate that, that everybody thinks that, that fans are just morons that'll just swallow any garbage, 'cause I think the kids are really sharp. (Bangs, cited by Gorman, 2001, 64).

Of course, the legacy of Bangs hangs over not only *Creem*, but also that of the music press in general. For example, in the introduction to the posthumous anthology of Bang's work, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburettor Dung* (1996), Greil Marcus considers the possibility that Bangs, whose principal output was record reviews, might be the greatest American writer of his generation. Much is made, for example, of Bangs' influence by beat writers, in particular Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and *William Burroughs's Naked Lunch* (1959):

> Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs were his heroes and teachers; he bought their myths of dissipation and redemption, dope and satori. Their book and everyone's records made him a writer. (Marcus, 1996, xi)

And, indeed, while his later output was more crafted, it would seem that during the period he wrote for *Creem,* Bangs remained dedicated to the spontaneity, subjectivity and open-endedness that characterised beat generation writers. For example, in a review of the Stooges entitled 'Of Pop and

Pies and Fun', originally published in *Creem* in 1970, Bangs deploys many of the stylistic conventions of fiction:

> Until then though, it sure ain't no fun, so swagger with your buddies, brag, leer at passing legs, whack your doodle at night gaping at polyethylene bunnies hugging teddy bears, go back the next day and dope out with the gang, grass speed, reds, Romilar, who cares some frat bull's gonna buy us beer, and after that you go home and stare at the wall all cold and stupid inside and think, what the fuck, what the fuck, (Bangs, 1996, 33).

There is an immediacy to his style: Bang's is trying to invoke emotions of the moment of experience. In particular, the idiomatic structure of Bang's language and the way it is broken up into short colloquial phrases, peppered with taboo language alludes to the purging, psychotically depraved quality of Burroughs's work. In this sense, Bangs work is clearly operating within the parameters of Keightley's definition of romantic authenticity. It embodies 'sincerity and directness' and is in effect a response to a 'core and essential rock sound' (Keightley, 2001, 136). However, it is the 'literary quality' of Bangs' work that is central to the way in which he has been historicised. For example, in *Pop Music and the Press,* Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly talk about the multi-layered quality of Bangs work: 'In his writing, self-reflexiveness counts. Self-parody counts as well, and self-knowledge most of all' (Jones, 2002, 35). Likewise, in Gorman's *In Their Own Write*, various contemporaries speculate on the literary qualities of his work; for example, Greg Shaw, founder of the LA based fanzine *Bomp!* ventures: 'He was great in the music press, but would he have been another Kerouac? I don't think so, and I don't rate Kerouac that highly' (Shaw cited by Gorman 2001, 115). Bangs' work was, however, of particular influence in the UK, where his articles from *Creem,* alongside those of Greil Marcus and Robert Christgau, were reprinted in IPC's *NME* from the early 1970s onwards.

New Journalism

If the 1960s were characterised by the emergence of an autonomous strand of American rock criticism, the most interesting developments in music journalism in the 1970s were arguably in the UK. While beat writers like Kerouac and Burroughs influenced the preceding generation of American critics, a new generation of British critics looked to their American contemporaries for similar

inspiration. Though Bangs, Marcus and Christgau were principally rock writers, by the 1970s they were increasingly viewed as part of a generation of American journalists practising what became known as the 'new journalism'. Other new journalists included Truman Capote, Hunter S Thompson, Norman Mailer and Tom Wolfe. This elevation of music journalism in America and the crossover between the world of serious journalism and rock writing is what marked out the US music press of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, when Thompson first published his *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) it was as a two part serial in Wenner's *Rolling Stone.* Likewise, Tom Wolfe's edited collection *The New Journalism* (1975) featured contributions from both Robert Christgau and Joe Eszterhas (senior editor of *Rolling Stone*).

Clearly the literary aspirations of these writers chimed with the romantic vision of American rock, of which Barry Kramer's *Creem* was perhaps the embodiment. As Bangs suggests (cited by Gorman, 2001, 64), *Creem* rejected the commercialism of the mainstream, believing in a core sound, which it was the journalists' duty to capture. The voice of the writer was therefore central to the process. For example, in Pam Brent's on the MC5 from March 1969, it is the subjective attachments of the reporter that are primary:

> … The Crow's Nest is small, extremely so. One cannot possibly fathom the results of as renowned a group as the MC5 playing there until one has actually lived through the experience. This, however, is not easily done. Arriving approximately thirty minutes after opening time, one is confronted with block-long double line, in which one is obliged to stand, freezing for an added half hour. Once inside, one pushes and shove's one's way through a sold mass of human flesh in an attempt to rid oneself of that unwanted coat. Having succeeded in depositing it on the lower floor, a fight to ascend the stairway ensues. (Mathieu, 2007, 15)

On the one hand, Brent's personal viewpoint is perhaps typical of the US music press of the period: detailed description of the setting and as with Jon Landau's piece from *Rolling Stone*, the repeated use of the preposition 'one' to include the reader. On the other hand, the *Creem* piece displays neither the ironic reach nor the self-consciousness of *Rolling Stone*. Instead, Brent fetishes the authenticity of

standing in the 'freezing' cold, as well as both having to 'push and shove' her way through a 'solid mass of human flesh' and 'fight to ascend a stairway' (Brent (1969) in Mathieu, 2007, 15). Arguably, however, this emphasis on communal experience is not necessarily in keeping with the over-arching aesthetics of the artist in question. For example, though MC5 were influenced by rhythm and blues, their aggressive style arguably gave the band a more avant-garde sensibility. Yet Brent's narrative is in this sense very romantic in the way that it privileges the sincerity and directness of the live performance. Other US artists of the period who seem discordant with this romantic authenticity include Lou Reed, The Stooges, and of course The New York Dolls (all of whom, interestingly, influenced punk in Britain). However, for new journalists, this kind of artistic license was integral to the writer's craft. In a sense, Brent's description is perhaps therefore more important than the event she is describing.

Utilising the stylistic conventions of fiction, new journalists experimented with figurative language and grammatical structure in ways more common to literature than magazine editorial. Aspects of this in evidence in Pam Brent's piece from 1969, for example, include the phrase 'solid mass of human flesh' (Mathieu, 2007, 15) to describe the audience. More instructive, however, is Tom Wolfe's introduction to Robert Christgau's first magazine article 'Beth Ann and Macrobioticism' (1965), about the death of a 23-year-old woman because of an eating disorder:

> Beth Ann and Macrobioticism seemed to be written so effortlessly that one is likely to overlook the tightness of its structure, which has a classic American short story quality to it. The one thing the story lacks is dialogue – a shortcoming that, as I say, is built into all stories where the reporter has had to reconstruct the scene rather than view himself (Wolfe, 1975, 363)

The story was originally published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, but found its way into Wolfe's anthology, alongside an extract from Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965) by which Christgau was clearly influenced. Capote's text, which was originally serialised in the *New Yorker,* is widely considered to be a forerunner of the new journalism style. It was developed from research into the murder of a wealthy farming family in Kansas in 1959 and, when it was published, was described by Capote as a 'non-fiction novel' (cited by Wolfe, 1975. 363). Wolfe notes that Capote was determined

to ‘reproduce the techniques of the novel in non-fiction’, in particular ‘the technique of parallel narrative that John Steinbeck was so fond of’ (Wolfe, 135).

The influence of Wolfe’s anthology and the new journalism style on the UK press is well documented. For example, Gudmundsson et al (citing Neil Spencer - former *NME* editor) outline the transformations that took place between 1972 and 1974:

> *NME* went through a revolution in the years 1972-3 after a period of falling sales, was back on top with circulation of 200,000 by 1974 and entered its heyday. It gained a reputation as a writer’s paper; in the early 1970s ‘everyone had their copy of Tom Wolfe’s New Journalism collection, and US writers like Lester Bangs were avidly read,’ … Bangs was even hired to do his own column and most of the cream of UK rock journalists – Nick Kent, Charles Shaar Murray, Ian MacDonald, Paul Morley, Ian Penman, Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons. (Gudmundsson et al, 2002, 52)

This ‘heyday’, as it is so often characterised, was in part the coalescence the literary aspirations of new journalism and the more outrageous sensibilities of the beat writers. The authenticity of the music was matched by journalisms desire for an authenticity of writing: neither music nor writing are seen as fun – but serious intellectual pursuits. However, as Eamonn Forde (2001) suggests, the renaissance of personality journalism in the 1970s was also attributable to the iconoclastic nature of the emerging punk era: what Gudmundsson et al have characterised as the second key moment in the evolution of the music press in the UK.

On the sensibilities particular to the *NME* in the 1970s the work of Eamonn Forde is perhaps the most useful. He recounts how the shift in editorship from Andy Gray to Alan Smith in 1970 brought about an ‘overhaul of the paper; taking it away from an agenda ‘steeped in show business tradition’ (Maconie, 1992: 29) into one oriented towards the counterculture (Forde, 2001, 25)’. As Nick Logan (subsequent editor of *NME*, *Smash Hits* and *The Face*) recalls, when he first start writing for the magazine in 1969 the emphasis of the magazine was still on the singles chart:

> It was so pop, the way the editor used to decide the content was to look at the Top 30 singles chart, he used to sit there and mark who was number 1 and see who we had covered and put them in the issue for next week, and that was it, nothing got in from the outside.
>
> Gradually, he had to concede that there were album sales, bands like Fleetwood Mac and Cream got in, and that was the stuff that I was writing about. They were slow to realise that things were changing and *Melody Maker* made them pay for it. (Nick Logan, 2009)

Logan took over editing the paper in 1973, just eighteen months after Gary handed it over to Alan Smith; this meant that within a two-year period the magazine went from being edited from someone in their 50s to a 24 year old.

> I was 24 at the time, extremely young to be an editor and I had no real experience of it. I don't know how I got the experience. The previous editor was called Alan Smith who was two or three years older than me and we were on the staff together, the *NME* only employed five or six writers when I first joined and they carved up the different groups between them and guarded their patch. I was a junior, Alan was more senior than me, and Andy Gray was the editor who was a lot younger than I am now, but he was an old guy. The *NME* ran into trouble because it was out of touch with what was going on. Me and Alan sat in a coffee bar and talked about what we might do with the magazine. (Nick Logan, 2009)

The significance of Nick Logan, however, is something that Forde skirts around. Instead, he emphasizes the recruitment of Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray. In this he is not alone and indeed Simon Frith argues that Kent and Shaar Murray brought credibility to the paper:

> Their immediate effect was on the paper's style . . . Their writing was hip and knowledgeable, their cynicism about the rock business was up-front' (Frith, 1983, 172).

However, for Forde it is Kent and Shaar Murray's belief in the 'personalism of new journalism' that is pivotal. In particular, he argues the autonomy Andy Smith gave them meant that the 'the idiosyncratic

voices, styles and opinions of the different writers scrambled for attention and domination' (Frith, 172). Certainly, in his selection and mediation of dialogue from an interview with Scottish singer Alex Harvey of the Alex Harvey Band, Charles Shaar Murray exhibits exactly the kind of self-referential approach for which Lester Bangs was renowned:

> You and me were talking about comic book heroes a little while ago," muses Harvey over a pint of bitter, "and the relationship between that and being a rock-and-roll star. In actual fact, you and Nick Kent are in a far better position to become a pop star than any rock-and-roll singer – because anything that comes out has got to come via you.
>
> "You said your readers regarded you as entertainers – that's what I'm saying. You are conveying the message. Somebody like Sinatra can make really duff songs sound good. Somebody that's a good writer can make something silly have some kind of shape. It becomes his show."
>
> Critic-as-star? A nice thought.
>
> Harvey, though, could reverse that almost effortlessly. Because he's seen so much without losing touch, he functions admirably as a critic.
>
> (Shaar Murray, 1974, 1)

Forde has characterized the identity of the *NME* during the 1970s as 'polyglottic' because it was home to a diverse and often competing selection of writers. This, Forde argues, reached its peak during punk when Nick Logan appointed Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill following a recruitment campaign advertising posts for 'Two Hip Young Gun Slingers' (Stephen Brook, 2007). Both were renowned for their acerbic style; together publishing the audacious *The Boy Looked at Johnny* in 1978, which proclaimed itself to be the 'obituary of rock 'n' roll'. However, upon reviewing some of the editorial Burchill contributed to *NME* between 1976 and 1979 there is also a thoughtfulness and reflexivity reminiscent of her American forebears:

> THE HEARTBREAKERS
>
> L.A.M.E
>
> "For every rock 'n' roll show 200 black children are shot!"

> Audience APPLAUSE greeted this remark by Iggy Pop at The Rainbow last Saturday. The implications of rock 'n' roll – the deaths, the dirt, the dissipation of precious energy, the cocaine, the high connections, the product – don't bear analysis anymore. You wanna riot? Fooled again, sucker, and me too.
>
> The latest vinyl communiqué from your favourite street fighting punks will have no bearing whatsoever on whether the button gets pressed or not. We may as well just retreat into our own universal private world.
>
> After rock 'n' roll as art-form/agent of social change/palliative come rock 'n' roll as reflex. Those few who have evolved this far play simple though not "minimalist" music that label implying a deliberate paring and studied naivety. "Realism" – though he would conjure up visions of Northern prole playwrights and kitchen sinks – would be much nearer the mark. (Burchill, 1977, 1*)*

The key issue here it would seem is that while punk transformed the landscape of popular music, for all its polemicism, it was not a radical point of departure for the music press. Rather the punk era galvanized certain trends in popular music journalism that can be traced back to jazz criticism, beat writers, new journalism and American styles of music reporting. Authenticity is central to this. As Keightley suggests: 'punk drew on modernist conceptions of authenticity to attack the dominant romanticism of 1970s rock' (Keightley, 2001, 138). However, as he goes onto suggest, the seminal text of the punk movement, the Sex Pistols *Never Mind the Bollocks* (1977) embodies both romantic and modernist sensibilities 'more or less equally' (Keightley, 2001, 139). What is remarkable, however, is the way in which, in his role as editor of *NME*, Nick Logan was able to rationalize these contradictions.

On the one hand, Nick Logan had been a champion of the shift towards a more serious style of music journalism at *NME* in the early 1970s; this emphasized the political significance of the counter culture and the aesthetic value of the long-play record. Nominally, this shift can be seen as a move to a more 'authentic' American rock sensibility, which the influence of both new journalism and writers like

Lester Bangs corroborates. On the other hand, Logan was an advocate of the backlash against the 1960s that underpinned the sonic purge of punk's ideological rationale: 'I loved Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Led Zeppelin, Cream, Fleetwood Mac and all those people and I wrote about them but they just felt completely stale' (Logan, 2009). Caveats Logan inserts here include Bowie, Roxy Music, Lou Reed, Velvet Underground, which he argues draw 'threads into punk' and interestingly embody a much more Art-school sensibility than those in the preceding. However, the significance of Logan's journey should not be underestimated. Reflecting upon this thirty years on, Logan is phlegmatic about the role of authenticity in the shift from counter-culture to punk:

> It comes down to the music you love, and what makes good copy. The ideal is when both of them combine, which they did most of the time. It was a really exciting period to be involved in. I did not sit around thinking how authentic it was. Credibility I suppose - the two interchangeable - making the *NME* credible was something I had to think about and I suppose with every magazine that I have done. (Logan, 2009).

Commensurately, Logan is matter of fact in his explanation of the changes *NME* under went during this period, eschewing ideological rationalisation in favour of the material circumstance involved in the production of a weekly music title. Of particular significance he argues was the period of industrial action when it was impossible to print the magazine:

> Just after I became editor of *NME*, there was an 8-week printing strike, which was quite cathartic because we couldn't put a magazine out, I was going to be more radical than Alan had been. I knew I wanted to put just one image on the front cover. But I couldn't do anything for the 8 weeks, but when we came back, all the pent up emotion just came out into the very first issue, which if you look at the issue, there was a sea change, which wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the printers' strike. (Nick Logan, 2009).

Though Logan concedes that what made punk so exciting was the sense in which it embodied 'throwing out everything old', he also emphasizes the social context of music journalism during this period. In particular, the civil unrest that saw 'pubs being burnt out' and 'riots' bought back an

excitement of having 'actual news stories to put in a magazine' (Logan, 2009). In the proceeding sections I will consider the way disco also configured the notion of authenticity in popular music; this is significant because both are the backdrop against which this research commences with the launch of *Smash Hits* in 1978. As I will go on to discuss in chapter 3, there is a disparity in the seriousness with which the two genres are considered, with punk generally viewed as more significant. Testimony to this the use of the phrase post-punk as opposed to post disco to describe the epoch before what Rimmer (1985) defines as new pop. Henceforth, therefore, I shall endeavour to use the more plural term 'post disco/punk mainstream' to identify the more commercial milieu of popular music in the late 1970s.

Punk and the Configuration of Authenticity.

The volatility of pop ideology is counterpoised in serious writing on pop by the emphasis on specific epochs. As Rimmer notes, the history of popular music is punctuated by significant moments at regular intervals: rock n roll in 1956, The Beatles in 1963, psychedelia in 1966, glam rock in 1972 and punk 1976 (Rimmer, 1985, 11). Appending this we can add on house music in 1987, grunge in 1991, r & b in the late 1990s before the fracture of mainstream pop into a compendium of niche markets and defined communities at the beginning of the 21st Century. And certainly, there is a sense in which all of these moments can be recouped within fairly traditional narratives of rock authenticity, romantic and modernist. It is, however, what happens during the periods of transition that is potentially most interesting. This is something Keightley gestures to when reflecting upon the period 1959 to 1963, the years between rock 'n' roll and The Beatles, which he considers to be 'incredibly important':

> The music and culture of the in-between years were incredibly important and may be viewed as a laboratory of sorts in which different elements of what would later become rock culture took shaped. The years 1959 – 63 saw a great deal of experimentation in the recording studio, with producers like Phil Spector, Berry Gordy, and Brian Wilson using available technologies to create exciting new sounds that could only exist on tape… The in-between years also saw increased representation of African – American and female performers in the mainstream. The desegregation of the charts accelerated, as Sam Cooke and Chubby Checker became mainstream superstars. Unlike the rock 'n' roll era, which had virtually no

> female stars, the in-between years were characterised by highly successful women performers with exciting and energetic 'girl groups' like the Shirelles and the Crystals, and immensely popular solo artists like Brenda Lee and Connie Francis dominating the charts. (Keightley, 2001, 117)

There is of course a parallel here between the early 1960s and the mainstream of popular music in the UK after disco and punk: a liminal moment in which the more stable signifiers of authenticity were transgressed by an influx of records influenced by dance floor rhythms. As I will go on to discuss in Chapter 3, the period 1978 to 1980 is an interesting time for popular music in the UK: not least because it represents the height of singles sales in the UK, but also because of the diversity of the musical mainstream. Likewise, I look at the way in which the written and visual culture of *Smash Hits* captured pop culture in the UK at this very interesting moment of transition. For the moment, however, I want to focus on punk.

The legacy of punk upon the way in which popular music is conceptualized is difficult to pin down. On the one hand, punk as a musical movement around which a sub-culture was formed had a tremendous social significance in the UK. For example, unemployment, social changes and civil disobedience are all part of the social context of punk. On the other hand, while the deconstructive sensibility of punk was potentially very avant-garde, in musical terms punk rehearsed some very traditional narratives of authenticity, which can be traced back in the music press to the American rock journalism of the 1960s and British jazz criticism of the 1950s. As Dave Rimmer has argued, the notion of selling out was a hippy concept that the punks adopted (Rimmer, 1985, 11). From an ideological perspective then punk is perhaps best considered as a deconstructive motif, which decoupled aesthetic integrity from musical accomplishment by reconfiguring performance within a narrative of cultural authenticity. The notion that the music press did not change radically during punk has been alluded to in the work of Gudmundsson et al. They argue that second only to The Beatles the punk rock era is the most celebrated moment in the history of British pop because it represented a 'crossroads where a modernist aesthetic, intent on making it new, ends up in a postmodern celebration of rock's basic barbarism' (Gudmundsson et al, 2002. 54). Or, as Simon Frith and Howard Horne have argued, punk kept in play both 'bohemian ideas of authenticity and Pop Art ideals of

artifice' (Frith and Horne, 1987, 124). These two ideas cohered themselves around the music press to form what Gudmundsson et al consider to be the second significant moment in the development of the music press in the UK for two reasons. Firstly, polemic writers like Burchill and Parsons embodied a working class cultural sensibility. Secondly, print was the principal means of disseminating information about this new phenomenon: radio disc jockeys shunned punk records and punk bands were often banned form live music venues. It was this social dimension to the deconstruction of popular music that, as Steve Jones has argued, marked out British rock criticism from its American counterpart. In a 2003 interview with Simon Warner on the website rockcritics.com, Jones suggests that UK critics made connections between music and everyday life:

> U.S. critics, while noting the social impacts of music, had a tendency to want to find a "big picture," what one might call "Woodstock syndrome". While U.K. critics did not, of course, miss the generational significance of punk rock, they also delved into discussions about school, the dole, neighbourhoods etc. (Steve Jones, 2003, 1)

Therefore, while the music press in the UK may have tacitly created a space for more plural constructions of popular music ideology, its narrative structure rehearsed some very traditional ideas about authenticity.

While music criticism in the 1960s may have focused on musical roots and instrumental accomplishment as the talisman of musical authenticity, by the 1970s the very same concept of authenticity underpinned ideas about social realism and political rhetoric. For example, while Nick Farren's article on The Damned uses literary devices characteristic of new journalism, the aesthetic framework configures group alienation with genuine artistic expression.

> Brian James comes into the pub. The kid refuses to believe that he's one of The Damned. Brian James doesn't have a plastic card to prove who he is. It doesn't matter too much, though – the kid's no longer slagging off the New Wave. Now he's waving a heavily tattooed arm to prove another point. He apparently plays guitar in an amateur band. He's aggressively

> hopeless about his music. No matter how well he's able to play, he's absolutely certain he'll never get anywhere.
>
> It's odd that despite their arrogant negativity, the blank generation do, at least, hold out some kind of hope. This far more conventional kid seems whipped before he's even begun.
>
> THE NEIGHBOURHOOD around the Manchester Apollo couldn't provide a better backdrop for a Late Seventies cultural confrontation.
>
> The Apollo is a medium-sized Thirties picture palace converted for rock 'n' roll. It and the adjoining pub stand rather forlornly in the middle of a vast tract of bleak scorched earth. The bulldozers have been and taken out the acres of back-to-back, Coronation Street terraces. Here and there half a terrace still stands in surreal isolation, like dazed survivors of a massacre. In the distance the alien, Clockwork Orange high-rise towers are waiting with their final solution to the people problem.
>
> In a landscape like this, it's all too logical for kids to turn to nihilist, Weimar Republic self-destruction to assert their own individuality. On stage, the Weimar nostalgia boom is in full swing. It comes in the person of singer Dave Vanian.
> (Farren, 1977, 1)

Far from challenging the conventions of rock journalism, punk reaffirmed central tenets of a belief system developed over the preceding years: a belief system that had shaped and gilded the careers of exactly the kinds of artists punk sought to do away with. Moreover, the success of *NME* betrayed the duality of its existence. While the *NME* may well have been steeped in the belief that popular music could be an agent of social revolution, the popularity of the music press during punk fixed rock criticism within the bigger picture of the existing capitalist media hegemony. In this sense, while punk did not change 'critical standards' in the music press it certainly sowed the seeds of change for the 'stylish criticism of the early 1980s' (Gudmundsson et al, 2002. 54)

Liminality and Disco

Disco is arguably more significant to the success of *Smash Hits* because at the time of its inception disco was the biggest commercial force in the record industry. Traditionally 'rock' artists like the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and Rod Stewart all had hits with records that conformed to the rhythmic patterns of disco records and this fusion of styles would go on to shape the way in which the very mainstream of rock would develop in the 1980s with the appropriation of drum machines and synthesizers. Yet, by the time of *Q's* ascendancy in the latter half of the decade, disco was systematically written out of popular music history: occluded from a very white, middle-aged, male orientated canon. In this direction, though it is beyond the scope of this project, I feel it is essential to gesture towards the broader contours of disco and the politics of gender and race that accompany it.

There is it would seem a real problem with the way in which disco is conceptualised by audiences that consider themselves serious in their appreciation of popular music. Central to this is the perception of disco as a commercial culture. As Richard Dyer argues, criticism of disco's 'mode of production' is often predicted on a false consciousness that 'it is possible in a capitalist society to produce things (e.g. music e.g. rock and folk) that are outside of capitalist mode of production' (Dyer, 1979, 20). Of course this predicts very accurately the sentiments of Keightley when he talks about the way in which rock culture perceives itself as a 'special case' of mass consumption (Keightley, 2001, 127). This incompatibility with over-arching rock ideology can perhaps be attributed to the preference in popular music criticism for the term post-punk to describe the music scene of the late 1970s. As David Hepworth suggests, the term rather overstates the importance of punk:

> I have great problem with 'post punk'. The fact that there is the expression 'post-punk' indicates punk's major problem, which is that it had a massively over-inflated sense of its own importance. Punk rock was just one of the things that was going on at the time. You might as well say the post-disco mainstream, because actually if you're looking for a real commercial phenomenon in the mid-1970s, it was disco music. (David Hepworth, 2009)

The occlusion of disco from mainstream accounts of popular music culture in the late-1970s does of course need to be placed in the context of both the race and gender politics of the time. A key

moment for this in America was the 'Disco Demolition Derby' in Chicago Illinois on the 12th July 1979. Organised as a promotional device by the radio station WLUP to draw attention to its rival broadcaster WDAI switching to an all disco format, thousands of disco records were burnt between games at the Comiskey Park baseball stadium, culminating in a riot. This violent reaction to the proliferation of the genre can in part be attributed to disco's explicit rejection of traditional modes of authenticity in popular music culture. As Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor argue, critics of disco bemoaned its formulaic quality:

> (A) more explicit and more widespread criticism was that disco had reduced the dance beat to its most mechanical basics. Anyone could dance to disco because it was so simple and predictable – it pandered to the lowest common denominator and lacked a genuine groove, according to its critics. Another standard criticism of disco was that it was shallow or insubstantial – fake, in other words. But the genre had deliberately avoided the aesthetics of authenticity. A typical disco record made no attempt to tell use about the performer or the reality. Instead, it created a world of glitter and celebration, ecstasy and escape (Barker and Taylor, 2007, 236)

However, it was also a function of embedded racist and homophobic sentiments amongst the anti-disco lobby.

The appropriation of disco music in America by the gay scene and the black community were certainly contributing factors to the virulence of Disco Demolition Night and other notable campaigns like Disco Sucks. As Peter Braunstein has argued in *American Heritage Magazine* (1999), disco threatened the hegemony of white rock masculinity:

> No one was more alarmed by the growth of disco than were fans of rock music. They saw it as a direct and intentional challenge to rock's position at the top of pop music's ziggurat. Rock fans framed their struggle against disco as a Manichaean conflict of ideological opposites, in which disco represented all that was synthetic, aristocratic, and fake, while populist rock stood for all that was earthy and real. Rhetorical polarities notwithstanding, history told a somewhat

> different tale. Rock had originally lost ground to disco precisely because it demanded a relationship between performer and fans in which the latter were reduced to passive, idolatrous spectators. This dynamic was reversed by the democratic principle within disco that relegated many performers to a state of near-anonymity and made the dancers the stars. Moreover, disco stood for a new sexual order that, in the words of the writer Alice Echols, "seemed to arouse something like castration anxiety in rockers." Rock had been an ongoing celebration of uncontested straight male sexual dominance; disco bypassed hetero men in favour of black women divas, gay male dancers, and virtually any other alternative. To reaffirm their sexual primacy, rockers needed to destroy disco and the altered sexual hierarchy it stood for. (Braunstein, 1999, Vol 50 Issue 7)

This diversity, then, mirrors the less singular profile of performers in *Smash Hits* and is an important backdrop against which the legacy of the magazine needs to be understood. *Smash Hits* featured disco artists, featured the disco chart and created in print form a 'world of glitter and celebration, ecstasy and escape' (Barker and Taylor, 2007, 236). That said, the pop scene in the UK was less polarised in the UK and as I have already suggested the more carnivalesque sensibility of British pop rendered the politics of disco a less contentious proposition. However, it is perhaps the corollary of this debate that, for the purposes of this thesis, is the most useful: the way in which the gender politics of disco framed the primacy of authenticity in the deconstruction of pop. As Barker and Taylor suggest, a suspicion of authenticity was a unifying force in the appropriation of disco by both black and gay communities:

> Black and gay culture each had their own reasons for treating authenticity with suspicion. There were huge differences between growing up black and growing up gay, but in either case you were more likely to be in an ongoing state of self-reinvention – to simply be yourself was to invite prejudice and hostility (Barker and Taylor, 2007, 236 –237).

It is this same uneasiness with the hegemony of authenticity then that is the motivating force behind this research. The way in which authenticity has been and continues to be used as a neutralising discourse that justifies the ritual exclusion of certain kinds of music and certain kinds of stars.

Moreover, it favours certain kinds of audience interaction; in particular the live concert and long play record. However, these are not the ways in which many music fans interact or are able to interact with pop music culture.

Conclusion

In the chapter, I have traced the development of the music press since the 1950s and the way in which it embraced and celebrated various modes of musical authenticity. Along the way, I have gestured towards the way in which this evolution informed and shaped the way the music press would progress in the 1980s. While the stylistic conventions of the music press in the 1960s and 1970s were in essence reconfigured by *Q* in the 1980s, *Smash Hits* emerges as a liminal moment in which the spirit of British pop in the 1950s was resurrected. This is significant because, though much of British pop of the 1950s may have been formulaic and standardized, its 'carnivalesque' mimicry of American rock 'n' roll challenged American pre-occupation with the authentic. It is this celebration of artifice and the rejection of American modes of rock authenticity that I will argue is particularly significant to in understanding the development of the music press in subsequent decades. Likewise, the 1960s were a time of transformation in the music press in both the UK and America. The early 1960s embodied a very pop sensibility, particularly in Britain where the charts were dominated by cover version of American rock 'n' roll. This is reflected in the mainstream emphasis of *NME* and the way in which The Beatles were presented as teen pop stars. All this changed in the wake of The Beatles success in America where the Liverpool quartet, alongside other British bands like the Rolling Stones and The Kinks, were taken much more seriously. The shift at *Melody Maker* away from jazz towards American *rock* sounds typifies the way in which popular music began to be viewed more seriously in this period. The more critical edge to the music press in the 1960s was reflected in the launch of three major American titles in the late 1960s: *Crawdaddy*, *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*. Though each had a very different emphasis, the central tenet of the writing was that popular music should be considered as a serious Art form. This new highbrow sensibility to *rock* in the late 1960s contrasted with the more carnivalesque take on *pop* in the 1950s and chimed in well with the literary aspiration of writers like Lester Bangs, influenced by beat generation writer like Kerouac and Burroughs. However, it was not until the 1970s and the publication of Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism* that this strategy would come into full fruition.

The 1970s was a time of consolidation rather than revolution in the music press in America. Strands that developed in the 1960s embedded themselves in the cross-pollination between the worlds of literary journalism and the music press. Land-mark moments in this respect are the publication of Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) in *Rolling Stone* and Tom Wolfe's *The New Journalism* (1975). In the UK, the publication of Lester Bangs work in *NME* and *Melody Maker* caused a stir, as did the publication of a UK edition of *Rolling Stone*. However, it was perhaps the work of Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray that had the biggest influence on the polemical style of the music press in the UK in the 1970s. In particular, their influence can be felt upon the acerbic style of Tony Parson and Julie Burchill during the punk era. That said, for all punk's revolutionary potential, in terms of the journalistic style, the era reinforced the form and conventions of an earlier era: authenticity, anti-commercialism and the subjective attachments of the writer were as integral to punk as they were the hippy-era that preceded. It was not until the launch of *Smash Hits* at the cusp of the decade that the journalistic values of the music press would begin to evolve in a new and more corporate direction.

In the subsequent chapters, I will explore the ways in which *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* transformed the mores of the popular music press upon their launch in 1978 and 1986 respectively. Both titles embraced the positive and creative possibilities of consumer culture. In *Smash Hits,* this was manifest in the celebration of the surface visual culture of popular music, while in *Q* it is marked the appropriation of consumer discourse into vocabularies for talking about popular music. Within the Academy, however, there is a tacit assumption in the work of Forde (2001), Shukar (2001), and Gudmundsson et al (2002), that the more anodyne register of *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* made them less significant than their historical antecedents *Rolling Stone*, *NME* and *Melody Maker*. I will argue that far from diminishing the value of the music press, so significant were the changes to the mores of the music journalism that today the legacy of *Q* and *Smash Hits* is of real value to Popular Music Studies.

Chapter 3 - Reconfiguring Authenticity in *Smash Hits*

Introduction

In this chapter I will look at the way in which the launch of *Smash Hits* in 1978 challenged the role of authenticity in the British music press. In particular, I will argue that *Smash Hits* dispensed with the authentic as a primary form of aesthetic deconstruction. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the role of authenticity in the music press has its origins in American rock ideology of the 1960s. Instead, I will argue that *Smash Hits* invoked a less fixed aesthetic rationale: a rationale that arguably reacquainted the music press with the more carnivalesque sensibility of the 1950s and a way of thinking about pop that is more British than American. The chapter begins with a survey of theoretical approaches to the music scene in this period, including the tendency to view the mainstream as problematic. Central to this is the way in which *Smash Hits* has been viewed as synonymous with new pop and the music culture of the mid-1980s. Instead, I suggest that consideration of the magazine should be focused on its footprint in the 1970s and the post-punk/disco period in which singles sales were at their height and the mainstream was more diverse. With some consideration given to the legacy of what Rimmer terms 'the star groups of punk' (Rimmer, cited by Gorman, 2002, 286), I then proceed to offer detailed analysis of the way in which *Smash Hits* communicates in terms of written style and presentational devices. Central to this will be an assertion that although the magazine's celebration of surface culture challenged received thinking about authenticity in popular music, the forms and conventions of the magazine were highly sophisticated: assuming high levels of cultural capital on the part of the reader. First, however, I will discuss the way in which the launch of *Smash Hits* was conceptualised by those who worked on it.

The Launch of *Smash Hits*

Smash Hits was launched in November 1978 as a collaborative venture between Peterborough based East Midlands Allied Press and Nick Logan, editor of IPC's *NME.* Initially it was published monthly; however, after just three issues, *Smash Hits* changed to fortnightly, which it remained until its closure in 2006. Although there had been a test-issue in September with Plastic Bertrand on the front, its first issue proper featured Blondie as cover stars. Unlike previous music titles, it was printed on glossy A4 paper and in colour. Another novelty of the magazine was the reproduction of the song lyrics for

records that were performing well in the singles chart. The tone of the magazine was largely celebratory: making no problematic distinctions between genres. For example, in 1979 cover stars include artists associated with punk, new wave, glam rock, disco and more progressive forms: The Buzzcocks, The Clash, Deborah Harry, David Bowie, Billy Idol, Donna Summer and Kate Bush. However, according to Nick Logan, such diversity did not fit with how its publishers initially conceptualised the project. When EMAP first began to explore the concept of a teen pop magazine they wanted to root the title in the disco genre and, indeed, the original title for *Smash Hits* was *Disco Fever* - in an attempt it would seem to capitalise on the success of the John Badham film *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). Logan had to be quite demonstrative in his assertion that the title would also cover punk: 'It was said to me we like *Disco Fever* – it was *John Tavolta*, it was *Grease*, it was *Saturday Night Fever* – and I said well forget it I want to put Sham 69 and Blondie in' (Nick Logan, *Media Guardian pod-cast*, 2009). Pop in Logan's mind was a broad church.

In contemporary accounts of *Smash Hits* much is made of the magazine emphasis of on 'pop'. For example, *25 Years of Smash Hits* (2003), Chris Fouracre's television documentary broadcast on Channel 4 it claimed that *Smash Hits* was a success because 'tabloid and telly ignored pop and the only place to read about it was in the serious music press' (Fouracre, 2003). Likewise, speaking to Reuters around the same time Stephen Palmer, MD of Pop at EMAP, speculated that secret of *Smash Hits* success was its ability to encapsulate the transience of pop:

> The world of pop is about big stars and big stories and building shrines to the stars that teenagers adore. *Smash Hits* was the first magazine to really share the readers' obsession with pop and is still unashamedly able to share the readers' excitement. It was the first magazine to realise that there is no yesterday and no tomorrow in pop - only today. (Stephen Palmer, Reuters, 2003)

Both accounts invoke a vision of pop that is perhaps more singular than that championed by Logan and indeed as the magazine developed it did become more focused on those bands an artists whose appeal was restricted to teenage girls. However, during the period 1978 to 1981 there was a considerable cross over between the kinds of 'pop' star covered in the *Smash Hits* and the more

traditional 'rock' stars covered by the traditional broadsheet titles *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Sounds*. And, as the cover stars of 1979 indicate, far from being transient *Smash Hits* pop has had considerable perpetuity.

In one sense, the crossover between *Smash Hits* and *NME* was a reflection of the UK singles chart during that period. According to David Hepworth the charts were very important during this period: 'everybody was focused on having chart hits' (David Hepworth, Interview, 2009). In this respect it could be argued that *Smash Hits* reacquainted music journalism in the UK with the Top 40 sensibility that characterised titles like *NME*, *Record Mirror* and *Disc* in the 1950s. And, indeed, Ian Cranna emphasises the importance of the charts:

> The main thing for *Smash Hits* was the charts. When that came out it governed everything because the charts also governed *Top of the Pops*, which in turn governed what went up and down the charts. (Ian Cranna, Interview, 2009)

This more fluid conception of pop is also very British: less pre-occupied with American conceptions of authenticity. And, indeed, *Smash Hits* could be said to embody a more 'authentic' vision of the British pop aesthetic discussed in chapter 1: the carnivalesque sensibility that permeated the music scene throughout the 1960s and 70s. However, it was also a direct result of the input of Nick Logan at the development stage and a willingness to experiment on the part of EMAP.

One of the key ways in which *Smash Hits* embraced the carnivalesque aesthetic of British pop was in the contradictory combination of punk and glossy paper. In Gorman's *In Their Own Write* (2002), for example, Logan speaks of how he had to fight EMAP for the inclusion of punk groups. By contrast, he suggests the use of glossy paper, which was a major departure from the more ragged style of the inkies was a happy accident:

> They had a plan to test an issue in Middlesbrough but couldn't get the paper they wanted, so they did it on glossy stock. My interest was in getting excellent photography, with the lyrics as the ballast and bringing these good acts to a young audience, be it The Jam or Elvis Costello.

> The test issue had Plastic Bertrand on the cover and Sham 69 as the centre spread. The kids loved the glossiness of the paper but hated all the punk stuff. It was, 'I hate it. Show me some more'. But I told EMAP I'd walk if we dropped all that stuff, because I was under no obligation. (Logan cited by Gorman 2002, 283-284)

Arguably this contrapuntal sensibility was central to the way in which *Smash Hits* challenged the hegemony of American rock authenticity, which had characterised the music press that preceded it. On the one hand, *Smash Hits* invoked the pin-up sensibility of the teen-magazine whilst on the other hand taking as its subject matter musicians who were generally considered to be serious artists. In effect *Smash Hits* embraced a Pop Art sensibility in that it used frivolous commercial forms to reframe thought-provoking cultural matter and as result blurred the boundaries between Art and commerce that had hitherto defined the role of the serious music press. In the light of EMAP's subsequent evolution into a large multi-platform media brand, Logan's bargaining position seems unlikely. However, this needs to be placed in context.

When Nick Logan set up *Smash Hits* his career was in the ascendant. Having started his career as a music journalist in the 1960s, during his time at the *NME* he transformed the overly reverential style of the title to great success: embracing punk and hiring iconoclastic 'personality' writers like Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons. By contrast, EMAP was a provincial operation, noted mainly for its printing work and the publication of a couple of men's passion titles (*Angling Times* and *Motorcycle News*). In leaving his prestigious role at IPC, Logan was determined to set up a magazine that was different to the *NME*:

> I came up with five or six ideas for magazines, across a range of which *Smash Hits* was the one extreme. It was the youngest, it was just an idea, there was something like it in the market and I thought I could do this much much better: much better paper, much better paper, much nicer better quality, give people something really decent. And there were all these great visual groups out there at the time post-punk and all these photographers I had worked with on the *NME* and I liked the idea of working in colour (Nick Logan, *Media Guardian pod-cast*, 2009)

In this use of colour Logan certainly inaugurated a more playful sensibility that is at the core of the *Smash Hits* aesthetic: mischievousness rooted in the juxtaposition between high gloss and *sub*-urban realism. And while it was Logan who set out early issues of the magazine on his kitchen table at his home in Essex, he soon enlisted the help of Steve Bush as Art Director. According to Ian Cranna, Bush's arrival was significant because it moved the magazine forward in terms of its visual grammar:

> If you look, you can see that really early covers, which Nick Logan designed, were more basic: the likes of Phil Lynott peering out from curtains of huge jumbo type. Steve came in; he was a natural designer and made it much more sophisticated. (Ian Cranna, Interview, 2009)

Likewise, Logan soon appointed Ian Cranna to take over the day-to-day running of the magazine. Cranna had originally been short-listed by Logan for a job on the *NME;* apropos *NME's* hip-young gunslinger recruitment campaign that procured Julie Burchill and Tony Parson. Though the job never materialised, Cranna worked on a freelance basis for NME whilst completing his PhD on 17th Century Scottish and Dutch History at the University of Edinburgh. However, it was his love of pop music that suggested Cranna to Logan for the job on *Smash Hits*:

> I'd been working for them from Edinburgh, but that was pretty much all I'd done. I was very green in terms of production and everything else so I had a lot to learn. I was on trial for three months and at the end of that period I had to decide what I wanted to do. And I must say I was kind of bored by the functional element of it. I felt I had something to contribute on the editorial side and I said that you know, am I going to take a chance on this or not? Otherwise I might as well go back to Edinburgh. I think I really forced Nick's hand, because by this stage Nick had started thinking about *The Face*, so I think this kind of pushed him out. (Cranna, 2009)

Indeed, it would seem that during this period Logan's sights were elsewhere: 'I don't think there was any secret he wanted to do something else and Nick was of the academic *NME* background. So I don't think his heart was in pop' (Cranna, 2009). And of course, when he launched *The Face* in 1980

it operated out of the *Smash Hits* office. Though Nick Logan moved on from *Smash Hits* very quickly his receptivity towards the modern and determination to produce a high quality product was already embedded in the magazine. This sensibility was to resurface in Logan's subsequent venture *The Face*: a magazine that would position some very avant-garde thinking into the mainstream. Consequently, it could be said that it was as much its quixotic sensibility that distinguished *Smash Hits* from the rest of the music press in the late 1970s, as it was the use of colour.

In addition to this, the magazine augmented its editorial with the reproduction of song lyrics. Working in the tiny office in Carnaby Street, it was Bev Hillier's (soon to be Bev Soutar, editor of *Just Seventeen*) job to transcribe the lyrics directly from the 7-inch singles. Such was the informality of the relationship between recording artist and music journalist at the end of the 1970s that Hillier would often speak directly to the writer of the song as opposed to the publishing company. This was a strategy Logan picked up from the publication *Disco 45.* In part, this served the function of padding out the magazine. Logan states: 'it appealed to me because I could do quite a bit of the magazine without a lot of staff' (Logan, 2009). In addition to the reproduction of lyrics, Hillier also influenced the editorial direction of the magazine when she became reviews editor. In particular, she drew attention to the importance of dance music and London club scene in a liminal moment between the disco and new romantic era. That *Smash Hits* was about more than just mirroring the pop charts, is evidenced by Logan's strategic view of the song lyrics as a way of including successful artists who sat less comfortable with Logan's esoteric pop vision:

> The likes of Bucks Fizz and ABBA, who I didn't have much time for, I didn't feature them in *Smash Hits* because I didn't like them. I could always just stick the lyrics in, which worked quite well, but the features would be about people that I actually liked. (Logan, 2009)

This discernment is evident in his rejection of EMAP's suggestion that the magazine be called *Disco Fever*: Though Logan was happy to include disco music in *Smash Hits*, he claims that the idea of aligning the title with one genre 'repulsed him because it had no longevity' (Logan, 2009). Instead, the magazine embraced post punk bands like Blondie, The Jam, The Police and The Clash not just

because Logan thought they would 'sell the magazine and have hits' (Logan, 2009), but also because he liked them

Theoretical Approaches to *Smash Hits*

Surveying the field, it is clear that those who have written about rock criticism have not overly analyzed the nature and purpose of the changes that took place in the music press at the end of the 1970s. While *Q* and *The Face* have been considered in some detail, *Smash Hits* tends to be ignored: lumped in either with the emergence of new pop (Rimmer, 1985; Reynolds, 2005) or the diversification of the music press subsequent to *Q* (Forde, 2001)*.* In part this can be attributed to complex relationships between the personnel involved; the launch of *Q* was controlled by Mark Ellen and Dave Hepworth, both of whom had worked previously on *Smash Hits* (as writers and editors). And, when plotting the trajectory of subsequent developments in the magazine industry and negotiating the legacy of *Q* this also works extremely well: Ellen went on to become editor in chief at EMAP, overseeing the launch of *FHM,* while Hepworth was the launch editor of *Empire*, *Mojo*, *Heat* and *Word*. Moreover as David Hepworth admits they were more ambitious for the title than Nick Logan, who had already achieved great things as editor of *NME* between 1973 and 1978:

> You know I wanted a really successful magazine of any kind. Don't forget, you can't separate people's personal ambitions from the trajectory of these things. You know what Mark Ellen, Steve Bush and I most wanted was a shot and we'd never had a shot before. And we got a shot and we were determined to make the most of it. And we did. We were ambitious bleeders. (Hepworth, 2009)

However, by focusing on this later period and ignoring Logan, what is often over-looked are the very close links between *NME* and *Smash Hits.* Indeed, there is a tendency to view everything that *Smash Hits* stood for as antithetical to the perceived high point of music journalism epitomised by the *NME* in the mid-1970s. This is not historically accurate. Not only was Logan instrumental in instituting the changes made by Alan Smith at the beginning of the 1970s, but he was also personally responsible for hiring both Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons: a campaign which also procured Logan's successor at *Smash Hits*, Ian Cranna.

According to Logan, his decision to leave *NME* was not a result of frustration with its editorial focus or emphasis on certain types of music, but rather the nervous tension of managing a large staff of writers:

> I was the editor of *NME* and decided to get out of IPC because it was such a strain looking after a maverick staff and trying to keep them apart from a very straight board of directors. We were very happy with the way the sales were going, and the ads, but not with some of the language and also some of the deeds and generally with some of the staff, no-one specific but some elements we were uncomfortable with. We left the advertising directive with the board of directors and it was a strain because I allowed myself to be the buffer between the two, keeping them apart as much as possible, and it couldn't take it anymore I'd just had enough. (Logan, 2009)

In setting up *Smash Hits* and subsequently *The Face*, then, what Logan sought to do was to extricate himself from working for a corporation and having to make editorial decisions as part of committee. For example, Wagadon, the independent publishing house controlled by Logan, which put out *The Face,* was an off the shelf-company purchase by Logan to formalise his relationship with EMAP. And, indeed, this independent spirit shaped the earliest formations of *Smash Hits*, which were put together at his home in Essex. It is ironic therefore, that, in attempting to escape the more stifling climes of a large corporation, it would seem that, inadvertently, Logan honed what is perceived by many as the corporate style of the pop glossy.

That Logan, as the launch editor of *Smash Hits*, worked at arms length from EMAP to develop the brand, is something that is played down in the accounts of Gunter Gudmundsson et al (2002) and Eamonn Forde (2001). For example, Forde is quick to recognize the impact of EMAP on the music press in the 1980s. In the broader contours of his argument he suggests that in *Smash Hits* and *Q* EMAP instituted a monoglottic, corporate style that did away with the new journalism influenced critic as star approach of the *NME*:

> This period, in publishing terms, saw the rise in market importance of EMAP Metro, a publishing wing of the EMAP organization. EMAP Metro not only brought much greater competition into the market, but also fundamentally reshaped the music magazine publishing arena and oriented it towards glossy, high-production, niche titles. Its two earliest successes were the fortnightly pop title *Smash Hits* (1979) and the monthly adult rock title *Q* (1986). (Forde, 2001, 26)

Forde is also excellent at delineating the contemporary significance of this for the music press. He is very clear about how the monoglottic style of *Smash Hits* evolved under Ellen and Hepworth:

> In 1978, Nick Logan left the editorship of *NME* to launch *Smash Hits which*, by the mid-1980s, stood as a contrast to the indulgences of the personality writers and the austerity of the 'poststructuralists'. Mark Ellen – one of the magazine's founding team – says that the editors had all left behind the 'tedious and rather turgid polytechnic *reasoning* to everything' typical of the inkies, preferring instead to create an incredible, fantasy parallel universe' where pop stars were approached as 'cartoon-like creatures' and their traits taken to the level of hyperbole. (Forde, 2001, 27)

This is useful because there is a clear sense of how *Smash Hits* differed from *NME* and *Melody Maker* and also how much later Ellen and Hepworth developed this into the house-style of *Q*. However, what is left hanging is the lineage of *Smash Hits* prior to Hepworth and Ellen: the legacy of Nick Logan and Ian Cranna. Unfortunately, Forde has a tendency to consider the polyglottic style of the *NME* in stark contrast with the legacy of *Smash Hits* and *Q,* occluding the cross-pollination of staff and personnel involved. For example, not only did Ian Cranna write for *NME* prior to editing *Smash Hits*, but he also went on to work for *Q* on a freelance basis. Likewise David Hepworth wrote for *NME* before joining *Smash Hits,* as did Mark Ellen. Moreover, as I shall discuss in Chapter 5, old stagers like Paul Du Noyer and Charles Shaar Murray were both employed on *Q*.

Reflecting a general lack of interest in the musical mainstream at the end of the 1970s Gudmundsson et al are likewise vague about the role of *Smash Hits* in the metamorphosis of the music. On the one hand, they suggest that 'when new pop arrived in the scene, the avant-garde strategy, based on the

legacy of Dada and situationism on one hand, and US pop art on the other, had won out' (Gudmundsson, 2002, 55). On the other hand, *Smash Hits* is dealt with only in passing and in relation to *The Face*:

> The biweekly *Smash Hits*, founded in 1978, and the monthly style bible *The Face* in 1980, were both pop glossies started by ex-*NME* editor Nick Logan. Both represented the new 'pop sensibility' much better than the old black/white inkies that gave you dirty fingers. *Smash Hits* did so by re-invoking the teen mag idea of 'pop as magic' and avoiding rock criticism in a strict sense, but selling to grown ups. *The Face* embraced a post-modern consumer ideology, conspicuously apparent in its design where the line between editorial copy and advertisement was unclear and visual flourished at the expense of text (Gudmundsson et al 2002, 56).

Beyond the realm of those writing specifically about the music press the notion that *The Face* was a significant point of departure in magazine publishing and indeed the consumer culture of the 1980s is well documented in the work of Dick Hebdige (1988), Sean Nixon (1996) and Frank Mort (1996). For example, Mort argues that *The Face* continued the alliance between 'style and resistance' albeit 'in a different form' (Mort, 1996, 28); clearly *The Face* challenged the notion of cultural hierarchy and the Bourdieuian correlation between education and taste. However, while *The Face* may well have been the ultimate expression of Logan's post-modern consumer orientated sensibility, there is evidence to suggest that the same reflexive awareness informed the development of *Smash Hits*.

In addition to a general lack of interest in mainstream pop at the end of the 1970s there has also been a tendency to lump-in the rise of *Smash Hits* with the ascendancy of what has become known as 'new pop'. New pop is a term originally used by Paul Morley in the *NME* at the end of 1980 to describe new popular music that was positive about the future of the mainstream. Although the launch of *Smash Hits* preceded new pop by more than two years, somehow, in the process of historicisation, the legacy of *Smash Hits* and the term new pop seem to have been conflated. Dave Rimmer suggest in *Like Punk Never Happened* (1985), that the story of new pop is also the story of *Smash Hits* (Rimmer ,1985, 5). And it is easy to see why he says this. The mainstream of popular music after punk and prior to new pop has been relatively ignored in Popular Music Studies. For example, though exhaustive in its documentation of the independent scene, Simon Reynold's account of post-punk

from 1978 to 1984 *Rip it up and Start Again* (2005), does not really mention the mainstream before the 'cross-over' of bands like Human League and ABC. Likewise, there is a tacit assumption on the part of Rimmer that those bands that preceeded new pop, in effect punk's 'star groups' (Rimmer, 1985, 15), The Jam, The Police and Blondie were somehow complicit in the production of new pop. As he states:

> Its rise mirrored exactly the new pop; the staples of its coverage were – as each came along – Blondie, The Police, The Jam, Adam, Spandau, Human League, Duran Duran, Culture Club' (Rimmer cited by Gorman, 2002, 286).

However, just as the mainstream of popular music in this period was about more than just punk's 'star groups' so too was *Smash Hits* about more than just new pop. As Logan states:' it was about trying to reach out to people and creating a community' (Logan, 2009). Moreover, the term new pop comes with some very negative associations

One of the central problems with using new pop as a blanket term for mainstream music produced after punk is that those who have historicised it tend to stress its commercial sensibility in a way that is problematic. For example, Rimmer and Reynolds both imply a connection between the rise of new pop and the rise of Thatcherism. As Rimmer states, new pop rejected independent record labels: perceiving that the financial constraints restricted the creative endeavours of bands like Joy Division and Echo and Bunnymen to 'an artistic ghetto' (Rimmer, 1985, 17). Likewise, Reynolds states: 'New pop defined itself through 'a set of overlapping values: health, cleanliness, mobility, ambition' (Reynolds, 2005, 364). By association, therefore, the years between punk and new pop (in which Margaret Thatcher came into office) are seen as a time in which popular music acquiesced in what Antonio Gramsci (1935) would term 'cultural consent' to this new corporate hegemony.

From a classic Cultural Studies perspective, therefore, it is much simpler to read *Smash Hits*' mainstream sensibility as a regressive force. Taking the neo-Marxist tools of Stuart Hall as a deconstructive framework, for example, it is easy to see how *Smash Hits* could be viewed as less innocent. Indeed, as Hall states in 'The Rediscovery of Ideology': 'in order for one meaning to be

regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself' (Hall, 1982, 1050). In this sense *Smash Hits* could be said to have acquiesced in the wider political hegemony and the climate of aspiration that underpinned free-market capitalism in the 1980s. This is the view taken by Simon Reynolds. His book *Rip it Up and Start Again* (2006), which focused on the post-punk period fetishises the authenticity of the alternative scene and presents *Smash Hits* as mainstream and Thatcherite. And certainly the glossy lifestyle appeal of *Smash Hits* later coverage of new pop bands reinforces this idea. However, this view of *Smash Hits* as Thatcherite only really works alongside what *Smash Hits* became in the 1980s and over-simplifies consideration of *Smash Hits* in the 1970s. Clear distinction also needs to be made between the social climate of Margaret Thatcher's first term in office between 1979 and 1983 and that of her second and third term.

The legacy of Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher and British Prime Minister between 1979 and 1990 is one of individualism and free-market capitalism.Though she won three consecutive general elections, in her first term in office she was not a popular leader. Indeed, her most strident economic reforms were implemented after her second victory in the 1983 election, which she won partly on the back of an upsurge in patriotism following British victory in the Falklands War. For example, her clashes with the trade unions, most notably the National Union of Mineworkers, occurred after the 1983 election, as did the privatisation of state utilities like British Telecom and the sale of council housing stock. Nevertheless, material excess and the polarisation of wealth have become central motifs in the way in which Thatcherism is remembered in the popular imagination. Yet, the economic boom did not occur until the end of Margaret Thatcher's second term in office in 1987. Indeed, in 1981 Britain was still in the grips of economic depression. Thatcher's response to this, to raise taxes in an attempt to curb inflation, may have safeguarded the future prosperity of the UK; however, in the short term it was extremely unpopular with the electorate. Nevertheless, there-on-in, aspiration, if not tangible material wealth, was a discerniable feature of 1980s popular culture. However, just as Margaret Thatcher's economic reforms did not get into their full stride until the beginning of her second term in office, neither was the transformation from punk to new pop seamless.

In *Rip it up and Start Again* (2005) Simon Reynolds begins to make moves towards mapping the pathway from punk to new pop. He negotiates a space for the more avant-garde and esoteric popular

music acts of the late 70s including Public Image Ltd, Talking Heads, The Slits, Throbbing Gristle and Joy Division. The central vector of Reynold's argument is that the post-punk period has been misremembered; however, its lasting influence on popular music has been considerable:

> As a distinct pop cultural epoch, 1978 to 1982… … certainly rivals the sixties in terms of the sheer amount of great music created, the spirit of adventure and idealism that infused it, and the way that the music seemed inextricably connected to the political and social turbulence of the times (Reynolds, 2005, xiv).

He points out that while mainstream politics may have shifted to the right with the 1979 general election, the politics of popular music remained distinctly left of centre: a cultural legacy of the 'endless strikes, power-cuts… …race riots [and] fascism' (110) of the 1970s. He claims that bands like Gang of Four, The Mekons and Delta 5 were influenced by 'trendy left autodidactism' (111), 'Marxism and hardcore Aesthetic Theory' (112). However, the distinction he perceives in the hierarchy of new pop stars is unconvincing. The differentiation he makes between the first wave of the New Pop (The Human League, Soft Cell and ABC) and its follow up (Duran Duran, Culture Club and Eurythmics) is on the surface reasonable; the success of the latter grouping translated across the Atlantic and the careers of the personnel involved has endured beyond the remit of new pop. Yet Reynolds invokes the kind of Frankfurt School narrative that is impossible to substantiate within any serious consideration of popular music: accusing those bands of being 'careerists' and 'clones' latching onto the 'surface elements of new pop' (111). However, as Rimmer's much earlier work makes clear, business acumen and a positive attitude towards the mainstream were central tenets of the original new pop manifesto.

This reluctance to acknowledge the mainstream is ultimately the drawback of Reynold's account. As Vince Egan suggests, Reynolds ignores the fact that bands like the Rolling Stones, Roxy Music and Fleetwood Mac all enjoyed considerable success during the post-punk/disco period.

> (A) chapter on the mainstream would've given some contrast (today's sixty-something stadium fillers never stopped filling stadiums and selling records in huge amounts despite the

> rhetoric of the weekly music press, independent record labels, and John Peel). (Egan, 2007, 529)

Indeed, for all its earnest good intentions, *Rip It up and Start Again* resorts to exactly the sort of tactics David Riesman talks about in 'Listening to Popular Music' (1950). According to Riesman there are two categories of listeners: majority and minority. Majority listeners consume mainstream music and pop culture as a product and source of light-hearted fun while the minority develops 'over elaborate, standards of music listening' (Riesman, 1950, 4-5). *Rip It up and Start Again* is a celebration of the over elaborate standards for listening to post punk. Moreover, Reynolds' reluctance to tackle the mainstream has the effect of re-inscribing a dominant narrative of authenticity in popular music history: whereby popular music of consequence is revered for its social authority. This has the very real effect of neutralising the aesthetic challenges posed to the cultural hegemony of popular music in the period 1978 to 1981 from within its own mainstream. Indeed, though *Smash Hits* was lead by the charts, while Ian Cranna was editor the magazine positively emphasized the importance of independent music:

> We had a fortnightly style, which had to be taken care of because we couldn't miss our print slot. So within that, if there were sort of 20 records, I tried to pick the ten most deserving of that focus. For example, promoting the Liverpool groups, Echo and the Bunnymen. That kind of thing: that were pop in a really good creative kind of way. To give them a leg up and make sure independent music had its fair share of exposure. (Ian Cranna, 2009)

However, ignoring the complexity of the post-punk mainstream and focusing instead upon post MTV culture of new pop also has the advantage that it fits with what Dave Rimmer defines as the 'cyclical theory of pop':

> Spin the wheel, watch it turn. Rock 'n' roll in 1956, beat and The Beatles in 1963, hippies and psychedelia in 1967, Bowie and Roxy and glam rock in 1972, punk in 1976… watch it turn. As an old wave degenerates and expires, so a new wave explodes and regenerates. Every five

> years or so the paradigms shift. So runs the cyclical theory of pop and so, after punk, we get the New Pop. Simple isn't it? (Rimmer, 1985, 11)

In this sense, new pop is the inevitable consequence of punk because it was diametrically opposed to all that punk supposedly stood for. Except, of course, that new pop has not been remembered with the same fevered enthusiasm as punk. As Reynolds suggests, pop history is extremely revisionist: 'In the more extreme or sloppy accounts it is implied that nothing of real consequence happened between *Never Mind the Bollocks* and *Nevermind*, between Punk and Grunge' (Reynold's 2005 XV). One of the reasons that the music that came immediately after punk is so difficult to theorise, therefore, is that it posed no threat to social structure in a traditional political sense; rather it endorsed the proliferation of consumer lifestyle. The 1970s is after all a decade in which saw the rise of the new middle class, the expansion of consumer credit and foreign travel. That is not to say, however, that popular music during the latter half of the decade posed no challenge at all.

Rather than challenging social structure, the significance of the music that came after punk is that it challenged the ideological framework of popular music itself. Central to this, I believe, is the rejection of American modes of rock authenticity as the talisman of aesthetic achievement. Instead the post punk/disco mainstream invoked a more plural sensibility, informed by the commercial sensibilities of Pop Art, ciphered through artists like Roxy Music, David Bowie and The Sex Pistols. Informed by Dada, surrealism and situationism, on the surface this aesthetic challenged the role of the popular music as an agent of social change. It reacquainted pop with the more carnivalesque aesthetic of the 1950s and the role of the listener as consumer of popular music. This mirrored broader economic changes in society, not least the decline of both heavy industry and the political leverage of the working class. This new sensibility in the pop culture of the late 1970s was not, however, dumb without purpose: it spoke for the agency of the individual and the creative subversion of dominant ideologies. And, as such popular music during this period rejected the niche that cultural theorists likes of Paul Willis were only just beginning to carve out for it as a working class folk art. However, perhaps the most important lesson to be learnt from this period is that the term 'new pop' needs to be treated with suspicion. It is, in effect, a Trojan horse. Ideologically it fits both the cyclical model of pop

history pedalled by the music press and the ideas about cultural hegemony emanating from Cultural Studies. However, it flatters to deceive: overstating its own relevance and denying the complexities of the post punk/disco mainstream. In this respect, I would argue that Reynolds emphasises the importance of the alternative scene because it is easier to conceptualise new pop as a regressive force than address the challenges posed to received-thinking about the way in which popular music is framed by the *Smash Hits* aesthetic.

With the benefit of hindsight of course it is easy to see that new pop has not been historicised with the same vigour that preceding moments in youth culture have been revisited; the hippy era and punk, for example, are viewed as being far more important than the airbrushed gloss of new pop. And, indeed, when considering the 1980s it's perhaps the emergence of house music at the end of the decade that is of greater significance to Popular Music Studies. That said, within the Academy as a whole, the significance of the new pop *era* is born out in the range and breadth of work considering the music video in the 1980s. Writers like Kaplan (1993), Schwichtenberg (1993) and Skeggs (1993), for example, have produced compelling readings of such texts that emphasises the radical gender politics of musical performance. Often labelled 'Madonna studies', this branch of Queer Theory has been very persuasive in interpolating the work of Michel Foucault (1976) and Judith Butler (1990) with popular music texts. In this direction, as mentioned in chapter 1, Diane Railton (2001) has written on more recent issues of *Smash Hit*s emphasising gender and the carnivalesque. What is sidelined in such readings, however, is the role of music in the production of meaning. It is without doubt that a central motivation for this research is a personal belief that the music of the post-punk/disco mainstream was very exciting. Not only was it a time in which records sold in vast quantity but, as Ian Cranna, suggests the music was vital and fresh:

> At that time that there was an incredibly broad range because not only did you have the punk and the new wave but you also had things like disco and ska and regular pop and rock records. But yes, it was an incredibly vital time for singers because they'd lifted the veil off who could and could not make records. And all these characters - who had not been able to gain access to making records (because the prevailing attitude of record companies that would only sign progressive rock or whatever type records) were suddenly free to do there

> own thing and have the means to do their own thing. So suddenly you've got all these fantastically vital people coming through, some of whom, when you look at it, like Ian Dury for example or Polystyrene (who'd been doing street theatre) didn't really belong in any category at all. (Ian Cranna, 2009).

In particular the collision of punk and disco produced some very distinct sounding records that would shape the way in which the popular song would develop well into the 1980s. In the proceeding section I shall look at what made the post-punk mainstream so important, which in turn contributed towards the significance of *Smash Hits* during this period.

The Post Punk/Disco Mainstream

Aside from annexing the legacy of music in the 1970s, the problem with approaches to *Smash Hits* emanating from Cultural Studies and Queer Theory is that they have the tendency to view the legacy of the magazine as problematic. And certainly within Popular Music Studies a sceptical attitude towards the title permeates. In *Understanding Popular Music* (2001) by Roy Shukar, for example, *Smash Hits* is viewed as part of the omnibus term 'teen glossies': titles aimed at girls that make 'stars accessible to adolescent fantasy' (Shukar, 2001, 90). Elsewhere, great emphasis is placed on the magazines use of language and the appropriation consumer vocabulary. Eamon Forde in particular attributes the decline of 'personality' in the music press to *Smash Hits* and what he describes as the 'monoglottic' (Forde, 2001) corporate tone of music journalism in the Eighties (*Q*, *The Face* etc). What is often over-looked, however, is the way in which *Smash Hits* transformed the music press at the end of the 1970s by celebrating the surface culture of popular music. It is my contention therefore that *Smash Hits* not only had a profound effect on the evolution of magazine publishing but also reflected a major shift in the way in which popular music was

1. Elton John Candle In The Wind 97/ Something About The Way…(1997)
2. Band Aid Do They Know It's Christmas Time?(1984)
3 Queen. Bohemian Rhapsody (1975)
4. Wings Mull Of Kintyre/Girls School (1977)
5. Boney M Rivers Of Babylon/Brown Girl In The Ring (1978)
6. John Travolta And Olivia Newton John You're The One That I Want (1978)
7. Frankie Goes To Hollywood Relax (1984)
8. The Beatles She Loves You (1963)
9. Robson & Jerome Unchained Melody (1995)
10. Boney M Mary's Boy Child/Oh My Lord (1977

Fig 10 Top ten selling British singles of all time (Rees and Crampton, 1994)

1978	1979	1980
1. Boney M Rivers of Babylon/Brown Girl in the Ring	1. Art Garfunkel Bright Eyes	1. The Police Don't Stand So Close To Me
2. John Travolta and Olivia Newton John You're The One That I Want	2. Blondie Heart Of Glass	2. Barbara Streisand Woman In Love
3 John Travolta and Olivia Newton John Summer Nights	3. Cliff Richard We Don't Talk Anymore	3 Kelly Marie Feels Like I'm In Love
4. The Commodores Three Times a Lady	4. Boomtown Rats I Don't Like Mondays	4. Abba Super Trouper
5. The Bee Gees Night Fever	5. Dr Hook When You're In Love With A Beautiful Woman	5. Ottawan DISCO
6. Father Abrahan The Smurf Song	6. Gloria Gaynor I Will Survive	6. Blondie The Tide Is High
7. Abba Take a Chance on Me	7. Tubeway Army Are Friends Electric	7. Dexy's Midnight Runners Geno
8. Brian Michael Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs	8. Blondie Sunday Girl	8. Kenny Rogers Coward of the Country
9. Boomtown Rats Rat Trap	9 Roxy Music Dance Away	9.Fern Kinney Together We're Beautiful
10. Kate Bush Wuthering Heights	10. Lena Martell One Day At A Time	10. John Lennon (Just Like) Starting Over

Fig. 11. Number 1 singles Dec. 1977 to Dec 1980 (Rees and Crampton, 1994)

conceptualised in Britain. In the remainder of this chapter I will suggest that *Smash Hits* exposed a sophisticated system of visual grammar that reveals a great deal about the way in which pop texts communicate. Moreover, I will contend that, in light of the way in which the music scene shifted in the 1980s and beyond, recovering the archives of *Smash Hits* in the 1970s is potentially very relevant to contemporary understanding of popular music and possibly leads the way to a more fluid understanding of the ways in which pop texts work. In particular, *Smash Hits* subverted the dominant

narratives of authenticity that permeated the music press throughout the 1960s and 1970s. And, in this sense. it could be argued that *Smash Hits* reconfigured pop aesthetics with a carnivalesque sensibility that is very specifically British. However, before we begin to extrapolate the ways in which *Smash Hits* reflected a transformation in the understanding of popular music at the end of the 1970s, it is perhaps worth pausing to consider in much broader terms the reasons why that period is important.

Perhaps the most important feature of the mainstream pop scene in Britain at the end of the 1970s is that in commercial terms it was tremendously successful. In particular, the late 1970s represents the height of singles sales in the UK. It is interesting to note, for example, that fifty percent of the records in the top ten singles of all time (Fig 10) were released in the 1970s with a definite emphasis on the latter half of the decade. This trend culminated in 1979 with 86 million singles sales: the highest yearly figures for the sale of singles in the UK to date. Surveying the end of year top tens (Fig 11) for the years 78,79 and 80 it is also interesting to note the variety of musical styles enjoying commercial success: disco, rock 'n' roll, easy listening, euro-pop, punk/new wave, electronica, singer song-writer, reggae, country and western. And, indeed, as I shall go on to discuss, this breadth of styles is reflected in the choice of performers selected for the front cover of *Smash Hits.* For Gary Mulholland this diversity within the mainstream of pop is something unique to the end of the 1970s:

> 1979 was in pop music terms at least, gloriously nuts. Punk and disco had taken the music industry by surprise and, as they struggled to understand what kind of strange noise and voices pop fans wanted, they allowed artists a degree of freedom and adventure that echoed the joy and tumult of the mid-60s. 1979 saw the peak and end of that process. (Mulholland 2002, 76).

Of particular significance was the influence of European disco on some very mainstream rock acts (Rod Stewart, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd etc). While this cross-over incited anger from some US audiences (resulting in campaigns like Disco Sucks and Disco Demolition Night discussed in Chapter 1) in many ways they set the template for the modern rock song, most significantly in their use of synthesisers. Likewise, the hits of post-punk stars were set to new rhythms: most notably Blondie's

'Heart of Glass' (a reggae song set to a Moroder beat) and The Police's 'Message in a Bottle' (reggae meets new wave). It was, in short, a period in which every flavour was on the menu and no style seemed to clash. And yet, within the Academy the period has almost been written out of pop history: a no-mans land between punk and the video culture of new pop and Madonna Studies.

Central to my case for the period covered by *Smash Hits* in the 1970s is the legacy of what Rimmer has defined as 'the star groups of punk': The Police, Blondie, and The Jam. History has judged these bands to be far more influential than any of their new pop successors. While the legacy of more avant-garde groups like Gang of Four, Material and Devo may, as Reynold's suggests, be being rediscovered by a new generation of musicians, new pop is indeed, that of a 'campy comedy zone… … eyeliner-and-synth fops with silly haircuts' (Reynolds 2005 XV). Few bands today cite Adam and the Ants or Spandau Ballet as major musical influences. By contrast Paul Weller, Deborah Harry and Sting have become iconic figures: continuing to fill large concert halls and commanding considerable media attention for their new recordings. In part this is because they belong to a very interesting period in the mainstream of popular music. However, it is also a reflection of their higher commercial status in the first place. In the period covered by Reynold's, for example, both Blondie and The Police had five number one singles in the UK, and The Jam four (Rees and Crampton, 1994). None of the new pop bands can match the singles chart achievement of the 'star groups' of punk. Duran Duran, Adam and the Ants and Culture Club were the most successful, all scoring two chart-topping singles each. Only if we take into account the total number of weeks spent on album and singles charts to date do Duran Duran fare better than any of the 'star groups' of punk: ranked 54th ahead of The Police (63rd), Blondie (73rd) and The Jam (110th) . An anomaly in this sense is Madness, who are, in these terms, far and away the most successful band of the era. Listed 43rd in Top 100 Acts, Madness notched up 16 top ten hits between 1979 and 1983, but are often annexed with ska influenced 2-Tone groups like The Specials and the Beat, who were less successful. Only one other group associated with the new pop era is ranked more highly, and that is the Eurythmics: ranked 42nd in the Top 100 Acts. However, as with Duran Duran, much of their success occurred beyond the time frame within which the new pop can be considered relevant. By the same token the period in which Nick Logan and Ian Cranna edited *Smash Hits* (1978 to 1980) is significant because the singles chart featured a much earlier generation of stars whose careers did not continue at the same stratospheric level into

the 1980s: Abba, Donna Summer, David Bowie, Bryan Ferry etc. Their legacy too has proved to be much greater than those of the new pop stars and this is well documented in the pages of *Smash Hits*.

Reframing *Smash Hits*

In the various accounts of *Smash Hits* that exist within the Academy, there is general consensus that the magazine transformed the mores of the music press in its celebration of the more ephemeral surface culture. And, for my own part, I am inserting two caveats. Firstly, reframing that history to include the magazine's footprint in the 1970s is significant because it gives a window onto a very interesting moment in the evolution of pop. Secondly, *Smash Hits* footprint in the 1970s is a space in which the music scene as a whole could be viewed regardless of genre; like the BBC's *Top of the Pops, Smash Hits* was a bandstand phenomenon, showcasing a broad spectrum of acts. The third revision that needs to be made concerns the tacit assumption that the magazine celebrated the visual at the expense of the written word. In part this can be attributed to the novelty of the presentational devices uses in *Smash Hits.* As Nick Logan himself conceded when, in 1978, EMAP distributed a test issue in Middleborough, it was the 'glossiness of the paper' (Logan cited by Gorman, 2001, 283) that hooked the sample audience and not the music coverage. And so while Roy Shukar is quite right to argue that 'teenage girls purchase *Smash Hits* and its competitors in part for the posters' (Shukar, 2001, 90) that should not preclude consideration of the language. Indeed, David Hepworth strongly refutes the assertion that the written style of *Smash Hits* was inferior to the music press that preceded it:

> Anyone who belittles the written style of *Smash Hits* knows nothing about writing because it was very well written and very carefully written and written by people who really could write. But it was also edited very tightly so there would be an awful lot of discussion about how it said what it said. (David Hepworth, 2009).

In this respect, it is worth noting that both Hepworth and Cranna were from academic backgrounds and, in Cranna's view, they were always writing 'for people like ourselves' (Ian Cranna, 2009). While Hepworth concedes that they knew the readership was young, he is also adamant that the view they took was never patronising: 'I think we always imagined they were curious and that they engaged and

wanted to know things that they didn't already know' (Hepworth, 2009). Yet, according to Cranna, in its infancy the magazine courted criticism from Logan's ex-colleagues on the *NME*:

> The odd thing was our offices were in Carnaby Street and directly across the way were *NME* who were one floor up and they were very snooty about us. They could look down and they'd say 'look they're having fun in their play pen'. When all the time they were basically jealous because we were reaching the audience they wanted to reach - shop girls and all that kind of stuff. We didn't fit in with the hipper than thou culture of *NME*. We were all kind of refugees from the *NME* and had found our own pasture as it were or niche and we were having fun with it (Ian Cranna, 2009)

However, as former *NME* writer Stuart Cosgrove commented to Chris Fouracre in 2003, there was considerable difference between *NME* and *Smash Hits*:

> On the one hand you had this newspaper that had its roots in the idea that pop and rock could change the world and this other magazine that didn't want to change the world it just wanted to change its shirt. (Stuart Cosgrove, *25 Years of Smash Hits,* 2003)

Yet, according to Cranna, for those working on *Smash Hits* such rivalry was very one sided: 'we never called them any names simply because it didn't our horizons. We were simply just getting the magazines ready and enjoying what we were doing' (Cranna, 2009). That is not to say that such playfulness was without some serious intent. Cranna concedes, for example, that there was a subversive element to the magazine to treating *pop* in a serious yet light-hearted way. Central to this was the invocation of the 1950s teen pin-up format:

> Pop, if you like had this not very intelligent background of magazines who are run by people who couldn't write and asked stars what their favourite colour was and you'd have these pin-up style pictures. So for us it was great to be able to talk to these bands about something that mattered, have a bit of fun and use the pin-up format. (Cranna, 2009)

It is perhaps this collision of the silly and the serious that is perhaps the essence of the way in which *Smash Hits* challenged the normative conventions of American rock authenticity, which characterised much of the music press of the 1960s and 70s. In the proceeding section I offer an analysis of some of the ways in which *Smash Hits* reconfigured the notion of authenticity in the music press with reference to written language and visual codes. This draws upon a detailed series of textual analyses and also a succinct musicological analysis of the certain tracks with which key issues of *Smash Hits* are associated.

The Language of *Smash Hits.*

In part the preoccupation with the visual culture of *Smash Hits* can be attributed to a higher ratio of image to text than the music press that preceded it. However, the articles themselves are fairly in-depth: assuming high levels of discursive ability on the part of the reader, in terms of both vocabulary and grammatical construction. For example, Dave Hepworth's article on Madness is written in the affectionate tones of a lenient schoolmaster: indulging the whimsical folly of his precocious underlings.

> MADNESS' ALBUM presents a fifty/fifty split between ska-inspired dance numbers and their own earthy tales of London low life. Lee Thompson's coarse sax is well to the fore as is Mike Barton's pumping keyboard technique. The band have chosen to label it the 'nutty' sound, a term thought up by Thompson to describe the noise of fairground organs. It's a rough lively sound, jaunty and old fashioned. On stage Chas Smash does his strange ratchet dance to the real delight of packed houses. A few shortcomings in the vocal department and an over reliance on the same tempo apart, they're enormously enjoyable. Family fun. (Hepworth, *Smash Hits* Vol. 1 No 26, 1979, 27)

Here the mixture of assonance (ska-inspired, dance, numbers) and alliteration (London low life) creates a haughty timbre. Likewise the ambiguity of the adverbial phrase 'well to the fore' leaves it up to the reader to decide whether that is a good or bad thing. Similarly, the quotation marks around the word 'nutty' convey mock shock and surprise at the bands description of their sound: these markers of speech serving as linguistic signifiers for the raising of eyebrows and the rolling of eyes. As the

section proceeds Hepworth's affectation of conservative befuddlement is reinforced by the selection of certain outmoded words and phrases; 'lively sound', 'jaunty', 'delight', 'enormously enjoyable' and 'family fun' all sound like manners of speech from a previous era: to be enunciated in the clipped tones of Received Pronunciation. This seniority of position is reinforced by the tagline accompanying the main headline: 'they call it MADNESS. Dr Hepworth dons a white coat and investigates'. However, the medical allusion is purposefully mocking: an ironic commentary on the role of the music press; Hepworth is cast in the elevated role of physician, while Madness constitute but symptom in the corpus of pop. On the face of things this superior tone marks *Smash Hits* out as supercilious and patronizing. And, indeed, criticism has been levelled at EMAP's subsequent creation *Q*, which Hepworth was heavily involved in, for being smarmy and condescending. However, in *Smash Hits* the subtle combination of words and phrases assumes high levels of both literacy and cultural capital on the part of the reader. For example, the verb 'don' is polysemantic, meaning in this sense to put on a garment but also signalling to the noun that signifies a person of great importance. Likewise, 'white coat' is a play upon 'madness' as a clinical diagnosis and the garb common to medical practitioners in a sanatorium. Elsewhere a metaphorical reference to the 'sweetness' of chart success, idiomatic expressions such as 'the ska 'gravy train' and a theatrical allusion to 'the boards' keeps things varied and makes the adolescent audience work hard. In this way the magazine is embedded with a subtle and secret code, which includes the reader and purposefully subverts the more pompous impulses of popular music writing. Far from patronising its audience, according to Hepworth such playfulness reflected a view of the readers as curious and interested:

> I think this was before a big sea change in attitudes to media. Where as nowadays, most people doing media assume that people don't want to know anything that they don't already know; they simply want to know what they know. They simply want to have it reinforced regularly. Whereas the idea with *Smash Hits* was that you could expand people's worlds. (Hepworth, 2009)

The use of irony is another feature of *Smash Hits* that marks its written style from the bombastic polemicism of the inkies. For example, in the short editorial by Dave Hepworth to accompany a

photomontage of Blondie on the set of the Alan Rudolph film *Roadie* (1980), the satire is affectionate rather than biting:

> EVERYBODY GOT popcorn? OK, it's Film Fun Time! So settle down in your seats and quit eyeing the person next to you for a minute while we fill you in on progress made so far on Blondie's World Domination-By-The-Eighties Plan (Silver Screen Division). The pix (below and over the page) were all snapped in Austin Texas, deep in the heart of cowboy country where men are men and mules are mules and never is heard a discouraging word. This is where the band have been filming 'Roadie' with weightwatchers favourite rock 'n' roll star, Meatloaf (Hepworth, *Smash Hits*, Vol 1 No 28, 1979, 15).

The magazine was unable to speak to the band for the issue and so the rather unusual editorial decision was taken to run with the pictures as the lead feature; as Cranna suggests: 'we thought it was sort of fraudulent to put somebody on the cover and then not have an interview or something' (Cranna, 2009). However, in the Christmas issue from 1979, David Hepworth works hard to make up for this: injecting new life into worn-out stock phrases and intensifying tired idioms with an ironic tone and self-effacing mockery. While the use of rhetorical devices, punctuation for effect, hedges and causal connectives are all fairly standard journalistic armoury, it is the invitation to inhabit a parallel fantasy world that is most compulsive: a landscape demarked by the hyper-real iconography of the populist imagination. From the cinematic optimism of the 'Silver Screen' to the cold-war anxiety of 'World Domination' Hepworth's imagery is painted in the heightened colours of a Warhol silk screen. Certainly this visual sensibility was very important to Hepworth and his view of *Smash Hits*:

> A picture's worth 1000 words and all that. You wanted it to look beautiful in the same way that it read beautiful You know what you have to understand is that it was a magazine as opposed to a newspaper and so as much effort would go into putting the material on the page as would go into the generation of the material in the first place, which wouldn't apply to newspapers. (Hepworth, 2009).

And indeed *Smash Hits* celebration of the synthetic and the superficial was central to the way in which it disrupted the centrality of authenticity in the smudgy inkies that preceded it. However, the magazine's sophisticated written style also paved the way for the polished journalese of *Q*: not least in the retrospective sensibility when dealing with older recording artists.

Both Cranna and Hepworth are in agreement that the sophisticated writing that went into early *Smash Hits* was very important in the formulation of *Q*'s house style: in particular the tension between the silly and the serious was characteristic of *Smash Hits '*chortlesome' big brother tone. However, it was perhaps the way in which early *Smash Hits* positioned older stars alongside the latest teen sensation. For example, in a feature article on Roxy Music from 1980, Steve Taylor's prose assumes high levels of cultural capital on the part of the reader in his consideration of the 'glitter era' and the band 'post-re-union'. Likewise, the title 'Stronger through the Years' is of course a play upon the title of track from the bands 1979 album *Manifesto* and creates a positive narrative arch in which this retrospective piece is framed and commensurately the article is peppered with temporal phrases and discourse markers:

> Just over a year ago, a brief history of Roxy Music might have ended by wondering whether changes in musical fashion might not have overtaken those pace-setters of the glitter era, Well, cast your mind back to the first post-reunion hits of 'Dance Away' and 'Angel Eyes' or to the way 'Over You' steamed up the charts and there's your answer. And if you've copped a good earful of 'Flesh + Blood', the new Roxy album, then any doubts ought to be well and truly knocked on the head; Roxy are back with a vengeance. Like the title track from 'Manifesto' said: 'Stronger through the years'. (Taylor, 1980, 6-7)

There is it would seem two stages to this process. On the one hand, the negotiation of time is couched in certain colloquialisms and eagerness to verify the bands contemporary relevance. In particular, the band's achievements on the singles chart are of considerable concern to the *Smash Hits* audiences. On the other hand, the perpetuity of Roxy Music's legacy weighs heavily on the piece as a whole: the concept of a re-union being at odds with the contemporaneous feel of *Smash Hits.* Taylor's interview with Ferry takes the form of a chronological resume of his earlier work with Roxy

Music and his more recent solo ventures. According to Hepworth this retrospective sensibility was typical of early *Smash Hits*:

> I can remember that around about that time John Lennon died, so there were huge amounts of looking back on The Beatles and the sixties and so forth. And *Smash Hits* did a huge amount of that because it was assumed that people wanted to know. People wanted to know about things that took place before they were born (Hepworth, 2009).

There is in this sense a contradiction. On the one hand, the magazine appears wilfully dumb, celebrating the ephemeral surface culture of popular music. On the other hand, it is does not dumb down: but rather assumes high levels of literacy and cultural capital on the part of its reader. As Mark Ellen suggests: 'It was obviously written by a bunch of clever university educated intellectuals trying to be funny' (Ellen, 2009). In this sense *Smash Hits* reacquainted the music in press with not only the more carnivalesque aesthetic of British pop and the journalistic sensibilities of the 1950s, but also the same kind of scholarly thinking that characterised Pop Art, The Independent Group and their influence upon a generation of British musicians in the 1960s and 70s (of which Roxy Music are perhaps the figureheads). In this sense, while defending *Smash Hits* against the accusation that it was dumb flies in the face of its own Pop Art project, it needs to be made clear that its linguistic register was neither lowbrow nor charm-less. That said, what *Smash Hits* has to offer Popular Music Studies does not solely concern the written word but draws instead upon the way in which the visual culture encodes some very specific strategies for listening.

The Visual Culture of *Smash Hits*

Textual analysis of *Smash Hits* between 1978 and 1980 reveals the complexity of the messages and values encoded in the visual culture of the magazine. It is, however, impossible to consider the visual without acknowledging the use of text to fix and sometimes liberate meaning. Taking the form of a detailed examination of the way in which ten lead articles communicate in words and pictures, focusing on the cover shot as well as the layout and positioning of the article, a number of key findings emerge. Firstly, as I have already suggested, there is it would seem no genre bias in early *Smash Hits*: disco, punk, ska and reggae are all covered. Though the artists featured are

predominantly white, this reflects the demographic of the singles chart rather than a separate ideological agenda. For the purposes of the investigation issues featuring both Bob Marley and Donna Summer were selected and it is reassuring to note that race is not foregrounded in interviews with either star. That said, the feature article on Bob Marley is elaborate in its exposition of the cultural context of the Rastafarian religion, denoted by the singer's crocheted hat and dreadlocks on the front cover. And indeed the solemnity of shot selected of Marley for the cover betrays an overt reverence for the reggae star, which counterpoises the more objectifying gaze characteristic of other cover shots. It is interesting to note that according to Ian Cranna this issue sold particularly poorly and that EMAP discouraged editors across all its titles from using non-white cover images:

> We were told, for example, sales would go down if we put somebody black on the cover. And it was true unfortunately. Across the board, football magazines, everything, sales would go down. Bob Marley was the one. We put that on and the sales did go down in spite of Bob Marley being Bob Marley. I don't know what the answer is. (Cranna, 2009)

Secondly, It is without question that the house style of *Smash Hits* photography was much more seductive than *NME* or *Melody Maker.* In part this can be attributed to the luscious colour and quality of the paper and Nick Logan's contacts from *NME*: Adrian Boot and Pennie Smith. The addition of poster supplements and pictures to stick on bedroom walls was key to the teen appeal of the magazine: reaching out to people 'who couldn't be a part of the scene (Logan, 2009). Though the Nick Logan era of *Smash Hits* precedes the launch of MTV in America by three years, the magazine reflects the rise of music video production during the 1970s and an increasingly visual portmanteau of stars from the glam rock era onwards. In particular the importance of music video for the American market (discussed in Chapter 1) saw a rise in the number of music videos produced and also shown on British television. As Ian Cranna suggests: this was not confined to Top of the Pops, but regional television and Saturday morning shows like Tiswas (Cranna, 2009). The significance of pop music video by during this period is evidenced also by the release of the first video album to accompany Blondie's *Eat to the Beat* (1979). This increased importance of the visual is reflected in the occlusion of straplines to identify the cover star: recognition of a band or performer is based upon their appearance rather than name. This very visual sensibility is reflected also in the colour pallet used for

fonts and text boxes: the use of strong pinks and yellows alludes to the visual codes of punk and the Pop Art sensibility of Warhol and the Independent Group. Indeed, it is this presentation of stars as consumer objects that is perhaps the key to the magazine's appeal. As Hepworth suggests: 'it took stuff from absolutely all over the place but it was kind of light and elegant, not dark and gloomy or anything like that. It wasn't over garish either' (Hepworth, 2009).

The third key trend emerging from analysis of *Smash Hits* is that typically musicians are not depicted in naturalistic poses. Instead the visual style favours hyper-real Technicolor, foregrounding either a pin-up status or cartoon like quality. In the case of a band like The Police this works very well: the rugged good looks, tanned complexion, and tousled blond hair lend the mid shot of this robust threesome from the cover of *Smash Hits* in August 1979 a naturally iconic quality. While *Smash Hits* addressed a less singular demographic in the 1970s than its core readership of teenage girls in the 1980s, early editions are remarkable for the way in which some quite improbable male subjects are reconstructed as pin-ups: an unlikely 'boy band', the homo-social bonding depicted on The Clash's front cover from December 1979 renders the quintet impassive and objectified. Likewise, the stylised studio shot of The Jam positions Paul Weller in the role of teen idol. By contrast the portrait of Ian Dury from the same month plays up the eccentric qualities of the Blockheads front man: the singers optician-style glasses serving as a visual motif for Dury's musical idiosyncrasy. That the shot purposefully eschews depiction of Dury's impaired gait (incurred through a bout of polio in childhood) is telling however as to the parameters of taste within which the magazine operates. Focusing on the glasses instead serves not only to distance him from the audience but also to reconstruct Dury as a more cartoon-like figure: a less defective caricature, more easily assimilated into the mainstream. And, indeed *Smash Hits* does not subvert the hegemony: solo female stars like Donna Summer and Kate Bush are presented in ways that festishize their sexuality. An anomaly in this sense is the image of Deborah Harry on the

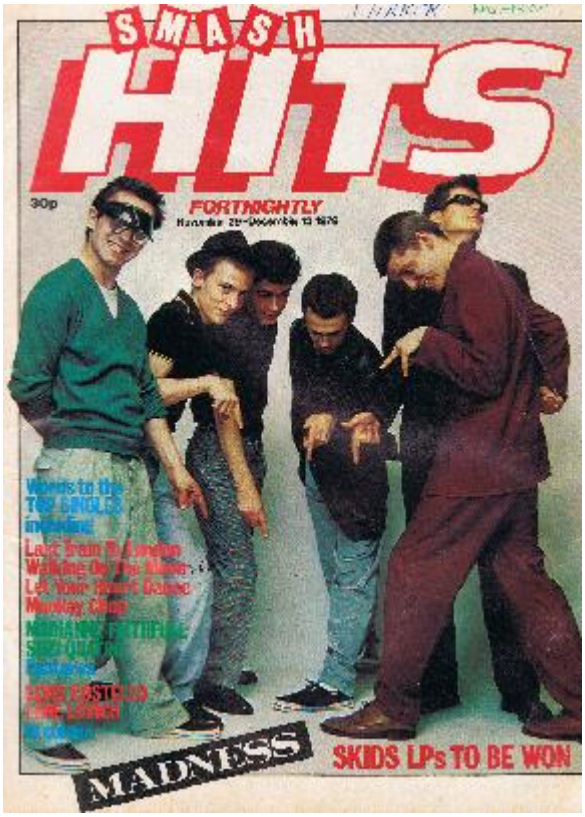


Fig 12 Madness (December 1979)

cover of *Smash Hits* from December 1979, in which the singer appears androgynous, positioned amongst her male band mates, dressed down in casual jeans and a jacket. As in its depiction of genre, it would seem that *Smash Hits* is remarkable for the parity in its depiction of gender: a level playing field in which the subject may be sexualised and objectified regardless of sex, race or musical style.

Reconfiguring Authenticity

While *Smash Hits* in the 1970s is remarkable for its celebration of the visual culture of pop and the creation of a value neutral space in terms of the representation of genre, the magazine is not impervious to genealogy of the musical form. Indeed, in the representation of stars, the visual codes denote some very specific strategies for listening. And, it is perhaps in this way that the magazine reconfigures the notion of authenticity most successfully. For example, on the surface the medium long shot of Madness on the cover of *Smash Hits* from December 1979 serves as a visual metaphor for the meaning of the band's name. The full-length photo of the sextet allows for considerable

interplay in body language, posture, clothing codes and facial expression. However, it also serves as an anthropomorphosis of the band's musical style. Book-ending this issue of *Smash Hits* was the release of two of the band's best known singles: 'One Step Beyond' (UK number 7 in November 1979) and 'My Girl' (UK number 3 in January 1980). The former is unusual in that it is essentially an instrumental with an extended sax solo: the repeated sax motif gives it structure together with the heavily reverbed Caribbean style vocal. The fast tempo, walking bassline and syncopated rhythms make it extremely infectious. By the contrast, 'My Girl' is a more traditional arrangement, characterised by syncopated guitar on the verse, arpeggio piano on the chorus and a prominent use of sax. This eclectic musical style is characteristic of Madness and it is possible to recoup both texts within dominant narratives of Afro-American rock authenticity. For example, in their habilitation of Caribbean musical form, both tracks pay homage to romantic notions of musical heritage. Likewise, in the experimental structure and synthesis of musical styles they offer a very modernist take on the evolution of the pop song. However, in *Smash Hits* it is the style of the 2-tone ska scene that is foregrounded. The pork pie hat worn by Daniel Woodgate, for example, is a homage to the sartorial codes of 1960s Kingston 'rude boys', as are the sharp suits of Mark Bedford and Suggs, which re-work the clothing codes synonymous with American jazz musicians like Lester Young. The posture of the group is also ideologically significant: a freeze frame of the 'skank' dance popularised by audiences in Jamaican dance hall where ska music was originally played. However, the cover is deceptively shambolic: out of a chaotic confusion of styles, a structured and coherent system of ideas emerges.

While the cover shot of Madness falls into the same category of caricature/cartoon occupied by Ian Dury, the same process of deconstruction can be applied to shots in which the male subject is more objectified. The high angle medium shot of The Clash on the front cover of *Smash Hits* from December 1979 is animated by the dynamic interaction between the body language of guitarist/vocalist Joe Strummer and drummer Nicholas Bowen Headon. The composition of the shot emphasises the band's brotherly intimacy: all figures are closely

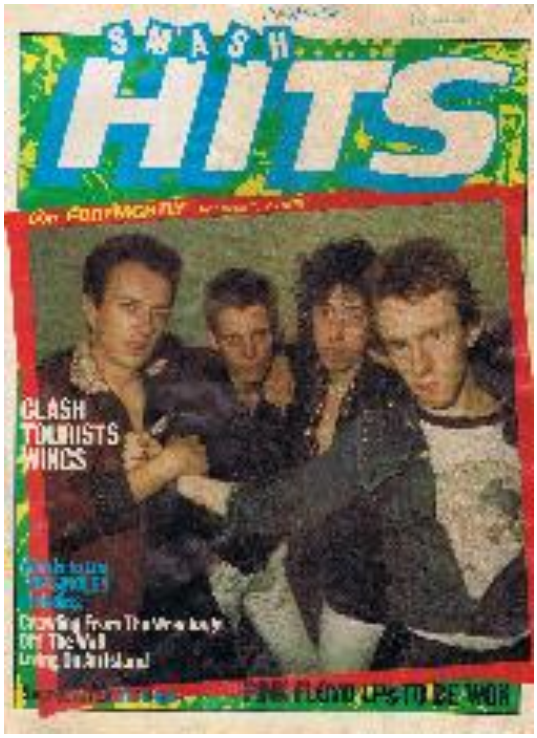


Fig 13 - The Clash (December 1979)

positioned with raised arms around their shoulders. The connotation of violence and passion is clearly a reflection of the band's music style. However, once again the clothing codes reveal the genealogy of their musical lineage. As with Madness, The Clash were heavily influenced by the music of the Caribbean, combining elements of reggae with a raw rock 'n' roll sound. This evidenced on both 'London Calling' (UK number 11 in December 1979) and 'Bankrobber' (UK number 12 in August 1980). 'London Calling' is perhaps the more straightforward of the two, punctuated by a strict 4/4 time signature, which is emphasised by heavy minor chords. By contrast, 'Bankrobber' is more progressive, incorporating syncopated reggae rhythms, synthesizer effects and a haunting vocal. Once again this musical style can be recouped within dominant narratives of American rock authenticity and indeed The Clash's position in the rock cannon can be attributed to their compatibility with this. For example, 'London Calling' invokes the romance of the capital city with its imagery of 'the river' and likewise 'Bankrobber' can be configured within social narratives of working class poverty. By the same token, the hybridised nature of the musical score is very modernist in its combination of reggae and rock 'n' roll styles and minimalist production values. While this tension is reflected in the image selected for the front of *Smash Hits*, there is lightness about the composition that reflects the more carnivalesque sensibility of the magazine. Central to this is the very British way in which the

band are objectified as pin ups. Most prominent is Headon who sports a traditional punk look, reminiscent of Johnny Rotton of The Sex Pistols: a tight fitting distressed denim jacket and dishevelled bristly red hair. However, the image of Chinese martial artist Bruce Lee printed on his T-shirt is a symbolic reminder of the mainstream: codifying the brutal and 'combative' quality of the music in the vernacular of popular culture. By contrast the rockabilly style of Joe Strummer's jacket and his more coiffured hairstyle alludes to 1950s rock 'n' roll icons like Elvis Presley and Bill Haley. Whether the audience explicitly understands this is less important than the sophistication it assumes on the part of mainstream taste. And indeed this is perhaps very much a function of the richness of the pop scene at the end of the 1970s. That on the cover of *Smash Hits* Heaton and Strummer act out the tension between punk and the historical antecedents of rock 'n' roll is unique: the physical conflict serving as a visual motif for the reconstructed sensibility of the post punk/disco mainstream.

The *Smash Hits* Aesthetic

The concomitant sophistication of the music and culture of the mainstream post punk/disco is in part what makes *Smash Hits* very special in this period. Foregrounding the visual is not at the expense of the soundtrack, but rather it is intrinsic to understanding the lineage of the musical text. Indeed, this process of exposition can be repeated in the deconstruction of cover shots and images of some very mainstream stars. For example, the high angle, medium shot of Bryan Ferry on the cover of *Smash Hits* from June 1980 communicates very well the louche playboy affectations with which the Roxy Music star is synonymous. His tanned skin suggests a jet-set lifestyle; offset by the cool crispness of his white linen shirt, his collar is casually unbuttoned and the sleeves are rolled up, connoting both effortless style and sophistication. The warm light and long shadows suggest a continental climate that is reinforced by the peone pink of the masthead and strapline font. This sub-tropical flavour is enhanced by the whitewashed Hacienda style of the backdrop.

As a code for deconstructing the music of Bryan Ferry, this cover of *Smash Hits* tells the reader much that it needs to know about the Roxy Music aesthetic: class and social mobility being central motifs in the bands legacy. In particular, as Michael Bracewell observes, for Bryan Ferry, the Art School experience, which was formative for so many musicians of his generation, was also a means of escaping a life of working class drudgery:

> As for many young people of his generation, tertiary education with in the arts would free Ferry from the immediate prospect of the drudgery of working class labour and introduce him to a liberating form of mildly bourgeois bohemianism – a new experience of life, 'beyond the coal-fields' of the industrial north-east. (Bracewell, 2007, 52).

Unlike their new pop forebears (Duran, Duran, Spandua Ballet or Wham!) Roxy Music do not celebrate the hard currency of bourgeois living, but rather luxuriate in the opulence of aesthetic capital; from the tasteful and expansive production values of the music to the understated design of their Anthony Price packaging, as the *Smash Hits* cover shows, Roxy Music deal in mannered sophistication and modest elegance. Describing the cover of the eponymous band's debut album from 1972, for example, Bracewell emphasises the 'deluxe elegance of the Hollywood style' (Bracewell, 288):

> Never before within the pop and rock mainstream had a group so self-consciously, and for obvious stylistic effect – building their 'new imaginary world' – listed credits for not just their hair and clothes, but also those of the model who graced the cover to such memorable and epoch defining effect. (Bracewell, 307).

For Bracewell, this seriousness about beauty - it's 'hetero-camp' (Bracewell, 225) - is intrinsic to understanding the musical text: the packaging symbolising the audacious musical manifesto of Ferry and his collaborators:

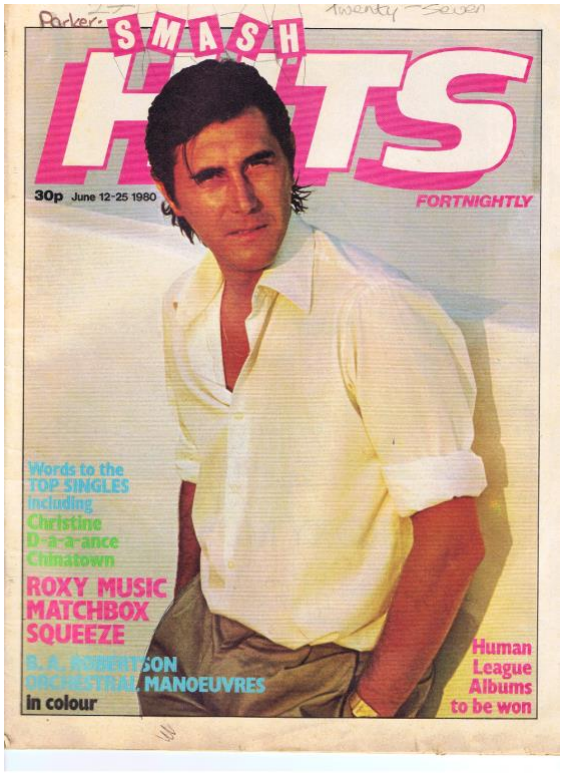


Fig 14 – Bryan Ferry (June 1980)

> (I)t was Roxy Music's lack of traditional, rockist apprenticeship – their precocity – which would most annoy their detractors. To arrive from nowhere, with what seemed a fully formed sound, which, in fact, seemed to endorse the groups swaggering modernity and stately disregard for the traditions of the business. (Bracewell, 364).

And, indeed, the band's second coming at the end of the 1970s perhaps embodied this plastic aesthetic more than their earlier incarnation featuring Brian Eno. For example, both 'Angel Eyes' (UK number 4 in August 1979) and 'Over You' (UK number 5 in May 1980) are heavily produced and on the surface much blander than earlier offerings like 'Virginia Plain' (UK number 4 in August 1972) or 'Love is the Drug' (UK number 2 in October 1975). However, that subtlety belies the complexity of both tracks. 'Angel Eyes', for example, reflects the proliferation of disco in the intervening years in the way it incorporates syncopated percussion and a sax hook. Crashing pairs of guitar chords and a synthesized effect mark the track out from its less reconstructed glam rock antecedents. 'Over You' is the more traditional of the two, based around a simple three chord pattern, guitar riff and vocal melody. However, the addition of vocal harmonies as the song progresses gives the track an incessant quality. It is very difficult to configure either of these tracks with dominant narratives of

American rock authenticity, as they purposefully seem to celebrate their highly contrived studio production. Indeed, such is the exquisiteness of the musicianship, the tonal perfection of Ferry's croon and the painstaking nature of their construction that both songs conspire to sound expensive. Tellingly neither track was a big hit in America – 'Over You' limped to number 80 but 'Angel Eyes' did not chart. That ultimately the music of Roxy Music has been assimilated as an aesthetic backdrop to gracious living cannot diminish the parodic critique of the high life encoded in the collision of musical styles and visual representations on the front of *Smash Hits*. And as such, perhaps more so that any of their other British contemporaries, Roxy Music define the *Smash Hits* aesthetic.

One of the ways in which the legacy of *Smash Hits* in the 1970s is perhaps most transforming is that its sensitivity to the aesthetic nuance of pop is not confined to its depiction of male stars. The representation of female artists is something that is extremely problematic when considering the legacy of both the new journalism infused titles of the 1970s (*NME*, *Rolling Stone*, *Melody Maker etc*) and the historical prerogative of *Q* and its imitators in the 1980s and 1990s (*Vox*, *Select*, *Mojo* etc). By contrast *Smash Hits* positions the female subject at the forefront of the pop scene. Deborah Harry is exemplary of this trend: not only were Blondie featured on the first issue of the magazine in '78 but she is a recurrent cover star throughout 79 and 80. As David Hepworth describes it in Chris Fouracre's documentary 25 *Years of Smash Hits* (2003), Harry was the dream cover star and, indeed, Blondie were one of the biggest selling acts of 1979 in the UK. Blondie were also unusual in that initially they were much more successful in the UK than America and it is easy to see why. Though Blondie were steeped in the counter culture sensibility of the New York punk scene (and have since been acclaimed for exposing mainstream American audiences to disco, reggae and rap), their records embraced a very mainstream pop aesthetic laced with an ironic reach more characteristic of British bands of the 1960s. Typical of this eclecticism are the hits 'Union City

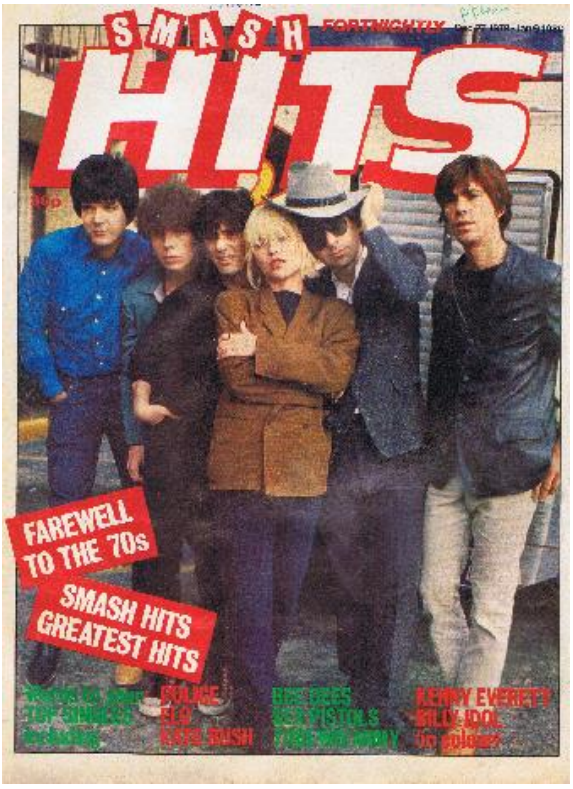


Fig 15 - Blondie (December 1979)

Blue' (UK number 13 in November 1979) and 'Atomic' (UK number 1 in February 1980). 'Union City Blue' is simple and anthemic, cohered around three guitar chords and a hook that is repeated throughout the song. 'Atomic' is more complex. The song is largely instrumental, based around a simple and repetitive 'Western-style' guitar riff (complete with tremolo); it does not follow a conventional song structure and features a bass solo in place of the middle 8. Like Roxy Music, Blondie are difficult to configure within traditional notions of Afro-American rock authenticity. In part this can be attributed in the case of 'Union City Blue' and 'Atomic' to the oblique nature of the lyrics. Though 'Union City Blue' evokes images of New Jersey, these are extremely impressionistic. Likewise, the post-nuclear themed 'Atomic' defies scrutiny in its oft-repeated refrain 'Oh your hair is beautiful'. By the same token, the musical text eschews virtuosity: the combination of the band's minimal playing and Mike Chapman's glossy production restricts the liveness of the sound. And, indeed, in this direction 'Atomic' could be said to be modernist in that it anticipates the way in which dance music would develop in the latter half of the 1980s. As with Roxy Music, it is Blondie's plastic Warholian sensibility that works best in *Smash Hits*. Emblematic of this is the way in which the December 1979 cover alludes to the Western imagery of 'Atomic': guitarist Chris Stein playfully

shares his Stetson with singer Deborah Harry and drummer Clem Burke is clad head to toe in an approximation of the Marlboro Man's blue denim. However, it is perhaps the way in which the cover shows the singers position as just one of the band that is most unusual: Adrian Boot's photography resists the temptation to foreground Harry's sexuality. That is not to say that shots of other stars and indeed other cover shots of Harry do no objectify the female subject in ways that Feminist readings might make problematic. Rather the representation of the female subject in *Smash Hits* is transforming because she is visible and considered on the same equal, albeit fetishised, terms as her male counter part.

The 'pin-up' is of course a recurrent theme in British popular music culture in the 1970s. 'Pin-Ups' is the title of David Bowie's 1973 album of covers and of course Roxy Music's Eno-era album covers conform to the blue-print set out by their debut: *For Your Pleasure* (1973), *Stranded* (1973), *Country Life* (1974), *Siren* (1975) and *Viva* (1976) all feature a glamorous female figure on the cover. The significance of the pin up for Bracewell is the 'ambiguity of its sexuality' and the 'translation of this sexuality into a manifesto on modern glamour and primary Pop Art source material'. More complex still is Deborah Harry's appropriation of pin-up style glamour: not least because of her close association with Warhol and the New York Art scene. However, central to this is her status as a musician: while she could have fronted a Roxy Music album cover, in Blondie she fronted the band. If, as Bracewell suggests, therefore, the image of Kari-Ann Mulller on the cover of *Roxy Music* symbolises the band's rejection of rockist modes of authenticity, what Harry's image symbolises is multifaceted. Unlike Roxy Music's avant-garde experimentalism and instrumental virtuosity, Blondie are quite a difference proposition; emerging from the Bowery punk scene of the mid-70s, in their earliest incarnation the band were decidedly rough around the edges. In this sense, it is easier to recoup the band within romantic notions of authenticity, though their later work did embrace new musical forms. That said, Harry's thrift-store allure and deliberate subversion of traditional Hollywood glamour embodies the punk sensibility of the musical soundtrack in much the same way that Muller's more manicured veneer articulates the more sophisticated finish of a Roxy Music recording. As Simon Frith and Howard Horne suggest, the confusion arises in Harry's manipulation of her own image to symbolise the group's collective identity and her own subject position as musician and writer within the band:

> Harry was in part a familiar sex object, the traditional American pin-up, blonde fetish who presented herself in such a stylised way as to draw attention to the conventions that defined her. But, even more interestingly, she used this Pop Art performance to explore something else too – the relationship of the female consumer to this male-defined feminine ideal. (Frith and Horne, 1987, 156)

Arguable the confusion between Harry's image and the collective identity of the band contributed towards the tensions that caused the band to split. However, this ambiguity of meaning, the collapse of distinction between the real and simulated, is perhaps symbolic of the way in which art and commerce collide with the body politics of sexual identity in the corpus of post-modern pop. As Frith and Horne suggests, there are obvious similarities between Harry's 'project' and the work of Cindy Sherman and of course Madonna took Harry's project into an entirely different league, which (as discussed in Chapter 1) has produced a diverse and varied range of academic critiques. And certainly, in the intervening years, these lines of fault between the self that is presented and the identity of the performer have become less problematic for both musicians and audience. Though Lester Bangs' biography of Blondie arguably misunderstands what Firth and Horne view as the Pop Art Situationism of Harry, in his description of *Parallel Lines* (1978) he encapsulate the *Smash Hits* vision:

> This is it. The masterpiece. Gotta be, because its dimensions are so perfect: no bottom, no top, no side, no rides, no new know how. Each song is a perfectly constructed concave system in which every piece of information offered up in the lyrics cancels out another corresponding piece of information, kinda like a jigsaw puzzle except at the end instead of a picture you get a perfect blank. And that blank of course is nothing less than Deborah Harry's face (Bangs cited by Robbins, 1993)

Like Roxy Music, Blondie define the *Smash Hits* aesthetic in their rejection of traditional modes of authenticity and celebration of visual glamour. While on the surface Blondie and Roxy Music are products of very different socio-cultural backgrounds: the unifying force is their representation of Pop

Art semantics and the notions that 'the conflation of modern phenomena – from art, science, industry and media – might be refined philosophically to assist with a renewed understanding of the art-making process' (Bracewell, 62-63). Clearly, as both Bracewell and Frith are suggesting, one of the key ways in which both Roxy Music and Blondie disrupt normative modes of rock authenticity and reacquaint pop music with its High Art potential is in their embrace and manipulation of 'the feminine'. However, for the reasons discussed in Chapter 1 I am reluctant to over-emphasize this and prefer instead to conceptualise the difference as characteristic of the carnivalesque nature of British pop. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that *Smash Hits* is very positive in its representation of female artists.

The Marginalised Mainstream

Both Roxy Music and Blondie capture something very specific about the *Smash Hits* Pop Art sensibility and though they both transgress boundaries of gender, they do not over-turn normative conventions, but rather parody the stereotype in such a way as to draw attention to its contrived form. Likewise, *Smash Hits* does not have a radical gender politics other than the equality with which the gendered pop subject is treated. However, the late 1970s was a time of much greater visibility for female artists in the UK charts; commensurately it was also a time which black artists were more visible. In this respect the period echoes the liminal moment in US popular music at the beginning of the 1960s, after rock 'n' roll and before The Beatles in which many female artists and black artists enjoyed mainstream success. And, indeed, I would argue that is was exactly this kind of diversity that made the mainstream so interesting during this period. Representative of both trends was the US singer Donna



Fig 16 – Donna Summer (June 1979)

Summer, who enjoyed hits in the UK and America from 1976 onwards and is of course synonymous with the disco genre, the politics of which were discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

That disco is often considered an inauthentic and feminised genre of music is well documented in the work of both Dyer (1979), Braunstein (1999) and Barker and Taylor (2007) and this is reflected in the doe-eyed shot of Donna Summer on the cover of *Smash Hits* from June 1979. The shot creates the atmosphere of an intimate live show: as if the singer is performing in a discothèque. The microphone she is clutching in her left hand reinforces this: held at the same coquettish angle as her head. The assumption that she is performing is encoded by the shot: her lips are parted to form only the most gentle of apertures as if miming to one of her erotic disco classics. And yet, Summers' Giorgio Moroder produced records often transgress the boundaries of disco. 'MacArthur Park' (UK number 5 in October 1978), for example, is long and complex affair; it begins like a rather pedestrian ballad, however, sweeping strings and a steady piano chord sequence build up slowly into a sudden explosion of syncopated disco rhythm notable also for the use of minor 7th chords. Likewise, 'Hot Stuff' (UK number 11 in May 1979) combined disco bass and drums with rock style. The combination of pitch-bend on the end of the synth motif and the snappy single syllable lyrics

invite the audience to chant the song in the manner of a rock anthem as opposed to a disco song. Arguably it is easy to recoup Donna Summer within romantic modes of Afro-American rock authenticity, not least because her records are synonymous with both gay and African American communities. Likewise, Moroder's production and use of synthesizers celebrated technology, experimentalism and progress. And yet, in the context of *Smash Hits,* it is the performative element that is being celebrated: the glamour and gloss of the disco. The temptation of course in the context of disco is to label this camp and indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, Sontag (1964) emphasises the gender politics of camp as a semiotic event. However, I would argue that *Smash Hits* is more carnivalesque than camp: the transgressive quality does not occur in the subversion of mainstream narratives but the equanimity with which that sensibility is applied to a wide range of texts. The Clash are presented in the same way as Donna Summer. Are The Clash camp? Maybe. The point is you would have to work very hard to argue that they are. The beauty of *Smash Hits* is that it renders that question redundant. Instead, it invites us to consider and celebrate the way in which our idea of The Clash and our idea of Donna Summer are constructed and what this might mean about the way in which we listen to their music. In part, the parity with which the issue of gender is treated in *Smash Hits* is a reflection of the mixed nature of the audience. According to David Hepworth the readership did not really polarise until the late 1980s:

> What happened with *Smash Hits* is that it was aimed at people who just like pop music and then it was found after a period of time that the people who mainly liked pop music were girls and that the people they liked most were pretty boy groups and then you end up focusing more and more on that area but that wasn't because of any restriction placed upon it from above.…The big change would be Bros or something like that. The only people who liked Bros were girls. And so it became entirely about pop stars you could fancy. You know my pet theory is that the *Smash Hits* decline can be traced back exactly to when we did the first *Smash Hits* Poll Winners Party, which was regarded as a huge break through for the magazine, to take it over ground and put it in people's living rooms with a big TV show. But, the danger with that is that you let daylight in on magic and you show the audience as being exclusively female and I don't think that's a good thing. (Hepworth, 2009)

Indeed, this is view corroborated by the eventual closure of the title in 2006: the magazine folded not because pop was dead, but because the magazine could not compete in the pre-teen market.

Though as Cranna suggested, EMAP were reluctant to have black cover stars, there is a similar tendency to over-state the significance of race when discussing the representation of black artists. Indeed as Paul Gilroy has argued, the legacy of both Bob Marley and Jimi Hendrix are typical of the posthumous way in which consumer culture inscribes excess meaning onto the black subject:

> Marley had become a brand as well as a symbol of resistance and resilience. And yet, his saintly presence was invested with a quality that resisted the branding dynamic. It is a unique moral authority drawn from profane and openly oppositional sources. This precious quality is what helps to transmit resources of hope into a different future than the one brought to mind by limitless consumerism and the alienated social relations that he dismissed as a 'rat race'. (Gilroy, 2005, 228)

In this sense Marley has come to symbolise the Baudrillardian 'deterence mechanism' (Baudrillard, 1981 (2001) 428), what Keightley views as the contradiction of American rock authenticity and the 'special case' of mass consumption (Keightley, 2001, 127). What is refreshing about the cover image of Bob Marley from August 1980 is that it does not invoke these generalisable and authenticating narratives of otherness per se. Rather it is just exemplary of those *Smash Hits* covers that encode a great deal about the cultural context of the music. Most prominent is his crocheted Rastafarian hat, which keeps at bay the singer's dreadlocks. The colour scheme, of course, has some very specific connotations: red symbolises the blood of all living things, yellow represents the sun that shines in Africa and green is for the earth. In combination these colours also denote the Ethiopian flag. Although

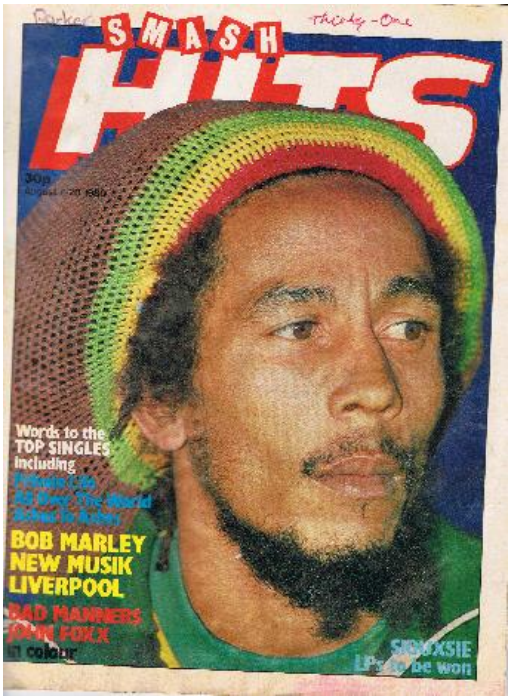


Fig 17 – Bob Marley (August 1980)

not clearly visible the implications of Marley's dreadlocks and facial hair reinforce the connection with the Rastafarian cultural system that views the former Emperor of Ethopia Haile Selassie I as God incarnat and tales from the third book in the bible that states 'they shall not make baldness upon their heads'(Leviticus 21.5). The implications of this for interpreting Marley's music is very specific. The origins of reggae are in the working class ghettos of Kingston in Jamaica, where Rastafarian first emerged in the 1930s. As reggae developed in the 1960s many of its pioneers where devotee of the Rastefari religion, with the lyrical content of many compositions dealing with issues of Rastefarian faith including love, dignity and self-respect. The use of chanting and the drum is synonymous also with African tribal identity, symbolising a rejection of European imperialism and the slave trade. Clearly, then, the legacy of Bob Marley and the Wailers can be recouped within dominant narratives of romantic authenticity. And, indeed, the hits concurrent to this particular issue of *Smash Hits* are representative of the reggae genre. 'Could You Be Loved' (UK number 5 in June 1980), for example, features strong vocal harmonies and syncopated clipped guitar throughout. Likewise 'Three Little Birds' (UK number 17 in September 1980) is cohered around three chords and a the use of call and response between the vocal and keyboard line. It is perhaps more difficult to frame these songs within a modernist narrative. While the influence of dub-reggae on punk bands like The Clash was at the

vanguard of popular music styles, Marley's work is more traditional. In this sense, it is perhaps the commodification of Marley star status that is of greater significance.

Bob Marley's ascendency to global fame in the 1970s was responsible for both the international awareness of both reggae and the Rastafari movement. The *Smash Hits* cover encapsulates the contradictions of this. On the one hand, Marley is an icon of black diasporic identity: Caribbean, anglophone and African; scorning the material affectations of Western music culture. On the other hand, Marley is translating the system of cultural values in Rastafari for a Euro-centric audience; his appearance on the front cover of *Smash Hits* , therefore, symbolises his own commodification. Where Bob Marley on the front cover of *Smash Hits* is transforming, however, is that it challenges received thinking about how reggae music is historicised. As Gilroy suggests, reggae, Bob Marley and the iconography of Rastafari is too often used as a one dimentional authenticating badge of disaffection: hats, t-shirts and beanies in red, green and yellow disengenously manufacturing the cache of subcultural distinction:

> More than Che Guevara, whose iconised oppositional features do a similar kind of worldwide cultural work, and Jimi Hendrix whose comparable immortality also won his music new audiences and an amazing global reach, Marley's afterlife arrives courtesy of postmodern consumer culture. Its technological resources have subdued the constraints of nature and endowed his image with virtual life-after-death in which popularity and sales could continue to grow. They seem to have grown faster after Marley's image was cleansed of any embarrassing political residues that might make him into a threatening or frightening figure. (Gilroy, 2005, 226)

Like Che Guvera, Bob Marley has become short hand in commercial cultures for off the peg insubordination and dissidence: a process that turns the politically potent into cultural wastematter. However, what his depiction on the front cover of *Smash Hits* achieves is the reaquaintance of Marley with the complexity embedded in both reggae and Rastafari: the

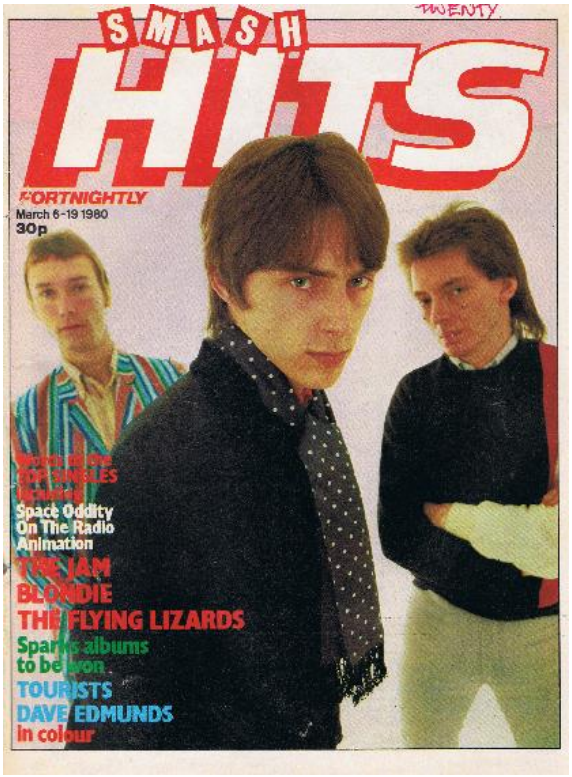


Fig 18 – The Jam (March 1980)

ethnic and commercial tensions of music that evolved from a mixture of African, American and Caribean musical forms.This complex visual grammar is typical of *Smash Hits* of the era and, as the magazine became more successful, budgets increased to allow for bespoke photo-sessions. For example, the mid-shot of The Jam on the cover of *Smash Hits* from March 1980 is highly stylised in its use of white background. The structure of the three-piece band is emphasised by the composition of the shot. Guitarist, singer and group figurehead Paul Weller is at the front of the shot. His sideways profile is offset by the straight to camera poses of drummer and bassist Rick Butler and Bruce Foxton. All three are looking directly at the camera, creating a slightly uncomfortable feeling of intimacy with the onlooker; their menacing stance echoes Alex and his 'droogs' in Stanley Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange* (1971). The clothing codes of the ensemble are closely connected with their musical style; Weller's haircut and scarf is, for example, a studied tribute to Steve Marriot, lead singer and guitarist with the Small Faces. The shot captures the dual spirit of the Mod era. On the one hand, the minimalism of the shot is charmingly modern, connoting the low budget plainness of French new wave cinema. This is reinforced also by the Tricolore of tight fitting clothing worn by bassist Bruce Foxton. On the other hand, Weller's neck scarf and coiffured hair evokes the dandyism of 1950s

Teddy Boy subculture from which the Mods evolved. Undercutting both these conflicting representations, however, is a violent undertone. From the hard angular lines of Paul Weller's jaw to the sneering pout of Bruce Foxton lips, there is a brutality at work here. Only the pantomime of colours on Rick Butler's deck chair print suit provide light relief from the grueling sophistication of the shot; alluding perhaps to the seaside battles of their forebears. The Jam's contradictory visual style gives a clear indication to the reader of Smash Hits how to interpret their music: stylised yet minimal, violent yet controlled. Indeed, while The Jam's music may capture the energy of punk, they were studied in their deconstruction of pop history combining elements of Stax and Motown with the more obvious references to British guitar bands of 1960s with which the mod-era is associated. Clearly The Jam can be configured then within both romantic and modernist modes of authenticity. However, on the singles concurrent to this issue of *Smash Hits* the band is operating within a more modernist modes of authenticity. Both 'Eton Rifles' (UK number 3 in November 1979) and 'Going Underground' (UK number 1 in March 1980) have a punk/new wave sound with shouted vocals, sing-along chorus, distorted guitar riffs and atonal chords. The musical economy of the trio is therefore communicated on the cover of *Smash Hits* by the band's posture, clothing and facial expression. The highly stylised composition of the shot, the simplicity of the background and stark lighting serve as visual signifiers for the band's reconstructed musical modernism.

By contrast, the medium close-up of Kate Bush on the front cover of *Smash Hits* from May 1980 casts the singer as a romantic heroine, like Catherine Earnshaw in Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' (1847), the title of which Bush borrowed for her breakthrough hit in 1978. Her tousled brunette locks fall to frame the feline facial features and though her fulsome lips are heavily painted with red gloss, her mouth remains in sullen repose. For Fred Vermorel it was the look as much as the sound of Kate Bush that cemented her star status:

> We recognise her as we always do stars. A face 'clicks', happens, transfigures anonymity. As the eye jumps to a pretty face in a crowd, the word sex on a page. Decisively it seems a star is born… So she burst through the telly in early '78. All wrists and lisp and dimples, all sweet and clever, all arms like water flowing over stones, as clean and delicious as a scoop of

> avocado pear. The suburbs breathed again. Fresh air after punk's foul blast. And very soon very famous… "The most photographed woman in Britain" (Vermorel, 1983, 9)

It is interesting to note that though Bush's UK Top 40 debut (at the beginning of 1978) coincided with the arrival of Deborah Harry and Blondie, as the cover shot from *Smash Hits* implies, hers was a less reconstructed and (as Vermorel says) an altogether more suburban femininity. For example, the heavily rouged cheeks accentuate her smoky eye makeup and sorrowful expression. Likewise, the backdrop to the shot emphasizes her warm skin tones. However, her black leather jacket is parted to reveal only the smallest glimpse of cleavage. That Bush both adheres to and subverts established conventions of feminine beauty is the key to her romanticism: On the one hand emotion is fore-grounded as a primary aesthetic experience, her make-up serving to highlight the socially constructed ideals about femininity: submissive, compliant and yielding. On the other hand, in the wildness of her hair and petulant facial expression, the audience confronts the sublime of untamed nature.

This tension runs throughout much of Bush's work. On the one hand, her music conforms on a superficial level with the forms and conventions of the traditional female singer-songwriter pioneered by the likes of Joni Mitchell and Carole King: particularly in her use of the piano and soprano voice. On the other hand, her unusual lyrics and four octave range challenge the listener in ways not traditionally associated with female musicians working in popular music. In particular, the unapologetic sexual themes of her lyrics on some of her early recordings broke new ground for female performers. For example, both 'Breathing' (UK number 16 in April 1980) and 'Babooshka' (UK number 5 in July 1980) have strong narrative elements. The romanticism of both tracks is emphasised by Bush's operatic vocal style and indeed



Fig 19 – Kate Bush (May 1980)

'Breathing' sounds like an aria. However, this sensibility is contrasted by the avant-garde modernism of the minimal soundscape and bass and drum sounds.

This contradictory effect is articulated not altogether convincingly on the front cover of *Smash Hits* in the deportment of a leather jacket. While this certainly gestures towards traditional rock 'n' roll, in particular the rebellious spirit of juvenile delinquency popularised by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* (1953), in the wake of John Travolta and Olivia Newton John's success in *Grease* (1978) the previous year, this choice seems somewhat contrived. Nevertheless, in the vernacular of popular culture within which *Smash Hits* clearly operates, the May 1980 issue communicates the ideological rationale underpinning the musical algolagnia of Kate Bush. Like the sexual self-mimicry of her heavily painted lip, Bush's music does have mainstream appeal; however, her diffident poise and esoteric composition sometimes makes accessing her work difficult. In this sublime resolution of post-feminist female sensuality and reconstructed post-punk instrumental virtuosity, on the cover of *Smash Hits* it would seem that pleasure and pain are intimately acquainted.

Conclusion – The Televisual Aesthetic of *Smash Hits*

Clearly the visual culture of *Smash Hits* challenged the production of meaning in the music press that preceded it. It opposed the polemics of the personality writers and the primacy of the written word. However, the real significance of *Smash Hits* at the end of the 1970s is the ideological shift it marked in the way in which audiences thought about popular music: challenging the primacy of authenticity as a barometer of taste. In part this can be attributed to the playful and ironic tone of the editorial. And, indeed, in this sense the magazine opened up a space for the more sophisticated consumer journalism of *Q*. However, it is without doubt that the visual culture of *Smash Hits* is potentially most interesting to the development of Popular Music Studies: reacquainting popular music with its more performative dimension. In this sense *Smash Hits* side steps the tension between Musicological approaches to popular music and those emanating from the Social Sciences by celebrating the synthetic qualities of the surface culture. Instead it provides a vision of popular music that is true to what Simon Frith (2002) has described as its 'televisual sensibility' and the defining influence of television on the rock 'n' roll aesthetic.

Focusing on popular music since the 1950s Frith argues that rock stars not only have to be telegenic in order to succeed but that the conventions of a good television performance have come to define what is understood by a good rock performance. In this sense the visual artifice of *Smash Hits* is perhaps closer to the core aesthetic of rock 'n' roll than the superannuated postulations of the inkies. As Frith suggests: 'for all the ideological importance of its live performance, rock is the first popular musical form to be constructed in the studio' (Frith, 2002, 286). Deposing of genre distinction is key to this sensibility, as is the levelling of cultural order imposed by the primacy of the visual in *Smash Hits.* The legacy of the magazine is that it exposes the ideological parameters within which popular music texts are deconstructed as contingent mythologies: mythologies to which the audience subscribes (or does not) in their reading(s) of the text. In this sense pop, rock, punk and reggae are not discrete genres in *Smash Hits* but shifting strategies; strategies used by the audience to understand not only the popular music to which they listen but also their own identity as audience members. The significance of the televisual aesthetic of *Smash Hits* then stretches beyond the moment of its inception at the end of the 1970s and the begetting of video pop in the 1980s and offers instead a viable mode of deconstruction for all popular music culture formed in the image of the

cathode ray. More specifically, however, in its rejection of American modes of rock authenticity, *Smash Hits* reacquainted the music press in the UK with a very specifically British aesthetic. An aesthetic steeped in the Pop Art sensibility of The Independent Group and the more European tradition of the carnivalesque: a seriousness about the superficial, which others like Sontag (1965) and Savage (1990) might view as camp. It is this inversion of the Baudrillardian deterrence mechanism, whereby that which is fake and commoditised is made manifest, which is at the heart of the *Smash Hits* aesthetic. As David Hepworth suggests: authenticity may not matter in *Smash Hits* 'that does not mean honesty does not' (Hepworth, 2009).

Chapter 4 - Consuming the Past: Enterprise and Heritage in the Music Press.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the way in which both *The Face* and *Q* addressed their readers as the consumers of popular music. In particular, it focuses on how both titles presented heritage as a contingent cipher for the objectification of masculinity and the way in which this coalesced in the production of some very specific narratives of authenticity. In general terms, *The Face* can be seen as an extension of Nick Logan's work on *Smash Hits* and in this sense the way in which it objectifies the past is very playful: embodying a parodic sensibility that is connotative of less singular codes of masculine identity. Indeed, when in 1980 Logan launched *The Face* not only did he finance the project himself but early issues were put together in the *Smash Hits* office with the help of art-director Steve Bush:

> I became editorial director, had quite a nice office and sat there thinking what else can I do. Then I went back to them with the idea for *The Face* and they said sorry all our money's gone into something else we can't do it yet, wait six months. And I thought I'm not going to sit around idly – I thought maybe I could do it. So, I found out how much it cost to print paper and then I put together the first issues of *The Face* in that same room. They knew I was doing it you know evenings and weekends with the art director of *Smash Hits* who designed the logo and we did the first one, pasted it up and everything. (Nick Logan, *Media Guardian*, 2009)

Though *Q*'s launch in 1986 was an EMAP venture, like *The Face* it was presided over by two ex-*Smash Hits* editors: David Hepworth and Mark Ellen. According to Hepworth, *Smash Hits* and Q 'were hugely related to each other' and not just in terms of style but also because they had 'lots of the same readers as they got older' (Hepworth, 2009). Like *Smash Hits*, *Q* was satiric in its outlook, however, the way in which it presented cultural history was less frivolous: cohered around a very fixed male canon and less mutable forms of masculine identity. Indeed, it could be argued that *Q* paved the way for the explosion of men's lifestyle titles in the 1990s; as Stuart Williams, editorial director of EMAP's music division states: '*Q* was the biggest selling men's magazine in Britain until *Loaded*' (Williams, 2007). The invocation of more stable codes of authenticity in *Q*, then, is perhaps the key to this:

counterpoising the more carnivalesque sensibility of both *Smash Hits* and *The Face* and the presentation of gender that was less singular.

Putting aside their unquestionable influence on the development of men's lifestyle publishing in the UK, both *Q* and *The Face* also represent the emergence of two distinct strands of authenticity in the music press. On the one hand, *The Face* is ambivalent about authenticity, preferring instead to celebrate the vanguard of cultural production in a way that it is informed, but not defined by the past. In this sense, it could be said that it adheres to the more carnivalesque, Pop Art aesthetic of British popular music discussed in chapter 1. On the other hand, *Q* reconfigures authenticity as a more contingent and commoditised symbol inextricable from the re-presentation of masculine cultural history. And, in this sense, it adheres to both romantic and modernist forms of American rock ideology. That the DNA of both phenomena can be found in *Smash Hits* is of course inextricable from the personnel involved. *The Face* was also very influential on the format of *Q*, as was the music press that preceded it; indeed, *Q* employed some of the same writers managed by Logan at the *NME* in the 1970s including Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent. As Nick Logan recalls, upon its launch, the editor of *Q* came up to him and said 'he wouldn't have had the idea if I hadn't done *The Face'* (Logan, 2009).

Within the Academy there is a tendency to simplify the complexity of this evolution and make problematic the appropriation of consumer vocabulary. In this chapter, I challenge this in two clear ways. Firstly, I will endeavour to outline the factors that shaped understanding of the way in which authenticity operated in the music press during this period, including the development of consumer journalism, the legacy of the baby boomer (Jones, 1980) and the objectification of heritage. Secondly, I argue that far from being antithetical to the role of the music press, the appropriation of consumer discourse opened up debates that are of great value to popular music. In particular, the way in which heritage is objectified is connotative of some very specific strategies for decoding popular music and in this direction the work of Andrew Higson and Frederic Jameson is particularly useful. Firstly, however, it is necessary to gesture towards the broader contours of theoretical debates surrounding both *The Face* and *Q*.

Theoretical Approaches

Received thinking (Forde, Gudmundsson etc) is that Nick Logan's work at *Smash Hits* is significant for inaugurating a more consumerist approach to the music press. In preceding chapters, however, I have argued that while *Smash Hits* may have embodied a more commercial sensibility in its dealing with popular music, in retrospect it is its celebration of the visual culture of popular music that is most interesting: the invitation to consume was a tacit one and in its infancy the magazine did not address the reader explicitly as a consumer. By the same token, it can be observed that although the journalistic standards of *Q* are not directly influenced by Tom Wolfe, they were in part shaped by a generation of writers who were, including Charles Shaar Murray and Nick Kent. In this sense, the significance of *Smash Hits* is that in the aftermath of punk it took the baton from the *NME* and fashioned a less polemic, more self-aware form of pop journalism, which captured the aesthetic spirit of the time. With *The Face,* however, Logan was more demonstrative in his enthusiasm for consumer orientated pop journalism. Initially, the magazine was conceptualised as a general interest magazine for men; however, he was advised that such a title would 'not work in this country':

> So I thought it was going to be mainly music with a few other things and I gradually introduced fashion and film and the things that we were working with at *NME*, apart from the fashion side. (Logan, 2009)

Though Logan assumed, given his background at *NME,* that the magazine would appeal more to men than women, the magazine was put together on the basis that 'the readership was 50/50' (Logan, 2009). Of particular inspiration was the emerging two-tone scene, which he had already captured on the pages of *Smash Hits* at the end of 1979, and the opportunity to build upon the possibilities *Smash Hits* had opened up for glossy magazines. Logan describes how he was inspired by 'luscious colour' of *Paris Match* and that his impetus for *The Face* was that 'common people' should have 'glossy paper' too (Logan cited by Gorman, 2001, 287). Nominally a music title, *The Face* stood out from both *Smash Hits* and *NME*, not just because of its production values, but because it positioned popular music within what Sean Nixon refers to as the wider context of the pop process: 'the dress codes of pop consumers, together with the design of record sleeves, glamour, the stars and pop video'. (Nixon, 1996, 146). Utopian as this vision might have been, the reality was that *The Face* addressed a more

rarefied constituent of readers than either *NME* or *Smash Hits.* Its audience was cohered around sub-cultural elite of metropolitan fashion police and style cognoscenti; a group whose identity was articulated in explicit material acts of consumption.

The notion that *The Face* epitomised something very specific and not entirely pleasant about Britain in the 1980s has become a recurrent theme in received thinking about the title. Gudmundsson et al, for example, define *The Face* as the embodiment of 'post-modern consumer ideology' (Gudmundsson, 2002, 56). Likewise, Mark Kohn argues that '*The Face* was a useful passbook to the young ideas for 40-year old advertising executives' (cited by Gorman, 2001, 289). Elsewhere, 'style' in particular is something that is viewed as problematic. For example, Frank Mort suggests 'style has been defined as the product of Thatcherism in as much as it involved capitulation to the marketplace' (Mort, 1996, 28). Consequently, when EMAP launched *Q* in November 1986, the people working on it saw it quite differently to *The Face*. '*The Face* had gone mad' commented Cowles (Art Director on early editions of *Q* magazine) in 1996 'and was a really high-faulting style title, very 80s' and on *Q* he was 'designing in a way to counterpoint that' (Cowles, 1996, 61). Likewise, Gudmundsson et al make clear in *Q's* earliest incarnation there was a stark contrast between advertising and editorial, which juxtaposed the synergy of the two pioneered at *The Face* (that has of course now become industry standard). From a theoretical perspective then it would be extremely convenient to pursue this line of difference. And certainly *Q* was less avant-garde in its cultural choices. Nevertheless, on a surface level *Q* bore more than a passing resemblance to *The Face*. Just as *Q* positioned itself as a counterpoint to *The Face*, it was also defined in opposition to the 'inkies'. In an obvious sense this was apparent because it was printed on glossy A4 paper, and for large sections it was in colour. However, more importantly is the fact that it also shunned the polyglottism of *NME* and much has been made of the anonymous professional style of *Q* journalism. Forde, for example, argues that 'the mainstream rise of *Q* since 1986 symbolized the passing of the belief that the music press could hector and dictate the taste patterns of its readership' (Forde, 2001, 28). However, this move away from the bullish journalese of the polyglots positioned *Q* much closer to *The Face* than some would have liked to believe.

In one sense, the similarities between *Q* and *The Face* were attributable to the personnel involved; both Mark Ellen (editor) and David Hepworth (editorial director) had been editors of *Smash Hits* after Logan's departure. Hepworth in particular had worked on early issues of the title. And, one of the key ways in which *Smash Hits* differed from the old style music press was in its use of the colour glossy paper that would go on to characterise both *The Face* and *Q*. However, its success was also predicted on the rise of a new sensibility in popular music brought about by groups who were less keen on preserving the distinction between art and commerce; as Rimmer suggests in *Like Punk Never Happened* (1985). That *Smash Hits* did not try to maintain that illusory distinction between music that is commercial and music that was serious was central to its success at the time and its continuing historical relevance. In one sense then, *The Face* can be viewed as the ultimate manifestation of *Smash Hits'* celebration of the surface culture of popular music under Logan while *Q* can be viewed as taking the impartial and irreverent tone championed by Hepworth and Ellen to the next level. And in a sense, that works quite well. However, within the Academy it is the articulation of consumer discourse that has drawn the most attention.

As Frank Mort has argued, *Q* was first and foremost a consumer lifestyle magazine (Mort, 1996, 75). Likewise, Forde suggests that *Q's* monoglottic house-style built on that of *Smash Hits* and was a function of its role 'as a branded consumer guide' (Forde, 2001, 29). And, equally, Gudmundsson et al argue that *Q* had become the 'ultimate consumer guide for rock and related products' (Gudmundsson et al, 2002, 58). There is a temptation then to lump together *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* as a single pivotal moment in music journalism; one which ushered in an era of what Forde describes as 'brand-centric music journalism' and its corollary: 'bureaucratisation, policy orientation and goal attainment' (Forde, 2001 29). And, as Mat Snow has observed, '*Q* with *Smash Hits* and *The Face* before it, broke the stranglehold of the three-party music press' (Snow cited by Gorman 2001, 319). While this in itself might be a good thing, the subtext underpinning the work of Gorman, Forde and Gudmundsson is that this was somehow the beginning of the end for music journalism. However, what this ignores is the subtle complexity of the relationship between *Smash Hits* and *The Face* in the development of *Q*.

When considering the music press in the 1980s there is a consensus that both *The Face* and *Q* were antithetical to what the music press stood for in the 1970s.Typical of this is the work of Forde, which suggests that the legacy of *Q* is a 'betrayal of New Journalism' (Forde, 2001, 36). In particular, when looking at the way in which the music press shifted between Logan's departure from *NME* (1978) and the launch of *Q* (1986) Forde has a tendency to emphasize the significance of the consumer journalism style and the business infrastructure of EMAP. For example, he writes extensively on the role of *Q* in establishing the 'monoglottic' corporate register of *Smash Hits* in the mainstream of rock journalism:

> Building on *Smash Hits*' market success and emphasis on a clearly defined and adhered to monoglottic house-style, the mainstream rise of *Q* since 1986 symbolized the passing of the belief that the music press could hector and dictate the taste patterns of its readership, placing emphasis on its role as a branded consumer guide. (Forde, 2001, 28)

Forde views *Q* as a key moment in inaugurating a new corporate sensibility, which has since seen many 'monoglottic' titles develop laterally as 'panportfolio' consumer brands. The success of *Kerrang* at the beginning of the 21st Century is typical of this trend: the brand was extended to incorporate television, radio and the Internet. Likewise, Gudmundsson et al view the legacy of EMAP to be one of segmentation and polarization: '*Smash Hits* for teenagers, *Select* for young male rock fans. *Mixmag* for dance enthusiasts, and *Kerrang* for heavy metal fans'. (Gudmundsson et al, 2002, 57). They are in agreement with Forde that *Q* focused rock journalism on the consumption of popular music product and that it deployed a more anodyne register in its treatment of popular music.

It would seem that Forde has a particularly rose tinted view of music journalism in the 1970s. He also bemoans the lack of access to stars resulting in the decline of new journalism style, immersion writing and the emergence of an increasingly litigious culture governing what can and cannot be discussed in interviews. While I do not disagree with Forde that many of the changes in the music press over the past twenty years have been to the detriment of the creativity and artistic freedom of those writing about the music press, it is too easy to dismiss the legacy of *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q*. As Forde suggests, the transformation of the music press has happened in conjunction with the streamlining of

the industry at large to fit in with the fiscal expedience of the global economy. This differs greatly from the music industry in the 1970s when, as Greil Marcus has observed, there was much more money floating round:

> There was just incredible, profligate spending. And in the early '70s too, writers were being flown on junkets all over the country, sometimes to foreign countries, there were these huge, lavish press parties. In order to impress you that an album was important, the record company might send you three or four copies of it once a week, instead of just one, or maybe none. There was just a ludicrous amount of money being spent. And if you lived in the centres of the record business--in Los Angeles or New York--you were being adopted by publicists, by record people, who wanted to be your best friend, did favours for you, called you up, told you inside stuff. I think in some ways, the ways in which writers were--whether you want to use the word corrupted, seduced, fooled, whatever--was much greater than it is now. (Marcus, 2004, 1)

With this in mind, in the proceeding chapter I chose not to make problematic the corollary Forde and Gudmundsson perceive between the slickening of the business infrastructure and constriction of debate. Instead, I argue that the appropriation of consumer discourse into the lexicon of popular music criticism has offered new opportunities for the mediation of heritage and the articulation of cultural taste. In particular, the presentation of cultural history emerges as a key concept in configuring men's lifestyle as an object of consumer journalism and the re-emergence of authenticity as a barometer of cultural taste.

As Marcus's comments suggest, while the culture of the record industry in the 1970s may have produced 'quality journalism', it was not necessarily conducive to the production of 'reasoned critique', and certainly not the kind that could be easily assimilated into Popular Music Studies. That said, Mark Ellen is modest on the significance of *Q*'s rejection of first person polemics, suggesting that he simply 'wanted *Q* to feel like a gang'. By contrast, David Hepworth is less reticent about the importance of *Q*'s corporate register:

> I mean all it about is stressing to people, journalists, that you're doing this for the readers, you're not doing it for yourself, you're not. Here's a big difference with *Q* and *Smash Hits* actually from most of these things. You meet lots and lots of people working in music and media and the majority of those people have one huge problem: they think they're in the music business. *Smash Hits* and *Q* and the people that worked on them never suffered from that delusion. They believed they worked in the media: in the magazine business and it happened to be pointing at the music business. So, that change of emphasis from you to the magazine was important in that sense (Hepworth, 2009).

Unsurprisingly, amongst journalists there is some resistance to the concept of objective consumer orientated music journalism. Barney Hoskyns, for example, states that he found *Q* rather 'smarmy' and suggests that it took 'the danger, glamour and mystery out of music' (cited in Gorman, 2001, 319). He argues that *Q* prose was 'a congruence of Mark Ellen's public school persona and David Hepworth's rather pleased with himself Grammar School take' (Hoskyns cited in Gorman, 321). And certainly, the key to *Q*'s 1 to 5 star rating system drew upon what Forde calls the cartoon-like hyperbole championed by Ellen and Hepworth at *Smash Hits*. The magazine was not, however, the first publication to treat popular music as product. Robert Christgau, for example, is well known for his Consumer Guide column, which first appeared in the Village Voice in 1969. Moreover, *Q* was not the first magazine to present music as a lifestyle choice. Though *The Face* is remembered as a 'style' title, from the outset this was cohered around the popular music stars: Bryan Ferry, Deborah Harry, and Julian Cope all appear on the cover of early issues (although, it has to be said, the way in which they are presented foregrounds their more avant-garde sensibilities). Where *Q* perhaps differed from other rock titles was the way it positioned mainstream music as part of the reader's wider lifestyle choices.

This mainstream emphasis of *Q* is reflected in Gudmundsson et al's suggestion that *Q* pictured rock music as a 'leisure activity': 'part of a life that also included work, football, television, and the local pub' (Gudmundsson et al, 2002, 58). They also make clear the distinction between rock as a 'leisure activity' and rock as part of 'metropolitan lifestyle': '*Q* in the 1980s was anti-*Face* and anti-Morley. Its readers were grown men for whom rock was a hobby (e.g. record collecting, factual knowledge suited

to pub quizzes' (Gudmundsson et al, 58). This viewpoint is perhaps slightly misleading. For example, it ignores the magazine's quite scholarly mode of address. As Ian Cranna suggests this was in part a legacy of *Smash Hits*:

> I think it was very much the academic background in us coming out, because I had come from studying history, that sort of historical perspective came naturally to me because I'd been trained to draw up a balanced report as it were. (Logan, 2009)

By the same token, both Andy Pemberton and Andrew Martin have accused *Q* of being old fashioned. For example, Pemberton argues that 'Q's voice is based on P. G. Wodehouse. That's why it is sometime accused of being tweedy' (Gorman, 2001, 323). Likewise, Martin emphasizes the lifestyle aspect of *Q*'s house style:

> I used to review records for *Q*, and I remember the reviews editor taking me aside to say, "We feel you've slightly misread the new Pat Benatar album." When I asked for guidance on the *Q* house style, he said: "Think of real ale . . . and P G Wodehouse." (Andrew Martin, 2004, 1)

Q may well have been more middlebrow in its cultural choices than *The Face* or indeed *NME.* However, that does not necessarily mean that the process of active consumer engagement was any less sophisticated than its more urbane contemporaries. Moreover, to assume a hierarchy in the firmament of consumer journalism seems at odds with the inherent reflexivity of its underlying principles.

Men's Lifestyle Journalism and Objectification of Heritage

While the dust has now settled on the proliferation of men's lifestyle titles in the 1990s there is not, yet, a definitive account of their evolution. Suffice to say that if the gender politics of the 1980s was characterized by a recoil against Feminism, the 1990s was set apart by emerging crisis in masculinity; a crisis which titles like *FHM* and *Loaded* sought to address in their reconstructed celebration of traditional masculine values: football, birds, gadgets and funny stuff. The success of these titles challenged the received wisdom in the magazine publishing industry that men do not buy lifestyle

titles by default, based on the assumption that we live in a mans world. As Janice Winship argues, the success of women's magazines was predicted on the need to articulate female subjectivity in a culture dominated by male narratives:

> Men do not have or need magazines for 'A Man's World'; it is their world out there… Women have no culture and world out there other than the one which is controlled and mediated by men (Winship, 1987, 6).

If we reverse this logic, therefore, the success of men's magazine in the 1990s invokes a very different power dynamic. In sociological terms the story of gender politics in the 1980s is a complex one and in this sense the emphasis on the consumption of male lifestyle could be viewed very negatively. For example, from a Feminist standpoint the proliferation of men's lifestyle titles could be viewed as part of a 'backlash' against Feminism, in which the mores of female culture were co-opted into a re-inscription of a more singular notion of patriarchy (Faludi 1992). And, indeed, Tony Quinn (2006) argues that changes in the demographic of male consumers was pivotal to magazine publishing in the 1980s:

> [I]n the mid-1980s, things were stirring. Many editors and publishers found themselves at some stage discussing the possibility of a general interest title for men over a pint after work. It was a boom time, with champagne bars opening all over the City of London. Men were staying single longer and had more cash to spend, particularly on clothes and toiletries. They could turn to *Viz* for a laugh (and did, its sales hitting almost a million), *Q* for music and one of a dozen daily papers for sport and news. However, the "new man" had nowhere to find fashion and grooming, and coverage of sex and relationships that was to be found in the women's weeklies and glossies. "Lifestyle" was becoming important, more men were reading their partner's favourites, yet many did not want to be seen with top-shelf magazines. So some titles began to explore the gap. (Quinn, 2006, 1)

One such title to explore this gap was of course Logan's *Arena*. This was the third in a hat-trick of successes for the former *NME* editor and there is a distinct genealogy behind the titles: if *Smash Hits*

opened a space for celebrity orientated pop journalism and *The Face* consolidated this with an emphasis on lifestyle, *Arena* could be said to have completed the set by addressing a more singular and lucrative demographic of metropolitan males. Successful though it was, *Arena's* success could not match that of *Q*. Though the market was able to support niche titles like *Arena* and *GQ* it was not until the mid-1990s that men's lifestyle titles were able to match the sales figures achieved by the music press. What this says about *Q* then is open to interpretation. Frank Mort argues that in *Q* music was simply the pre-text for consumer journalism:

> (T)he editorial stance was to anchor reader's interest via traditional music coverage. EMAP's strategy was to avoid becoming another casualty in this fragile market by smuggling in the consumer journalism format rather than foregrounding it. Music was used as the bait. (Mort, 1996, 75)

From any angle, this is a convincing argument: the evolution of consumer journalism and the pop press are intimately acquainted. Though it may have defined itself to some extent in opposition to the style press, *Q* drew heavily on the format tested by Logan at *Smash Hits* and refined subsequently on *The Face.*

While *Smash Hits* celebrated the commercial sensibility of mainstream popular music, the comparatively rarefied aesthetic of *The Face* pioneered a more serious style of consumer discourse compatible with more serious, even scholarly journalistic standards. Certainly, *The Face* influenced the consumer sensibility of *Q*; however, according to David Hepworth, the money record companies were spending on promoting the CD also shaped *Q*:

> (I)t provided a huge advertising budget, which filled the magazine with ads. You know the argument at the time of the launch of *Q*; the advertising department were against it because it said that you would never sell adverts to the music business on a monthly basis. Well how wrong they were. (Hepworth, 2009)

Indeed, the mid-1980s also saw a realignment of the music scene in the UK with the tastes of a previous generation. As Mark Ellen suggests, the CD, Live Aid and the importance of the albums market reflected the influence of an ageing demographic of consumers interested in revisiting the music of their youth:

> 1986 seemed to be a perfect time to launch it - the CD had reactivated the albums market and invented the nostalgia market, and albums acts had just been reactivated themselves by their appearance at Live Aid - which in turn re-launched the arena and stadium circuit. (Ellen, 2009)

The success of *Q* and this shift towards a more retrospective sensibility is in part a product of wider demographic shifts in the age of popular music audiences. As Keith Negus argues, the collision of punk and middle age made urgent the revision of certain aspects of the culture:

> Punk rock finally challenged, deconstructed and exposed the mythologies of rock at the very moment when the original teenagers and youth of the rock generation were beginning to grow old and beginning to hear things in a different way: songs of generational rebellion, sexual liberation and social concern were starting to be used to advertise wine coolers, executive cars and personal insurance. (Negus, 2001, 158)

While the CD and *Q* captured this moment of retrospection at its height, as Negus suggests it had been a long time coming. Indeed, copies of *NME* suggest this project was already well under way by the late 70s, with vinyl anthologies and classic boxed sets advertised in its pages. Likewise, a lead news article ‘Classic Rock at RAH’ from 1978, for example, betrays a peculiar fixation with the cultural nobility of certain texts:

> ‘Classic Rock’, the hit album featuring symphonic treatments of standard rock material is to be presented on stage in the New Year. The London Symphony Orchestra who recorded the LP are giving two big concerts at London’s Royal Albert Hall on January 30 and 31 –when they’ll be accompanied by a 200-strong choir, plus a special rhythm section comprising some of

> Britain's top rock session musicians. Conductor is Harry Rabinowitz. (Editorial, *NME*, 1978, 3)

Of course, this determination to acquaint popular music with the high cultural forms foretells of the ways in which Q would develop new aesthetic rationales to encode the historical perpetuity of seminal recordings. However, the advent of the CD was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it provided a logical impetus to repurchase a titles already owned on vinyl or cassette tape as the digital sound quality was reputed to be much better. Secondly, it was a tangible objectification of a recording's perpetuity: the CD was considerably more durable than vinyl or cassette tape. In short, it symbolised the commodification of heritage: a practice, which as Corner and Harvey suggest in *Enterprise and Heritage* (1991), was not restricted to popular music in the 1980s:

> History is gradually being turned into something called heritage whose commodity value run from tea towel to the country house. Its focus on an idealised past is entropic, its social values are those of an earlier age of privilege and exploitation and it serves to preserve and bring forward into the present. Heritage is gradually effacing history, by substituting an image of the past for its reality. (Corner and Harvey, 1991, 175)

For Corner and Harvey, the commodification of heritage in the 1980s was a tangible way national identity reconfigured itself in the face of privatisation and socio economic change. This sentiment is echoed by Andrew Higson's work on Merchant Ivory films in which he views the tacit invitation to consume in costume drama as a response to instability about national identity (Higson, 1993). The same structure can be imposed onto the success of the CD and *Q* in the 1980s: the stability of heritage allayed fears not just about by economic transformation and culture change but also the commodification of male lifestyle.

Angry Young Men and the Post-War Baby Boom

Though it is arguably the resurrection of the authenticity as a contingent and commoditised form that is most significant in the objectification of both masculinity and heritage, the cultural prerogatives of the post war baby boom helped to frame that project. Though baby boomer (Jones, 1980) is a term that is often applied to people born in the UK between 1946 and 1964, 1947 represented a high point

in terms of birth rates in the UK. According to Hepworth this was significant for *Q*. Though he concedes that the readers were younger, the majority of stars on the front of early *Q* were born before 1950.

> The performers were middle-aged. I suppose there was a kind of shift I suppose at the time of *Q* launched. Yes there would be. Eric Clapton, you know or whatever would be forty. And I supposed you could say it's always been about the forty-year-old rock star. Ten years after that U2 were forty and ten years after that Oasis were forty. So it all moved forward. (Hepworth, 2009)

And, indeed, for this demographic in the 1980s, that had caught the end of the rock 'n' roll revolution of the 1950s, the 1960s were a defining decade. In this sense the selection of stars like Paul McCartney and Keith Richards on the cover of early *Q*'s is connotative of the revivification of the dominant modes of American rock authenticity that framed the success of British invasion bands in the US. For Hepworth, the resurgence of interest in musicians from the 1960s seemed anomalous

> I supposed it is fascinating that that bunch of people, I don't know, that Mick Jagger at the time appeared to be eking out the end of his career with the Rolling Stones. What do you know? Twenty-five years later, they are still at it. Nobody would have predicted that rock stars would have better career prospects than the guys who went to work in banks. (Hepworth, 2009)

Of course, the career prospect of the rock stars Hepworth is speaking about is predicated very much on the durability of authenticity as dominant mode of aesthetic deconstruction. However, the rehabilitation of authenticity in *Q* needs to be understood in the socio-historical context of those writing in the music press.

In the same way that British Art schools equipped a generation of musicians with the critical awareness to expand the aesthetic parameters of their own Pop Art stardom, so did the expansion of access to Grammar School education in the wake of the 1944 Education Act impact upon the way in

which a generation of listeners understood popular music. Indeed, when the first baby boomers came of age in the 1960s they were better educated and better off than any generation that preceded them. And, for the significant minority who became state subsidised university students, education opened the doors to a whole new way of life. Michael Bracewell, for example, is unequivocal in his view that improved access to education opened the door to 'bourgeois bohemianism' (Bracewell, 2007, 52). Indeed, many sought to distance themselves from the moral restrictions and material austerity of post-war Britain by embracing new ways of living and cultural codes. That this lifestyle was not open everyone was arguably a gap which music press plugged during the 1960s and 70s. And, indeed, for Nick Logan, what unified his work at *NME*, *Smash Hits* and *The Face* was the desire to give readers outside of the major cultural capitals of university towns and urban centre access to the capital of consecration:

> When I was 15 I left school in London because my family got evicted and I went back to my grandparent's house in Lincoln where I was born and spent about 9 months up there when big things were happening, and I just felt out of it, not that I would have been anymore in the thick of it, I wasn't Mark Bolan, I wasn't running around the King's Road, I would still have been on the fringes, but I was stuck up there and all this stuff was going on. There was nothing in the *NME* on it, *Record Mirror* had an 1/8 of a page on soul legends each week and the odd picture in *The Instrumental*… It's what I was trying to do with *NME*, reach out to people who couldn't be a part of the scene, I did with *Smash Hits* and also with *The Face* and it was very much what I was trying to do, to reach out to people and creating a community of people who were in the same situation as me. I was the only one who was into that sort of thing, I was the only one who got it. There was nowhere to get the information, whereas today it is everywhere. (Logan, 2009)

In this sense, Logan's view of the music press fits the classic Bourdieuian paradigm whereby education foregrounds taste and taste constructs class belonging.

That students from working and lower middle class backgrounds revelled in their sudden edification is evidenced by the number of pop musicians this system produced in the 1960s and 70s. Less widely

considered, however, is the impact of this upon the development of music journalism. Though changes at both the *NME and Melody Maker* in the early 1970s were a product of the way in which American rock ideology framed British popular music in the 1960s they were also driven by an influx of highly educated professionals who valued popular music. Not only were people like Nick Logan much younger than the generation that preceded them (Nick Logan was 24 when he took over *NME* in 1973) but they were also able to use academic tools in the deconstruction of popular music. Arguably, the slippage between modes of analysis influenced by traditional subjects like History and English and the more avant-garde sensibility found in Art schools accounts for the emphasis placed upon authenticity in the music press during this period. By the same token, though new journalism was shaped by those born in the inter-war years, its influence on the music journalism of the 1960s and 70s was also a product of the cultural prerogatives of those born after the Second World War; education had anointed the mores of a generation and the Establishment was viewed as something to be challenged. However, the contradictions endemic to the subject position of the newly embourgoised cannot be over-stated.

Though many children of the baby boom were embourgeoised by education they arguably occupied a more liminal space; loosing their original class identity only to find themselves not fully emancipated into the Establishment. Frustration at the insidiously restrictive nature of social class in the 1950s and 60s is a theme explored in popular texts like John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and Keith Waterhouse's novel *Billy Liar* (1960). Though both texts are emblematic of the outsider mentality of the new youth hegemony they are also have the tendency to fetishise the authenticity of the class belonging. This tactic is of course a common trope in early Cultural Studies. Typical of this is Paul Willis' *A Social Theory for the Meaning of Pop* (1974) in which he views popular music as an authentic expression of working class youth:

> (T)he vast majority of young people involved with pop music are working class, and share along with the rest of their class, an inability to articulate their meanings in an abstract verbal manner. (Willis, 1974, 3)

Just as Willis' model over-simplifies the pop process, so too is it easy to overstate the significance of class resistance of in the work of Angry Young Men. As Arthur Marwick observes, the real significance of writers like John Osborne and Kingsley Amis was the demographic downturn in the age of intellectual:

> The 'angry young men' were certainly not youths. But their writings and the publicity which surrounded them, helped none the less to create the notion of a culture led by individuals of a rather younger age than hitherto had been usual: there was a kind of 'shunting effect'– intellectuals were now fifteen or twenty years younger than they used to be, so the age of popular entertainers and fashion-setters, too, was shunted back by fifteen or twenty years. (Marwick, 1996, 123)

Indeed, Lynne Segal finds this romanticism unconvincing; she argues that the vehemence directed at the ruling class by a new creed of the intellectual was motivated by individualism rather than collective solidarity:

> In retrospect it is clear that the scorn which the Angry Young Men hurled at 'the Establishment' was class resentment, but one devoid of any collective class-consciousness. As many have since commented these new writers were mostly university graduate ex-grammar schoolboys from lower-middle or working-class backgrounds, climbing quickly – but for them not quickly enough – up the class ladder. They faced a Britain as class conscious as ever – at least, that is, in its upper echelons, where power, authority and prestige still resided, and with it contempt and ridicule for the grant-aided student. (Segal, 1990, 15)

However, where Marwick's work is most interesting is not so much the coalescence of the cultural front line around youth, but the corporate sensibility of that culture. Echoing sentiments expressed by Daniel Miller in *Consumption as the Vanguard of History* (1993), Marwick points to the economic determinism underpinning the culture imperialism of 1960s babyboomers: 'an economic phenomenon related to the new spending power created by the new technological high-wage society' (Marwick, 1996, 123). In this sense, it could be argued that the transformations that took place in youth culture

from the late 1950s onwards were as significant for the way in which they framed cultural consumption as they were for their output. Moreover, by sheer dint of numbers, the baby boom provided an audience for the beat explosion of the 1960s and all that followed. And in this sense their tastes and sensibilities provided a framework for the way in which popular music was conceptualised as a product by the music press. The significance of the fact that by the 1980s the children of the post war baby boom now occupied positions of power and authority, therefore cannot be overstated: the 'new' youth hegemony that was both individualistic and corporate was now middle-aged.

Enterprise and Heritage, Masculinity and the Music Press

A fascination with the relationship between cultural history and consumer culture underpins Paul Du Noyer's article 'Cocaine' from *Q1*. Of particular interest is the way in which it assimilates facets of 1950s culture into the landscape of contemporary consumption. For example, the black and white illustration that leads the article echoes the advertising for 50s household products like washing powder with the caption: 'it's the white one, it's the bright one'. This is juxtaposed against the image of a smart young male in a shirt and tie proffering a rolled up bank note. This constructs a powerful narrative in which the cultural past is intrinsic to understanding the cultural present. Consumption is fixed within a framework of 50s nostalgia as a way of locating the centrality of commerce in contemporary definitions of culture. On a very basic level, this confers authority upon that cultural past. Soap is central to this: it configures a domestic space with a national space. However, what is interesting is the slippage between this and the representation of gender. As Daniel Miller has argued the housewife and the purchase of such goods is the embodiment of very particular kind of commercial culture:

> She [the housewife] commands the fate of developing countries as one of poverty or relative affluence. But she also commands the progressive activity by which consumption is used to extract culture as the self-construction of humanity from the intractable but essential institutions of the modern world such as the market of bureaucracy. (Miller, 1993, 34)

The occlusion of the housewife in this image and replacement by a male figure in conventional 'business' attire is, therefore, loaded. It co-opts the potentiality of moral consumption into a male narrative and reconfigures the power of that cultural heritage with



Fig 20 - Image used to accompany Paul Du Noyer's article 'Cocaine' from *Q*1.

masculine authority. This process repeats itself in the article that follows. The notion that cocaine is the 'yuppie drug' (Du Noyer, 1986, 52) suggestive of conspicuous wealth is encapsulated in the phrase: 'A coke habit has been described as God's ways of telling you that you are making too much money' (Du Noyer, 1986, 52). However, this is not linked so clearly as it might be with cultures of female consumption and prescription drug abuse. Du Noyer frames contemporary use of the drug only once within a narrative of medicine cabinet narcotics: 'put it like this, cocaine becomes as banal as the housewife's Valium'. Instead, he regales us with stories from the folklore of contemporary popular music in which such excess is deemed heroic. However, what is significant is not the moral voice but the authority of masculine history. This is exemplified in the article's fixation with male stars: 'Bob Geldof, Elvis Costello, Sting, Fish of Marillion, Jackson Browne and David Sylvian have all owned up but usually in a past-tense sort of way'. Where is Stevie Nicks, Joni Mitchell or Marianne Faithful in this list? In *Q* it would seem those narratives that confer the power of cultural heritage most effectively are those that are male. To understand these tactics more fully it perhaps necessary to explore the way in which heritage was objectified in *The Face*.

Though *The Face* was aimed at a more rarefied constituent of readers than *Q,* national identity is central to the location of heritage. As Sean Nixon suggests in his analysis of Robert Elm's article in *Face 61* on David Bowie's 1976 appearance on *Soul Train* 'it built into the magazine a memory of a sub-cultural moment' (Nixon, 1996, 148). Likewise, Mo Trix's article 'History of The Future' from February 1986 makes an explicit link between collective identity and the representation of the past. For Trix it would seem the fixation upon cultural heritage in the 1980s is indexed to both cold-war anxiety and the abolition of the future:

> We live in the age of the microchip but the under the sign of the atom. The future has been erased by the bomb, becoming so bleak as to be unthinkable. While all around cling to mock-Georgian, the fake pastoral, the values of the past, it is worth asking whatever happened to the future? (Trix, *Face 70*, 1986, 56)

However, it is the figuration of consumption and power into the equation that is most illuminating. The article is accompanied by 28 images of futuristic 20th Century design including cars, rockets, toasters and a vacuum cleaner. In its sumptuous eight-page-entirety it seems to purposely fetishise the historic qualities of the artefacts. Each shot has a purposefully iconic quality and this manufactures an awkward nostalgia. The future it would seem is the latest thing to be objectified in the consumption of heritage. She argues that, in Britain, the 1950s is a potent signifier for this. Space exploration was at the forefront of the collective imagination and it was a time in which British objectified this future in the consumption of goods:

> The launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, in 1957 sent the world into ecstasies. A satellite seemed to represent the ultimate triumph over Nature; once up there staying for ever, free from the burden of gravity. Sputnik motifs appeared on everything from teacups to scooters, along with the symbol of a more double-edged discovery by the warmongers. If you used it for peaceful ends, said the apologists, atomic power could make electricity from any source look like blood from a stone. Under the sign of the Atom in Brussels in 1958, everybody, everybody tried to look



Fig 21- Images used to accompany ‘History of The Future’ in February ’86 issue of *The Face*.

> relaxed, and certainly a million coffee bars, ceiling lights and coatstands got their aesthetic inspiration from the discoveries of fission… the future we all recognize today was invented in the spacemag of the Fifties. (Trix, 1986, 63)

America was also synonymous with this project, partly because of its dominant economic position but also because long before the war the American Dream articulated itself in the commodification of its future aspirations. As Trix suggests Bel Geddes’ designs in the Thirties for ‘revolving restaurants, floating hotels and flying cruise liners’ did a lot to help the US out the great depression. However, what is most interesting is that she identifies a confluence between the historic objectification of the future in the consumption of the present and the contemporary consumption of the future in the objectification of the past. The heritage of consumer of heritage, it would seem, confers authenticity on the consumption of heritage

The representation of heritage in the music magazines of the 1980s is significant because it captures both the moment of retrospection inaugurated by the CD and the co-option of masculinity as a project of consumption. Just as Corner and Harvey (1991) identify the commodification of heritage as the key concept used by the Thatcher government in managing the conflict between political conservatism and radical free-market capitalism so too does the historicisation of popular music bridge an ideological gap between the cultural prerogative of the masculine and the commodification of male lifestyle. The exclusiveness of the CD becomes both a historical archive and a potent symbol of

fetishised *lifestyle* consumption. Mark Cooper's piece 'The Beatles on CD', for example, is illustrative of the numerous articles on the new format in early editions of *Q*.

> Long-awaited by dealers and public alike, these *Beatles*' releases will set the seal on the arrival of compact disc as a mass-market phenomenon and boost the sales of both the hardware and the software. The releases mark a watershed for those who have held-off investing in CD 'until The Beatles are out', a phrase dealers have grown tired of hearing (Cooper, Q6, 1987, 10).

What is fascinating about this article is the way in which Cooper uses narratives of consumption to negotiate the wider cultural capital of the recordings. He sets up a binary in which the release of the first four Beatles albums on CD simultaneously confers cultural authority on the new format and reaffirms the weight of The Beatles' legacy. The meaning of consumption is in dialogue with much broader judgments of taste. On the one hand, the subheading suggests that cultural authority is not judged in terms intrinsic to the aesthetic qualities of the recordings but in anticipation of the sales EMI will make: 'Massive sales or bloody massive sales'. On the other hand, halfway way through the piece Cooper recounts how demand for these new releases is such that bootlegged copies of a test pressing 'command as much as $80' (Cooper, 1987, 11). Such is the capricious tone of the article: if 'mass-market' sales are a good thing then the cultural cache of black-market product is even better. Consumption becomes a narrative device: a way in which *Q* mediates its own cultural values. This narrative, however, is not entirely linear. It demonstrates what you want it to: if sales are small then the object is exclusive, if sales are high then it has populist authority. This is encapsulated in the final sentence: 'Once again, The Beatles have arrived to launch another popular music revolution'. It is the narrative account, not the status of consumption itself that shifts and for this reason we perhaps need to look beyond consumer theory to explain the mediation of cultural artefacts in *Q*.

Clearly in the objectification of cultural history, both *The Face* and *Q* are rehearsing some strident narratives of cultural power. There is clear distinction in the way in which these operate. Pitting one text against another in a bid to uncover the ideological difference, however, is not a new strategy for dealing with the music press. In 'The Bottom Line on Planet One: Squaring up to *The Face'* (1988)

Dick Hebdige uses the analogy of a war between first and second worlds to describe the relationship between *Ten8* magazine and *The Face*. Broadly speaking the world of *Ten 8* is modernist: 'the relations of power and are ordered so that priority and precedence are given to written and spoken language over 'mere idolatrous imagery' (Hebdige, 1988, 158). By contrast world of *The Face* could be said to embody a more post-modern rationale: 'Truth – insofar as it exists at all – is first and foremost pictured: embodied in images which have their own power and effects'. Hebdige argues that the relative success of *The Face* over T*en8* is reflective of the times, which are characterised by the collapse of the relationship between the signifier and signified, the predomination of surface culture and the simulacrum. In one sense it would be very easy to read the relationship between *Q* and *The Face* against the same binary. Certainly, *Q* adheres to a much more modernist rationale than *The Face*. And in this sense the success of *Q* can be seen as a yearning for the much more familiar terrain of *NME* and *Melody Maker* in which authenticity is the compass by which rock steers itself. As David Cavanagh points out *Q* was for a generation of music fans who had 'grown up reading Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray and, hey, here was this magazine where they could read Charles Shaar Murray again' (Gorman, 2001, 323). However, not only does such a tactic ignore the fact that the effect achieved by the bricolage of writers of the polyglottic era was no less post-modern than the more homogenised style of *Q*, but it is also antithetical to the view of the 1980s outlined by Frith. Rather the success of *Q* can be attributed to the successful manufacture of a veneer of modernist authenticity over a base structure very similar to that of *The Face.* This can be said to have worked on two levels. Firstly, while *The Face* embodied consumer discourse, *Q* magazine worked hard to fetishise its use of that language. Secondly, while *The Face* positioned popular music in relation to the wider pop process, *Q* positioned popular music amidst the lifestyle of its male readers. Consequently, the ideological distinction between *The Face* and *Q* is inextricable from the use of consumer discourse. The location of cultural power in *Q* and *The Face* can be predicated on three things. Firstly, it is definitional of the relationship between the individual and national subject: the mediation of cultural heritage is intrinsic to the stability of national identity. Secondly, it is a function of a mutable economic structure: cultural power is objectified in the consumption of the cultural past. Thirdly, it is complicit with the construction of masculinity: insofar as masculinity is inextricable from power. This third model of cultural power in the 1980's, however, needs investigating more carefully. While in *Q* it would seem that masculinity is complicit with cultural oppression, in *The Face* that relationship is

more ambiguous. This is demonstrable in comparison between the representations of the male subject on the covers of each magazine. The construction of masculinity, it would seem, is indexed exactly to the location of cultural heritage. What needs to be given further consideration is the role of music in the negotiation of this.

Music, Identity and Taste

The model of cultural nobility offered by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1979) is an excellent way into beginning to think about the presentation of cultural artefacts in the music press and the ways in which the mediation of taste is suggestive of the dominant ideology. Bourdieu identifies what he calls 'cultural nobility' (Bourdieu, 1979, 2) in the claims that are made by and on behalf of divergent cultural matter. In his logic cultural taste is the site of contestation between differing accounts of what is legitimate and 'noble' and what is not. This he argues is contingent not upon the objects themselves but the way in which they are objectified. For Bourdieu education is the key to not legitimacy itself but the successful proclamation of that. The sort of claim an individual makes is closely tied to the education they have had and in this sense 'nobility' has the tendency to always foreground itself. The objectification of cultural 'nobility' for Bourdieu is negotiated in the consumption of cultural matter: 'consumption is, in this case, a stage in the process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code' (Bourdieu, 1979, 3). He uses the term both literally and metaphorical to regulate what he refers to as cultural capital. On the one hand, cultural capital determines the predilection of consumers in the choices they make. On the other hand, all sorts of symbolic consumption goes on in the way knowledge is socially distilled. He gives the example of the value difference between a 'Concerto for the Left Hand' and a 'Straus Waltz' and quite clearly we can apply the same principal to other hierarchical binaries including rock/pop, masculine/feminine and classical/popular.

The music press embodies Bourdieu's model of distinction: it both educates its readers and renders them complicit in judgments of taste. Moreover, the inextricable relationship between education and

judgment foregrounds the success of each publication: the reader is implicated and flattered in the successful proclamation of nobility. Between *The Face* and *Q*, however, there is a subtle difference in the weighting of education and judgment. On the one hand, *The Face* invites readers to make their own judgments of taste, while simultaneously educating its readership with subject matter that is on the brink of the mainstream. On the other hand, *Q* offers artefacts that are more familiar, but makes an explicit attempt to educate its readers in the process of naming. This is implicit in the narrative tone. *The Face* is purposely irreverent; nominally serious topics like art, for example, are subordinate to frivolous things like cosmetics in the 'intro' section. The magazine brings together a disparate collection of cultural material. Characteristic of this is page 32 of *Face 70* in which Japanese avant-garde Art is considered alongside the design of beer bottles. It assumes a dexterity on the part of the reader in distinguishing between cultural matter which can be 'bombarded with designer pork scratchings' and 'iconoclastic neo-dada objects' (*Face 70*, 1987, 32). By contrast, there is a discomfort about such mutability in *Q*: a need to re-inscribe the seriousness of the subject and contain the plurality of its existence. The introduction to Chris Salewicz's lead article with Paul McCartney in *Q1* is characteristic of the solemnity with which it handles cultural artefacts:

> Paul McCartney is 44. He was 20 when his first composition appeared on record. Today he's just returned from remixing a second single from his new LP Press to Play, his 27th solo or group studio album in 24 years (Salewicz, 1986, 29).

Of course, this interview was very important to the success of the magazine: Paul McCartney is one of contemporary popular music's most respected performers and it was something of a coup to have him in the first issue. However, the use of incessant arithmetic data to corroborate this seems unnecessary.

In 'A Guide to Modern Living' or 'I bet you haven't heard of *The Face'* Frank Mort highlights the way in which the magazine uses consumption to mediate symbolic order. The agent of this relationship for Mort is style: the exchange value of which is commodity. In *The Face* this is framed not in acts of 'everyday' consumption, but in 'an exotic celebration of goods (Mort, 1996, 25). The selection and arrangement of goods, according to him, is highly specialized: 'it was the binary opposition between

taste and the mass market' (Mort, 1996, 25). What is significant about this account is the way it emphasizes the consumer discourse as a language in which the magazine is fluid. However, it is also a language that is silent. *The Face* purposefully eschews, it would seem, explanations of why things have style. The assumption is that if the reader does not already know, then there really is not point in telling them. Its codification, therefore, pertains to be indecipherable. Consequently, it does not comment on consumption, but rather embodies it. *Q* quite clearly operates within a similar framework of consumption to *The Face*. Each issue explicitly locates contemporary popular music in the context of wider cultural consumption. For example, early editions feature articles with a wide variety of titles: 'Cocaine' (*Q*1); 'Books of Blood' (*Q*1); snooker player 'Gordon Burn' (*Q*3); 'George Lucas' (*Q*3); 'Ken Russell' (*Q*5); 'Multiplex Cinemas' (*Q*7); 'TV Comedy' (*Q*9); and, 'ITV: The Chart Show' (*Q*9). No cultural artefact is offered alone. However, the magazine is far more elaborate in the construction of criteria for the judgment of taste. For example, although *Q* is making judgments of taste on behalf of the reader, the definitions of the star-rating system explicitly educates the reader on how to make their own claims. The use of the word 'sane', for example, and the phrase 'achieves what it set out to do' appeal to categories of rationality that are difficult to substantiate. The magazine not only codifies a specific language of nobility but also institutes a framework of value-based consumer choice. This is exemplified in the introduction to the guide in which *Q* explicitly addresses the reader as a consumer: 'record company schedules means that in a small minority of cases a record may not be in the shops at the exact time of publication'. Likewise, reviews are ordered by the commodity status of the recording: 'either a new compilation or a mid-price edition'. *Q* catalogues cultural artefacts in such a way that judgment is inextricable from consumption. Certainly the arrangement of those artefacts is highly symbolic. However, consideration also needs to be given as to how *Q* is consumed.

The inextricable relationship between the cultural order of popular music and the commodification of its heritage confers upon the mediation of both literal and symbolic consumption in the music press authenticity that is highly saleable. Indeed, the slippage between symbolic and literal consumption is clearly the ideological niche market the music press fills. The literal consumption of heritage is one way in which the music press confers nobility upon the symbolic mediation of cultural taste through consumption. This process is most explicit in the re-release section of the magazine, which often matches and sometimes exceeds the volume of new material reviewed: the history of popular music it

would seem is a rich ideological reserve to be mined ad infinitum. Though consumption may be a narrative device rather than a material exchange, it is the way in which the mediation of cultural taste articulates itself as a meta-narrative of symbolic consumption that is most interesting. By affecting the value neutral standpoint of objective consumer guidance, the music press conceals the partisan ideological framework underpinning the arrangement of popular history into a linear canon of culturally noble artefacts. The appearance of only ten women on the cover of *Q*between 1986 and 1990, for example, is connotative not only of a ritualised predisposition towards older male stars but a strategic exclusion of female performers and their histories. Gillian G. Gaar (1992) and Lucy O'Brien (1995) have both written excellent books that challenge the masculine order of popular music history, and in this sense the power of cultural heritage is perhaps metonymic with the heritage of masculine power. However, what is needed is a closer consideration of the ideological foundations underpinning the documentation of popular music history in the popular music press.

Parody/pastiche

Theorists of the post-modern generally agree that in late capitalist society the relationship between the real and the simulated becomes somewhat blurred. Fredric Jameson, for example, argues that in a hyper-real semiotic landscape, the relationship between the signifier and signified is not just under some duress but it has arguably been replaced by the simulacrum (Jameson, 1991, 13). This created an enormous problem for the music press in the 1980s, which simultaneously wanted to open up markets for new technological hardware but relied upon its ability to deconstruct and appraise the values and traditions of the past. If it was no longer possible to distinguish qualitatively between one recording, composition and performance or another, what function did the music press serve? The answer was the commodification of heritage. In a digital age the need for the skilful musicianship of the past was no longer important in the production of new music. Paradoxically, therefore, the fetishised inscription of authorial certainty by the music press became all the more urgent.

Andrew Higson's work (1993) on the heritage film in the 1980s is a useful way into thinking about the presentation of history in the music press. In a study of Merchant Ivory literary adaptations - *Howard's End* (1992) and A *Room With A View* (1986) - Higson identifies heritage, like Corner and Harvey (1991), as a manifestation of cultural instability about national identity. However, it is his appropriation

of the terms 'parody' and 'pastiche' defined by Jameson (1991) that proves most instructive in overcoming the semiotic paralysis of postmodernism:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exits. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs. (Jameson, 1991, 17)

For Jameson to pastiche is to mimic without any satiric or other impulse that communicates difference, but to parody is far more carnivalesque and knowing and this has all sorts of benefits in sorting out the signification of culturally ambiguous matter. Higson, for example, uses it to distinguish between specific narratives of historical representation:

> The heritage films…work as pastiches, each period of the national past reduced through a process of reiteration to an effortlessly reproducible, and attractively consumable, connotative style (Higson, 1993, 112).

The antithesis of this would perhaps be the inter-textual hybridism of films like *Scary Movie* (2000) or *Austin Powers* (1997), which consciously spoof generic forms and conventions, as well as the historical time frame in which they exist. Certainly, in the presentational devices used within the music press the differences between parody and pastiche are likewise articulated in dialogue with representations of cultural history that are less singular. In the shot of Paul McCartney, for example, on the cover of *Q1* the performance of heritage is entirely neutral; the musician does not have to don a Beatles' suit and mop-top wig to assert historical prerogative. Likewise, for the shot of Mick Jagger on the cover of *Q5* it is unnecessary for Mick to put on a leopard skin cat suit and flounce around with a silk scarf, even though his cultural authority is contingent upon the evocation of such past glories. By contrast, an image of Adam Ant from an early issue of *The Face* undermines a fixed historical position with a pantomime of historically ambiguous romantic iconography. Similarly, a shot of Mick

Jones from *The Clash* in a Stetson toying with emblems of Spaghetti Western films is at odds with their urban British identity. What this means, however, is ambiguous. Perhaps the key point to extract is that the presentation of cultural history presents the possibility of an underlying ideological framework resistive to the levelling of post-modern debate.

Now for Higson, the slippage between parody and pastiche is synonymous with a number of other cultural tensions. For example, in the pictorial camera style of the heritage film, Higson argues that the creation of a 'narrative space' (Higson, 1993, 126) comes second to 'the creation of a heritage space'. And, for him, this is commensurate with the tacit invitation to consume: heritage is used to implicate the audience in the subordination of cultural order to capitalism. Clearly there is an equivalence here with the way heritage and male authority converge in *Q* and *The Face* to confer nobility upon consumption as a narrative strategy for determining cultural taste. Likewise, Higson offers a resistive reading of the heritage film in which parody become synonymous with alternative codes of masculinity: 'The discourse of authenticity is treated so seriously', he argues, that 'the films scale the heights of camp' (Higson, 1993, 126). And certainly as Susan Sontag (1964) has argued, there is a lot of theoretical mileage in camp as a Foucauldian semiotic event. However, this needs to be placed in the wider context of the representations of gender within the magazine.

The representations of gender on the front cover of *Q* and *The Face* help define boundaries of masculine identity in the 1980s. For example, Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger embody very different codes of masculinity. Paul McCartney stands for stability and the real; he is working class in origin, a family man and an honest guy. By contrast, Mick Jagger symbolizes something more capricious and extreme: bravado, insouciance and bourgeois ennui. However, these are rendered entirely neutral on the cover of *Q*. The magazine presents the two men in a way that foregrounds their historical status and makes any need to negotiate their position as masculine subjects superfluous because, inevitably, it is one and the same thing. By contrast, on the cover of *The Face*, the gendered identity of Mick Jones and Adam Ant is negotiated in specifically historic terms. Like Paul McCartney, Mick Jones stands for stability and the real. However, this is a far more rebellious and violent mode of working class masculinity. Accordingly, Adam Ant is connotative of mutability: the kind of middle-class foppishness and theatricality to which Mick Jagger also appeals. Unlike *Q*, this difference is

performed in temporally coded visual language. Thus, when Jones sports a Stetson, he is appealing to a historic breed of frontiersmen, loners and outlaws. Likewise, Ant's debaucherous curled locks evoke 18th Century romantic ideals about the chivalrous rogue. However, the cultural authenticity this confers upon the male subject is always effaced. We know that Jones is not a real cowboy and we know that Ant is not a real highwayman. *The Face* may be camp, but the real significance is that in both magazines this ideological disposition is historically coded.

The difference between parody and pastiche is suggestive of the same ideological divide that exists between 'rock' and 'pop': it can be conceptualised in terms of what is synthetic and that which is for real. However, its theoretical advantage is that it is less genre-specific and separates performativity from notions of gender per se. For example, while a band like Bon Jovi are nominally 'rock', there is a strong element of self-parody in their performance, while a 'pop' act like Dido is almost certainly devoid of any satiric impulse. It also privileges the dependence of cultural capital on heritage. And, although this may be articulated in terms of symbolic and literal consumption, judgements of taste perhaps need to be decoupled from the baggage of capitalism. The parody/pastiche divide is useful then because it foregrounds cultural order in the narrative certainty of history. As the live music scene is testimony, this issue is pressing: new groups compete against tribute acts and ageing original stars have more often than not become their own tribute band. Certainly in contemporary music magazines from *Top of the Pops* to *Wire* there is a divide between those that embody a more self-conscious parodic sensibility and those that are more linear in their presentation of history. What is certain, however, is that it is not necessarily the music that codes itself in this way. From Steps to Throbbing Gristle popular music may well be the embodiment of post-modern cultural practice, however, what shifts are the narratives of authorship, which the music press imposes on these phenomena. While a magazine like *Q* may pertain to present value neutral accounts of pop history, of which their own legacy may be an integral part, in reality those narratives are highly specialised and value loaded. However, there is a tension here between that which we might tentatively refer to as 'pop ideology' and the need of the story that is being told to be engagingly sequenced and structurally coherent.

Conclusion

If we accept that from a classic Cultural Studies perspective the music press exists to en-code and de-code the meaning of popular music, it would seem that underpinning this process is a tension between art and commerce, which exists also in the popular music scene. This is significant because debate within the academy has been shaped by a similar anxiety about mass culture and whether or not it is possible to value post-modern cultural matter like popular music qualitatively. One solution to this is to shift the focus of analysis away from the judgements of a pre-discursive self to the medium of judgement. As Simon Frith argues, the music press 'is not just producing a version of music for the reader, but also a version of the listener for the music' (Frith, 1996, 68). In the next chapter I focus in more detail on the specialised vocabularies contained within *Q*. These exist on a number of levels, from the interplay of visual images to the meaning implied in the structure of sentences; embedded in the tense of a verb, subordinate clause or rhetorical device.

Of those theorists that have focused on the music press in detail there is consensus that the written style of the music press shifted in the 1980s. *Q*, *The Face* and *Smash Hits* are seen as having replaced the new journalism style of *NME* and *Melody Maker* (defined by Forde as 'polygottism') with a more corporate 'monoglottic' form. The role of consumer-based discourse, in particular the affectation of a non-partisan homogenised style is something that is made problematic by Gudmundsson et al, Forde and Gorman. Their view of the music press in the 1980s regards the judgement of taste in *Q*, *The Face* and *Smash Hits* as complicit with consumer culture and less than radical. While I have not attempted to challenge this view per se, it needs to be augmented with awareness that, far from being antithetical to the function of the music press, the appropriation of consumer discourse possibly makes its role more transparent.

The changes in the music press during the 1980s did not, however, happen in a vacuum; although seemingly there was a very tight nucleus of personnel involved. They were in part a response to a new sensibility in the popular music scene brought about by groups who were less keen on preserving the distinction between art and commerce than the generation before them. They were also a response to the fragmentation of the pop market, as the first generation of pop fans moved into middle age. Teenage singles buyers, thirty-something connoisseurs and metropolitan fashionistas were just some of the distinct demographics the music press now aimed to cater for. However,

perhaps the most formative influence upon the transformation of the music press in the 1980s was the objectification of masculinity as a project of cultural consumption.

It is well documented in the work of Nixon and Mort that by the mid-1980s masculinity had become a commoditised entity. This was manifest in both the redefinition of retail space on the High Street and the emergence of style titles like *GQ* and *Arena*. And, while *The Face* was clearly aimed at this more elite demographic, *Q* perhaps addressed a more middlebrow audience: the man who shopped in Burtons and C&A. In retrospect, therefore, it would be easy to view the transformation of the music press in 1980s as a clear step towards the very mainstream commodification of male culture in the 1990s with magazines like *Loaded* and *FHM*. While this is a story that needs to be told, it is not one I have attempted to recount here because it would inevitably be at the expense of what is particular to popular music. Nevertheless gender recurs as a key issue in the encoding and decoding of popular music, but this requires some further extrapolation. The relationship between popular music and consumer discourse can be seen in a number of sets of binaries: rock verses pop, the masculine verses the feminine, the authentic verses the inauthentic, and modernism verses post-modernism. On the one hand, it could be argued that commoditised forms are synonymous with pop, the feminine, the inauthentic and post-modernism. On the other hand, art could be seen as metonymic with rock, the masculine, the authentic and the modernist. The problem with this approach, however, is that it is too prescriptive. What happens when we encounter an inauthentic performance of masculinity in the rock genre with a post-modern sensibility? Not only is the meaning of consumer discourse fluid but also the terms of its definition are changeable. Moreover, the notion that there is a hierarchy in the cultural order of contemporary popular music seems like anathema: popular music is after all characterised by its pseudo-individualised nature. Nevertheless, there is a certain democracy in capitalism; in so far that it is a commodity, popular music is cultural matter with capital value that is continually in flux. In a literal sense this is evidenced in the worthlessness of the releases found in the bargain bin. Figuratively it is verified in the temporal value of some popular music compared to the longevity of ‘classic’ material. In both cases these relative values are also indexed to a range of variables (age, race, sex and class) connected to what is being appraised and who is doing the appraisal. And, in this sense, the music press is about masculinity because historically it was predominantly men who were writing the reviews: a masculine subject position was prerequisite to the capital of consecration.

Indeed, emanating from that standpoint it is possible to see emerging an elaborate framework for aesthetic judgement, defined by and sometimes in opposition to patriarchal order. While race, age and class interpolate in this ruling, it is my contention that gender predominates. Taste in this sense has the tendency to foreground itself: the music press both educates it readers and renders them complicit in judgements of taste. Part and parcel of this initiation is the rehearsal of some very specific narratives of gender, which are manifest not least in some extremely partisan editorial strategies for dealing with female recording artists.

While historically the music press has tended to shroud taste in mystery, the appropriation of consumer discourse in the 1980s endeavoured to make the process of judgement more apparent. This is evidenced most clearly by the star rating system in *Q*, which instituted a deceptively anodyne register for what was clearly value loaded in its emphasis on logic and consistency. A properly polished veneer of cogency, however, required a more tangible barometer of taste than assumed rationality. What emerges as a key concept, therefore, is the role of heritage in the negotiation of authenticity. If nobility is contingent upon the inheritance of a musical gift or the continuation of a musical legacy then the successful proclamation of that in the music press is dependent on defining the laws of succession. And, both *Q* and *The Face* were very good at defining those laws. While *The Face* was a benefactor of the new and avant-garde, *Q* was reluctant to bequeath distinction to anyone but the most established popular music performers. It is in these strategies for encoding the performance of heritage that the music press reveals most about its aesthetic rationale and in this direction Higson's use of Jameson is definitive. *The Face* can be seen to embody a parodic sensibility: carnivalesque and ironic in its representation of the past. It turns historical depiction into a witty commentary that says as much about the present as it does about the past. By contrast *Q* is far more earnest in its depictions: solemnly trying to relive the past but forever missing the point that that past is forever gone.

Chapter 5 - Authenticity and the Contingent Aesthetics of Consumer Discourse in Q 1986/1988

Introduction

This final chapter looks at the way in which *Q* represented authenticity during the period 1986 to 1988. In this sense it draws upon arguments set out in chapter 4 in its exploration of the role of consumer vocabulary in the 1980s; however, it also builds upon the textual analysis of *Smash Hits* offered in chapter 3 and the history of the music press delineated in chapter 2. The central vector of my argument will be that *Q* rehabilitated authenticity as a contingent aesthetic construct, which embodied the plural and often contradictory definitions outlined in chapter 1. While this is to some extent a function of the objectification of heritage recordings and 'classic' rock, it is also evidenced by the way in which new music is mediated. Underpinning this is an awareness of the way in which consumer discourse was incorporated into vocabularies for talking about popular music and how this offered new opportunities for understanding its ideological significance. In this sense, *Q* can be said to draw upon two strands. On the one hand, *Q* is a product of Logan's work at *Smash Hits* and subsequently *The Face*: pop music is positioned as a product and placed within the context of the wider lifestyle. On the other hand, *Q* draws upon an earlier era in music journalism, not just in its preference for older artists, but in terms of the personnel involved. For example, ex-*NME* employees like Charles Shaar Murray and Paul Du Noyer wrote the majority of the re-release reviews. There is of course a certain irony to this: though it draws upon strategies honed by Nick Logan, in a sense, *Q* re-invoked the myth of authenticity, which both *Smash Hits* and *The Face* had helped debunk. Of course, this over-simplifies the process. As I have attempted to outline in the earlier chapters, the evolutions of *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* are intimately connected with the story of the music press that preceded it. This is evidenced, for example in the retrospective sensibility at work in both *NME* and *Smash Hits* during the 1970s and cross-pollination of personnel. And yet the notion of authenticity emerges as key concept.

In 'Reconsidering Rock' Keir Keightley argues that rock mythology is based upon a 'constitutive paradox' (Keightley, 2001, 125) between the commercial and the serious of which authenticity is the ideological resolution. This tension between genuine artistic value and the Top 40 sensibility of the mainstream is, according to Keightley, a function of the irreconcilable nature of post-modernism and rock ideology. In particular, its relationship to consumer culture is something that is problematic and as Keightley suggests rock ideology conceptualises itself as a 'special case' of mass consumption (Keightley, 2001, 127). The re-emergence of authenticity in *Q* is, therefore, of tremendous significance to Popular Music Studies. On the one hand, it speaks of the durability of authenticity as a mode of aesthetic deconstruction and interpretation: the number of academics who have written about authenticity in popular music since the 1980s evidences this also. On the other hand, the return of authenticity in *Q* reconfigures the concept as less resistive to the levelling effect of post-modern discourse than might previously be assumed. While authenticity may well be central to Afro-American rock ideology, in British pop history it has a more ephemeral position in keeping with the more playful, carnivalesque sensibility of the form. In this sense, the invocation of authenticity as a less singular aesthetic construct in *Q* appends Keightley's thesis quite neatly in that it accommodates the plural concept of romantic and modernist modes of deconstruction. However, its implicit embrace of commercial cultures is also a function of a discrete evolution in the music press in the UK at the end of the 1970s. As discussed in chapter 1, it could be argued that Britain's subaltern position in the formulation of Afro-American ideology not only frames its carnivalesque sensibility but also permits a unique point of relation to commoditised forms. However, that is not to say *Q* is without regressive impulses of its own and certainly the way in which authenticity is invoked by the magazine marginalises certain kinds of artists and certain kinds of stars.

Although *Q* embraced commoditised forms in a way that is specifically British, in its predilection for particular genres of music, *Q* could be said to embrace a more Afro American sensibility in its invocation of authenticity. Indeed, *Q* is very rock-ist in its orientation. Though rock is broad term, as Keightley suggests, it does favour artists who write their own songs (Keightley, 2001, 134). And, as Barker and Taylor argue, rock music rejects music 'that is labelled contrived, pretentious artificial, or overly commercial' (Barker and Taylor, 2007, ix). In *Q*, this predisposition towards certain kinds of artists and recordings can be seen as a reflection of the aesthetic forms particular to the long play

album as opposed to the single. Garry Mulholland is particularly instructive in his consideration of the distinction between what makes a great single and great album. In the *500 Greatest Singles Since Punk and Disco* (2002), for example, Mullholland considers why he did not write a book on albums:

> 'Why don't you write a book about the 1001 greatest albums?' somebody asked me before I'd barely begun. 'Because nobody goes around humming albums,' I answered without a pause. That may sound glib but it isn't. Our worship at the alter of the long-playing record is a distortion of music appreciation concocted by the music business itself. It is cheaper to manufacture albums, particularly on CD. To fit with this fact of business life, we've allowed ourselves to be convinced by two not entirely unrelated value judgments. Firstly, an album is a more 'serious' work, giving us a complete picture of where the artist is creatively and emotionally at the time of release. Secondly, that cultural life is expensive and, as consumers, we must shop around for the value-for-money deal, and 70 minutes of music for £15 is obviously better value than £4 for 15 minutes (Mulholland, 2002, 14).

Though he subsequently published a companion piece (*The 261 Greatest Albums Since Punk and Disco*) in 2006, Mulholland is in effect describing the precepts upon which *Q* was founded. As Ian Cranna suggests: '*Q* was more about the monthly visit to the album release cupboard' (Ian Cranna, 2009). However, it was also about taking music serious and as Cranna suggests restoring 'good taste':

> *Q* was always about providing information on artists of quality in a readable way. *Q* had a more adult approach. They could pick and choose who they wanted to interview. It was a reinstatement of 'good taste' in a way. (Cranna, 2009)

This notion of 'good taste' cohered around the aesthetic and commercial consideration of the long play record are the cornerstone of *Q*; while 'quality', as a term, may assume the taken-for granted clarity of the obvious, as Bourdieu suggests, good taste is far from value neutral (Bourdieu, 1979, 3). In *Q*, judgment is indexed not only to narratives of authenticity and heritage, but also the commoditization of white, male lifestyle.

With refreshing candour, David Hepworth is quick to point out that in the music press judgments of taste are compromised by the need to appeal to certain kind of reader:

> While it claims to be rational and cool in assessing the quality of things, what it's largely about is musicians that it's white male readers can identify with rather than things of any kind of value. (Hepworth, 2009).

That *Q* propagated a singularly white, male, middle-aged rock-orientated history of popular music, is evidenced by the covers: between 1986 and 1990 only ten women appeared on the cover of the magazine over 48 issues. By contrast, there is a predilection for older male subjects: indicative of the convergence between masculinity and heritage discussed in chapter. Fig 22 lists the artists featured on the cover of the first twenty issues. Out of 63 images featured on the cover of the first twenty issues, only 13 are of women. While this in itself is not particularly remarkable (men have always been disproportionately featured in contemporary popular music), what is significant is the longevity of the careers enjoyed by those male stars. Of the 53 male subjects that remain, nearly 50% (25 in fact) had been in the music industry for eight years or longer; 60% of those 25 men have more than 15 years service under their belt. Conversely, of the 13 women featured, only four (33%) have had careers of eight years or more (Christie Hynde, Deborah Harry, Tina Turner and Joni Mitchell) and only two (8%) (Tina Turner and Joni Mitchell) a legacy equivalent to that of 30% of the men. For Ian Cranna this bias can be attributed to Mark Ellen:

> Women do not feature very highly on Mark Ellen's radar. I think he sees writing about music as men's business. I remember having a big argument with him about this at one point; whether it is a blind spot or he's conscious of it or not I don't know. (Cranna, 2009)

And, indeed, Cranna certainly carved out a niche for himself reviewing recordings by female artists: 'I almost felt like I had a cause to champion. I always felt like there was an imbalance' (Cranna, 2009). That said, David Hepworth is outspoken in his thoughts on the bias of the *Q* canon:

> The respectable rock critical view, which still dominates the media wildly over estimates white rock groups and hugely underestimates black performers, female performers, dance artists, one off hits, all those things. That is mainly because it is written by white males who've been to university. (Hepworth, 2009)

In this sense, while *Q* may appeal to a more reconstructed notion of authenticity compatible with commoditised forms, it is anchored to some very fixed notions of gender and ethnicity. For the purposes of this research, however, what is perhaps most interesting about these findings is that they corroborate Ralph Von Appen and Andrew Doehring's work on the 'rock canon'.

Although Appen and Doehring do not consider *Q* in detail, in 'Nevermind The Beatles, here's Exile 61 and Nico' (2006), the magazine does form a backdrop to their exploration of canon–formation as a generic convention of the music press since the mid-1980s. Their focus is on the publication of the 'Top 100' lists published in the music press including television; the analysis is cohered around a 'meta-list' compiled from thirty lists published between 1985 and 2004 in titles ranging from *Sounds* (1985) to *Rolling Stone* (2003) and includes two lists from *Q* in 1998 and 2002. They argue that from a sociological perspective the predilection of these lists for certain kinds of artists reflect the audience demographic of such music titles: white males aged twenty to forty. Consequently, artists that perform consistently well across all charts include The Beatles, Nirvana, The Beach Boys, Pink Floyd and The Velvet Underground, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, Radiohead and Van Morrison. Indeed, they remark on high levels of stability across all lists. The corollary of this, of course is that other groups are notably marginalized, including women and black artists. For Ian Cranna this is a function of the hegemony of the white male academic in the music press:

> Probably if you think about it people who write about music do tend to come from a white, male, academic background and are used to bringing a certain amount of articulacy and thought to make there arguments stick. So really it's not that surprising. Black music never did figure very highly in *Q*'s canon. I think that probably reflected the fact that there wasn't much of a market and black music is difficult to write about. There are very few people who can write and really make you want to listen to a record (and write intelligently and articulately

> about it) because there isn't much to talk about in the lyrics compared as opposed to say Randy Newman or Joni Mitchell. There's only so much to write about a 'You and me ecstasy' kind of lyric. So I don't think there was that much to write about really in terms of black music from a white academic perspective. That would be my spin on it. (Cranna, 2009)

It is perhaps unsurprising that *Q* reflects the preferences that Appen and Doehring suggest are characteristic of the rock canon: the magazine pioneered the rock retrospective. It is interesting, therefore, to note that from its inception all of the older stars featured in Appen and Doehring's 'meta-list' can be found on the front cover of *Q*. Reproduced below is the 'meta-list'. Listed next to each recording is the issue number of *Q* in which the artists in question or a group member appeared on the cover of *Q between* 1986 and the end of the 1990.

1. *Revolver* The Beatles – 4 x (McCartney Q1,Q34, Q50 + Beatles Q9)
2. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts* The Beatles 4 x (McCartney Q1,Q34, Q50 + Beatles Q9)
3. *Nevermind* Nirvana (appeared later in Nineties)
4. *The Beatles* The Beatles 435 14 x (McCartney Q1,Q34, Q50 + Beatles Q9)
5. *Pet Sounds* The Beach Boys 1 x (Q24)
6. *Abbey Road* The Beatles 342 4 x (McCartney Q1,Q34, Q50 + Beatles Q9)
7. *Dark Side Of The Moon* Pink Floyd 2x (Q23 and 48)
8. *The Velvet Underground & Nico* The Velvet Underground 1x (Loud Reed Q29)
9. *Blonde On Blonde* Bob Dylan 295 1 x (Q39)
10. *OK Computer* Radiohead (appeared later in Nineties)
11. *Astral Weeks* Van Morrison (Morrison, *Q*35)
12. *Exile On Main St.* Rolling Stones 3x (Jagger Q12a ,Richards Q25, Stones Q37),
13. *What's Going On* Marvin Gaye
14. *Never Mind The Bollocks* . . . The Sex Pistols (later in Nineties)
15. *Highway 61 Revisited* Bob Dylan 1 x (Q39)
16. *The Joshua Tree* U2 3x (Q10, 26 and 31)
17. *The Bends* Radiohead (later in Nineties))
18. *The Stone Roses* The Stone Roses 1x (Q46
19. *London Calling* The Clash (Q1 Joe Strummer)
20. *Blood On The Tracks* Bob Dylan 1 x (Q39)
21. *Are You Experienced?* Jimi Hendrix Experience (later in Nineties)
22. *The Queen Is Dead* The Smiths 1 x (Morrisey Q11)
23. *Automatic For The People* R.E.M. 1x (Q27)
24. *Rumours* Fleetwood Mac 1x (Q44)

25. *Achtung Baby* U2 3x (Q10, 26 and 31)
26. *Ten* Pearl Jam
27. *Born To Run* Bruce Springsteen 1x (Q8)
28. *Rubber Soul* The Beatles 4 x (McCartney Q1,Q34, Q50 + Beatles Q9)
29. *Let It Bleed* Rolling Stones 3x (Jagger Q12a ,Richards Q25, Stones Q37),
30. *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* Oasis

Fig 22 - Appen and Doehring's 'Meta- List' cross-referenced with covers of Q 1986 to 1990

What is remarkable about this list is how complete it was by the end of 1990; the only notable exceptions are Marvin Gaye and Jimi Hendrix: both black and both dead.

David Hepworth is modest in his assessment of the stability of the *Q* canon: 'it was the kind of thing that magazines are good at. Magazines are good at putting a foot on the ball and saying this is how the world looks right now' (Hepworth, 2009). By contrast, Appen and Doehring conclude that the project of canonisation in the music press is not only a very specifically masculine project but also that the process articulates itself within a discrete ideological framework. For this reason they suggest that while the music press may well embody gender bias, conceptually it symbolizes a completely new aesthetic framework for looking at popular music:

> We revealed a network of values, in which the appraisal of innovation, expression, authenticity and song writing are of major significance for the final judgment. Other criteria such as originality, versatility, homogeneity, complexity, simplicity, or (the hardly definable) beauty are of further importance, while instrumental virtuosity seems to be an aspect that is neglected. Among these values, a hierarchy of universal validity cannot be found. Authenticity, however, seems to rank as a key factor (Appen and Doehring, 2006, 34).

Of particular interest to me is the notion of authenticity. Not just because it can be indexed to some very specific narratives of gender, as Mary Harron (1988) and Norma Coates (1997) suggest, but because it both re-acquaints the legacy of *Q* with its forebears and presents authenticity in a commoditised form. Like *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Rolling Stone,* the framework for valuing popular music in *Q,* it would seem, was still very much indexed to the notion of authenticity. What *Q* did that

was different was configure the concept of authenticity within the framework of consumer culture. The advantage of this for Popular Music Studies is that it habilitates both modernist and romantic precepts as contingent structures on the shifting foundations of post-modern culture.

Popular Music Studies

The legacy of Theodor Adorno's scathing attack on popular music in 'On Popular Music' (1942) and David Reisman's equally critical 'Listening to Popular Music' (1950) have cast long shadows over the history of Popular Music Studies. On the one hand, both pieces have given rise to a baby boom generation of Cultural Theorists who have produced a sterling body of work in its defense. The general consensus (Angela McRobbie, Simon Frith, Keith Negus etc) is that the popular music scene is a complex world in which the attitudes and values constitute a symbolic system. On the other hand, some musicologists (Richard Middleton, Nicholas Cook, Lucy Green etc) have contended that the problem with Adorno's work is that he measured the value of popular music in ways that were only suitable for evaluating classical music. The corollary of such strategies, however, which level all cultural matter, is a tacit anxiety that popular music should be valued not *in* the same terms as other high art forms but *on* the same level. Consequently, while there is agreement that, in some respects, popular music embodies post-modern cultural practice, there is confusion as to whether or not popular music can or should be valued qualitatively and if so how.

One strategy for overcoming the problem of value in popular music is the identification of the moment that it first embodied post-modern cultural practice. In 'The Media Economy of Rock Culture' (1993), for example, Lawrence Grossberg identifies the rise of the rock video in the 1980s as the ultimate example of the 'post-modern' and the 'disappearance of reality' (Grossberg, 1993, 185). Likewise, in 'Making Noise – Notes from the 1980s' (1999), Andrew Blake privileges the technological innovations of the 1980s. For Blake it is Art of Noise's 'Close to the Edit' (1985) that is a personal high water mark because it confirms Jacques Attali's predictions in *Noise* (1977, translated in English in 1985) and foretells the way in which technology would impact upon composition and the ownership of music. By contrast, Keith Negus makes clear links, in *Popular Music in Theory* (1996), between the birth of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s and the introduction of the 7-inch record, television and the transistor radio. He challenges the arrangement of 'vast numbers of sounds, words and images' into 'musical eras' as

'neutral activity' and his emphasis on the imposition of 'pattern and order' suggests that there has never been a pre-post modern moment in pop (Negus, 1996, 160). However, perhaps the most convincing solution can be found in Andrew Goodwin's article 'Sample and Hold – Pop Music in the Digital Age' (1988), which asks the question 'Do we need a post-modern theory of society/ the aesthetic in order to understand post modern cultural forms?' (Goodwin, 1988, 273). In theory, it would seem that we do. Pop is such a multi-accentual process. The sonic experience of listening to a record is not the only way in which it speaks to us. However, just because the Cultural Studies approach has been shaped by theorists (Bourdieu, Jameson, Barthes etc) who have exposed the constructed nature of what Paul Willis describes as 'the reification and detached objective evaluation of serious art' (Willis, 1974, 3*)* that does not necessarily mean popular music cannot be valued qualitatively. As Goodwin suggests, popular music practice in the digital age may embody 'post-modern' cultural practice but 'producers appear to be working within fairly traditional notions of creativity and authorship': 'Pop might be eating itself but the old ideologies and aesthetics are still on the menu' (Goodwin, 1988, 271). However, it is Simon Frith's work on the language of criticism that is perhaps most instructive in establishing what those ideologies and aesthetics are

In 'Common Sense and the Language of Criticism' (1996) Simon Frith focuses on the discursive language that is available to us when making judgements of taste about popular music. He begins by setting out the problems in ascertaining any kind of consensus on taste in popular art forms: principally that 'a measurement of popularity, in short, is not a measurement of value' (Frith, 1996, 48). Frith then recounts the way in which the British research organization Mass Observation sought to probe beyond this in the 1930s and 40s with an anthropological project that investigated the relationship between audiences and popular cinema. Inspired by this Frith identifies three contemporary arenas in which judgement about popular music are articulated: amongst musicians themselves, amongst music producers and amongst the music press. Frith begins by arguing that the high cultural role of the critic, going back to the beginning of the Nineteenth Century was to bridge the 'musician/listener gap' (Frith, 1996, 64): 'the critic became necessary as expert, as someone who could explain the music to the public'. He then counters this with a view of the critic in the second half of 20th Century:

> As large-scale commodity culture emerged at the beginning of this century, though, the mediation role became equally significant the other way round: the mass audience had to be interpreted to producers, and the critic became the ideal consumer too. (Frith, 1996, 65)



Fig 23 - *Q* and *The Face*

In updating this for the 21st Century in light of the proliferation of web 2.0 user-generated content and the deregulation of cultural capital this concept has been inverted: the consumer is now the ideal critic. However, what is significant about Frith's account of the music press is that he decouples what we might interpret as the post-modern values of the mass culture industry from the specialist audience of popular music consumers reading the music press. Instead, he argues they are resolutely modernist in their longing for a sensitive minority readership. This of course echoes what Andrew Goodwin suggests in 'Sample and Hold' about the very traditional narratives of authorship that preside over even the most digitally advanced musical productions. However, perhaps where Frith's work is most useful is in the identification of the language of the music press as illuminating 'how musical sounds mean' (Frith, 1996, 67). He focuses on the use of adjectives and the way in which the music press turn description into interpretation: relating music to its possible uses and placing it generically. However, it is the function of both these as 'consumer guidance' that is pivotal, in particular the knowingness of the exchange between critic and reader:

> Such reviews are incomprehensible to anyone who is not already informed in the right way.

> Criticism, in other words, is not just producing a version of the music for the reader but also a version of the listener for the music. (Frith, 1996, 68)

This provides not only a clear link to Pierre Bourdieu's work in *Distinction* (1979) but an apparent framework in which the relationship between language, consumerism and qualitative judgements of taste can be explored. By making the process reciprocal and reflexive (i.e. the reader is complicit in the proclamation of cultural nobility because the act of consuming both the magazine and music is extricable from the construction of self) Frith shifts the emphasis of distinction from the music to the medium of criticism (i.e. language).

The *Q* Consumer Guide

The success of *Q* can be attributed to its focus on the album as the primary medium of popular music consumption, which, as Mulholland suggests, invoked a twin sensibility of seriousness and consumer value not traditionally associated with the pop single. In its appropriation of the consumer journalism format *Q* drew heavily on Nick Logan's work at *The Face*, which pioneered the lifestyle/music. While *The Face* was a guide for metropolitan style aficionados, *Q* targeted a more middlebrow audience. And, indeed, Ian Cranna takes exception with the notion that it was about lifestyle per se:

> Lifestyle to me sounds a bit empty and coffee tableish, which it definitely wasn't because people really did care and care passionately about the music that went into it. Features had to be of a certain standard. (Cranna, 2009)

Frank Mort corroborates this view in *Cultures of Consumption* (1996); he suggests the secret of *Q*'s success was *not* foregrounding the magazine in the consumer journalism format:

> (T)he editorial stance was to anchor reader's interest via traditional music coverage. EMAP's strategy was to avoid becoming another casualty in this fragile market by smuggling in the consumer journalism format rather than foregrounding it. Music was used as the bait. (Mort, 1996, 75)

The difference in pitch between *Q* and *The Face* is evident also in the presentational devices used on the front cover. On the one hand, *The Face* presents a single image, carefully positioned, well lit and in splendid isolation: 'Faces' are offered alone, like expensive jewellery. By contrast, the collage of stars on the cover stars on the cover of *Q* creates a less in singular impression: like the Baudrillardian shopping mall the cover of *Q* is a collective in the production of meaning:

> Few objects are offered alone without a context of objects to speak for them. And the relation of the consumer to the object has consequently changed: the object is no longer referred to in relation to specific utility, but as a collection of objects in their total meaning. (Baudrillard, 1970, 27)

There-in lies a difference: while *Q's* covers are like attractive window displays in provincial department store, *The Face* is more akin to a Knightsbridge boutique. As Mort suggests, this is contingent the latters avant-garde orientation: 'the feature introduced individuals who were on the verge of mainstream success' (Mort, 1996, 149). By contrast, *Q9* presents familiar faces freshened up in some new and intriguing display. As Stuart Williams suggests, *Q* was very mainstream: 'about stuff that was in the Top 40' (Williams, 2007). Likewise, Cranna emphasises the conservatism of the magazine suggesting it was for people who like 'critically appraised or approved music' (Cranna, 2009).

In early issues, the *Q* Review section made up roughly one third of the magazines editorial: starting around page 70 and continuing though to the penultimate page, approximately thirty pages later. Though the main body of the review section focused on 'New LPs' newly released (approximately 10 pages), a sizable proportion of the reviews focus on re-releases (about 8 pages). The remaining twelve pages focus on classical music, books and films in fairly equal proportions. *Q1*, for example, features 77 reviews of new mainstream releases (including two compilation albums), 32 re-releases and an extended round up of new classical recordings. While other titles have a tendency to pre-select a much smaller number of items for review that perhaps reflect the interest of their target reader (which admittedly *Q* does to a certain extent in the selection of lead reviews) the overall broader base of the magazine allows for a much more interesting comparison of texts within the popular music genre. While this research is confined to an over-view of the qualitative distinctions

made between popular music it would be possible to play off jazz against classical, rock against pop and explore the ways in which the use of language encodes further ideological codes. The spirit of the *Q* Review, however, is not overbearing in its authority, but rather modest and self-effacing in its mode of address.

> What follows over the next 32 pages is designed for your information and entertainment. Every month Q lists reviews and rates hundred of LPs. We also report on the most exciting cinema release and newly published books. While we can't guarantee that you're going to agree with the opinions of a small army of reviewers – indeed it would be tragic if you did – it's our intention that you'll find this section helpful in selecting items for further investigation (*Q*1, 1986, 67).

Though the name of each reviewer appears at the bottom of each review, it is clear that just as the phrase 'army' connotes a band of soldiers united by a common aim, the judgements of taste expressed are meant to be collective: the 'voice' of *Q*. This collective 'monoglottic' style is epitomised in *Q*'s use of the star rating system: a structure organised to bring some continuing to the judgements of taste articulated by individual reviewer:

> **QLPs**
> LP reviews are divided into three sections. The first – and largest – covers new popular records, tapes and CD's. The second largest keeps track of re-releases – either new compilations or mid-price editions of already available recordings. The third is a digest of the month's more interesting classical releases. The combination of Q's deadlines and the caprices of record company schedules means that in a small minority of cases a record may not be in the shops at the exact time of publication. It is, however, scheduled to be shipped before the end of the month.
>
> **Each LP review carries a star rating. These work as follows**
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | ***** | **Indispensable.** A record likely to be enthused-over by 99% of sane humans |
> | **** | **Excellent**. A record that achieves what it set out to do |
> | *** | **Good**. A record that may be average but is nonetheless enjoyable |
> | ** | **Undistinguished**. A record that's unlikely to appeal to anyone beyond hardcore fans and the person that made it. |
> | * | **Tragic**. A record so utterly devoid of merit that even the artist would demand a fee to sit through it. |

Fig 24 - The *Q* Review

Encoded in these definitions are a number of key judgements about popular music. In the first instance, the explanation of a five star review implies that both sanity and populist acclaim are characteristic of distinction in popular music. Interestingly, however, the ultimate accolade of a five star review is categorised not as outstanding, brilliant or super but 'indispensable'. Encoded in the choice of adjective, conjugated out of the verb 'to dispense' (to deal out'), is a tacit assumption about popular music as consumer product: that somehow the need to hear and experience a piece of music has been replaced with the need to consume and own it. Likewise, the rationalisation of 'excellent' betrays a predilection for more streamlined models of economic accountability: the phrase 'achieves what it set out to do' redolent of Thatcher's target driven reforms of the Civil Service. The reasoning behind good is perhaps the most interesting. The dictionary definition of the term ranges from 'satisfactory in quality' to 'morally excellent'. Likewise, the accompanying text is confused suggesting that though the record may be 'average' it is still 'enjoyable'. This tension between the quest for aesthetic excellence and the notion of audience gratification is a potential sticking point in the qualitative evaluation of popular music. On the hand, the mellifluousness of 'good' implies artistic distinction yet it also capturing the ritual pleasure to be had consuming the familiar. As we move down the rating list it is interesting to note that as the stars decrease the definitions get longer. The use of 'undistinguished' as a pejorative phrase is, in this sense, the corollary of Bourdieu's use the term 'distinction'. The personalising of this lack of distinction amongst 'hardcore fans' points to the subjective ascription of meaning to popular music. The lowest category of judgement, the one star review is defined as 'tragic'. That the definition of this is counterpoised with humour is reflective of *Q's* jocular house-style. While such light-heartedness is of course at odd with the polemicism of the 'inkies', the contrapuntal sensibility alludes to a more quixotic, ironic, post-modern sensibility: the so bad it's good school of thought.

Within the terms of its own definition, the *Q* Review star rating system can be read off against some of the key debates in popular music. In the first instance, the notion that popular music is a consumer product that may well be 'indispensable' reinforces the idea that the purchase of certain recordings

might be pivotal in the construction of identity. Likewise, that on some level quality is stable enough to be assured is reflective of the steadiness of the socially constructed framework of cultural capital and is also the very premise on which *Q* is founded. In the exposition of what constitutes good music, however, the *Q* Review reflects the tension between musicological and sociological approaches. On the one hand, a good record may be average in its musical accomplishment. However, on the other hand, the social context of its consumption may provide pleasure and enjoyment. This contradiction runs throughout the lower ranking definitions. There is, for example, an acceptance that the proclamation of taste may be indexed to the interest of minority groups of listeners. However, only at its nemesis, does the *Q* star rating system embrace an emotional discourse marker as a barometer of aesthetic categorisation: 'tragic'.

THE BOLSHOI
Friends
BEGGARS BANQUET BEGA 76
LP/Cass
These are not so much songs as tuneless and rather self-important attempts at poetry, chanted or crooned over a great deal of minor chord guitar arpeggios and florid piano, the time honoured calling card of the sensitive brigade. And what canny observers of the human condition The Bolshoi are. Take Someone's Daughter as an example: "I can see her by the water/Look's like someone's daughter". Where does that leave other females?

I've never clapped eyes on a Bolshoi but I can hear the cheek-bones on this record
Andy Kershaw *

LOVE AND ROCKETS
Express
BEGGARS BANQUET BEGA 74 LP
Love & Rockets used to be three quarters of Bauhaus (the fourth being the one with the cheekbones) and are obviously finding life as gothic has-beens hard going. Their first LP, IF There's A Heaven Above, contained some nice, understated pop songs but this time they've gone seriously wrong.

They try everything – Stones rip-offs, gothic thrashes and lots of hippy meandering blessed with titles like Yin & Yang. Nothing much works.
Chris Heath *

THE LOVER SPEAKS
The Lover Speaks
A& M AMA 5127 LP/Cass

The "concept" for this group (actually a person called Freeman with his friend Joseph) is apparently "based" on a novel Freeman was writing. Their name and at least two songs (Every Lover's Sign and Love I Give You Everything) have been filched from Roland Barthes' A Lover's Discourse. They also prattle on a lot about renaissance poets and Emile Zola. If you think that sounds boring and pompous and dull you should listen to the Jimmy Iovine-produced LP. Put it another way, I can't imagine what would be the literary equivalent of this kind of lightweight and numbingly predictable rock but I'm quite sure I wouldn't want to read it.
Dave Rimmer *

Fig 25 - One star reviews in *Q1*.

Andy Kershaw's review of the album *Friends* by The Bolshoi is one of only three records in *Q1* to be awarded one star (Tragic. A record so utterly devoid of merit that even the artist themselves would demand a fee to sit through it'). The others are Chris Heath's review of Love and Rockets second LP *Express,* Dave Rimmer's review of *The Lover Speaks* by The Lover Speaks. All three reviewers give the albums short shrift; not one is a lead review or more than 20 lines long - with the word count veering between 71 (Heath) and 110 (Rimmer). It is worth noting also that two of these releases (The Bolshoi and Love and Rockets) are on the independent label Beggars Banquet. There is, however, a discursive register that is common to all three. On the Bolshoi, Kershaw's tone is sarcastic. The use of rhetorical questions and examples from the lyrics convey implicitly his disdain for the recording without him having to labour the point: take Someone's Daughter as an example: "I can see her by the water/Looks like someone's daughter". Where does that leave other females? (Kershaw, 1986, 67) Though Kershaw's rather literal exception to The Bolshoi's lyrics seems a little pedantic, this is balanced by a more nuanced consideration of the bands musical style.

> These are not so much songs as tuneless and rather self-important attempts at poetry, chanted or crooned over a great deal of minor chord guitar arpeggios and florid piano, the time honoured calling card of the sensitive brigade. (Kershaw, 1986, 67)

Kershaw's disdain for the band is sealed in the final sentence in which the narrative shifts from third to first person: 'I've never clapped eyes on a Bolshoi but I can hear the cheekbones on this record'. (Kershaw *Q1,* 67) His reference to 'cheekbones' we assume is at once an allusion to both the prismatic quality of Slavic beauty and the ephemeral quality of the music. In this sense the album fails because it is 'contrived' and 'pretentious': in effect, what Barker and Taylor (2007, ix) define as inauthentic.

Chris Heath's review of Love and Rockets' LP is as scathing as Kershaw's. It affects the kind of euphemistic condescension that is normally the preserve of school reports. With nothing much to say about the music, Heath dwells on past success and informs us that they are 'finding life as gothic has beens hard'. Again, there is sarcasm in phrases like 'wishy-washy' and 'hippy-meanderings', and the hushed, confidential tones of the final line 'nothing much works' (*Q1*. 74). However, it is the reference

to cheekbones once again that is most striking: 'Love and Rockets used to be three quarters of Bauhaus (the fourth being the one with the cheekbones)' Unlike Kershaw's review of the Bolshoi, and in the context of the rest of the review, it would seem that on this occasion it is the very absence of cheekbones that is the problem. However, it is more likely that this is meant as a backhanded slur: such is the dire quality of the album that *only* cheekbones can save them. Once again, the recording fails because it fits neither romantic nor modernist definitions of authenticity.

The third album in *Q1* to receive only 1 star is the eponymous debut by The Lover Speaks. It is reviewed by Dave Rimmer (author of *Like Punk Never Happened*) and is predictably irreverent in its tone. He uses quotation marks around the words 'concept', for example, and 'based' to highlight the spurious pretensions of the album. In particular, Rimmer takes exception to the band's intellectual posturing:

> Their name and at least two songs (Every Lover's Sign and Love I Give You Everything) have been filched from Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*. They also prattle on a lot about renaissance poets and Emile Zola. (Rimmer, 1986, 74)

Rimmer's determination to debunk this bogus pomposity is communicated by the subtle choice of word 'filched' and 'prattle' where less emotive and colloquial terms would have sufficed. However, it is the shift from third, to second and then first person narrative in the final sentences that is most interesting. First, he addresses the reader directly: 'If you think all that sounds boring and pompous and dull you should have to listen to the Jimmy Iovine produced LP' (Rimmer, 1986, 74). Rimmer then reinforces his own viewpoint by challenging the reader not simply to agree but to empathise with him. This is underscored in final sentence in which Rimmer shifts to the first person: 'I can't imagine what would be the literary equivalent to this lightweight and numbingly predictable rock but I'm quite sure I wouldn't want to read it'. This is significant not only for the use of the person pronoun but also the invocation of modernist conceptions of authenticity in his repudiation of the 'predictable'.

What we can extract from these three reviews is a highly complex code for writing about music. First of all there is an expectation that the reviewer is unprejudiced in their judgement. This is conveyed in the opening sentence of the review, which usually begins with some fairly neutral statement about the

record. However, within that statement there is usually a self-consciously deployed clue that the reviewer is inevitably partisan. This could be anything from a deftly deployed pair of speech marks to a coded inter-textual reference. Because understanding of this is contingent upon a code embedded within the magazine the reader is already implicated in the judgement of taste. These are not explicitly mediated. Instead each reviewer relies upon a series of highly cryptic comments expressed within an emotive narrative structure. Shifts in tense, a conspiratorial tone and provocative language all render the reader complicit in judgements against recordings that are not fully expressed. Though hardly polemical the typical shift in the final sentence or two to the first person challenges *Q*'s supposedly corporate style. What differentiates the 'wishy-washy' meanderings of Love and Rockets from the work of Joni Mitchell or their 'gothic thrashes' from The Mission, for example, is not articulated. And yet, lurking beneath this is an anxiety about authenticity: the notion that these records are ephemeral and formulaic.

At the opposite extreme, what is fascinating about Dave Hepworth's five star review of Paul Simon's *Graceland* is that it is seemingly unable to talk explicitly about music, preferring instead to reconstruct the songwriter as the Christopher Columbus of new world music. Hepworth's appraisal is the first review in *Q* to award an album five stars and the only review in *Q1* to do so. Like Kershaw et al's one star reviews, Hepworth's analysis is more partisan than it first appears. In the opening topic sentence of Hepworth's there is a startling juxtaposition of narrative ploys, which create drama, yet infer logic. Simon's name, for example, is used in full and the notion that he has 'shown uncommon interest beyond the mainstream' is qualified by the adverb 'always', which implies a kind of temporal stability that neutralises the statement. Likewise, in the second paragraph the emotive term 'overwhelming' is counterbalanced by the use of causal connectives like 'consequently'. Hepworth's attempt to foreground the music by italicising the word 'sounds' is undone by the adjective that



Fig 26 - Reviews in *Q1*.

follows: 'different'. Thus while he may want negotiate the apocryphal tale of the 'Rich Rock Star Slumming It in Soweto' (whose tabloid connotations are implicit in the alliterative quality of the bi-line) it is in terms of 'otherness' that Hepworth constructs the musical success of *Graceland*. Musical styles are defined by geographical boundaries – a ' Peruvian Folk Group', a 'New York horn section' and a 'Jewish South African penny whistle' – but Africa, as a continent, becomes a catch-all concept for music that as Simon comments in the sleeve notes is 'familiar and foreign sounding at the same time'. And so the review relies upon highly figurative terms to disseminate the music: just what 'naval contemplation' and 'the open sky of entertainment' mean are left open to interpretation. However, in the final sentence we are left in no doubt that like 1492 (The year Christopher Columbus 'discovered' America) 'the year 1986' is of great historical importance. In this review it is quite clear that Hepworth is invoking the same romantic concepts of authenticity Keightley outlines in 'Reconsidering Rock' in which 'tradition and continuity with the past' are key to aesthetic integrity (Keightley, 2001, 136).

Clearly, in both Hepworth's review of *Graceland* and Kershaw et al's one-star reviews, exaggeration and over-statement come with the territory; polarity courts polemicism and much that is polemic is also highly readable. And certainly, if we turn our attention to the reviews of those albums that have been awarded two, three and four stars we find more reasoned accounts – the middle ground, it would seem, always was *Q's* forte. On the surface, for example, Charles Shaar Murray's review of The Human League's *Crash* adheres to the same blueprint. Written in the third person, Murray's

review constructs the Human League as professionals with 'careers' but cannot help resorting to the classic 'from' and 'to' narrative arch to insert a bit of drama in the opening sentence: 'from Sheffield Art-school beginnings to their current miraculous return from the dumper'. Likewise, there is irreverence in the terms 'faffed around' and 'supposedly irreplaceable' and figurative charm in the phrase 'coasting a wave of success'. However, beneath the veneer of *Q's* in-house style Murray offers some solid deconstruction of the album's musical achievement. Not only do we learn of 'Oakey's ponderous baritone', but that his vocal 'stock-in trade has always been the edge of uncertainty in those resonant tones'. The review considers a number of tracks in detail including the single 'Human', which is described as another 'treatise on infidelity and remorse' and a track called 'Swang' that has 'tough resilient backdrop, in the producer's finest tradition'. There is considerable difference here between adjectives like 'substantial' and 'different', in the *Graceland* review, which are impossible to define and difficult to interpret. Words like 'tough' and 'resilient' may well be highly emotive and comparable with the other strategies used within the magazine to affect the reader, but what is significant is that when used in relation to the music, as opposed to just the clichéd caricature of the artist, they become considerably more meaningful. In this sense, Shaar Murray's piece is appealing directly to modernist conceptions of authenticity outlined by Keightley, whereby the Human League recording is valued for its openness regarding the rock sound.

Like Murray's review of *Crash*, Hepworth's review of Tina Turner's *Break Every Rule* plays up to and subverts the popular image of the singer by dwelling not on the performers 'raunchy thighs' but the omnipotence of the record's predecessor *Private Dancer* (1984). The notion that *Private Dancer* is an 'ambient' record is of course comically controversial. But nevertheless the use of that very phrase is useful because it identifies the binary opposition of what Tina Turner is not. So while Hepworth may gesture snidely to the albums' 'platinum predecessor' and 'guest celebs', there is a real sense in what musically the record will hold in phrases like 'rips, tears and snarls' and 'snap off lyrics in chunks'. Where his review is interesting is in the confluence he identifies between the musical content and the cartoon figure that is Turner. That 'the songs that suit her best' are the ones that 'combine spiky funk verses with knock-down-drag-out rock choruses' will surprise few readers. But, in that common language, Hepworth is identifying ways of talking about popular music that do not rely upon tired notions of authenticity and spurious claims about musical genius. Indeed, when he says that 'Tina

Turner's act is every bid as calculated as Shirley Bassey's' he could be speaking for a whole raft of other 'rock' performers from Bruce Springsteen to U2. However, while it is far from coincidental that Hepworth just happened to identify this when talking about a female performer, we should not let this detract us from the possibility that *Q* also embodies the more carnivalesque sensibility of *Smash Hits*.

Paul Du Noyer's review of *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry* (1986) is commensurately quixotic in its consideration of the aesthetic charms of Billy Bragg, suggesting that although the sound of his voice is 'not a lovely sound' it is a 'curiously attractive one'. This playfulness is manifest in the alliterative description of Bragg's 'dulcet decibels' and figurative allusions to the singer's estuarine tones:

> It's about four years since our ears first discerned the dulcet decibels of young Bill Bragg; they wafted across from the Essex flatlands like something designed for guiding container ships safely through the morning mists of the Thames estuary (Du Noyer, 1986, 68).

The sardonic reference to singer as 'Bill' rather than Billy gently mocks the matey affectations of the political troubadour. There is a tension here between the sacred and the profane. Though Du Noyer alludes to the subliminal emotion underpinning Bragg's work in the headline (romantic) and acknowledges his sincere commitment to the Socialist cause (Red Wedge) it is his *Smash Hits* style persona that wins out: Bragg is variously described as a 'Big-Nosed Bastard from Barking', a 'one man Clash' and the 'Bard of Barking'. For all its satirical posturing, Du Noyer's predilection for poetic device reflects a singularly literary sensibility to the deconstruction of the text, which is entirely appropriate given Bragg's lyrical



Fig. 27. Billy Bragg in *Q*1, p.185.

style. For example, the observation that the track 'Greetings to a New Brunette' is 'kitchen sink ballad is supported by a direct quotation: 'I'm celebrating my love for you/ With a pint of beer and a new tattoo'. Though Du Noyer stays true to the monoglottic principle of objective third person analysis, the language is stylistically advanced. Du Noyer's prose is more scholarly than the beat sensibilities of new journalism: more tangibly bookish.

That *Q* realised the more cerebral affectations of *Smash Hits* is evidenced in David Hepworth's review of R.E.M's *Life's Rich Pageant* (1986). On the one hand, he is typically cutting in his opening proclamation that 'REM are probable candidates for 'Most Inscrutable Rock Group of the Present Day' (David Hepworth, *Q1*, 73). That a band should be incapable of being analysed is of course greatly problematic for the music press. On the other hand, in his sign-off, Hepworth negates the very essence of *Smash Hits* in his assertion that while 'Superman might just provide them with a hit single. That would be… incidental to the real business at hand'. Implicit in this judgement of course is an adherence to hierarchical structure concerning the relative artistic value of a 7-inch over a long player. That this binary can be read off against genre (rock/pop) and indeed gender distinctions (masculine/feminine) has been considered in detail elsewhere (Harron/Coates). Though the *Q* Review

may embody a range of contingent ciphers in the deconstruction of popular music, what grounds all of these is a necessary adherence to the belief that the album is the primary structure of musical form. This prejudice is evidenced not just in the perceived incompatibility of REM with the aesthetic sensibility of the singles chart but the fact that the track with the most potential is one that Hepworth postulates the band have recorded 'ironically'. That Hepworth should be able to decipher a parodic distinction to the bands artistic rationale is of course contradictory to his opening statement. And, indeed, Hepworth's narrative offers a lengthy explanation of the album's creative accomplishments. For example, it is suggested that on the topic of the Ohio River the waterway becomes a 'metaphor for a deeper malaise and an opportunity to meditate upon a few anthropological ironies' (Hepworth, 1986). On the one hand, this tension between the inscrutable and its exposition is perhaps a cornerstone of *Q*'s ideological rationale; a review has to pertain to the mystery of the recording in order to reinforce the cultural capital of the reviewer. On the other hand, this portentousness is offset by humour and self-effacement as Hepworth confides that 'Cuyahoga' is also a 'great tune', drawing the readers attention to other highlights 'if all that sounds too unbearably pompous' (Hepworth). Whether of course *Q* flatters to deceive, lacing its own discrimination and bigotry with humour and wit in order to disguise more regressive impulses, is ultimately impossible to fix. However, while the appropriation of *Smash Hits* more parodic sensibility potentially destabilises the proclamations of taste made for and on behalf of the magazine, the net result is that this levity of tone adds veracity.

While *Q* embodies a fluid, multi-accentual tone in its deconstruction of the popular music texts such capriciousness is not valued in the musical text itself. For example, Mark Cooper's review of Elvis Costello and The Attraction's *Blood and Chocolate* (1986) bemoans the eclecticism of the set: 'Elvis Costello's career now consists of a spiral of sidesteps and multiplying identities, all designed to accommodate the extraordinary fecundity of his writing' (Cooper, 1986, 70). While Cooper commends *Blood and Chocolate* as a 'good Elvis Costello record' the sentiment expressed in his observation that 'for me that's no longer quite enough' is of course highly personal. Key to this it would seem is a lack of emotional resonance. Cooper complains that 'the word play is too clever for many of the songs emotional good'. Likewise it is suggested that 'as Costello has matured he has replaced emotion with skill'. On the one hand, this fetishisation of sentiment and feeling is at odds with the more plastic, sensibility of *Smash Hits.* Though *Q* may be reconstructed in its judgements of taste, the object of its

investigation needs to reside within a more authentic paradigm. On the other hand, there is a clear mistrust of unnecessary musical virtuosity: Costello's avant-garde sensibility, it would seem, runs counter to *Q*'s somewhat middlebrow tastes. And, indeed, this can be read off against the target demographic of the magazine: the ideal reader of *Q* was more provincial and indeed middle aged than the average reader of *The Face* or *NME* for that matter. Emotion then becomes a catchall concept, reframing cultural prejudice as positive discrimination: buoyed by the kind of received thinking and common-sense values Brunsden and Morley talk about in *Everyday Television: Nationwide* (1981). That embedded in *Q* are some ideas about culture and identity that are less singular than its consumer vocabulary would imply is evidenced elsewhere by its somewhat phallocentric editorial. As a barometer of taste, however, 'emotion' seems contrapuntal to the patriarchal sensibilities of the magazine's consumer lifestyle project.

Adam Sweeting's review of Daryl Hall's *Three Hearts in the Happy Ending Machine* (1986) has no such reservation in configuring the deconstruction of the text within the broader contours of consumer lifestyle journalism:

> What do you give the man who has everything? In Daryl Hall's case a house in London, a bit of breathing space and a new working partner in the form of Dave Stewart, Eurythmic and workaholic (Sweeting, 1986, 71)

The commodification here of Hall's relationship with Stewart is apposite. Hall it would seem views Stewart as integral to the reflexive of his (musical) self: 'I really wanted someone who would take me out of myself and be a catalyst' (Sweeting, 1986, 71). In one sense this corroborates Anthony Giddens' view of changes to the personal sphere outlined in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992) in which human relationships are reconfigured as a consumer project. However, there is the slippage between this more fluid conception of the self and the objectification of Stewart as a more fixed personality. And, interestingly Sweeting's reservations about the album centre on the mimetic quality of the alliance: 'Dave Stewart may be too much of a kindred spirit to give him the creative poke he really needs'. There is, it would seem, a contradiction here between the implicitly post-modern construction of the self denoted by the appropriation of consumer discourse and a necessary longing

for a more modernist paradigm in which traditional notions of creativity and authorship might be reconfigured. And, in this sense. the distinction between the conception of the subject and the wider framework of taste can be read off against the characteristic difference between Anthony Giddens' work and that of George Herbert Mead. On a surface level, therefore, Sweeting's review is grounded in the idea that meaning is socially constructed; this is evidenced by the thorough exposition of the creative connections underpinning the production of the album: Joni Mitchell, Bob Geldof, Arthur Baker, Robbie Mackintosh etc. Undermining this, however, is recognition that the significance of the star guest can only be negotiated in dialogue with their commoditised status in the wider media economy. Sweeting is at pains to point out, for example, that Baker is credited in 'the unfamiliar role as lyricist' and confesses that Geldof and Mitchell's contributions 'could have been supplied by anybody (or a Fairlight)'.

Judgements of taste then and the qualitative evaluation of popular music in the *Q* Review rest upon the most contingent of foundations. And, indeed, it is in this tension, between the implicitly post-modern and that which is essentially modernist in its disposition towards the unique and original, that the *Q* review embodies the dichotomy outlined by Judith Butler:

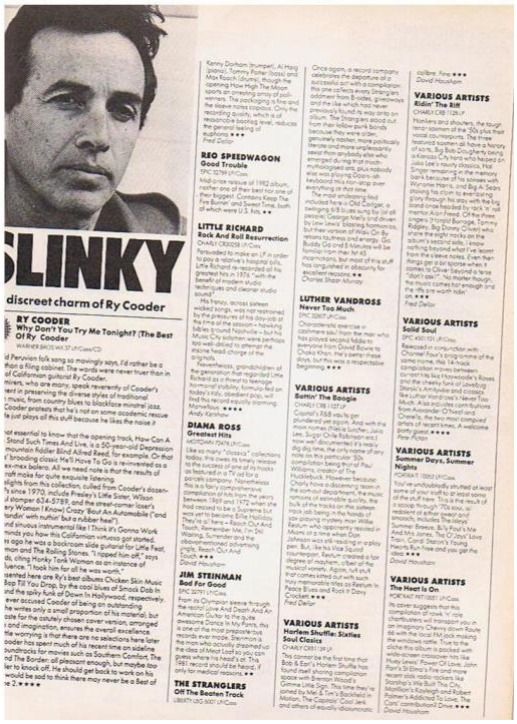
> It seems that theory posits foundation incessantly, and forms implicit metaphysical commitment as a matter of course, even when it seeks to guard against it; foundations function as the unquestioned and unquestionable within any theory. And yet, are there 'foundations' that is, those premises that function as authorizing grounds, are they themselves not constituted through exclusion which, taken into account, expose the foundational premise as a contingent and contestable presumption? (Butler, 1995, 7)

While the narrative tone of *Q* alludes to universally understood truths about popular music, the appropriation of consumer journalism precludes the notion of a fixed and stable subject. In this sense the judgements of taste made for and on behalf of the magazine are left open to contest. The rejection of first-person polemicism is significant then because it distances the *Q* Review from a fixed and stable subject position that exists prior to judgements of taste. In this sense, the corporate register of the magazine embodies Butler's ideas of a subject position constructed in discursive

practice. Indeed, the 'I' that is *Q* does not exist separately to 'the subject positions that have constituted it' (Butler, 1992, 9), but rather *Q* is 'constituted by these positions'. In short, for all the embedded universal assumptions about popular music that Q makes, by refusing to fetishise the subject positions of individual writers, the magazine actually embodies a more pluralistic version of the music press than the polyglottic era that preceded it. However, while this fluidity remains consistent throughout reviews of new music, in its presentation of archive material and cultural history the magazine is more singular in its cultural prejudice.

Reissues in *Q*1

The reissues section of *Q1* is spread over just two pages and features reviews of 33 albums and compilations. Like the main section of the *Q* review this is arranged into alphabetical order with the names of individual writers appearing at the end of each review, however, there is much greater variance in the actual length of review ranging from just 21 words for Abba's *Voulez Vous* (1979) to over three hundred for Ry Cooder's *Why Don't You Try Me Tonight?* (The Best of Ry Cooder). Shorter reviews, including the Abba title, along with a Beach Boys reissue are not attributed to an individual writer. Though *Q* is renowned for its corporate tone, this is atypical of how the reviews section developed. It is interesting, however, to note that both reviews make mention of the fact that these albums are being reissued at 'mid-price' (Abba) and 'budget price' (The Beach Boys); neither release is available on CD. By contrast, the Ry Cooder album is a more extensive anthology released on vinyl, cassette and CD. In this sense, there is a definite correlation between the editorial priority and the distinction of a recording as a product: mid-price albums are ignoble and low, while exhaustively compiled


SLINKY

discreet charm of Ry Cooder

RY COODER
Why Don't You Try Me Tonight? (The Best Of Ry Cooder

REO SPEEDWAGON
Good Trouble

LITTLE RICHARD
Rock And Roll Resurrection

DIANA ROSS
Greatest Hits

JIM STEINMAN
Bad For Good

THE STRANGLERS
Off The Beaten Track

LUTHER VANDROSS
Never Too Much

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Battin' The Boogie

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Harlem Shuffle: Sixties Soul Classics

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Ridin' The Riff

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Solid Soul

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Summer Days, Summer Nights

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Heat Is On

Fig 28 Reissues in *Q1.*

CD compilations are authentic and fine. And in a sense the Ry Cooder compilation, which brings together a miscellany of recordings by a significant artist, to the left of the mainstream, is the more significant work in that moment. However, in polarity between the review of Abba's *Voulez-Vous* and the Ry Cooder best of, *Q* set the template for the way in which popular music would be historicised in throughout the 1990s and beyond. For example, a lakc of interest in explicitly pop performers and indeed female artists is reflected in the speed with which the Abba album is dispensed; likewise, the emphasis on the hit singles creates the impression that the album itself is an irrelevance: 'Mid price edition of the 1975 [sic] Abba-album that brought forth the hits 'Chiquita', 'Does Your Mother Know?' and 'Voulez-Vous'' (*Q*1, 84). Indeed, such is the haste with which the review has been written, that the year of the album's release is incorrectly stated as 1975 and not 1979. By contrast, Paul Du Noyer's appreciation of the Cooder release is a more measured affair, speaking of the forty-year-old guitarists significant work conserving the heritage of American music:

> His admirers, who are many, speak reverently of Cooder's achievement in preserving the diverse styles of traditional American music, from country blues to blackface minstrel jazz. Wearily, Cooder protests that he's not on some academic rescue mission. He just plays all

this stuff because he likes the noise it makes. (Du Noyer, Q1, 85)

Here enterprise and heritage are configured in the objectification of a more stable code of masculine identity cohered around traditional notions of musical authenticity; as the cover stars of *Q* demonstrate, the magazine had a preference for older white male stars. Now of course it would be argued that editorial decisions such as these were informed by which 'classic' recordings were to be released on CD. As Mark Cooper's piece in Q6 suggests, the release of The Beatles on CD at the beginning of 1987 conferred authority on the new format (Cooper, Q6, 1987, 10). And, indeed, the Cooder anthology is a CD release, while the Abba album is only available on cassette and vinyl. However, like Appen and Doehring, I would argue that this predilection for certain kinds of stars is less reflective of the proliferation of CD culture than it is redolent of a more ritualised strategy for historicising popular music.

That embedded in the anodyne corporate register of *Q* are some highly partisan approaches to decoding popular music is evidenced in the language of the *Q* Review: Paul Simon, Tina Turner, the Human League etc. And in this sense, when talking about new music, the magazine, it would seem, is fairly forward thinking: un-beleaguered by the music press's historical predilection for authenticity as a barometer of taste and instead erecting a series of contingent ciphers around which the value and purpose of popular music is worked out. In the reviews of re-releases, however, the magazine is less reflexive. Though the magazine does not resort to the first person polemicism of the inkies, there is a clear gender bias in the way in which the history of popular music being presented. This is reflected in the reissues section of *Q1* in which featured only two female artists (including bands with female members): Patty Labelle and Diana Ross. Now of course, this reflected in part the decisions and selections of record companies about which albums to reissue. However, as with Abba, the succinctness of the reviews conspires to suggest a more routinised occlusion. For example, though LaBelle and Ross enjoy more favourable reviews than either The Kinks or The Stranglers, the word count of these reviews is approximately half. Unlike the Abba/Cooder binary, this cannot, however, be read off against the relative commodity status of the Compact Disc: of all the re-releases, only Cooder and The Monkees are scheduled for release on CD.

That the project of retrospection is more complex than the proliferation of CD technology in the 1980s is evidenced by advertisements for vinyl box sets in *NME* in the 70s. By the same token the first album issued on CD in 1982 was not a 'classic album' re-release or a 'best of' but Abba's very contemporary *The Visitors (*1981). However, if we accept the view of the music press to be as John Stratton suggests the ideological resolution of economic conflict (Stratton, 1982, 274) then the strategies deployed by *Q* in the 1980s in the negotiation of cultural heritage begin to make more sense. On the one hand, as Keith Negus suggests, by the 1980s the audience for popular music had got much older: disenfranchised from youth centered popular music culture. On the other hand, this audience bought music in sufficient quantity for them to be of considerable interest to record companies interested in making money out of recycling old recordings. That *Q*'s solution to this ideological problem was the objectification of musical heritage as a discrete project of masculine sub-cultural identity has been dealt with in some detail in chapter 4. What I want to do now, is look at the by-product of that process: the ritual exclusion of performers from the heritage of popular music culture.

The notion that in its dealing with archive material *Q* was more singular in its judgments of taste than when dealing with contemporary releases is problematic. It disrupts the line of continuity between the changes instituted by *Smash Hits* at the end of the 1970s and the emergence of less polemic, but perhaps more sensitive, style of popular music journalism in *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q*. There is, for example, a definite continuity between the way in which David Hepworth wrote about Ian Dury in 1979 and Tina Turner in 1986: intelligent and ironic, playful yet insightful. By contrast, though Paul Du Noyer's review of the Cooder compilation deploys many of the stylistic conventions characteristic of Hepworth/Ellen house style, the selection and positioning of the piece is contrapuntal to the *Smash Hits* aesthetic: eschewing the mainstream in favour of the more the rarefied strategies for listening, characteristic of what David Reisman's (1950) identifies as 'minority' audiences. This fracture is expressed most eloquently by the marginal position of Abba's *Voulez Vous.* In part because the album was concurrent to *Smash Hits* ascendancy and the peak of record sales at the end of the 1970s, but also because *Voulez Vous* is renowned as an album composed of singles rather than a cohesive work in its own right. Indeed, the album contained seven top five singles (including the

double-A-side Summer Night City/Angel Eyes). By contrast, the Ry Cooder compilation is composed not of hit singles (he has had none), but choice selections from his more esoteric albums. In one sense, this reflects the broader editorial strategy of a monthly verses a fortnightly title: just as the contemporaneous quality of *Smash Hits* was cohered around the singles chart so too is the slightly longer view of *Q* informed by album sales. Moreover, it reflects the consumer behaviour of older music fans perhaps less interested by the singles chart. What is problematic, however, is not the difference in *emphasis* but the difference in *value*.

In its dealings with contemporary recordings, the difference between *Smash Hits* and *Q* is not pronounced. There is the same equanimity to the way in which new music and stars are considered: recordings are valued in the terms of their own definition; contingent ciphers applied. By contrast, in reviews of reissues and compilations the magazine is wont to rehearse more traditional narratives of authorship and authenticity. In a review of Kate Bush's *The Whole Story*, for example, Paul Du Noyer raves about the singers' 'ingenious arrangements', 'gift for melody' and 'supreme talent' (Du Noyer, 1986, 108). Likewise, Mark Cooper commends Fairport Convention for 'playing their instruments exceedingly well' in a review of *House Full* (1970) (Cooper, 1986, 108), while Charles Shaar Murray ventures that Bobby Womack is a 'formidable guitarist, composer and producer' (Shaar Murray, 1986, 109). There is, it would seem, a predilection for recordings that can be configured with ideas about instrumental accomplishment and musical authenticity. By contrast, electronic forms are less enthusiastically received. Lloyd Bradley states: 'A Flock of Seagulls play synthpop of the least interesting variety' (Bradley, 1986, 108), while Phil McNeil suggests that 'the worst' tracks on a Hot Chocolate best of are the 'dodgy disco workouts' (McNeil, 1986, 108). Though Paul Du Noyer is sensitive to the 'funk propulsion' and 'European chic' of the Pet Shop Boys *Disco One* (1986) it should be noted that this was less a re-release but more a round-up of recent 12 inch singles (Du Noyer, 1986, 108-109); however, the assertion that this is a 'painless way of re-acquainting' yourself' implies an aversion on the part of reader and critic to releases not in a long play format. Dance music it would seem has a short shelf life. By contrast, music that matures with age tends to be more traditional. For example, in Du Noyer's review of Nick Drake's posthumous *Fruit Tree* (1979) the longevity of the music can be ascribed to the simplicity of the musical form. However, there is tension between judgments of taste and the consumer journalism format:

> The 12 years since Nick Drake's early death have not diminished the quiet allure of his songs: the introspective musings of a bruised and brooding young soul played solo with acoustic guitar or backed by stalwarts of English folk's peak years. Now his producer Joe Boyd has boxed together Drake's three LP. set along with a fourth of outtakes and numbers unreleased at the time (some of which you won't find on the Island Fruit Tree set). It's a welcome venture but if you're new to Drake then try the Best Of album *Heaven in a Wild Flower*. And if you've got the three originals, get the fourth album by itself (£5.90 inclusive, from Hannibal, PO Box 742, London, W11), (Du Noyer, 1986, 108).

On the one hand, this romantic view of the Drake oeuvre has, like Paul Du Noyer, been imported directly from the new journalism inspired *NME* of the 1970s: the very antithesis of what Eamonn Forde has characterised as the anodyne and corporate register. On the other hand, in its avoidance of first person polemics and its consumer journalism style the piece is, in effect marketing authenticity as product.

This fetishisation of the genuine and the real is evident in Shaar Murray's reading of CBS's release of recordings made by blues artist, Bessie Smith in the 1920s. Like Du Noyer, Shaar Murray was a refugee from the *NME* and commensurately his review of Smith's recordings is steeped in appreciation of the rawness of her talent: 'her huge clear voice, with its unparalled control of emotional nuance and expression gave her a reputation as one of the greatest American singers of the century' (Shaar Murray, 1986, 109). Like Do Noyer there is a predisposition to configure Smith within a fundamentally modernist paradigm, contrapuntal to the surface culture and veneer of 1980s pop culture: an idea of popular music shaped by confluence of jazz criticism and beat writers in the new journalism style of the 1970s. Presenting Smith within that context, however, does not work. Not because her work pre-dates the proliferation of rock 'n' roll, but because it denies the essentially post-modern experience of listening to her voice on CD:

> Ten years ago, CBS assembled the complete works of the late great Bessie Smith into ten double album sets. 160 performances recorded between 1923 and 1933 (another 20 were

> never released and the masters has long vanished) were painstakingly cleaned up, using the most sophisticated technology available at the time and some of them were assembled from several different copies. This deluxe addition was an infinite improvement on previous issues and went down a storm with collectors, aficionados and inquisitive Janis Joplin fans alike. (Shaar Murray, 1986, 109).

Clearly, the notion that tracks from the anthology have been painstakingly 'assembled from several different copies' is a potent symbol of the post-modernism in popular music. And, indeed, the routine acceptance of this is emblematic of what Andrew Goodwin says that popular music practice in the digital age may embody 'post-modern' cultural practice but 'producers appear to be working within fairly traditional notions of creativity and authorship' (Goodwin, 1990, 271). Indeed, Shaar Murray's mention of the 'master tapes' is symbolic of this: the notion that there is a pre-post-modern moment in the history of the pop, a moment which focusing on the past aims to recover. This, however, as Negus (1996) observes, is problematic. On the one hand, within a rock-pop aesthetic the fetishisation of the musical recording as the original text falls foul of the same reifying discourse that makes Adorno view of popular music unworkable. The Beatles may well have used the studio as an instrument, but focusing on recordings denies the performative and indeed televisual qualities of pop (Richard Middleton, Nicholas Cook, Lucy Green, Simon Frith etc). On the other hand, if we adopt a more blues/jazz sensibility then the recording is an anathema to the improvisational qualities of the genre. To view any recording of popular music as any more than a simulacrum cannot be substantiated. And, in one sense the heritage recording can be viewed as a contingent cipher, a strategy for decoding pop no different to the narratives of authorship ascribed to dance music producers and disc jockeys. However, the use of journalists associated with the polyglottic era confuses that process. On the one hand, both Du Noyer and Smith dutifully toe the *Q* party line: eschewing first person polemics in favour of balanced consumer journalism. On the other hand, like the Bessie Smith anthology, they are in themselves heritage products: symbolic rejoinders to an age of greater stability in the proclamations of taste made for and on behalf of the popular music press.

The commodification of distinction in *Q* is it would seem intimately connected to the format of the album: be this a deftly compiled best of or a digitally re-mastered classic, the conventions of the long-

player weigh heavily on what *Q* presents as good music. The limitations of this from an aesthetic point of view can be evidenced in the work of music journalist and *Q* writer Gary Mulholland. In his follow up to *This is Uncool (The 500 Greatest Singles Since Punk and Disco) (2002)*, *Fear of Music (The 261 Greatest Albums Since Punk and Disco)* (2006), Mulholland ventures that audiences have quite a different relationship with an album compared to a single:

> Entire albums don't slap you in the face when blasted out of a radio in the hairdressers. You have to buy them, listen to them, and form a deeper relationship with them. Singles can just be fuck buddies. Albums expect to be partners for life. (Mulholland, 2006, 7)

And indeed, this sense of perpetuity abounds in *Q's* consideration of what makes a good album. For example, in Charles Shaar Murray's review of *The Best of Blondie* (1981) he argues that the '14 hard boiled sweets on this collection have aged remarkable well' (Shaar Murray, 1987, 90). He also is at pains to relay the lineage of the band's musical influence: 'Debbie Harry, Chris Stein and their teammates retroed their way to the era of Girl Groups and British invasion'. However, his resistance to less stable aesthetic parameters is evident in his misunderstanding of the band's self-effacing style on 'Rapture': 'whatever hipness points Harry gained by rapping on Rapture are lost by her rapping complete gibberish'. While this confusion is ironic given the beat sensibility of Harry's lyrical style and Shaar Murray's more literary pedigree, as with Bessie Smith, there is a yearning for a more authentic aesthetic. Where Shaar Murray's account is at odds with the definition of an album offered by Mulholland of course, is that *The Best of Blondie* there is, like the nine of the thirty-two re-releases reviewed in *Q9*, an anthology of singles and not a single body of work. And, indeed, there is a sense in which Best-ofs occupy a very difference space to a regular studio album. In Shaar Murray's review of the *Best of Randy Newman* as with the *Best of Blondie* a need to place the work in historical context and identify high points. However, it is perhaps the notion of value that is most prominent: in both of Shaar Murray's reviews he mentions the number of tracks on each album: 14 and 22 respectively. Likewise, concision is important. Indeed, of the Newman collection Shaar Murray observes the 'records are rarely padded out with gratuitous things like solos (Shaar Murray, 1987, 86). By contrast, reviews of complete original recordings betray different aesthetic criteria.

Mat Snow's review of John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* (1960) deploys similar strategies to those used by Shaar Murray in reviewing 'Best of' albums. He puts the artist in context and positions the recording in relation to its forebears. However, it is the identification of the title as a turning point in the history of popular music that is unique:

> Recorded in August 1959 and first released in 1960, *Giant Steps* was the album that put John Coltrane on the map as the leading jazz tenor saxophonist after years of developing his style as sideman with such luminaries as Miles Davies and Thelonious Monk. Not only was *Giant Steps* a colossal career move, it also kicked off Coltrane's five-year golden period which produced such classic albums as *My Favourite Things*, *Coltrane Impressions*, *Africa/Brass* and *A Love Supreme* as well as several brilliant live recordings (Snow, 1987, 86).

Though Snow identifies *Giant Steps* as a turning point, there is sense in which its greatness is reflective of a period of heightened creative and prolific output; verified here by mention of the 'classic albums' which followed. Central to this is the idea of music 'breakthrough' and 'giant ideas': 'the then novel jazz strategy of modalities where the soloist was freed from a chord base'. This twin concept of innovation and peak performance underpin Brian Glasser's review of Bill Evans/Jim Hall's *Undercurrents* (1959):

> Bill Evans was one of the few Jazz pianists to successfully weld intellect and passion into a palatable finished product, and he finds a good match in the cool, clean guitar playing of Jim Hall. It's a relaxed date, and the two men put as much into each other's solos as their own – witness the telepathic version of My Funny Valentine. Although the rest of the LP never quite touches the same heights, any chance to hear Evans in his (1959) prime is not to be missed. (Glasser, 1987, 86)

The review of reissued 'classic' rock albums in *Q* is surprisingly taciturn. Indeed, while 'Best ofs' abound, the more singular releases in early *Q* tend to be jazz and blues recordings. In theory this would seem to reflect the original marketing strategy of the CD towards the audiophile community. However, closer inspection reveals rock best-ofs to be the most likely candidate for release on CD: in

Q9 compilations by Randy Newman, REM, Spear of Destiny, T-Rex, Blondie, Jethro Tull and Steeleye Span constitute 7 of ten artists listed available on CD. Where rock albums are released in their original format on CD, however, is as part of a series of reissues: titles by XTC, King Crimson and The Beatles sit alongside other items from the group's back-catalogue. In the case of King Crimson, *Lizards* (1970) and *Islands* (1971) constitute what David Sinclair describes as the 'final residue' of the progressive rockers' 'back-catalogue'. Mirroring Glasser and Snow's focus on Coltrane and Evans/Hall jazz recordings, Sinclair bemoans the lack of musical innovation on these two albums, suggesting that the band 'steered itself into a musical cul de sac from which very few progressive rock acts ever return' (Sinclair, 1987, 90). Likewise, Sinclair is lukewarm in his appreciation of XTC's re-releases, which like King Crimson, complete a series of back catalogue reissues. Once again for Sinclair the barometer of distinction is musical innovation, with the reviewer suggesting that for ''all their high-wire antics' a good chorus 'may yet prove to be their greatest achievement' (Ibid).

On the second installment of The Beatles back-catalogue (*Help!* (1965) *Rubber Soul* (1965)*, Revolver* (1966), however, Paul Du Noyer is somewhat more effusive. As with Shaar Murray's review of Bessie Smith in *Q3*, Du Noyer's Beatles review is wont to fetishise the authenticity of the original recording:

> Here, then, in crystalline precision is the noise the boys made in the years '65 and '66 – a period of transition that saw their mop tops getting shaggier, their music growing stronger and their outlooks overhauled by the parallel adoptions of Eastern religion and psychedelic chemicals (Du Noyer, 1987, 91)

On the one hand, like Snow and Glasser on jazz, Du Noyer emphasises the era captured on the albums as a turning point into a period of heightened creative and prolific output. This is reinforced later on in the review when Du Noyer states: '*Revolver* liberated pop from the limitations of commercial beat music'. On the other hand, though in its fascination with the quest to find the definitive recording (stereo v mono) Du Noyer is like Shaar Murray propagating the myth of the authentic, in his identification of the symbolic meaning of The Beatles' hair Du Noyer betrays a more reflexive sensibility. However, it is perhaps Du Noyer's idea about musical form that reveals most about what makes a good album. In his consideration of *Help!,* for example, Du Noyer suggests that

though by anyone else's standards the album is 'transcendent' in 'strictly Beatles terms it is a holding operation'. Though he concedes that the album has its high points, including the title track, 'Ticket to Ride' and 'Yesterday', of concern is the ordinariness of other tracks such as 'I've Just Seen Her Face' and 'The Night Before'. By contrast, though simplistic, Du Noyer suggests that *Rubber Soul* is 'almost always gorgeous'. Consistency then emerges as a key concept in the definition of a good album: as common to original release as it is a 'best of'. Indeed, in Du Noyer's appraisal of *Revolver*, it is stated that the album is 'said (by rock critics at least) to be the best of The Beatles'. Commensurately, it is the only album of the triptych to which five stars are awarded. What is meant by the phrase the 'best of The Beatles', however, needs unpacking. On the one hand, this could imply that the album captures the group at their creative zenith: *Revolver* is the 'best of' all The Beatles albums. On the other hand, there is a suggestion that the album is more redolent of a 'best of' anthology because 'all its 14 tracks are extraordinary'. There is then a tension here between the yearning for consistency and seeking out brilliance. Few records are like *Revolver*: Many albums are *consistent*, many songs are *extraordinary*, few LPs, are, however, consistently extraordinary. Appropriating *Revolver* as a model of aesthetic excellence in popular music, therefore, is extremely problematic.

On the face of things, the selection and presentation of archive recordings in *Q* appears to be a value neutral activity; it institutes a set of principles suited to the task in hand: the qualitative evaluation of LPs. However, in the objectification of history, the seeming neutrality of this framework of taste conceals a more partisan strategy, whereby the aesthetic rationale underpinning the LP comes to stand for the way in which popular music is valued across all formats and genres. That the form of a full-length set informs this belief system in *Q* is evidenced by the reification of certain stylistic features, including consistency, variety and originality of form. Moreover, the corollary of this, is that understanding the forms and conventions of the LP is not only definitive in proclamation of taste but in the formation of the rock canon. As is evidenced by the work of Von Appen and Doehring (2006), it is classic albums not classic singles that have shaped the way in which popular music has been historicised so far.

Conclusion

That popular music history is formulated by frameworks of taste, cohered around the aesthetic form of

the LP raises big questions about the value and purpose of popular music. On the one hand, to argue that popular music is only legitimate when it occurs within the tightly prescribed boundaries of the LP reinforces Adorno's view of popular music as a pseudo-individualised diversionary pleasure. It also discourages concision in musical expression and suppresses the experimentation necessary to create musical brilliance. On the other hand, to reject all formal constraints is foolhardy. Clearly the aesthetics of pop are partly mimetic: the way in which pop texts borrow and re-work the other texts is one of the defining sensibilities of popular music. Abandoning all consideration of form then denies the essence of the way in which the genre operates. However, a history of popular music that is formulated around the protracted concerns of the LP is problematic. Unsurprisingly then of the non-jazz reissues reviewed more often than not, *Greatest Hits* packages fare best in *Q*. In this sense Abba cannot compete with Ry Cooder because *Voulez Vous'* seven moments of brilliance are augmented by some rather humdrum disco, while the *Best of Ry Cooder* is a cherry-picked selection from decades worth of recordings.

The disparity between the aesthetic of the single versus the albums can of course be read off against a whole other set of arbitrary binaries: rock versus pop, masculine versus feminine etc. And, as both Mary Harron (1988) and Norman Coates (1997) suggest there is much to support this approach in popular music culture as indeed there is in *Q*. Clearly *Q* does have a male centered rock-ist persuasion: believing to some extent in the geniuses and heroes Harron suggests are characteristic of rock. That those geniuses and heroes are predominantly white, middle aged males can in general terms, as I suggest in Chapter 4, be read off against the patriarchal structure of society and the demographic profile of *Q*'s potential audience. What this neglects to observe, however, is the perpetuity of the judgments articulated by *Q* in crystallising the formation of rock cannon. It can seen in the table that cross references the cover of Q with Ralph Von Appen and Andrew Doehring's (2006) 'meta list' that by the end of the 1980s the canon of popular music history has already been fixed. That the 1990s should embody a less restrictive set of codes is evidence of the project's success. The habilitation of Abba and the success of the compilation *Abba Gold* (1992) is a case in point. On the one hand, it could be argued the playfulness and irony which characterised homages to the band by artists like U2 and Erasure was suggestive of greater fluidity in understanding of popular music: a concept of pop not restricted to the aesthetic form of the long play album. On the other hand, the

ambiguity in these tributes, which celebrated the kitsch and parodic quality of the band's visual style served as more a symbolic rejoinder to the dominant hegemony than meaningful subversion. The corollary of this, however, as Appen and Doehring's list is testimony to, is a stability to the rock canon and the occlusion of certain types of artists. As Mulholland argues the history of 'rock is very white, very male, very straight' (Mulholland, 2006, 8). And, indeed, The Clash are the only band from the class of '79 to be featured on the cover of *Smash Hits* and appear in the meta-list: coincidently, a very white, very male, very straight band.

That in *Q* something is lost and something is found is not so remarkable. On the one hand, in the appropriation of consumer journalism the magazine opened up new and interesting ways for thinking about popular music that can be indexed to the reflexive construction of the self and contingent modes of aesthetic deconstruction. On the other hand, the magazine offered a somewhat limited perspective on the history of rock: a perspective that we may not agree and which may have been distorted by the magazine's need to survive in the wider media economy. That this perspective un-did much that was achieved by Nick Logan at *Smash Hits* is also fair comment: the magazine re-inscribed a more singular notion of pop history, which can be read against unpleasing narratives of cultural power in terms of gender and genre, not to mention race, age and nationhood. However, it would be inappropriate to suggest that *Q* 're-framed' pop history: the prefix suggesting an intent to alter or refine something, which had already been accomplished. Though there is evidence to suggest that the process of canonisation began in the 1970s, clearly the launch of *Q* and the proliferation of the CD were a moment in which this project gained new momentum. If criticism is to be leveled at the music press for the way in which popular music has been historicised then it is unfair to bemoan *Q's* first attempt; rather condemnation should be directed at the inability of subsequent generations to significantly *re*vise that model. Like the curate's egg, *Q* was indeed good in parts; failure to recognize this is potentially to fall foul to the same mistake as Eamonn Forde (2001). His discontent with what the music press became in the 1990s arguably distracts his work from the very positive qualities of EMAP products in the 1980s and the more regressive impulses of the inkies in the 70s. In so far as the music press exists to reconcile the ideological conflict between the aesthetic and the commercial, what it has to offer the Academy will never be philosophically pure. The role of the researcher, therefore, is not to be disheartened by this imperfection but to keep on searching, not for the pot of

gold at the end of the rainbow, but the fragments of knowledge, the contingent ciphers and nuggets of understanding that will inform and shape the development of Popular Music Studies.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have traced the development of the music press since the 1950s and the way in which it embraced and celebrated various modes of musical authenticity. Along the way I have gestured towards the way in which this evolution informed and shaped the way the music press would progress in the 1980s. While the stylistic conventions of the music press in the 1960s and 1970s were in essence reconfigured by *Q* in the 1980s, *Smash Hits* emerges as a liminal moment in which the spirit of British pop in the 1950s was rehabilitated. This is significant because, though much of British pop of the 1950s may have been formulaic and standardized, its carnivalesque mimicry of American rock 'n' roll challenged American pre-occupations with the authentic. It is this celebration of artifice and the rejection of American modes of rock authenticity that I have argued is particularly significant to in understanding the development of the music press in subsequent decades. Likewise, the 1960s were a time of transformation in the music press in both the UK and America. The early 1960s embodied a very pop sensibility, particularly in Britain where the charts were dominated by cover version of American rock 'n' roll. This is reflected in the mainstream emphasis of *NME* and the way in which The Beatles were presented as teen pop stars. All this changed in the wake of The Beatles' success in America where the Liverpool quartet, alongside other British bands like the Rolling Stones and The Kinks, were taken much more seriously. The shift at *Melody Maker* away from jazz towards Afro-American *rock* sounds typifies the way in which popular music began to be viewed more seriously in this period. The more critical edge to the music press in the 1960s was reflected in the launch of three major American titles in the late 1960s: *Crawdaddy*, *Creem* and *Rolling Stone*. Though each had a very different emphasis, the central tenet of the writing was that popular music should be considered as serious Art form. This new highbrow sensibility to *rock* in the late 1960s contrasted with the more carnivalesque take on *pop* in the 1950s and chimed in well with the literary aspiration of writers like Lester Bangs, influenced by beat generation writer like Kerouac and Burroughs. However, it was not until the 1970s and the publication of Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism* that this strategy would come into full fruition.

The 1970s was a time of consolidation rather than revolution in the music press in America. Strands that developed in the 1960s embedded themselves in the cross-pollination between the worlds of

literary journalism and the music press. Land-mark moments in this respect are the publication of Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) in *Rolling Stone* and Tom Wolfe's *The New Journalism* (1975). In the UK the publication of Lester Bangs' work in *NME* and *Melody Maker* caused a stir, as did the publication of a UK edition of *Rolling Stone*. However, it was perhaps the work of Nick Kent and Charles Shaar Murray that had the biggest influence on the polemical style of the music press in the UK in the 1970s. In particular, their influence can be felt upon the acerbic style of Tony Parson and Julie Burchill during the punk era. That said, for all punk's revolutionary potential, in terms of the journalistic style, the era reinforced the form and conventions of an earlier era: authenticity, anti-commercialism and the subjective attachments of the writer were as integral to punk as they were the hippy-era that preceded. It was not until the launch of *Smash Hits* at the cusp of the decade that the journalistic values of the music press would begin to evolve in a new and more corporate direction.

In this thesis I have argued that *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* transformed the mores of the popular music press upon their launch in 1978 and 1986 respectively. Both titles embraced the positive and creative possibilities of consumer culture. In *Smash Hits* this was manifest in the celebration of the surface visual culture of popular music, while *Q* is marked by the appropriation of consumer discourse into vocabularies for talking about popular music. *The Face* is in this sense a halfway house: addressing the readers as consumers and positioning pop music within the context of the wider lifestyle. Within the Academy, however, there is a tacit assumption in the work of Forde (2001), Shukar (2001), and Gudmundsson et al (2002), that the more anodyne register of *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* made them less significant than their historical antecedents *Rolling Stone*, *NME* and *Melody Maker*. I have argued, however, that far from diminishing the value of the music press, so significant were the changes to the mores of the music journalism that today the legacy of *Q* and *Smash Hits* is of real value to *Popular Music Studies*. In the long run it would seem that the lasting of legacy of *Smash Hits* and *Q* could be that they offer contingent ciphers for valuing popular music qualitatively: a temporary framework in which relative notions of culture order can be worked through and negotiated.

The legacy of *Smash Hits, The Face and Q* has been considered by a number of academics (Forde,

Gudmundsson, Gorman etc), all of whom emphasise the shift away from the 'journalist as a star' feature and the emergence of a more 'monoglottic' corporate style. In particular the legacy of EMAP titles *Smash Hits* and *Q* and to a certain extent *The Face* are seen as problematic. In this thesis I have argued against this from a number of angles. In the first instance, though there is considerable overlap in the personnel involved, *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* were ideologically discrete in their interpretation of popular music. Secondly, the distinction that is perceived between the polyglottic style of the inkies and the monoglottic style of the music press in the 1980s is misleading. Many writers who had previously worked at *Melody Maker*, *Sounds* and *NME* went on to find work at *Q*, *The Face* and *Smash Hits*. Likewise, there is much greater continuity between the music press of the 1980s and its 1970s forebears than Forde, Gudmundsson etc allow for: not just in the legacy of Nick Logan but also in the increasingly retrospective outlook and the predisposition for narrative accounts grounded in modernist notions of authenticity and realism. These later titles also embodied a much more definite house style than the generation of titles that preceded them. On the one hand, the look of *Smash Hits* is rooted in the reproduction of pop visuals in glorious Technicolor. On the other hand, the feel of *Q* is grounded in its measured tone and use of objective consumer discourse. *The Face* is, in this sense, a stepping-stone between the two, marked out by its parodic sensibility.

Within the Academy, understanding of both titles is undermined by a fear of 'brand-centric' journalism and the more aggressive impulses of post-modern consumer culture. There is, however, a contradiction in that attitude. In approaches emanating from the Social Sciences there is an understandable skepticism towards the destructive aspects of free-market capitalism: a sense in which the music press acquiesced consent to a new cultural hegemony. However, this denies the structure of the relationship between capitalism and post-modern cultures. While the individual's more tangible engagement with the economy at the level of consumer rather than producer may be a characteristic feature of post-modernity, such financial models are not necessarily definitional of cultural forms. Within the Academy there is, it would seem, a need to resist against the advance of free enterprise by actively defying post-modern cultural paradigms. In particular, Forde's reading of the music press is steeped in longing for a more authentic frame of reference: the new journalist principles of immersion writing and literary techniques. This emphasis on the authenticating voice of the individual is redolent of Theodor Adorno's (1942) reifying view of the musical text. However, this

tactic undermines the value of the music press for Popular Music Studies.

If the worth of the music press is to enlighten debate about the value and purpose of popular music then from the theoretical standpoint understanding of the music press needs to be informed by Popular Music Studies. Forde's view is, therefore, incompatible with the consensus view that the popular music text is the epitome of the post-modern. As Negus suggests, even in its more traditional forms like the 7-inch single popular music is a simulacrum. The changes the music press underwent during the 1980s are fascinating therefore because they acquainted music journalism with the more commercial sensibility that the popular music scene had always embodied. In *Smash Hits* this is manifest in the celebration of the visual and in *Q* this means foregrounding the conceptualisation of pop music as product. Far from distancing popular music from its sacred function, in doing so *Q* re-affirmed the role and purpose of the music press in what Stratton describes as the 'ideological resolution of a real economic conflict' (Stratton, 1982, 283). The system of beliefs encoded by the music press is therefore worthy of extrapolation.

In the first instance, analysis of *Smash Hits*, *The Face* and *Q* reaffirms the general consensus (Angela McRobbie, Simon Frith, Keith Negus etc) that the popular music scene is a complex world in which the attitudes and values constitute a symbolic system. Central to this symbolic order is the notion of authenticity, which as Keir Keightley suggests 'can be thought of as the compass that orientates rock culture in its navigation of the mainstream' (Keightley, 2001, 131). Steeped in the reconstructive sensibility of the mainstream post punk/disco, *Smash Hits* debunked the notion of authenticity as a talisman of aesthetic integrity. It shifted the emphasis away from the providence of production, be that musical or social, to the audience reception, thereby reacquainting popular music with its televisual sensibility and exposing the constructed nature of genre. Instead, authenticity in *Smash Hits* existed as an aesthetic purity in the honest celebration of the artifice of the pop process. As David Hepworth stated: 'we knew it was a process. We didn't take people at face value' (Hepworth, 2009). By contrast, *Q* re-invoked Afro-American notions of rock authenticity: in the objectification of male lifestyle and heritage as a consumer product. This is articulated most clearly by the *Q* Review, in which authenticity is reconfigured as a plural concept embodying both romantic and modernist traditions. The significance of this for Popular Music Studies is that it shifts the focus away from the judgment of

a pre-discursive self to the medium of judgment: allowing for the resolutely modernist in its longing for a sensitive minority readership while remaining true to post-modern values of mass culture. In deciphering the exchange between critic and reader we shed light not only on the reflexive quest to construct the self but also the contingent subjective attachments ascribed to the meaning of popular music. The reciprocal process in which the reader is complicit in the proclamation of cultural nobility is encapsulated in *Q* both literally and metaphorically in the mediation of cultural capital and the appropriation of consumer vocabulary. In this sense, consumer culture is allegorical: a Bourdieuian metaphor for the way in which cultural capital is assimilated and disseminated.

That in *Q* cultural capital is symbolic of cultural power is evidenced in the more singular judgments of taste rehearsed within the reviews of archive re-issues. In part, this can be attributed to the commodification of the music press's own heritage in the employment of journalists synonymous with the polemics of the polyglots. However, it is also a function of the way in which music is used to objectify male lifestyle in the era immediately before the proliferation of men's lifestyle titles. It would wrong, therefore, to ignore the regressive potential embedded in superficially innocent judgments of taste and proclamations of cultural nobility. By the same token, to focus specifically on the more unpleasing aspects of the way in which the music press presents aspects of sex, race, gender or nationhood is to waste an opportunity to recuperate some very exciting ideas about popular music. For example, it can be observed that the editorial features of *Q* talk about female subjects in ways that foreground the male gaze. Equally, though there is parity in the way in which the naturalistic style of *Q* photography presents both male and female subjects, in its objectification of masculinity *Q* was breaking new ground for a mainstream title. Neither of these approaches, however, contributes significantly to understanding of the way in which popular music is conceptualised in the music press and the ways in which this might inform Popular Music Studies. That said, though the ideologies of pop may be free-floating signifiers, contingent landmarks on the flat landscape of post-modernity, they still need to be configured within broader narratives of cultural power. Power, however, as Peter Middleton argues, is 'virtual' force, not an action or a history, but a potential for either' (Middleton, 1992, 151). In *Smash Hits, The Face* and *Q* we see possibilities for both. For example, previous accounts of *Smash Hits* have been wont to dwell on its more mainstream, corporate sensibility; the inference has been that the magazine acquiesced in cultural consent to the more regressive impulses

of a new economic hegemony. Likewise, *Q* is continually repudiated for its more anodyne corporate register and its middlebrow cultural prejudice. By contrast, in this account those circumstances have been framed very differently. It is argued that *Smash Hits* disrupted the dominant hegemony of the American rock, instituting a more playful sensibility that reacquainted British pop with the richness of its surface culture and its very televisual sensibility. Likewise, it is suggested that *Q* rejected the polemicism of the inkies, introduced a more measured tone and bought about a less singular idea of the relationship between critic and audience. The truth of historiography is ultimately impossible to substantiate. However, for the purposes of further investigations the onus rests on future generations to significantly revise this model.

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