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It was on the basis of these complaints, again with particular attention paid to the letter of Harvey, that the CRTC granted CKDU-FM its conditional licence renewal. As a condition of licence, CKDU must submit a station policy that will serve as guidelines for the station's broadcast of "sexually explicit" material. Due by September 1, 1994, this policy must then be reviewed and approved by the CRTC. Once approved, these guidelines become law and CKDU must fully abide by them. The guidelines must specifically "include control measures expressly tailored to special program-

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12. Do you personally own a CD player?

❍ Yes 48.1 ❍ No .2

13. Please indicate which of the following beverages you have served or consumed at home, and which you have consumed away from home at a restaurant, party or bar in the past week.

In the past week:	served/consumed at home	served/consumed away from home
Wine	❍ 49.1	❍ 50.1
Beer	❍ .2	❍ .2
Vodka	❍ .3	❍ .3
Gin	❍ .4	❍ .4
Rum	❍ .5	❍ .5
Rye Whiskey	❍ .6	❍ .6
Scotch Whiskey	❍ .7	❍ .7
Soft Drinks	❍ .8	❍ .8
Liqueurs	❍ .9	❍ .9

14. How often have you personally done the following in the past 12 months.

___ Pleasure trips (1-3 nights away from home) 51.52.
___ Vacation trips (4+ nights away from home) 53.54.
___ Business trips 55.56.
___ Attended festivals 57.58.
___ Attended conferences 59.60.

15. Do you own, rent or lease a car?

❍ Own a car 61.1
❍ Lease a car .2
❍ Rent a car .3
❍ None of the above .4

16. Are you:

❍ Female 62.1 ❍ Male .2

17. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

❍ Under 20 63.1
❍ 20-24 .2
❍ 25-29 .3
❍ 30-34 .4
❍ 35-39 .5
❍ 40-44 .6
❍ 45-49 .7
❍ 50-54 .8
❍ 55-59 .9
❍ 60-64 .0
❍ 65 or over .x

18.Which single category best describes your occupation?

❍ Professional, Executive, Owner or Manager 64.1
❍ Administrator .2
❍ Artist .3
❍ Educator .4
❍ Media .5
❍ Writer .6
❍ Sales .7
❍ Public Service .8
❍ Gallery Owner, Director or Employee 65.1
❍ Labour .2
❍ Homemaker .3
❍ Student .4
❍ Retired .5
❍ Unemployed .6
❍ Other (please state) .7

Community Radio At Odds With "Community Standards"?

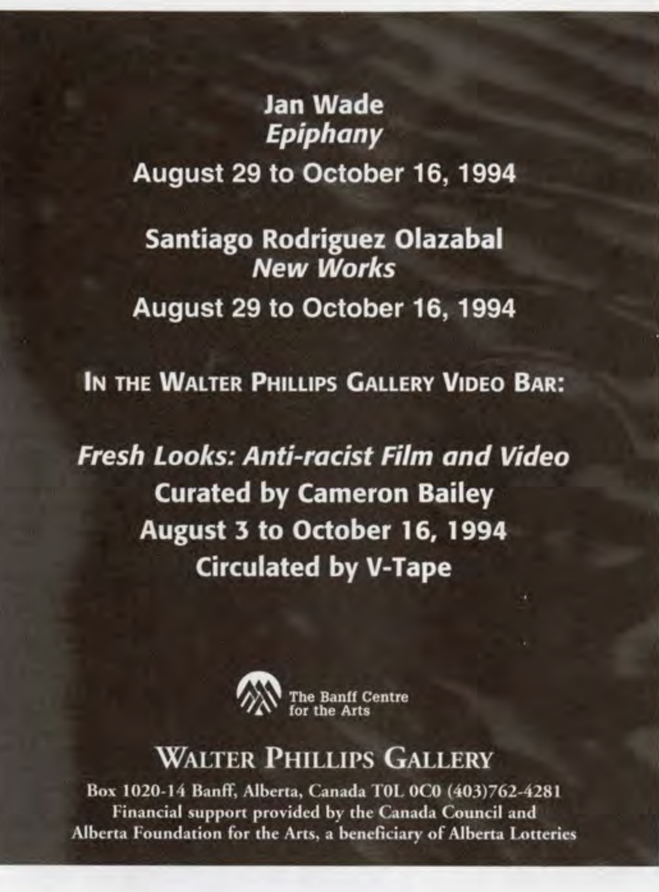
Halifax–In early July 1993, the Canadian Radio and Television-Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) received a formal letter of complaint from Halifax resident Wayne S. Harvey. Harvey happened to tune in to one hour of Halifax-based campus-community radio station CKDU's "All Day All Gay" programming. In his letter, Harvey stated that what he heard was "disgraceful and tasteless... garbage," and complained that "the language was very coarse and the reference to gay sexual preferences was totally unacceptable." Included in that sixty-minute period were two spoken-word pieces; one a love poem entitled "Language of Desire" written by First Nations lesbian author Beth Brant, the other a satirical audio performance piece, "Lily and Christian," produced by Halifax artists Renee Penney and Michael Weir. The most "graphic" language contained within the pieces were the words "ass" and "breast." As for the "reference to gay sexual preferences," there were, of course, many throughout this full day of special pride programming.

In December 1993, CKDU was called to a public hearing concerning its soon to be renewed licence. While all stations must submit extremely detailed applications for licence renewal every few years (generally four to eight, as determined in their last renewal), all stations are not called automatically to a public hearing on the issue. CKDU was called forward in order to discuss "the implementation of programming guidelines with respect to the broadcast of materials that listeners may find objectionable."[1] According to the CRTC Commissioner for the Atlantic Region, David Colville, the letter of complaint from Mr. Harvey "was a trigger" for the Commission's decision to call CKDU forward to a public hearing.[2]

In March 1994, the CRTC published Decision 94-106, the document regarding CKDU's licence. The station was granted a four-year renewal, subject not only to the licensing conditions under which it had already been operating, but also subject to a number of new conditions. As a result CKDU-FM has become the first radio station in Canada to be given a conditional licence renewal which imposes regulations on the airing of "sexually explicit" material. At no point, however, has the CRTC attempted to define what it means by "sexually explicit" for its licencees; instead the Commission refers the decision to such nebulous phrases as "existing community standards" and "high standards." Evidently, programming aired on CKDU in June 1993 as part of their "All Day All Gay" special programming for Lesbian and Gay Pride Week did not meet such "standards."

It is interesting to note which issues and public complaints the CRTC chose to focus on and respond to in Decision 94-106. In its last licensing period of August 1991-94, CKDU received nine written complaints that went to the CRTC. Five of these complaints go unmentioned in the official CRTC document regarding the licence decision. More space is granted to the concerns of Harvey than to any other complaint: complete with a quote of his objection to the airing of "reference to gay sexual preferences." And in the end, the CRTC concluded that "the broadcast in the middle of the day of the sexually explicit material referred to in Mr. Harvey's complaint does not meet the high standard required by the (Broadcast) Act."[3] Additionally, the Commission notes that Harvey's complaint is not the first it has received "concerning programming of this nature broadcast by CKDU-FM."[4] It points out that it received two "similar complaints" about CKDU's "Halifax is Flaming" special programming for Pride 1991.[5]

It was on the basis of these complaints, again with particular attention paid to the letter of Harvey, that the CRTC granted CKDU-FM its conditional licence renewal. As a condition of licence, CKDU must submit a station policy that will serve as guidelines for the station's broadcast of "sexually explicit" material. Due by September 1, 1994, this policy must then be reviewed and approved by the CRTC. Once approved, these guidelines become law and CKDU must fully abide by them. The guidelines must specifically "include control measures expressly tailored to special program-



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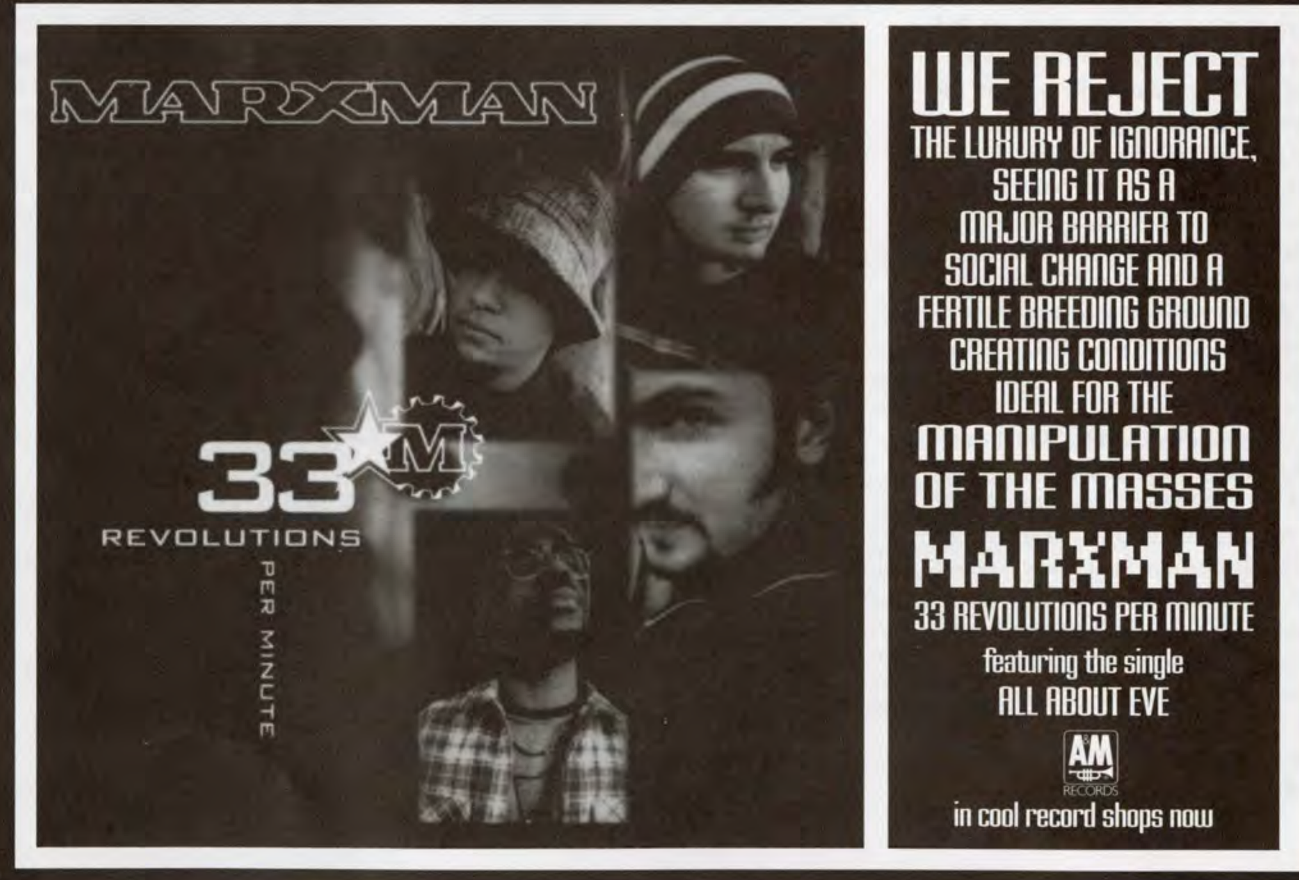

ming that is not part of the station's regular programming, such as the 'All Day All Gay' programme, and to any other programming that may contain sexually explicit material."[6] The guidelines must incorporate the following CRTC-stipulated provisions:

1. Warning messages must be aired one week before a "special programme" containing sexually explicit material, two hours before such a programme, and every hour on the hour during the programme, as well as before any other programming that contains sexually explicit material.

2. Sexually explicit material shall not be broadcast except between 9 PM and 6 AM in order to lessen the possibility that children and others who might be offended by this material are listening.

3. That when an occasion arises where material to be aired may conflict with generally accepted audience values regarding such matters as vulgarity, profanity or sexual behaviour, the material shall only be broadcast if it is in the proper context, is integral to the theme of the programme and has worthwhile educational value.[7]

The CRTC's decision, and its many implications, deeply concern a large number of people active in campus-community radio. Ian Pringle, programme coordinator at Vancouver's CFRO (Co-op Radio) and current President of the National Campus-Community Radio Association (NCRA), notes that "the CRTC's being able to decide on community standards, decide on behalf of the public, what is and isn't acceptable, sounds an awful lot to me like Canada Customs being able to make their decisions as materials are coming over the border."[8]

A literal interpretation of the CRTC's proposed guidelines would suggest that CKDU, knowing that homosexuality may not be a "generally accepted...sexual behaviour," must automatically issue warnings in advance of programming that deals with lesbian and gay issues. Sandra McDonald, a volunteer who has been involved in developing policy at CKDU, notes that these regulations could be viewed as "a definite, direct conflict with the mandate of campus-community radio."[9] Campus-community radio is licenced with the main purpose of broadcasting material that is not likely to be heard on commercial radio; material that will reflect and serve the interests of those not represented in mainstream media. Additionally, in its *AM-FM Policy for the Nineties*, the CRTC "emphasizes that the fundamental responsibility of radio broadcasters is to provide original programming of direct relevance to the communities they serve."[10]

In 1991, the CRTC added sexual orientation to its abusive comment regulation, meaning that it is officially in violation of the Broadcast Act for broadcasters to make homophobic remarks on air. Not only, then, are the regulations in direct conflict with the mandate of campus-community radio, they would also appear to be in stark contrast with the CRTC's belief that it is in the "forefront of dealing with this issue [homophobia]."[11] One may wonder how the CRTC can justify paying such attention and respect to the openly homophobic letter of Mr. Harvey.

The CRTC based much of its CKDU licence renewal decision on this letter and chose to refer to it extensively in its published report. It is no wonder that community radio activists are concerned about possible results. As Ian Pringle states, "the implications of this decision are pretty deep in that what we're really talking about here is controversial programming, community standards and who decides what those community standards are."[12]

Sandra McDonald feels that there has been "an inconsistency in the way that the CRTC has been dealing with sexually explicit material. CKDU has had complaints about heterosexual sexually explicit material and the CRTC has agreed with our defence."[13] She cites the example of the post 8 AM broadcast of the Yeastie Girls track *You Suck*, a song in which the women vocalists encourage their rather reluctant/lazy male lovers to "go down, baby." CKDU did receive an official letter of complaint via the CRTC for the airing of this song. They responded with a letter outlining why they felt it was important to air the song, and the Commission agreed. Sandra goes on to say that CKDU's programming has been heavily affected by the recent CRTC licensing decision. "There's a real sort of chill and self-censorship happening at the station now because people really can't figure out what it was that made the CRTC investigate a complaint that seems to be homophobic in nature, lodged against material that's not sexually explicit, but let the airing of Yeastie Girls' 'You Suck' go by. It's hard to figure out what's allowable and what's not allowable."[14]

CRTC Commissioner David Colville has stated repeatedly that it is not the Commission's intention to ban programming of a gay or lesbian nature, and he strongly feels that no

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group of people has been singled out in this decision. While speaking at the National Campus-Community Radio Conference this past June, Colville said of the CRTC "when we say sexually explicit, we mean sexually explicit...we don't mean references to homosexuality at two in the afternoon. The whole question of sexually explicit/pornography/obscenity has never been well defined and I accept that. But it's not our intention to try and muzzle homosexual discussion."[15] Intent and impact are often two very different things, however.

In a final defence of the CRTC decision, Commissioner Colville told the NCRC participants that "...our job always involves a delicate balancing act of competing interests, whether they're economic, social interest or whatever. We've tried in this case to reach a balance that we thought would be reasonable in the context of dealing with sexually explicit programming, across the spectrum.... You obviously think the balance has gone too far one way. I guess it remains to be seen whether or not that censors or eliminates that kind of [community, issue-based] programming from the air. I would hope it would not. I guess if we thought it was, we'd want to rethink some of those issues."[16]

Colville, and other CRTC Commissioners have also publicly denied that this is a precedent setting decision. Officially, the CRTC is a complaint driven body. This means that such a regulation is not likely to become part of another radio station's licence unless similar complaints are made to the CRTC which then have an impact on that station's own licence renewal. However, official understandings aside, the CKDU decision regarding the broadcast of "sexually explicit" material is already being treated as a precedent-setting case even beyond campus-community radio.

In June, three months after the decision was publicized, CKDU received a phone call from a commercial radio station in Quebec. This station had wanted to air a daytime phone-in discussion about sexual practice and safe sex. Upon calling the CRTC to ask if there were any guidelines for the broadcast of such material, the station was told to look at the CKDU decision.

To say that there is concern amongst those who are actively involved in campus-community radio is an understatement. In fact, there is concern, confusion and outrage. Many feel that the decision was largely based on an openly homophobic letter and that the CRTC has confused sexual preference with "sexually explicit." Ian Pringle, NCRA president, speaks of institutionalized homophobia, suggesting that there was and is "considerable ignorance of the issues involved" on the part of the CRTC.

In an attempt to encourage the CRTC to re-consider or revise its decision, a working group of community radio activists has been struck. This group, formed at the National Campus-Community Radio Conference, aims both to enter into dialogue with the CRTC and to mobilize public protest against this initiative. Thus far, a letter condemning the CRTC for its decision and outlining the reasons for concern has been sent from the NCRA to the CRTC. There has been no response as yet. Additionally, the group, with the participation of the NCRA, is organizing a National Day of Action for Thursday, October 27. This would involve campus-community radio stations across the country airing the two spoken word pieces found "sexually explicit" by the CRTC, and informing their local audiences about the issues involved in this situation.

In April, a concerned CKDU listener wrote a letter to the CRTC expressing his extreme dismay with the decision. In it, he also requested definitions of "sexually explicit," "community standard" and "adult programming," and asked the Commission to consider cancelling its decision. His response was a letter containing "observations" about the decision and its provisions, including the fact that "none of the three provisions of the decision actually bans the broadcast of any material." There were no explanations or definitions of terms. As for his request that the CRTC consider cancelling the decision, the listener was met with the response that "the Broadcasting Act provides that, except as provided therein, all decisions of the Commission are final and conclusive."[17]

With the rise of the right, religious and political, there has been an increased monitoring of progressive media, including community radio. This decision, although technically only applicable to CKDU itself, sets a precedent which could result in an incredible flow of newly legitimized complaints about radio programming that deals with sex and sexuality. Any station management concerned about complaints and licence renewals is not well served by the CRTC's lack of clarity on this issue. Self-censorship around topics such as safe sex, youth and sexuality, women and sexuality or even "gay sexual preferences" is not an impossibility. Nor is the restriction of all such programming to the hours of 9 PM to 6 AM.

The full impact of a decision such as this is not likely to be seen in the

immediate future. There is little doubt, however, that the impact will not be a minor, uncomplicated or positive one for campus-community radio and its listeners. Previous to this decision, there has been no formal CRTC policy regarding "sexually explicit" material; there has only been reference to both "community" and "high" standards. The Commission has now created a situation where the broadcast of material dealing with "sexual behaviour" shall be subject to "generally accepted audience values."

The CRTC has been extremely shortsighted in this ruling, which can only have a negative impact on the lives of those whose very identities are too often viewed as not being "generally acceptable." The Commission's failure to offer a definition of the phrase "sexually explicit" to those it regulates is irresponsible; it must reexamine its reliance on broad terms and generalized phrases. A definition, though not easy to come by, would at the very least protect against arbitrary, uninformed or moralizing decisions.

Should you wish to gather more information about this decision and/or the working group that has been struck, contact:

Ian Pringle
President, NCRA, c/o CFRO-FM
337 Carrall Street,
Vancouver, BC, V6B 2J4
or
Jo-Ann Citringo
Station Director, CKDU-FM
6136 University Avenue
Halifax, NS, B3H 4J2

Additionally, individuals may request information and/or address comments, concerns or complaints to the CRTC regional office nearest them. The address for the federal office is:

CRTC
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Members of Parliament may also be written. No postage is required for letters to MPs.

–Denise Benson

Thanks go to Vashti Persad and Lisa Vinebaum of CKLN, and Kathleen Pirrie Adams for assistance in writing this article.

NOTES

[1]Canadian Radio and Television-Telecommunications Commission, *Decision CRTC 94-106*, [Ottawa]: CRTC, 24 March 1994, p. 1.
[2]National Campus-Community Radio Association Conference (June 1994). Transcribed from question period with CRTC Commissioner David Colville.
[3]Canadian Radio and Television-Telecommunications Commission, Op. Cit., p. 3.
[4]Ibid., p. 3.
[5]Ibid., p. 3.
[6]Ibid., p. 6.
[7]Ibid., pp. 6,7.
[8]From interview with Ian Pringle, 8 July 1994.
9 From interview with Sandra MacDonald, 8 July 1994.
[10]Canadian Radio and Television-Telecommunications Commission, *Public Notice 1990-111, AM FM Policy for the Nineties*, [Ottawa]: CRTC,1990, p. 6.
[11]National Campus-Community Radio Association Conference (June 1994). Transcribed from question period with CRTC Commissioner David Colville.
[12]From interview with Ian Pringle, 8 July 1994.
[13]From interview with Sandra MacDonald, 8 July 1994.
[14]National Campus-Community Radio Association Conference (June 1994). Transcribed from question period with CRTC Commissioner David Colville.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Ibid.
[17]Canadian Radio and Television-Telecommunications Commission, *file 1125-301*, letter to CKDU listener, [Ottawa]: CRTC, 22 June 1994), p. 4.

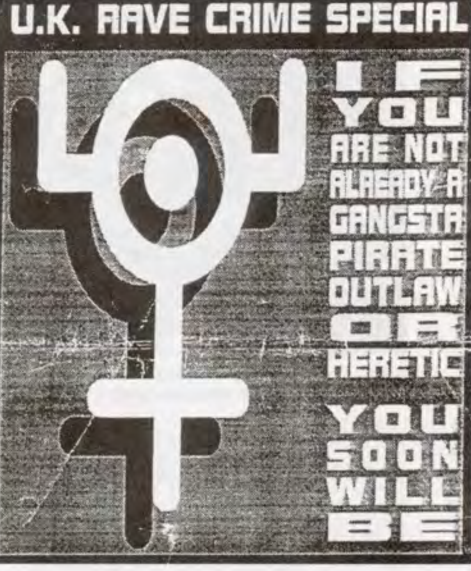
Summer Of Love – Winter Of Discontent

Fighting For The Right to Party

London–Very quietly, and with disconcertingly little media coverage, the British Tory government is currently attempting to bring into effect the weightiest piece of legislation since World War II. The proposed Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill not only gives law enforcement agencies unprecedented powers over the British public—most crucially by eliminating the basic democratic "right to silence" after arrest—it also affects the fundamental rights of public assembly and freedom of movement. This could, of course, have grave repercussions for unlicensed public and private gatherings, but also in relation to many forms of public protest. The section of the bill that most directly affects public assembly, interestingly enough, comes in Section 47 of the 117 clauses of the bill under the heading "Raves."

The loose legal definition of a "rave" as outlined in the bill is: any gathering on land in the open air (a semi-exposed building also applies) of 100 or more persons, at which amplified music is played during the night. In a subsection of Section 47, music is defined as "a series of syncopated beats."(Ravel's Bolero anyone?) Further, it states that if a police officer believes beyond "reasonable" doubt that ten or more people are present on land: a) making preparation for such a gathering, b) waiting for such a gathering to begin, even at some other locale, or c) attending such a gathering, he or she may order them to leave. Failure to do so ASAP, or attempting to return to the same location within seven days are considered criminal offenses punishable by three months imprisonment and/or a fine of 2,500 pounds (approximately $5,000 Canadian). Other clauses of the Bill relate to trespass and to assembly of twenty or more persons where amplified music may (or may not) be playing. A perhaps ironic, but nonetheless disturbing aspect of the "rave" clause is that it is inclusive of both private and public sites. This means that a landowner does not have the right to have a gathering of ten or more people on her/his property if it is decided or suspected by an officer of the law that this might constitute "waiting for a rave to begin." In view of Tory rhetoric about respect for private property—according to which new anti-squatting clauses are being included in the proposed bill—this lack of decision-making capacity by land owners appears at the least contradictory, at worst Draconian.

Another of the ominous and sweeping inclusions in the bill is the sanctioning of the use of "reasonable force" to obtain mouth swabs and hair samples of people taken into police custody (although not necessarily charged with any offence), for the unstated purposes of making up a national DNA identification databank. Anticipating an overflow of the prison population after the introduction of the bill, the government has also introduced the concepts of prison ships and electronic tagging. Michael Howard, Home Secretary and the Tory politician largely responsible for drafting the bill, is also attempting to introduce the privatization of prisons and the expansion of private security companies in lieu of the police force. Currently the government employs a private security company, Group 4, which has become infamous among protesters for acts of brutality.[1]



Underlying many of the clauses in the pending Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is a disturbing subtext that has been at the heart of the Tory's heavily publicized "back to basics" policies. It is not difficult to guess what this might imply...a return to the "good old family values" of the practically mythical nuclear family, of course. But what may have been less predictable is the hysterical demonization by the national Conservative government in collaboration with the right-wing press of single mothers, New Age travellers and ravers, in conjunction with (child)

British police and private security, Group 4, use outlawed razor wire against anti-road protesters. Still from footage by Kathleen Maitland-Carter.

Setting up for a Spiral Tribe rave in the French countryside. Still from Footage by Kathleen Maitland-Carter.

pornographers and rapists.

To comprehend the circuitous route by which the heinous laws in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill might be able to be passed into statute, one needs some familiarity with some of the cultural history that the Tories have so far successfully propagandistically manipulated in an attempt to undermine a growing social movement.

Back To Basics

In 1988 a cultural phenomenon erupted that was dubbed the second "Summer of Love." A new youth culture exploded, one characterized by a heady combination of acid house music and the designer drug Ecstasy (MDMA). Since then, through mutations and hybridization, different musical genres and sub-genres have developed, with rave mixing and merging with free festivals and broadening the definition of rave culture within an alternative cultural scenario.

The most exciting element from a social-anthropological perspective is that rave culture, while starting out as a largely twentysomething movement, now encompasses a huge variety of individuals from different backgrounds: from squatters to New Age travellers, hippies, punks, and all ages from six to sixtysomething, Blacks, Asians and whites, working, middle and upper class people. Rave culture crosses economic borders and social boundaries. Perhaps this is the threat perceived by the "powers that be."

E for Ecstasy

In the course of demonizing rave culture, much has been made of its connections with the drug Ecstasy. Although E was perhaps a crucial element at its genesis, the nature of raving and the culture around it has superseded the initial chemically induced euphoria that E provided: It is no longer a prerequisite for raving. E can just as easily be found at a football match or the local pub as at a local underground rave or nightclub. In fact, as the drug high has faded it is the so-called smart drinks that are de rigueur these days.[2]

Ecstasy aside, most rave culture exists outside the law. It is an illegal economy, unlegislated, self-governed and untaxed. In fact it has been said by the police themselves (off-the-record that is), that the reason the government does not like raves is that it doesn't make any money off of them.

State of Play

There are currently over one hundred sound systems in the UK playing music that, from a distant and perhaps reductive perspective, could all be called house music. This category encompasses music as diverse as the people who listen to it. By 1992 the flavour of the day was hardcore, a techno variation on heavy dub-reggae, variously speeded up or slowed down and played with added "synth" elements and, frequently, with a live toaster or MC as well.

The categories of house and techno are ever expanding. Hardcore, which is now referred to as jungle or hardcore jungle, currently includes a subgenre with the moniker "the Dark Side" which is usually the more experimental techno and hardcore techno. The proliferation continues with trance and tribal trance, deep house, garage, ambient, ambient dub, acid (house), acid dub, acid bhangra, acid thrash and gabba (the hardest and fastest, the punk of techno) as well as a recent variation: trip hop.

Like any youth movement, there is some semblance of a philosophy and politic that is part of rave culture. It is based largely on a neo-hippy peace & love kind of vibe. It also encompasses a radical grass-roots ethos. Although raves quickly became commercialized, the underground remained just as strong and in some cases actually developed as a result of the commercialization. Squatting and raving came together in a potent union, with empty buildings and disused public spaces being claimed for the purpose of having a rave: Ministry of Defence sites, common land, old factories, warehouses, old police training centres and former workhouses. In tune with the rise of the DIY aesthetic and attitude, rave culture has also seen the rise of a new and renewed eco-activism in Britain, as well as the invention of the hybrid eco-activist hippie raver. Though their political motivations may not always be explicit, sound systems also follow these impulses in their commitment to having free or pay-what-you-can policies.

Industry Nightmare

To a large degree rave music has been faceless, nameless, anti-celebrity blank-label enterprise with the emphasis on the DJ or the sound system. Real rave music, as opposed to the mega-marketed pseudo, has been a thorn in the side of the music industry as it tends to bypass traditional commercial means of production and distribution. This can be attributed to the so-called democratization of technology, i.e., just about every teenager can scrape together the means for at least a crude system to produce and record a music track, or probably knows someone who has done this. Individuals, collectives and/or small independent record labels often produce a single run of 1,000 records, distribute them independently and attempt to move them as quickly as possible to recoup funds in order to produce the next record.

In the last year the majors, Warner Bros. and Sony etc., have been sniffing around the rave scene. A & R guys (and they *are* usually guys) turn up at squat parties, trying to find the next big thing. But techno artists work in a way that is anathema to the major labels' logic of marketing music through sheer volume. As well, many techno acts work under a variety of pseudonyms, releasing music on different independent labels or self-releases under different names for different kinds of music tracks. Rave culture thrives on the cult of obscurity, not celebrity.

Bad Press/Good Publicity

The mainstream media hasn't been very sympathetic to rave culture, often focusing on its drug-related aspects. Indeed, travellers seem to epitomize everything that Thatcherite Britain and the current Tory government despise: extended families, single mothers, homeless people, anti-private property ethics, opting out of the system, or being dirty (or, according to a term used to describe travellers, one they embrace themselves: crusty.) Rave culture has become a popular target, mentioned by both John Major and the Queen as responsible for the "moral decay" of the country; as such it can be used to divert attention away from failed economic policies and the selling out of public industry, health care and education.

One rave event that will undoubtedly go down in history took place in the spring of 1992. When two major traditional free festivals (one of which had been taking place for over twenty-five years) were stopped by the police, the two festival populations then converged at Castlemorten, a hitherto anonymous bit of Common land in the northern county of Worcestershire, whose denizens were usually the local farmer's sheep. The Castlemorten Festival/Rave went on for a week with approximately 50,000 people assembling on the site.

The press went to town, with papers such as *The Sun* in inimical tabloid style, using headlines like "Hippy Rave Convoys Take Over Small Town Common." It became a media spectacle with all the national press covering it—making it one of the best advertised raves ever. Much was made of the noise levels, with local farmers complaining about the constant pounding of the techno beat. And in the press a strange subtext emerged as constant allusion was made to the display of human feces and the dirtiness of rave and festival goers.

Although festi-raves were already a norm, Castlemorten brought together a large number of sound systems hailing from different parts of the country, with a wide range of musical orientations. For those that attended, it became (dare I say it) the Woodstock for the rave generation. The Tory government, not surprisingly, called it anarchy.

Castlemorten became the grand excuse for the proposed Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill as well as for a series of outrageous transgressions of

Preparing for a Spiral Tribe rave in France. Still from Footage by Kathleen Maitland-Carter.

civil liberties in Britain: unsanctioned road blocks, police brutality at squat raves—including showing up in full riot gear, tear-gassing people at warehouse parties, and arresting numerous individuals who were staging parties on private land—as well as the implementation of the proposed laws *before* they were in fact law.

The Final Challenge

Early last spring it became public knowledge, through leaked internal police memos and a subsequent front-page *Guardian* newspaper story, that police had been busy with "Operation Snapshot," a covert surveillance operation through which information about travellers, rave organizers and sound system members, as well as weekend ravers—including information about nicknames, license plate numbers and descriptions of vehicles—was being compiled.

Liberty (formally the National Council for Civil Liberty), an independent organization campaigning for civil liberties, is currently challenging the police monitoring operation in the European Court of Human Rights under the Right to Privacy provisions which should protect a group that has not necessarily committed any crime. Charter 88, another independent organization whose aim it is to have the European Convention on Human Rights implemented as law in Britain, has also been involved in the battle against the proposed new bill. But the most crucial and visible element in the battle against the pending new laws has been the grassroots organizations: the travellers, squatters, the eco-activists, ACT UP members and the ravers. In May of this year 15,000 people marched in protest to Trafalgar Square. In July, 50,000 people came out to defend their civil liberties. The bill, however, met with little resistance from the opposition parties in the House of Parliament, with the Labour Party fearing to appear "soft on crime" at a time of declining votes. It appears that this damaging and dangerous bill, now in the late stages of actually becoming law, (presently making its way through the House of Lords) is finally becoming part of a widespread discussion in the media, one which hinges especially on the "right to silence" issue as the key to opening public debate.

This significant political battle is currently being fought through the efforts of a loosely organized group of ravers calling themselves The Advance Party, a group intent on defending their right to live and play as they see fit, and which, in the process, defends civil liberties within what was the first supposedly democratic nation.

—*Kathleen Maitland-Carter*

NOTES

[1] Unlike police officers, Group 4 employees are not required to wear identification names or numbers and are therefore difficult to legally identify in cases of transgression against protesters or any other members of the public.

[2] Ecstasy was originally used for therapeutic purposes in the 1930s and is still used by some therapists in Switzerland. The drug is said to make the subject feel a sense of "connectedness," lightness of being and joyful revelry. There have been under ten E-related deaths in the UK since 1986, mostly due to physical dehydration. It has been commented more than once that if this relatively small number of deaths were really the issue the government would stop financing fear-oriented anti-drug propaganda and start putting out informative information that would educate people about the possible hazards of ingesting illegal substances.

[3] Proposed solutions to the rave "problem" in terms of noise levels have come various groups, among them the Magistrates Association who have suggested that instead of criminalizing vast sections of the population, a series of disused locations be allotted, i.e., ex-Ministry of Defence sites for both travellers and raves, sites that are far removed from any local residents and sheep. As it goes these happen to be popular locations for travellers and ravers anyway.

Music in the New South Africa

DARIA ESSOP

Daria is a writer and cultural worker with a weakness for candy and a keen sensibility when it comes to shoes.

The struggle for freedom under the racist apartheid regime in South Africa has been advanced through music. Classic South African styles such as marabi (jazz), kwela (penny whistle), mbaqanga (township jive), along with modern versions such as rap and rock were employed as tools in the fight against apartheid. Artists such Miriam Makeba, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Hugh Masekela and the Mhotella Queens, Philip Tabane and Abdulla Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) have used music as a form of political expression to speak out against the brutal apartheid regime and to transmit information, often underground. Music has always been a driving force in the resistance to apartheid and the empowerment of Black South Africans.

The development of music in South Africa is linked to community and social life. In 1897 gold was discovered in Johannesburg and the mining industry that developed drew large numbers of Black workers into the city. White farms around the city also employed large numbers of migrant workers. The workers who settled in and around Johannesburg wanted music that was new and vibrant but still kept its cultural roots. Johannesburg, called Egoli (city of gold), became the centre of modern South African music. Shebeens (speakeasies) sprang up to cater to migrant workers who were cut off from family and community. Musicians in the shebeens played a mixture of the music they had heard on mainstream records and a variety of indigenous sounds; choral groups were also popular.

The roots of modern mbaqanga (township jive), which is a mix of traditional music, urban music and jazz, lie in thousands of Blacks being forced off their land by laws such as the Land Act of 1913. Under such laws Blacks were restricted to owning only thirteen per cent of the total land area of South Africa. Most of the displaced population was forced to live in new dwellings called "Tribal Homelands." The proximity of these settlements to urban centres led to the hybridization of indigenous and European music and the development of new music styles.

European instruments like the guitar, banjo and saxophone had been introduced long before 1900 and were blended into the roots of the African music. By the 1950s these European instruments were prominent in township jive. The early jazz music of Armstrong, Basie and Ellington had enormous impact on the development of the music in the shebeens. The Jazz Maniacs were perhaps the most popular band during the 1930s. Their music was a synthesis of jazz, swing, and local melody known as marabi music, and the inspiration for future generations of musicians like Dollar Brand, Hugh Masekela and Kippie Moeketsi. Missionaries had introduced church music and this was then mixed with traditional singing (a cappella mbube) to produce the famous choral sounds distinctive to South Africa (as in the unofficial anthem *Nkosi Sikilel 'i Africa*, written by Enoch Sontaonga in 1912).

In recent years the economies of the frontline states have been so weakened by apartheid that many of the best musicians have been forced to live in Europe or North America, resulting in the inevitable dilution of their musical styles.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo is one of South Africa's greatest mbube groups today.

From the late 1940s onwards one of the major local venues for South African music has been Dorkay House. It functioned as a meeting place and a base for a musicians' association which has a long history of helping artists who hung out there; Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand, Kippie Moeketsi and Ntemi Piliso among them. Topflight plays and musicals were created at Dorkay House, which is managed by Queen Ndaba, who still organizes benefits for musicians and, together with Ntemi Piliso who leads the band, has helped reform the Jazz Pioneers. Musicals, theatre and film also flourished during the '40s, usually featuring Black life from a white point of view. Money of course never filtered down to the talent, namely the Black Africans.

In 1912, record companies started recording indigenous acts, although they paid a pittance to the performers and royalty payments were unheard of until the 1960s. At first few indigenous acts were recorded; later some recordings became internationally popular. In the 1950s composer Solomon Linda's *Mbube*, which became *Wimoweh (the Lion Sleeps Tonight)* was heard all over the world. Miriam Makeba later recorded a unique version of it which became one of her most popular songs. Many singers in the U.S. have remade *Wimoweh* using English lyrics instead of the original Xhosa (which didn't make complete sense in translation). Some jazz musicians preferred not to record, and to avoid the studio exploitation of their music. Because the studio would discard recordings immediately after they stopped selling, the records of this era are rare and difficult to find. No archival material was ever kept by the white-owned record companies, let alone details and dates about releases and recording sessions. The instant the music stopped making money for the whites in power, they lost interest in it.

The big-band scene virtually ended in the 1950s with the forced removals of Blacks to the new townships like Soweto, the segregation of venues, and increasing gang activities, as society was threatened by the new policy of apartheid: the extreme legal separation of the races and the establishment of complete white domination in every aspect of life. The Jazz Maniacs split up in the 1950s as a result of musical differences, gang pressure and the forced removals under the 1950 Group Areas Act. Between the 1940s and '60s kwela or penny whistle was popularized, mainly by township children. The sax also grew in popularity at this time. The music's major stars were Spokes Mashiyane and Lommy "Special" Mabaso.

In the 1960s Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, the ANC was banned, the political climate worsened and segregation became even stricter. It became more difficult for jazz bands to survive economically and politically. There was nowhere for young musicians to learn how to read music. Record companies took firmer control of the new commercial mbaqanga bands. Miriam Makeba spoke out openly against apartheid, asking the United Nations to boycott her country. Her punishment for this was a ban on all her records in South Africa. It was illegal to sell her old records or any of the new U.S. albums that she did with RCA while in exile. But music still got through. Records were smuggled in from other countries. Secret shipments made their way into the townships and were sold under the counter. Many other musicians went abroad or were exiled. In this way, the talents of South African musicians such as Masekela, Maadeba, Dollar Brand and Mbulu were brought to the attention of the outside world.

South Africa has produced many fine musicians who have toured the world taking the richness of its Black urban culture to a wider public. They have carried a message to the outside world, of the struggle of a people forcibly restricted in their right to freedom and dignity. Artists living in the democratic world picked up on their struggle and created songs and performed freedom concerts for those in jails, in exile, or living daily under conditions of confinement. Groups such as Peter Gabriel, UB40, Gil Scott Heron and the Neville Brothers gave us politically charged songs such as, *Biko, Sing Our Own Song, What's the Word (Johannesburg)*, and *My Blood*.

Many people would have us believe that it was artists like Paul Simon who brought South African music to the rest of the world. As a musician, Simon uses musicians and music from other countries to keep his work from becoming too self-conscious or devoid of craft. Perhaps he was instrumental in delivering the music of South Africa to the white mainstream, but the music and talent existed prior to Paul Simon, despite the fact that the racist apartheid regime forced it underground.

In recent years the economies of the front-line states have been so weakened by apartheid that many of the best musicians have been forced to live in Europe or North America, resulting in the inevitable dilution of their musical styles. Over the next decade South Africa will be rising out of the ruins of apartheid with all of its ugliness and damage. As the new South Africa takes shape, more of the country's art and cultural work will be produced and exposed to other cultures. Already in the townships there has been an incredible surge in the production of folk art, which has become a hot commodity on international markets. Local paintings, beading, carvings and craft are in demand and their value has shot up since apartheid came down. South Africa's art, dance, film, theatre, and music will now also be seen and heard by a wider audience. Along with this, of course, comes the threat of a new form of exploitation. An ad by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for import/export opportunities in South Africa uses the phrase "ripe for the picking" to describe the economic opportunities in South Africa that are now available to other countries.

Certainly the indigenous people will make some gains; the culture will become commercially accessible; artists will have a viable chance at enjoying the benefits of success. It will be interesting to see if a change-over occurs in the controllers of the music industry. Will white domination continue in the management and production of music, ownership of clubs, promotion of concerts, etc.? I believe that, slowly, power will filter down to the creators and rightful owners of the music, and Black people will seek control over their music and gain access to the industry they have fed for so long. Economic reforms are part of the Mandela Government's plan, and the music industry has a compulsory role to play in seeing that these reforms are realized.

Will music change as radically as the political climate of the country is expected to? If these predicted changes do occur, will there be as much demand or necessity for politically charged music? With the inevitable influence of North American and European popular culture on Black South Africans comes an increasing amount of purely commercial work being produced. To gain access to the mainstream commercial market the music will have to be filtered and watered down. Songs of struggle and freedom will always have thier place in South African culture. It remains to be seen if the music that survived years of colonialism and brutal apartheid will continue to flourish in the new South Africa. Along with the onslaught of boy-meets-girl love songs, and pop bands imitating the West, there will be a fresh resurgence of music that captures the strength of the people and the obstacles and barriers that lie ahead of them on the road to autonomy.

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Notes on Bhangra

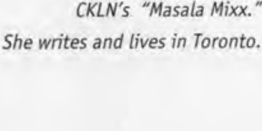
VINITA SRIVASTAVA

British bhangra. Bhangra Beats. The New South Asian music. World Beat. That Indian stuff. That Punjabi boy music. Copy-cat music. Bhangra begs to be written about.

Circa 1986. Parents' Wedding Anniversary. Someone puts on bhangra. Bibiji (my grandmother) laughs loudly, gets up with a start and dances, arms in the air. My aunt reaches for her arms, smiling, saying gently, "your heart, your heart, slow down."

up
my mother r o c k s her hips and
down.

My cousin says, "Oh no, they're playing Indian music, let's get out of here." My mother pulls her hip out.



Vinita Srivastava co-hosts CKLN's "Masala Mixx." She writes and lives in Toronto.

Bhangra, a Punjabi folk music, is usually played for hours at the harvest (Vaisakhi), at weddings and at other celebrations, as is its counterpart, women's songs called Giddha. Men and women dance in their separate circles to the songs that spin stories of their village life. My grandmother is my translator of this music: a young woman, feeling so sad to leave her mother on the eve of her marriage, leaves her red hand prints all over her mother's wall so that she'll remember her and her tears; a young man, afraid he will never find a mate, sits and cries in his house; a secret love "affair," a secret longing, takes place at the village well during the daily ritual of fetching water.

But what is referred to as bhangra now is part of a whole scene of new South Asian dance music which has many forms, including Bengali rap, rap, Asian house and Indo-jazz. It is characterized by complex blendings of "Western" and "Eastern" sounds. Although Western musicians and stars such as John Coltrane, John Maclaughen, the Beatles, and later solo George Harrison, have been credited with paving the way for South Asian musicians to fashion their new music, there is a political context that must be recognized about the fusing of these forms.[1]

In 1984, in the midst of Thatcherism and the continued threat of racism, after the recording of the first full length bhangra albums—which included Alaap's collaboration with arranger and musician Deepak Khazanchi and Heera's "Jag Wala Mela"—bhangra as a musical form exploded in the United Kingdom. South Asians became news. We were supposed to be quiet. And shy. And repressed by strict parents. In school, and well behaved. Beautiful young girls in sari blouses and jeans and energetic boys in caps, arms in the air, going to clubs. Now that was news.

Here in Toronto, Metro press ran special stories about alienated and depressed South Asian youth and frothing-at-the-mouth fathers. Read: they don't know how to adapt. Crazies. They should go back from where they came. From 1990 to 1994 South Asians were listed in the Canadian Press Index most often in reference to the Ayodya crises, times of "communalist" violence, or during natural disasters. A book about Indo-Canadians in the Maritimes documents South Asian contributions to Canadian society as 1. yoga 2. vegetarianism. It was this kind of stereotyping that delayed the "bhangra explosion" both in Canada and the United Kingdom.

By the late 1980s the bhangra scene had begun to grow. The UK group Heera had made its first attempt to cross that "mainstream" by releasing the EP Beat The Rhythm, which actually did chart in the United Kingdom at #103. So began the "bhangrastream." Organizations in Britain such as the Bhangra Accolade Awards (BAA), the Asian Pop Awards, the Asian Music Awards and the Asian Music Arts Association (AMAA) appeared and began to create public recognition for this musical art form—which had been "bizarre-a-fied" by the mainstream press—as a viable professional industry.

Then Apache Indian came onto the scene with his independent release, "Movie Over India" in 1990. By 1992 Apache Indian's ragga-bhangra style had critics raving about his mainstream-crossover-potential. And in 1993, Apache Indian's single "Arranged Marriage" did cross—to the top of the pop charts in Britain and in Canada. Primo remix artist Bally Sagoo entered into the mainstream by moving from Oriental Star Agencies to Island Records and, most recently, to Columbia Records.

In Metro Toronto (especially Brampton, Peel and Mississauga), DJ crews such as Mystical Illusions and DJ G-10 (later Jitten), whipped out remixed versions of British bhangra, and fused it with Hindi film music played at daytime jams. Daytime dances solved more than one problem for young production and promotion teams: first, they no longer had to convince licensed clubs to "give up" an evening, and second, young girls not allowed to go to nightclubs could attend. With worried (and sometimes angry) parents, romper-room media, religious morality, alcohol, and newly formed gangs, the daytime dance debate raged. But production crews such as Punjab Culture Shock, Mystical Illusions and Asian Effect quickly realized that the Daytime-Dance-Debate raged. But, so did the dances.

By 1993, local Metro Toronto artists such as Earl Ferns (Desi Records), Vineeta and Punjabi By Nature were charting at Toronto's community radio station, CKLN. In addition to the daytime suburb jams there were downtown evening parties as club owners and bar managers began to see the economic potential of bhangra parties. This new scene made room for things like all-Indian hockey teams, crews such as Punjabi Mafia, Pakis With Attitude (PWA), Khanda Queens, Palace Girls and the Masala Sisters, and the creation of "South Asian pride" clothing such as the line designed by Nation Wear. Releases by local artists Roach, Kidd Spice and remix group United Kulture clearly showed that the new bhangra scene was identifying with and drawing from existing hip-hop culture. Punjabi By Nature's appearance at the recent Beastie Boys concert in Toronto, as well as the most recent Bally Sagoo remix—a collaboration with the Dream Warriors on their latest hip hop single, "Day in Day Out (Shanai Remix)"—point to an increasing acceptance of this. The scene has gone far in Canada, and things are now happening in Edmonton: DJ Gabbar gives us "Hardc ore Bhangra" with songs like "FOB (Freaks off the Boat)" on his remix cassette *The Extremist*.

[1] "Billboard Bestows First Century Award," Billboard, 5 December 1992, pp. 21-36.

The new South Asian dance music scene has drawn not only from hip hop, but from reggae, ragga and pop cultures. In this scene Naughty By Nature becomes Punjabi By Nature, MC Hammer becomes Punjabi MC Rootz, Madonna becomes Alisha Madonna, Don Dada becomes Apache Indians' Don Raja, Night Crawlers become Taj Mahal's Dhol Crawlers. While this music has been labelled imitation (especially when it first started to hit new ears), musicians such as pop star Alisha Madonna translate and subvert Western music for an Eastern audience. Her lyrics are not simply a translation, but an interpretation—her new songs fit her society and her varied value systems. In his song, "Rapper UK" MC Rootz makes it clear that he's talking about Asians in England:

> ...remember your rootz and where you came from. From the motherland, back in the '60s, brothers and sisters building a community. Times were rough. Now I'll be damned if see a brother dissin' his culture.

Bhangra music became cultural production, self-expression, education, political agitation.

A recent Indo-jazz album made up of a beautiful interweaving of Khuljit Bharma's musical influences, including East African, South Asian and Western, is cleverly named *Confusion* (Keda Records). Western saxophone plays with and in and through nondescript violins, Eastern tablas, jars of lentils being shaken, flute, sarod, electric bass. First it sounds like 1930s Charlie Parker jazz, then Handel's Water Music, and then a classic Morning Raga. I use the term Indo-jazz: one I hear often: so easy to hyphenate. Bhangra-reggae. South-Asian-Canadian. Indo-Caribbean-Canadian.

I internalize the racism I have felt since I started playing this music. Requests for normal music, English please, something modern, something livelier (!) This, along with comments like, "no offence, but I'm fifth generation Canadian and I want to hear Canadian music," make me determined to play this music. But it's been a struggle, one which strengthens my respect for the musicians who are also determined to be heard in the music industry, those who contribute their talent so openly.

Groups such as Apna Sangeet have made the new bhangra music fit their situation by singing about the alienation that many Punjabi immigrants have felt in England. Eight years later, Apache Indian's reggae-bhangra songs "Caste," "Movin' On" and "Magic Carpet" deal with communalism, castism and racism between Asian and African peoples.

His hit single, "Arranged Marriage," carries soft suggestions for change with his list of Indian sweets (including ladoo and barfi), marriage rituals and cultural guidelines. That's the kind of education I wish had been around when I was growing up. (Ten years old. My mother sends me to a school dinner-of-the-world potluck with barfi, a sugary, coconutty creamy cheese desert. The kids make fun of me and I come home sad.)

Apache Indian calls himself the "educator." But there are groups that feel a stronger, bolder approach is necessary. Hurtling us forward with a hip-hop-tabla-laced language of resistance, Funda-Mental's "Janaam" (Birth) calls upon the "Third World" to revolt against the West. In "Gandhi's Revenge," Funda-Mental responds to Eurocentric society with a history lesson about Indian freedom fighters and lines that translate as "let your death come," and "you know the world will fight." A ritualistic chant is released in "Wrath of the Blackman," which samples Malcom X, and encourages people of colour to rise up and take their freedom.

My DJ partner Amita and I often sit in wonder at bhangra concerts and dances. There is this amazing thing that's happening: South Asians are educating themselves and others about their cultures and politics. Proud and loud. At a family gathering (circa 1993) my cousin, who used to think that brown people belonged in the land of the nerds, now asks me for copies of new bhangra tunes.

I was born the daughter of a steel worker
Son of a farmer from a land in the East
Full of colour, spices, warmth and smells
Pain and hunger, fear and oppression.

And we were raised in the life of love and hope
Because I was born the daughter of a steel worker
And the baby of a mother with the name of Asha
And I was raised in the light and I was born to fight.

– *Emteaz, UK Asian dub poet.*

Rhythm Activism
An Interview with Marcel Khalife

NADA EL-YASSIR

The fall of the Soviet Union has by default ushered in a monopolar world order, the magnitude and repercussions of which are still being grappled with politically, economically and culturally. Islamic fundamentalism and, by association, the Arab world, have become a convenient, new, external enemy. Hostility between the Arab world and the West, however, is by no means a new phenomenon. Its roots can be traced to the time of the crusades launched by western Europe in 1097, supposedly in order to recapture the Christian Holy Lands from the infidels (read Muslims/Arabs).

The crusades also signalled the beginning of a knowledge transfer from the Arab world to the West. Much of the European Renaissance was built, in fact, on the science, philosophy, medicine, architecture, arts and mathematics developed by Arab-Islamic civilization, yet this is rarely mentioned or acknowledged by Western society. This denial of contributions by other civilizations is by no means unique to East-West relations. We see parallel patterns in power dynamics between, for example, Europe and the Native civilizations of the Americas.

The Arab world and the West have faced each other on the battlefield several times since the crusades, from the Reconquista and the colonization of the Arab world, to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Lebanese war and, most recently, the Gulf war. Despite Western vested political and economic interests in the Arab world, the contemporary intellectual and cultural expressions of this vast and diverse region have been allowed to trickle into Western consciousness only when they reinforce preconceived ideas and are therefore unchallenging.

Enter Marcel Khalife, poet, author, composer, musician and singer. Khalife takes up these same issues of East-West relations through his music. By joining the militant word to new Arabic melodies influenced by Western styles, Khalife's main achievement lies in taking New Arabic Poetry to the very people about whom and to whom it is talking. His popular and innovative musical expression of the joy, love, suffering and struggle of ordinary people has earned him the adoration and respect of tens of millions of Arabs from the Gulf to the Atlantic.

Born in Amsheet in northern Lebanon in 1950, Khalife studied the oud at the National Academy of Eastern Music in Beirut. He started his career by composing music for ballet and film, but the onset of war in Lebanon pushed him in another direction. In 1976, he moved to Beirut and formed a musical group, Al Mayadine. Risking their lives, Khalife and his ensemble performed in abandoned halls, hospitals and in the streets of war-torn

Lebanon. Their goal was to steal the song from the midst of ruins and bring some happiness to the people whose hopes and dreams had been shattered by the fifteen year war. But Khalife does not sing only for the people of Lebanon. In his own words, "I have toured around the world and people in other countries are as affected by my music as the people of Lebanon are. I'm singing against oppression, wherever it is."

Khalife's work is part of a small movement of cultural revitalization in the Arab world. Through his exploration of the incredible richness and potential of Arabic music, he makes cultural expression an instrument in the struggle against social and political oppression. It also becomes a channel for real dialogue between the East and the West, as Khalife attempts to restore balance to the relationship between the two. His latest work, Summer Night's Dream, was the first to be released in the West (Redwood Records). Marcel Khalife comes to Toronto on September 23, 1994.

This interview was conducted by Nada El-Yassir, host of "There Was.... There Was Not!" on CKLN 88.1 FM in Toronto:

Q: Can you talk a little about the beginnings of your musical career?
A: You can say that I loved music since I first became aware of life. As a boy, I used to go out with my mother to the church in our village, and my first contact with music was through religious hymns. Amsheet, where I grew up, is a village by the sea, north of Beirut. On occasion, my grandfather, who was a fisherman, used to take me out to sea and there I first heard the mawawil of these fishermen, their rhythms and songs. So, I would say that this was the beginning of my musical awareness. As I grew older, my parents helped me enroll in the conservatory, where I studied music seriously. That's briefly how things started for me.
Q: You are well known in the Arab world as a political musician. Through your music, political ideals and thoughts are reflected in a way that finds resonance in the Arab heart. How do you perceive the connection between art and politics?
A: Art is not in need of anything to support it. If it is good art, it can stand on its own, but to be really able to give, in art, the artist takes a stance through which he or she can obtain vision and strength. My music—my song—does not express a political event directly. It is not as if I wait for specific events and write about them. Rather, I can extract from the essence of that event. In other words, my offering is beautiful music with a cause. The political idea does not necessarily develop artistic work. A political idea sometimes complements art. The questioning of the world and universe is a political question. Politics is a general concept of life, so one cannot run away from politics. To earn a daily living is a political act; dialogue between people is a political act; our conversation today is political. That's how I understand politics. There is no political song or political music. We cannot say there is progressive music and reactionary music. There is simply music that is beautiful or not beautiful. What can this music offer in consciousness, in development for humanity? How can it enter the depth of a human being and give him or her vision and dreams of hope, of happiness, of beauty, of victory? That is how I understand the relationship between politics and art.

Q: In the 1960s and '70s, there was great political aspiration and some movement towards Arab unity and towards a progressive movement in the Arab world. Since then, we have perceived regression, an atrophy, if you like, of Arab art. Could you talk about the reflection of the political situation in expression in art in the Arab world?
A: This decline, however, is not only present in the Arab world; it is global. If you look at the world's map, you will see a complete collapse of structures in all corners of the earth. Let us be realistic, objective and balanced. How has the [new] world order arrived with such ferocity? It is dangerous. There is no longer anything in the world that can stand by itself, that can be unique. There is no balance. The earth is now tipped and revolving around an unnatural axis. I don't see that the hamburger and Pepsi civilization is the one that can deliver the world. We are seeing the results of the new world order. We are witnessing conflicts: further class conflict, more sectarian and ethnic strife in the whole world. Today there is civil war in Yugoslavia, in the heart of Europe. I see a big danger. If the world does not return to some kind of balance or create some state of balance, the decline will be horrific.

We are connected to the world and are part of it. We, in our region, are affected because we are a nation suffering a great deal. We have the Palestinian cause, still alive, despite the attempts to obliterate the spirit of the Palestinian people and the attempts to eliminate their cause; the Lebanese problem where, for fifteen years, total war has been waged, a war that has destroyed everything, consumed everything; the conflicts that exist between one country and another, one border and another. All this reflects a cultural decline. There are, however, still some places where people are successful at saying "no." Saying it in beautiful poetry, theatre and film. As for the Arab media channels, they are ensuring that the non-artistic forms of culture proliferate and prevail. There is need for a lot of struggle.
Q: You are on record as saying that you are not interested in folklore, that we should move beyond it. What did you mean by that statement?
A: Let me be precise. It is not that I don't like folklore or that it does not interest me. I don't like the touristic manifestation of folklore. When you arrive in Lebanon's airport, you see postcards with dabkeh groups or villagers playing nai and dourbakeh under a cedar tree. I don't like tourism. Folklore for me, in its human depth, is very important, but folklore in its artistic translation is very ugly. No, I have to be balanced in my words. Folklore has to be understood as an identity, a cultural heritage of a people. How can we extract from folklore or the popular song and music and move beyond that to another place? That, for me, is what is important about folklore.
Q: What are your thoughts on the new styles of music that enshrine hybridity between Eastern and Western traditions and forms; music such as Rai, for example.
A: I have no problem with hybrids. I feel that music today has opened up and is no longer containable. Information, communication channels, videos, TV, satellites, have connected different parts of the world, and through these communication channels, many influences have reached humanity. Today, I cannot sit in Lebanon and shield myself from the rhythms that pass through. Jazz, pop, classical and folkloric music from around the world reach my doorstep. This is enriching the development of music around the world. The important thing is to maintain the spirit of the music that comes out from a particular place. You cannot listen to my music, even if I had constructed it on western classical foundations, through orchestration and arrangement, without hearing that there are Arab and Eastern characteristics of that music. You cannot but perceive sun, sea, heat, warmth, because I am an Arab composing music. Drawing on other musical traditions and rhythms, if they blend in a suitable way and do not compromise the integrity of what I am doing...would enrich my music.

GLOSSARY
dabkeh: traditional dance
dourbakeh: fish or goat skin covered clay drum
mawawil: plural of mawal; unaccompanied vocal section of a song.
nai: type of shepherd's flute

Heartbeat in the Diaspora
Taiko and Community

TAMAI KOBAYASHI

Tamai Kobayashi is a member of Wasabi Daiko

April 1994. In a dimly lit auditorium in west-end Toronto, at the Chiapas benefit for Mayan Refugees, Wasabi Daiko is setting up our small *shime* drums and larger *josukes* for our first piece, *Protractor.* The tech does not go well and we grumble off, but console ourselves that at least *Matsuri* is in decent shape. But then I think almost every taiko group in North America has a decent version of *Matsuri*. To some eyes it may seem strange that a taiko group that has its roots in Japan would be playing at a benefit for Chiapas. The connection is not obvious. I should retrace my steps...

Taiko is, in Japanese, "big drum." In Japan, taiko was used in religious ceremonies to bring rain for the harvest, to grant safe passage and victory in battle. It is there in festivals, in the temple, in *odori* (a form of Japanese dance). It has been taken over the seas to *Nikkei* (people of Japanese descent) communities in the Asian Diaspora and popularized by such internationally renown Japanese-based groups as Kodo and Ondekoza. Taiko has remained rooted in community life in the face of, and perhaps because of, the intense modernization of Japan over the past 150 or so years. In the mythical origins of taiko, it is the drum, the pounding of Ama-no-Uzume, the Goddess of Mirth, who lures Amateratsu from her cave, returning her to the community of gods and demi-gods, thus saving the world. Historically in North America, this idea of community is central to the practice of taiko drumming

In Canada, taiko first appeared in Vancouver. Katari Taiko was established in 1979 as a collective with a mandate to develop Asian Canadian culture. The '70s had been an important time for the formation of new Asian Canadian cultural organizations. The Powell Street Festival originated in 1976 in Vancouver; the Powell Street Review was first published in 1972 in Toronto; the ban on government files on the Japanese Canadian internment had been lifted in the mid seventies; the National Japanese Canadian Citizen's Association became known as the NAJC and established a Reparations Committee; and the first photo-based history of Japanese Canadians, *A Dream of Riches: Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977*, was published. In retrospect, the formation of Katari Taiko at the end of the decade seemed to promise the cultural rebirth of Asian Canadian communities that had survived the hardships of immigration, internment and dispersal policies during and after World War II.

Katari Taiko has strong links to the Powell Street Festival. Katari's members have volunteered, performed and coordinated the festival since the group's beginnings. It is significant that the Powell Street Festival has been the locus of Katari's community involvement. Powell Street has a particular resonance in Japanese-Canadian history. Located in the skid-row east end, near an abandoned saw mill, the site seems disconnected from Nikkei culture, but Powell Street was once the site of a thriving pre-war Japanese Canadian community—the closest thing to a Japantown ever to exist in Canada. Later the community was dispersed by internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II and their displacement and deportation following the war. (Japanese-Canadians, their properties and possessions seized and sold, were not allowed to return to British Columbia until 1949). The Powell Street Festival affirms the significance of this site in Japanese Canadian history. It bridges the past and present by celebrating contemporary Japanese Canadian culture on this site. It is this act of rebuilding and reclaiming community that is mirrored in the formation of taiko groups.

The *matsuri*, or festival, is a site of the construction of community, yet it is not a dead reckoning of the past—indeed, taiko in Canada is not the mere mimicry of taiko in Japan. As a living, growing culture, it evolves and changes over time. It was at the first Cherry Blossom festival in San Francisco that Seiichi Tanaka was inspired to create the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. Tanaka was the person who first brought taiko to North America and many groups, including Katari, can trace their genesis, directly or indirectly, to him. (San José Taiko was created as a break away group from his San Francisco Taiko Dojo). Katari, in turn, has played the function of "mother group" in relation to the development of Japanese Canadian taiko, giving workshops to people in other cities who went on to form their own taiko groups. (Hinode Taiko in Winnipeg was formed in this way.) In 1985, ex-members of Katari, upon moving to Toronto, set up Wasabi Daiko. In Vancouver, members of Katari have branched out into Uzume Taiko, (the first professional taiko group in North America) and Sawagi Taiko (an all-women group).

Taiko in Canada has distinctive characteristics; there is more movement, a choreographed sense of theatre. This is not to say that all Canadian taiko groups are the same. On the contrary, taiko style varies from group to group, even from period to period. One can distinguish the "San José style" which is free and fluid, the "Suwa style" which is rigid, as it is taken from a militaristic tradition. The influence of martial arts on taiko is also evident. In some pieces there is an infusion of music, poetry, movement, narrative, a mix of the traditional and other diasporic influences, jazz, dance, etc.

Taiko is an oral tradition, with an emphasis on collectivity. This, along with the history of Japanese-Canadians, has imparted a strong sense of community to taiko groups. While taiko has developed from a longstanding tradition, a tradition that is not without its own internal tensions, it is inextricable from the context of racism in North America.

Asians in Canada continue to be confronted with the stereotypes of Asian passivity, weakness and invisibility; Asians are rarely seen as creators of culture. In 1988, redress for the *Nikkei* community was achieved, yet in cultural terms we have yet to fully arrive. The majority of Katari Taiko members, interestingly enough, and in contrast to more well-known Japanese taiko groups, have been women. This holds true for taiko groups across North America. Katari's signature piece is Mountain Moving Day, taken from Yosano Akiko's famous poem (Yosano is a prominent *meiji*-era feminist). By providing alternative images of Asian women, images of them as vital, powerful, visible and creative, groups like Katari dissolve the image of Asian women as submissive and silent. Taiko has also had, in North America, a strong alignment with Queer culture. The development of taiko reflects the concerns of contemporary Japanese Canadian communities. The conflicts, issues and resolutions played out within taiko groups mirror those that occur within the larger communities.

In 1992, the Canadian Taiko Festival brought together all of the taiko groups in Canada, with Winnipeg's Hinode Taiko acting as the host group. There were workshops on composing, group process, etc. In the group process workshop there were a number of issues discussed: to be political or not to be political, issues of membership and cultural appropriation, hierar-

Taiko has become a space in which Japanese Canadians and other Asian Canadians can meet each other and work together across what have been historically cultural/national divides. Taiko has been one of the sites in which many communities have come together.

chies versus collectives. In Wasabi itself there have been crises along these lines, along with membership turnovers. Yet from its beginnings, following the example set by Katari Taiko's community-based activism, Wasabi Daiko has had an overtly political focus. Wasabi's political concerns are reflected in the performances and benefits that the group attends. (Redress Commemoration, Earth Spirit Festival, Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in 1991 and 1992, East Asian Youth and Alienation Conference, Canadian Peace Alliance Benefit 1993, etc.)

Along with a commitment to progressive political movements, its philosophy espouses the development of Asian Canadian identity, not as a mere multicultural spice, but actively defining an Asian Canadian presence in the arts. Wasabi's mandate also outlines an objective to work in solidarity with other Asian groups—in particular with other Asian groups. In North American taiko, recruitment is extended to a Pan-Asian membership. The Asian communities in Canada were subjected to many similar forms of discrimination including, internment and dispersion of the Japanese, and the levelling of the Exclusion Act and the Head Tax against the Chinese. Taiko has become a space in which Japanese Canadians and other Asian Canadians can meet each other and work together across what have been historically cultural/national divides. Taiko has been one of the sites in which many communities have come together. While *sanseis* (third generation Japanese Canadians) have been pivotal in the development of taiko, taiko has also been embraced by the *shin ijushya* generations (postwar immigrants). Expanding the musical form of taiko has resulted in collaborations such as Katari Taiko and Kokoro (taiko and dance), Shinobu Homma and Pui Ming Lee's Moondance (taiko and jazz piano), Gohroh Ensemble and dancer Michael Greyeye (taiko, dance and jazz saxophone), Wasabi Daiko, Manasie Akpaliapik and the Inuit Throat Singers (taiko, Inuit drums and Inuit song).

Yet there are still some hard questions about audience, appropriation and access that taiko groups are confronted with. Music, given its "universality" is easily consumed; audiences can enjoy taiko performances but remain oblivious to its politics. In the worst case, the modern performance of taiko drumming may become ahistorical and even appropriated by the larger dominant community. Given that the attitudes of the mainstream to Japanese culture may alternate between Japan-bashing on one hand and Japanophilia on the other, choosing an audience for taiko can be problematic. Who do we play for and why? As all groups do, taiko groups must also "sing for their supper." In choosing the audiences for which we perform taiko groups must often weigh their economic survival against their social and political ideals.

April 1994. *Protractor*, *Matsuri*, and *Miyake* have gone well. Our set is done. There is some confusion stage side but we return to centre stage for the drum jam, drums of the four directions beating in time. We are a community of sorts, built consciously across historical divides and diasporas, but built nonetheless; not to romanticize or collapse difference, but to see who we may become.

Organized Disorder
The Changing Space of the Record Shop

WILL STRAW

In 1872, just before opening le Bon Marché, his newly acquired department store, Aristide Boucicault hurriedly rearranged its layout. In Boucicault's own justification of this reordering, Rachel Bobby suggests, we may glimpse the birth of a distinctly modern conception of commerce and shopping. What is necessary, Boucicault wrote, speaking of his customers,

> is that they walk around for hours, that they get lost. First of all, they will seem more numerous. Secondly...the store will seem larger to them. And lastly, it would really be too much if, as they wander around in organized disorder, lost, driven crazy, they don't set foot in some departments where they had no intention of going, and if they don't succumb at the sight of things which grab them on the way.[1]

Part of the original appeal of the department store, Rachel Bowlby has argued, rested on the fact that in entering it one did not directly encounter the proprietor or sales person. There was no sense of obligation to buy something, little risk that one would be asked what one was looking for. The moral equation between entering a shop and making a purchase, typical of earlier forms of commerce, had been broken. The customer's drive to investigate everything for offer now sprang from an individual, touristic compulsion to explore, rather than a deliberate pressuring from others.

The sense of wandering around in "organized disorder, lost, driven crazy," has marked my own experience of the record store over the last five years. The small or mid-sized chain stores of a decade ago are gradually disappearing, giving way to sprawling superstores with their segregated boutiques, multiple floors and careful construction of architectural confusion. This combination of confusion and enticing promise reaches almost caricature levels in the HMV Superstore on Yonge Street in Toronto. Upon entering, one faces no salespeople or records on display, but two sets of stairs whose destinations are not (to the first-time visitor) clear. At the downtown Sam the Record Man outlet in Montreal, the upper levels are organized as a set of interconnected garrets, through which even experienced customers are likely to stumble, confused, in their search for a way out. On my last visit there, I noticed a new sign inviting customers to seek directions if they were lost.

Few spatial environments crystallize so perfectly an emergent set of cultural and economic relations as do contemporary record superstores. The record superstore is the product of several, easily observable economic trends: the general popularity of gargantuan retail outlets (as in the office supply or pharmaceutical products industries), the move towards concentration within the recorded music industry (in particular, within distribution), and the emergence of a relatively integrated entertainment software industry. For my purposes, however, the superstore stands as the latest attempt to resolve long-standing dilemmas in the relationship of the record industry to its intended and imagined markets of consumers. Once oriented toward producing a limited number of blockbuster successes, record companies are more and more the exploiters of accumulated back catalogues or infinitely differentiated niche markets. In the most optimistic scenarios of the record companies, their market has come to be characterized by a new, stable predictability; jazz reissues, classical compilations and alternative rock albums now sell in numbers that lend themselves easily to procedures of rational calculation.

For other analysts, however, the sprawling pluralism of the contemporary record store threatens a dispersion of the market into anarchic confusion. As tastes fragment and few records attain the sales levels of a Thriller or a Purple Rain, consumer choices no longer manifest themselves as broad,

collective swings toward this album or that. Instead, they are spread among thousands of choices from a fifty-year stockpile. As the boutiques within superstores proliferate, and with them the number of titles for offer, marketing experts begin to speak of "selection stress": the "anxiety [of] a music buyer faced with the enormous selection in most stores."[2] A whole range of technologies, subsidiary media and marketing strategies are now marshalled to reduce this stress, to direct the buyer comfortably and confidently to specified titles.

The Swing Vote

Fifteen years ago, in the midst of the record industry's economic slump, the trade press was shot through with rhetoric about the need to win back adult record buyers. Demographic studies showed a longterm shrinking of the primary audience for rock recordings (males aged 18-24); wooing back the older, so-called casual buyer came to be the challenge of the 1980s.[3] The diagnosis of why adults had ceased buying records in significant numbers throughout the 1970s focused, for a time, on the spatial environment of the mall chain store. Narrow and deep, the chain store confronted middle-aged shoppers with young, frighteningly subcultural sales clerks, and heavy metal music blasting from an entrance which was itself blocked by displays of unrecognizable current recordings. The folklore of the record industry during this period included story after story of adults entering a mall store, asking for a Perry Como or Peggy Lee album, and meeting a blank stare of non-recognition from sales clerks.

Throughout the 1970s, record companies in North America had reduced the attention paid to non-specialist, department stores (such as Woolworth's or Eaton's), because those who frequented such stores were considered casual, infrequent buyers of records. In an industry dependent upon rock recordings and a population of buyers heavily involved in music, the commercial weight of record racks in these stores came to be seen as negligible. By the early 1980s, and with sales declining, there was a significant reversal of thinking on this matter. The industry's salvation, it was now argued, required turning away from rock, and toward so-called non-perishable classes of product, such as children's music, easy listening, classical music and reissues from the past. "Non-perishable" meant that these forms did not rise and fall with the rhythms of fashion; stores could maintain titles in inventory for long periods of time.

The principal target for these non-perishable recordings, the industry believed, was the young adult woman. "[S]he's uncommitted," one industry executive described this kind of consumer:

> She isn't really into music, doesn't read hip music magazines, doesn't go to concerts, but [she] reads shopper guide columns and is about ready to hook up with cable TV or buy a video game.[4]

The most effective means of reaching these buyers, it was claimed, involved campaigns encouraging them to buy recordings as gifts (presumably for men). The "Give the Gift of Music" campaign of the early 1980s was directed precisely at so-called casual buyers. These were to be found "walking up and down the aisles of your customers' chain, discount or department store."[5] Females aged thirty to thirty-nine, whom research found to spend twenty-five percent of all gift dollars, were designated the "swing vote" within industry discourse, those who could make the difference between a record's profitability or failure.[6] During this period, as well, labels producing so-called middle-of-the-road recordings explored what were termed non-traditional sales outlets for recordings—liquor stores, perfume stores and gift shops—bypassing a music retail sector considered inhospitable to their target audiences.

The recording industry's construction of a "casual buyer" has typically conflated the aging adult and the female. Both are seen as slow in their response to shifting trends and much less involved in the circulation of music-related knowledges than the male consumer in his late teens or early twenties. Each of these consumer groups, according to the industry's understanding, nevertheless possesses specific virtues. The "casual buyer" has no prior inclination to purchase records; once convinced to do so, however, she is easily swayed by advertising strategies. In this, she is diametrically opposed to the "core" male buyer, who is always willing to buy records but notoriously selective in his buying decisions. The wooing of the largely female, "casual" buyer is regularly painted in the terms of chivalrous guidance. Having defined musical recordings as appropriate gifts, the industry will offer benevolent instruction as to which recordings are suitable for that purpose.

The Comfort Level

If the compact disc has emerged as one of the most dazzlingly effective commodity forms, this has little to do with its technical superiority to the vinyl record (which we no longer remember to notice.) Rather, this effectiveness has to do with its status as the perfect cross-over consumer object. As a cutting-edge audiophile invention, it seduced the technophilic, connoisseurist males who typically buy new sound equipment and quickly build collections of recordings. (Indeed, by the late 1980s, and because of the CD, the proportion of males within the record-buying audience had reached peak levels).[7] At the same time, its visual refinement and high price rapidly rendered it legitimate as a gift. In this, the CD has found a wide audience among the population of casual record buyers.

These audiences, distinct and opposed in a variety of ways, find a partial convergence within the reissue strategies of record companies. The jazz or classic rock connoisseur seeks and now finds the range of titles that archiving impulses require. The casual buyer finds a range of titles that will allow him/her to establish a collection that, although likely to remain limited, seems to represent a well-established canon. For the record companies and the retail sector, the significant challenge of the near future is that of delivering information. Means must be developed to inform connoisseurs of ongoing reissue programmes; at the same time, the anxiety of casual buyers about their lack of expertise must be overcome.

In this context, there is a preponderance of moralizing exhortations, directed at those within the record retail industry, to increase the level of comfort of those browsing in their stores. Classical, jazz and alternative rock music are regularly characterized as "intimidating," in that they present the would-be buyer with the horrifying possibility of making a wrong choice.[8]

The strains within this moralizing however are most visible in discussions of the popularizing of classical music.

Guided by the conviction that "aging baby boomers are looking for something new and mellow to listen to," labels have sought to render classical music friendly and populist, promoting it on television during basketball games, through movie soundtracks or via tie-ins to Martha Stewart cookbooks.[9] In the experience of one distributor of classical music, "racks that highlight chart successes and include recommendations of titles made the consumer 'more comfortable.'"[10] For traditional classical labels, such as Deutsche Gramophone, this is frequently seen as shameless pandering, a squandering of the prestige capital accumulated by these labels or by the orchestras and composers they have presented. (This pandering, nevertheless, has become unavoidable, as budget-line classical albums, often featuring Eastern European orchestras, reduce the market shares of once dominant labels.)

If record stores have become larger, it is in part to accommodate all customers: the casual and the legendary "core" buyer of records. The latter, obviously, can wallow in the archival inclusiveness of the superstore. For the casual buyer the sprawling abundance of the superstore—its mixing of historical times and endless subdivision of tastes and genres—although likely to intimidate, is just as likely to comfort. Just as it suggests an endless set of knowledges not yet mastered, its flattened sense of equivalency means that none stands more privileged than another.

Space and Stasis

The effects of the CD on the layout of the record store are easily traceable, but they must be seen against the background of a larger audience fragmentation, of which they are both a cause and an effect. The predominance of the CD has grown during a period when radio has ceased to play a

significant role in stimulating record sales, in large measure because the majority of radio stations have moved away from playing current music. The declining promotional role of radio has spurred the turn towards reissues, just as this turn itself has weakened the link between the records put on sale and what is heard on radio. Record companies, to remain profitable, have come to depend on the tighter but more predictable profits which accrue from the sales of thousands of back catalogue titles. While current recordings obviously continue to be released, they do so within a context of increased audience fragmentation. (One can own two albums on today's Billboard Top 10 without ever having heard most of the others.) In this context, the processes by which consumers come to know about and seek out records are increasingly differentiated, grounded in the everyday minutiae of word-of-mouth or highly specialized magazines. Seeking to influence sales, record companies have extended the hand of chivalrous and polite guidance to all buyers.

To benefit from massive reissue programmes and from the pluralism of current product, record stores themselves have had to enlarge their physical space so as to offer an enormous range of titles. (They can no longer sacrifice the revenues from marginal forms, such as alternative rock, to specialty stores.) This requires extensive capitalization, both to expand and subdivide the physical space of the retail store, and to maintain large, slow-moving inventories over long periods of time. This requirement, more than any broader economic trend, may serve to explain the recent disappearance within Canada of the A&A and Discus chains, both of which lacked the resources necessary to maintain and expand inventories.

The important tension within the record retail sector presently is that between the offering of a potentially chaotic abundance and the marshalling of a variety of means for focusing consumer choice and producing order from amidst this chaos. The changing architecture of the record store over the last half decade reveals the new importance of consumer information and its delivery. The rise of in-store listening booths, give-away magazines and label display racks is a direct result of the declining role of radio as a force in stimulating record sales. These forms and technologies all presume a redefinition of record-buying as an activity stimulated by discovery, previewing and experimentation, rather than prior exposure or peer group reinforcement. They are meant, in other words, to contain the epidemic of "selection stress."

In this context, the industry's conceptualization of buyer behaviour has shifted considerably. This is no longer imagined in causal terms, as the effect of particular promotional media on collective buying decisions. Rather, it is imagined as a set of coherences which link the observed purchase of one title to the possible or probable purchase of another, along a calculated series. Here, the acquisition of information on individual buying habits has become embedded within new technologies which create buyer profiles and guide their choices. The most discussed of these, offered by Intouch of San Francisco, involves listening stations in record stores, for the use of which identification cards are required. A customer who samples any pop/dance record is offered a sneak preview of the new album by another pop/dance artist; later, he/she is mailed information on upcoming albums of similar style. Record companies, in turn, receive data on which cuts the customer listened to while using the machine. This is combined with demographic application supplied when the customer applied for a card.[11]

The emergence of these information systems and technologies has been embedded within an ongoing campaign against waste, against the failure to use the most trivial sorts of information. One effect of this preoccupation with data has been the virtual disappearance from record stores of deletes or cutouts. As cash registers are linked to inventory control systems, and these to record companies and their pressing plants, the risks of over-pressing and ordering have been reduced. Slow-selling stock is reallocated to other branches; best-selling titles are printed as they are needed.[12] The effect, for long-time browsers like myself, is a redefinition of the record store's promise of discovery. Once, a decade ago, it was based on the enticing likelihood of stumbling across bins of cheap, failed albums or over-runs. Now, the pleasure of discovery has been directed towards tastefully packaged reissues selling at catalogue prices.

Afterthoughts

These changes, like so many others reshaping our cultural landscape, may leave us with a paralyzing ambivalence. In an age when in-store giveaway magazines build credibility by running negative reviews, or when listening posts invite us to test the latest alternative rock obscurity, traditional critiques of record industry hype or shrinking choice seem quaintly inappropriate. Longstanding concerns about the neglect of once-marginal forms or performers are disarmed as major firms rush to reissue their back catalogues in lovingly designed collections. Complaints about the elitism implicit in CD pricing policies wither when attractive soul reissues on compact disc sell for less than a current 12" vinyl dance single.

What has withered as well, amidst the new fragmentation of musical tastes, is music's role in producing and registering disruptive shifts of popular attention. As musical tastes divide, they appear to be more purist: industrial rock, rap or country albums now reach the Top 10 without the obvious signs of compromise or hybridization. The rationalization of distribution, sales and promotion has helped to transform the market for records into segregated blocks of loyal core buyers rather than a site for crossover of collective redirection. In this context, successful records seem more authentic, more faithful to their generic traditions, than at any point in recent history. "There is an increasing proliferation of street-edge music," one record label executive said recently, and "the old rules don't apply as much."[13] Under the new rules, a Nine Inch Nails album makes the Billboard Top 10 in its first week of release.

With so much that seems positive in these changes, we may overlook the new segregations of taste and audience which have resulted. Few collective gatherings are as racially and socially homogeneous as a Pavement concert, for example, and Pink Floyd's recent New York show was, by all accounts, the most exclusively white event in that city's recent history. As record superstores beckon with their pluralist abundance, magazines, radio formats and the broader logics of social differentiation have circumscribed tastes and buying patterns within predictable clusters. What has been lost, arguably, are those (politically ambiguous) moments of crossover or convergence that regularly undermined music's usual tendency to reinforce social and racial insularity. Stumbling around the record superstore, "lost, driven crazy," the paths we follow are likely, nevertheless, to map the stubborn lines of social division.

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NOTES

[1]Quoted in Rachel Bowlby, Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 74.

[2]Josh Kaplan, founder of the marketing firm Intouch, quoted in Matt Rothman, "A New Music Retailing Technology Says, Listen Here," The New York Times (July 4, 1993), p. F9.

[3]See "Rackjobber Meeting: Co-operation Urged For Expected Older Demographic Exploitation," Billboard (October 11, 1980), p. 3; and "Racks Laud Older Demographics: Post-25 Fans More Apt To Shop At Mass Outlets," Billboard (October 31, 1981), p. 3.

[4]Michail Kapp of Warner Special Products quoted in "Racks Laud Older Demographics: Post-25 Fans More Apt To Shop At Mass Outlets," Billboard (October 31, 1981), p. 3.

[5]Ibid, p. 3.

[6]"Rackjobber Hear Outline for Growth," Record World (October 31, 1981), p. 3.

[7]See, for example, "Record Buyers Are Older, Male-Skewed: Biz Tries To Adjust To Shifting Demos," Billboard (July 27, 1991), p. 6.

[8]For an account which makes the link between these musical styles explicit see "Unlocking Classical Music's Potential," Billboard (April 13, 1991), p. 45.

[9]See, for example, Meg Cox "Classical Labels Tune in New Listeners," The Wall Street Journal (April 9, 1992), p. B1.

[10]"Unlocking Classical Music's Potential," Billboard (April 13, 1991), p. 45.

[11]See "Getting In Touch With Customers: In-Store Service Launches Album Promos," Billboard (January 29, 1994), p. 71.

[12]On the gradual disappearance of cut-out or delete records see "Retail Track," Billboard (November 20, 1993), p. 56.

[13]Barry Weiss, Senior VP and GM of Jive Records, quoted in Craig Rosen "Heatseekers Explode On Billboard 200: Newcomers Push Established Acts From Top," Billboard (February 26, 1994), p. 1.

Harlem State of Mind

A Conversation with Greg Tate

VICTOR BAINS MARSHALL

Victor Bains Marshall is the host of CKLN's popular open format show "The Middle Passage." He is a writer who has done interviews with many innovative artists and performers—from George Clinton to Me'shell N'degeOcello. He is covering the 1994 Festival of Festivals for Black Film Review, a Washington based quarterly.

As a journalist, Greg Tate has written about most of Black society's icons and personalities: from music folk like Miles Davis and Black hard-core legends the Bad Brains, from painter Jean Michel Basquiat to filmmaker Millicent Shelton. His critiques and essays are thought-provoking and written in a wildly inventive style.

After attending Howard University in Washington D.C., he embarked on a career in writing, gettin' his big break with New York City's influential *Village Voice*, after submitting work that was so impressive he was asked to become a full-time contributor. Over the last few years Greg has become somewhat of a multimedia personality, writing for not only the *Voice* but also *Spin* and *Vibe*, among others. He also co-founded the Black Rock Coalition with "Living Color" guitarist Vernon Reid, and is featured on the Coalition's latest compilation disc, *Blacker Than That*, with his band Women In Love, in which he plays lead guitar.

I spoke on the phone [in February 1994] with Greg from his home in Harlem, the Mecca of Black creativity in North America.

VBM: I recently was talking to my sister back home in Philly and she was lamenting the fact that some Black folks, particularly the youth, seemed to be under some type of mass psychosis which manifested itself through violence, misogyny, and, too often, the death of another brother or sister. Some rap music has come under fire from individuals and organizations for helping to compound the situation through negative portrayals of Black women and life in the "hood" in general. Why do you feel some young, Black male rappers have this unhealthy attitude towards our women?
Greg: I think that attitude comes out of a scapegoating vibe. Brothers victimizing Black women because they feel powerless to change their own situation in society. They're looking for somebody lower on the totem pole than them, somebody nearby, which are the sistas. Obviously these guys have a lot of insecurities about themselves as men and about being able to fulfill the perceived functions of a man in society, or did, before they became rap stars. It's like they have this attitude that women wouldn't be interested in them if they weren't rich and famous; and so, a lot of this stuff is comin' from this real spiteful, revenge type of bag, cause they weren't "the dynamite love man," or whatever in high school.
VBM: What are some of the comments that you've heard from sistas regarding this issue? What are their thoughts?
Greg: Well, I think that sistas who are into hip-hop definitely feel abused, but, because of their love of the music and the hip-hop culture, they're rolling with the punches. I think that there's a general feeling amongst sistas that they're waiting for something better to come along in terms of brothers' attitudes and acknowledgment of Black women within hip-hop. As well, a lot of what you're dealing with are very adolescent attitudes. It's not anything that rap has invented, you know what I mean. It's something learned from society at large. If you watch TV or films women are often depicted as hookers and ho's, you know, scheming bitches and the whole thing. They just don't use those particular words. It's magnified with Black folks in particular, because the conditions that we work from are so extreme.
VBM: Moving towards a positive, affirming resolution of this dilemma that Black folks find themselves in nowadays—what steps can people such as yourself and others in the media, who chronicle these events and to some extent are role models, take to help turn the situation around?
Greg: I think that it's more important on a certain level that brothers speak out against violence, sexism and misogyny in the culture even more than sistas do. Why should sistas have to bear the burden of that all the time?! I mean right is right and wrong is wrong and even the brothers who are perpetuating that misogynist shit know that it ain't right. That ain't about no love, that ain't about no healin', that ain't about no support or anything that's gonna liberate us!
VBM: It seems as though the past few years have brought little inspiration on the Black political scene as far as dynamic leadership is concerned, but Louis Farrakhan and the Nation Of Islam have injected a new vision and new mandate into the mix. A lot of Black youth are relating to his message.

Charlie Parker & Miles Davis in the '50s.

What's your take on the situation?
Greg: It's hard to speak on. I think that many Blacks are drawn to him because he's a Black figure who's outside, way outside of what appears to be a corrupt, aloof Black leadership mainstream. Farrakhan definitely says a lot of things that, even if you don't necessarily espouse those beliefs, are still things that many Black people feel. Having been raised in this society, we feel like we've been chumped, and too often people are bending over backwards to appease the white power structure. The Nation is also really involved in communicating with Black youth, reaching out to them in a way that other organizations aren't doing. Let's not forget also that The Nation is a powerful persuader! There's kind of like only two ways to go; reform or revolution. I think that for the most part we're still in the reform mode, still trying to make that work, but we definitely need some bolder, more visionary leadership coming out of the mainstream.
VBM: Back in 1985 you and "Living Color" guitarist Vernon Reid formed the Black Rock Coalition, the purpose being to get exposure and radio air play for Black musicians' groups that were into rock and alternative music, but were being for the most part totally ignored by radio: both white and Black formats. Do you see more of an acceptance, a tolerance of Black rock-oriented artists now in '94?
Greg: This past year we've started to see acceptance you know, of Black rock bands as far as new bands being signed is concerned. Now, with it being a post Nirvana era and with the success of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the industry is more open to alternatives in general and music that bridges the gap between what's goin' on over in the Black side, what's goin' on in hip-hop, and what's happening in the white rock arena: things that bridge the gap between those musics in terms of form, intensity

Above: John Coltrane

and presentation.
VBM: You're a writer and a musician, you've directed a play, and lord knows what other creative endeavours you've been involved with.... Where did you get this passion to invent and chronicle Black aesthetics and cultural theory so thoroughly? What were the early years like?
Greg: Well I'm originally from Ohio and my parents are from the south: Memphis, Tennessee. They were both heavily involved with the civil rights and Black Power movements of the sixties and were part of a cultural, political group in Ohio that would routinely bring to town folks like Stokely Carmichael, Pharaoh Sanders and Amiri Baraka to speak and play. So I got exposed to a lot of progressive Black thought and art early on in my life. That had a lot to do with my development as a thinker, certainly as somebody concerned with Black culture. When we moved to Washington D.C. I found folks there who had been involved with student and Black Power struggles so that also had an impact. Howard University's radio station circa 1972 had a real eclectic approach to broadcasting. You would hear Marvin Gaye, Wayne Shorter, Muddy Waters and Jimi Hendrix in the same set. That's where I first became exposed to Miles and Jimi, on Howard University radio. It was really wild! I've always been a heavy reader and when I started writing my strongest influences were Ishmael Reed and Pedro Bell (the fellow who wrote the liner notes to the Funkadelic albums) and of course Amiri Baraka. To me, he's sort of like the godfather of all modern Black writers. He's just such a powerful influence! Especially in terms of constant experimentation and having such a distinctive voice. As a writer those kind of things work on you subconsciously; you're not consciously trying to emulate him, it just becomes a certain level, a high standard you have for deciding what good writing is. Just reading a cat like that establishes a standard for you. I'm sure it's like in the sixties when other saxophonists were conscious of Coltrane, because he was such a developed musician and musical thinker. I think that Amiri Baraka sets a similar standard for Black writers who have followed him—accomplished essayist, poet, playwright, fiction writer and outstanding talent!
VBM: In your writing style you marry the articulation and slang of a freestylin' rapper with the encyclopedic vocabulary of a Harvard University English professor, and it works brilliantly for the most part. It even seems as though you make up words when none are available to convey your thoughts. Where did you develop this style of writing?
Greg: I think that it was something that I always wanted to develop, and over time I just got better and better at it. I was always around music and musicians and the way musicians talk has always been in my head—you know, just the way brothers talk in general. I wrote poetry before I got into journalism and essays and I was trying to do the same thing there, you know, create a poetic voice that could really contain Black conversation.

We concluded the interview on a note that typifies Greg's fearless approach to life and his willingness to contribute in any way, manner or form to the new Black Aesthetic.
VBM: I hear that you and composer Leroy Jenkins are presently completing work on "Fresh Faust," a jazz, hip-hop opera. What's up with that?
Greg: We've just had a workshop meeting where Leroy took the director and myself all the way through the score. He showed us how he had scored the libretto. We're going to do a workshop production in Boston sometime in March.

Even You Can Not Resist Her
9 Courtney Love Tantras

MARILYN MONROE, TODAY THOU HAST PASSED
THE DARK BARRIER

–diving in a swirl of golden hair...
nah ooth eeze farewell. Moor droon fahra rahoor
Michael McClure, Ghost Tantras

Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.
John Donne

LYNN CROSBIE

Lynn Crosbie is a Toronto poet. Her recent book of poery, VillainElle, was published in the spring of 1994 by Coach House Press.

i. Live Through This

It is difficult to write about Courtney Love this spring (1994); she has just passed
the dark barrier of suicide, and she is silent. Love is someone who I have long admired as someone (Miss World) whose choices

are conventional (career + marriage + child) are unconventional

[in integral rational functions]

imaginary   real and equal   real and unequal

Sassy, April 1992: *...girls get discouraged from math, and I think that affects song writing, because math is a big part of arranging a song in your head.*

ii. Love

She chants and recites a mantra: *Inside of me is safe, inside of me is safe.*

Vanity Fair, September 1992: *Courtney chanted for the coolest guy in rock...to be her boyfriend.*

Their songs complement they complement each other–

Hate me, my friend   Take everything, I want you to

compliment: he is *so graceful and beautiful* she is *the best fuck in the world.*

her fingernail scars on his back, Courtney's Love;

I'll be the biggest scar in your back

Her circle just –

Every night I've been sleeping with his mother,
and I wake up in the morning and think it's him
because, because his body's sort of the same.

I have to go now.

iii. Marriage +

Courtney Love and Kurt Cobain married in Waikiki, Hawaii on February 24, 1992.
He wore green pyjamas
She wore a lace dress that belonged to Frances Farmer (*Frances, Saint*).

Come As You Are, Toronto: Main Street Books, 1993:

Kurt thought he might cry at the ceremony

Everyone wore leis

On a cliff in Waikiki there are ukuleles, blue seas +

iv. heroin

slut-kiss girl won't you promise her smack

Julian Cope (October 1992): Free Us ... From Nancy Spungen-Fixated Heroin A-Holes Who Cling To Our Greatest Rock Groups And Suck Out Their Brains... *(Courtney Love) needs shooting and I'll shoot her.*

When Cobain's body is examined valium and heroin are found in his system (April 8, 1994) – Love is arrested on April 7th for possessing a "controlled substance."

beside her – glassine bag syringe white powder

beside him – note identification a doll in utero

She is cleared of charges on May 4th; the substance thought to be heroin

heroin is a Hindu good-luck charm

(September, 1992): *Things are really good. It's all coming true. Although it could fuck up at any time. You never know.*

v. I Think That I Would Die (*I want my baby*)

It was a bad time to get pregnant and that appealed to me

Eugene a boy and Frances a girl

Frances Bean (her sonogram a kidney bean) born August 18, 1992

People, May 2, 1994: *In August 1992 reports that she had done heroin during her pregnancy – allegations Love vehemently denied - prompted*

Los Angeles child-welfare authorities to place Frances Bean...
in the temporary custody of Love's sister, a move that Courtney
has said made both her and Kurt suicidal.

The Globe reports that the parents of the junkie baby have money & fame but no damn heart.

the sonogram – In Utero;

Frances (19 months) can sing the first line of "All Apologies." She walks

by the river after her father's suicide

in a leopard coat and pale blue sweater

holding her mother's hand she waves at the water

something there

vi. And She's Not Even Pretty

– title of Love's Hole-fanzine

At one time, Courtney Love and Kat Bjelland were not on speaking terms.
One reason – Courtney lent Kat a dress who wore it to England first and
Courtney could not wear those fucking dresses in England anymore.

If Veronica and Betty make separate appearances

at the beach in the same bikini

at a dance in the same formal

anywhere in Riverdale in the same fucking outfit

people scatter, terrified –

she'd kill for less

the *kinder-whore* look, art

less rips and skin-tight velvet,
huge red lips (ripe persimmons) + sea-bluegreen eyes + trampy blonde hair
Is she pretty on the inside, is she pretty from the back?

vii. Love sings this and other songs

her voice is terrifying

power rage violence (violets, violins)

loss love lyrical

poetry

Spin, December 1992: *What am I supposed to do, turn into fucking Mother Teresa all of a sudden? Am I supposed to write a country record because I had a baby? I've felt more sexual warfare, political, medical and media terror in the last couple months than I've ever felt in my whole life.*

political – electric guitar

torrents of noise and feedback

screams –

I'LL BE THE BIGGEST DICK THAT YOU EVER HAD

viii. Revision

winter 1994

Pamela Des Barres (I'm With The Band) interviews Courtney Love (I'm In The Band) for Interview

career + marriage + child

+ stripper + rock star + English major +

surgery + rubies + motheaten sweater +

+ Caligula + reform school girl + movie star + heroin at the Chelsea

And I'm a feminist! +c.

In 1993 I wrote Courtney Love a fan letter and she wrote back:
my story is like a pie that you slice with layers and layers of ooze coz
ive done everything almost Everything almost everywhere

ix.

her unclockable mouth (her) dominant nature

she has a monologue going twenty-four hours a day and...sometimes she includes others

Courtney Love is an articulate speaking
subject who defines constructs
herself best who is
silent

Village Voice, April 19 1994: *Listening to Love's tape at the vigil, I began to think about women's silence...Part of Cobain's personal tragedy was his inability to feel his own power; at this moment, Love's achievement is to be able, across the black expanse of her sorrow, to maintain a sense of her own.*

I have to go now

peace, love, empathy Courtney Love

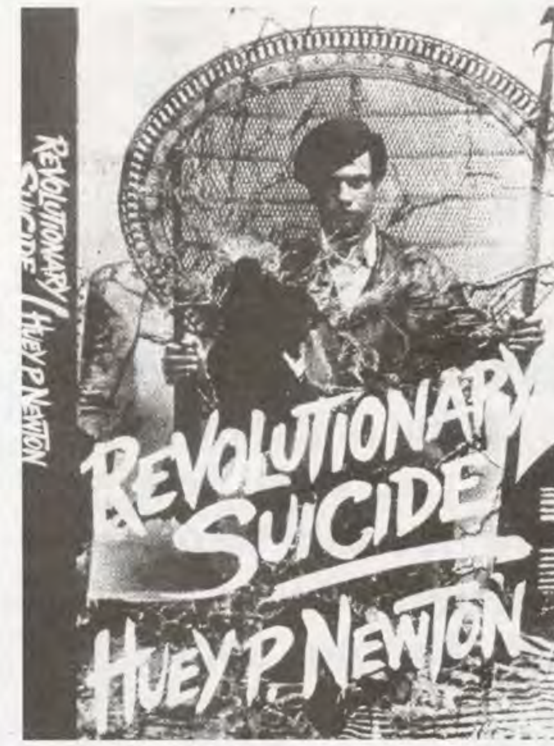
REACHIN'
(a new refutation of space and time)

JAMES OSCAR

My interviewees, Digable Planets, who I expected to be easy going adherents of "hybridity," (the discussion of which has become almost banal), took hybridity, as it were, for a ride—and then decided to re-ground it in those always necessary particulars which give any agency its spiritual life fruit. What was not so apparent, what appeared instead as a nuanced didacticism, was a warning against an all-too-comfortable hybridity which loses control of its congenital vacillation.

The thrust of our discussion turned out to be the formulation of a "new" Black aesthetic in the process of its own formation, an aesthetic which I found quite well respected, reworked, and recomplicated in Digable Planets' music and style.

JO: I would first like it if you could situate yourself vis à vis the hip-hop world, because it seems as though there are certain moments in time when certain artists act as "theorists" of what's going on. For instance, they may say, as you do, that it is time to start refuting space and time...I don't want to put you on some pedestal as the "intellectuals" of hip-hop, but it seems as though you are critiquing certain things, sort of like when De la Soul said "Take it off."
ISHMAEL: Well, I do think we do understand certain things.... See, we have had, in some ways, the privilege of solid parenting, but within the context of a strictly African American growing up and existence within the urban areas of the country. You are therefore an observer, but an observer of yourself and of everything that goes on in your environment, you know what I'm saying? Take for instance gangster music and gangster rap, we understand the mentality of it because we grew up around it, we also understand why it is popular and the social implications that supercede it—much more than the people that are doin' it.... Just having that kind of knowledge is something that comes out in our music, being able to analyze a situation, but not like a sociologist from the outside who goes in and does a case study, but as a sociologist who has come out of it and is still in it and still looking at it, and who may still criticize sometimes....
JO: It's interesting that while waiting for the interview before me to end, it became apparent your publicist had assumed I was going to come in and examine your lyrics, but it would seem to me that part and parcel of this "new" aesthetic is a privileging of the form as opposed to the lyrics (although not to disregard lyrics),[1] a privileging of vibe, as it were, rather than working through so-called conscious lyrics. In listening to your album, and more specifically the song "Last of the Spiddydocks," it is quite difficult to discern whether or not that song is about the exiled jazz musicians in Europe who, having a hard time making money, had to leave the United States. So, it seems, at least in my listening, that the whole album works more through a total vibe than just through individual songs. It seems as though it is the vibe of the album which is "refuting space and time," not just the lyrics. Can you explain what a vibe is?
ISHMAEL: My perception of the question is: what is necessary in order to have what is called the vibe? In the context of what we are talking about, it just comes from knowing and feeling what the fuck you are talking about or what music you are putting together. You can tell when somebody's frontin', you can tell when you listen to House of Pain that when they are talking about "put your head out," they're strictly just making a song; but if you listen to Dr. Dre in some song like "Rat-tat-tat," you feel it. He knows what he's talking about. He's not just saying something that he's just formulated in his mind. So I think a vibe comes from just knowing what you're saying, feeling it and knowing what is naturally true.
JO: I don't want to get into the typical line of questioning about whether you are advocates of drugs, a question which no doubt has been previously put to you after the release of your song "Nickel Bag of Funk," but what are your feelings



about groups which have recently come out with a definitive agenda in support of the legalization of marijuana?
ISHMAEL: We are not really advocating the use of drugs. We recognize marijuana as something that's detrimental to your health in the long run...not to say we don't smoke marijuana sometimes..., but we wouldn't advocate it, and we definitely would not go around fighting for the legalization of it, unless it had some other political implications, like maybe undermining the government....
JO: If I could quote the late Huey Newton for a moment from his text, *Revolutionary Suicide*: "As a result of coalitions, the Black Panthers were brought into the free speech movement, the psychedelic fad and the advocacy of drugs which we were and are dead against. All these causes were irrelevant to our work which was concerned with deeper and more fundamental issues, in fact, survival." The whole notion of coalitions and such things as "rainbow" coalitions, joining other groups—what happens to the Black issues in these instances? You speak about "we the synthesis of then and now melt, channelled to the masses by a DJ in some felts, long haired hippies, Afro-Blacks, all get together across the tracks." What is this vision you present in the context of coalition-building?
ISHMAEL: Our agenda is, first of all, a Black agenda. And, because politically we don't see any drastic changes being made to the advantage of Black people in the United States during our lifetime, it will always be a Black agenda, and nothing else. As we have learnt through reading and through experience and through all the teachings of our parents, a lot of times organizations that have Black agendas but have been helped along by so-called liberal white people—it is at that point that the thing falls apart. So, it's just a Black thing really. We don't hate white people, we just recognize our situation and we draw from all types of influences, both Black and white authors and artists and poets.... What we do is take from what's useful and apply it to our situation....
JO: Because what you get is Jesse Jackson and his rainbow coalition, you get rainbow education in New York, with gays wanting to teach their issues to kids in grade school and stuff.... It's not even a matter of hating these groups but it seems Black always gets lost in the shuffle....
ISHMAEL:...Yeah, it does, because we don't have any power, but who's to say that Black people can't teach other Black people about gay issues. Why not? Everything that we learn has to come from a Black source. You know what I mean. Otherwise it's just too diluted to have any substance to it. I don't see a rainbow in America. The country we live in isn't a rainbow country, it's a white country with all the other colours underneath it, it's been that way and it's going to be that way long after we die, so our moves have to be made to try and inch and inch and inch closer to Black people being equal, being thought of as equal, being perceived as something to respect and something to admire, not something to feel sorry for.
JO: In relation to Baraka's metaphor of 1966, "the changing same," and also in relation to Ishmael Reed's assertion in "Mumbo Jumbo" that: "out of this ferment, will emerge something new,"—which reminds me of early bebop (and maybe this will spill into politics)—I want to ask you about the carving out of, or perhaps the recovery of, a "new" aesthetic, and about how there is always a danger in this newness.[2] Perhaps it is like when De La Soul introduced the Daisy Age by singing "Take it off, off, off" in reference to certain Black signifiers like the Kangol hat which were becoming commodified and to a certain extent nothing more than a bunch of items. The danger of course came in everyone running to them and becoming "Black hippies." As a general premise the danger in becoming a Black hippie is in the possibility that you might leave behind your gangsta mentality and its accompanying militancy. Maybe you can explain to me about maintaining such a militancy while questioning the militancy.
KNOWLEDGE: I think basically it's about always being true to yourself. Actually it starts with knowing who you are; you've got to know who you are first before you can do anything. The thing with this De La Soul thing with everyone

You keep using the word commodity, talking in its language and about its formation. Now if you are a commodity as you keep saying and they're "biting" your style, how can we use this to our advantage? Cause it seems to me somebody like Miles Davis used it somewhat to his own advantage.

becoming Black hippies is that it showed that those people had no understanding of what was going on, because I don't think De La Soul were hippies from the beginning. So anybody who jumped on the bandwagon and became a Black hippie had no understanding of what they were talking about, their whole concept, what they were trying to get across....

ISHMAEL: ...That's the difference between the people who said it and the people who reacted to it. The people who were saying it know why they were saying it..., but that's the American mentality.... A lot of people who had never heard of De La Soul, they just saw some other cats that were cool with medallions on. I mean the position of art in relation to revolution is to popularize as well as raise the standards of the masses of people you are trying to reach. The only way you can do that is if you are speaking to the people, you have to speak the people's language. At the same time, you have to have some insights about the oppressors of those people and you have to also stay in close allegiance and be close to the masses and always be one of the oppressed, no matter what your financial situation. You can't ever ascend out of that.... That's just the basis of being a revolutionary artist in any genre: literature, visual arts, music. You always have to be around and never feel like your situation is too delicate or that your sacrifices are greater than somebody else's; like saying "I can't fight because of this or that...." That's when you're dead and you're just a shell walking around.

JO: In the United States now, you have this nasty Black bourgeoisie that is coming out of the woodwork and it's kind of funny because *The New York Times* ran an article a while back about the Black bourgeoisie in L.A., "joining allegiance with the masses," investing in Black banks and all this kind of stuff. Any kind of comments on this phenomenon? It's becoming almost like post-colonial Africa with all these Black leaders becoming presidents and being just as bad as the old oppressors.

ISHMAEL: Well, so many of them were just puppets of the imperial regime, people who were the establishment in those African countries. It's the same thing here. You get these little bourgie kids, punk-ass kids that don't know shit. And they are the ones who listen to products of revolutionary music from the hood, ghetto music, and then they go out and emulate that and at the same time they can go back to their homes up in the top of Baldwin Hills. It's just like you get a whole generation of fake Black people.

JO: It seems as though if there is something "new" in this new aesthetic I guess we must realize that an appropriation may occur. In *Details* you are pictured with the latest garb from Emporio Armani and Armani Exchange(AX), and as you know, people are right into AX right now, especially as it seems to cater to the hip-hop crowd—any comments on dressing or style? Because reading the article in *Details*, which I found a bit problematic because, first of all, assuming I have read it correctly, your interviewer is not part of this sub-culture and has no genuine wish to understand it. Peter Blashill, the author of that *Details* article said he was so surprised to see gangstas wearing turtlenecks and berets. Any comments on this? Because gangstas have always been wearing berets and turtlenecks, they don't always wear Kangos.

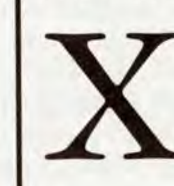
KNOWLEDGE: You can't tell a gangsta by the clothes they wear.

JO: Yeah, I know that but this guy seems to do that.

ISHMAEL: Well he's white, he doesn't know any gangstas at all. He could never pick one out anyway. All his perceptions of gangsta are from *Boyz 'n the Hood* and "Starsky and Hutch"—you know, stuff like that.... Actually, the only way we would have those clothes would be if they would have given them to us after the photo shoot. That's promotions you know. Again, when you're a part of a conglomeration you're like a commodity, a product, certain things that you do for promotional reasons...

KNOWLEDGE:...And that's one of them, wearing that kind of stuff.

JO: Look at the X in AX, that seems obvious enough. AX is basically "biting" hip-hop. The fashion world is biting



the hip-hop world left and right. How can we protect ourselves as artists?

ISHMAEL: Going back to what Knowledge said, it's all education. We shouldn't give a fuck about what a white person thinks. It doesn't matter whether they know they are biting hip-hop or not, as long as we know it and we understand it; that's all that really matters. Cause they aren't going to change; we should stop hoping for them to look at us equally or hoping they respect us, because that's not a hope anymore.

KNOWLEDGE: This country was built on racism and it's going to stay that way.[3] You just got to worry about yourself and build yourself up, you can't worry about everybody else. And about the Armani, as long as they can find something to make money off of, they will do it...and it's always been based on Black culture. They've always made money off Black culture, since the beginning—and it's going to continue.... Right now hip-hop is really something popular among the young crowd, and Armani wasn't really big among young people. Now he sees he can make money off of them so he's doing it..., but I would never have put my foot in the Armani Exchange store...

ISHMAEL: ...I walked by it many times.

KNOWLEDGE: The only reason we had those clothes on was because that was all they had at the photo shoot for us to wear, so we wore them.[4]

JO: You keep using the word commodity, talking in its language and about its formation. Now if you are a commodity as you keep saying and they're "biting" your style, how can we use this to our advantage? Cause it seems to me somebody like Miles Davis used it somewhat to his own advantage. But it's scary, because you become so wrapped up in the commodity, and money and stuff....

ISHMAEL: Well, the first step is to recognize yourself as that (as a commodity). Once you see this you see the main problem. So many people out there just don't recognize this, they think they're actually doing something for themselves, without recognizing what they're doing for other people. Basically it goes back to what we were saying about popularizing as well as raising the standards.... If you have an outlet you use that outlet to your advantage, you always have to keep in mind that you still have to deal with all the other circumstances.

JO: If you are now commodities, how are you going to come up next on your next album? Are you going to declare yourself dead like De La Soul did on *De La Soul is Dead*, their album following *Three Feet and Rising*, the one that espoused the whole notion of the Daisy Age (which unfortunately, as Knowledge pointed out, was misunderstood as some Black hippie movement)? Sometimes it's the only way to go; to kill yourself that is, or rather, to proclaim your own death at the height of your own commodification.

KNOWLEDGE: The only way to go is to be alive.... De La Soul didn't really declare themselves dead because so many things branched off of them that didn't really have anything to do with them.... I think they were declaring the myths people were creating about them dead—Daisy Age and things like that. Like we said before, people got caught up in it and had a misunderstanding of what they were trying to say. I don't think we would have to declare our sound dead to go on, because we know that even though it spawned a lot of other groups on the same type of vibe, a good group is a group that can accept that and not react to the spawns but can keep building, keep adding on to it. Because if you react it just kind of shows that vibe just wasn't really that strong.

JO: One of the questions I had was originally intended for Mecca due to her ancestry as Brazilian American, but upon further reflection it became apparent that because of our status as Blacks who have grown up in somewhat foreign lands, we are all cultural mulattos. You say you take from everywhere (various musical and intellectual traditions) but this "new" music (jazz, hip-hop, acid jazz) is also quite important in another respect. For me, not having grown up in the United States and not being exposed to certain Black musical traditions, namely jazz and soul, it's really only now that I am hearing this "old" music, discovering jazz and these other Black musical traditions, through your music. I know that you toured in Europe and I am wondering whether there were any reactions from any kids, say in France where Black youths have gone through a similar experience to myself (without large exposure to all these Black musical traditions) but where rap has become a dominant form of expression.

MECCA (LADYBUG): In Nice, if you're asking us about kids that approached us, we did a jazz festival and there were these kids from two magazines, and they had a lot of nice questions about Marxism and about being Black in America, and about Frantz Fanon and why we though a lot of people weren't introduced to that stuff.

ISHMAEL: In the States, though, it's a different sort of alienation for a lot of Black people. They tend to stray away from the newness, stray away from the references made to people, and, if it is not something easily understandable, then it's seen as not worthy of understanding at all. Again, this is due to the programme we've had since we were brought over here. So the main problem is getting people to realize that and not be afraid of things they don't understand. The main thing we want to accomplish is for everybody that's Black to recognize the Blackness in the music.

JO: You just brought up Frantz Fanon, what had these students commented on in terms of their reading and/or exposure to Frantz Fanon? Was it that they felt people in the United States hadn't read it?

MECCA (LADYBUG): No actually they were telling me that in France a lot of students there don't know about Frantz Fanon and don't care to know about him.

JO: One of the things I would say about Frantz Fanon, especially in terms of your whole notion of "refuting space and time" is that if one looks at the first several pages of the book, the first things he says are about the colonizer's camp, the spatial division, the domination of space and time, as it were. In a class, one of my professors referred to Marx as the "thief of time" and Frantz Fanon as the "thief of space...." You talk about "refuting space and time" if you're refuting space and time, you're obviously trying to create a space, visually and musically. Maybe you can explain to me the whole notion of the Fat Clinic because when I was looking through the lyrics you talk about "trying to gang my style" then you say "Uncle Sam showed us all of space...we refuted it. Ghetto was the aim." To me that was really nice because you have space where you are, in other words, saying fuck to the coalition building. It's a Black thing and also acknowledging imperialism in the reference to Uncle Sam.

ISHMAEL: Well, it's basically not so much a refuting space and then creating a new space, it's like breaking down any walls around any type of space at all, so that you never feel like there's someplace you can't go.... So Uncle Sam showed us all his space; as Black people, the space he showed us was nothing but a little box...you know, whether it was your apartment, or your building, or your neighbourhood, it wasn't enough space to feel like you had room to work in. So that's why we said "we refuted it." We told him: "ghetto was the aim, let go of my brain." It's like: "let me go," that's what that's all about—making space everywhere at all times, whatever times.

JO: Returning to my original query it is quite interesting to see these Black youth manifestations in places like France especially in the light of a comment by Lamine Kouyate, Senegalese-Parisian designer, saying of Black kids: "Mali was really a cultural cradle.... The ancestry is strong, but people are very open to foreign influences. I knew more about rock and funk in the '70s than any kids in Paris when I got here."

James Oscar is a writer and independent film programmer working in Toronto.

NOTES

[1]Certain grammars of jazz and this new music (jazz-hip-hop) both as form and in their form (corpus) act as a challenge to Western art in its resituating of what has become accepted and gained currency as Western aesthetics, not as moments of closure, but rather as temporal moments of open
specificity.

[2]"It must be realized that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, or more dangerous to manage than the establishment of a new order of government; for he who introduces it makes all kinds of enemies of all those who derived from the old order and finds but lukewarm defenders among those who stand to gain from the new one." Machiavelli, The Prince (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), p. 27.

[3]If one reintroduces here the concept of the changing same in the context of Black existence in the United States, one comes out, as one should, with an oxymoron, a kind of grammar of probable impossibilities, with a very critical moment of hope and a critical moment of pessimism. This "pessimism" about the lot of Black America must be read as a moment or rather an instance or evocation of enabling constraints especially in the light of the title of their album "REACHIN'" which evokes a grammar, albeit critical, of these possibilities. In the context of their whole motif of outer space, one could say their pessimism is one of the cosmic type.

[4]Ironically, shortly after the interview, I noticed Digable Planets appearance in September *Vogue*. This seems to be at odds with what they were saying here....

I'M TRYING TO GO BEYOND THE CATEGORIES. I NEED TO ASCEND. I'VE GOTTA FIND THE SPACE WHERE MY CREATIVITY IS NOT LIMITED. IT'S TIME I BECAME MORE THAN A BLACK MAN.

UH-HUH. LISTEN, I HAVE A NEW STORY.
A WOMAN WALKED FOR MANY MILES THRU THE DESERT TOWARDS THE SUNRISE, UNTIL SHE CAME ACROSS A MAN.

"PEACE, MY BROTHER," SHE SAID. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?"
ANNOYED, THE MAN STOPPED WORKING AND SAID: "I'M TRYING TO BUILD AN INSTRUMENT."
"A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT?" ASKED THE WOMAN. "THAT'S WONDERFUL! I HAVE MY MUSIC IN MY HEAD WHEREVER I TRAVEL."
THE WOMAN BEGAN TO SING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL JAZZ FOR THE MAN.

HE SAT AND LISTENED UNTIL HIS EYES BECAME SAD.
"IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I PLAYED OR LISTENED TO MUSIC LIKE THAT," HE SAID. "I USED TO PLAY ALL THE TIME, BUT THEN I DECIDED TO TAKE APART MY OLD INSTRUMENT. I WANTED TO CREATE A TOOL THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO PLAY A NEW KIND OF MUSIC. SOMETHING THAT I'D NEVER HEARD BEFORE, BUT ALWAYS WANTED TO HEAR."

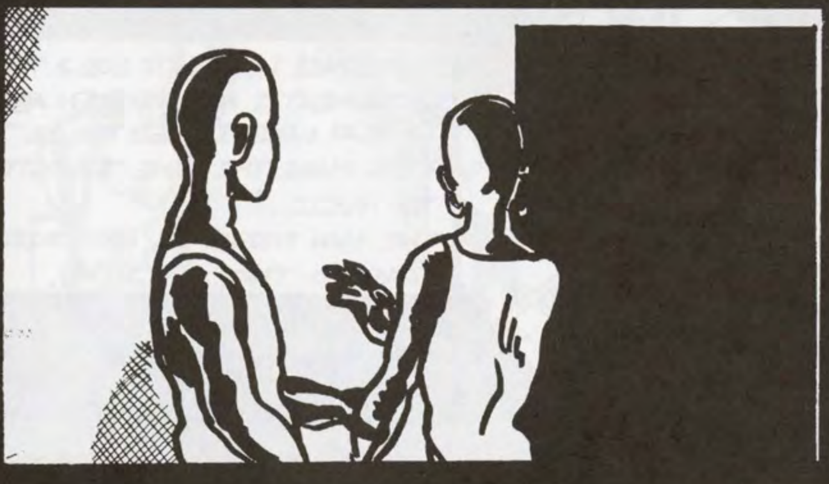
"BUT SINCE I BEGAN TO BUILD THIS INSTRUMENT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PLAY LIKE I USED TO, OR TO EVEN MAKE THE TIME TO LISTEN TO MUSIC."
THE MAN PAUSED AS MEMORIES FLASHED THRU HIS MIND.

"AND HERE YOU ARE.... YOU WALK HERE AND BEGIN SINGING THE MOST BRILLIANT JAZZ THAT I'VE HEARD. HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT IS THAT ALLOWS YOU TO DO THIS, MY SISTER?" ASKED THE MAN. "MAYBE KNOWING THAT WILL HELP ME AND MY OWN CREATION...."

THE MAN LOOKED AROUND FOR THE WOMAN BUT SAW ONLY HER FOOTPRINTS. SHE HAD TAKEN HER MUSIC AND WALKED ON TOWARDS THE SUN.

HAVE YOU BEEN LISTENING?

YEAH... THAT WAS A GOOD ONE. I LIKED IT. WANNA FUCK?



BY TERENCE ANTHONY

•1994

Book s on Music

Radio Rethink

art, sound and transmission

edited by Diana Augaitis and Dan Lander

Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1994

CD imprinted by Walter Phillips Gallery

ANN SHIN

In light of the development and hype over new media, radio seems old-fashioned —something leftover from the days when a family would gather in the parlour to sit around the wireless and hear the news. It's been a while since radio was in the forefront of people's minds. Now, it is often considered primarily a medium for airing twenty-four-hour-a-day music, with the odd traffic and news report. In light of all the changes in communication technologies, it is high time for an evaluation of the role of radio in society today. How does it fare against computer networks and multimedia communications? What does radio offer that is unique and valuable to the public today?

The most obvious thing that sets radio apart from other media is that it's live voice. The spoken word has always, and will continue, to hold an audience; this, in spite of the predominance of the visual image in Western aesthetics and popular culture. But beyond this most basic feature of radio, there are questions about the politics of technology as well as issues of context, form and censorship which complicate any discussion of the medium.

Radio Rethink provides a wide range of views on these issues. As a collection of essays (with an accompanying CD), *Radio Rethink* attempts to represent the widest range of voices possible. Everyone from Hank Bull and Patrick Ready from *The HP Show* in Vancouver, to Irish feminist Margaretta D'Arcy give their take on radio in this book. The subjects explored range from the history of radio to radio art, from radio's role in cultural identity to starting up a pirate mini-FM station. If there is a common concern among the writers, it's convincing readers that radio *is* relevant and there is still much to be done in the medium.

One of the main concerns of several authors is how the public has been denied access to transmission technology. Since its use by the military as a tool for communication, radio transmission and reception have become distinct and separate technologies, with the public being given the latter but denied access to the former. Radio has become a one-way communication tool with the public being relegated to the role of passive receivers.

In *Radio Rethink,* D'Arcy and Tetsuo Kogawa talk about setting up "pirate" mini-FM stations for community-based communications. In 1990, D'Arcy and a group of women got together to air an international women's radio festival from Galway, Ireland. With support from women's radio stations around the world they transmitted the show on a narrow-cast transmitter (with a radius of two miles). As it was a pirate station, it was able to ignore the laws against the broadcast of voices of members of Sinn Fein, as well as laws against broadcasting information on how to obtain an abortion.

The issue of state censorship is even more predominant in Japan where, until the 1980s, most cities had only one FM station. Kogawa writes that radio broadcasting has been under such strict control by the state since World War II that Japanese mass media still refer to the airwaves as their *national resource.* Mini-FM stations were the first forms of free radio or pirate radio. They started in the early 1980s achieving immediate cult status and served to provide a common gathering space for people with similar concerns.

Both D'Arcy and Kogawa talk about the role of radio as a catalyst in mobilizing and providing voice to a community; with computer communications available to people around the world, however, the notions of community and community forum are rapidly changing.

Computer networks are now being used as a medium for both private exchange as well as for public forum. A typical usenet is similar to a narrowly defined community radio station, with the exception that the readers of the usenet are also contributors as well. Everything from information, opinions, even artwork and music can be downloaded onto a bulletin board. (Granted the nature of this may change as more private and state regulations are placed on computer networks.) Access to "transmitting" your information via computer is also much easier to obtain than with radio. To take part, all you need is a couple thousand dollars to set up your computer and modem system (much less if you buy used equipment). Membership into many bulletin boards is free.

Conversely, a radio station can create the sense of a certain linguistic and cultural community whereas the more anarchic BBS system cannot. Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña talk about their use of radio for Latin American listeners in America. Fusco writes that "Radio is an important medium for maintaining a sense of cultural identity by constantly recycling and recreating an image of what Latin America is for Latinos outside of Latin America." In terms of its effect on non-Latin listeners in the broadcast area, Gomez-Peña writes, "We are interested in 'disorienting' the audience through unexpected sound and language. By making them experience a kind of cultural vertigo and by shattering their sense of 'the familiar,' we aim to erase the borders between 'us' and 'them.'" Mass media radio can be seen as a means of confrontation where the listener's sensibility as well as intellect are challenged by the very sounds of a familiar but foreign language.

Artists in *Radio Rethink* take this principle of "vertigo" even further with the CD by forcing listeners to adjust the way they listen to the work. While listening you are forced to question the habitual associations you have with radio. For instance, on the CD is an excerpt from Robert Racine's *Sound Signatures* — a work based on transforming writing, a visual form, into its sound representation. The resultant recording of the sound of signatures being written runs for almost fourteen minutes. On first and second hearing it comes off as an esoteric exercise. But arguably, if you listen to the cadence of the writing and the sound of the different writing utensils on paper, you gain an image of the signature, if not the writer herself.

Racine's piece, and those of the other artists such as Christof Migone and Hildegard Westerkamp, push the definition of radio. Their pieces demand a different kind of listening, one that goes against established habit. Whether they succeed is debatable. With radio having become so entrenched in the pop music industry, there is hardly a context for intellectual art on the airwaves. The sound art pieces on the CD seem more appropriate as gallery installations than as radio broadcasts.

As most of the CD is devoted to sound art, it is quite a departure from the issues discussed in the book. As a CD, *Radio Rethink* challenges our listening habits; as a book it presents different ways in which radio is conceptualized. What is missing in this collection is a critique of established commercial and public radio formats, as well as an examination of the impact of new media on radio. The authors of *Radio Rethink* establish that there are different contexts in which to consider radio, but it remains to be seen how it will change in the future as a medium for art, community forum and mass communication.

Ann Shin is a writer living in Toronto. She is currently working on a manuscript and recording called City Rituals.

Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs

John Lydon, with Keith and Kent Zimmerman
New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994

MARC DACEY

How ironic. Punk rockers, who would have sneered at dropping thirty-two dollars on a hardcover book in 1979, are probably now among the few who could afford to pay the price today. John Lydon, now the singer of the band Public Image Limited, was, as Johnny Rotten, the lead singer of the Sex Pistols—arguably the most notorious of the punk rockers of the late 1970s. This is his story, and it's an entertaining, bilious scrabble through the opinions of a man, now in his late 30s, who seems to have forgotten nothing of his turbulent youth.

Lydon's autobiography reads somewhat like a long interview: other voices are brought in, including Lydon's father (who allows that "my Johnny changed the world"), friends, surviving Sex Pistols, and assorted hangers-on, to comment upon, contradict and combat Lydon's recollections. While it makes for a very lively read, the technique —and the absence of footnotes and an index —occasionally make it difficult to catch just who is speaking. Most notable in its absence is the voice of the Pistols' notorious, Svengali-like manager, Malcolm McLaren, who, because of this glaring omission, is unable to rebut Lydon's allegations. Still, keeping in mind that these are the thoughts of a committed individualist who has maintained many of his anarchic convictions, Lydon's book is a keeper as a personal account of a social and artistic experiment that for a few years knocked a complacent, morally corrupt Britain off its bearings.

For Lydon, the Sex Pistols two-year run wasn't a stunt or a ploy. He saw it as an escape from of a sharply delineated working-class life, which, using the first person, Lydon describes, partly in derision and partly in solidarity, as full of "lazy, good-for-nothing bastards, absolute cop-outs [who] never accept responsibility for our lives, and that's why we'll always be downtrodden." Indeed, much of the first part of the book contains Lydon's invariably awful experiences with religion, the class system, the educational system and authority in general. Music was an escape for Lydon, a bright, angry young man who naturally veered between a shyness born of alienation, health problems and open hostility.

Hostility was the public face of Lydon's "Rotten" persona, and as the spitting, sloganeering lyricist and front man of the Sex Pistols, his inchoate anger defined punk rock as a musical genre and as a social and fashion trend. Contempt and loathing for the Establishment was its manifesto, according to Lydon, but punk was almost immediately merchandised into something that could be bought in punk boutiques—an oxymoron of the first degree. Lydon, who comes across as a bit of an idealist underneath all his invective, mourns the fact that his expression of autonomy, individuality and personal responsibility were only shallowly understood by the hordes of Pistols fans. Lydon would have preferred, it seems, anti-fans, seeing the whole industry of rock music as being utterly corrupt.

As for Sid Vicious, Lydon's bandmate and punk's dead saint, Lydon spends a great deal of the book on their relationship, Vicious's lack of will when it came to fame and drugs, and especially his American girlfriend Nancy Spungen, for whom no one has a good word. Lydon sees Vicious's eventful death from a drug overdose as a case of falling prey to the very "rock-star" mythology that the Pistols wanted to explode.

This is a terrific read for anyone interested in Lydon himself, but is also an excellent primer to the punk years, which are, no doubt to Lydon's disgust, very nearly ready to become the next wave of musical nostalgia.

Marc Dacey is a Toronto writer and co-editor of Chart Magazine.

Music/Sound 1948-1993

The Michael Snow Project

The Performed and Recorded Music/Sound of Michael Snow, Solo and with Various Ensembles, His Sound-Films and Sound Installations. Improvisations/Compositions from 1948 to 1993.

Edited by Michael Snow
Toronto: Knopf Canada, 1994

STEVE REINKE

Of the four books connected to "The Michael Snow Project," the *Music/Sound* volume is probably the one we needed least. As Snow admits in the introduction "ninety-nine per cent of the readers of this book will have had no direct listening experience of the music discussed." While this claim is somewhat of an exaggeration, the general idea is true. This is a book about music that remains largely unheard, recordings that are rare or out of circulation and improvised performances attended by small audiences.

I can't help but look at this particular publication as symptomatic of the entire "The Michael Snow Project." This book did not come into being because a body of work needed to be documented and critically discussed. This book exists merely to complement a "celebration of Snow" staged through an unprecedented cooperation of Toronto's largest cultural institutions for contemporary visual art. In fact it seems as if it was forced into existence as a long and heavy footnote to this enterprise of genius-building.

Beautifully designed by Bruce Mau, the book features lots of performance photographs, facsimile memorabilia (newspaper reviews, concert announcements), a transcription of a conversation and a half dozen written texts.

The first of these written texts is David Lancashire's "Blues in the Clock Tower," an engaging account of Snow's years as a jazz musician. Part history, part personal remembrance, it covers 1948 (Snow still a teenager) to 1972 (Snow returns to Toronto from New York).

A sort of passive-aggressive hagiography is at play here, largely through the positioning of names. On the first pages of his introduction Snow reproduces his liner notes for his "The Artists' Jazz Band" 1973 release, crossing out all but the proper names leaving a list of musicians he particularly admires. The project of much of the book is to spin out this list into a genealogy of musical greats and position Snow's name within this history.

The next section documents Snow's activity with the CCMC, who have performed weekly improvisational concerts at Toronto's Music Gallery since 1975. One long text transcribes a conversation between Snow and two of the other CCMC co-founders, Al Mattes and Nobua Kubota. Unfortunately, the transcript is largely unedited, leaving in all the incomplete sentences, the many ahs and ums. The result is casual and personal, but I found it impenetrably boring.

Image from an anonymously produced poster project, 1994.

More direct in its lavish praise is Raymond Gervais' "Les Disques de Michael Snow," reprinted here in translation. However, Gervais is so intent on the project of genius-building he undermines his own attempts at analysis. Again there's a lot of naming going on, with Snow and Glenn Gould set up as the binary stars of the Canadian music universe.

Much more interesting is the dialogue between Bruce Elder and Michael Snow. Elder spins out long analyses/questions/comments often developing several lines of thought in tandem, some very quickly, others with painstaking slowness. Snow responds with measured deflections that are never anything less than engaging, often downright illuminating. It seems that their dialogue could continue indefinitely, and I wish it would.

Part of the problem is that much of Snow's sound work is done as part of his film and installation work and is therefore likely better off being discussed in these contexts. (What I'd really like to see is a substantial critical piece on Snow's brilliant *The Last LP.*) Also, because his own writing on his recordings has been included in *The Collected Writings of Michael Snow* rather than this book. It seems that after everything was divvied up, not much of substance was left for this volume.

Steve Reinke is a writer and media artist currently working on "The Hundred Videos."

Ranters and Crowd Pleasers

Punk and Pop Music, 1977-92

Greil Marcus
New York: Doubleday, 1993

YASHAR ESSOP

Greil Marcus's music criticism is intelligent and down-to-earth, grave with learning but with a ready grasp of everyday life. His previous work, *Lipstick Traces* was an erudite and weighty study of punk rock and its historical roots. Marcus situated punk within a tradition of dissidence which includes artistic movements such as the Dadaists, the Lettrists, the Situationist International and even heretical medieval religious movements. *Ranters and Crowd Pleasers* develops the themes explored in Marcus's earlier foray into the secret messages of popular culture. Although it is less historically oriented than *Lipstick Traces*—being a collection of journalism rather than a formal study, or history of semiotics—this book performs much of the work of more self-conscious histories of punk music, with about twice as much ease.

The bulk of the book is devoted to pieces on post-punk avant-garde bands. Most of these bands developed out of the intellectual ferment provided by the University of Leeds' leftist milieu. These groups differ from their precursors like the Sex Pistols and the Clash not only because of their co-ed composition, but because their rebellion was strongly informed by a leftist political consciousness.

Marcus is instinctively sympathetic to post-punk bands like the Gang of Four, the Mekons, Delta 5, the Au Pairs, and the Raincoats because these post-punk avatars reflect his own Marxist commitment to the politics of everyday life, and the belief that popular music should engage with ordinary reality rather than escape from it.

It is characteristic of Marcus's journalism that it invisibly presents us with as much insight into its author as of his subjects. Showing a penchant for satire and wicked humour in "Rock Death in the 1970's: A Sweepstakes," Marcus laments the debasement of the word "survivor" in the parlance of the times. Instead of a word suggesting life, death and struggle, "survivor" has come to refer to "...anyone who has persevered, or rather continued, in any form of activity, including breathing, for

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The breadth of Marcus's cultural references gives *Ranters and Crowd Pleasers* a gravity and intelligence normally alien to rock criticism. Marcus is as likely and capable of discussing Vietnam, Jean Luc Godard, Raymond Chandler, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno and Henri Rousseau as he is Johnny Rotten or the Gang of Four. This knowledge is never deployed as cultural name-dropping but is used to dramatize the connections existing between all artistic and cultural expressions. "Johnny Rotten and Margaret Drabble" illustrates a striking connection between the punk icon and successful British mainstream novelist. Both confront worlds in which nihilism has replaced faith as the creed of the day, and in which human virtue is no longer seen as effective or necessary. The comparison is illuminating and seductive, characteristic of a work in which the intelligence underlying much of punk music is identified and examined. Ultimately, Marcus succeeds in making punk music seem articulate, a quality that some might feel is inimical to the music itself.

Yashar Essop is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto. He is from South Africa.

Extended Play

Sounding off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein

John Corbett
Durham: Duke University Press, 1994

BRENT CEHAN

A New World of Sound?

Shuttling randomly through Corbett's book, I'm reminded of its distant ancestor, John Rockwell's *All American Music*: a compilation of profiles of leading twentieth century classical, jazz, avant-garde and "art rock" performers Milton Babbit, David Del Tredici, Philip Glass, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Laurie Anderson and the Talking Heads.[1] Eventually, I bought albums by most of these artists or made tapes from friends. As an artist wannabe I readily recognized this as "Art Music"—which doesn't mean music that artists actually listen to. Years of studio visits later I learned that artists listen to just about anything. These performers were either artists (Anderson, and to a lesser extent Byrne), borrowing from critical art theory, and/or incorporated artist works into their own work or their promotional imagery. What

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Rock journalism is a form of social criticism for Marcus. In an ideal world, rock 'n' roll performs the hard tasks of social criticism. In the real world it more often confines itself to trumpeting its own success. The bands Marcus champions commit themselves to the expression of ordinary life, in all its banality, and sometimes all its horror. The post-punk avant-garde eschews the desire to refine a sensibility or to project a persona: the usual goals of mainstream performers. They cultivate anonymity. Their attitude may be remote, deadpan, innocuous, even threatening, but is not supposed to be of interest in itself. Rock's ultimate sin is the failure to communicate anything other than the specialness of the artist and his or her private concerns. Post-punk's ability to carry its Marxist burden, transcending solipsism and breaching the absolute, is what renders it heroic in Marcus's eyes.

Marcus cuts through the pretension and vacuity that often characterizes mainstream rock criticism. But he is never elitist, and remains as comfortable and evocative in his appreciation of Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* as in his celebration of figures like Elvis Costello or Lora Logic. The solipsism of mainstream music is his constant target. Rock musicians forays into philanthropy for instance does little but arouse his disgust, such excursions often being transparently motivated by the desire for self-promotion and aggrandizement. Marcus demonstrates how "We Are the World" is an anthem that dramatizes its performer's self-involvement instead of functioning as a cry in the wilderness to enlist support on behalf of the starving in Ethiopia. Similarly, the rock musicians who embraced the anti-nuclear cause in 1979 are pinioned for their political ignorance and their too-easy conviction in the supremacy of their cause, with Marcus pointing out how rock musicians have failed to embrace more divisive and controversial issues like abortion rights—an issue that directly effects more men and women on a day-to-day basis.

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Sun Ra, as reproduced in *Extended Play*.

Rockwell provided was really an advanced indicator of "cool," which was more than welcome to an audience that had outgrown Rolling Stone, begun reading the Village Voice and grown weary of the social and musical constraints of pop/rock. I dutifully followed the agenda suggested by the book, buying Cage, Elliot Carter, a few Giorno Poetry Systems records and some Satie, for context. Each list spawned new lists dividing the uninitiated from the cognoscenti. (I confess that like many others in my social position, I dubbed some Steve Reich on to the soundtrack of a non-narrative film.) What could I have been thinking?

I was consumed.

I still have the records but lost those most ephemeral of commodities offered by music consumerism: entertainment, knowledge and validation. As is inevitable with currency dependent narratives, the paradigms changed and the illusion of complex complete integration promised by the unifying agenda in Rockwell's book was dismantled. I lost the current.

I offer this extended prologue as an explanation for my apprehensions about this new entertainment assignment: John Corbett's Extended Play. Like the Rockwell book, it's got both the pop stars to draw you in and the promise of learning some critical theory (too bad some of it's Baudrillard), while reading about music. If you're looking for an intelligent essay on consumerism's relationship to CD technology; or a randomly sequenced interview with John Cage; or a not very convincing one on "aesthetic terrorism" (i.e., scent used as a subliminal form of advertising in department stores); or just some new things to listen to, this book sets the scene with critical essays, profiles of artists with large and complicated bodies of work, extensive interviews and a detailed annotated discography, and will guide you towards a variety of theorists and performers.

The loose organizing thread of the book, sketched in the opening essay "Brothers from Another Planet" focuses on Jamaican dub producer and musician Lee "Scratch" Perry, most noted for launching Bob Marley's career, eclectic jazz innovator and synthesizer pioneer Sun Ra and Parliament/Funkadelic leader George Clinton. (They also receive profiles and/or interviews later in the book). Each employs distinctive yet dissimilar forms of musical multilayering, have incorporated space motifs in their work as signifiers of "otherness" (including ark/space ship/slave ship tropes), and have adopted mad genius "shamanistic" (Corbett's word not mine) personas involving elaborate costumes and word play. Corbett argues convincingly that these function in each artist's work as a means of critiquing the "rationality" of the Western society that saw Black bodies as machinery and transported them to alien continents. But I wonder if the philosophical worlds of the artists, including their critiques of racism, are best viewed by grouping them within this framework. Perry, for instance, is more closely tied to Rastafarianism and Jamaican politics than outer space. From my introductory listenings (and Corbett's commentary), Ra emphasizes the equal validity of dream states, myth, emotion and the cerebral as the means through which we literally "know" the universe and our place in it. "The Funk" employed by Clinton's Afronauts conquers the body and mind, accepts both of them totally and then through sensuous experience, permanently fuses them.

By grouping these artists around the space motif Corbett implies but doesn't actually provide for a specific historical or cultural text that would link the themes of

Computer imaging by Brent Cehan.

Diaspora, madness and space. Perry, Ra and Clinton seem contextualized only by other artists whose inclusion supports Corbett's own cross-cultural and cross-generational reading. They are not fully contextualized in terms of other popular cultural meanings of space, or in terms of equally important Black contemporaries who didn't employ similar tropes, or who used them differently.[2] Of seventies artists invoking space, eclecticism, advanced production technique and positions ranging from alienation to celebration its worth noting that Labelle had a space period, as did David Bowie, Earth, Wind and Fire, Jefferson Starship, Miles Davis and Supertramp. I can't fault his analysis of individual performers (the reading of Clinton's cosmology is great) but Corbett's correlation is more the expression of a music fan's personal aesthetic and speculative desire for coherence than a fully formed cultural analysis.[3]

Corbett is a fan's fan, which means I occasionally find myself lacking, and resenting the structures that create that lack: "Of course you must own No New York..." Without getting too Oedipal about it, my speculative desire for coherence just might not be his. While I'm glad that he positions a number of Black artists with extensive discographies as the new grand old men of music, I'm baffled that the book profiles only three women, (Sainko Nantchylack and Ikue Mori and Catherine Jauniaux), two of whom are members of a duo. Especially in light of the eclectic range of his selection, even within Corbett's loose intersection of race, spatial acoustics, political and artistic autonomy which serve as the implied criteria for inclusion, there are any number of women who could or should be here and whose work may even revise the terms of that criteria.

Any of the other women with extended careers in avant-garde music included in "New Music for Electronic and Recorded Media"[4] from my Rockwell period would do for starters. As would the ones who have appeared since but haven't received the same validation. As does Betty Carter who, after having seen her yawn her way through a rendition of "When Its Sleepy Time Down South," I would argue demonstrates as much awareness of acoustic and vocal technique, jazz music history and the political implications of white audience/black performer positioning as anyone included here. The "auteur" positioning of women working in hip-hop and dance music —Janet Jackson, Neneh Cherry, the Woman-Who-is-Head-of-Maverick-Records and her protégé Meshell N'dgeOcello—or the equal foregrounding of women and men in acid jazz groups are barely noticed in Corbett's essay on the social and psychological status of (mostly Black) female background singers "Siren Song to Banshee Wail."

So, I may or may not include this book in my own musical agendas and aesthetics and if you are someone truly serious about music, you owe it to yourself to do the same. Corbett's introduction describes his CD player as a postmodern instrument creating random juxtapositions shuttling between tracks and selected artists. More recently my own player linked with my modem has been taking advantage of the Toronto Public Library (416-393-7670) and their extensive CD collections which after hundreds of lendings can continue to reproduce unaffected sound. (For those without a modem, computers in the library will also allow you to reserve CD's in their collection). With CD technology implying precision, clarity and permanence in both its physical composition and expense, it has definitely shaped listening agendas: for me, this results in a heterogeneous mix of classical chamber/jazz as well as dance music. But my choices are equally the result of the political, technological and aesthetic criteria as well as the accidental limits of what I can play at a comfortable volume without disturbing the neighbours. As a result, the music constantly shifts cultural and formal contexts. Let your own discretion be your guide.

Brent Cehan's work in progress "If the past had any sense it would move" is still a work in progress.

NOTES

[1]John Rockwell, All American Music, (New York: Knopf, 1983).

[2]Especially useful would be other political Black readings of the space programme, Egypt—a technologically advanced African empire (especially in astronomy), and popular readings of science contemporary with the artist's careers. One of Clinton's trademarks is the complete recontextualization of pop cultural phenomenon in his own terms: the Space Invaders video game, the discovery of Black holes, The Empire Strikes Back, cloning and Erich von Daniken's Chariots of the Gods? have all found places in his work.

[3]Compare Bowie's grimly contradictory Queer/Aryan myth of deliverance "Oh You Pretty Things" with Clinton's optimistic and world transforming Black nationalism.

[4]The record, perhaps best known by Laurie Anderson completists, also features early electronic music composer Johanna M. Beyer, Annea Lockwood, Pauline Oliveros, Laurie Spiegal, Megan Roberts and Ruth Anderson (1750 ARCH Records, 1977).

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