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THIS EXCERPT CONTAINS THE INTRO. AND CHAP. 7

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Introduction

Rock bands have been an important part of Liverpool's culture and identity since the 1950s. It is impossible to determine the exact number of bands on Merseyside, but a survey conducted for the Liverpool Echo early in 1980 discovered the existence of more than one thousand. When I first arrived in Liverpool in 1985 full of strategies on how to seek out bands and establish contacts in the music world, I found myself immersed in an overwhelmingly musical environment where many people seemed either to be in a band themselves or to know someone who was in a band, and where many of those not in bands spent much of their time talking of forming or joining one. I learnt about bands from taxi-drivers, hairdressers, waitresses and waiters; and in cafes and bars conversation on bands could be overheard.

Each time I changed residence, fellow residents put me in touch with more bands and each new neighbourhood slowly revealed to me its musical populace. Through my window I watched music equipment being loaded into vans, saw people emerge from houses carrying guitar cases, and heard the echoing sounds of bands rehearsing. In Liverpool itself, clothes and music shops displayed notice-boards crowded with advertisements placed by bands searching for new members or by individuals looking for bands. Some bands had daubed their name in all sorts of places in what seemed a frenzy of self-promotion whilst long stretches of walls were continually plastered, layer upon layer, with posters advertising performances and records.

With so many bands existing in an area of great economic decline, frequenting a fairly small city centre, with a music scene thwarted by lack of funds, the competition for resources and venues for live performance, media attention, and local as well as national fame was intensive. The music scene was rife with gossip, legend, and feud. It lacked a focus such as a major club or centre for live performance, and many bands had formed factions and cliques based around particular studios, clubs, and organizations. Within and between them there was rapid movement and fluctuation as bands came and went, split up and reformed, changed their name and membership, so that interrelations between them were often complex, and plotting the course of individuals through a series of bands was as laborious a

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task as charting family trees within the most intricate of kinship systems.

Such rapid change also occurred with the clubs, studios, and venues for live performance that continually opened and closed. The city was littered with boarded-up clubs, some supposedly burnt down for insurance claims, existing side by side with empty and decaying buildings and

warehouses. Economic decline had not only reduced the number of venues for live music but also its audiences. Well-known bands were no longer attracted to Liverpool to perform and music facilities for young people were sorely lacking. All this despite the fact that Liverpool was still famous world-wide for its bands and their music and had consistently, over the previous twenty-five years, produced an average of two new charting bands a year. Few of those successful bands had been able to remain in Liverpool, if only because of the London-based monopolies in publishing and recording, and had thus left, taking their wealth with them. One local disc jockey often told the story of a promoter of local music who in the 1960s stood on the London-bound platform at Lime Street Station begging the departing bands not to take their equipment out as well. It was not just the bands that left the city. Liverpool's population declined from around 900,000 in 1951, to 483,000 in 1986. (The population of Merseyside at that time was 1,467,600.)

Liverpool was no newcomer to poverty and unemployment but since the 1970s the rate of unemployment had risen dramatically. By 1985 it was 27 per cent, double the national average. 53 per cent of those unemployed persons had been out of work for more than a year, compared with 39 per cent nationally (Parkinson, 1985:13.) The highest rate of unemployment was amongst the young. A report by the City Planning Officer (October 1987: 'An Economic Development Strategy for Liverpool') stated that in 1986 only approximately 13 per cent of the economically active young people had jobs if placements on various temporary employment schemes were discounted. The national unemployment rate was also highest amongst young people but was no more than half that in Liverpool. Consequently, many school leavers in the city were no longer even thinking in terms of jobs. For most, life revolved around the fortnightly Supplementary or Unemployment Benefit cheque which might occasionally be supplemented by periods of semi-employment -- usually at cash-in-hand jobs exploited as cheap labour -- or broken by some government scheme entitled 'Youth Training', 'Community Programme', or 'Enterprise Allowance.'

That dramatic rise in unemployment and the increasing awareness of it had been accompanied by a mushrooming of bands. (It has been

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said that, 'Unemployment brings out the guitar in everyone'-- Channel 4, *Europe A Go Go*: 5 January 1985. A journalist from Liverpool wrote: 'large numbers of people seek to escape the boredom of the dole by forming bands and playing music' -- *Next* 14: 6 September 1986.) There existed a general feeling that being in a band was a legitimate career to follow rather than a 'drop-out' phase some adolescents might pass through before going on to a more 'serious' occupation. Thus in a city where the attitude of many young people was that you might as well pick up a guitar as take exams, since your chances of finding full-time occupation from either were just the same, being in a band was an accepted way of life and could provide a means of justifying one's existence. 'It's an alternative to walking around town all day', said one band member, while another asked, 'What else is there to do?'

A band could provide a means of escape where fantasies were indulged but it could also play an important cultural and social role, providing an outlet for creativity and a means by which

friendships were made and maintained. Basically, most people were in bands for these social and cultural factors. They enjoyed it. They loved playing, performing, and socializing, and since alongside that there always existed the possibility of 'making it', that is earning a living from the band in one way or another, then the quest for success became a major motivation and preoccupation, a ray of hope in a grim reality, and band members were drawn into all kinds of plans, strategies, and activities designed to achieve that success. It might sound clichéd but it cannot be denied that being in a band was seen by many, whether employed or unemployed, to be a 'way out' of their current situation, 'a way out of the jungle', as some phrased it. A local promoter of bands described it (Radio 4, *Dancing In The Rubble*: 29 October 1982) as being, along with sport, the 'fastest way out':

In such a run down area people look around, see how depressed it is and decide they have to get out . . . It's the only way for young kids. Everyone you meet is in a rock band these days. There's more go in people here (Liverpool band member quoted in Chappell, 1983: 6).

Thus for many bands the major problem was how to 'make it', not only in a period of economic decline, unemployment, dwindling audiences and performance venues, but also during a recession in the national recording industry that made record companies cautious, taking fewer risks and signing fewer bands. In reality, the chances of getting a record deal were remote. During my year in Liverpool only five or six bands signed record contracts and it was estimated by a few people with relevant experience that less than one per cent of

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bands would ever get one and fewer still would attain success thereafter: 'There's got to be approaching one thousand bands, I suppose, at any given time . . . and I can tell you that between . . . 1977 and 1980 about four or five actually made it ... got chart placings, made money . . .' (Roger Eagle, Radio 4, *Dancing in the Rubble*: 29 October 1982). Most bands were thus precariously balanced between fame and obscurity, security and insecurity, commerce and creativity. Life was a series of successes and failures, periods of optimism followed by periods of depression. The longer a band struggled and the older its members got, the more harshly the failures were felt.

This book discusses that struggle in detail within the context of the bands' social and cultural lifestyle. In doing so it considers the interrelationships between art and society, attempting to explore the tension between creativity and commerce through description and analysis of the processes of musical production and performance by the bands, with particular reference to two specific bands. It demonstrates the way in which both bands perceived commerce and women to be a threat to their creativity and solidarity and indeed their very existence, and argues that in response those bands expressed notions of purity and impurity in the production, performance, and marketing of their music, emphasizing in that distinction certain ideals such as those of masculinity, democracy, egalitarianism, honesty, naturalness, and cleanliness.

Liverpool was chosen as the location for the study because of its history of involvement and achievement in rock music. I have used the name 'Liverpool' even when referring to Merseyside as a whole because the music scene on Merseyside was focused upon Liverpool and because Liverpool has become a familiar name since the success of the Mersey Beat bands in the 1960s. I lived in Liverpool for one year, from October 1985 to October 1986. Research was largely restricted to 'rock' bands, with the term 'rock' being used to encompass those bands that made music with reference to the national 'independent' or 'commercial' music 'scene' (with the exception of 'heavy metal' bands whose music-making and underlying conceptions and ideology of music were so specific as to require study on their own.) This therefore excludes jazz, cabaret, folk, and country-and-western bands from the study (although many members of those were also members of rock bands) but includes a variety of music labelled in many different ways, such as 'alternative' or 'pop' -- although 'rock' is generally distinguished from 'pop', which is seen as more commercial. It must be emphasized that on its own 'rock' was not a commonly used term because whilst bands might

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refer to their music as 'rock' or 'pop' they nearly always accompanied those terms with qualifying descriptions.

Research focused upon cultural production in a local context, covering bands without record contracts that therefore functioned on the margins of the industry. However, an important part of the study dealt with the way in which those bands were influenced and affected by cultural production of a commercial nature at a national, mass media level. Throughout the year, unstructured interviews were conducted with musicians and music personnel. Co-operation was rarely a problem and many were eager for the attention and were particularly flattered at being asked questions on the most detailed aspects of their music-making. Participant observation involved a smaller circle of bands, including the two used as case-studies. Gradually I became an accepted part of this group. I did not participate in the actual composition, rehearsal, or performance of the music -- though occasionally invited to do so, largely because the music-making was taken so seriously and depended upon such a delicate balance of different factors (e.g. the personalities, concentration, and musical techniques of each band member) that I decided it would be better not to get involved in that particular activity of the band. However, I did attend rehearsals and 'gigs' (live public performances) and participated in many of the bands' social activities. Most of the information gathered was written down in note form either during or after it had been collected. Some conversations, particularly those on the most intricate aspects of music-making, were tape-recorded, as were many rehearsals and performances.

The social, cultural, and artistic impact that rock music has made throughout the world is outstanding. Its mass production has become exceedingly complex and costly and a great deal has been written about it in the popular press. Yet despite the enormity of the industry and the ubiquity of the music it produces, academic study of rock music has been slow to emerge in Britain and remains as yet underdeveloped in comparison with the literature on other forms of popular culture. As a result, the available literature is fragmented.

Of the few writers who have studied rock music, some (e.g. Benjamin, 1970; and Willis, 1978) have celebrated it as counterculture, a folk or art form that directly expresses the needs and values of an active audience. They do so in opposition to mass culture critics such as Adorno and Horkheimer (1977) and Burchill and Parsons (1978) who argued that rock is a meaningless reflection of the evil machinations of the commercial record industry which debases its

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performers and audience. Others, such as Harker (1980), Coffman (1972), Burchill (1965), and Frith (1983), have located rock somewhere in between those two positions. Coffman and Harker discussed the conflict of roles experienced by rock stars caught between the demands of their audience and the record industry. Frith has analysed the way in which rock music expresses the contradictions and tensions of capitalist culture. 'The music doesn't challenge the system but reflects and illuminates it' (Frith, 1983: 272.) Nevertheless, youths can still use it to create their own meanings; thus although rock music is not a folk form, its ideology incorporates a notion of authenticity, i.e. claims to the music as 'folk' or 'art': 'Rock is a mass-produced music that carries a critique of its own means of production; it is a mass-consumed music that constructs its own "authentic" audience' (ibid.: II.) Frith's work represents a major contribution to the study of rock music, and this book follows many of his concerns and ideas and examines some of them in detail.

Much of the literature on rock music has concentrated upon lyrics, youth culture, rock stardom, or the record industry, focusing upon the ideological and theoretical issues involved with rock as mass culture. There has also been a preoccupation with rock's origins and relatively short history -- which is perhaps to be expected from any new discipline trying to establish itself by historicizing and documenting its own development. What is particularly lacking in the literature is ethnographic data and microsociological detail. Two other important features have been omitted: the grass roots of the industry -- the countless, as yet unknown bands struggling for success at a local level -- and the actual process of music-making by rock bands. It is those bands and that process that form the subject of this book.

In pursuing such a subject I follow the example of Bennet, Finnegan, and White, three exceptions to the above literature. Bennet (1980) described the process of becoming a rock musician in America. Finnegan (whose book, *The Hidden Musicians*, 1989, only became available as this book was going into press -- though I am grateful to the author for sending me draft copies of two chapters) studied the 'practice' of music-making by rock bands in Milton Keynes, describing the social processes by which they and other 'amateur' 'musical groups' in Milton Keynes learn, rehearse, perform, compose and organize their music. White (1983) studied two 'semiprofessional' bands in another part of Britain, one a rock band, the other a jazz band, highlighting both the musical and non-musical conventions and constraints upon their music-making and focusing

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particular upon the way in which their music-making was directly influenced by the legal factors that governed it. These writers provide valuable ethnography on the music-making and musical environment of rock bands. Many of their findings were confirmed by my own, which supports their use, following Becker (1982), of the terms 'art world' and 'musical world' to describe the ideological and practical circumstances within which rock bands operate.

Apart from Finnegan and White, British anthropologists have rarely dealt with popular culture or even with music, and it is only recently that more attention has been focused upon 'anthropology at home' -- in this case modern industrial Britain. Those studies that have included analysis of music often considered it only as a reflection of the social structure within which it was made, or in its relation to the functioning of the society as a whole. This study attempts to redress that by focusing upon the processes of musicmaking and the complexity of social relationships involved, analysing the way in which the music not only reflects but affects the social environment, and highlighting the underlying conceptions of music which determine the musical terminology and categories used and the evaluation of music, musicians, musical knowledge and skills. The study thus reflects the influence of ethnomusicology (particularly that embodied in the seminal works of Blacking, 1973; Merriam, 1964; and Keil, 1966), a discipline closely related to social anthropology, which has addressed such issues in its cross-cultural approach to the study of music.

However, although ethnomusicologists have studied Western musics, they have rarely looked at rock music. Nor have musicologists, who (with the exception of Adorno) have tended to avoid the study of popular music in general, often considering it not worthy enough for study. In addition, they have rarely adopted a sociological or anthropological approach to their material, unlike literary critics such as Finkelstein (1976) and Durant (1984), who have analysed the way in which music's structures and forms embody certain ideas and meanings.

Because of the paucity of anthropological analyses of music and popular culture, the gap that has been identified in the academic literature on rock music, and the absence of musicological and ethnomusicological data on Western popular music, the discussion presented in this book is inevitably exploratory and much of the literature surveyed has been gleaned from non-academic periodicals, papers, and rock biographies. It must be emphasized that musicological transcription and analysis would be applicable to the study but is not within the scope of the book. It must also be noted that

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although the discussion will highlight a continuous ideology, organization, and structure amongst the bands and the music 'scene' in which they operated, those bands and that 'scene' nevertheless comprised a situation of such rapid change and fluctuation that to follow traditional anthropological practice of writing in 'the ethnographic present' would have been misleading. Consequently, the past tense has been employed throughout. Pseudonyms have been used very occasionally.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first presents some background material on Liverpool and its rock music 'scene', whilst the second introduces the two bands featured as case-studies throughout the book and examines the social factors involved in the structure of the bands. Chapter 3 outlines what is involved in the organization and running of such bands, Chapter 4 describes and analyses their public performances, and Chapter 5 considers their endeavours to 'make it' and achieve success. Chapters 6 and 7 focus upon the making of the music itself and the band members' underlying aesthetics and conceptualization of music, whilst Chapter 8 considers the relation of women to those bands and their musicmaking and focuses upon tensions and contradictions within the bands.

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CHAPTER 7

Style and Meaning in the Music

MUSIC OF ORDERLY DISORDER

This chapter considers the music-making of "the Jactars" and "Crikey it's the Cromptons!" within the wider context of rock music and music in general, thus highlighting its cultural, social, and historical specificity.

The aesthetics and ideology involved in the production of the Jactars' and Crikey it's the Cromptons!' music had been particularly influenced by British and American punk styles of the 1970S. The 'do-it-yourself' message of punk, which has been well documented elsewhere (see Frith, 1983, and Laing, 1985, for example), encouraged many people, including members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons!, to form bands. Trav, Gary, and Dave began making music together in the late 1970S at the age of 13-14 years, when punk was at its height. Later they joined Tony and others and experimented in Trav or Tony's house with various sounds using hairdryers, hoovers, cardboard boxes, bottles, typewriters, in addition to more conventional instruments. As far as the music itself was concerned, punk:

meant an attitude towards musical performance which emphasized directness and repetition (to use more than three chords was self-indulgence) at the expense of technical virtuosity (p.14) . . . a challenge to the orthodoxy of 'artistic excellence' in punk's choice of musical style; and the aggressive injection of new subject matter into the lyrics of popular songs, some of which broke existing taboos (Laing, 1985: 12).

Williams (NME: 26 January 1986) wrote of the:

undying punk principle that musical ability not only tends to be boring when possessed by skinny white boys but can be a downright hindrance if one wishes to communicate ideas that are fresher than last February's freerange eggs.

Members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! had clearly adopted that challenge to technical and musical virtuosity, believing that 'musos' who trained themselves in, and often became obsessed with, musical and technical skills had, in doing so, lost the right attitude (as had those bands that used backing tapes at their performances instead of live musicians). They had lost, as one person put it, 'that feel'. Similarly, White (1983: 197) wrote that amongst jazz musicians: 'there is a distinction drawn between feel and technique. Those who have great technique sometimes place less emphasis on 'feel' whereas those who have limited technique sometimes place greater value on the feel of the music.' A musician who rehearsed at the Ministry said that he and other bands at the Ministry believed in 'musicianship' and hadn't time for Half Man Half Biscuit and 'their friends'. As far as he was concerned that was not music and those bands would vanish in a few months whereas bands like his continually worked hard and achieved something musically.

When Tog and Tony formed the short-lived Vegetable Smutt Kraft Band, Tog decided to play lead guitar though he knew nothing about it and couldn't play it, 'which', he explained, 'is the kind of sound we are after'. He and the others readily proclaimed their musical incompetence, as did many bands influenced by punk. ('Virtuosity kills the simple spontaneity of rock'n'roll' -- the Inca Babies, *Sounds*: 5 January 1985.) When the Iconoclasts first began performing, the bass player would give her bass to the band's roadie to tune. The first time he did so he tuned all four strings which, she informed him, was unnecessary because she only used one of them. Such bands appear to have adopted an aesthetic of musical incompetence. However, this did not involve incompetence as such, but on the one hand the competent contrivance of it, and on the other, the skillful construction of a complex whole from an assortment of simple and incompetently played (whether intentionally or unintentionally) sounds, chords, and notes. Such bands therefore adopted an aesthetic which often required considerable care and skill to embody in their music. Thus Tony admired a song by a well-known band which he described as 'just two chords', whilst Tog derogatively named another band at Vulcan 'three-chord wonders', and jokingly asked if it was true that they had come up with another chord that week. Clearly the first band was appreciated for expressing an aesthetic of simplicity (or incompetence) whilst the second was criticized for being musically incompetent.

The musical aesthetics of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! was thus expressed in various guises in the music of other bands and

could even be seen to encompass rock music as a whole as well as trends or genres within other art forms. Cooper (1982: 77) wrote of Echo and the Bunnymen:

None of the three were musicians and to this day they have difficulty tuning guitars and find it impossible to play with other people . . . The Bunnymen's success is the chemistry of three people from the same background finding a common music because they didn't play well enough to know the clichés . . . The Bunnymen's virginity, their lack of experience, is their essence.

At a 1986 conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, a member of a band named Talulah Gosh claimed that his band and a small group of similar bands dealt, like punk, with music as noise and instruments as objects. They produced 'poppy', 'lyrical', 'tuneful' songs but he explained that their melody and lyrics were contradicted and subverted ('attacked' as he phrased it) by the manner in which the instruments were played, for although the band's members could play their instruments 'properly', they used them in a 'non-instrumental' way. He cited a band that took that style to an extreme making what he described as, 'pure noise with songs . . . it's about noise yet at the same time it's about music'. Similarly, a member of the Shop Assistants was quoted as saying:

We usually manage to get out of tune at the same time . . . I like the idea of having extremes. On the one hand there's the guitars going wild, and accompanying that there's Alex's vocals, highlighting the tunes that run through our songs. Only now do people realize that it's possible to have noise and still have tunes in there as well -- before it's always been regarded as only possible to have one or the other, but not both (NME: 17 August 1985)

The relationship between musical elements such as music and lyrics can thus be complex. They act and react upon each other or independently of each other. When I asked Ryan's vocalist what the band's lyrics were about he answered that they were all about love, whereupon the guitarist proudly declared that his chords were 'all about hate'.

In the 1960s the Who treated instruments as objects by smashing them up during performances. 'I smash guitars', said Pete Townshend, 'because I like them. I usually smash a guitar when it's at its best' (Herman, 1971: 45). This was explained as an attack on commodities which were seen to come between audiences, performers, and the music. 'If I stood on stage worrying about the price of a guitar then I'm not really playing music. I'm getting involved in material values' (ibid.: 53). According to Herman, the Who wanted their music to appear: 'constrained and orderly yet frantic, with

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instrumental lines that intervene with such complexity that they give every appearance of chaos; what Townshend elsewhere called an "orderly disorder" (ibid.: 58). Turner (1983: II8) wrote, 'it takes a great amount of order to produce "a sweet disorder", a great deal of structuring to create a sacred play-space and time for antistructure'.

The guitar-smashing and 'orderly disorder' or the Who are examples of what Martin (1981), following Turner, called the 'symbols of anti-structure' which pervaded popular culture in the 1960s:

The arts and the Underground were the primary milieux in which the cultural vocabulary of liminality was developed during the 1950s and 1960s -- ambiguity, taboo breaking, anti-structure -- in short, the symbolism of ecstatic disorder (ibid.: 137).

This was particularly characteristic of rock, a youth music that embodied rebellion. By seeking to invert, subvert, turn 'upside-down' musical conventions and treat instruments illegitimately, Tony, the Jactars, and Talulah Gosh were thus following in the footsteps of other artists from the Sex Pistols, the Flying Lizards, and the Who to the Surrealists and Dadaists who originated at the time of the First World War and whose spirit came to pervade art, popular music, and popular culture in general (Russolo's 1913 manifesto was entitled 'The Art of Noise' and Satie, one of the predecessors of the Dada group, incorporated mechanical instruments such as typewriters in his music and was attacked by the press for doing so). Anti-structural symbolism in rock music thus became, as in other musical genres, art forms, and various political movements, a taken for granted style displaying rules and predictable patterns, i.e. structure. In reality, any musical form would be unintelligible without structure.

Inversion and disorder were also emphasized in the Jactars' and Crikey it's the Cromptons!' performances, in their rejection, for example, of some of the traditional forms of rock showmanship such as elaborate stage dress or contrived, rehearsed movements, and in Tony's striving to 'freak out' and be 'wild' and 'over the top' in his stage dress and movement which involved wearing 'clashing' colours and looking as 'uncomfortable as possible' in odd socks or oversized suits. In the adoption of such styles both bands again followed the attitudes of many others before them:

There is a beautiful photograph of the Comets with the bassist lying on his back with his feet in the air balancing his instrument, wearing ostentatiously odd socks. This is the first installment of the body symbolism of antistructure (Martin, 1981: 164).

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The lyrical themes of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! (including those of violence and pain; loneliness, alienation, and helplessness, as though one were 'a dead leaf' floating in 'a fast stream' -- from 'Tongue'; and of women as deceitful temptresses) again reflected those prevalent in other styles of rock music. Rock's ideology has been specifically directed towards youth and rebellion and throughout its history lyrics have expressed aggression, romance, sexuality (largely male sexuality), and misogyny. According to Laing (1985), for example, punk lyrics involved, on the whole, those same themes, but because punk was designed to shock, violent themes were particularly stressed and sexuality represented in a more aggressive manner:

The Stranglers' songs . . . have scenarios of pornographic fantasies, with strongly sadistic overtones, and elsewhere that group and the early Adam and the Ants produced litanies of detailed violent acts: 'I'll sew up your mouth', 'You kicked my cheekbones in', 'Smack your face', 'Treat you rough', 'Beat you till you drop' (ibid.: 76).

Many rock lyrics express the younger generation's sense of alienation, frustration with their elders and the world at large, and their worries about their future. Such lyrics often exhibit, therefore, a sense of hostility or a depressing, pessimistic tone highlighted by Julie Burchill in a review of the Jesus And Mary Chain (NME: 23 February 1985):

Horrible nasty sound for big baby boys to sit around feeling depressed and important to. Funny, isn't it, how many people -- particularly those in beat combos -- feel important, the stuff of zeitgeist, blitzkrieg and history, when they're down in the dumps, and feel trivial, not 'real', when they're happy.

The above themes are often characteristic of song texts outside rock music since, as Merriam (1964: 46) pointed out, the language in song texts is 'often more permissive than in ordinary discourse', which gives composers licence to express themselves in a manner inappropriate in everyday language. Lyrics can often, therefore, reveal psychological processes and 'deep-seated values and goals stated only with the greatest reluctance in normal discourse' (ibid.). Analysis of them can thus illuminate both 'ideal and real behaviour'. Expressions and styles of enunciation in song texts are also often different from those of everyday speech. In rock music, for example, words are frequently distorted and accents changed.

The ideology of rock music, as opposed to pop, has generally incorporated the belief that lyricists should write what they really feel or think as if to do so is to be natural and genuine and to do otherwise to be contrived or false: 'Rock . . . carries intimations of sincerity, authenticity, art . . . These intimations have been muffled

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since rock became the record industry, but it is the possibilities, the promises that matter ...' (Frith, 1983: II). Thus many lyrics are deeply personal expressions of their composers who are often selfconscious about them. Tony said that some of his lyrics were perhaps too personal, and Trav said he never showed his lyrics to people and worried about people reading them. Consequently, band members who did not contribute towards lyrical composition often didn't know the lyrics or were unaware of their meaning. Tog, for example, said that of all the Jactars' songs he only knew some of the words to one of them. He rarely listened to the lyrics when he was playing because he was usually concentrating upon the drum beat -- though he sometimes listened to them on recordings. Similarly, the lyrics of One Last Fight and the Da Vincis were written by the vocalists and their meaning was cryptic and personal to them. The other band members appreciated that and although they didn't understand the lyrics they admired them and found them interesting. Nevertheless the lyrics were written on their behalf and did express their own feelings in one way or another.

Consequently, interpretations of lyrics could, even within a band, vary considerably, as revealed by the following quote in which members of the same band discuss one of the band's songs entitled 'Perfect Circle', the lyrics of which had been written by Michael, their lead vocalist:

'Peter always tells this story about how "Perfect Circle" was inspired by a bunch of young boys playing baseball', says Michael. 'To me, it was about my ex-girlfriend. A lot of times they [the other band members] won't see the words until we record the song; a lot of times they won't want to.' 'We're just like anyone else', said Peter. 'We try and interpret them personally but actually we know Michael, so barring maybe three songs over our recording career I know what they're about because I know the girl or the person, or the time and the place. But I think one would get the emotion anyway, whether or not one knew the particular circumstances. He writes in a pretty oblique manner, and that's OK' (NME: 6 July 1985).

The nature of such lyrics is thus paradoxical in that whilst their intended meaning and its interpretation can be highly personal and individual, they are also written on behalf of the band as a whole and for public performance. (This public/private dualism can also be seen as characteristic of music on its own: 'Because of its lack of word or pictorial imagery, music seems to be the most inward of the arts. But it is also the most immediately social, in the awareness of kinship it evokes among a body of listeners, without impediments of any kind'-- Finkelstein, 1976: 14.) Lienhardt (1985: 144) highlighted the

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dualism between the public and private nature of lyrics in his discussion of African songs which are:

contrary to what was once supposed about their anonymous, communal 'folk' origins, usually assigned to their individual composers, who hold the copyright, as it were, and they contain images and illusions which are incomprehensible . . . without a knowledge of intimate local and personal experience of the composer himself. In this respect, like much of the best poetry, they make the private self public, while retaining a sense of privileged admittance to its privacy.

The private nature of lyrics is therefore expressed in the context of a performance but can also be obscured through distorted enunciation and accent. Lyrics may thus be incomprehensible or misunderstood by audiences, but at the same time accepted as part of the band's general style. Their intelligibility may be considered unimportant as long as the audience knows what the song is supposed to be about and as long as the music conveys and supports that meaning. Audience members might also impose upon lyrics their own meanings and interpretations. Their lyrical content might be taken to address them, conveying collective sentiments and acting as a form of psychological expression and release for them as well as for the composer(s) and performers. The lyrics may not intentionally express meanings and sentiments relevant to audience members, but by expressing the personal, individual experiences of their composer they might also reflect aspects of the composer's social and cultural environment which may be shared by the audience.

From its beginnings, rock music has involved repetitive, predictable, and simple beats, rhythms, melodies, and lyrics, accompanied by certain sounds and styles that have often been 'conventionally unaesthetic or dissonant' (Durant, 1984: 180). Rhythm and volume have been

emphasized as well as aggressive, arrhythmical noise, and themes discussed above such as rebellion have been consistently played upon. Because rock has been primarily aimed at youth and marketed as such it has often, as Burchill and Parsons (1978) pointed out, promoted an 'illusion of youth rebellion' or, as Martin put it, 'The semblance and symbol of revolt without its reality . . . Thus rock is the ritual gesture of liminality not a first instalment of revolt: the ~mage and not the substance' (ibid.: 167). 'The teenage world of rock and roll', wrote Kerridge (1984), 'provided a door through wh~ch youngsters who might otherwise have been respectable could now enter the underworld.' Similarly, Clover (1985) and Burchall (1965) have pointed to the 'myth of rock'n'roll and the revolution' This rebellious image of rock with its accompanying symbols of disorder and anti-structure has often led to its being associated with

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working-class youth in particular. Many have been keen, for example, to point to the working-class roots of punk (e.g. Marsh, 1977). Yet that is another illusion. In reality, anti-structural symbolism in 1960s art, as Martin pointed out, appealed particularly to middle-class bohemians, and punk symbolism of the 1970a did much the same. It was not even the case that punk's musicians were predominantly working class as Laing (1985: 122) has shown.

The stance taken against technology by members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! was also a long-standing anti-structural device brought to the fore yet again by punk. Technology stood in the way of their ideal of honest music-making. The problem, however, was how to maintain and project that honesty whilst recording: in other words, how to use advanced technology to produce music that sounded 'raw' and expressed an aesthetic of simplicity opposed to technology. They, like others, wanted to capture the essence of live performance on recordings. Thus Tony was critical of his band's first demo tape because it sounded 'too controlled and contained', and contrasted it with a recording of one of their live performances which had more 'vitality and power'. He and other musicians thought their bands sounded better live than recorded because they sought to achieve that 'rawness' of sound as part of their musical style. (Many also preferred live performance because of its visual aspects.) Tony also described one or two of his songs as 'live' songs as opposed to those that sounded better recorded.

It was, however, difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce the live sound on a recording. One sound engineer bemoaned those bands who came to a studio wanting to sound live:

They just presume that you can plug in and play as usual and get a live effect. They don't realize that playing live and recording are two completely different things. To begin with, you don't have the same volume that you get when you play live. You also lose the visual effect which amounts to over so per cent of the live experience.

Achieving that 'live effect' thus required considerable skill and a suitably chosen studio and engineer. To help them decide which studio to record in musicians listened carefully and critically to recordings of other bands. For most, their choice was restricted by limited finances although, as mentioned earlier, bands like the Jactars might use simpler studios for ideological as well as financial reasons. They and others, however, often found t.hat simpler equipment did not

necessarily produce the raw sound desired. Huw, for example, pointed out that their demo tape sounded too 'contained' only because they couldn't afford a good quality recording and an engineer skilled enough to mix it properly.

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Thus whilst technology (including instruments as well as recording equipment) was seen as a constraint, its creative, beneficial potential was also recognized (particularly by bands making different styles of music from that of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! and expressing a different attitude towards technology), as shown by the following quote from a band named Wire, admired by both the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons!:

It became clear very quickly . . . that we had to separate the two processes of playing live and making a record. Live the idea is still very much that of the guitar-based group; on record we found it was necessary to embrace current technology . . . We started by constructing the pieces in the familiar way but then as we got more familiar with the technology, we got excited by the possibility of fusing the two. If it sounds technological then good, but behind it all the playing is still there. What it allows you to do is to take all the best parts of performance and utilise those to build up the ideal copy (NME: 18 April 1983).

The medium of their art was only one of many constraints put upon the music-making of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! and other bands. In addition there was its commercial nature. Most band members made a distinction between 'commercial' and 'noncommercial' or 'alternative' music, which often led to argument and discussion on the definition of 'commercial' music. Tony, for example, described his music as 'alternative' and 'non-commercial' and often derogatively referred to 'commercial' music as 'pop' or bubble-gum music' played on Top of the Pops and Radio One. Huw pointed out that Tony had written some songs which were 'catchy' and hence commercial. Tog, in support of Huw, reckoned that any of Crikey it's the Cromptons!' songs could, with 'hype' (i.e. publicity and financial backing), be pushed to the top of the charts, and added, to annoy Tony, that it would be harder to do that with the Jactars' music which was definitely less 'commercial' than Crikey it's the Cromptons!

Whether their music was defined as 'commercial' or 'noncommercial' most bands wanted to appear on record and 'make it' in some way, which meant that they usually had to deal with those institutions involved with the mass production and commercialization of music. To sell their products such institutions categorized and labelled music into certain styles or genres. Thus the music industry to a certain extent prescribed the music heard by the general public because many bands orientated themselves, their music, and their image towards those categories in an effort to achieve success. Geoff Davies believed that music should reflect its performers' thoughts and feelings because that was what art and entertainment ought to be

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about. He bemoaned the fact that musicians were now 'calculating how to jump on the band wagon and which type of song has a good chance of getting into the charts . . . Anyone who does this is merely a business man as far as I'm concerned.' No band, he said, should have to make

compromises to try to sell records: 'If you've got something in your head that you think is great there are always other people who will like it because nobody is alone.'

Whether bands conformed to commercial categories and labels or reacted against them, they still used them as a reference point and were generally unable to seclude their music-making from commercial considerations. There were so many bands competing for success that many succumbed to the pressure to produce music directed in one way or another at particular record companies. A clear example of how this could happen was the reaction of Crikey it's the Cromptons! to the comments of A&R people they saw in London. Huw agreed with some of them, trying to persuade Tony to change his music-making accordingly, and all of them began to think more carefully about their songs and their appeal to record companies. Dave T. even suggested they look at the books *How to Make a Hit Record* and *How to Make a Demo*, and Tony wondered whether they should 'completely sell out' and make 'commercial music' in order to get a deal and then revert back to their original style to record a 'way out' album. For a while he considered their 'more commercial' songs quite favourably and produced two songs he thought one of the companies they visited might like.

Other bands allowed their music to be far more constrained by commercial considerations. At many rehearsals I attended musicians avoided experimentation during music-making, preferring to play safe in case record companies wouldn't like it. Roger Hill described this as 'the subservience of imagination to production'. Leigh (1984: 100) wrote of Liverpool bands in the 1960s:

Groups lost their individuality as they tried to emulate the successful sounds of others. They knew that there was big money at stake and yet this was their undoing. They became greedy . . .

The members of one local band who wrote strongly political lyrics, were constantly pressurized by their manager and others to sacrifice their principles and tone down their lyrics to make them more acceptable. Some bands, after months or years of failing to achieve a record deal, completely rewrote their songs in an effort to make them more 'catchy' and acceptable. Those under contract to a record company usually released their most 'commercial' song as a single, particularly if a previous record had been unsuccessful. Often they

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were pressurized to do so by record company personnel. Also important (as illustrated in Chapter 5) was whether that particular style of music was currently in vogue.

Thus most bands were involved with the continual re-formation and adaptation of their music in order to satisfy not only themselves but their audience, whether it be the friends, relatives, and locals who attended their live performances, the unknown potential audience they hoped to eventually reach through their records, or the particular record company or A&R person who might make that possible.

CULT OF ORIGINALITY

The Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! described themselves as 'alternative' and didn't like to be 'labelled' or categorized. They wanted, like other bands I met, to appear unique and make music that was 'different'. Their quest for originality could perhaps be placed within a general cult of originality that has influenced all arts this century. Despite that, most bands were also keen to acknowledge their musical 'influences', i.e. particular bands they admired that had influenced them.

Considerable emphasis was placed upon deciphering the influences of bands, and band members often proudly displayed their ability to detect, identify, and trace them in their music. If certain influences were attributed to a band with which its members disagreed, or when its music was described as 'derivative', it was usually seen as a great insult. When one club owner returned Crikey it's the Cromptons! demo tape to them saying they were too 'derivative', the band's members were outraged, particularly Tony, who often declared that his main aim was to make music that was 'really different' and once told me how anxious he became when his voice was compared to that of others because he so badly wanted to be unique. Afterwards, he spent hours arguing with others at Vulcan about whether his music was in fact derivative. The manager of Ryan compared it to the music of Talking Heads and to one of that band's songs in particular. To prove his point he played a recording of the song to Tony, who was forced to admit that there were certain similarities. They also discussed the music of One Last Fight. A member of Ryan said it sounded like that of the Cure but Tony disagreed and pointed to one particular sequence of music which he described as a 'rip-off of the Virgin Prunes'. He mentioned this to members of One Last Fight but they said they had never heard of the Virgin Prunes. Tony was determined to play them a recording by the band so they could hear the similarity for themselves.

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Members of the Jactars also spent much time discussing, identifying, tracing, and arguing about influences of other bands and acknowledging and denying those attributed to their own. When Roger Hill broadcast their advertisement for a drummer on Radio Merseyside and described them as sounding like the Smiths, a wellknown Manchester band, they were shocked and upset. Trav reflected pessimistically,

whatever you do you're just going to get categorized. The Jactars have been put in the Smiths' category. No matter what you do, if you have a bass and two guitars you get compared to other bands of that nature.

The problem was not only that people listened to music in such a subjective, individual manner that they heard and appreciated the same piece of music differently, but that whilst acknowledging their 'influences' and perhaps admitting that it was difficult (if not impossible) to be totally original because everyone had been influenced by somebody, many bands nevertheless wanted to create their own distinctive style of music and be appreciated for doing so. There seemed to be a feeling that to do so was to be not only original and creative but honest and genuine. Thus a member of the Da Vmcis described the music of One Last Fight as 'false', explaining that he found it 'contrived . . . like lots of bands put together'. The quest for originality

was clearly revealed in the earlier descriptions of the Jactars' and Crikey it's the Cromptons!' music-making where the bands' members pointed out that a sequence of music, a sound, a style of playing or singing, or even a whole song, sounded too much like that of another band and it was altered appropriately.

However, although it was common for bands to unconsciously mimic the music of other bands, many consciously borrowed from or adapted the music of others to incorporate it in their own and claim it as their own. If the Jactars or Crikey it's the Cromptons! did that then I was not aware of it (though Tony once told me he had 'ripped off', i.e. stolen someone else's guitar rhythms), but it was apparent amongst some other bands. Such 'borrowing' was not a random or haphazard process but involved a certain amount of skill, subtlety, and etiquette. Two members of Carry On Spying, for example, described how they had listened to a record by a well-known band and heard a bass line they particularly liked, deciding to use it themselves. However, the bass line sounded familiar and they realized that it was similar to that of another band they knew that also rehearsed at the Ministry and for that reason they couldn't use it: 'It's too close to the knuckle', said one, 'to use stuff from another Liverpool band.' Bands rehearsing in the Ministry regularly gathered

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in the office to chat and joke and often accused each other of stealing sequences of music which might have been overheard at rehearsals or performances. Generally such accusations were made in a lighthearted, jovial manner, but occasionally the rivalry between particular bands made them more serious.

The fear of having one's music 'stolen' and the stress upon originality contributed to what could be described as a mystification of the processes of music-making (reminiscent in a way of Pete McLaine's comment on Mersey Beat bands in the 1960s: 'Everything was so secret in those days because so many groups were rehashing old songs. The KGB or the CIA couldn't have been more secretive' -- Leigh, 1984: 78). Some bands, for example, kept their performance techniques secret and were reluctant to discuss them with outsiders. (Such mystification also occurs in other performance arts -- see Burns, 1972: 155, for example, on acting.) Similarly, trumpet players in New Orleans have been described as covering their hands with handkerchiefs when playing so as to shield their fingering from the view and mimicry of others. Bands didn't usually like being watched at rehearsals. When I first began to attend rehearsals of Up the Khyber the band's manager regarded me suspiciously and wanted my assurance that I would never reveal to others my observations about the band and the way it operated. Sometimes band members referred jokingly to such secrecy. A member of Rise, for example, once referred to a musical technique or style of his band during conversation with members of Up the Khyber. The technique surprised the latter, which led the member of Rise to comment that he was giving away all Rise's 'secrets' and should keep quiet.

Copying or 'borrowing' another band's music was acceptable if acknowledged and presented in the form of a cover. Thus members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! attended a performance of a band that had recently acquired notoriety in the independent music scene and were appalled that their songs were 'complete ripoffs' of various other bands. Tog thought it

would have been much better if they had just done covers. 'In fact,' he added, 'as cover versions they would have been really good.' A local cabaret performer, however, said that cabaret, involving the reproduction of familiar songs, had become a 'dirty word' among rock musicians and was viewed derogatively. This was illustrated earlier by Trav's attitude to cabaret and covers. Most rock bands started off playing and rehearsing covers but progressed on to their own material. Thereafter many were against performing a lot of covers because they felt that to do so showed a lack of creativity and initiative. 'It's very easy to copy someone', said a member of one, 'but it's the

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hardest thing to be original.' Midi was shown earlier to regard the performance of covers as an indulgence that pleased audiences but some musicians didn't like the idea of 'playing entirely for an audience' and saw covers as 'entertainment' and thus demeaning, as opposed to the creation and performance of original material which was integral to a band's self-respect.

The covers performed by bands like the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! were often viewed as a relaxing diversion from their own material, as with the latter's version of the well-known song 'Waiting for my Man' which they usually performed at the end of their set or as an encore if one was demanded. With such covers emphasis was again, as mentioned earlier, placed upon originality and creativity. Yet because the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! chose to cover songs of bands they admired that often made music of a style similar to their own, their covers might also be seen as a declaration of allegiance and thus a conveyor of identity. Members of another band said they only did covers 'for a laugh':

We do one which is very tongue-in-cheek, done very differently . . . taking the piss out of it. You find a lot of bands doing covers of bands that sound like them whereas we do . . . a very different type of music that they [the audience] don't expect us to do so they know we are really doing it for a laugh.

The injection of humour into the music, performance, and general image of a band was common practice. The lyrics of Crikey it's the Cromptons!, for example, were largely based upon Tony's individual sense of humour which his co-band members to some extent shared. That same sense of humour was also expressed in Crikey it's the Cromptons!' music, stage dress and performance, poster designs, name, and song titles. Tony sang songs about fish playing a guitar with a plastic fish dangling from its neck, posters advertising one gig featured a drawing by Huw of a mutated fish-like creature with 'let them eat plankton' printed underneath, and, discussing his stage image, Tony would fantasize about performing with a frozen haddock strapped to his forehead.

Other local ('wacky') bands displaying humour in their musicmaking included: Half Man Half Biscuit, whose lyrics about television personalities amused listeners nationwide; the Mel-OTones, who had an unusual stage image and produced their own comic entitled 'Trash Can' featuring members of the band and their friends in cartoon form; and the Veggie Band, whose

members were proclaimed 'born-again veggies' and included Colin Cucumber and Barry Beetroot. Many bands incorporated humour in more subtle

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ways. Lyrics, for example, might contain references or jokes recognizable as such only to the band's members and close friends. Musical jokes might also be included, such as the Jactars' instrumental number of 'pure noise', Crikey it's the Cromptons!' ending of one song during a performance in 'tongue-in-cheek', 'heavy metal' style, and their inclusion of some drunken yodelling on a demo tape recorded in a studio late one night. Such humorous elements brought band members and associates closer together as participants in a shared code and were thus an important part of the band's image and identity.

Earlier, the strong sense of identity conveyed by a band's name was mentioned, representing the band as a thing in itself, over and above its individual members and somehow defining them. That could also be said of the music, which was not conceptualized as an expression of its four or five individual makers but as an expression of the band as a whole, over and above the individuals that comprized it. Again this was an important aspect of each member's identity and was bound up with the bands' 'democratic ethos' discussed earlier. A member of the Da Vincis said that all bands comprized members with different tastes in music which was usually reflected in their music. However, he continued, 'sometimes it can all come together and you can produce something that is an expression of the whole band'. Similarly, a member of Blue Nose B said of his band: 'We all have different music tastes but we've moulded ourselves into our own sound', whilst Pete Best said of the Beatles, 'We had a group sound. It wasn't just one person' (Davies, 1986: 30).

Thus bands, like instruments, rooms, studios, and engineers, were said to have their own particular 'sound' which comprized their music and musical style, the specific instruments that made it, and the way it was presented through their 'set'. Much attention and discussion focused upon that sound because it was seen to express and convey the band's identity. Thus Tony wanted Dave to turn off the guitar 'effects' he was using saying 'we're not really a distortion band', and members of Carry On Spying, after someone pointed out that all their songs sounded different and some sounded like those of other bands, completely rewrote many of them. They agreed there was a danger the songs might all end up sounding similar but said that at least they would have their own distinctive sound.

In general, that sound was conceptualized as a fixed, unchanging identity, but it was also considered important that a band should develop and progress through time and be heard to do so. Its new songs should thus be seen as a move forward, either because they improved upon older songs or because they represented a change of

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style or emphasis. Ideally the sound thus retained its essential characteristics whilst continually changing and, in a sense, developing with the band members themselves. 'If you don't progress you regress', said one local journalist, criticizing a famous local band for not developing its style

over the years. Similarly, the Jactars' new demo tape was criticized by some of their friends as a 'backwards step' because the new song on it sounded just like their old ones: 'At least Crikey it's the Cromptons! are progressing in their stuff', said Tony.

That emphasis upon development reflected the rapid fluctuations of trends and styles in the national music scene which encouraged the quest for change and originality, for hitting the right 'formula' at the right time. Bands were expected to continually compose new material. One man, for example, proudly declared of his band, 'We're not afraid to drop or change songs.' Hence the existence of the process described in the previous chapter whereby new songs were composed while older ones were rehearsed and continually recomposed for performance as a set. Those new songs were gradually introduced ('worked in') to the set whilst older ones were dropped and later revived or fondly played and remembered within the privacy of the band as 'old faves'. A local band named Wake Up Africa was described by members of Crikey it's the Cromptons! and their associates as 'professional', but they criticized that professionalism as a sort of 'selling out'. Wake Up Africa had been together for six years and were still performing songs they had played at the start of their career. In other words, they had worked on the same few songs until they had honed them down to perfection, a policy regarded by others as unadventurous.

Although I have suggested that the band and its sound existed as a thing in itself over and above the individual personalities that comprized and produced it, those individuals were obviously important components and appreciated as such. Through them the character and image of the band was constructed and developed; thus when its membership was threatened, or when someone left the band, a crisis arose because the band's sound and identity was under threat.

MASS CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The construction of identity through tastes in music was important not only for the band as a whole but for the individual, as revealed in the previous chapter. Considerable emphasis was placed upon the music tastes of each band member, with Trav envisaging the music he

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and Dave liked as forming a continuum of styles as if that represented the range and extent of their personalities. Concern was shown that such individual preferences should not conflict with or interfere with the band's sound. Members of Some Party once explained that the differences between their tastes in music never became particularly problematic because if a member's influences began to emerge in his playing 'we pull him in line'. It is thus important to note the way in which particular musical styles, forms, and even a particular sound (whether of an instrument, voice, technological device, or band) could be invested with so much social and cultural significance.

As mass culture rock music is received via all sorts of channels and in all sorts of situations. Its commercial nature means that it involves continual promotion and marketing of new styles and trends by the record industry in order to make its companies as much money as possible. That sense of change and movement is, as we have seen, incorporated in the ideology of rock:

Rock was always meant to be illusory and ephemeral, such stuff as dreams are made of; barely existing as a definable whole at all and then always in a state of eternal and perpetual flux, constantly being either consumed or renewed within the flutter of an eyelid; a place in which a three-minute song could encompass infinity or nothing at all, where ideally everything should exist just long enough to die, being transient in order to flare with life for an instant forever remembered on record -- rather than splutter for an age. It should always be young and never old. Uncompromised by experience and unbridled by routine, not existing long enough to receive the withering touch of either (Tony from Sigue Sigue Sputnik, *Melody Maker*: 24 August 1985).

Thus rock music is contemporary and immediate. Records evoke particular periods of time with their own particular styles, images, and happenings. Individual songs can have a personal relevance in that they relate to one point in an individual's life and conjure up associated feelings, experiences, and relationships, but they can also evoke communal feelings and experiences and they play upon a sense of community in their audience and in a way give rise to it. (For discussion on how pop songs play on a sense of community with others and create an 'illusion' of community see Laing, 1969; Frith, 1983 and 1981; Williams, 1976; Riesman, 1957; and Sartre, 1976.) There is a sense that all have experienced the same music, progressing through and growing up with the same bands and musical styles, and thus share a similar history.

This contemporary, temporary, temporal nature of rock music also means that individuals experience a feeling of having grown out

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of particular styles so that looking back at music one listened to in previous years is like looking at old photographs of oneself with a feeling of embarrassment at how one used to look. Members of the Jactars, Crikey it's the Cromptons!, and other bands spent many hours reminiscing and laughing self-consciously about bands and songs they used to listen to and like, listing them in chronological order and associating them with their age and activities at that particular time. Each band and musical style was recognized as the product of a specific period and appreciated as such. Thus when Tog played me a recording by a band he and Midi had previously been in, I was told to bear in mind the fact that the music 'is good for what it is . . . It's good for 1980.'

Rock music is striking, however, not only for its encompassing, communal nature, but for its diversity and the way in which its styles and sounds are adopted and used to construct and identify various groups and even geographical areas. The appropriation of sounds and styles by various subcultures, for example, and the way in which such styles to a certain extent create those subcultures, has been well documented elsewhere (see Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978; and other studies produced at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University). Here it is perhaps interesting to note how the process relates to rock bands. It was shown earlier that the incorporation of individual music tastes into the construction of a band's sound, which was often claimed by the band to be both original and 'different', could prove difficult if those tastes were particularly diverse or conflicting. Thus advertisements placed by bands looking for new members usually proclaimed which musical groups and styles the band liked or was influenced by in order to attract appropriately like-minded applicants. (Lonely

hearts advertisements also proclaim musical tastes, i.e. they are a basis upon which friendships are formed.)

As part of a nationwide audience for recorded and commercial music, each individual or band could thus be associated with a particular taste group constructed through musical styles promoted and marketed by the record industry. In addition, as rock music makers there was a sense in which each member participated in that construction of style, taste, and meaning in rock culture, and perceived themselves as doing so, which was part of the attraction and excitement of being in a band. The messages and meanings of those particular styles were continually contested and debated, which meant that their producers, performers, and listeners felt a sense of involvement within the debate.

Music, in other words, is a shared code, and appreciation of it

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depends both upon an understanding of that code and a willingness to understand it. Rock music has been regarded as youth music not simply because of the intrinsic nature of the music itself and the way it has been associated with youth and profitably marketed as such, but because the existence of the so-called 'generation gap' has made the older generation unwilling to learn or appreciate the codes involved and the younger generation more anxious to appropriate them exclusively as its own. Rock music is thus a boundary marker that gives rise to strong feelings of allegiance and identity involving all sorts of non-musical factors.

In order to appreciate why people formed and maintained rock bands it is important to consider not just the appeal and attraction of rock music, but also that of music and music-making in its own right.

Band members delighted in the physical activity of producing noises and sounds. Some expressed a personal dislike of the music their band produced but nevertheless loved playing it. In turn, the music itself could arouse a physical response which is often the main intention of some musical forms. Many styles of rock music, for example, are constructed to encourage people to dance and feel energetic, sensual, or romantic: 'it is music to slop beer to, wave arms, punch fists, shout along and sweat to', proclaimed the reviewer of one gig (NME: 33 July 1985). Such physical movement can, as suggested earlier, play an important role during live performances by acting as a visual element of the music, conveying and generating emotion. Thus pleasure can be aroused by music alone_by the repetitious, predictable, familiar characteristics of well-known pop songs perhaps, as well as by the cacophony, bustle, and spectacle of a live performance. Frith (1983: 206), *New Society* (9 December 1984), and Martin (1981: 154) have all pointed out that the essence of rock is 'fun' or 'play'. It makes people feel good. Music is also experienced physically within the body. Sounds are absorbed by the body and resonate within it.

Yet music is used not only to arouse pleasure but to convey and stimulate a variety of other emotions and give emotional release. Lullabies, for example, are constructed to sooth and lull the emotions whilst other musical forms are used to calm and heal or arouse and heighten spiritual feelings, as with religious musics. Music can also provide or encourage the opportunity to 'let off

steam' and perhaps express violence or hostility of some kind as revealed by the way in which musicians sometimes use their instruments almost as an

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extension of themselves and as a means through which to express their feelings. Thus Pete said he could 'work out' his aggressions with Crikey it's the Cromptons! and Tony strummed his guitar in a petulant manner when he got frustrated. The arousal of certain emotions and excitement can in turn affect the music and the performance of it as indicated in Chapter 4.

The physical, emotional, and pleasurable quality of music and music-making cannot be experienced in quite the same way through any other form of social or creative and artistic activity, which is why music is so popular and valued so highly. McGregor (1983: 81) summed it up thus:

Pop is energy. Rock is energy. Movement is energy. We are all energy, we are part of the Heraclitean stream, we are moving in blowfly trajectories from creation to death and as we hurtle along this invisible airborne stream we try to conjure up images, symbols, correlatives which correspond to this sense of speed, tragedy and joy and we create music.

The power and intensity of feeling in music and other creative art forms have been variously attributed: to their ambiguous nature which can articulate a variety of shifting feelings and meanings (Langer, 1951: 206); to the fact that art creates a moment of 'universal humanity' (Brecht, quoted in Fischer, 1963) and 'expands human kinship' (Finkelstein, 1976: 109); to the 'magic' inherent in art, the merging of the self with the whole which makes all art 'necessary' (Fischer); to the 'liminality' and 'communitas' in the arts and in ritual (Turner, 1969); and similarly, to the fact that while 'history develops, art stands still' (E. M. Forster, quoted in Blacking, 1981: 138). Music can thus externalize the internal, communicating things otherwise uncommunicable. It has power and autonomy, creating its own space and time where all kinds of dreams, emotions, and thoughts are possible.

Music communicates messages through its musical structures, verbal texts, symbolic forms, and through the emotions they arouse. Thus music is ideal for making meaning. It is used as a framework to express and convey memories, sentiments, and ideals; ideas, values, and arguments. Music is therefore, in a sense, 'good to think' (Levin-Strauss, 1970). These are not just individual, subjective expressions and creations but reflect aspects of the society and culture within which the music is made. Music may be described as a series of 'human images' and 'portraits' (Finkelstein, 1976: 10), 'tonal expressions of human experience' (Blacking, 1973: 31), or 'humanly organized sound' (ibid.: 32). It is therefore 'an ideal field for the study of relationships between patterns of social interaction and the invention of cultural form' (Blacking, 1979: 3).

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Consequently, techniques, styles, contexts, forms, and functions of music and music-making vary according to culture and society. The process of composition and rehearsal within a rock band was developed and learned together by all the band's members and was thus suited to, and affected by, their particular personalities and relationships between them. But it was also culturally conditioned, affected by: those members' aesthetics, values, attitudes and outlook, musical training and skills, and their legal status within the band; the band format and the instruments and technology used; the style of music made and styles and trends of music produced by other bands; and by the particular market and audience aimed at. Herman (1971: 15), for example, illustrated how the process could be affected by economic trends by describing how the ease with which electric guitars could be purchased on credit in the early 1960s encouraged the development of 'small guitar-based bands.'

Descriptions, definitions, and categorizations of music are also culturally conditioned, as is the way in which music is valued, appreciated, and responded to. It may be valued as an art and a source of aesthetic pleasure, for its spiritual, symbolic, or philosophical qualities, or for the possibilities it opens up for social interaction. The way that rock music has been viewed in Western societies has to some extent determined its rebellious nature and the power of its symbolism. Cultural attitudes towards particular geographical areas are also relevant, such as the way in which Liverpool has been regarded as a centre for the production of rock music.

Thus different societies and cultures and the various social, cultural, geographical, and age groups within them adopt their own musical forms and styles and react against or respond to each other's. They also hold their own particular criteria of musicianship and excellence; concepts about music, music-making, musicians, and relationships between performers and audience; and emotional and other responses to music. Movement to music, for example, varies from individual to individual, but differences between members of different cultures can be more striking since although physical movement is universally generated by music, the particular forms and styles that movement takes are culturally specific. Thus the same piece of music can encourage completely different kinds of physical responses within different cultures.

Throughout this book culture and society have been seen not only to be reflected in music but also affected by music. People make music but: 'there is also a sense in which music makes man, releasing creative energy, expanding consciousness and influencing subsequent

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decision-making and cultural invention' (Blacking, 1979: 3). Music thus exists as a thing in itself irreducible to its specific situation, makers, and score or to the more general social, cultural, and economic context within which it was produced. Marcuse (1977: 72) suggested, not only of music but of art in general, that it 'breaks open a dimension inaccessible to other experience' through its transformation of content into form. As suggested earlier, it is this quality that gives music its political and symbolic power and throughout history music has been used for political and ideological purposes with much effect.

In a controversial but thought-provoking argument Attali (1985) described music as a 'battlefield' and discussed the political power of 'noise'. He examined distinctions between music and noise, harmony and dissonance, and ultimately, order and disorder, and the way in which they reflect the social structure. Relations between harmony and music express social, hierarchical differences: 'music . . . creates order . . . Internal and external noises do violence to the code and to the network' (ibid.: 30). As a threat to the social order noise is hedged with rules and legislation that seek to control it:

noise had always been experienced as destruction, disorder, dirt, pollution, an aggression against the code-structuring messages. In all cultures it is associated with the idea of the weapon, blasphemy, plague (ibid. 27).

Noise or music can thus destroy or replace a social order. This idea, as Attali admits, is not new. A. Jackson wrote (1969: 296):

Rhythmical sounds are predominantly man-made and are readily identifiable with social order, whereas din or arrhythmical noise is more typical of breaking of man-made order ... As Douglas (1966: 94) says, 'ritual recognizes the potency of disorder' for 'disorder spoils the pattern' yet its potential for patterning is indefinite. Therefore breaks in the pattern of events may be reflected in disordered arrhythmical sounds while a taking up of a rhythmical beat again reasserts human control over events -- but even that is speculative.

Hebdige (1979), in his study of subcultural styles, used the word 'noise' to 'describe the challenge to symbolic order that such styles are seen to constitute' (p.132), whilst Tagg (1979) demonstrated the way in which atonal music is used in film to express danger or threat.

'Noise carries order within itself' wrote Attali (ibid.: 33). Here again therefore, we see order in disorder, structure in anti-structure: 'What is noise to the old order is harmony to the new' (ibid.: 35). Attali's main preoccupation was the effect of money upon this battle, the increased commoditization of music that selects and isolates the musician: 'Money enters the picture and widens the

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rupture music contains within itself' (ibid.: 30). It therefore intensifies the power struggle between what counts as noise and order.

Basically, what members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! most enjoyed doing was making music. This was clearly revealed by their gig in Manchester (Chapter 4) where, in the early hours of the morning, after being treated badly by the club's managers, severely disappointed at the absence of an audience, they performed to and for each other through sheer enjoyment of musicmaking and its social benefits. However, in order to play music and attempt to make a living from it, the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! were required to become involved in, and preoccupied with, matters such as organizing gigs, raising finances, hiring and

buying transport and equipment, renting rehearsal space, recording demo tapes, and arranging publicity. Their music-making was constricted by commercialism. It determined where and when they could perform, who would attend their performances and hear their music, the way their music was located and valued, and the way it was supposed to be structured and seen to progress with time and with current trends.

Members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! were not explicitly political or idealistic. They scorned 'commercial' music but did not (unlike other bands such as some of those labelled 'art', progressive, or 'experimental') articulate any coherent, considered views or philosophy on commerce and creativity or even on what they meant or were trying to achieve in the music they made (although individually Trav and Dave had clearly considered such issues). They did not, therefore, propound upon the evils of commerce. However, in the making of their music the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! not only explicitly but implicitly and unintentionally reflected, expressed, and confronted aspects of their surrounding environment and their feelings about it. They did so through the styles of music they chose to make and listen to -- which embodied a certain ideology in rock, i.e. that of 'authenticity'; through their lyrics and musical sounds; and through their attitudes to the marketing of the music. This was particularly noticeable in the lyrics on deceit and isolation, the incorporation of elements of disorder (noise) in the music's order, and the creation of musical 'purity' and 'honesty' by stripping the music of its 'impure' commercial trappings. The music's hidden distinctions between punty and impurity, honesty and deceit, reality and artifice, expressed the contradiction and tension constructed by our culture between art and entertainment, creativity and commerce, culture as a

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collective, creative expression and culture as a commodity. Thus although their music was made outside of the market-place it reflected the contradictions and alienation of commerce and of modern industrial capitalism in general.

The same contradictions and tensions have been revealed and explored in the music and culture of groups from the same or different periods and genres. Willis (1978), for example, writing about the 'cultural politics' of motorbike boys and hippies in the 1970S, described the way that each group took commodities like motorbikes and records from their environment and used them in their own distinctive and politically significant way that was a 'striking back at the heart of the commodity form and its detailed domination of everyday life (171) . . . an unequal struggle against the unrecognized or misunderstood determining social and economic structures around them' (ibid.: 181), an attempt to find 'meaning and potential' amongst the 'worst productions out of the dead hand of the market'. Their cultural activity, like that of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons!, therefore showed 'a creative response to modern conditions' (ibid.: 174).

Beethoven composed his music at the time when music first became commoditized and Finkelstein (1976: 54) wrote that Beethoven showed:

a squeamishness about his dealings in money matters, as if it were not fitting for an artist to drive a bargain. But in moving from aristocratic patronage to the marketplace Beethoven had to handle the marketplace on its own terms.

Like the Jactars, Crikey it's the Cromptons!, and musicians of other genres and eras, Finkelstein suggested that Beethoven expressed that problem through deliberate use of 'dissonance', 'new chords', and 'dramatic oppositions', 'in the face of an audience that presumably wanted only sweet sounds' (ibid.: 58). Thus his music was also seen by some at the time as: 'a kind of individual "defiance of society"' (ibid.: 58). Finkelstein (ibid.: 97) suggested that Schoenberg and Stravinsky's 'atonal', 'dissonant' music also expressed the composers' 'alienation' and the constrictions of the market-place.

Durant (1984: 76) wrote of 'dissonance' and Attali (1985: 33) of 'noise', that it signified 'censorship and rarity': 'Concerted attempts to develop atonal music can come to appear in such terms a counterpart to a larger cultural decline into a meaninglessness for the individual of the modern world' (Durant, ibid.):

the very absence of meaning in pure noise or in the meaningless repetition of a message, by unchanneling auditory sensations, frees the listener's imagination. The absence of meaning is in this case the presence of all

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meanings, absolute ambiguity, a construction outside meaning. This presence of noise makes sense, makes meaning. It makes possible the creation of a new order on another level of organization, of a new code in another network (Attali, ibid. 84).

Conflict between creativity and commerce is widely felt. Those involved in different occupations, arts, and cultures experience the same pressure to 'sell out'. Regarding popular music, for example, Becker (1963) described the way in which the conflict was experienced by American jazz musicians of the 1940s, giving rise to the development of 'deviant' jazz groups that constructed a distinction between 'hipness' and 'squareness' which reflected the commercial pressures they were under and was developed in order to try to minimize them. Harker (1980) examined the contradictions and pressures of rock music as a commercial form in relation to the lyrics of particular rock stars such as Bob Dylan and John Lennon, which reflected the dilemma of their position, trapped in between commercial pressures and attractions and the need to express integrity and counter-cultural or revolutionary sentiments and messages. Similarly, Coffman (1972) considered some ways in which that conflict of roles was expressed and resolved by other rock stars and by their audiences (again in the performers' lyrics, but also in the development of a 'cult press' through which their audience could keep track of their experiences and activities); whilst Laing (1985), Frith (1980), and others have studied that conflict within the context of the 'punk' movement.

Why is it, however, that some groups either explicitly or implicitly express cultural opposition or resistance to hegemony whilst others do not? Although Liverpool bands like the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! responded to commercialism by expressing its alienating effects in

their music, other bands took on commercial values and ambitions and constructed their music accordingly. The increasingly capitalistic attitude and outlook of such bands and their effect upon rock music in general were commented upon by many (see Thrills NME: 23 February 1985, and Savage, 1984: 241, for example). That difference in attitude cannot be explained as a simple reflection of the different degrees of oppression, marginalization, and dissatisfaction experienced by such groups or bands, although inevitably musicmaking, including the making of meaning in and through music and the real~zat~on of the potential of music, music-making, and other forms of creativity, reflects, and is conditioned by, class, as is leisure in general.

Middle-class education and models of thought often emphasize the benefits and possibilities of originality and creativity, so that

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experimentation and the expression of ideas and meanings in the arts is encouraged. Those influenced by such models are likely to have access to a variety of arts and styles through all sorts of media channels and environments. In addition, they may be provided with, or encouraged to take, the leisure in which to further their aspirations of performing, playing, creating. Some might be able to do so with the financial assistance and encouragement of their parents. Growing up with a middle-class model of success and conception of how to succeed might thus encourage a relaxed, openminded approach to music-making and its possibilities. Those provided with such a model, whilst not necessarily encouraged to struggle against, or even question, dominant ideologies, might at least be more likely to be made aware of their existence than are others who presume that is as things are or should be.

Many band members in Liverpool had not had access to such models of thought and creativity. Some said that at school they were made to feel pretentious if they expressed interest in creativity of any sort. In such a context joining a band was seen as a creative and 'different' thing to do and many of those who did so distinguished themselves from those they called 'scallies'. They wanted, said one man explaining why he and his friends joined bands at school, to show that they were just as important as everyone else, and were unable to state or demonstrate that through other means of expression. Peers who showed hostility to that chosen form of expression and creativity did so, he said, because they felt threatened or undermined by it. It did seem as though many such bands viewed their creative efforts differently and sought to achieve different things through them. In general, their members could not afford to spend such a lot of time and financial resources, let alone emotional investment, upon their band and still see it as a hobby or leisure activity, or an art form with which they could experiment and allow themselves the time to develop.

Although not all members of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! could be described as middle class, several of them had grown up in a more middle-class environment with access to various channels of thought, creativity, and music-making that might have been denied them had they been from another area or gone to different schools. Encouraged by that and by punk (which, as suggested earlier, involved such thinking and attitudes) they sought to experiment with their music-making and express originality in their music, and had the time, leisure, and

space in which to do so. The form and structure of their music and its underlying concepts and meanings reflected this. In contrast, members of several other

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bands who had originated from less privileged areas of Liverpool sought ideals of professionalism in their music-making and wanted to entertain with their music and achieve respect for their musical ability. They also attempted, as the Jactars, Crikey it's the Cromptons!, and others phrased it, to 'play the game', and in doing so achieve fame and fortune on a commercial, mass cultural level.

This chapter has emphasized a continuity of ideas and structures throughout musical styles and genres. It has demonstrated, for example, that many other musicians besides the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! have sought to make music that reflects an aesthetic of simplicity and dissonance, of competent incompetence, 'orderly disorder'. As in the previous chapter, it was suggested that such music was seen by its makers to be natural, pure, spontaneous, and thus honest_hence Cooper's reference to Echo and The Bunnymen's lack of musical expertise as their 'virginity'. In addition conflict between creativity and commerce has again been highlighted in expressions of anti-commercialism by bands like the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! (such as in their term 'selling out'), the Who (who felt that instruments as commodities stood between them, their music, and audience), and punk and hippy bands that 'assume an opposition between art and business, between honesty and bureaucracy' (Frith, 1980: 57).

The rebellious attitude of such bands, their challenge to technical and musical proficiency and their stress upon honest, meaningful music and lyrics, illustrates their role in what Frith (1980, 1981, 1983, and 1986) has described as the recurring ideology of folk in rock (as opposed to pop), involving a concept of 'authenticity' opposed to commerce and technology which are seen as 'false'. This ideology, Frith pointed out, developed through romanticism, the folk tradition, and the mass culture debate of the 1920s and 1930s.

The belief in a continuing struggle between music and commerce is the core of rock ideology . . . The assumption is that rock music is good music only when it is not mass culture, when it is an art form or a folk sound (Frith, 1983: 40) ... mass media critics ... contrast mass and community, fragmented consumption and collective creation, alienation and solidarity, passivity and activity (ibid.: 48).

Frith (1986) highlighted three ways in which opposition to technology has been expressed: technology is opposed to nature and seen as 'unnatural', to community in that it is said to alienate performers from their audiences, and to art:

The continuing core of rock ideology is that raw sounds are more authentic than cooked sounds . . . A plays to B and the less technology lies between

them the closer they are, the more honest their relationship and the fewer the opportunities for manipulation and falsehoods . . . if good music is . . . honest and sincere, bad music is false --and technological changes increase the opportunities for fakery (1986: 266).

However, Frith also (ibid.: 269) mentioned the way in which, paradoxically, 'technological developments have made the rock concept of authenticity possible', which the experiences of the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! verify: Records have made the music available, and technology can be used in unconventional ways and can benefit or stimulate creativity.

The value placed by bands like the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! upon authenticity, honesty, and spontaneity in musicmaking, in opposition to technology and commerce, was also indicated by their quest for originality and distinctiveness. That often involved a personalization of music and music-making through humour, and an emphasis upon creativity, self-expression, and identity. It reflected again the belief that music should be a genuine and natural expression of the emotions, thoughts, and intentions of its makers:

Our music comes from the soul. It's what you would play if you came from a working-class background in Liverpool. Pete Wylie's songs [a well-known rock performer from Liverpool] reflect his upbringing whereas It's Immaterial's [a well-known band from Liverpool] reflect nothing. They know nothing about being on the dole (Blue Nose B).

We are growing, the music it comes from our feelings together and from a natural empathy between us. We play and it comes out, we release it, it is a part of us that we cannot explain, we do not know where it comes from, it is natural (member of New Order, quoted by Edge, 1984: 77).

Authenticity was also emphasized by the desire to create a sound to represent the band which was seen as somehow natural, changing and growing with the band and its members. 'We've moulded ourselves into our own sound', said a member of Blue Nose B.

The expression of and emphasis on such attitudes and values surrounding the notion of authenticity indicates a quest for meaning, a desire to create something meaningful and thereby achieve integrity and self-respect. This was reflected in the mystification of musicmaking, involving an attitude of secrecy towards composition and performance, and the distortion of lyrics and accents, which heightened the sense of importance involved, as perhaps, did the exclusion of women from music-making. The music-making was thus a male activity, bounded by secrecy, rituals, and masculine values. Morbid, depressing lyrics were associated earlier with the desire to feel 'important'. The existential, pessimistic nature of Tony,

Trav, and Dave's lyrics might again indicate a desire for meaning, reality, and honesty in music-making.

Finally, the quest for meaning was also reflected in the scorn bands like the Jactars and Crikey it's the Cromptons! directed against 'cabaret' music which was seen as meaningless and demeaning, as 'entertainment', a form of 'prostitution'. It is interesting that in general women in Liverpool favoured music that was danceable or romantic in tone. Such music was usually regarded as more commercial than 'rock' and thus associated more strongly with 'entertainment'.