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Talkin bout my generation: popular music and the culture of heritage

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Raymond Williams once remarked that ‘Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (1983). He never said what the other ones were but had he been writing today, one of these might well have been ‘heritage’. Indeed, the imbrications of ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’, and the vexed nature of their relationship, particularly with regard to popular music, are such that each has come to serve as a synonym for the other in the wider sociocultural imaginary. This paper casts a critical spotlight on discourses of cultural heritage in the UK by questioning what makes popular music culture ‘heritage’ and considering the extent to which the UK popular music has become increasingly *heritagised*. Relating the specific example of popular music to wider debates on cultural heritage and heritagisation, the paper calls for greater problematising of discourses of popular music as cultural heritage, and considers, by way of conclusion, how a critical focus on the lived, performative and ‘hauntological’ dynamics of music heritage practices can illuminate understandings of the way cultures of music and memory are negotiated and transacted in the present.

Keywords: popular music; cultural heritage; heritagisation; nostalgia; memory; praxis; intangible heritage

Introduction

If nothing else, the global spectacle that was the London 2012 Olympics Opening and Closing Ceremonies would have left few doubting the value and importance of popular music in the cultural imaginary of twenty-first century Britain. Musicians and artists from The Beatles, to The Jam, to the East London rapper Dizzee Rascal were amongst the dizzying roll-call of bands and performers woven into a rich tapestry of national cultural heritage that took in the Industrial Revolution, the National Health Service (NHS) and much else besides. While Britain’s industrial heritage or the heritage value of post-war institutions, such as the NHS and the welfare state, are firmly (if at times contentiously) inscribed on the cultural map of the nation, the idea of ‘popular music heritage’ is one that is founded on more recent and rather less certain discursive terrain. As well as the Opening and Closing Ceremony performances concerts programmed as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad – a cultural festival that run concurrently with the Games – showcased a sample of what was widely billed as the ‘Best of British’ popular music ‘heritage’. A performance

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by the rock band the Who closed the Games, for many no doubt a fitting choice given their baby-boomer credentials and a career that stretches back to the early 1960s and to the nascent stirrings of post-war popular culture in the UK. A brief medley of some of their landmark songs, culminating in a collective rendition of – what else – ‘My Generation’, featuring fellow Closing Ceremony artists, brought the proceedings to an end. Was the Who’s performance a celebration of ‘heritage?’ In view of their pedigree, are Roger Daltrey and Pete Townsend seen to, in some way, embody, metonymically, Britain’s music heritage? Does the fact that the band’s former drummer Keith Moon, who died in 1978, has a heritage plaque erected in his honour somehow lend them more status as exponents of music heritage? And why ‘heritage’ as opposed to ‘culture?’ They are still alive and performing after all. Indeed, the band followed their Olympic appearance with a tour of North America. That said they were touring their classic 1973 concept album *Quadrophenia*, so perhaps, it is that that makes it heritage; the band in a sense revisiting its own ‘heritage’ in the form of classic works. Bennett (2009) has described this phenomenon as ‘heritage rock’, a genre in which performances and reissues of ‘classic albums’ are one of its defining hallmarks.

In the midst of all the clamour and spectacle of the Olympics finer points of detail as to whether popular music is or has a ‘heritage’ in the same way that, for example, Lancashire cotton mills or Victorian mental asylums are considered heritage, were not, unsurprisingly, afforded all that much attention. Yet, in so far, as the Olympic ceremonies were discussed and in part packaged as a celebration of Britain’s cultural heritage, the event represented what is probably the largest spectacle and extravaganza of popular music heritage ever staged. When events such as this are considered alongside the welter of other narratives and discourses of popular music heritage that have emerged in recent years, the question of what exactly it is or does is one that becomes all the more intriguing by dint of the fact that it has attracted so little in the way of critical attention; and more so again when, as quickly becomes apparent, there appears to be no clear consensus or articulation amongst its practitioners as to the meanings and practices ascribed to the term.

It is with these preliminary thoughts in mind that we might begin to provisionally sketch the outlines of a discursive landscape in which popular music in the UK (or in England more specifically) is variously understood, critiqued, consumed and practised as a form of ‘cultural heritage’. As such a landscape becomes more populated and defined, a jumble of questions and problems start to take shape: When does popular music ‘culture’ become popular music ‘heritage?’ In what ways does the latter inform the former (and the former the latter)? What do different individuals and groups mean by ‘popular music heritage?’ Indeed, *is* it meaningful? What are its politics; its performativities? How does it shape identities or ideas of place and locality? What are the relationships between musical pasts, presents and futures? These and other questions form the basis of ongoing research into popular music heritage, cultural memory and identity being conducted collaboratively in four European countries (England, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Austria) and in Australia, the USA and Israel.¹ In the companion article to this paper, ‘Unauthorized popular music heritage’ (this volume), Sara Cohen and I base our analysis on qualitative studies of popular music heritage discourses that reflect a broad cross section of sectors, institutions and industries. We draw on these findings to pattern a mosaic of music heritage in England that illustrates the ways in which shifting and often contested meanings and narratives of popular music history are negotiated

and constructed. In the present paper, I am more directly concerned with the question of what makes popular music culture ‘heritage’ and the ways in which popular music culture is *heritagised*, relating the more specific case of popular music to wider debates on the heritage of culture (or culture of heritage). Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is not to map the historiographic webs of discourse in which popular musics are enmeshed (a task that the other contributors to this volume have already embarked upon, widening the field of enquiry beyond England and the UK to other European countries). It is: (a) to cast a critical spotlight on the discourse of heritage and heritagisation in which popular music in the UK has, unwittingly or otherwise, become increasingly embroiled; (b) to make stronger and louder the case for problematising discourses of popular music *as* cultural heritage; and (c) to consider how the trope and institution of the archive – briefly discussed with reference to ‘hauntological’ readings of musical legacy and creative practice – can serve as a mechanism by which to explore the lived and performative engagements with popular music pasts.

The legacy of culture

Art is now indivisible from the idea of culture; culture from heritage; heritage from tourism; and tourism, from what I saw emblazoned recently on the window of an American chain store in Glasgow, as ‘the art of illusion’. (Tilda Swinton, quoted in the film *Derek*)

The above quote, from the 2008 Isaac Julien documentary *Derek*, a film about the late artist and filmmaker Derek Jarman, offers a searing reflection on the state of the cultural and creative industries in the years since Jarman’s death in 1994. Celebrating Jarman’s legacy, and lamenting the loss of a unique and radically independent creative voice, Swinton, who appeared in many of the director’s films, invites us to consider the place of an artist, such as Jarman in the cultural landscape of twenty-first century Britain, and the extent to which (or if) such a figure might flourish culturally and creatively today. Painting the portrait of the artist, his life and work, *Derek* also prompts interesting reflections on the legacy, or *heritage* of culture in Britain over the last few decades, and, by extension, the ‘culture’ of heritage that has increasingly come to dominate discourses and practices of creativity in a post-Thatcherite era of neoliberal consensus. ‘Art’, ‘culture’, ‘consumption’, ‘heritage’ and ‘tourism’: for Swinton, these have become conflated under a more generic rubric of an instrumental ‘art of illusion’; a convergence, well encapsulated in sociologist Rodanthe Tzanelli’s (2007) designation of the ‘global sign industries’, of different modalities and sectors of cultural production and consumption.

Were he alive today, Jarman would almost certainly repudiate the suggestion that his work constitutes or in some way contributes to ‘cultural heritage’,² a term that would not sit comfortably with an artist whose instincts were to push boundaries, provoke and subvert; to carve out an oppositional space in which dissonant voices challenge the orthodoxies of ‘tradition’ and ‘heritage’ in so far as these work to marginalise and suppress difference, whether in terms of sexuality, politics, class, gender or ethnicity. Jarman’s legacy – his *heritage* – or patrimony – is in part made manifest through the establishment of the annual Jarman Award which acknowledges the work of new and emerging artist filmmakers. It looks back, in other words, in order

to look forward. Culture as life-blood, growth and presence; not as a marker of absence, nostalgia or consumerist ‘retromania’ (Reynolds 2011).

The case of Derek Jarman is also instructive in terms of setting out the wider context of discussion rehearsed in this paper inasmuch as he represents an artist who eludes easy pigeon-holing creatively. Various, a director, cinematographer, visual artist, poet, writer, diarist, music video director, stage and set designer and gardener³, Jarman worked collaboratively across the arts and creative sector; he was a prominent gay rights activist and trenchant political voice and his films and music videos brought his work firmly into the mainstream of British pop culture from the late 1970s. Attach the word ‘heritage’ to all this and we are confronted with the question of how to represent, curate or ‘package’ Derek Jarman as a heritage ‘icon’ (to use the term employed by the UK Government’s Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), who in 2006 launched its ‘Icons of England’ programme⁴). Is an exhibition of Jarman’s paintings or a retrospective of his films a celebration of ‘heritage’, ‘culture’, ‘cultural heritage’ or all (or none) of these? Is the short (perhaps shrinking) journey from the gallery or festival to the museum the factor that would single out (institutionalise?) his oeuvre as ‘heritage’ rather than, say, as ‘art’ or ‘cinema?’ Does the appellation ‘heritage’ afford a level of ‘inclusiveness’ that makes more palatable aesthetic forms otherwise deemed as ‘elitist’, ‘difficult’ or ‘un-commercial?’ And, given the collaborative nature of the work of artists such as Jarman, to what extent is to pin the banner of ‘heritage’ to fetishise the individual artist as creator at the expense of the wider ‘culture’ surrounding the production and consumption of specific artistic and cultural works, and which is, therefore, to a greater or lesser extent still part of the organic ebb and flow of contemporary cultural life.

Williams (1983, p. 87) once remarked that ‘Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’. He never said what the other ones were but, to the extent that its meaning is similarly refracted through ‘several distinct and incompatible systems of thought’ (1983, p. 87), it is not inconceivable to imagine that had he been writing today, one of these might well have been ‘heritage’. Indeed, the imbrications of ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’, and the vexed nature of their dialogic relationship, are such that each has come to serve as a synonym for the other in the wider sociocultural imaginary. Reinforcing this contention, a recent report published by the UK tourism agency Visit Britain (2010, p. 4) noted that ‘it can be difficult to separate Culture and Heritage in the mind of the consumer because they are inherently linked’. Helpfully, the report goes on to inform the reader that: ‘Culture is an association with the human world including art, ideas and rituals as well as monuments, architecture and history whereas Heritage is more about the past’ (2010, p. 4). From this, might the reader be expected to infer that art, ideas or rituals fall somehow outside the purview of what might count as Heritage? Is Heritage ‘more about the past’ than history? Is not Heritage no less ‘an association with the human world’ in so far as its meanings, institutions and practices are a product of Culture(s)? Mindful of the need to build a policy model that is attuned to the mechanics of market segmentation, Visit Britain differentiate three ‘key pillars’ of cultural and heritage tourism: (1) Cultural Heritage (e.g. ‘the legacy of Shakespeare and his literature’), (2) Built or Historical Heritage (e.g. ‘Tower of London’) and (3) Contemporary Culture (e.g. ‘modern art, theatre’) (ibid.). Given that the legacy of Shakespeare includes a thriving contemporary theatre scene, the establishment of the Royal Shakespeare Company, a constant stream of film and

television adaptations of his plays and much more, just how sustainable is an operational distinction between 'Cultural Heritage' and 'Contemporary Culture' as the basis of consumer behaviour? For the sake of argument, would a tourist visiting London's Globe Theatre fall under Built Heritage or Cultural Heritage or both? And if she returned to the theatre to attend a performance of *The Tempest*, is that enjoying England's Cultural Heritage or its Contemporary Culture? If, inspired by the play, she then felt moved to travel across town to one of London's surviving repertory cinemas (Built Heritage or Contemporary Culture?) to see Derek Jarman's 1979 film version, then, is that Cultural Heritage or, again, Contemporary Culture?

As this example demonstrates, there is a good deal of ambiguity and confusion surrounding the meanings and practices of heritage as a form of cultural consumption. This is both acknowledged at an official level as evidenced by responses obtained from consumer surveys (the bulk of the Visit Britain report draws from findings published in the National Brands Index 2009) and is unreflexively rehearsed as part of Visit Britain's own policies and discourses in relation to cultural and heritage tourism. Contemporary popular culture is elsewhere defined in the Visit Britain report as '[encompassing] such things as: TV/film, British stars, fashion/style, royal scandals, and recent history (e.g. 60s; Punk)' (2010, p. 73). By this reckoning, the period defined as 'the 60s' or the explosion of punk, a decade later, do not qualify as 'heritage', which begs the question as to what point does recent popular music history become popular music heritage? The situation is rendered all the more confusing when considered in light of Visit England's 2007 music-related tourist marketing campaign England Rocks! which was widely publicised as a celebration of England's musical heritage. British tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, for example, declared: 'This week, tourism bosses launch England Rocks! a campaign showing how you can discover our rich musical heritage on holiday'.⁵ So, it *is* cultural heritage! In the 'creative' for the England Rocks! campaign, produced in October 2006 by the 'strategic creative agency' Milton Bayer,⁶ initial logo 'scamps' – design ideas for logos based on generic items of rock and pop iconography such as guitars, Who-style mod arrows and targets, plectrums, etc. – are supplemented by doodles and scribbled phrases, such as 'coat of arms', 'heritage of rock', 'band typefaces', 'resonates across all target audiences', 'urban' and 'distressed', and a list of decades with associated artists: '50s – Cliff R[ichard], 60s – Stones/Beatles, 70s – Queen, 80s – Joy Division, 90s – Robbie [Williams]'. What seems clear from this rather usefully sketched out brainstorming exercise is that, from a marketing perspective at least, the idea of music as cultural heritage is one that the UK tourism industry is keen to exploit, and that styles, icons and logos that are most likely to find resonance with 'target audiences' are one of the key mechanisms in the branding of music heritage as a product of tourist consumption. Bands or solo performers function as semiotic triggers to evoke whole decades. While, given the still nascent state of the pop music industry in the post-war decades, the 1950s and 1960s 'icons' spring no great surprises, by the 1970s and 1980s the choice of band/performer becomes arbitrary, reflecting the ways in which the tastes and memories of key individuals (in this instance, staff at a private marketing company subcontracted by a government-funded national tourism agency) often exert a strong influence in the production of collective or national popular music heritage discourses (Roberts and Cohen, this volume).

If the economic rationale behind campaigns such as England Rocks! may be clearly evinced, the meanings ascribed to the term 'heritage' are altogether less easy

to determine. Despite attempts to clearly define the parameters by which ideas of cultural heritage and popular culture are understood and applied in practice, in the discourses that surround the production, promotion and consumption of popular music histories, it is clear that the terms ‘heritage’, ‘nostalgia’ and ‘memory’ are often used interchangeably, in relation to popular music cultures, as if each were a synonym of the other. In the same way that ‘culture’, in the words of Don Mitchell, is ‘something of a muddle ... [and] too important a concept to leave languishing’ (in Ashworth *et al.* 2007, p. 7), ‘heritage’ marshals a jumble of overlapping, disparate and, at times, contradictory meanings that accommodate a burgeoning array of perspectives that frustrate attempts to pin the concept down. As Lowenthal suggests, ‘heritage today all but defies definition’ (1996, p. 94).⁷ However, at the same time, this very plenitude (and, by corollary, *dearth*) of meaning is seen by some in a more positive light. Samuels (1994, p. 205), for example, argues that “‘Heritage’ is a nomadic term, which travels easily, and puts down roots – or bivouacs – in seemingly unpromising terrain ... Lexically, “heritage” is a term capacious enough to accommodate wildly discrepant meanings’. Yet, while ‘heritage’ can certainly be argued, by virtue of its capaciousness and ‘dissonance’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, Graham *et al.* 2000), to cultivate a rich and diverse seed bank of socio-cultural capital, at the same time its very intractable status has meant that the increasingly amorphous (or ‘nomadic’) semantic field from which the concept has been harvested has encroached with ever greater abandon on ideas and meanings otherwise the preserve of, say, ‘culture’, particularly in the case of popular cultural forms such as music.

Cultural heritage and cultural heritagisation

Often it seems as if people have forgotten that cultural heritage, in the last resort, is about culture. (Byrne 2009, p. 158)

In one important sense, the very notion of ‘cultural heritage’ is problematic from the off. As noted above, in so far as all heritage is cultural, ‘the expression “cultural heritage” is [perforce] tautological’ (Ashworth *et al.* 2007, p. 7). Rather than attempting to hammer a square peg of interpretive meaning into the round hole of practice, cultural heritage is better understood as a *process*, in that its meanings and uses are socially, spatially and temporally enacted, and, as such, are constantly being remade and negotiated (Smith 2006, p. 34, Harvey 2008, p. 19). ‘Cultural heritage’ is thus in part a discursive device that throws open the question of, on the one hand, the ways in which cultural forms and practices such as popular music are being reframed and reworked through and by discourses of heritage and, on the other, the ways in which ideas of heritage, nostalgia and memory are themselves expressions of everyday social and cultural practices, and as such are invested with meanings, values and positionalities of individual and collective forms of habitus.

In *Theatres of Memory* (1994), Raphael Samuel rounds on what he calls the ‘heritage baiters’ who, in the 1980s – a decade which saw the emergence of a ‘new regime of historicity’ (Hartog 2005) that had started to gather pace around notions of heritage – had begun to critique what they saw as the pernicious spread of a heritage culture that ‘had led to not only a distortion of the past, but to a stifling of the culture of the present’ (Hewison 1987, p. 10). For the so-called heritage baiters,

the ‘cult’ of heritage (Lowenthal 1996, p. 1) and the commodification of the past, which its many detractors saw as its primary economic rationale (bearing in mind that, under Thatcherism, these critiques were set against the backdrop of a rapidly consolidating neoliberal hegemony), was less a celebration of ‘authentic’ historical consciousness as a sense of history as ‘entropic decline’ (Wright 2009[1985], p. 66). In the midst of all the flag waving and celebratory embrace of Britain’s ‘past times’ (to cite the name of a popular chain of heritage/nostalgia shops that was established in 1986), Hewison’s observation that ‘The past is growing around us like ivy ... The more dead the past becomes, the more we wish to enshrine its relics’ (1987, p. 30, 139) would have struck a decidedly downbeat note. ‘The true product of the heritage industry’, Hewison insists, ‘is not identity and security, but entropy. If history is over, then there is nothing to be done ... [Heritage] has enclosed the late twentieth century in a bell jar into which no ideas can enter’ (ibid., p. 141, 144).

Yet, Samuel’s intervention – a scotching of any suggestion of a monolithic critical response by the Left to the rampant ‘heritagization’ of society and culture – was in part driven by the desire to reclaim a more positive – more *progressive* – understanding of heritage. Noting that, in the 1980s, much of the political momentum that helped transform ‘heritage’ into an industry came from local authorities, many of them Labour-led (1994, p. 238), Samuel stresses the value of heritage to working-class communities grappling with the impacts of unemployment, deindustrialisation and the decimation of Britain’s manufacturing base. He applauds, in particular, the way that many local heritage initiatives placed premium on the maintenance of artisan skills and the ‘labour and services of the craftsman-retailer [*sic*]’ (ibid., p. 245). For Samuel, heritage is culturally pluralist and ‘cannot be assigned to either Left or Right’ (ibid., p. 281, 303). In his view, heritage is not just a hegemonic defence of white, upper-middle class traditions or a vehicle for the ‘preservation’ of the vested interests of power-elites, it is also a means by which ‘public history’ has been able to flourish and exert its influence over dominant narratives and histories. In the guise of heritage, local communities, minority groups and work-based collectives, such as trade unions and other industrial organisations, have lent their voice to a ‘new wave’ of social historians and environmental campaigners (ibid., p. 238) concerned with the preservation of local customs and traditions and the social, economic and ecological resources by which they are bound and rendered sustainable.

Directly or indirectly, Samuel’s perspective on the progressive value of local heritage discourses underpins many initiatives developed by archivists, museum curators and DIY enthusiasts (Bennett 2009) involved in the production and preservation of local popular music heritages. For example, in Birmingham projects including several online music heritage archives⁸, a music documentary, *Made In Birmingham: Reggae Punk Bhangra* (Dir: Deborah Ashton, 2011), and ‘Home of Metal’, a museum exhibition celebrating ‘40 years of Heavy Metal and its unique birthplace’⁹, all situate the music heritage of Birmingham and the West Midlands within the industrial and socio-economic landscapes from which they emerged. The association between heavy metal (the music) and heavy industry in the region (members of Birmingham bands Black Sabbath and Judas Priest worked in the steel industry) illustrates the way in which the interweaving of local music heritage with industrial heritage and social history can give voice to working-class communities and identities that would otherwise struggle to secure a stake in more official forms of local heritage discourse. That said attempts to exploit these music histories as

part of efforts to marketing or brand the city as a visitor destination suggest a degree of instrumentality in terms of the production and consumption of local music heritages in cities such as Birmingham. This in turn raises questions as to how authentic or resonant the reception of these narratives is likely to be amongst the communities in question. A report published in 2012 by Birmingham City Council examined that the role of popular music in shaping perceptions of the city included amongst its recommendations the distinctly un-rock 'n' roll suggestion that 'the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture should work with partners to celebrate the reunion of Black Sabbath in 2012'. (Birmingham City Council 2012, p. 9). Tellingly, the report's recommendations include no mention of the celebration of contemporary music cultures in the city or policy ideas that might improve the lot of musicians and artists whose cultural output today becomes the legacy – the *heritage* – of tomorrow.

Despite Samuel's dismissal of the negative arguments of critics, such as Hewison and Wright, and concurring with Wright who concedes that the argument associating 'heritage' with national decline has failed to thrive (2009, p. xiv), there is, nevertheless, much that remains pertinent in the charges put forward by so-called heritage baiters. In the rush to consensus, in much of the literature, on heritage that Hewison's attack on the 'heritage industry' is oversold or too focused on economic factors (Harvey 2001, p. 324, Smith 2006, p. 49), and, by implication, retains little in the way of merit 25 years on, it is worth noting, by way of reminder, that Hewison's concerns were targeted not so much at heritage per se, but rather the impacts of the heritage *industry* on contemporary arts and culture. In this regard, his polemic still carries some force inasmuch as the *heritagisation* of culture he diagnosed continues to have implications in terms of the way the culture and heritage industries have become, to all intents and purposes, indistinguishable. The more that 'culture' is viewed through the prism of 'heritage' the more that questions pertaining to its impacts on present day forms of cultural expression, and on the spaces and narratives that give shape to ideas of being and belonging, history and identity, remain critically pertinent.

Hartog approaches heritage as a new 'regime of historicity'; a discontinuity or rupture marked by a rapid growth in 'heritagization' or 'museification' in which the 'time' of the past approaches ever more closer to the present. 'As memories are increasingly claimed or demanded', he argues, 'everything could be considered heritage or liable to become heritage' (2005, p. 12). For Hartog, heritagisation is the present historicizing itself. That heritage is more about the present than the past is also picked up on by Wright, who argues that the past exists as an 'accomplished presence' in the public consciousness (2009, p. 128). Tunbridge and Ashworth's definition of heritage as 'a contemporary product shaped from history' (quoted in Harvey 2001, p. 32, 2008, p. 20), while also acknowledging that heritage 'only exists through the reading which it is given by communities and human societies in the present' (Harrison *et al.* 2008, p. 3), also alludes to 'heritage-making' as both an economic and creative activity: history becomes the raw material from which to sculpt, craft or fashion a tangible 'product'.

The idea of the past as a resource perhaps brings with it questions as to its possible scarcity. The anthropologist Appadurai (1981, p. 201) writes: 'There exists a widespread though tacit assumption that the past is a limitless and plastic symbolic resource, infinitely susceptible to the whims of contemporary interest and the distortions of contemporary ideology'. That the contrary might be the case – the past as

literally a scarce resource – was the subject of a satirical article from 1990 reporting on warnings from the US Department of Retro that if current levels of retro consumption continue unchecked, the country will run entirely out of the past: ‘The National Retro Clock currently stands at 1990, an alarming 74% closer to the present than ten years ago, when it stood at 1969’ (quoted in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, p. 58). As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, ‘As the retro clock speeds up, life becomes heritage almost before it has a chance to be lived’ (ibid.). This is well illustrated by the example of the many ‘list’ and nostalgia compilation shows that have clogged up British television schedules in recent years (e.g. I Love the Seventies, 100 Greatest Albums/Films/Sporting Moments, 100 Greatest TV Moments, I Love the Nineties and History of Now: the Story of the Noughties, and so on). At what point in time the UK National Retro Clock currently stands is anyone’s guess, but the fact that nostalgia shows look back to as recently as the noughties (BBC2’s History of Now: the Story of the Noughties was broadcast in the first week of 2010, just days after the noughties had ended) suggests that, in pop culture terms at least, the past *is* indeed a scarce resource. With ‘history snapping at our heels’, as Augé puts it (1995, p. 30), the culture of heritage has fast become the production and consumption of culture *as* heritage: the culture of heritagisation.

(In)tangible popular music heritage

The notion of ... heritage has cast off its historical, material and monumental moorings and embarked on an age of memory, society and identity. (Nora 2011, p. x)

If, as we have seen, all heritage is cultural, then, by the same token, all tangible heritage is necessarily refracted through the cultural prism of intangibility. As Laurajane Smith suggests: ‘If heritage is a mentality, a way of knowing and seeing [i.e. “cultural”], then all heritage becomes, in a sense, “intangible”’ (2006, p. 54). Debates surrounding tangible and intangible heritage have dominated much of the heritage studies literature, particularly with regards to international policy frameworks built around UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

As various commentators have noted, the concept of ‘intangible heritage’ can be a difficult one to pin down; at its most general, it is a recognition of the innate heritage value of ‘the culture that people practise as part of their daily lives’ (Kurin 2004, p. 67). Determining what counts as intangible heritage under the Convention (and by negation, what does not) is by no means a straightforward affair. Kurin, for example, points out that video games, pop music, modern dance or karaoke bars would all be ruled out by the Convention criteria, yet, all may symbolically express a sense of ‘authentic’ cultural identity and pass on their own forms of tradition and inheritance (ibid., p. 69). Moreover, the act of safeguarding or preserving items of cultural heritage (tangible or intangible) does not necessarily mean that the culture writ large – the deeply embedded and holistic entanglements of identity, history and everyday practice – is in some way sustained or ‘saved’; as Kurin notes, ‘Saving songs may not protect the ways of life of their singers, or the appreciation due by listeners’ (ibid., p. 75). The unreflexive assumption of the innate value of heritage (Smith 2006, p. 29) – the default position that heritage must in itself be a good thing – can inhibit more critical reflections as to *why* it is necessary to remember

and preserve. This is something that certainly has bearing on ideas of popular music as forms of cultural heritage as all too often the more elemental question as to why it is important to bundle miscellaneous items of pop memorabilia into a museum or archive, or to preserve every last item associated with a revered musical icon as if they were holy relics, goes routinely unchecked. Lowenthal remarks on the ways in which archivists are now adjured to keep everything (1996, p. 12). Citing the example of the Beatles, he notes that ‘All pop memorabilia are treasured, however trivial or tawdry’ (ibid., p. 15). The unbargained, for irony of a push towards the preservation of *intangible* culture, is the dilemma of what to do with all the *things* that are amassed along the way. One response has been to render the tangible intangible once more by digitising collections and cluttering up the more practical and inexhaustible spaces of virtual museums and online archives. To remediate memory, in other words. But, by the same token, the video sharing website YouTube already performs this function in its own haphazard kind of way, offering a portal to music memory that is unrivalled by any other resource out there in the intangible environs of cyberspace. It is further evident in the many online heritage resources that DIY archivists and others set up to display digitised items of rock and pop memorabilia such as ticket stubs or to record and share memories of gigs or festivals attended. Rock memorabilia is also increasingly valued as a commodity, whether at the more ‘niche’ end of the market such as John Lennon’s tooth or, fished from a drain, Michael Jackson’s hair (both of which have sold at auction) or, less sensationally, posters, programmes and other items from festivals, concerts and events.¹⁰ Memorabilia collected by fans is also beginning to find its way into museums, such as the collection of Spice Girls ‘super-fan’ Liz West who has amassed over 4000 items associated with the girl band.¹¹ Never has the ‘intangibility’ of the UK pop music heritage enjoyed such a spectacularly tangible presence.

By definition, music *is* intangible, as indeed are people’s musical memories. But, neither music nor memory exists in an ontological vacuum. They are enacted and practised in material environments (venues, clubs, festivals, museums, galleries, pilgrimage sites and heritage trails), mediated through technologies (musical instruments, radio, television, internet, portable media players such as the Walkman or iPod, record player, tape deck, etc.), and materialised in general items of assorted memorabilia (album covers, books, concert ticket stubs, autographs, photographs, home movies, diaries, letters and so on). In other words, to talk of ‘intangible’ music heritage in isolation from the ‘tangible’ and material makes little sense. Yet, this is the very double bind that discussions of popular music as cultural heritage are inevitably forced to confront. As Smith has observed, critical engagement with the culture and performativity of heritage entails the ‘surfing [of] a tension between the idea of the intangibility of heritage – the idea that heritage *is* the cultural processes of meaning and memory making and remaking rather than a thing – and the critical reality that there *are* physical things or “places” we call and define as heritage’ (2006, p. 74, emphasis in original).

In many respects, then, the discussion around tangible and intangible heritage is something of a red herring. *All* heritage is intangible, in that meanings and values attached to objects and sites of memory are socially and culturally negotiated. All heritage is, therefore, also political. The question becomes not what (or where or when) popular music heritage is in any given context, but rather what it does; how heritage discourses mobilise meanings, identities and performative enactments. In this regard, I challenge Ashworth et al’s binary distinction of ‘heritage as culture’

and heritage as ‘an instrument for achieving other objectives’ (2007, p. 41). Heritage is instrumental *as* a form of cultural practice. Questions around the instrumentality of heritage cannot, therefore, be readily disentangled from the culture and habitus that generate specific heritage discourses and narratives. ‘Culture’ is the instrument by which heritage performs.

It is worth remarking at this juncture that the UK is amongst a handful of countries that abstained in the vote on the 2003 UNESCO convention (see Kurin 2004, p. 66), signalling a reticence to fully embrace the idea of intangible heritage as well as concern as to its possible implications for the heritage sector in those countries inasmuch as it poses a challenge or threat to official heritage policies and Authorised Heritage Discourses (or AHDs) (Smith 2006, Smith and Waterton 2009). It is also worth noting that the countries that abstained – Australia, Canada, the UK, Switzerland and the USA – include those Anglophone nations that have made the most in-roads in the development of popular music heritage and tourism initiatives in recent years. This may of course be nothing more than a coincidence, but it may also be an indicator that in the absence of official endorsements of the rather more nebulous idea of heritage as ‘culture’ – as extending to forms of popular or everyday cultures rather than just referring to buildings, monuments, landscapes or fine art ‘treasures’ – music heritage industries in the UK are bypassing ‘official’ gatekeepers and AHDs and are establishing their own forms and structures of heritage discourse. This was certainly borne out in research conducted amongst different stakeholders in popular music heritage in England (Roberts and Cohen, this volume).

In an interview conducted with an unnamed official within the English AHD, Smith was informed that ‘England does not have intangible heritage’ (2006, p. 134; Smith and Waterton 2009, p. 297). On the terms already elaborated, this could also be read as ‘England does not have any heritage’. It is of course not saying that, it is stating that ‘England has *tangible* heritage’ – a very clear policy line drawn in the sand by the DCMS and English Heritage. From the AHD perspective, the marking of intangible forms of cultural heritage in the UK is effectively ‘franchised out’ to a random rag-bag of ‘unofficial’ organisations, such as the Heritage Foundation¹², who quite willingly and energetically venture where English Heritage appear hesitant to tread.

The implications of debates on intangible heritage in relation to popular music histories are not so much to press home the case for or against their status as intangible forms of cultural heritage in terms that might be recognised by the UNESCO convention. The arguments and questions raised prompt reflection on the much broader case of the inherent intangibility of all forms of heritage and the implications this has for heritage management in the UK, as Smith and Waterton have observed (2009, p. 300). In other words, analyses of the culture of popular music heritage in the UK provide critical insights into the popular culture of heritage of the UK and the many inconsistencies and contradictions by which it is increasingly defined.

Having explored some of the debates surrounding ideas of cultural heritage and the heritagisation of culture, and related these more specifically to the particularities of the heritage sector in the UK, in the final part of this paper I widen the discussion to consider the disjuncture between the idea of popular music as cultural heritage and a culture of memory in which popular music may be considered less in

terms of a reified *heritage-as-object* than of a culture of music and memory that is enacted as part of the lived and embodied dynamics of everyday practice.

Critical music heritage: building, wayfinding and practice

Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording and the visibility of the image. (Nora 1989, p. 13)

The term ‘hauntology’ is one that has started to appear in writings on popular music over the last decade in reference to the dislocated temporalities of a musical style and aesthetic that is haunted by the lingering presence of the past, or *past-present*. Originally coined by the philosopher Jacques Derrida and reworked by, amongst others, the music critic Simon Reynolds (2011¹³), hauntology can encompass the ‘hauntings’ of retro culture; the use of archaic and anachronistic styles and techniques (e.g. samples of old wax-cylinder recordings, classical records, library music, archival collections and so on) or, to cite the curators of the 2010 exhibition *Hauntology*, ‘[it] also can be seen as describing the fluidity of identity among individuals, marking the *dynamic and inevitable shades of influence* that link one person’s experience to another’s, both in the present and over time’.¹⁴

While the idea of hauntology, as rehearsed across many online blogs and articles, remains intractably difficult to pin down, and putting aside the question as to what new insights or perspectives it necessarily adds to debates around the aesthetics and temporalities of postmodern music cultures, it is noteworthy in the context of the present discussion, in that it can be more prosaically looked upon as another means by which to articulate or account for the way the presence of popular music pasts leaves its imprint and influence (the ‘materiality of the trace’) on contemporary forms and practices of popular music culture. In other words, music ‘heritage’ conceived of as a spectral presence that moves across time, place and individual linking – and by negation detaching – the experiential *hereness* and *nowness* of music cultures to (and from) those that have given form to other cartographies of time, place and musical identity. At a meta-level of analysis, discussions of musical hauntology, therefore, like those of heritage, nostalgia or cultural memory, skate around the edges of a wider historiographical focus of critical enquiry: how are popular music histories made meaningful and navigable? What are the discourses, practices and institutional frameworks that shape specific *cultures* of popular music history? And how and in what ways (and under whose authority) do the legacies, ‘aura’ and influences of distinct music pasts translate into the cut and thrust of contemporary music scenes and cultures?

Needless to say that these are questions that are by no means straightforward to address, demanding, as they do, complex and broad-ranging responses that draw together a whole host of overlapping perspectives and concerns and which bear the contextual inflexions of specific cultures, geographies and histories. Yet, given the wider shift towards a more specific *heritagisation* of cultural forms and practices that I have outlined in this paper, to what extent is it possible to delineate what might be described as a *critical discourse* of popular music as cultural heritage? On the strength of the welter of general books and online resources on the subject, there is little doubt that popular music is widely accepted and discussed in terms of local and/or national cultural heritage, yet curiously, there remains something of a

lacuna in the academic literature on popular music where the notion of ‘heritage’ has gone largely unexamined. Recent scholarly activities around the subject of popular music heritage and cultural memory have sought to rectify this lack of critical engagement. Of the relatively small number of published articles to date that have explored this area, only a handful have explicitly confronted the idea of music *as* heritage (Kong 1999, Frost 2008, Bennett 2009, Leaver and Schmidt 2010), although none extend this idea to any degree of sustained critical scrutiny or problematise the relationship between music, culture and heritage. Elsewhere discussions have tended to approach the question of heritage in more diffuse terms, whether in relation to debates on nostalgia (Grainge 2000, Bennett 2004); retro culture (Reynolds 2011); popular music history (Thornton 1990, Bennett 2007, Inglis 2007); memory (Lipsitz 1990, Burgoyne 2003, O’Brien 2004, Dijck 2007, Momcilovic 2008, Bijsterveld and Dijck 2009); tourism and pilgrimage (Atkinson 1997, Cohen 1997, Stokes 1999, Kruse 2003, Gibson and Connell 2005, Margry 2008); canonisation and consecration (Jones 2008, Kärjä 2006, Schmutz 2005); or musicscapes and soundscapes (Cohen *et al.* 2010, Long and Collins 2012). By comparison, *critical heritage* studies of popular music, that is, perspectives which examine some of the discursive frameworks and a priori assumptions surrounding the production and consumption of popular music as cultural heritage, remain underdeveloped.

If we throw into the mix the question of the music *archive*, then the architecture of heritage that has been constructed around popular music cultures in recent years becomes more clearly delineated inasmuch as it brings into focus the processual nature of music heritage: its practices, spatialities, performativities and instrumental functionality. By ‘archive’ I am referring here to both the tangible object: the institution, collection or digital resource, for example; but also, in the more generic sense of an intangible repository or (potentially) limitless databank of cultural memory from which threads, fragments and traces of popular music pasts are gleaned and crafted. As Nora observes, ‘What we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled’ (Nora 1989, p. 13). A focus on heritage as archival *practice* – or ‘heritage-as-praxis’ (see Roberts and Cohen, this volume) – draws attention to the processes and discourses by which this unlimited repertoire of memory is differentially ‘recalled’. The archives of cultural memory are rendered present by what Hirsh and Smith (2002, p. 9) call the “acts of transfer” without which we would have no access to them’. These acts of transfer are of course manifold and lie at the core of how different forms of music and cultural heritage are mediated, packaged, constructed, consumed and generally transacted.

In the digital age, the paradox of archival remembering is that in many respects it obviates the very necessity to recall, in that the more the past is anchored in a virtual domain the less the past is correspondingly *lived* as an embodied temporal praxis. The archive, in other words, does the remembering on our behalf. Hoskins (2001, p. 344) draws similar conclusions arguing that ‘[t]o archive something is to no longer require the need to remember it. Indeed, one could argue that the contestation of memory has shifted from memory to the archive itself’. Google long and hard enough, the assumption has it, and one is bound to excavate some trace of a sought-after musical memory. The problem with this, however, is that it is only a memory in so far as ‘the archive’ grants us its access. The ‘acts of transfer’, in

other words, are rendered transparent as if memory is (or has become) merely the residual product of an automated past.

An arguably more productive and performative method by which to anchor the self in the real and imagined spaces of popular music heritage is to adopt, on the one hand, the metaphor of the journey and to envisage the act of transfer as a practice of *wayfinding* (Ingold 2007). Alongside, wayfinding the metaphor of *building* also lends itself well to ideas of heritage-as-praxis in the Heideggerian sense of building-as-dwelling (Heidegger 1971): of growing or cultivating, through practice, a sense of place and being. This is best illustrated by citing the words of an actual archivist, Andy Linehan, the Curator of Popular Music at the British Library Sound Archive:

I like the idea that we [the Sound Archive] have collected over the years all the kind of musical influences that have filtered through to what's happening now and you can go back and *trace the path* ... you work out your own way of doing it [...]; *build* your own picture. And so I kind of see it as ... you can come here and *construct* your history and your heritage, if you like. We hopefully are providing the *building blocks* for you to *construct* your [own] ideas. (Roberts and Cohen, this volume, emphasis added)

Similar metaphors were expressed by other respondents interviewed as part of research into popular music heritage in England. A music historian defined cultural heritage as that which 'informs you going forward', conveying a spatial imaginary of music heritage as a constellation of waypoints on musical journeys that are rooted in the present and routed towards the future. The chairman of a heritage organisation discussing post-war British music heritage remarked that '[it] now has become part of our [national] heritage because that was the *building blocks* to British music and the music we've given around the world'.

These spatial metaphors reveal an intentionality of archival practice that is oriented not so much towards the past but to the present and future. Their constitutive spatialities are suggestive less of what Benjamin (1999, p. 576) likens to 'the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam' – the excavatory quest of the archaeologist digging through the layers and strata of memory; but, of a spatial imaginary where the past is not hidden or buried but existing instead in a state of 'co-presence' (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, p. 7) with present-day cultural landscapes. Whether or not this qualifies as a condition of 'hauntology', I will leave to the hauntologists, but what it does indicate is that the 'archive' is very much a living, breathing organism that is deeply embedded in everyday social and cultural life.¹⁵ The 'culture' of popular music heritage, by implication, is one in which musical pasts and presents are to all intents and purposes indivisible. To talk of 'heritage' as somehow separate from what it is that producers and consumers of popular music are already doing anyway makes little sense. Indeed, the case can and perhaps should be made that the 'heritage' tag be dropped altogether in relation to popular music lest the museification and heritagisation of everyday life that critics of the heritage industry have diagnosed more generally leads further to the ossification of otherwise forward-moving music cultures.¹⁶ Sifting through the bones and relics of long dead musical pasts, the archaeologist rebuilds and reconstructs what has already passed. The wayfarer, architect and *bricoleur*, by comparison, build new and as yet untrodden musical pathways and lay the foundations for contemporary creative environments: spaces of circula-

tion and encounter where music histories are negotiated and transacted, not cast in stone and left as memorials to cultural obsolescence.

Conclusion

The culture of popular music heritage is, in the first instance, defined in terms of its constitutive plurality of form, practice and spatiality. It manifests itself in and across a number of discursive fields, many of which overlap but which at the same time are just as likely to be characterised by a tension or inherent contradiction that questions the ontological assumptions as to what popular music heritage is or, indeed, what it can or should be. What we might understand by the term ‘popular music heritage’ is determined by the diverse cultures and spaces within which it is practiced. Accordingly, and as I have argued in this paper, rather than attempting to sketch the manifold *heritages* that attach themselves – with varying degrees of coherence – to forms of popular music culture, it is more instructive to pay critical attention to the discursive and performative structures of meaning and practice by which they are constituted. The ‘heritage’ value of popular music to organisations such as Visit Britain is qualitatively different to that determined by English Heritage. It is different again to that which underpins the motivations of the growing number of DIY heritage practitioners and online archivists or the curator of a city museum looking to celebrate the creative legacy of local musicians and performers. The discourse of popular music heritage which mega-events like the London 2012 Olympic Ceremonies help cement might have some affinities with those which the commissioning editors of TV nostalgia shows routinely construct and reinscribed in the symbolic imaginary of the nation; but, they might equally strike a dissonant chord with music cultures and identities that are otherwise left off the map of a local or national heritage discourse. The culture of heritage surrounding the commercial production of, for example, items of rock and pop memorabilia or the repackaging of music product as ‘heritage rock’ is not the same as that which stirs the creative interests of those exploring the ‘hauntological’ pathways and legacies of music histories. The archivist who cultivates his or her personal collection of records, CDs and memorabilia is not necessarily in the same cultural ballpark as the archivist of a national collection such as that overseen by the Curator of Popular Music at the British Library. The parameters by which we might delineate and render coherent a critical analysis of popular music heritage are, therefore, challenged by the heterogeneity and sheer complexity of practices that collectively undo and problematise ‘music heritage’ as an object of discourse. Popular music *heritage*, in other words, is all about popular music *culture*. Yet, at the same time, popular music culture is increasingly fashioned as a product of heritagisation. The latter becomes the index of the former rather than the other way around.

Factor into the equation, the overlapping and contradictory spaces and sites of popular music heritage (Cohen *et al.* forthcoming) – virtual and online spaces, interactive environments such as museums and galleries, archives, venues and performance spaces, memorial sites (heritage plaques, rock ‘shrines’ and gravestones, heritage trails and so on), embodied spaces and emotional geographies of music and memory – and the challenge as to what music heritage is or might be in any given circumstances is rendered all the more transparent. By breaking down music heritage discourses into the spaces, practices and ‘acts of transfer’ that play performative host to the cultures of popular music pasts, we can gain a better understand-

ing of how these pasts, in all their colour, diversity and authenticity, are lived in the present.

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Notes

1. See <http://musicmemoriesproject.blogspot.co.uk/p/our-project.html>; www.eshcc.eur.nl/english/hera_popid/
2. Which is not to say that his work has not been discussed or valued as cultural heritage. For example, in his book *Visions of England: Class and Culture in Contemporary Cinema*, Dave (2006, p. 141) cites Jarman's 1977 'punk film' *Jubilee* as an example of 'occult heritage', which he describes thus: 'At its simplest it represents valuable but neglected resources of the past. These resources represent an *occult* heritage in the sense that they are hidden or obscured by official heritage culture'.
3. His garden at prospect cottage on the bleak coastal landscape of Dungeness in Kent attracts visitors from around the world and represents another example of the artist's cultural legacy as living or organic 'heritage' that has a social and aesthetic life rooted, nourished and enacted in the present.
4. The Icons of England project invited the public to nominate their favourite icons, 'the things [they] cherished about England in the twenty-first century': www.icons.org.uk (www.culture24.org.uk/art362437) [accessed 16 November 2011].
5. 'England Really Rocks', *The Sun*, 10 February 2007: www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/travel/17461/England-really-rocks.html [accessed 16 November 2011].
6. www.miltonbayer.com/ [accessed 16 November 2011]
7. Robert Hewison, writing in 1987, remarks that Lord Charteris, Chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (and former private secretary to the Queen) is reported to have said that heritage can mean 'anything you want' (quoted in Hewison 1987, p. 32).
8. See <http://birminghammusicarchive.co.uk/>; www.birminghammusicheritage.org.uk/; www.homeofmetal.com/; www.sohoroadtothepunjab.org [accessed September 2012].
9. www.homeofmetal.com/events/events-list/birmingham-museum-art-gallery-home-of-metal/ [accessed September 2012].
10. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-15606017; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2072798/Michael-Jacksons-hair-fished-shower-drain-bought-Gambling-website-11k.html; www.rockmusicmemorabilia.com/ [accessed September 2012].
11. <http://spicegirlscollection.blogspot.co.uk/> [accessed September 2012].
12. The Heritage Foundation is a charity established in 1991 (as the Dead Comic's Society, later to become Comic Heritage) and has mainly developed from the interests and background of its chairman and co-founder David Graham. Amongst its initiatives is a heritage plaque scheme designed to raise both greater awareness of the contribution and legacy of British entertainers as well as the profile of the charities which the organisation supports. The plaques commemorate figures from the world of show business and entertainment and include many popular musicians. See www.theheritagefoundation.info/aboutus (accessed 23 March 2011).
13. According to Reynolds hauntology 'is all about memory's power (to linger, pop up unbidden, prey on your mind) and memory's fragility (destined to become distorted, to fade, then finally disappear) ... [In the UK] hauntologists are self-consciously playing with a set of bygone cultural forms that lie outside the post Elvis/Beatles rock and pop mainstream ... [and p]layfully parodying heritage culture' (2011, p. 335, 337, 361). See also Davis (2005).
14. www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibition/hauntology [accessed 17 April 2012, emphasis added]. See also <http://andrewgallix.com/2011/07/07/hauntology/>, www.wired.com/

beyond_the_beyond/2011/07/musica-globalista-simon-reynolds-on-undead-hauntology/ [accessed 17 April 2012].

15. I have elsewhere discussed in detail the concept of the ‘archive city’, which similarly seeks to articulate a space of representation in which ‘the archive’ is a sociocultural index that is located both in material landscapes (e.g. the lived and performative spaces of urban habiting) as well as in the virtual spaces of archives, museums, galleries and different forms of media (see Roberts 2012).
16. Although it is the case that, to a certain extent, consumers and audiences have themselves embraced the idea of ‘heritage’ in relation to popular music pasts and that music heritage practises can without doubt positively inform collective narratives of memory and identity, the much wider question as of what music heritage is and does and the ways in which it has bearing on contemporary music cultures and creative practises is, I am suggesting, one that warrants a closer degree of critical attention than it has been afforded to date in discussions on popular music and memory.

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