



# Aspects of UK Popular Culture in the Nineteen Seventies

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## Aspects of UK Popular Culture in the Nineteen Seventies

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In the 1970s, to almost everyone's surprise, the post-war boom came to a grinding halt, accompanied by a very high level of industrial strife. Yet at the same time, a number of social changes and values continued to work their way through the fabric of the community. The legalization of homosexuality in 1967, as well as making Britain a safer place to live for gays,<sup>1</sup> allowed homosexual rights movements to rise and begin a dialogue with (initially reluctant) left wing currents. The women's rights' legislative advances, and the examples of the Black and Women's movements from the USA gave rise to a flourishing and variegated movement against different aspects of women's oppression. The children of non-white immigrants found themselves both scapegoated for the unemployment and misery caused by the economic crisis, and considerably less willing to keep a low profile politically and culturally (as almost all their parents had felt obliged to do).

What effect did this heady brew of experience and struggle have on popular culture: on music, television and cinema in particular? Popular culture does not generally "reflect" or "react" immediately or in any simple manner to social change. Much of the artistic sense and structures of feeling of songwriters, directors or scriptwriters are formed by long-term developments: we are often led to speak of a "generation" of creators. The tastes, attitudes and priorities of audiences, too, are crystallized over longish periods; changes not normally directly related to popular culture – such as the abolition of military service at the end of the 1950s, the reduction in the size of families, or the rise in the number of young people going to university – are likely to be more influential on audience priorities than one might think.

It is important not to imagine popular culture as a homogeneous set of practices. Television, cinema and popular music, to take the three examples we are dealing with, have quite different rules of production. Even before the internet and YouTube, a small investment was enough for a budding rock group to be able to produce a musical demo tape, a concert in the local pub, or even a first record. Even a "low budget" cinema film, on the other hand, required a far greater amount of money and therefore a far greater sense of potential audience, sources of capital and so on. Understanding popular culture involves exploring processes of production as well as repertoires.

In addition, cultural trends are spaces of conflict, enthusiastically praised **and** widely contested at every moment. It can be difficult to make a coherent analysis concerning many thousands of products and to distinguish between what is representative and what is incidental. It is particularly important to remember that, if a record sells a million copies in the UK, the million buyers are not necessarily the same people who bought a copy of the best-selling record of the previous month!

### **Television<sup>2</sup>: a main factor in influencing values?**

Let us begin with the youngest of the media at the time. Television, then as now, was divided into a public service sector, the BBC, funded by a licence fee, and a commercial sector. In the 1970s, the number of channels and programmes available to the viewing public was far smaller than today. Before YouTube, Netflix and catch-up TV, before cable and satellite, 24 hour news channels or dedicated sports channels, people were used to switching (on a rented television set, without a remote control) between the three basic stations: BBC1, BBC2 and ITV. This meant that a given TV programme had far more influence than today: a

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<sup>1</sup> The expression used at the time, extended to LGBT later.

<sup>2</sup> Almost all the television programmes mentioned in this chapter have at least one episode available on YouTube.

scandalous documentary or thought-provoking new series could become a staple of conversation in every school and workplace. The BBC carried no adverts, whereas the ITV regional franchises,<sup>3</sup> given the small number of alternative marketing outlets, could demand advertising revenue undreamed of today, some of which was invested in programme making. From 1967 to 1970, channels began broadcasting in colour, and colour TV sets gradually took over: by 1976 colour sets outnumbered black and white ones in the country.

Television was far more male-dominated than today. Apart from short experiments in earlier years, the first regular woman newsreader on BBC1 was Angela Rippon, who began in 1975. Anna Ford, in 1978 was the first on Independent Television Network news. Her arrival provoked the comment from colleague Reginald Bosanquet “I have never been averse to working with ladies”: clearly, female newsreaders were considered a novelty. We would have to wait till 1990 to see the first woman presenter on the BBC flagship sports programme, *Grandstand*.

From time to time the government took it on itself to review the general broadcasting situation. The Pilkington Report in 1962 had declared “Television is and will be a main factor in influencing the values and moral standards of our society,” and had recommended a new channel for the BBC (BBC2, which began in 1964). By the mid-1970s, this concentration on television as a moral educator was seeming out of date and the Annan Report in 1977 suggested a new commercial channel be authorized (this would be Channel Four, operating from 1980). It also wanted the BBC to rely more on buying in privately produced programmes rather than making its own. The general trend, as in other areas of society, was moving very much away from state moral guidance.

BBC and ITV each had their flagship weekly documentary series, which were remarkable for their longevity. On the BBC, *Panorama* (1953-2016),<sup>4</sup> broadcast at peak time on a weekday, and presented 50 minute episodes with in-depth reporting on highly topical questions. A few examples will give the flavour: in 1974 episodes included “Pay: how much are you worth?”, “British nuclear power: the great confusion”, “Cyprus in Sorrow”, and “King Coal”. In 1975, among many others, there was a piece on the European Economic Community (“In or Out: the Sovereignty Question”), a debate about race relations (“Shirley Williams vs Enoch Powell”), an episode “Panorama in Rhodesia” and another entitled “Coming apart? The Devolution Debate”. In 1977, a ground-breaking episode (“The Best Days...”)<sup>5</sup> used fly-on-the-wall technique to look at life in an ordinary British secondary school.<sup>5</sup>

ITV broadcast quality thirty-minute peak-time documentaries, often of a campaigning tone, in *World in Action* (1963-98),<sup>6</sup> although there were a few mishaps, such as the 1978 episode which alleged that microwave ovens were dangerous. Sales slumped in the UK after these allegations, later shown to be unfounded. In 1973 the episode “Tomorrow’s women” looked at up and coming female politicians; in 1974 “Flying Pickets” looked at new trade union tactics and in 1978 “The Nazi Party”<sup>7</sup> looked at the rise of the far-right National Front.

Other non-fiction productions of the 1970s included *Tomorrow’s World* (BBC, 1965-2003) which presented optimistic views of (sometimes speculative) scientific progress, broadcast live. It attracted 10 million viewers per episode, and introduced its first female

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<sup>3</sup> Granada, Thames, Grampian, Yorkshire TV etc.

<sup>4</sup> Dates of television programmes mentioned in this article include in some cases only the “classic” incarnation, excluding later revivals.

<sup>5</sup> This episode is available on YouTube.

<sup>6</sup> The 1971 episode “Conversations with a Working Man” is available on YouTube, as is the episode on *Gay Pride* 1979.

<sup>7</sup> Available on YouTube.

presenter in 1974.<sup>8</sup> Inventions presented included the pocket calculator (in 1971), and the digital watch (in 1972). Most of the population was similarly riveted by the Apollo moon landings, which continued until 1972, and in particular by the Apollo 13 mission, in which the astronauts survived against all odds a serious technical breakdown.

British soap operas are a national institution, and include the longest-running TV series in the world (*Coronation Street*, Granada, 1960-2016, 8 914 episodes at the time of writing).<sup>9</sup> It follows the life of a streetful of mostly working-class people in a fictional town in the North of England. In 1973, a low point of 8 million viewers per episode was reached, but fortunes recovered a few years later.<sup>10</sup> ITV's other flagship soap, *Crossroads* (Carlton, 1963-1988), which followed everyday life in a country hotel, was noted in the 1970s for introducing, sometimes for the first time on television, storylines about contemporary life: a single parent, and also a Black foster child in 1970, or an inter-racial romance in 1977.

Other standard formats which still exist today may be of interest. Quiz shows of the 1970s can appear tame to 21<sup>st</sup> century viewers accustomed to *The Weakest Link* or *The Chase*. *The Generation Game*, for example, involved families trying to answer questions as well as learn, in minutes, skills such as pizza-making. On *Sale of the Century*, contestants could win high tech gadgets and home furnishings. *University Challenge* (Granada 1962-1987) and *Mastermind* (Various, 1972-2016) allowed viewers to watch brainboxes answering difficult questions. Talent contests were also less sophisticated than today's *Britain's Got Talent* or *The Voice*. The studio audience applauded politely, viewers did not phone in to vote, and the shows were filmed on a box set as in a theatre. *Opportunity Knocks* (Various, 1956-78) was a typical example.

### **Comedy in a changing society<sup>11</sup>**

The twenty five-minutes-per-episode situation comedies of the 1970s often spoke to changes in society, family structure and lifestyle, and explored questions people were already concerned about. This did not generally mean that they were programmes with a precise political message, but that the writers wished people to identify with characters, and release tension by laughing at issues which were worrying them. These sitcoms could also provoke discussion and even argument.

The single mother found her way onto the screen with *And Mother Makes Three* (Thames, 1971-73).<sup>12</sup> It is highly significant of the moralist atmosphere of the time that the heroine Sally Harrison (played by Wendy Craig) was not divorced or never-married, but was a young widow. When she (inevitably) fell in love, it was with a widower, so the moral order was kept safe. *Bless This House* (Thames, 1971-76) showed the trials and tribulations of an ordinary working-class bloke living with his long-haired hippie son and ecologist daughter. The new trend for groups of young adults to share houses was the theme of *Man About the House*, (two young women were sharing a house, platonically, with a young man who found them attractive), whereas *The Good Life* (BBC 1975-78) explored the world of a middle-class couple who had decided to leave their jobs and become "self-sufficient", growing food, keeping animals and making their own clothes, while still living in their very respectable neighbourhood.

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<sup>8</sup> Judith Hann, who stayed with the programme for twenty years.

<sup>9</sup> Until 1981 and the arrival of *EastEnders*, major soap operas seem to have been confined to ITV.

<sup>10</sup> A number of episodes, (including "Episode 1482" from April 1975, in which one of the characters is a soldier stationed in Northern Ireland) are available on YouTube.

<sup>11</sup> All the sitcoms mentioned have episodes available on YouTube.

<sup>12</sup> Television programmes are here identified by channel and date, films by director and date.

*On the Buses* (London Weekend, 1969-73) followed the life of a loveable bus driver, concentrating on how he got one over on workplace management while flirting with any woman in sight. He lived with his mother in a household with serious money problems: the electricity was regularly cut off. Modern life intruded occasionally, as when the hero's sister was divorced in the last series. In this programme and a number of others, women could only be portrayed as stereotypically attractive or stereotypically unattractive. The question of divorce, in a society where one heard always of "broken homes" rather than "one-parent families" was still a tense subject.

Two sitcoms tried to deal with the question of racism and immigration, a central concern of 1970s Britain. The first of these was *Love Thy Neighbour* (Thames 1972-76). It told the story of a white working-class trade unionist and his wife, whose next-door neighbours were an educated Black couple. The trade unionist and his socialist friends were roundly mocked in a number of ways, but the centre of interest was the loud and frequently expressed racism of the central character. He was meant as a figure of fun, but the popularity of the series may have been as much based on racism as anti-racism. Bizarrely, the Black male character is similarly racist against Whites; all in all then a highly political sitcom, a long way from any real experience which people in ethnically mixed areas were having.

In *Mind Your Language* (London Weekend 1977-79) the action took place in a language classroom where a wide variety of recent immigrants to Britain were being taught English by a well-scrubbed ex-public schoolboy. All the characters except the Englishman were crude stereotypes: the Pakistani and the Indian hated each other, the Chinese woman could not stop herself continually quoting Chairman Mao, the Italian spoke with his hands and the French woman tried to seduce all and sundry. Howls of audience laughter were heard when the Indian wrote in Urdu on the blackboard. The Englishman bravely attempted to establish a *Pax Britannica* in the classroom despite all the tensions between the students. *Mind Your Language* was remade in several different countries and adapted to local stereotypes, and *Love Thy Neighbour* got a second lease of life in a series made specially for the Australian public. Neither of the series would be likely to be accepted on British TV today.

### **Cinema: lean years**

There may be less to say about cinema, since the 1970s are generally seen as a difficult period for British film production, lying between the successful 1960s, which had seen the continuing stream of Hammer Horror movies<sup>13</sup> and the first James Bond films,<sup>14</sup> and the 1980s which saw a UK cinema revival, based on a generation of directors trained through television, and a new strategy of concentrating on three recognized niches for British films (comedy, social realism and heritage films). Box office admissions fell from 193 million in 1970 to 110 million in 1980, and these smaller audiences might well choose US blockbusters to see,<sup>15</sup> rather than home-grown films. British cinema production did not have access to the amounts of financial backing available for US cinema or for UK TV. So, from a figure of around 100 British films a year produced in the 1950s, and 80 in the 1960s, output fell to under 50 films a year, despite the continuing application of the "Eady levy", a tax on cinema tickets to help fund UK film-makers. Developing technology raised the price of producing a film, and British directors were faced with the dilemma that UK receipts would never alone

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<sup>13</sup> Such as *The Abominable Snowman* (Guest, 1957), *The Strangers of Bombay* (Fisher, 1960) or *The Plague of the Zombies* (Gilling, 1966).

<sup>14</sup> Beginning with *Dr No* in 1962

<sup>15</sup> *Jaws* (Spielberg 1975), *Rocky* (Avildsen, 1976), *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977), *Saturday Night Fever* (Badham, 1977), among a number of others. Disney was also present (*The Aristocats* 1970, *Robin Hood* 1973)

be able to cover costs. More and more, then, they had to write with an international, and especially a US, audience in mind.

British humour, though apparently undefinable, has a good international reputation, and comedies made up an important portion of cinema output. Series of comic films revolving around suggestive humour which seems dated today, continued to sell quite well: the “Carry On” series,<sup>16</sup> for example, or TV spin-offs such as *On the Buses*.<sup>17</sup> Later in the decade, more sophisticated comedy such as the Monty Python films gained international success.

A few British directors in other areas managed to shine. Ken Russell’s films, in particular *Savage Messiah* (1972) (a biographical film about French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska), and *Tommy* (1975), a spectacular rock opera exploring childhood trauma and rock stardom, were highly successful. John Schlesinger’s *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (1971) broke new ground in presenting its central homosexual character as well-adjusted and successful, while his *Marathon Man* (1976) explored the pursuit of Nazi war criminals.

As in many other fields, the domination of white men in public life was very slowly being challenged. Only one feature-length British film in the 1970s, though, was wholly directed by a woman: *The Other Side of the Underneath*, written and directed by Jane Arden. It showed the descent into mental breakdown of a woman living in the Welsh valleys, and was very well received at the London film festival, heralded by some as “a major breakthrough for the British cinema”. Laura Mulven co-directed the experimental film *Riddles of the Sphinx* in 1976, which attempted to deconstruct the male gaze and invent a feminist way of filming and viewing.

The decade saw the very beginnings of Black visibility in British cinema. Horace Ové became the first Black British director to produce a feature-length film: *Pressure* (1976). It deals with conflicts between West Indian immigrants in London and their British-born children, and with the question of racist policing and discriminatory recruitment practices, and the media representations of these topics. However, Horace Ové did not succeed in financing another full-length film for eleven years (*Playing Away*, 1986). The life of a South-East Asian immigrant, a small businessman in Birmingham, was portrayed in Peter Smith’s *A Private Enterprise* (1974), whereas *Blackjoy*, by Anthony Simmons deals with life in Brixton for young West Indians.

### **Popular music<sup>18</sup> from Glam to synth pop**

The 1970s is recognized as a key creative period in popular music. Increasing independence of young people, social and political crises and developing technology appear to have contributed the ingredients for a renewal and broadening of this popular art form.

The dance hall band was practically finished: the discothèque (often in a room above a pub) was the flavour of the age. Folk, Jazz or rock festivals gathered thousands of serious enthusiasts, despite the British climate, and such festivals became much more frequent, more professional, and more expensive (especially compared with the many free festivals of the late 1960s). The generalization of the cassette tape made it easier for people to collect large amounts of music without buying it. Popular music continued to be dominated by the three-

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<sup>16</sup> Including *Carry On Up the Jungle* (Thomas, 1970), *Carry On Behind* (Thomas, 1975). *Carry On England* (1976) can be watched in its entirety on YouTube.

<sup>17</sup> *On the Buses* (1971), *Holiday on the Buses* (1972), *Mutiny on the Buses* (1973).

<sup>18</sup> Among the hundreds of artistes and thousands of songs, I have deliberately cited very small numbers of examples and have omitted many significant contributions. This was necessary for the chapter not to degenerate into a list. All the songs cited, and at least some of the work of all the artistes cited, was easily available on YouTube at the time of writing.

minute song, and very few instrumentals sold well.<sup>19</sup> As ever, with almost no exception, only songs sung in the English language could sell.

Television was an important means of popularizing new groups. The weekly programme *Top of the Pops*<sup>20</sup> (BBC, 1964-2006) presented the countdown of the Top Twenty best-selling singles to millions of young viewers, and selected bands mimed their songs to their own records, sometimes accompanied by the scantily dressed women dancers of Pan's People (1968-76) or Legs and Co (1976-81). The late-night show, *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (BBC, 1971-88), in contrast, took their rock music very seriously and presented longer, live sets from key artistes (Bob Marley, Judas Priest, Fairport Convention and The Who, to name just a few).

To examine the many thousands of popular songs of the decade, one is obliged to break them down into genres according to the style of music, or the values expressed. We habitually speak of such genres as Glam Rock, Progressive Rock, Folk Rock, Punk, Reggae and Metal, yet the contours of a genre are not clearly delineated, are often fiercely debated, and the genres themselves may be useful journalistic labels rather than based on solid commonalities. In addition, many songs do not fit neatly into any genre.<sup>21</sup>

One key genre of early 1970s UK popular music came to be known as Glam Rock, and featured flamboyant androgynous dressing and texts about love and partying.<sup>22</sup> The names of many stars – Wizzard, the Glitter Band, Alvin Stardust – translate the atmosphere. David Bowie and Queen moved through, then transcended this genre to gain lasting recognition. The theatrical flamboyance of Glam Rock went further in individual self-expression than the Rock and Roll of the 1960s, and the ambiguous sexualities celebrated were part of a longer trend to wider bounds of acceptability.

Metal, known at the time as Heavy Metal, continued a tradition of theatricality in popular music, with the most celebrated players, Black Sabbath,<sup>23</sup> Deep Purple and Judas Priest, gaining lasting success. Musically they were characterized by volume, emphatic, jerky rhythm, and an original use of voice. Themes were generally dark: Satanism, drug taking, war and sadomasochism were very much present. Judas Priest's "Screaming for Vengeance" is not atypical. Music, themes and dress-codes, then, appealed to a desire for aesthetic rebellion against upbeat, smartly dressed, establishment ways of life.

Those artistes grouped together under the genre label "Progressive Rock" wanted to carry on the tendency launched by Bob Dylan and by the later Beatles, of taking popular music seriously as art. Sometimes classically trained, these groups<sup>24</sup> recorded longer pieces, wanted coherent "concept albums" to be at the centre of their work, and eschewed the sexually boastful on-stage presence which had been part of the rock n roll experience. Led Zeppelin's 8 minute song "Stairway to Heaven" is one of the most celebrated pieces, combining, typically for the genre, a dreamy atmosphere with philosophical lyrics: "There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold, and she's buying a stairway to heaven". Jethro Tull's *Thick as a Brick* album (1972) is another key example.

Folk music had undergone a grassroots revival in the 1960s with the establishment around the country of hundreds of folk clubs where enthusiasts would gather, and where authenticity and bonhomie were more important than stardom and virtuosity. In record sales,

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<sup>19</sup> Exceptions were Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" (1973), the Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band playing "Floral Dance" (1977) and James Galway's "Annie's Song" (1978).

<sup>20</sup> Episode number 770519, from 1977, is available on YouTube.

<sup>21</sup> I recommend Lieutenant Pigeon's "Mouldy Old Dough", for example.

<sup>22</sup> Slade's "Cum on Feel the Noize" or Mud's "Tiger Feet" are fair examples.

<sup>23</sup> Black Sabbath's second album, *Paranoid* (1970), can be heard on YouTube

<sup>24</sup> Pink Floyd, Genesis, Yes, Jethro Tull, Led Zeppelin are among the most commonly cited.

a niche market had been established with bands such as Fairport Convention, Pentangle, The Dubliners or The Chieftains, often playing a mix of traditional rural songs (about courtship or the passing of the seasons, witchcraft or village life) and newly composed pieces. In the 1970s, Richard Thompson and others moved into folk rock.<sup>25</sup> After the arrival of punk rock, The Pogues would mix the high speed rock sounds with traditional Irish repertoires, and Runrig<sup>26</sup> would eventually produce Scottish folk rock in huge stadiums.

Reggae, which had come to 1960s Britain from Jamaica, had initially been limited to West Indian communities in the big towns. Its texts in Jamaican dialect, rebellious attitude and bass-dominated beat had represented for young British West Indians something of their own in these times before multicultural education, where schools would completely ignore West Indian or other non-white history and culture. It then became popular among white youth counter-cultures such as mods and early skinheads. The 1970s was the decade it moved into the mainstream, symbolizing the desire of young West Indians to be publicly part of British life on their own terms, and their rejection of their parents' deferential attitudes to the "Mother country".

Reggae had some difficulty getting this mainstream acceptance: for a long-time it was not played on the radio, where deciders were solidly white. Home-made sound systems got the music onto the streets at the Notting Hill Carnival, at informal house parties and elsewhere. The first Reggae Number One in Britain was Desmond Dekker's *The Israelites* in 1969.<sup>27</sup> The song spoke of poor Black people working to feed their family, and used the Rastafarian comparison of the African Diaspora to God's chosen Israelites in the Old Testament, who will one day be delivered from exile. Bob Marley's work made reggae universally known: his album *Catch a Fire* in 1973 was his first hit album in the UK, and *Exodus* (1977) perhaps the most influential. Aswad (formed in 1975) and the more political Steel Pulse<sup>28</sup> (formed the same year) were the most successful of the bands formed by UK born descendants of West Indian families.

From a purely musical point of view, punk rock did not bring much innovation apart from an accelerated rhythm, a prominence for the drums and a preferring of rapid start-up in a song to gradual build-up. Its main contribution lay elsewhere. Punk's emergence in 1976 was an aesthetic response to the social and political crisis. Born in the art schools, it rapidly gained popularity among working class youth.

The typical narrator from a rock and roll song was the young man sure of his success with the girls, that of progressive rock the spiritual ascetic poet. The punk narrator is often a bitter, sarcastic loser, and sarcasm in popular music had before that time been very rare. The Sex Pistols songs *Pretty Vacant* and *God Save the Queen* are the most iconic examples. The genre reacted against sophisticated and overlong virtuoso prog rock productions and against cheerful disco dancing hits to sing instead a more gritty malaise. Although musical genres do not mechanically reflect the period they are produced in, it would be difficult to imagine Punk's "No Future" aesthetic in the 1950s, when almost everyone felt the society's prospects were rosy.

Punk's Do It Yourself ideology spawned thousands of local bands, and the rise of the amateur fanzine and the small independent record label. Even those bands who signed with bigger companies often tried to work against the excesses of commercialism. Crass<sup>29</sup> printed

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<sup>25</sup> Steeleye Span, *A Parcel of Rogues* (1973) ; Fairport Convention, *Tipples' Tales* (1978).

<sup>26</sup> *The Highland Connection* (1979).

<sup>27</sup> The second was from one-hit wonder Althea and Donna, "Up Town Top Ranking" in 1977.

<sup>28</sup> Their albums included *Handsworth Revolution* (1978) and *Tribute to the Martyrs* (1979).

<sup>29</sup> *Stations of the Cross* (1979).

on their record covers “Do Not Pay more than 45 pence”, whereas the Clash’s triple album, *Sandinista* (1980), was deliberately sold for the price of an ordinary album.

Punk seemed to open the gates to dealing with a much wider variety of themes in popular song, with a particular emphasis on the gritty. So Northern Ireland politics,<sup>30</sup> masturbation,<sup>31</sup> parental pressure for success,<sup>32</sup> or women’s body image in society,<sup>33</sup> and many dozens of other topics were sung about. Interestingly, punk opened up space for female groups, and singer-songwriters: The Slits and The Raincoats being the most important examples. The former’s production included sarcastic lyrics about being a woman (“Typical girls are looking for something/ Typical girls fall under spells/ Typical girls buy magazines/ Typical girls feel like hell/ Typical girls worry about spots, fat, and natural smells”). The latter became more avant garde in musical content as the 1980s came into view. They also developed a feminist critique of rock. “The basic theme in rock’n’roll is what goes on between men and women...Rock’n’roll is based on black music. And it’s based in the exclusion of women and the ghettoization of blacks. Which is why we want to put a bit of distance between what we do and the rock’n’roll tradition.”<sup>34</sup> they said in an interview.

In the last few years of the decade, the synth pop genre emerged. Partly inspired by the German group Kraftwerk, this genre was aiming not at exploring new kinds of lyrical content or theatrical communication, but on producing new sounds, with the different kinds of synthesizer newly available commercially, or rigged up from spare parts by enthusiasts. Tubeway Army, Ultravox and The Human League were important names. Songs tended to glorify the mysterious electronic future and leave sarcasm and social comment behind.

Punk and reggae were the two genres which were the most present in the remarkable emergence of a broad movement against discrimination, “Rock against Racism”. This organization encouraged the production of large numbers of local concerts where reggae and punk bands (which had overwhelmingly Black and White followings respectively) would play on the same stage, and audiences unaccustomed to being at the same gigs would join together. National concerts were also set up, culminating in a “Carnival against the Nazis” in London in 1978. This impressive attempt to get antiracism out to young white people who might have been tempted by the increasingly present fascist organizations of the mid-seventies also led in music to crossover influences. Such bands as The Police (formed in 1977) and UB40 (formed in 1978) show how Reggae influences had counted for some of the most creative of the next generation of songwriters.

We hope this very partial, whistle-stop tour of popular culture in the 1970s has brought to life a part of everyday experience from that decade and thus helped towards an understanding of its social and cultural history.

John Mullen est professeur en civilisation britannique à l’Université de Rouen. Il a publié de nombreux écrits sur l’histoire de la musique populaire britannique, dont le livre *The Show Must Go On – la Chanson populaire en Grande Bretagne pendant la Grande Guerre* (L’Harmattan 2012).

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<sup>31</sup> The Buzzcocks “Orgasm Addict”.

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<sup>33</sup> Crass “Shaved Women”.

<sup>34</sup> Marcus, Greil, *In the Fascist Bathroom: Punk in Pop Music, 1977-1992*, Harvard University press, Harvard, 1999, p. 113.

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