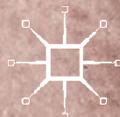




Youth and Permissive
Social Change in British
Music Papers, 1967-1983
Patrick Glen



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Patrick Glen
University College London
London, UK

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: a Sea of Possibilities?

Paul Rambali, a music journalist during the 1970s and 1980s, explained that popular music had ‘suggested a range of possibilities in life that nobody ever told me at school nor my parents’.¹ For young people like Rambali, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s popular music was the most significant cultural form that entertained, informed and influenced them. The music press was where, every week, they found out what was going on and why it mattered. Any young person with a small amount of disposable income could walk to almost any newsagents in Britain and find a copy of a weekly music paper—one of the so-called inkiies due to their cheap printing methods, which left ink on the readers’ fingers. Even if someone did not have the money to buy a copy, it seemed that music press readers were a generous sort and would share: the *National Readership Survey* recorded that over nine people read each copy, which translated into a potential readership, combining those who read the *Melody Maker*, *New Musical Express* (*NME*) and *Sounds*, of around 3,000,000 people per week.² These papers, made in metropolitan London—the hub of the

¹ Paul Rambali, personal interview (2011).

² Circulation figures are according to Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) figures provided by IPC Media (2010). The number of readers-per-copy is found in the *National Readership Survey* (*NRS*). *NRS* (January–June 1972). *NRS* (January–June 1978).

music industry and the press—offered a window into popular music, the people who made it and other fans. Copies piled up in bedrooms, living rooms, university and sixth form common rooms telling not only a story of the happenings in music, but that of social change and the way that we as a society understood youth.

With their newspapers in front of them, readers were typically greeted with a large photograph of a star musician or group on the front page surrounded by enticing lures—who was releasing an album or planning to tour or let a journalist know piquant details about their personal life or politics? Inside was a familiar format, news at the front with the charts, short articles and record reviews, longer features and interviews, live reviews, concert listings, letters from readers, and finally, the classifieds. All these sections were interspersed with advertisements of various sizes and mostly paid for by record labels or industry management who were promoting their acts. There was plenty to be entertained by and as the 1960s moved into the 1970s, the length of papers doubled, ensuring value for money and plenty to read. It was fuel for the imagination and increasingly, after 1967, a place where critical voices concerning politics and society were presented to a mass youth readership.

SONIC YOUTH

Young people spent a disproportionate amount on records and music papers and were key markets for the music and publishing industry.³ With around 15% of all young people buying music papers during this period and nearly all having at least second-hand access to papers, the music press provides a unique insight into the culture of young people and the commercial culture that catered for them.⁴ Papers allowed a lively exchange of ideas between journalists, musicians and readers, many of whom were under twenty-five years of age. From these exchanges, it is possible to recover viewpoints on the lives and ideas of young people. The views and behaviour of youth in this period has a particular significance as it allows us to consider the young people's reactions to coming of age in a period in which their material position and social power had grown. Full employment, growing consumer power and greater freedoms granted by the

³ Mark Abrahams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959): 5–14.

⁴ *NRS* (January–June 1972). *NRS* (January–June 1978).

liberalising censorship encouraged a buoyant 1960s culture industry that could be used as a platform to critique society. Young people's unprecedented economic position gave them greater autonomy from parental authority and defined them as a discrete market for goods. As Selina Todd and Hilary Young noted, it was not simply a matter of escaping their parents' homes and mentalities but parents and children cooperated and even the children of those who had not gained materially during the 1960s were encouraged to live more daring lives.⁵

The music press's success epitomised the increasing cultural, social, political and economic position of youth that emerged in the post-war period and the importance of popular music to their lives. Mark Donnelly has argued that 'the most important field of all, in terms of how it allowed young people to shape their own environment, was pop music'.⁶ A sentiment shared by historians of youth culture and popular music like George Melly, Jon Savage and, recently, Keith Gildart and Matthew Worley.⁷ Young people's ways of living with popular music, however, attracted social anxieties as young people found spaces for their own social interactions, news sounds, styles, ways of speaking and writing, and behaving. Louise Jackson, Jon Savage and David Fowler have studied, for instance, the close attention that was paid to 1950s teenagers gathering around a jukebox (even if, as Melanie Tebutt has noted, there were similar anxieties about youth in the inter-war period).⁸ Jackson argues that adults in

⁵ Selina Todd and Hilary Young, 'Baby-Boomers to "Beanstalkers"', *Cultural and Social History* 9:3 (2015), 451–467.

⁶ Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture Society and Politics* (London: Pearson Education, 2005), 35.

⁷ Keith Gildart, *Images of England through Popular Music* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1972). Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005). Matthew Worley, *No Future!: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) Also see, Jon Garland et al., 'Youth Culture, Popular Music and the End of "Consensus" in Post-War Britain,' *Contemporary British History* 26:3 (2012): 2.

⁸ Louise Jackson, "'the Coffee Club Menace: Policing Youth, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-War Manchester,'" *Cultural and Social History* 42:4 (2007): 289–309. David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920–c.1970: From Ivory Tower to Global Movement – A New History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008): 166–170. David Fowler, 'From Jukebox Boys to Revolting Students: Richard Hoggart and the Study of British Youth Culture,' *Journal of Cultural Studies* 10:1 (2007): 73–84. Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (London: Pimlico, 2008). Melanie Tebutt, *Making Youth: A History of Youth in Modern*

positions of authority constructed a coffee club ‘menace’ to defend ‘an older imagined social order’ that was threatened by new forms of youth sociability and style.⁹ This is not, however, the full account as there was a significant amount of vested and, indeed, adult interest in harnessing an acceptable form of mass youth culture for profit. Fowler and Gillian Mitchell argue that early rock and roll elicited tolerance and curiosity as well as attempts to control; Mitchell uses the example of rocker Tommy Steele who coyly navigated aristocratic, working-class and youth cultures to create a suitably acceptable pop product with mass appeal setting a ‘moral standard’ for rock ‘n’ roll musicians.¹⁰ This book continues a similar examination to find, through the music press, those it reported upon and its interactions with figures of authority, how youth and popular music navigated the scrutiny of figures of authority who deemed certain ideas or behaviours deviant or transgressive and reacted accordingly. It will consider how music papers, as mass-market publications, mediated the need to entertain and provoke an audience who were viewed protectively by society.

Keeping out of trouble was sometimes difficult for the music scene, which was ideal for music papers who wanted to attract readers using controversy. Matthew Worley noted ‘youth cultures have long smouldered with the sense of deviance’.¹¹ Like Worley, Gildart and other recent scholars who have intervened in the nexus of youth and popular music, this book learns from and endeavours to develop, the pioneering work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Despite the ‘subcultural’ perspective being challenged by scholars such as Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson’s idea of a ‘scene’ that is underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of a ‘field’ and Howard Becker’s ‘art worlds’, allowing for a more fluid idea of identity and belonging, there is still something to be taken from the CCCS’s canon.¹² In terms of ‘permissiveness’, Stuart

Britain (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014). Melanie Tebbutt, *Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁹Jackson, ‘Coffee Club Menace’: 289.

¹⁰Gillian A.M. Mitchell, ‘A Very “British” Introduction to Rock ‘n’ Roll: Tommy Steele and the Advent of Rock ‘n’ Roll Music in Britain’: *Contemporary British History* 25:2 (2011): 219–221.

¹¹Worley, *No Future!*: 15.

¹²Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004).

Hall argued that ‘permissiveness’ divided the middle class between young and old as they came into conflict over tradition, consumerism, sex and gender roles.¹³ This division played out in the music papers of the late 1960s and early 1970s and, in fact, set the scene for the 1970s when the intervention of working-class people in the punk scene’s subcultures caused significant tension as did the various groups who were othered as they made claims for representation and rights in line with the idea of ‘permissiveness’ and liberal acceptance. *Resistance through Rituals*, as well, provides a significant Marxist account of youth following the election of the Conservative government in 1970, and this book finds a similar authoritarian response to youth as they were demonised by moral panics, media amplification, policing and law.¹⁴ John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts’s argument that adult authority responded to the new position of youth in British society and their deviations from social norms with attempts to control youth transgression rings true.¹⁵ The work of Raymond Williams is also instructive when considering the views of youth, as it is with anyone else, as they frequently conform to his idea of ‘structures of feeling’ as intuitive organic intellectuals rather than adherents to any discrete ideology.¹⁶ Still, this intuition enabled people to reflect on their position within society when making statements.

Music papers were authoritative sources of information for its readers. It was a medium within which the young found social commentary and perspectives on matters that were important to them. Around the turn of the 1970s, musicians were increasingly expected to articulate authentic experiences and positions despite presenting them through a medium shaped by commercial artifice. Popular music had a certain power, studies that examine ‘affect’ use terms such as ‘intensities’, ‘modulations’ and ‘resonances’ and there is no coincidence that these terms are also commonly

¹³Stuart Hall, ‘Reformism and the Legislation of Consent’ in National Deviancy Conference (ed.) *Permissiveness and Control: The fate of the Sixties legislation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980): 1–43.

¹⁴Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subculture in Post-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁵Stuart Hall, John Clarke, Tony Jefferson, Brian Roberts, ‘Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview,’ in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson eds, *Resistance through Rituals* (London: Routledge, 2006): 11–16.

¹⁶Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977): 128–135.

used to describe sound. Drawing from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's radical critical theory that developed the systems of knowledge described in Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Lawrence Grossberg explains how investments in popular music develop identities.¹⁷ The music press facilitated access into groups, contexts and situations where desires, practices and structures could form. These strategic investments created networks or 'maps' of meaning that allowed groups who had made 'affective allegiances' and individuals to negotiate power, for instance moral codes, through the politics of identity and pleasure collectively. Grossberg argued that,

People give authority to that which they invest in; they let the objects of such investments speak for and in their stead. They let them organize their emotional and narrative life and identity. In this way, the structures and sites of people's investments operate as so many languages that construct their identity.¹⁸

Music papers offered meanings for reinterpretation and presented opportunities in language, musical products, fashions and physical spaces for readers to resist and reconstruct expectations. They were influential, as Andrew Hobbs, a music paper reader and now a journalism scholar, argued: 'as someone who grew up waiting for Thursdays when the music papers came out and who dabbled in this field myself ... I wonder whether this worldview stunted me, morally and aesthetically'.¹⁹ Many others agree that popular music and the music press were highly persuasive.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, Tavistock Publications, 1974). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out*, 83–84.

¹⁹ Andrew Hobbs, Review of Hoskyns, Barney, ed., *The Sound and the Fury: 40 Years of Classic Rock Journalism: A Rock's Backpages Reader*. Jhistory, H-Net Reviews (August, 2006).

PERMISSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

This book adds nuance to the idea of the permissive society or moment or debates and, as a consequence, provides examples of how permissiveness was contingent upon an individual or group's class, locality and other elements of a person's identity. It shows how even in the most 'permissive' areas and milieu (within which popular music and the music press can reasonably be counted), contrary to reassuring liberal accounts of a society transformed to being more open, rational and caring, there was the opportunity for illiberal or discriminatory or downright unethical behaviour justified or enabled by permissiveness. This is therefore, a book that tries to complicate the supposed rise of permissiveness by picking at how experiences and understandings are shaped by factors including, but not limited to, class, gender, sexuality and race. The beneficiaries of social changes that could be described as being permissive were, more often than not, privileged men.

Young people and the music press provide an empirical opportunity that allows us to uncover the interplay between permissive ideas and behaviour at the intersection of privileged metropolitan scenes, represented by the music press and music industry, and a young nationwide readership. As many have argued, young people were frequently presented as a barometer for the nation's health and thus subject to specific types of regulation: cultural works were censored if deemed liable to corrupt the morals of children, and post-war youth subcultures attracted police surveillance, demonised and provoked moral panics.²⁰ The way, therefore, that youth was understood had a profound interplay with the context of social change and permissiveness; the music press gives us a snapshot of these issues.

²⁰ Anthony Aldgate, 'Defining the Parameters of "Quality" Cinema for "the Permissive Society": the British Board of Film Censors and *This Sporting Life*,' in Anthony Aldgate, James Chapman and Arthur Marwick eds, *Windows On the Sixties: Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 26–32. Martin Cloonan, 'Exclusive!: The British Press and Popular Music, the Story So Far' in Steve Jones ed., *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002): 114–133. Martin Cloonan, *Banned!: The Censorship of Popular Music in Britain, 1962–1997* (Aldershot, Arena, 1996). Louise Jackson, 'Review Article. Youth and Modernity,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42 (2007), 639–47. Jackson, 'Coffee Club Menace': 289–308.

The argument that Britain became a permissive society builds the ideas of new freedoms, changing attitudes, the manifestation of previously closeted desires and the lessening of legal restraints on the individual. At its centre is the passing of liberal legislation: The Wolfenden Report's recommendation to decriminalise homosexuality (1957), the Obscene Publications Act (1959), Abortion Act (1967), Sexual Offences Act (1967), Theatres Act (1968) and Divorce Act (1969) elevated topics previously steeped in innuendo and secrecy into the public discourse as the threat of legal reprimand was reduced. This happened around the same time as concerns about British imperial and economic decline: scandals such as the Profumo crisis, secularisation narratives and global youth concerns such as the Vietnam War prompted a re-evaluation of traditional moral arbiters' authority. The new economic power of youth and the publicization of youth countercultures brought new fashions and music to the country along with lived sexual freedoms and drug use. There was, of course, 'permissive' legal change and a discourse on permissiveness in the 1960s, but they have often been overstated as a symptom of a rapid shift in sensibilities and behaviour. In the 1970s, more legislation followed such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) and Race Relations Act (1976) along with the emergence of groups such as the gay liberation movement. While there were certainly changes in British society, the extent that the changes permeated the lives of all and people's attitudes is dubious. Marcus Collins, for instance, is perhaps too easily impressed by the 'avatars' of 'sexual revolution' and the 'new morality' of the 'immoral majority' following the passing of permissive legislation.²¹ His work on the Beatles and Rolling Stones takes a similar position and deems the 'permissive moment' as 'deradicalised' by the 1970s.²² Histories of the 1960s, such as those by Arthur Marwick, Collins or Jonathon Green, overstate the 1960s unique permissiveness and understate the extent permissiveness was a fundamentally elite metropolitan phenomenon with a lengthier ancestry that was more thoroughly, but still not entirely, realised in public during the 1970s.²³

²¹ Marcus Collins, 'The Pornography of Permissiveness: Men's Sexuality and Women's Emancipation in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain,' *History Workshop Journal* Issue 47 (1999): 99–108.

²² Marcus Collins, 'Sucking in the Seventies?: The Rolling Stones and the Aftermath of the Permissive Society,' *Popular Music History* 7:1 (2012): 5–23.

²³ Marwick, *The Sixties: Social and Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, 1958–74* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1999); Jonathan Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

The perspective arguing a change to a more permissive society, even if just for a so-called moment in the 1960s, runs into opposition from a number of positions: feminists, postmodernist and revisionist historians, working mostly in the history of sexuality, have questioned such a straightforward account of social change. Feminists such as Beatrix Campbell notes that despite permissiveness opening a 'political-sexual-space' for women, the extent of female sexual dissatisfaction in the face of the clamour of 'sexually liberated' men shows that permissive liberation was gendered.²⁴ Rosalind Brunt argues that the discussion of sexuality in the 1970s, was shaped by the idea, passed down by the Wolfenden Report, of the 'consenting adult in private' rather than offering a frank and healthy view of sexuality.²⁵ From the postmodernist perspective, Michel Foucault argued that a profound reflection on sexuality had 'swept through our societies over the last decades; it has chastised the old order, denounced hypocrisy, and praised the rights of the lyrical, immediate and real; it has made people dream of a New City'.²⁶ Despite this discussion, however, he still found the change to be partial and that certain topics were repressed, eliciting 'prohibition, nonexistence and silence'. This book provides evidence to substantiate these claims, particularly in light of the culture of silence in reporting sexual abuse in the music press, sexism and the unease that non-heterosexual people were introduced to in music papers.

In matters of changing social mores and developing identities, critical theory has provided a way of understanding how individuals reflectively appropriate ideas, narratives and symbols to create themselves. These choices are constituent elements of broader transformations in society. This understanding of the interplay between morality, selfhood and social change develops aspects of Michel Foucault's histories of sexuality by asking: why did morality become a topic for such vehement discussion in this period?²⁷ Why were certain acts transformed into discourse and how

²⁴ Beatrix Campbell, 'A Feminist Sexual Politics: Now You See It, Now You Don't,' *Feminist Review* 5 (1980): 1–18.

²⁵ Rosalind Brunt, 'An Immense Verbosity: Permissive Sexual Advice in the 1970s' in Rosalind Brunt and Caroline Rowan eds, *Feminism, Culture and Politics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1982): 143–170.

²⁶ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out*: 57.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978), 1–16.

was this policed?²⁸ Therefore, what was defined, debated, critiqued and proposed? It analyses how music papers justified their ability to articulate judgements and form claims to not just musical expertise but authority regarding the intersections of ethics, morality and politics. This book questions the extent to which individuals recognised themselves or were recognised as subjects of this discourses—normative, deviant or something more ambiguous—and how the subsequent interplay between social mores played out shaping people, papers and broader ideas about British society.

Queer theory has developed insights into active identity creation that contributes to understanding an individual's relationship with changing social mores and, as a consequence, society. Judith Halberstram's contribution to Judith Butler's work on performativity and Foucault's *History of Sexuality* demonstrates how queer lives threaten the dominant logics of capitalist, white, western, heterosexual society.²⁹ They challenge typically middle-class understandings of 'reproductive temporality'. Strands of popular musical, countercultural and underground knowledge combined elements of non-reproductive 'dangerous and unruly' adolescence with the heteronormative pursuit of longevity and the stable nuclear family.³⁰ Halberstram uses William S. Burroughs' notion of 'junk time' as an analogy but perhaps Burroughs' cut-up technique is a more apt metaphor. The cut-up disrupts perceptions of order and normality: Burroughs' tape experiments speed and slow time, symbols and narratives are placed out of context and can be assigned new meanings. Popular music offers entry into diverse scenes where cultural texts and symbols are redeployed in many ways and contexts. Its audiences could interpret information reflexively like Burroughs' peer Allen Ginsberg shopping for images in the lonely Californian supermarket and finding Walt Whitman and Federico Garcia Lorca as well as artichokes.³¹ A 1970s music paper, like a supermarket, was a place to display and market products, as well as a place where

²⁸ Ibid., 17–18

²⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990); Judith Halberstram, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (NYU Press: New York, 2005).

³⁰ Halberstram, *Queer Time and Place*, 5.

³¹ Allen Ginsberg, 'A Supermarket in California' in *Collected Poems 1947–1997* (London: Penguin, 2013): 144.

people could take cues to build their identity and politics within the context of a changing society and culture.

The relationship between ideas, words and actions that might be deemed permissive and the notion of a permissive society or a society that can be seen as overwhelmingly more permissive, has also been questioned by revisionist historians. Even when considering the increased role of youth during the 1960s, the distinction between young people's social role before and after austerity is slightly overstated, youth subcultures and debates on youth morality occurred before and during the Second World War.³² Bill Osgerby had traced youth's role in consuming cultural products and media, which solidified the leisure economy, to the mid-nineteenth century.³³ Those who work in or around the field of the history of sexuality, however, have put a particular mark on the debate about permissiveness. Frank Mort's work on the urban history of 1950s London has undermined some of the myths of British social change by analysing the scandals, commercialised sexuality and social mixing that made London a crucible for social change and a reference point for debates on public morality.³⁴ He argues that scandals, for instance, drove modernisation of mores and laws more than progressive law and technological advances that occurred during the 1960s. This resonates with the reality of the music press—a commercialised, central-London media with the power to raise scandals—and the stories that it described with their fractured accounts of being a public and private individual navigating license and control. Indeed, music papers incorporated the added tension of communicating this culture to the country and young people, the acts of self-censorship, spin and defences of the music industry when alleged to be a corrupting influence bear witness to this.

There have, furthermore, been a number of studies that have undermined the standard account of the move to a permissive society by shining a light on its antecedents. Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter have demonstrated that the private 'Victorian' attitudes towards sex remained or 'lingered' during a period of 'sexual revolution', but sexual behaviour before

³² Andrew Davies traces youthful street gangs known as 'Scuttlers' to Victorian and Edwardian Manchester in *The Gangs of Manchester: The Story of the Scuttlers Britain's First Youth Cult* (Preston: Milo Books, 2008).

³³ Bill Osgerby, *Youth Media* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004): 42.

³⁴ Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

the 1960s was not exclusively chaste.³⁵ Queer history has shown that some ideas about permissiveness overshadow alternative histories of non-heterosexual people before decriminalisation. Helen Smith has found spaces for homosexual people and sociability in Northern England, which were previously undiscovered, that disrupt any linear approach to ideas of tolerance and solidarity.³⁶ The work of Harry Cocks, Matt Cook, Matt Houlbrook and Chris Waters have shown that London's queer subcultures, though remaining in the shadows until 1967, provided a space for different approaches to social mores and sexuality to be explored.³⁷ This book compliments the idea that there are underexplored antecedents to the so-called permissive society by drawing upon their legacy in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, while also indicating the complex interplay between permissiveness and control that continued after the putative permissive moment in the late 1960s.

THE PRESS AND MUSIC PAPERS

Another way in which to critique the idea of the permissive society is using press history to understand the social construction of morality and who, precisely, is charged with adjudicating upon or shaping social mores for particular audiences. The power of the media to create myths and inform the public from the 1960s to 1980s has been noted. Nick Thomas, when considering British student protest movement, has suggested the notion of a 'media Sixties'.³⁸ Similar suspicions have been voiced by Adrian Bingham who views permissiveness as a 'journalistic cliché' in response to

³⁵ Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 348.

³⁶ Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class and Same-sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895–1957* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³⁷ H.G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19th Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 7–11; Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–57* (London: Chicago University Press, 2005): 3; Chris Waters, 'Disorders of the Mind, Disorders of the Body Social: Peter Wildeblood and the Making of the Modern Homosexual', in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945–1964* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999): 139.

³⁸ Nick Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest in Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History* 13:3 (2002): 278.

a rise in sexual imagery and discourses in the popular press.³⁹ As repressive, moralist legislation was replaced, as Mort, Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis have argued, a space was opened for people to, at least theoretically, articulate alternative sentiments in public.⁴⁰ Mark Donnelly, however, made the apt distinction between a ‘permissive state’ and a ‘permissive society’ when trying to disentangle unambiguous and insufficiently complex interpretations of the 1960s.⁴¹

This book, while making a contribution to understanding the link between popular music, youth and society, is in its aims and methods primarily a work of press history. Like Adrian Bingham’s *Family Newspapers?*, I seek to understand ‘ideas of *public* and *private* at different moments in different contexts’ as a matter encompassed in the negotiations of social mores and the politics of morality.⁴² Unlike Bingham’s study, which focuses on sex alone, this book considers the broader question of permissiveness and includes protest, the power of youth, revolutionary politics, identity politics, and drug use. It does so to disentangle the numerous topics that were reinterpreted during the twentieth century as part of a discourse on changing moral and ethical codes. These codes defy ‘permissive’ or culturally conservative dichotomies and point towards looking at dynamic and changeable movements in society rather than a simple move towards a permissive society. By choosing the music press, a collection of papers that were cherished and bought by young people, I can access what might be expected to be the sharp-end of permissiveness—metropolitan London and the counter culture—to see how these people interacted with younger people through a mass market medium.

To aid an analysis that grows from this perspective, I have, again taken methodological cues from the CCCS. Again, drawing from Bingham’s

³⁹ Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the Popular Press in Britain* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011): 121.

⁴⁰ Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis ‘“A Field for Private Members”: The Wolfenden Committee and Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1950–67,’ *Twentieth Century British History* 15:2 (2004): 175–176. Also see, Frank Mort, ‘Mapping Sexual London: The Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution 1954–57’, *New Formations*, 37 (1999): 92–113. And, Frank Mort, ‘Scandalous Events Metropolitan Culture and Moral Change in Post-Second World War London’, *Representations* 93:1 (2006): 106–137.

⁴¹ Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, 116.

⁴² Bingham, *Family Newspapers?*, 11.

example and that used by Anna Gough-Yates, I have used Stuart Hall's three 'moments' of any cultural form to frame my approach: encoding (how the text is created), the text and decoding (how the text is received and interpreted by readers).⁴³ In lieu of an editorial archive, I used oral history to understand how the texts were produced and I have considered the letters pages, circulation and readership data, along with reactions from figures of authority (such as the press, local authorities and Parliament) to gain an image of reception. The book is also informed by Stanley Cohen and Jock Young's approach outlined in *The Manufacture of News*, which outlines a methodology for understanding how capitalism and ideology shape the content of the press through 'the process of selection', which colours representations and, therefore, reception.

Press history is, however, a relatively new field in contemporary British history. There have been a number of studies, mainly from cultural, media, and journalism studies perspectives, into magazines that, like the music press, have made lifestyle part of their reporting. Considering women's magazines, following Angela McRobbie's intervention into the field (her 'systematic critique' of a girl's magazine, *Jackie*, 'as a system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology'), Janice Winship, for instance, offered a Gramscian account of magazines contributing to women's subordinate role in society, which has been followed by a number of Foucauldian analyses that uncover regimes of truth and meaning in texts.⁴⁴ There is much to be taken from both Marxist and postmodernist approaches: Marxism to consider the cultural and social dynamics of culture in capitalist society through hegemonic discourses, the other to uncover the ways in which micropower shapes discourse, understanding and identities. Anna Gough-Yates has made an instructive intervention into the field of magazines studies that bridges these approaches. Following on from the work of Sean Nixon and Frank Mort on consumer identities, along with Paul du Gay and Angela McRobbie, who use studies of texts

⁴³ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Inter-War Press in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 16. Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding' in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Hobson eds, *Culture, Media, Language* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1980), pp. 107–110. Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (London: Routledge, 2003), 6–7.

⁴⁴ Angela McRobbie, 'Jackie: Romantic Individualism and the Teenage Girl,' in *Feminism and Youth Culture from Jackie to Just Seventeen* (London: Macmillan, 1991): 81–134. Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987).

grounded in urban London that ‘construct’ and mediate new identities through a fluid and changeable culture industry, Gough-Yates argues that there is a revealing interplay between industrial organisation, practice and ‘cultural discourses’ on identity that impact magazines and the structure of their industry.⁴⁵ This book is the first history of the music press in which music papers, as texts, but also the terms of their production and reception are used to evaluate a historical controversy: in this case, of course, permissive (or, for that matter, counter-permissive) social changes and understandings of youth.

There has been prior scholarship that provides important contextual insights, Simon Frith and Greil Marcus’ have argued that music journalists were not simply music critics but culture critics.⁴⁶ From the 1960s, these critics mediated society, politics and culture to their readers. This had a significant impact, as Lawrence Grossberg argues, that young people invested profoundly in the music press and it shaped their identities.⁴⁷ Other studies, often informed by Pierre Bourdieu’s contention that fields in art reflect the values of those who hold cultural power, consider the class-bound relationship between music, music press discourse and power.⁴⁸ They have analysed institutional discourses and value judgements when music papers analysed music and developed distinctions regarding style and genre to serve the music industry: when, as Simon Frith wrote, informed by Frankfurt School scholars like Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, ‘something human ... taken from us and returned in the form of a commodity’.⁴⁹

Derek B. Scott and George McKay have noted Edgar Jackson’s (the editor of *Melody Maker*) prejudice towards black people and jazz in the

⁴⁵ Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women’s Magazines*, 19–21. Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996):10. Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption* (London: UCL Press, 1996). Paul Du Gay, *Consumption and Identity at Work* (London: Sage, 1996).

⁴⁶ Simon Frith, “‘The Magic That Can Set You Free:’ The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community,” *Popular Music* 1 (1981): 159–168.

⁴⁷ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out*, 57.

⁴⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984): 1–2.

⁴⁹ Simon Frith, ‘The industrialisation of popular music,’ in James Lull ed., *Popular Music and Communication* (London: Sage, 1987), 54.

1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰ Alf Arvidsson analysed how Spike Hughes, contributing to the *Melody Maker* under the pen-name ‘Mike’, used his authority as a performer who understood the European musical tradition to create a sympathetic criteria for analysing jazz and conferring relative standing within the genre.⁵¹ Matt Brennan has argued, a similar shift in rationale was later required to justify rock ‘n’ roll.⁵² This way in which music journalists attach values like ‘authenticity’ to genres to adapt reporting to new styles and musicians from different backgrounds has also been noted by Ulf Lindberg, Gestur Guðmundsson, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisthaunet.⁵³ Jayson Toynbee has extended this empirically to demonstrate how music papers create ‘communities of taste’ in a manner that is ‘didactic and, perhaps more tellingly, correctional’.⁵⁴ Marion Leonard, as this book will agree, has found that there are certain typically male-authored tropes about women that reoccur in rock writing.⁵⁵ When a certain genre was justified within the critical discourse of a music paper, it was not a simple aesthetic distinction but one which reveals much about wider society and culture. Ideas of genre and taste were shaped by history, society, culture and identity, which strengthens Robert Christgau’s argument that music papers are cultural gatekeepers.⁵⁶ This journalistic practice has developed within the context of socially available distinctions that are grounded in assumptions about ideas of class, race and gender.

⁵⁰Derek B. Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 88. George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005): 73–86.

⁵¹Alf Arvidsson, “‘Mike’ discourses on hot jazz: discursive strategies in the writings of Spike Hughes, 1931–33”, *Popular Music History* 4.3 (2009): 251–269.

⁵²Matt Brennan, “‘Nobody Likes Rock and Roll but the Public’: Down Beat, Genre Boundaries and the Dismissal of Rock and Roll by Jazz Critics”, *Popular Music and Society* 36:5 (2013): 561–564.

⁵³Gestur Guðmundsson, Ulf Lindberg, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisthaunet, ‘Turning Points in British Rock Criticism, 1960–1990,’ in Steve Jones ed., *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press 2002): 41–64. Gestur Guðmundsson, Ulf Lindberg, Morten Michelsen and Hans Weisthaunet, *Rock Criticism from the Beginning: Amusers, Bruisers, and Cool-Headed Cruisers* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁵⁴Jayson Toynbee, ‘Policing Bohemia, Pinning up Grunge: the Music Press and Generic Change in British Pop and Rock,’ *Popular Music* 12:3 (1993): 289–300.

⁵⁵Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (Aldershot, 2007).

⁵⁶Guðmundsson et al., ‘Turning Points’: 55.

One significant caveat regarding music papers is that they are a distinctly different product to fanzines (or zines, as they are commonly known). As Guðmundsson and his collaborators noted, there had been a dialogue between British music papers and fanzines as well as a shared pool of writers: Jon Savage and Paul Rambali, for instance, moved from zines to the weekly music press.⁵⁷ Teal Triggs offers an overview of the field, but Worley offers the clearest distinction between zines and the weekly music press: he argues that during the punk era zines allowed the people that produced them to challenge the mainstream media and assert their own cultural identities without having to compromise to being a ‘conduit for corporate interests’.⁵⁸ Unlike music papers, profoundly shaped by market constraints, zines were more geared towards direct communication between peers who created and nurtured communities.

THRILLS: SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

This book feels highly personal and not simply due to the thought, time and effort that I have put into it, as much as I have endeavoured to be a critical and detached outsider I feel a kinship with the journalists who wrote music papers (deepened by interviewing some of them for this book), the musicians that appeared inside their pages and the readers. As a teenager, I was captivated by the music press of the late-1990s to the mid-2000s (some might say, a pale reflection of what it was ‘back in the day’), those papers led me to boxes full of old records in the loft and at the back of cupboards, the local record shops and venues, books, television and radio shows that defined my friendships and relationships. It was an important formative influence that contributed to shaping who I am today. When as I teenager I moved from a vibrant music-loving, left-leaning, multicultural and tolerant city, Manchester, to the countryside. In bleak north Northamptonshire, music papers (or magazines, as they were known by the time I was old enough to read them) became one way of staying in touch with the city and staying interested. A copy of the *New Musical Express* (*NME*) was also an

⁵⁷ Steve Jones, ‘the Intro,’ in Steve Jones ed., *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press 2002): 4. Roy Shuker, *Key Concepts in Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 1998): 199. Toynbee, ‘Policing Bohemia’: 290.

⁵⁸ Worley, Punk, Politics and British (fan)zines, 1976–84: ‘While the world was dying, did you wonder why?’ *History Workshop Journal* 79:1 (2015): 84. Teal Triggs, *Fanzines* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).

incredibly useful way of hiding from social interactions at school while waiting for Friday night at Northampton's Soundhaus or *120 Minutes* late at night on MTV2. Within the generic black-walled space of the Soundhaus, music papers had led me to a territory that was more exciting and interesting than school, a home away from home where I interacted with people who were like minded and gave me food for thought. Music papers remained a part of this: I will never forget Pete Barnes's excitement when the Ikara Colt's gig that we attended (along with my sister, Kate, and her friend, Tabitha), was given a perfect 10/10 rating by the *NME*. Like our forbearers in previous decades, the papers and the culture they shaped and described informed our politics, values, aspects of our social identities and interactions.

From the age of eighteen, I began to see another side of the culture; I wrote for fanzines, music papers, magazines and performed in bands. The obsession with music was so strong that I even became a roadie—for a while I carried Donny and Marie Osmond's amps to storied venues like Warwick Castle for performances to the sparkling wine and hamper crowd, but at least I got to visit the Imperial Pub in Rugby, where Spacemen 3 had performed their first gigs, to pick up very generous wages (roadies have a strong union). By this point the music writing that mattered to my friends and I had migrated online, other than zines and *The Wire*, but regardless, writing about music offered a window into new sounds from around the world. These experiences mean that I can empathise with journalists who have thought 'can I write that?' or 'maybe it will be easier if I leave that line out'. I understand the feeling of 'I wish I had not written that.' As a musician, I have said daft things to journalists, awkwardly posed for photographs and talked rubbish on the radio. This book sometimes dwells on the bad to make a historiographical point, but I will add this caveat, music journalism can provide an entry point into a world of great sounds, people and enjoyable experiences. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s many journalists, musicians and fans made what now seem like substantial errors of judgement and while we should not excuse them and *definitely* learn from them, they were products of their social and cultural environment. We have an opportunity to question why it happened and offer constructive alternatives that can make society more just and equal.

Despite the bad, the music press also provided inspiration, a way into British and international music culture and provoked the social act of coming together—sometimes with the aim of changing society. In particular, DIY culture has provided a space where politics and culture inter-

twine. Without the music press I might have never found the feeling of optimism that this community has given me and, for that matter, never felt the moment when playing music in public to a crowd of strangers is temporarily exhilarating and summons feelings of transcendence rather than terror.

This book concentrates upon the big-three of weekly music papers, *Melody Maker*, the *NME* and *Sounds*, it examines music papers' production and aspects of their reception as a prism through which to shed light on the social construction, acceptance and extent of permissive social change and how this was shaped by the position and understandings of youth. The book considers these discussions and practices as part of dynamic and complicated processes of social change. It begins its analysis in the late 1960s and ends in 1983 shortly after the socially 'traditional' and economically radical Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, won a second parliamentary majority. At that point the music press fragmented into a number of more genre-specific titles, established papers declined in circulation and, arguably, their cultural influence was challenged. In 1979 *Smash Hits* launched a new type of highly popular pop journalism that stripped the seriousness from reporting, but remained conscious of popular music's ability to subvert, challenge and inspire. The paper's large, glossy, commercial fashion-influenced photography foreshadowed the way that prior concerns about 'authenticity' were challenged as the image became privileged over the text.⁵⁹ This trend would go further with the launch of Music Television (MTV), which brought the previously overshadowed promo video to the fore as a marketing tool that was more immediate than music criticism, less challenging to the music industry and a more efficient marketing tool.

Before the decline of the more established music papers, however, they underwent a period in which previously unsuitable topics became part of their remit. In a decade, music papers moved from coverage of Engelbert Humperdinck discussing his mansion and pop releases to news sections edited by rock-loving countercultural revolutionaries, punk politics and

⁵⁹ Simon Frith, "'The Magic that can Set You Free": the Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community,' *Popular Music* 1, (1981), 159–168. Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place*; John Stratton, 'Between Two Worlds: Art and Commercialism in the Record Industry,' *Sociological Review* 30 (1982), 267–85; and Carys Jones, *The Rock Canon: Canonical Values in the Reception of Rock Albums* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 23.

accounts of music's relationship with life in post-industrial Britain. It became readers' and journalists' business to know musicians' 'positions' and articulate their own. Readers' letters pages incorporated debate on politics, gender, drugs, behaviour, racism, sex as well as music.

However, while the scope of expression and modes of writing in these papers changed, there were aspects of continuity and changes that were subtly repressive. Many journalists and readers disputed the 'permissiveness' of allegedly permissive legislation and the nature of social change. They viewed the 'freedom' supposedly afforded to people and the differences that gave access or restricted the opportunity to live according to 'permissive' mores critically. By presenting a diverse collection of non-permissive rationales, papers demonstrate that there were forces that constrained as well as liberated. Some illiberal perspectives could be spun as liberated or forward thinking: sexual liberation and free love, for example, could be manipulated to enable misogynistic sexual exploitation.

Each chapter begins with a brief overview of the artists and genres that were popular during the period considered and the journalists and papers who covered them. It explains noteworthy changes in the papers layout, content, circulation and readership. The chapters then evaluate how changing musical and journalistic styles were shaped by their broader cultural and social contexts, and how this was balanced with papers' commercial considerations.

After establishing the journalistic and commercial context from 1967 to 1970, in the first chapter, I evaluate the justifications for a greater remit in pop reporting that emerged from 1967. This is framed by an explanation of how distinctions in music papers were extended to enable new genres and groups of people to be accepted in the decades before. It then compares music industry entertainers whose easy-listening music was supported by the music industry and music press with a new generation of musicians. These new musicians, or musicians that had been emboldened to be more candid or provocative, ran the risk of losing patronage but, by presenting themselves as representative of youth and changing values, they were able to carve a new niche. Using the moral panic about drugs of 1967, the chapter then gauges how music press discourse adapted to the debate around social change and those young people that argued for it when they were seen to be transgressive.

Chapter 2 examines the period between 1971 and 1973, which can be characterised as a vital period in shaping the style, content and structure of music papers for the rest of the decade. These changes encouraged and

enabled more detailed articles and articles on social, cultural and political issues that further established popular music's role in constructing and representing social change. The chapter analyses the rise of the underground in music papers and considers the new forms of writing, ideas about youth and politics that constructed the idea of a 'rock community'. This focuses on the discourse on anti-war politics and activism. The chapter then explores the frictions caused by these new notions of youth identity bound in ideas of permissiveness and freedom when lots of young people gathered together at music festivals. This section makes particular reference to reporting on the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival and the attempts made the following year by MPs in the Conservative government to prevent overnight gatherings of over 1000 people, the Night Assemblies Bill.

Chapter 3 explores how the music press understood gender and sexuality within the context of a period that is supposedly characterised by less discrimination towards women and non-heterosexual people. The chapter argues that despite providing space to articulate feminist arguments, journalists and artists offered perspectives and language that was overwhelmingly sexist. Female journalists and musicians, while sometimes able to counter sexism, were often subject to unpleasant working conditions and gendered, particularly sexual, expectations. Using the rhetoric of sexual liberation, the music press contributed a sexual culture that enabled illegal and unethical sexual conduct while preventing the full story from being reported. Journalists were aware of exploitative sexual conduct but it was not reported due to the commercial concerns associated with the threat of losing access to stars and record companies withdrawing advertising. The chapter then considers the legacy of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Popular music and, therefore, the music press provided a significant platform to construct public identities for gay men after decriminalisation. David Bowie was the first male, British queer pop star to come out in a music paper after 1967. This encouraged a public conversation that was previously withheld from young people. Music papers hosted a debate that recorded understandings of the links between sexuality, popular music and society. They advertised and reported spaces in which previously criminalised queer subcultures congregated. Papers usually advocated a tolerant approach to gay rights, but notions of 'tolerance' and the division of public and private behaviour was problematic. Journalists drew upon pre-1967 tolerance of camp, tacitly queer musicians, rather than taking a radical position in a society, which legislated for hidden homosexuality.

Papers did, however, provide symbols for queer (and for that matter straight) people to reflectively appropriate.

Chapter 4 considers the debates that surfaced after the popularisation of the 1976 wave of British punk rock. Punk provoked a moral panic that illuminated figures of authority's moralistic approach to youth and their expedient use of commercial and political power to service these values. It shaped reporting as punk-influenced writers tried to develop claims to punk's meaning, purpose and politics, and affected paper's visual style and relationship with readers by destabilising the rhetorical division between performer and fan. The first part of the chapter explains the spectacular creation of 'punk' in music papers using controversy and violence while encouraging the young and the working class to become involved. This is followed by an examination of debates that contested that punk was inherently violent and consequently a threat to public decency and safety by considering the punk scenes interactions with the Greater London Council and how this was reported in music papers. The paper considers how anti-racism was used by music papers both altruistically and to rehabilitate the punk genre, which illustrated music papers' need to be flexible to safeguard the music industry against claims that specific genres and artistes were undesirable, particularly when faced by censure by local authorities. The chapter then considers how the new framing of fans, journalists and musicians, framed as peers, caused music papers to consider habitual or risky drug use in a new light. This shift was rather worrying for editors and journalists. They responded by assuming a duty of care for their readership and tried to include meaningful and even-handed drugs education.

Chapter 5 begins by evaluating the style of reporting in *NME* and how this style was critiqued in letters pages, *Sounds* and *Melody Maker*. *NME* included writing by journalists influenced by scholars such as Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and Marshall McLuhan, science fiction and bleak literature, which created an arguably esoteric style. This accompanied a general acceptance of a post-punk aesthetic and the idea of social decline, conflict and alienation. This is contrasted with the debate on politics, particularly in *Sounds*, that had a distinctive ferocity, but the chapter unpacks how the paper ran into trouble by, perhaps inadvertently, giving a space to racist and fascist voices in the Oi! punk scene. Finally, the chapter argues that the more esoteric and pointed styles, contained within the dense prose and long articles that had developed over the previous decade, contributed to a decline in circulation and as the established music press declined, the success of more targeted and less intense magazines.



CHAPTER 2

Hungry Freaks, Well-fed Entertainers?: Something Different in the Music Press

The year 1967 was an impressive one for popular music. A glance at the singles chart reveals a wealth of pop hits from psychedelic rock to soul and crooners but it was the twelve-inch album that really grew in popular and commercial prominence. Some of the albums made in 1967 were understood as progressing the album format into something beyond a collection of songs in a value-for-money format. So rather than just a collection of potential hits and filler, albums like *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Axis Bold As Love*, *Their Satanic Majesties Request* or *Disraeli Gears* were conceived with guiding concepts, thematic arches and ambitious sonic goals. Musicians and producers used the multitrack studio to capture a broader range of sounds and textures on tape; they also integrated techniques and esoteric influences from avant-garde, non-western and non-commercial music, philosophy, visual arts, film and literature. Perhaps ironically, as these musicians operated within a highly capitalistic music industry, their approach was considered artistic and guided by aesthetics, spiritual or intellectual intuition rather than shaped by their perception of what would sell to the largest number of consumers. The creation of these albums was defined less by commercial requirements to release records frequently in a fast-paced, trend-oriented market; instead artists, journalists and the music industry endeavoured to redefine popular music as a serious art form. Consequently, more unusual and complex music with space for a range of messages, some with social, political and cultural underpinnings, reached a mass market. It