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**SUNBIRD RECORDS:
A POST-SUBCULTURAL DESIGN.**

JONATHAN LINDLEY

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The University of Huddersfield.

March 2020.

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Abstract.

Sunbird Records was created in 1999 by Steven Lindley and Ian Almond as a platform to release world music in Darwen, Lancashire. After 2 years releasing no more than 10 albums as physical CD records, the label ceased trading and lay dormant until 2013, at which time the label was redesigned to investigate whether post-subcultural discourse factors in the design of an independent record label? To facilitate answering this question the label designed a new website, shop, studio, live music venue and roster of artists. All of the labels documented activity is accessible via the label's website www.sunbirdrecords.co.uk.

The study develops its primary case study, Sunbird Records, as a way of implementing post-subcultural discourse in practice. Between the late 1970s and the present, there has been an important shift in the evolution of alternative culture. This transition, from subculture (Hebdige, 1979) to post-subculture (Thornton, 1995), has yet to be comprehensively understood by cultural discourse or applied practically as a method for cultural production. The study has been designed for the purpose of critique and further reflection, its findings will be independent distinct and context-specific.

Keywords: neo-tribe, post-subculture, design, independent, network.

Introduction.

Between the late 1970s and the present, there has been an important shift in the evolution of alternative culture. This transition, from subculture (Hebdige, 1979) to post-subculture (Thornton, 1995), has yet to be comprehensively understood by cultural discourse or applied practically as a method for cultural production. To this end, the present study is concerned with designing a post-subcultural entity and critiquing it. The present study's primary question is: how does post-subcultural discourse factor in the design of an independent record label? An independent record label is a suitable place to find cultural activity, operating in relation to both mainstream and alternative culture. More importantly, the independent record label performs as a well-poised, concentrated and pertinent social organisation, populated by an already enmeshed network of consumers, producers and participants, which is what makes it such a complimentary situation to conduct an investigation into post-subcultural discourse. This study fleshes out previous notions of post-subculture by designing an independent record label, developing it as an active post-subcultural organisation and studying its relationship with the culture industry, something which until now has never been attempted as an academic study.

In order to create an independent record label, the present study designs a platform which facilitates the emergence of a post-subcultural network, the network and its counterpart organisation is what the present study posits as a Record Label. Sunbird Records is created as a multifaceted platform which promotes the development of its network through its website, studio, shop, live music venue, social platforms etc. it is important to note that the practical design productions which facilitate the emergence of a post-subcultural social entity, like a record label, are typically accepted as by-products rather than designs strategised to encourage a network's growth, in this sense, the present study is making a unique contribution to knowledge by specifically investigating its design.

It may be useful to first define some of the present study's keywords in order to facilitate the reader. The present study employs the term 'Neo-tribe' (Maffessoli, 1996), this is a useful term in order capture an organisation of participants which work collectively to produce and consume a type of dialectic, post-subcultural or context specific culture. The present study also employs the term 'Post-Subculture' as a way of defining the space created in the wake of subcultural activity, a space which intrinsically harbours the emergence of post-subcultural entities such as neo-tribes. The present study uses the definition of 'Independent' which can be understood as an organisation, group or person

free from the external pressures, control or oppression which govern well-connected, dependent and major entities, it can also be understood as a style or method of producing culture in relation to mainstream cultural production. The present study also utilises the term 'Network' which can be understood as interconnected people, groups or organisations for the majority of this thesis, but is more acutely investigated in its third chapter which defines the more nuanced properties of a network. The present study also employs the term 'Design' which can be interpreted as the process of designing, or as a finished production. The first implies a process of incremental refinement undergone in order to support a movement, purpose or motivation, the latter implies a type of artefact, product or outcome. At times the present study utilises similar terms such as create, produce and develop as synonymous terms only to reduce repetition. Another useful term to define is 'Participation', for the sake of the present study we can understand participation as any type of connectivity that generates cultural activity, for example, a person that visits the label's live music venue can be considered a participant, a person that interacts with the label's website could too be considered a participant. In effect, the term participant is used to define a person, group or organisation which interacts in any way with the label.

The present study departs from PhD tradition, it pioneers exciting and challenging ways to conduct research within the field of design, and area of post-subcultural discourse. This study is a practice-based research project, which can be better understood through Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds's definition of practice and of research. In their 2018 paper 'Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts' they define practice as: "Practice that is creative is characterized not only by a focus on creating something new but also by the way that the making process itself leads to a transformation in the ideas—which in turn leads to new works" (Candy, Edmonds, 2018). Their definition of practice is vital while positioning the design and organisation of an independent record label as the "process" which can lead to the "transformation" of ideas. The process of organising a platform, inherently supports, influences and guides the conception of "ideas" which emerge from the participants of the label, typically as music productions. Candy and Ernest go on to suggest that research is: "a systematic investigation to establish facts, test theories and reach new knowledge or new understandings" (Candy, Edmonds, 2018) They are keen to evoke the notion that research and practice are not the same process but rather a tension between the two exists in order to effectively create new knowledge, with regards to this notion we can consider that the practice conducted by the present study is performed physically through Sunbird Records in the form of signing artists, creating, releasing and distributing music, through hosting events at the label's venue, through organising and supporting artists through its recording studio etc. while the research can be considered to be conducted through the present

studies thesis. All of which are conveniently documented and archived on the label's primary digital platform and website www.sunbirdrecords.co.uk.

There are some more useful and direct practice-based methodologies employed throughout the thesis which will be highlighted in a chapter's introduction where necessary. For example, the study benefits from a more acutely incisive and valuable method in its autoethnographic fifth chapter, which supersedes participant observation (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), with the more practice-based approach of design and critique. In 2011, the London Metropolitan University held their first Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Subcultures Conference, to which Bill Osgerby presented a paper titled 'Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change'. Osgerby explains how post-subcultural studies have highlighted "the complexities of style, taste and attitude in an increasingly media-saturated, commodity-driven cultural landscape" (Osgerby, 2014, p.22), which he then goes on to elaborate, by suggesting that the "studies rooted in ethnography offered much fuller accounts of 'lived experience'" (Osgerby, 2014, p.22). When referring to subcultural research Osgerby means the studies of Punks, Mods, Riot Grrrls, etc. which were largely participant observation. The present study is practice-based, a critique of this practice runs parallel with it, resulting in the employment of a more direct design and critique approach, since the study has been designed for the purpose of critique and further reflection. With this in mind, if necessary, each chapter will introduce its more nuanced practice-based methodology in its first paragraph, which should aid the reader should the present research's method of study alter.

The present study's approach strives to be both more engaging and innovative than previous research because of its unique dialect, context and independence. Sunbird Records aims to develop a discourse with the cultural cartel by developing a parallel system from within the infrastructure of the culture industry, by design and critiquing the development of a self-managed neo-tribal (Maffessoli, 1996) micro-society of post-subcultural participants. Sunbird Records is the design project which drives the present research, so does the critical analysis of Sunbird Records' design, organisation, graphics, network and narrative, as well as critiquing the relationship between Sunbird Records and its surrounding or connected organisations. Learning from existing labels' more effective techniques (Rough Trade, Warp, Factory, etc.) and key cultural theorists—who will be referred to throughout the present study (Maffesoli, Vaneigem, Latour, Bourriaud, Hebdige, Thornton)—Sunbird Records aims to be a dynamic cultural catalyst for neo-tribal cultural production, and with each production develop a better synthesis of its dialect, context and strategy.

Each chapter explores the pertinent aspects of an independent record label's design:

Chapter one considers the discourse surrounding subculture and post-subculture in order to better understand the territory an independent record label emerges into. The chapter decodes pertinent theories in order to support different types of organisations, primarily the independent neo-tribal micro-societal organisation. It also positions concepts of neo-tribalism and the revolutionary potential of the everyday, which might further catalyse the dynamic between independent culture and mass culture.

Chapter two examines graphic productions that often accompany musical forms and bear a relationship with those musical forms. The chapter considers selected graphic productions in relation to their contextual situations, with the intent to interpret what lies beneath each production's graphic surface. The chapter also considers neo-tribal tactics in relation to each graphic production, in order to establish post-subcultures relevance in relation to each work. Finally, the chapter reflects upon the design of the present study's primary case study: Sunbird Records, in order to inform the study's primary research strategy of design and critique.

Chapter three explores the design of an independent record label's network in order to comprehend the complex social organisation of its participants. The design of an independent record label enters into a tension with already established organisations, as well as past and future entities; in other words, it connects with a fluid and evolving network. This resonates with what French sociologist Bruno Latour terms actor-network theory (Latour, 1996). Latour's notions of network theory will therefore play a pivotal role in this chapter, especially when considered in relation to the study's primary case study Sunbird Records.

Chapter four investigates the mediatised projections created by artists, record labels and third-party producers utilising film as a mediatisation of musical forms. It highlights the key shift from audio culture to something more fully immersive. The chapter also considers the tensions between the objective, subjective and de-subjective productions which have been labeled as "rockumentaries" in popular culture, which is also critiqued in relation to post-subcultural discourse. It also explores the notion of live media as opposed to recorded media in relation to post-produced (Bourriaud, 2002) media.

Chapter five auto-ethnographically examines its primary case study, Sunbird Records, in order to explore a less mediatised graphic production of narrative. The chapter uniquely reflects upon the design of an independent record label, creating a context-specific narrative

and analysis in relation to post-subcultural discourse. It also considers the narrative as another aspect of an independent record label's design, organisation and cultivation.

By way of conclusion, the present study considers the relationships Sunbird Records might have in the future, that is to say, after it has been concluded. In an essay for his edited book *Resistance Through Rituals*, cultural theorist Stuart Hall describes the transition from subculture to post-subculture as he writes: "Subordinate cultures will not always be in open conflict with it (mainstream culture). They may, for long periods, co-exist with it, negotiate the spaces and gaps in it, make inroads into it" (Hall, 1993, p.6). Hall is predicting the shift towards post-subcultural adaptation and the emergence of neo-tribal cultures which tend to "negotiate the spaces" within the culture industry. The present study aims to move beyond post-subculture, by designing an independent record label and simultaneously developing a parallel critique of it—superseding participant observation with design and critique—the present study aims to suggest possible tactics for post-subculturalists to progress beyond the constraints of neo-tribalism. These speculations are designed in relation to what Vaneigem describes as "part of a subversive current, of which the last has not yet been heard" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.4), which can be read as a progressive mass of revolutionary potential that evolves far beyond post-subculture.

Chapter One – Discourse: From Subculture To Post-subculture.

This chapter aims to explore the discourse surrounding subculture and post-subculture in order to better understand the territory an independent record label emerges into. The chapter decodes pertinent theories in order to support different types of organisations, primarily the independent neo-tribal micro-societal organisation. It also positions concepts of neo-tribalism and the revolutionary potential of the everyday, which might further catalyse the dynamic between independent culture and mass culture.

Concepts of subculture have faded, while neo-tribalism (Maffesoli, 1996) has intensified as a key cultural trope. Previously, alternative culture developed through subcultural groups such as punks, mods and hippies, and for academic and writer Dick Hebdige, subculture catalysed cultural distinction through the consumption of style and existed as “systems of communication, forms of expression and representation” (Hebdige, 1976, p.129). For Hebdige, typical subculturalists utilise consumption to express their views and present these values through stylised products and services. Moving to the present, sociologist Michel Maffesoli suggests that subcultural groups have been replaced by post-subcultural groups, called “neo-tribes”, which supersede subculture as a contemporary social force “to be expressed through lifestyles” (Maffesoli, 1996, p.98). Maffesoli believes that post-subculturalists experience a more comprehensive mode of expression because they act out their views through more than the consumption of style, through the performance of collective lifestyles.

According to Maffesoli there is a differentiation to be made between “the masses”, “the process of disindividuation” and “the individual” (Maffesoli, 1996, p.6). When Maffesoli suggests that the notion of masses exist “without any precise goals”, he means that they lack distinct collective symbiotic objectives or, in other words, they function as individuals unwittingly in competition with one and other. Maffesoli goes on to propose that in certain circumstances, conditions occur enabling individuals to undergo the process of disindividuation, and these individuals create distinct organisations which he defines as neo-tribes. Neo-tribes emerge after the “saturation of the inherent function of the individual” (Maffesoli, 1996, p.6). In this sense, neo-tribes appear out of conditions that coerce subjects to organise groups, as a means of working collectively towards a shared goal. This

process usually happens when the benefits of being an individual are outweighed by the benefits of collectivity, creating a shared incentive for disindividuation. The present study is interested in these organisations, as well as the designs that stimulate them, utilising certain terms—such as micro-society, collective and community—not as separate distinctions but as synonyms of neo-tribes in order to avoid repetition.

The shift that Maffesoli defines—from mass to disindividuation—can be seen in the design of cultural definition, separation and distinction, all of which are typical processes utilised by subculturalists and post-subculturalists. In 2009, art and design curator and theorist Hans Ulrich Obrist interviewed social critic Raoul Vaneigem, for publishing platform and archive E-Flux. During the interview, Vaneigem states “This process of re-appropriation that I foresee has a name: self-management” (Obrist & Vaneigem, 2009 [Interview transcript]). In *The Revolution of Everyday Life* Vaneigem predicts the re-appropriation of social arrangements as a means of creating revolutionary potential. While subculture created distinction through the consumption of style, post-subculture attempts to move forward, creating self-managed social organisations whose participants share synergistic lifestyles and can cooperate temporarily towards shared goals. Vaneigem believes that the future will be populated by self-sufficient independent groups, and frames the transition towards this, as the revolution of everyday life (Vaneigem, 1967).

This shift is most prevalent in the social organisation of independent record labels and is specifically identifiable in a label's graphic productions, such as in its identity, media and performance. In his book *The Time of the Tribes*, Maffesoli first articulates the notion of neo-tribalism as a direct reaction to what he terms “massification”, or what is now known as globalisation. Maffesoli states that “The rational era [of subculture] is built on the principle of individuation and of separation, whereas the empathetic period [the present] is marked by the lack of differentiation, the ‘loss’ in a collective subject” (Maffesoli, 1996, p.11). For Maffesoli, the masses are amalgamations lacking differentiation, they are not defined by the boundaries subculturalists relied upon, unless of course, these masses arrange themselves into smaller micro-societies. Participants of self-organising post-subcultural collectives are what Maffesoli defines as neo-tribalists.

According to Maffesoli, the most dynamic culture disseminates from these neo-tribes, as he claims that “cultural and individual dynamism” is based on the “tension between heterogeneous elements” (Maffesoli, 1996, p.105) as opposed to the previously asserted formal dichotomy between the “sub” and the “cultural”, which was emphasised through graphic practice such as fanzines, posters and tattoos. However, in the contemporary,

graphic productions are increasingly problematising this supposed division between sub and culture. In this way, graphic productions can be used to develop a neo-tribal aesthetic out of a post-subcultural context, which the present study aims to explore by critically designing ways of developing a more nuanced relationship with "the mainstream".

In developing his notion of the neo-tribe, Maffesoli suggests that "There are many examples in our everyday life to symbolise the emotional ambience exuded by tribal development" (Maffesoli, 1996, p.105). It is important to note Maffesoli's emphasis on "the everyday"; the neo-tribe is not a bizarre event but rather an almost banal happening. Maffesoli goes on to elaborate when he suggests that we observe a "rationalized social" being superseded by an "empathetic sociality" which Maffesoli believes is "expressed in a succession of ambiances, feelings and emotions" (Maffesoli, 1996, p.11). Evidently, for Maffesoli, the everyday happening of a neo-tribe is played out through varying strengths of "ambiances, feelings and emotions", that is to say: there is an intensity to the "sociality". Similar again to Maffesoli's concept of the neo-tribe, Vaneigem implies that we must: "build a parallel society opposed to the dominant system and poised to replace it" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.246). However, Vaneigem is not simply encouraging a problematic binary relation of "one" and "other", "sub" and "culture", instead he celebrates a pluralism of "variation", according to Vaneigem: "True radicalism permits every variation and guarantees every freedom" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.246). Together they propose the construction of parallel micro-societies, or neo-tribes, of every variation, and through these varying strengths of sociality, the everyday social might be replaced, either through *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (Vaneigem, 1967) or through *The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (Maffesoli, 1996).

Vaneigem's notion of revolutions often resonates with Maffesoli's post-subcultural notion and both generally promote what Maffesoli calls an increasing "tension between heterogeneous elements" (Maffesoli, 1996, p.105). Maffesoli's "heterogeneous elements" and Vaneigem's "every variation" are synonymous with the same ideal, they both conceptualise a more diverse, dynamic and stimulated culture through new modes of cultural participation, through the formation of micro-societies and the retribalisation of contemporary life. Both Vaneigem and Maffesoli challenge the tenure of distinctions created by the consumption of mass culture, Vaneigem voices his view of consumer culture as he writes: "To consume is to be consumed by inauthenticity, nurturing appearances to the benefit of the spectacle and the detriment of real life" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.136). For Vaneigem, subculture failed because of its core values, which were centered around consumption, style and communication, which were for subculturists, a comfortable way of assuming a compliant subversive role. As a result of subcultures fading ardour, the present

study provides alternative dynamic constraints, by developing new contingent definitions for post-subculturalists.

In his 2009 book, *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher writes frivolously with regards to the purpose of certain “cultural zones” as he writes: “the establishment of settled ‘alternative’ or ‘independent’ cultural zones which endlessly repeat old gestures of rebellion and contestation as if for the first time.” (Fisher, 2009, p.9) While this might appear to simply devalue the worth of ‘alternative’ and ‘independent’ cultural zones this notion gestures an oversimplified binary, which is in fact far more complex and nuanced. Fisher goes on to write: “‘alternative’ and ‘independent’ don’t designate something outside mainstream culture; rather, they are styles, in fact the dominant styles, within the mainstream.” (Fisher, 2009, p.9) The present study posits this as ill-informed, while ‘alternative’ and ‘independent’ are indeed “styles”—as well as methods of production, consumption and participation—by their very nature they cannot sit within the mainstream, however they can, and do, exist in relation to the mainstream beneath the broader umbrella of culture. The present study also suggests that in order to critique the repetition of “old gestures of rebellion and contestation”, one must also critique the old gestures of dominance and control exerted by mainstream cultural organisation, something which the present study investigates more comprehensively.

When asked by Obrist about the future, Vaneigem responds: “The future belongs to self-managed communities that produce indispensable goods and services for all. The idea is to produce for us, for our own use” (Obrist & Vaneigem, 2009 [Interview transcript]). It is clear that Vaneigem supports a pluralism of cultures in his notion of “self-managed communities”, which, as stated earlier, can be considered synonymous with neo-tribes, he articulates this pluralism of micro-societies through a tension of exclusivity-inclusivity; he is concerned with the production “for us” and “our own use”. The present study develops these tensions, and pluralisms, by producing a diverse culture through the design of a micro-society, as an independent record label. One contrast, however, needs to be drawn between our interpretation of Vaneigem’s and Maffesoli’s micro-societies and neo-tribes, for Vaneigem often describes a community more isolated, more like a commune than a neo-tribe. Maffesoli rarely describes a neo-tribe as a closed system, but rather a well-connected network that has a considered agenda and relationship with its broader culture.

By fostering localised independence, as a micro-society, Sunbird Records manifests itself as a “self-managing community” designed to perform neo-tribal activities, these activities take shape in a series of graphic productions. These graphic practices produce what Vaneigem

terms “indispensable goods” and “services” (Obrist & Vaneigem, 2009 [Interview transcript]). In contrast to Vaneigem, Sunbird Records inflects a more cultural artistic value of “goods”—such as: records, apparel, posters, merchandise, animations, etc.—whilst Vaneigem alternatively defines “goods” with a socio-economic emphasis. Later, in the same interview with Obrist, he gives examples of “goods” to be “Free trains, buses, subways, free healthcare, free schools, free water, air, electricity, free power, all through alternative networks to be set up” (Obrist & Vaneigem, 2009 [Interview transcript]). Sunbird Records is a nascent design of Vaneigem’s assertion of future cultural production, however, in the contemporary, the dominant production of goods appears to work through the consumption of competition.

The present study posits that the relationship between the emergent, and the established, is somewhat complicated, the emergent enters into a situation which theorist Aram Sinnreich articulates in his essay ‘The Materialisation of Music and the Rise of the Cartel’ which was first published as part of *The SAGE Handbook of Popular Music*. In his essay Sinnreich suggests that the principle problem with the developed creative industry is it inevitably expands, and in doing so, it develops programs of self-preservation, for Sinnreich these involve: “establishing trade associations, regulating prices and practices, controlling access to retailers and consumers, and continually lobbying for copyright expansion and other legal and policy concessions. In other words, it became a cartel” (Sinnreich, 2014, p.615). The cartel is not, as is instinctually assumed, a top-down hierarchy of oppression, instead it has a flatness, which means its effects can be felt across the entire culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The culture industry was first introduced as a concept by German philosopher Theodor Adorno and German sociologist Max Horkheimer in their 1944 essay ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’, the term will be utilised throughout the present study as a way of conveying the commodification of culture, typically as a network of organisations which produce culture for consumption, for example: Universal Music Group is a major record label that exists as part of a network of entities, not above it, but indeed, within it.

In the culture industry, the cultural cartel has been a developing force since long before subculture, more specifically in the music industry, it was catalysed by the independent record label movement which was popularised in the 1950s by Nashville based Sun Records. Despite being less categorically defined, subculture too existed long before punks, mods and hippies and has resurfaced in many different forms since. “Popular subculture” (Hebdige, 1979) was subject to a process of mainstream enculturation during the 1970s, and was quickly capitalised on by major organisations, and converted into something more readily

marketable, which in many ways has problematised subcultural critique and driven traditional subculturalists to disband. Like subculture, neo-tribalism is susceptible to the typical devaluation of enculturation, a process which has been accelerated, less-typically, by mediatisation, mass-production and globalisation.

Alternative culture has become a commodity which is being enculturated at progressively faster speeds, this has encouraged major and dependent organisations to develop tools to further accelerate this process. For example companies such as Indify and Instrumental are powered by algorithms, the program detects the fastest growing artist profiles on social media and streaming platforms, then charges a premium to its clients for the collected data. These programs better facilitate already established cultural organisations, by allowing privileged entities the advantage when sourcing new talent. These are but a few evolving programs of the cultural cartel, a notion that the present study will later posit as a key instigator in the evolution of subculture and post-subculture.

Sunbird Records as an organisation is not distinctly opposed to the cultural cartel, nor does it celebrate these modes of control. The label is focussed on negotiating the cultural cartel's effects, that is to say, that Sunbird Records isn't above, below or outside of these forces, instead, Sunbird Records is nested within the culture industry and in turn, creates a dialogue with the cultural cartel. Sunbird Records generates difference through its positioning and graphic productions. This is how Sunbird Records creates a much needed context-specific alternative, by critiquing its relationship with the cultural cartel. Indeed, the present study suggests that culture expands in the transformative relation caused by the cultural cartel's effects, which push for faster more forceful enculturation. This notion is something which screenwriter Bruce Robinson highlights satirically as he writes: "They're selling hippie wigs in Woolworths. The greatest decade in the history of mankind is over" (Robinson, 1987). Robinson is somewhat parodying the notion of enculturation, while capturing the loss of movement as the language of a subculture is enculturated. This could, in turn, be perceived as forcing post-subculturalists to re-introduce dynamism into the resulting space.

If alternative culture is inevitably consumed by major organisations, reproduced as mass-media and controlled by cartel-like forces, then the opportunity for difference and opposition might appear futile. However, it can be thought of as creating meaning through difference, or the distinction of potential negative space. For example, in *Society of The Spectacle*, Vaneigem's contemporary Guy Debord explains how a "loss of quality" is "evident at every level of spectacular language" as "the commodity form reduces everything to quantitative

equivalence" (Debord, 1967, p.14). He is assertive with his subjective view of mass-produced culture, however, it can be read that he implies a loss of authenticity, which ethnographer Sarah Thornton makes comprehensible as she writes: "a musical form is authentic when it is rendered essential to subculture" (Thornton, 1995, p.29). There is a resonant theme between these two views that the mass-production of a culture devalues it as a commodity, which reduces it to "quantitative equivalence", resulting in the repression of diverse subjectivities, which is what eventually consumed the subcultural. In relation to these notions, neo-tribalism must act through lifestyle instead of consumption. An active neo-tribalist must do more than simply contemplate, because neo-tribalists create meaning through lifestyle and lived experience, which Debord articulates as he writes: "the less he lives; the more he identifies with the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own life and his own desires" (Debord, 1967, p.14). Debord is concerned with the mass-production and consumption of "spectacle", where Sunbird Records is a platform to experience and develop those desires of alterity as a means of critiquing mass-culture.

There are many oppositions to mass-media, including two false oppositions to the mainstream, firstly there is abstinence: to live outside that culture and to ignore the mainstream—this is common for people that "do not have a TV" or "do not drink Coca-Cola" but refuse to admit a phone is also a TV, in the same way a Laptop is, as are the large screens in public squares. The other false-opposition context is viewing mainstream culture from the outside looking in, but this assumes the possibility of evading the intrusive presence of mainstream culture in the first place. Both oppositions are very different from the notion of a propagation of culture, for example creating a commune, without interacting with mainstream culture whatsoever. Sunbird Records offers something more strategised by design, not something of romanticism, but rather a realist approach, in opposition to the contemporary cultural cartel. Sunbird Records presents alternatives from within, by being able to self-manage from within the already established framework of the culture industry, offering a unique contribution to knowledge by internally resisting the cultural cartel. Naturally, there are limitations to the extent of Sunbird Records' independence, the organisation is governed by the same rules that control every organisation in the United Kingdom: HMRC, Companies House, etc. but for Sunbird Records there is an amount of intrinsic independence due to its historic, social and geographic positioning.

The present study interrogates the cultural cartel by re-appropriating the goods of the mainstream—overproduced records, eccentric videos, flamboyant performances—in a way that is essential to post-subculture, and therefore by Thornton's understanding of subculture, might develop post-subcultural authenticity and from that post-subcultural

capital (Thornton, 1995). The central aim is to perform difference—that is to say: make a potential alternative actual. In doing so, this avoids what social critic Neil Postman calls “culture-death” (Postman, 2005, p.172) which could result from the dominance of an unchallenged cultural cartel, because without difference creating movement, our experience of culture relaxes and the force of the cultural cartel goes unnoticed. In relation to Postman’s notion of culture-death, Vaneigem develops a similar idea which he terms “survival sickness”. Survival sickness is the state in which the individual experience of everyday life suffers, something which Vaneigem insists can be altered by collective self-management as he writes: “So general is survival sickness that any greater concentration of lived experience cannot fail to unite most of humanity in a common will to live” (Vaneigem, 1967, p.142). For Vaneigem, *The Revolution Of Everyday Life* is the theoretical way to cure survival sickness and avoid culture-death, by relieving the necessity for mass-produced products, services and culture. *The Revolution Of Everyday Life*’s solution is to empower collective self-management and self-sufficiency. These ideas are what the present study hopes to critique through the articulation of the independent record label. The contemporary independent record is not an autonomous entity, nor is it a major organisation, it is typically a small business which can operate alone or in coalition with other organisations, it is also malleable and adaptable, capable of mediating its inputs and outputs, this is what makes the design of an independent record label a unique approach to better understanding post-subcultural discourse.

Literature, both entertaining (*Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*—Hunter S. Thompson) and informative (*England's Dreaming*—Jon Savage), often prioritises particular subcultural moments, with many writers’ nostalgia, especially for punk, only serving to render it more spectacular and fantastical: “Punk was beaten, but it had also won. If it had been the project of the Sex Pistols to destroy the music industry, then they had failed” (Savage 1991 p.541). This simply illustrates the typical nostalgia, romanticism and revivalism restricting subculture in an attempt to make an era more fantastic. Many iconic punk bands started with independent labels but eventually they signed to majors. For example, the Sex Pistols were signed to Virgin records before eventually signing with majors EMI, A&M, Warner Bros and Universal Music Group, and became a valuable product to the music industry. By contrast, this study is invested in a forward-facing practical approach to researching post-subculture, by insisting that more could be learnt about present post-subculture by developing new ways of graphically articulating the design of neo-tribes.

Dick Hebdige suggests in his landmark publication *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* that despite being insightful, participant observation as a methodology for ethnographic research has its limitations. Hebdige claims that the "absence of any analytical or explanatory framework has guaranteed such work a marginal status in the predominantly positivist tradition of mainstream sociology" (Hebdige, 1979, p.75). In response to what Hebdige identifies regarding this lack of analytical objectivity in subcultural discourse, the present research aims to more clearly convey its findings, with the benefit of an advanced form of this method, namely design and critique, which allows the present study to not only participate and observe a post-subcultural movement, but to design the parameters which allow that culture to exist and simultaneously critique its development.

In an interview with BBC4, referring to the Sex Pistols, Wilson over emphasises the role Manchester played in the punk movement, he suggests that after the Sex Pistols' gig at the Lesser Free Trade Hall, punk "took root in Manchester in a way that it couldn't have taken root anywhere else", however, he then articulates the nature of fringe subcultural dynamism as he elaborates: "because this was the perfect dirty, northern industrial town, with boredom, and with unemployment, and somehow this became the punk city" (Wilson, 2009). According to Tony Wilson, co-founder of Factory, it was necessary to base Factory in Manchester and not London because innovation could only be optimised out of the spotlight and on the fringe. Music journalist Barry Nicolson wrote a feature for NME around the eighth anniversary of Wilson's death, in which he suggests that: "not only did he believe in the city's cultural potential at a time when few saw any to speak of, but he was determined to realise it, to give Manchester a new sense of itself." Wilson believed this revitalisation could be achieved through cultural production and the development of alternative culture in contrast with London. Moreover, Nicolson writes: "Wilson envisioned Factory not as a business, but as an engine for cultural regeneration" (Nicolson, 2015). As the production of mass-media expands in dominance and consumes more of the music industry, the fringe, where almost a lack of culture exists, becomes an anti-culture, a zone where subversion and resistance finds its place in cultural discourse. The present study revitalises some of Factory's more successful tactics, developing new strategies to critique their efficacy.

Context-sensitive artist and facilitator Theaster Gates organised a significant gathering under the identity Sanctum (Sanctum, November 21, 2009) in 2015, for 24 days, 24 hours a day. In Bristol, Gates constructed a site which he named Temple Church. The venue became a hub for a temporary swarm of cultural activity, fed meaning by artists, musicians, producers, participants and consumers. Gates is interested in activating cultural dynamism in a type of anti-spectacular way, in the sense that the venue was populated by exclusive

participators. The venue famously hosted small-scale happenings with very limited room for observers. This was done in stark contrast to more spectacular happenings, such as the events held at the Academy Music Group's chain-like music venues, which dominate each major city in the UK, including Bristol. The main function of the gathering is to share contemporary ideas, information and culture. Gates hints at the present research's theme when he states: "To make the thing that makes the thing" (Gates, 2016). Gates is referring to factors such as identity, organisation and production, in other words developing the infrastructure that creates meaningful cultural dynamism. Gates is interested in designing the parameters that allow for cultural interchange to take place, this notion of creating frameworks, structures and parameters is what the present study posits as neo-tribal organisation. These parameters or constraints typically undergo a process of refinement which can be considered a process of design. The organisation of an event such as Gates' Sanctum is similar in many ways to the construction of a creative space, it has a direct effect on the cultural movement that occurs within it. The same factors underpin the design and construction of Sunbird Records. Although, where Sanctum only temporarily offered a platform, Sunbird Records is strategically positioned to offer a more permanent structure for neo-tribal participants to develop cultural dynamism within.

Gates is also interested in fringe culture, something that the present study finds synonymous with alternative culture. As part of Sanctum's promotional material, it is regularly suggested that Gates employs a "working principle of seeing and reflecting upon the unseen, unvisited and under-heard" (Gates, 2015). This is the culture which we can assume to be alternative, subcultural, counter-cultural and post-subcultural. In many ways Gates acts as a cultural catalyst, because he brings "unseen, unvisited and under-heard" artists to the forefront of their context-specific circumstances, this culture experiences an amount of additional cultural interchange as a result of this additional exposure. All of this activity enters into a relationship with mainstream culture and the effects of culture held in a cartel. For his essay 'Weightless Data: The New Heavy Freight', designer and author Adrian Shaughnessy is conscious of these modes of cultural oppression, he explains how digital networks such as the internet have challenged conventional methods of distributing culture, goods and services, etc. he goes on to assert that contemporary modes of distribution have: "been largely taken over by the oligarchs of Silicon Valley, every system, every regime, has within it the seed of its own subversion." (Shaughnessy, 2018, p.56) What Shaughnessy alludes to is the assumed state of equilibrium our culture is subject to, as presently the culture industry is subject to an amount of easily controlled digital oppression, for Shaughnessy the "seed of its own subversion" has already been planted and

indeed the results of a counter-culture might already be in development, for example, the rebirth of retro physical products such as vinyl and tape records.

The cultural cartel progressively controls more of the creative industry and oppresses in more subtle and delicate ways as it evolves. Peter Saville, the graphic designer for Factory Records, attests to the effectiveness of this approach when in an interview he states: "It's during the current era that in a way the cultural canon has become entirely integrated, or appropriated, for the purposes of commercial practice" (Saville, 2012). Saville is talking about the way in which design, like music, has been reduced to commerciality, to serve a more diluted purpose than previously. Later in the interview, Saville also discusses the conflict between the "marketing man" and the "designer": "So when you were fighting the marketing men, saying 'look there is a better way of doing this' it kind of felt worthwhile, but when the marketing people sit there and say 'how do we seduce' that's the problem" (Saville, 2012). Here Saville is addressing the difficulty of being a designer whose primary function is to serve capitalism in its crudest form. Understandably, Saville romanticises a time when graphic designers had more influence on their clients and could assert their own creative practice. When asked about the challenge facing communication designers today Saville comments on how for the graphic designer "the toughest thing is maintaining a sense of integrity in the work they are doing" (Saville, 2012). While more nuanced, for the sake of the present research it can be assumed that "maintaining a sense of integrity" for Saville results from retaining an existing position, in relation with the cultural cartel. In this sense, Sunbird Records is driven with a clear purpose: to critique the cultural cartel by encouraging the shift described by Vaneigem towards generalised self-management in art and culture.

The present research is studying the design and organisation of a parallel system ready to replace the existing system which is oppressed by the cultural cartel. This study will test the efficacy of these responses and investigate the neo-tribal dialect that develops with these productions. Cultural theorist Ross Haenfler in his 2014 book: *Subcultures*, suggests that post-subcultural theory puts too much emphasis on the importance of "consumption and leisure in alternative cultures; consuming a lifestyle trumps politics or a coherent worldview for many participants" (Haenfler, 2014, p.12). For Haenfler, subcultural theorists focus on subcultures' need for consumption and leisure time— notions that could only empower the cultural cartel—this research will focus on the organisation of the independent record label in order to support its participants.

Chapter One

Graphic: Designing Aesthetic Significance.

This chapter explores both the accidental and the strategized design of an independent record label's graphic productions. These graphic productions typically become vehicles to both transfer and substantiate post-subculture, critiquing examples generated by Vertigo Records, Factory Records, Warp Records and Sunbird Records. For the sake of the present study, we must consider the graphic production as an ambiguous visual interpretation of musical forms, music movements, design forms and design movements, all of which are given meaning by the contextual situation unique to each production. Thus the notion of a graphic production goes far beyond the aesthetic, as the present study considers meta-levels of meaning found beneath the aesthetic surface of a graphic production. The deeper conceptual and contextual meanings of post-subcultural graphic production are significant for neo-tribal cultural organisations as they, upon critique and reflection, help develop new strategies for further neo-tribal graphic productions. What might be unnoticeable to most consumers, is significant for Vaneigem as he writes: "It was as if they were in a cage whose door might as well have been wide open, for they could not escape, nothing outside the cage had any significance" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.23). In this way, graphic productions are often used to satisfy, persuade or manipulate consumers. Without consumers capable of interpreting meta-information, the graphic production's message can be miss-interpreted or fail to hold any significance at all. This chapter analyses the conditions surrounding selected productions, to better understand their relevance in relation to post-subcultural discourse, and the techniques employed by labels to cultivate or capitalise on them.



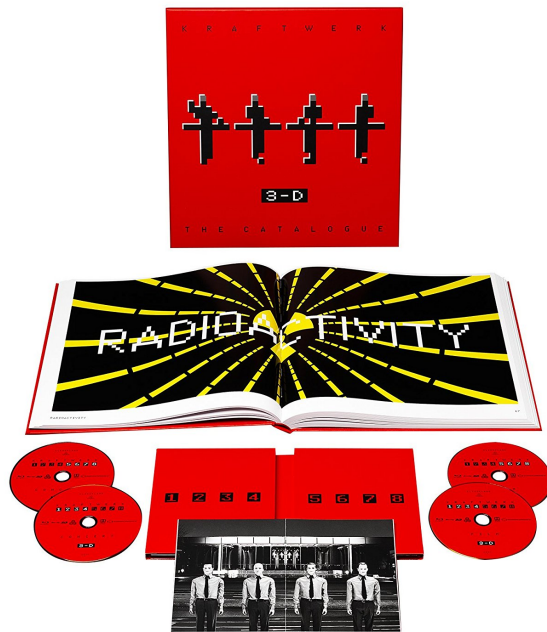
(Schult, 1974)

Vertigo Records is a UK based record label originally developed as a subsidiary label of Phonogram Inc. in 1969 by Olav Wyper, before eventually being acquired by Universal Music UK. The label has released music by rock artists such as Black Sabbath, Genesis, Metallica, KISS and Bon Jovi. Interestingly, while physical copies of music dominated the music industry, the label also focussed on importing records, bringing foreign music culture to the UK for distribution. Vertigo Records were responsible for importing and distributing seminal krautrock artists Kraftwerk, but more significantly the re-design of Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* sleeve artwork, which went on to become one of the most influential and iconic graphic productions in electronic music culture. The original sleeve designs for *Autobahn* were produced by German artist Emil Schult, depicting an over-saturated hyper-lucid German motorway, and the reverse cover depicted the band as passengers inside a moving car. Graphically, at that time, this might have been a competent and accepted album sleeve design. However, when Vertigo Records imported the album to the UK in 1974, the label had their in-house design team re-produce the cover art, using only the motorway sign. This remix of the original album cover became the iconic and lasting representation of Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*.



(Vertigo, 1974)

In order to compete with the major labels' over-competency at dominating the media, there is perhaps more impetus for subcultural and post-subcultural producers to be innovative in order to sell records. What makes Kraftwerk interesting graphically, is that since the band formed in 1970 they have consistently been a cornerstone in the field of electronic music, as well as repeatedly being a reference point for the graphic production of music culture. Kraftwerk went on to develop a performance-based graphic installation titled *Minimum-Maximum* in 2004, that toured extensively. The performance eventually became a 3D visual show which travelled globally and was eventually released as *3-D The Catalogue* featuring all 8 studio albums and their counterpart 3D live performances. These performances, where the audience received 3D glasses upon arrival, demonstrated the band's ability to lead in the application of technology to music culture nearly forty years after they formed. Kraftwerk's *Minimum-Maximum*, established extended platforms for the consumption of their culture, developing information to be communicated as an expansion of music. Through their graphic productions, we can see them develop new strategies for substantiating subculture. These strategies are what inform subcultural discourse, and in turn influence the design of subcultural music productions thereafter.

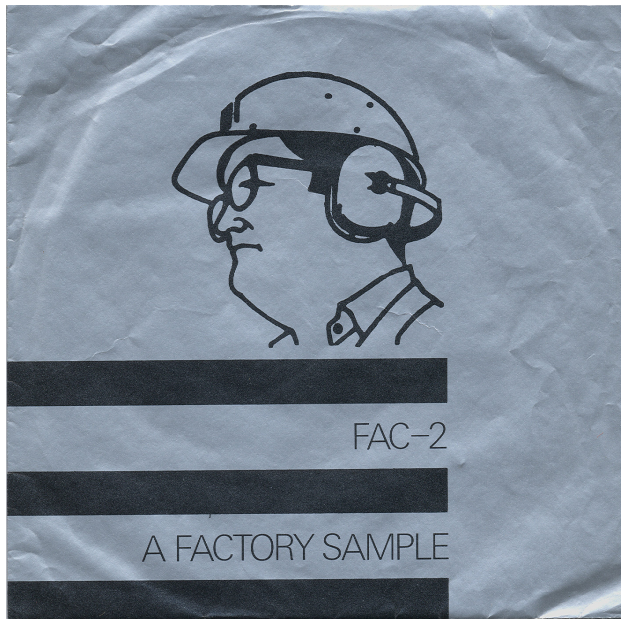


(Kraftwerk, 2017)

In 1975 Manchester based design student Peter Saville was dramatically affected by the cover of *Autobahn*, later commenting: “the *Autobahn* sign had a markedly profound and enlightening influence upon me. In a way, I would say it was my first basic lesson in semiotics” (Saville, 2015, p.61). This aesthetic became a major reference point for graphic designers, especially designers invested in music culture, and for Saville, this was the language that he eventually played a role in popularising in Manchester. What this demonstrates is the way in which culture disseminates through a network. In relation to Latour’s actor-network theory, potential culture is co-opted by re-interpreters, the more active and practiced the actor (Latour, 1996), the more prominent their reproduction of that culture becomes. Saville Studios became a leading actor for the modernist language developed from Kraftwerk’s *Autobahn* record sleeve.

Established in 1978 by Tony Wilson, Alan Erasmus, Martin Hannett and Peter Saville, Factory Records was a record label based in Manchester, which developed strategies for independent record labels and organised its affiliates in an unorthodox fashion, making Factory Records a unique context specific record label. Factory Records were influential in their nurturing of bands like Joy Division, New Order and Happy Mondays, yet the label facilitated a broader spectrum of artists, producers and designers. The label was instrumental in developing a subcultural movement in Manchester and some of its graphic productions are still available for consumption as past subcultural signifiers, despite the label ceasing operations in 1992. Therefore Factory Record’s graphic productions could be

considered the label's successor, as its culture has outlived the organisation that facilitated its creation.



(Saville, 1978)

A Factory Sampler was their first record to be pressed to vinyl in 1978, featuring works by Joy Division, The Durutti Column, John Dowie and Cabaret Voltaire, produced by Martin Hannett, Laurie Latham and C.P.Lee, mastered by George Peckham and given an aesthetic treatment by Peter Saville. The majority of the record's conceptual development was orchestrated by the label's organisers, until the label outsourced its physical pressing to Carlton Productions. *A Factory Sampler* is an example of collective design, a localised sociological construction that produced a cultural artefact, a response to produce culture in what at the time was a relatively—in comparison with London—bleak and disparate cultural landscape. *A Factory Sampler* could be considered as one of the earliest examples of a neo-tribal production, assimilating information and re-contextualising it with a previously unheard dialect. In some ways, the transition between subculture and post-subculture, renders subculture obsolete. For Hebdige, subculture was only ever a transitory movement, he explains how subcultural productions can be considered artistic, but only in relation to "a particular context; not as timeless objects, judged by immutable criteria of traditional aesthetics, but as 'appropriations', 'thefts', subversive transformations, as movement" (Hebdige, 1979, p.129). For Hebdige, subculture has context-specific significance and for Factory this context-specific significance was explored through the production of *A Factory Sampler*. In practice, context-specific culture, like subcultural productions, have been nullified by globalisation and the reduction of context. This transition towards massification

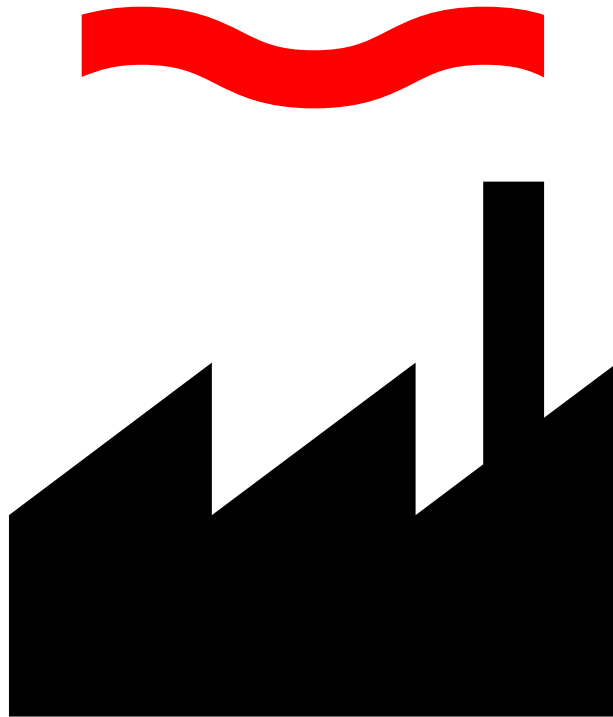
creates diluted and then mass-produced reproductions of culture. This complicates the efficacy of context-specific subcultural productions, which catalyses the emergence of neo-tribalism as a tactical mechanism to create new context specificities.

When American artist Andy Warhol founded his studio The Factory in 1962, it operated very differently to Factory Records, despite both organisations utilising and pioneering primitive neo-tribal strategies. Warhol's Factory was an organisation actively employing more structured production methods, but within the context of cultural production. Defining Warhol's Factory as neo-tribal or subcultural is problematic because the organisation utilised individual entities but arranged them in an unusual way. For a short period of time, Warhol managed American rock band The Velvet Underground, who were part of a major experimental-rock subcultural movement. In becoming part of Warhol's Factory, The Velvet Underground became a subcultural component within another subcultural organisation. In contrast, Factory Records was famous for being badly organised as a business, yet as a collective of cultural producers, they were practicing a more forward-thinking holacratic approach, sharing Tony Wilson's vision of Factory Records as "an engine for cultural regeneration" (Nicolson, 2015). Factory Records were catalytic in bump starting the notion of Manchester as a music scene, in opposition to the established London scene. In some ways, Factory Records used more neo-tribal tactics than Warhol's Factory because Wilson's organisation very clearly and combatively defined its anti-position. This became a strategy which could be considered neo-tribal, in ideologically restricting consumption to an exclusive geographic location, and through this isolated contextual articulation, the organisation designed itself a unique consumer demographic. It is difficult to categorically define the beginning and end of subculture, and the beginning and end of post-subculture because they are, by their nature, analogous cultural movements. Subculture appears as a means of subverting broader culture, but upon the nullification of a subcultures efficacy, subculturalists are forced to develop new tactics, which develop as post-subcultural movements such as the emergence of neo-tribes.

When considering these two organisations, Factory Records almost accidentally utilised a more holacratic (Robertson, 2016) approach to the label's structure, allowing each artist, producer and band to function as self-managing components. In his 2015 book *Holacracy: The Revolutionary Management System That Abolishes Hierarchy*, writer Brian Robertson compares a holacratic organisation to the internal components of the human body. He states: "a network of autonomous self-organizing entities" that "take in messages, process them, and generate output. Each has a function and has the autonomy to organise how it completes that function" (Robertson, 2016, p.21). What Robertson means here is that

operative holacracy is an organised fluid network of self-managing components, functioning to achieve goals that benefit the whole organisation or the holacratic entity. Factory Records was infamous for its eccentric self-organisation, which positioned the label as part of an independent movement that questioned conventional methods of cultural production. The label challenged the types of strategies employed by more established organisations. Interestingly, the organisation of Factory Records was as challenging as some of the material produced by the label. Indeed, the way the label was composed and arranged was as important to the development of subcultural discourse as the culture that the label's artists produced, which makes it an apt case study for the present studies themes.

Saville was a key component in shaping the aesthetic of Factory Records and served as the primary art-director of the label before its demise in 1992. Inspired by designers like Herbert Bayer and Jan Tschichold, Saville was instrumental in disseminating their modernist graphic language throughout Manchester with Factory Records. By looking at some of Factory Record's visual language we have an insight into the inner workings of the label. In his 1967 essay 'On Typography', seminal graphic designer and Bauhaus alumni Herbert Bayer writes: "the typographic revolution was not an isolated event but went hand in hand with a new social, political consciousness and, consequently, with the building of new cultural foundations" (Bayer, 1967). The foundations that Bayer alludes to are indeed the foundations that Saville re-appropriates when he utilises a modernist aesthetic language, using bold, paired down and reduced graphic forms in a context-specific environment to create meaning. By associating this—then more European—visual language with popular culture, Saville and Factory Records made modernism more comprehensible and accessible for subcultural consumers, the Factory Records logo is an example of this appropriation. This graphic language became a unique selling point and iconic signifier of Factory Records. Saville almost acted as an interpreter, disseminating aesthetic language directly into Manchester. This could have been considered a juxtaposition in relation to the social and political conscience of Manchester, as the city was going through a period of regeneration, despite the post-apocalyptic account of Manchester that Factory Records would have you believe.



Factory Records

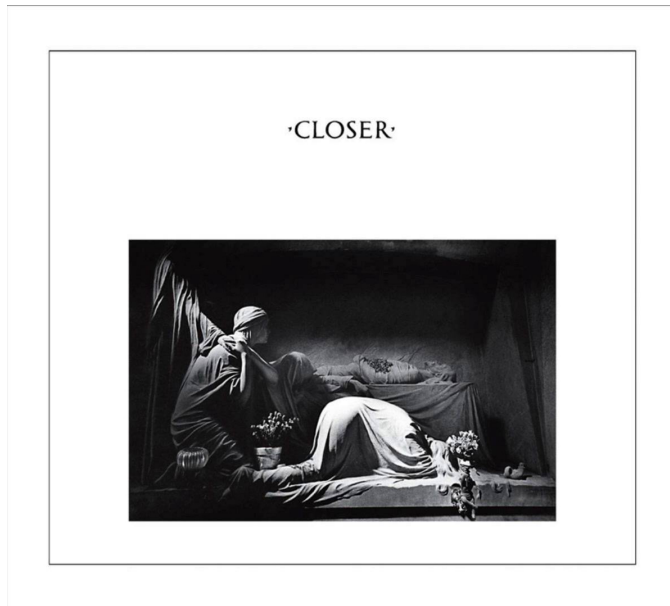
(Saville, 1978)

There is a clear connection between Saville's utilisation of signage aesthetic and the influential re-appropriation of *Autobahn*. One can imagine the appropriation of modernist graphic design in contemporary music culture, as an innovation that spread through a web-like network from Düsseldorf's Kraftwerk, to Manchester's Factory Records and then onto even more remote nodes of the network, before eventually the signal returns entirely reshaped. The application of an aesthetic like modernism to music culture can only have significance if either the conditions for its significance coincidentally exist or a force is cultivating the conditions for its significance to exist. For Factory Records, its logo was a combination of both these circumstances. As industrial production waned in the then transforming northern metropolis, Saville used the factory icon because it succeeded a history of industrial iconography, transforming it into a symbol for new cultural production. This, paired with a slightly displaced Helvetica Bold, was the application of design as a force of cultivation.

Swiss typeface designers Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffman designed *Neue Haas Grotesk* or *Helvetica* in 1957. This kick-started the typographic modernist revolution, something which Dutch designer and typographer Wim Crowel believed added objectivity to type

design. Crouwel suggests in Gary Hustwit's 2007 film *Helvetica*, that the typeface: "was more neutral, and neutralism was a word that we loved. It should be neutral. It shouldn't have a meaning in itself. The meaning is in the content" (Hustwit, 2007). The Factory Records logo utilised a typeface and graphic language which was largely adopted by commercial and corporate graphic design. At almost the same time as Factory were developing FAC 115: Factory Records Stationary, which was to be released in 1984, the New-York city subway system started using the same typeface for all of its signage designs. When *Helvetica* is applied to a record label like Factory Records, it creates a new significance because of its context. The same hyper-legible language is used today in transport, safety and medical signage globally, and as the various strains of *Helvetica* evolve, so too do the typefaces interpretations, meaning that a graphic production is constantly evolving and changing as our culture evolves with it.

Influenced by Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*, Saville is clearly employing similar design strategies for example, both designs utilise re-appropriated signage as a means of communication, making juxtaposition the mechanism. To take something like signage and use it in the context of album artwork in 1974, changed conceptions of iconography. In this instance, it's the re-interpretation of an everyday icon that gives meaning to the Factory Records' logo. This re-interpretation and the utilisation of juxtaposition, creates meaning out of otherwise potentially meaningless graphic production. This notion of re-interpretation is something that Vaneigem insists our culture must pursue as he writes: "The modern world has to learn what it already knows, become what it already is, through a great exorcism of obstacles, through practice" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.3). For Vaneigem this is the act of living and re-learning to live, making the recapturing of subjectivity the key to revolutionary potential. For an independent record label's graphic output, the same recapturing or re-appropriation of graphic language could be equally as empowering.



(Saville, 1980)

After working with Joy Division of Factory Records, Saville designed the record sleeve for *Closer*, which was released in July 1980, less than two months after Ian Curtis' death. It depicted a photograph by Bernard Pierre Wolff, taken of The Appiani Family Tomb by Demetrio Paernio in the Cimitero monumentale di Staglieno (a cemetery in Staglieno, Italy). Demetrio's sculpture depicts "a family grieving at the deathbed" (Louder Than War, 2013). This, in the light of Ian Curtis' suicide, was a volatile graphic. Saville and Wilson both claim the design was finalised before Curtis' death, and that they decided to keep the graphic despite its controversial context-specific situation.

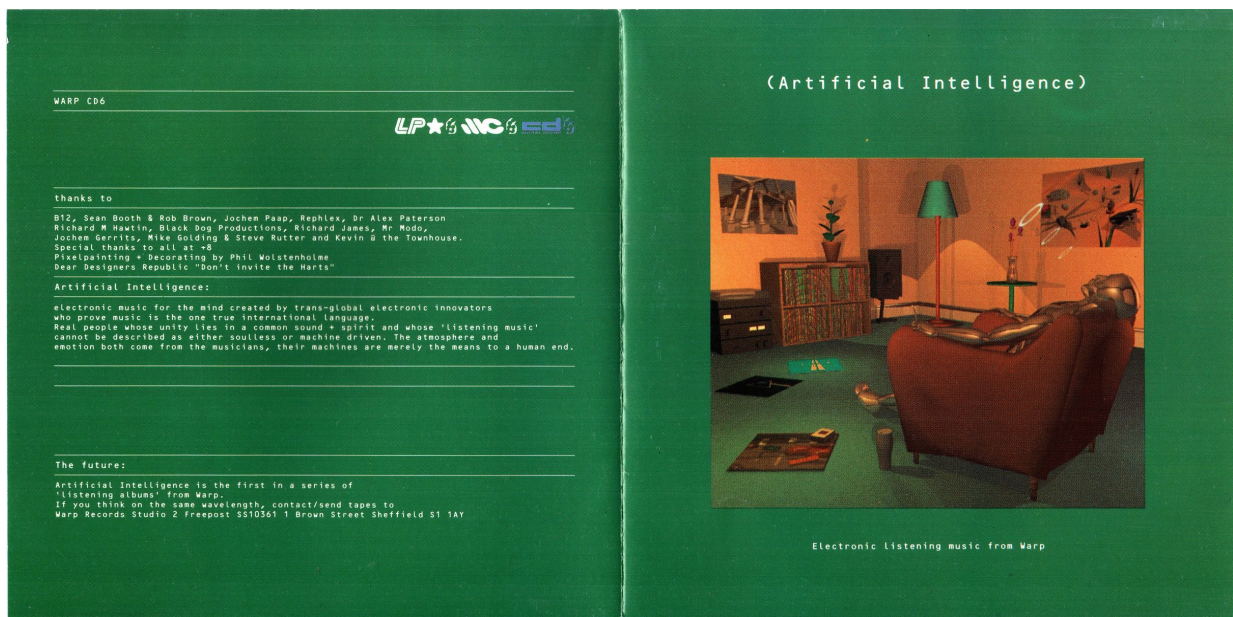
The photograph used on the cover of *Closer* creates meaning with each stage of its production, as well as in contrast with Demetrio Paernio's intentions for the photograph. What results is a graphic with many meta-levels of representation and interpretation. The point of convergence between Saville and his audience carries different tiers of understanding, depending on the viewer's history with the label, the band, the photographer, the sculptor, with each tier adding greater fidelity to the viewer's translation. The sleeve for *Closer* was significant, not so much because of its technical or design prowess, but because it conceptually re-appropriates an image, and through post-production (Bourriaud, 2002) the image is given new meaning, a meaning which is accessible on many levels, dependant on the consumer. More precisely the *Closer* cover art was part of a significant context specific discourse which became part of a broader context specific cultural movement.

Saville, post Curtis' death, stated that he didn't believe the image was a photograph of a real tomb: "it's a postmodern juxtaposition of a contemporary work housed in the antique. At first, I didn't believe the photo was an actual tomb" (Saville, 2011). This is pertinent because it highlights Saville's utilisation of an aesthetic tone. Saville is less interested in the actual tomb and more interested in the evocation of melancholy, which comes from the representation of a tomb. Saville was using the image because of its semiotic value, not because of the value held in the tomb's portrayal or the value held in the photographer's choice of framing, choice of lens or choice of exposure.

Saville suggested interior and graphic designer Ben Kelly produce the interior of Factory Records' next bold venture, Fac 51, The Hacienda. Staying true to the label's employment of juxtaposed symbolism, the venue famously housed "bold directional and warning markings, neon bar signs, bollards and cats-eyes which mapped out the dance-floor" (BKD, 1982). This became the physical home of Factory Records, an incubator for the developing Manchester rave movement. Financially it spelt disaster for the label and a contributing factor to the downfall of Factory Records. However, by this time the label had already made its mark in the narrative of independent record label culture, and in doing so it generated new narratives for the design of an independent record label.

In 1989 Steve Beckett, Rob Mitchell and Robert Gordon founded Warp Records. A similar narrative can be seen threaded through this label's origins, a small group hoping to create an improved platform for the production and consumption of alternative culture. Warp Records were originally based in Sheffield and worked with The Designers Republic to develop their branding, cover art and print material. Interestingly, in 2010 the founder and primary graphic designer of The Designers Republic was interviewed for the Creative Arts Magazine. When asked if he could draw a parallel between his work and the work of Saville, he stated: "You could draw parallels, but I wouldn't; neither would I regard Neville (Brody), Peter (Saville) and Malcolm (Garrett) as iconic, or anything other than passionate and eloquent fellow designers" (Anderson, 2010). Anderson diverts slightly from the central aim of the question, which is focused on the similarities between Warp and Anderson in Sheffield, and Factory and Saville in Manchester. The present chapter posits that had Factory Records been founded in 1989, and Warp Records been founded in 1978, similar narratives might have emerged but in reverse. Warp Records became a well recognised cultural component in the field of electronic music, but more notably Warp Records pioneered and developed the notion of dance music as something more than just entertainment, which then became the label's main focus. This development makes Warp Records an interesting subject for the present study, so too does the fact that Warp is now

one the largest independent record labels, with artists such as Aphex Twin, Brian Eno, Squarepusher, Autechre and Flying Lotus.



(Warp, 1992)

In 1992 Warp Records released a compilation album called *Artificial Intelligence*, the album's design articulated techno music as something with more depth, where until now techno music had only really been considered as a culture of entertainment. The record was recognised as catalysing a new discourse on dance music. While considering *Artificial Intelligence* twenty-five years later for The Guardian, writer Ben Cardew suggests that: "Warp managed to codify this new strain of electronic music, signalling their intentions via the compilation's name, strapline and cover art" (Cardew, 2017). According to Cardew, the label articulated the compilation in a way that repositioned its music. Interestingly, Cardew notes the "name, strapline and cover art" as the most significant factors in creating this newly positioned electronic dance music, which of course was a production of the record label's design. The artwork was noteworthy because it featured an android listening to music within a typical living environment, but on the floor are the sleeves of both Pink Floyd and Kraftwerk, designed to signify a convergence, not between progressive rock and electronic music, but the maturity of different languages in music culture. The notion of electronic dance music as something to be listened to at home, as opposed to the more accepted club situation, was an experimental gesture.

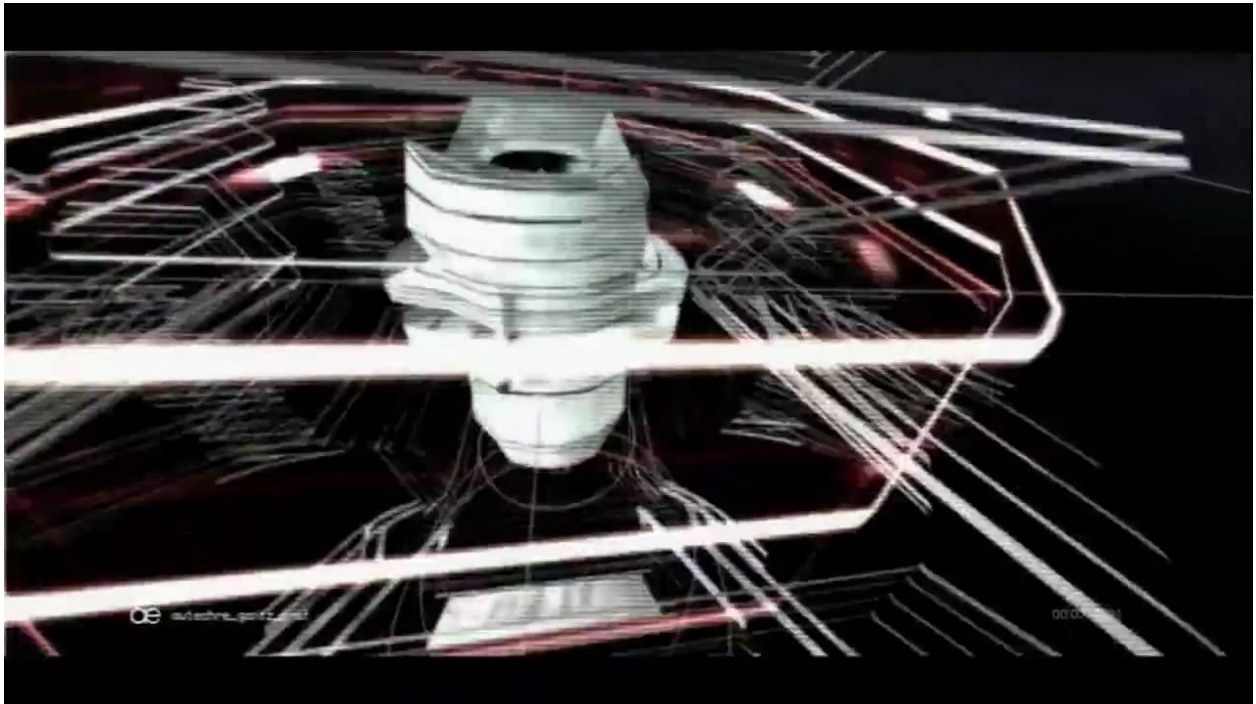
The gesture divided consumers in a way that could be considered subcultural, becoming known as IDM (Intelligent Dance Music) which was developed in relation to EDM (Electronic

Dance Music). IDM as a genre became infamous due to its perceived pretences. In an article for influential music-culture platform Pitchfork, music journalist Simon Reynolds writes: "What exactly is 'intelligence' as manifested in music? Is it an inherent property of certain genres, or more about a mode of listening to any and all music?" (Reynolds, 2017). He questions the packaging of music as IDM, as did most consumers. Reynolds assumes that the music labellers are esoterically alienating consumers, but IDM was originally a term for programmatic music. This genre of music was populated by consumers and producers interested in creating parameters which allow a computer, or perhaps an analogue system, to generate audio which could later be interpreted as music. This challenged the then more conventional method of playing and recording musical instruments, something that IDM pioneer Eno alludes to when he explains how as a composer he became more interested in constructing "some kind of system or process which did the composing for you. You'd then feed inputs into it, and it would reconfigure it and make something beyond what you had predicted" (Eno, 2012). The notion of developing a "system or process which did the composing for you" wasn't a particularly new idea but again like Saville's modernist design in Manchester, it was Warp Records and artists like Autechre, Aphex Twin and Brian Eno that were key in popularising this type of language in Sheffield at that time.

Upon reflection, the way Warp packaged *Artificial Intelligence* didn't "codify a new strain of electronic music" as Cardew suggests, it codified a new strain of music consumers that became interested in IDM and the ephemera surrounding the music. Despite writing specifically about the art world, art critic and writer Lawrence Alloway is relevant here because he notes the tiers of esotericism found in an already established medium. In his 1972 essay 'Network the Art World Described as a System' Alloway writes: "the notion of esoteric art and everyday life in opposition needs to be modified to allow for art's presence in the quotidian realm." (Alloway, 1972, p.7). In one sense, intelligent dance music esoterically positions itself away from electronic music, by creating definition, in another, it is part of Alloway's proposed modification, creating a space where, for intelligent dance music consumers, everyday life and esoteric art run in parallel. This reframing of electronic music consumption challenged the way people listened to the record, thus Warp's tactics created a sub-sub-culture which the label was ideally situated to supply with its productions. In 1992 this would perhaps have appeared a bold step for electronic music, emphasising the articulation of its graphic representation as a primary method of creating distinction.

Warp also pioneered interesting territory popularising audio/visual graphic productions, producing visuals as a platform for the music, which was influential in graphic design, animation, and 3D design. The label's network expanded, triggering the production of a

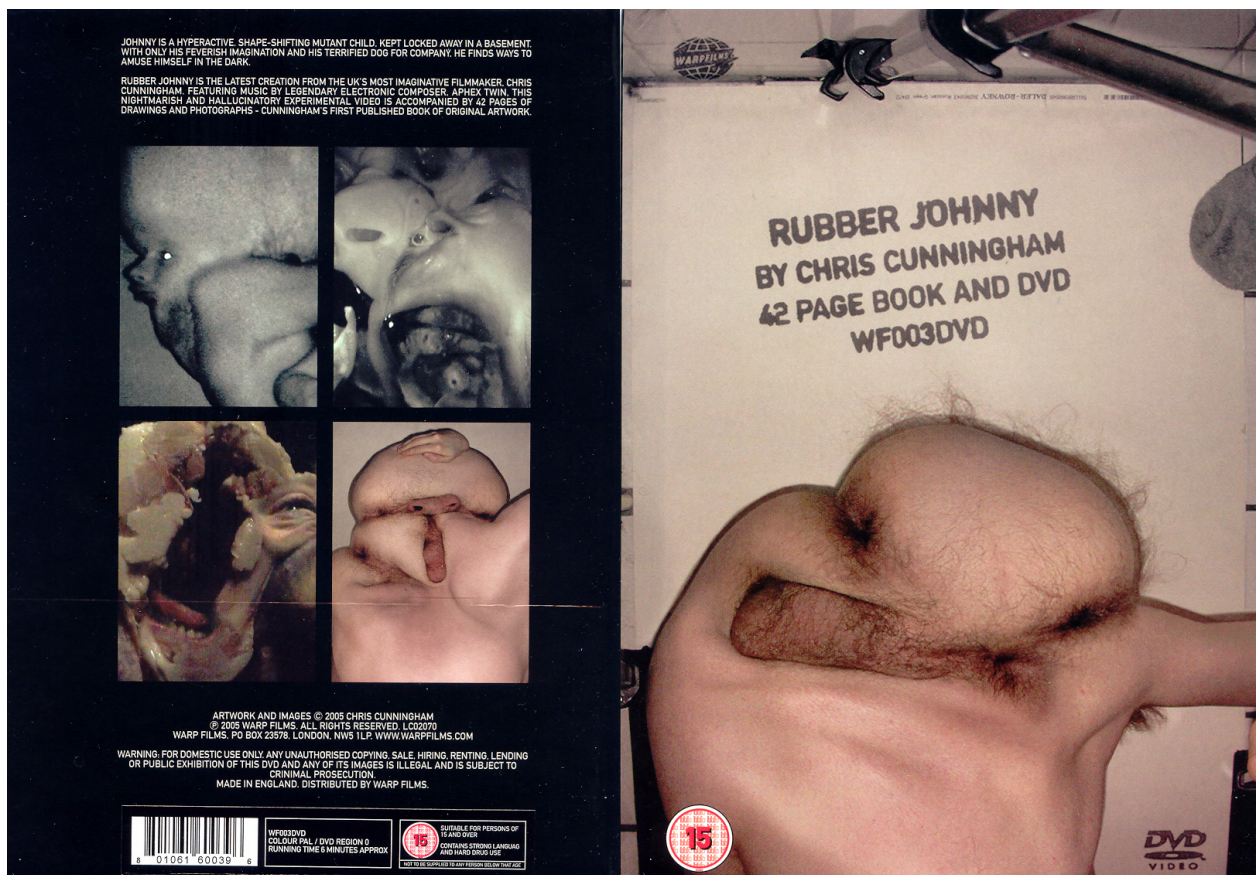
series of films which were later catalogued as *Warp Vision: The Videos 1989-2004*. The films were another major factor contributing to the label's pioneering stance on the convergence between audio and visual production. It features a broad range of graphic, animation and film experimental shorts which were pioneering in expanding music culture far beyond audio into a more experiential zone. Again the label found a way of taking their signature programmatic and generative productions and applied the same principles to the graphic production of film. This popularised experimental methods of visual production through the label's already established network.



(Autechre, 2002)

In 2002 Warp Records commissioned Alex Rutterford to produce an animated video for *Gantz Graf EP*, a three track EP by seminal IDM band Autechre. The title track and counterpart animation 'Gantz Graf' became one of the most recognised computer graphic creations of its time. The animation is populated by metaphysical shapes that respond to Autechre's music, in a time when, for independent 3D visual production, responsive or reactive functionality was still in its infancy. What became the driving force of the animation then, was not necessarily the aesthetic properties, but the narrative associated with the animation's process of production. At that time creating such an animation would have been laborious and challenging, requiring meticulous attention to detail and perseverance. Much like the narrative that supported the label's musical productions, 'Gantz Graf' appealed to consumers in the same way a stop-motion animation would have captured the imagination of an audience in the 1960s. This was due largely to Rutterford's utilisation of a primitive

technology and his ability to push the said technology to its limits. In an interview with Warp, Rutterford explains how he spent more than four weeks conceptualising a method to be able to begin constructing the video, he later states that: "The rest of it is complete and utter boring number crunching, entering sums and stuff" (Rutterford, 2008). The narrative of painstaking labour on Rutterford's part, is of course evident to consumers, producers and participants of animation as a subculture, making the video a developer of subcultural capital for these participants. Perhaps the reason for this interview nearly six years later is for the label to both produce more information for past consumers and to re-iterate more clearly the narrative of the film's production.



(Cunningham, 2005)

For many of Warp Records' participants, Richard James's (Aphex Twin) single 'Rubber Johnny' remains one of it's most noteworthy productions, due largely to the short film which accompanied the release. This film was produced in collaboration with experimental musician and video artist Chris Cunningham and features a young adult suffering with hydrocephalus, who responds to Aphex Twin's music while restrained in a wheelchair. The film infamously celebrates fractious content, causing controversy upon its distribution. This type of cultural production gained the label and its associated artists much notoriety as the

content became the mechanism and its virility became the medium. 'Rubber Johnny' was released shortly after the birth of YouTube in February 2005 which became a primary distribution channel for the short film due to its subcultural nature. Subsequent to the film's release, we can see its language being re-produced in different forms, from films like William Malone's 'Fair Haired-Child' (2006) to album covers like 'No Love Deep Web' by California based noise band Death Grips (2012).

In stark contrast with the design aesthetics employed by Factory Records, Warp Records position distorted and fragmented aesthetic language within electronic music culture, similar to the way postmodern graphic design superseded modernist graphic design. Both 'Gantz Graf' and 'Rubber Johnny' utilise distressed information at a high resolution to signify very different messages in relation to Factory Records or Vertigo Records. In a sense, both graphic productions were relatively radical music videos, particularly for independent electronic music culture, because they challenged the accepted narratives found in existing music videos at that time. 'Rubber Johnny' is a highly stylised film due to it being shot almost entirely in infrared, but what made the film's content tangible, and in a way more lucid, were the prosthetic based special effects produced by Cunningham. There is a section of the film where the main character collides with the camera destroying his face in a gruesome and haunting way that could only be depicted through prosthetic manipulation. The nature of the film's aesthetic separates audiences in a way that is contextualised by the culture industries climate at that time, as music culture was becoming progressively more accessible due to emerging digital platforms. Warp Records created content that actively divided its consumers, creating fans that would follow the label development, while simultaneously repelling consumers that might find their content incomprehensible. This act again assists Cardew's notion of codifying of participants. The notion of separating, codifying and re-codifying consumers has been apparent since subculture emerged in the 1970s. For electronic music, which became popular through the late 1990s and early 2000s, the act of subcultural separation had yet to happen, which is what Warp Records, Aphex Twin and Chris Cunningham achieved with their graphic production of 'Rubber Johnny'.

Well recognised as a primary cultivating force of electronic music—since the release of *Artificial Intelligence* in 1992—the label consequently developed a strong network of organisers, producers and consumers. Warp Records could then generate its own post-subcultural productions and convince its audience of its significance, a tipping point for independent record labels attempting to establish their position in the culture industry. This means that the development of a label's own platform and network can facilitate the acceptability of its cultural productions, and for a label like Warp Records, 'Rubber Johnny'

was catalytic in amassing subcultural capital, (Thornton, 1995). Trading this capital with its own audience, through its virility and polarising content, the film was a landmark graphic production which disseminated digitally far beyond the label's primary audience.



(Flying Lotus, 2011)

In 2011, Warp Records' Steven Ellison (Flying Lotus) developed a project that moved beyond existing print or screen-based media, it was named *Layer 3*. The project was created in collaboration with John King (Timeboy) and David Wexler (Strangeloop) who produced a type of 3D graphic language which enveloped Ellison's live music performance to create a fully mediated live experience. *Layer 3* took elements of performances like Kraftwerk's *3-D The Catalogue* and radically accelerated their live and performative mechanisms. *Layer 3* produced a graphic yet tactile quality to the live aspect of Ellison's performance, due to its active physical three-dimensional installation. In contrast, Kraftwerk's *3-D The Catalogue*, albeit using physical properties, relied heavily on 3D glasses which produced an illusionary quality. *Layer 3* graphically challenged the way in which aesthetic elements were orchestrated by transforming the visual assets into a playable instrument, not simply as an accompaniment to the music. Both King and Wexler trigger the visual assets with MIDI instruments, potentially making for a more immersive live performance. The show is effectively a live remix, pulling from a pool of audio and visual

assets, creating a live post-production (Bourriaud, 2002) as a 3D immersive audio/visual experience.

Developing graphic productions in association with the music industry often acts as a public platform for graphic artists. The *Layer 3* project toured extensively and received critical acclaim, this led to subsequent mass-reproduction through other mediums such as commercial advertising and corporate events. *Layer 3* was temporarily in the spotlight as the culture industry caught up with the project and commodified its graphic language. It also symbolised the now proficient post-disciplinary (Blamey, 2016) era of dance music and performance.



(Squarepusher, 2012)

Warp Records then presented a series of immersive performances like Tom Jenkinson's *Ufabulum Tour* in 2012, which progressed the notion of visual interpretation further, through a totally reactive live solo performance as Squarepusher. The *Ufabulum Tour* featured Jenkinson's signature IDM productions but notably presented live bass sections where the visual elements translated live bass guitar signals through a complex computer rig. The result was another landmark moment for the culture of audio/visual graphic productions. What makes Jenkinson's Squarepusher interesting, is his unique level of accomplishment in many disciplines, as a post-disciplinary producer. Writer and academic David Blamey in his 2016 book *Specialism* suggests that for creatives who continue to restrain their work with disciplinary constraints, the progressive movement towards post-disciplinary production will continue: "to be regarded as a threat to unity and a cause of

declining standards - but it just doesn't follow that greater creative autonomy results in more trivial or less satisfying work" (Blamey, 2016, p.20). What Blamey attends to is the fear of a compression of quality, where a single practitioner can become only relatively competent in many fields, as opposed to a specialist in one. Jenkinson's *Ufabulum* suggests, in its hyper visceral audio/visual production, that as automation and technology remove the need to "specialise", it becomes the role of the practitioner to post-produce components. Despite being primarily a musician, Jenkinson typically starts with software, developing his own software and tools, before creating music, visual software, visual assets, developing a live performance, etc. The culture industry inescapably enters unpredictable territory as the democratisation of tools—entry level software and hardware—facilitate more "artists" than ever before, so we should see an expansion of dynamism, particularly as the post-disciplinary artist enters the stage.

In 2014, celebrating 25 years of Warp Records, the label hosted an event in Kraków, Poland called *Warp 25*. The event featured some of the label's most prominent artists, including Squarepusher in collaboration with the Sinfonietta Cracovia: "Squarepusher will unveil an all-new live show featuring one of Europe's most distinguished chamber ensembles, the Sinfonietta Cracovia" (WARP25, 2014). This performance took Jenkinson's audio/visual practice to Squarepusher consumers with an entirely different contextual environment, but a context that redevelops the notion of IDM for its participants, as something more than computer-based music, or graphic visual production.

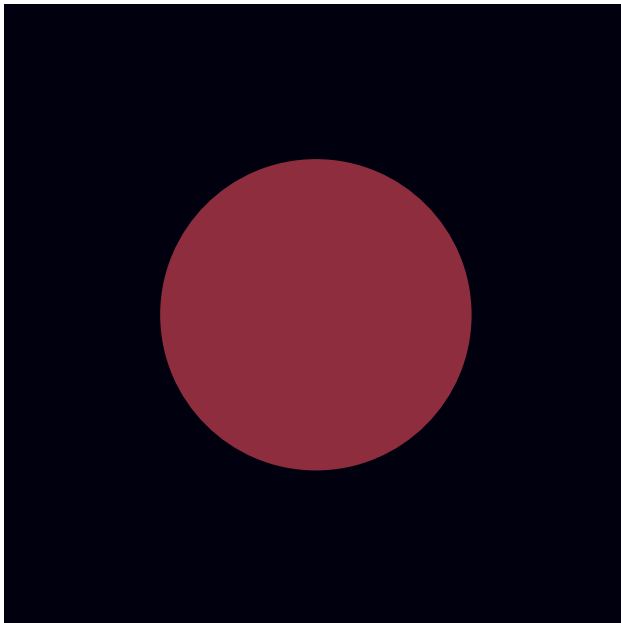


(Sunbird Records, 1999)



(Sunbird Records, 2013)

Sunbird Records was originally founded by Steven Lindley and Ian Almond as a way of releasing world/fusion music in Darwen, Lancashire. Upon its first graphic interpretation in 1999, the Sunbird Records logo symbolised a small bird flying towards a sun, finally, the graphic was overlapped with a cursive typeface projecting the word "Sunbird". The logo was only ever produced as a low-resolution jpeg, initially designed for the reverse of CD packaging. Upon the label's rebirth in 2013, Vector designs were created in order to allow its user the maximum amount of flexibility, creating a pool of assets for the label's participants to utilise. The bird icon could be used alone, as too could the sun, or the web URL. Long-term however, and almost by accident, the graphic which came to represent Sunbird Records was the burgundy sun. It was the most malleable and adaptable representation of the record label and therefore advanced the graphic identity and aesthetic language employed. This graphic identity became a major part of the label's connectivity with its audience as the label started to produce merchandise, and through this reproduction, the branding began to evolve.



(Sunbird Records, 2017)

Interestingly the graphic identity which typically signifies Sunbird Records, its sun icon, is simply a bold graphic with a subtle hue. The burgundy dot could be interpreted as either a sun, or the record icon used on classic tape machines, therefore reducing the graphic language to its minimal form. In effect it created a reduction in mediatisation, in stark contrast to the rest of the culture industry, which appears to be moving towards a more

mediated landscape. For Sunbird Records it is important to develop its design as something much simpler, but also less concrete, creating a more responsive and flexible graphic language. Despite being the label's primary graphic representation, it is the foundation of a graphic language which expands with each graphic production, largely due to the requirements of each brief rather than personal or regulatory preference. One aspect of the label's graphic language is its employed colour scheme, consisting almost entirely of monochrome tones and the label's signature burgundy. The label's graphic language plays within these freedoms and restrictions to develop a plethora of stylized assets, which have since come to signify the label, especially for the label's already connected participants. The same branding is used at the end of each video, animation or film, lending a sense of continuity through all aspects of print, product and digital graphic productions.

Chapter Two — Network: A Neo-Tribal Social Entity.

The present study now turns to explore network theory as a way to negotiate the complex relations between agencies at work in the design of an independent record label. As shown in the previous chapter, record labels are made up of myriad networks: the home, the neo-tribe, the friend, the industry, etc. To better comprehend post-subcultural theory, it is important to first understand what networks are and how they form. If post-subcultural networks, such as neo-tribes, emerge out of the diminishing relevance of subcultural groups, then their differences must be understood. To this end, this chapter first examines network theory as a way to develop useable terminology and give a sense of context. Then the chapter examines Sunbird Records as a neo-tribal network. In this way, the present study expands upon the themes of its previous chapters, where for Maffesoli: "The accent is then on which unites rather than that which separates" (Maffesoli, 1996, p.10). The current chapter's goal is to better understand this "accent", through Latour's notion of the network in his 1996 essay 'On Actor-Network Theory', interestingly, the present study considers actor-network theory as part of post-subcultural discourses.

For Latour, actor-network theory is composed of three constituent parts, the first being: "a semiotic definition of entity building" (Latour, 1996, p.7). For the purpose of this study we position the record label as the semiotic entity. The second part: "a methodological framework to record the heterogeneity of such a building" (Latour, 1996, p.7), for the record label this is clearly evident in its multitude of mediums and languages, as well as its productions and artefacts. Finally the third aspect is: "an ontological claim on the 'networky' character of actants themselves" (Latour, 1996, p.7), which can be understood as the sense of community felt by a label's participants. These three aspects fold neatly into one when considered in relation to the design of an independent record label. Fundamentally, the record label is a network of agents—such as traders, translators, producers and consumers—who assemble to form a cultural organisation. Discussing his notion of networks, Latour writes: "Every network surrounds itself with its own frame of reference, its own definition of growth, of referring, of framing, of explaining" (Latour, 1996, p.11). As such, this network can be considered the identity of the record label. Its identity is a signifier, which upon creation becomes what Latour terms an "actor". For Latour the "actor" is crucial in challenging our understanding of social theory: "An 'actor' in 'Actor-Network Theory' is a semiotic definition—an actant—that is, something that acts or to which activity is granted by others" (Latour, 1996, p.7). From this we can understand that Sunbird Records is the actor, given force by its participating actants, which exist in relation to the label's position on the fringe of the culture industry.

In accord with Latour's actor-network theory, independent labels also have a discourse with both true independent and dependent poles of the culture industry. Latour suggests that the way to maximise our social landscape is to reinject it with social theory, claiming that the "only way to achieve this reinjection of the things into our understanding of the social fabrics is through a network-like ontology and social theory" (Latour, 1996, p.4). The present study posits that the design of an independent record label—as something more than just people making music—is better facilitated by the reinjection of post-subcultural design, a thing-oriented discipline which is focused on the design of posters, merchandise, record sleeves, etc. This object-oriented interpretation of post-subcultural design and the making of a record label, is a unique contribution to knowledge made by the present study. Indeed, this is the nature of the present study: to design and critique the development of a neo-tribal actor.

In his 1972 essay 'Network: The Art World Described as a System', art critic and writer Lawrence Alloway writes: "The art world can be viewed as "a shifting multiple goal coalition" (Alloway, 1972, p.5). Considering this more broadly, Alloway can be interpreted to mean that the culture industry is a network of actants, actors, individuals, collectives and tribes with different goals, whereby each participant's actions relate to, or have an effect on, the rest of the network. For Latour it's also important to recognise that social networks are constructed not simply of nodes with in-out connectivity, but instead a more complex web like structure. He elaborates this notion as he describes a network as having: "a fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems" (Latour, 1996, p.3). This notion is critical when considering a cultural neo-tribal actor, an actor which in some way separates itself, and in doing so moves towards a new cultural zone. An actor utilising neo-tribal tactics then, must in some way sever connections in order to create itself a cultural territory. We might imagine then, in Latour's terms, that the act of neo-tribal networking is the process of separation, a kind of actor nomadism, where a cluster of fibrous activity moves into a somehow secluded less connected zone. For multiple reasons this could be to retire, to grow, to incubate or to rebuild.

For the organisers of independent record labels, the act of being independent has regularly presented itself as the art, in some cases even more prominently than the music. When considering the art world Alloway hints at this notion while he questions the art world's generated output. He suggests that: "It is not art because that exists prior to distribution and without the technology of information. The output is the distribution of art, both literally

and in mediated form" (Alloway, 1972, p.6). Therefore for the record label, the way in which information is disseminated through its network is the output, the cultivation and development of its actor-network is the art. This creates different levels of production, the production of music as an art form and the production of a platform as an art form, both the actor and their actant's networks develop with each reproduction.

Neo-tribalism is a type of transition where actants define themselves through an actor, but also define themselves by severing carefully selected connections with their network. When considering actor-network theory Latour writes: "Strength does not come from concentration, purity and unity, but from dissemination, heterogeneity and the careful plaiting of weak ties" (Latour, 1996, p.4). This becomes a problematic assertion for neo-tribal tactics but even more so for the connectivity of the autonomous actor, who instead of being a "plaiting of weak ties" would be a total propagation. Propagation by its nature adds concentration, purity and unity to a nebulous network. As a concept for post-subcultural theory and neo-tribalism, propagation would be the linear progression in terms of moving post-subculturally. What perhaps separates neo-tribalism from the design and development of something more isolated, is that tribalism never suggests a total rejection of the parent culture. In some ways it suggests a more competitive remix of that culture and a development of the parent culture while simultaneously rejecting failed connections.

As an actor develops and moves away from initial actants, its connections begin to change. When we look within an already developed actor, and at its more active participants, they develop different amounts of agency. This agency typically forms as a hierarchical structure, where some participant's have more control than others. With the emergence of neo-tribalism, we can see independent actors developing entirely new organisational structures, structures which better facilitate neo-tribal productivity. Latour goes further to suggest that all entities: "can be understood as "choices" or "selection" of finer and finer embranchements going from abstract structure -actants- to concrete ones -actors" (Latour, 1996, p.8). The present study would argue that through the evolution of society, from tribal actors to global actors, further embranchements now emerge as neo-tribal actors. There is a distinction to be made by the relative level of an actor's decisive dis-connectivity, where the neo-tribal actor would typically sever ties with un-synergetic organisations. It would remain an active node in its network—arguably a more active node post-severance—yet to sever ties completely creates a propagated autonomous actor, or a commune-like organisation. The social commune takes the culture of the parent stock and re-develops as an autonomous closed network—arguably a less active node post-severance because its energy is restrained by its own closed network.

The actor-network is a notion, yet it exists in Latour's words as a "thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character", the nature of the network is something that exists in a tension with varying intensities. Further to this Latour expands: "A network is not a thing but the recorded movement of a thing" (Latour, 1996, p.14). He highlights the network as past connections and—considering the neo-tribal actor—dis-connections. Adding further complexity to this movement, there is even more at play within the independent neo-tribal record label, including what we might term micro actors. For example each band or artist develops their own identity while typically consisting of fewer primary participants, their productions lead to the development of their own micro actor-networks which exists as part of the label's macro actor-network.

While usually having more agency regarding the label's direction, the label's primary organisers are also reliant on the productions of these micro-actors. This positions the label's organisers as post-producers of its micro-actors productions and makes their primary role to act as filters, mediating the culture of the organisation, before disseminating its information into the network for further consumption. For a neo-tribal organisation like an independent record label, micro-actors have a unique amount of influence upon the rest of the network. Usually control within an organisation is top down, but within the independent label the producers retain the most significance, as access points for consumers but also as the architects of the labels future network.

In order to maintain neo-tribalism as an ideology, it is crucial that participant's roles appear to hold no more significance than any other's. For the organisers, their roles are equally weighted with responsibility, except the organisers who create the most movement often condition themselves into a role of supporting others, and in turn tribally assert themselves as leaders. For Sunbird Records the labels development is cultivated by three organisational components, each with access to all the channels of communications, streaming services, bank accounts and social media platforms. They also have the most contact with the label's other sectors and in effect control the label's modes of dissemination. They also shape the label as a network, making and severing connections, hoping to design the strongest possible actor for its micro-actors and actants. For Sunbird Records neo-tribalism is utilised to develop meaning out of a post-globalised network.

Managing an organisation's growth is critical in relation to that organisation's position within the larger culture network. For a label utilising neo-tribal tactics it's important to manage the scale and concentration of its participants. A small label utilising neo-tribalism would

hope to see the rewards of localisation as well as the benefit of focus, being able to invest and commit to fewer subjects where larger labels might spread risk. Cultural critic and writer Daniel Quinn in his 1999 book *Beyond Civilisation* writes: "Every vision is self-spreading, but not every vision spreads in the same way. In a sense, the spreading mechanism is the vision" (Quinn, 1999, p.15). Quinn is an advocate of neo-tribalism as a model to re-tribalise society, encouraging his readers to find meaning in constraint. In a sense, he suggests that more can result through cultivation than through replication. Neo-tribalism is the reversal of unhinged expansion as a method of generating subcultural or post-subcultural capital. Where he writes "the spreading mechanism is the vision" he means that the act of concentration is the vision, what might be considered an anti-massification tactic generates neo-tribal capital, which itself becomes a commodity to be shared and traded with the rest of the network.

In relation to a record label's actor, effective connections are evident by the amount of information traded and with each transaction the network develops. Neo-tribalism proposes that actually affirming the label's position or even scaling down its connections, can create neo-tribal capital for the label. If the label has inter-activity with an isolated independent or a well-connected major then it shifts the label's position in relation to its actor-network. It also inadvertently shifts its already affiliated artists' positions. Each connection has the potential to be pivotal, particularly while the culture industry is inevitably searching for Alloway's "shifting multiple goals". With this in mind, organising a label into its most pertinent dialectic position can be articulated through design, through a process of elimination, through learning from successful movement—and often more importantly unsuccessful movement—and the consumers input, which effectively makes consumers productive participants. Managing consumers and shaping the label's actor-network through communication now becomes the role of label organisers and designers.

The present study now explores the role of an events organiser. If Sunbird Records is the actor which creates the activity of its actants, then the events organised by the label can be considered as catalysts of the network's movement. A temporary swarm of consumers participate in the trading of subcultural, neo-tribal and post-subcultural capital at each event. This event would typically take place over the course of a month. For Sunbird Records an event such as a "gig" undergoes a course of treatments, initially information is held in remote digital spaces in order to allow permitted members of Sunbird Records' neo-tribe to access, amend, mould and refine. A prospective booking agent would first negotiate a fee for an artist, as well as arrange travel, hospitality and accommodation. The booking agent would then arrange for support artists that appropriately fit with the headlining

performers. Next the booking agent would hand over this information to the rest of the network, by uploading all the relevant information to an online calendar. This makes the information available to certain participants with the necessary permissions. As the event approaches, the bar manager would then arrange for the correct balance of bar staff, door staff and sound technicians as well as to order enough stock to sustain the bar throughout the duration of the event. Promotional material is needed for social media platforms as well as printed material to be distributed locally, typically being produced by an in-house graphic or multimedia designer, unless the event is being managed by an external promotions team. For Sunbird Records this material is usually only released to the public a few weeks before the event, otherwise the event fails to reach its digital engagement potential. Subsequently, the events information is distributed to the public which develops digitally as a temporary network of attending, might attend or decline and less evidently between people and their personal networks. Finally the event takes place, now a dynamic network of information, participation, production, consumption, observation and documentation.

Events act as small temporary bursts of cultural energy. Catalysed by that initial booking, every part of the network is energised by the artists or performers booked, and each participant of the network is fed impetus by the initial booking. There are many factors which can affect participation. Such as the participant's economic circumstance, participant's relational circumstance and participant's relationship with the actor. There are an infinite number of variables that can affect each individual actant's negotiation of an event. Therefore members at the core of the network play a pivotal role in stimulating the rest of the network. Their role then, is cultivating and supplying the cultural demands, if organisers fail to satisfy these demands then the labels participant's start to engage with other sectors of the network, and the organisation can become compromised. After the ritual of performance, the network continues to participate in a type of event-echo, with participant's trading information long after the event in documented forms, typically this happens as participants share information digitally through social media. As stated earlier, these events are in a constant flux, with varying overlaps. The build up to an event normally overlaps the decay of previous events, this is interesting because for a network experiencing a transfer of cultural information, the information transferred is more saturated than the linear recounting of an event's timeline discussed earlier.

Moving away from the label's events organisers, the present study now turns to some of the label's producers. Firstly the study examines Today, They Are Older who signed to Sunbird Records in 2013. TTAO, as they are commonly known to Sunbird Records' network, are effectively a micro-actor, in the sense that the band is an actor connected—but also self-

managing—to Sunbird Records. The label oversees elements of the band’s development but there are boundaries between the two organisations. At its most primary level the band is comprised of five components, a vocalist, lead guitarist, rhythm guitarist, bassist and percussionist. Each band member plays a role within Sunbird Records and having contributed to the construction of the label they function as actants for both TTAO and Sunbird Records. The distinctions developed between these organisations often blur, especially when each organisation's goals are synonymous, as when, the promotion of a TTAO record is beneficial for both organisations.

Liam Corran vocalist for TTAO created 1988 promotions, the events management team that book the majority of Sunbird Records’ events. Iain Rutherford plays rhythm guitar for TTAO while also contributing to Sunbird Records in-house sound engineering team. Graham Aspinall plays percussion for TTAO and documents live events at Sunbird Records, he later develops this documentation into short films, as well as producing photographic material for social media platforms. Thomas Jones who plays bass for TTAO manages the bar at the label’s venue and is employed full time by the label. But interestingly Adam Turnbull plays a very different role, his role is primarily in writing new material for the band to then record and release through the label. In some ways Turnbull is less pre-occupied with the demands of the label and better suited to concern himself with the direction of the band, he is an actant within a micro-actor within an actor.

In practice this structure is simpler, and yet, only upon examination does the complexity of a neo-tribal organisation’s design become evident. The nature of each participant’s relationship—to its actor and other actants—is nuanced, making both the fabric of each network and the texture of that fabric unique, transitional and delicate. For the label it is important to apply an amount of semi-permanent contractual correspondence, in order to frame these connections. For TTAO, or rather the five individuals in the band, it was important to concisely frame the commitment made in signing to Sunbird Records. By creating an agreement that connects both actors, each actant is free to move beyond those spaces while the actors are more interwoven. This process of creating clarity out of the seemingly chaotic bricolage of networks is critical to the understanding of an independent record label, without creating definition, the label would collapse into Latour’s “wiry, stringy, ropy” mulch of actants.

The label in its early stages attempted to fabricate micro-actors, as opposed to finding actors to sign. This was a necessary act because at this point the label could offer very little as an incentive for artists to sign to the label. So the label designed artists. It created

ghost-actors, in order to create a functional record label which artists would then want to be affiliated with. One example of this would be the creation of conceptual band MYRA—fütaba. MYRA—fütaba was designed to inspire a new strain of emerging actants invested in electronic music. The concept was to show potential participants the type of culture the label was prepared to support, then to incubate emerging actants and connect them to Sunbird Records. For a time after the release of MYRA—fütaba's 'EPa' and 'EPb', which collectively featured no more than twenty minutes of experimental electronic music, there was an amount of interest from new actants wanting to participate with Sunbird Records. However, without a strong actor leading micro-actors or loose actants, the connections break, and in this instance the internal electronic network collapsed back into a lack of distinction. The network that grows out of a chaos of actants, forms a structure and its form depends on the strength of certain connections. For Sunbird Records' electronic movement the bottom up design of a strong actor was specifically to soak up potential actants, however it failed to pull enough cultural movement in its wake and effectively fell back into the pool of unstructured actant potential.

Moving again beyond the realm of music, there is an even smaller team of visual producers within Sunbird Records. This team is made up of two graphic designers, two photographers and one videographer. These visual producers tend to report either directly to the label's organisers or directly to the artists depending who they are producing work for. Typically recording artists need a new set of promotional photographs every six months to drip-feed through social media platforms, but also more critically, promotional material might be needed in time for a new release. The label's photographers also play a vital role in documenting events at its venue. Each photograph carries with it the potential to convert potential actants into potential digital participants, through the utilisation of digital networking platforms like social media. To be able to tag a person or artist in a photograph or video allows the label to make potential connections digitally as well as extending a sense of neo-tribal connectivity. Photography has proven to be an important dynamic of the venues post-event experience, which is largely due to the existing network's relationship with the medium and the functionality of each platform.

A contrast could be made between participants organising the audio and participants organising the aesthetic, when it comes to arranging the catalytic "networky" moments such as events. The musicians, performers and sound techs present their work on stage, it's given that there is an amount of aesthetic present in live performance, but for the visual producers working within Sunbird Records, their work is either released before the event, or after. For example the graphic designers would typically produce promotional material

before the event, and the photographers and videographers would post-produce their captured documentation into a photo-album or a short-film after the event. This raises a question as to when the event actually takes place, and does the event occur at different times for different members of an actor-network? It could be argued that an event occurs for a graphic designer when the posters are printed weeks before, so too it could be argued that the event take place for a videographer during the event and during the weeks after, when the film is being edited and is only finally completed when the video is uploaded to the relevant platforms. This example again demonstrates the interconnected complexity of a network's participation.

Due to recent technological advancements, the distinction between videographer and photographer has become further blurred. With the progression of live streaming it has become accepted, in some cases as the norm, to run a live video feed from an event straight to media platforms online. In some ways this has made videography and photography redundant, except in the pursuit of a higher quality artefact. According to Thornton new technologies are only accepted after they have passed a grace period of enculturation, she writes: "technologies are naturalized by enculturation. At first, new technologies seem foreign, artificial, inauthentic" (Thornton, 1995, p.29). What Thornton is suggesting here, is that if new technologies can overcome their assumed "foreign, artificial, inauthentic" textures, then they have successfully been enculturated and have therefore become normalised. From this the present study posits that culture is heading towards a more collective live experiential realm, a realm where the actant is connected directly to his or her network through progressively more controlled sensory means. Virtual reality gaming is a clear example of this development. In tune with this movement towards mediatisation, Sunbird Records live stream some of their events as a contemporary venture, to remain competitive with other cultural platforms, but also in an attempt to remain relevant in a technological landscape and cultural network.

The present study now examines the extended network of Sunbird Records which appears more as co-operation between two or more actors, as opposed to its own internal network. New independent organisations grow until their activity starts to register with other actants, they then develop into something more active within their network, either in coalition or competition with other agents but usually a combination of the two, as an actor. If we consider Dropjaw Audio, a drum and bass collective based in Darwen, they organise free parties for their participants, they select DJs, arrange performers and manage hardware specifically for bass heavy audio events. The collective used to arrange rituals for subcultural participants in remote locations, but due to their events gaining more and more

traction, the collective began to look for ways to monetise its dynamism. The collective continued to grow, and so too did its consumer, producer and participant network. This expansion forced the collective to create more synergy between their vision and another organisation, Sunbird Records. Dropjaw Audio's actants restructured its network in order to collaborate with the label, trading subcultural capital for facilities that could better support their productions. While working together, both organisations' networks changed shape, this could be seen in Latour's words as "the plaiting of weak ties" (Latour, 1996, p.4), in new territory, while retaining an amount of relative separation from the parent culture.

Dropjaw Audio working in partnership with Sunbird Records is significant for a number of reasons, as discussed, the most important motive is the trade of cultural capital between both organisations. Dropjaw Audio trades some of what Thornton terms "hipness" (Thornton, 1995, p.12), for security by working with an established and licensed organisation, as opposed to the previous free parties which carried with them an element of risk. What unfolds is a situation where the unruly nature of a drum and bass rave is captured within the confines of a safe, controlled and managed environment such as the Sunbird Records Venue. For some participants this undermined the subcultural qualities of their scene, yet according to Thornton: "a musical form is authentic when it is rendered essential to subculture or integral to community" (Thornton, 1995, p.29). From this, it can be understood that for some subculturalists the deviant act of attending a free party in the woods might constitute "a musical form" that is "essential to subculture", while orchestrating a drum and bass rave within the confines of a neo-tribal music venue could be seen as "a musical form" that is "integral to community". Despite sacrificing some actant ties within their own networks as a result of the trade, it becomes apparent that what Thornton is describing is in fact symbiotic trade between both Actors.

Moving more remotely from Sunbird Records' network, we encounter external trader actors, such as distributors. As these connections are created further from the core network, the currencies traded also shift. Sunbird Records has a relationship with Sean McGinty of *BBC Introducing* at Radio Lancashire, networked throughout the BBC. Thus allowing access for both Sunbird Records to disseminate culture internationally and the BBC to begin enculturating a neo-tribal independent movement. Effectively this trade is a type of actant-share. Sunbird Records provides the station with content to generate new listeners, and the station provides the label with exposure by sharing the labels productions with its existing listeners. The central goal then, for both actors, is to create a temporary crossover, in order to cultivate their own networks. For the label, expanding its network can only be considered

growth if its content is received by potential new actants from the radio station's existing listeners, and further solidifies existing connections with the label's established network. For the radio station, these transactions equate to an average, a balance between each cultural production, interview and feature. Each radio show would typically host twenty or more pieces, each one from a different participant, actant, or actor. The radio show is more interested in creating a well balanced range of cross-over states in order to cover a broad cultural landscape and in turn connect with the greatest possible audience of actants, without alienating existing listeners. For a radio station, or indeed any cultural distribution platform, it appears important for each entity to cultivate and nurture its own actor-network.

Connections have even been made between Sunbird Records and automated digital services, particularly organisations that provide digital distribution, which rely heavily upon automation due to the sheer volume of information flowing through the entity. The label utilises the functionality of an organisation called Ditto Music, which provides a music aggregation service. For an independent record label an aggregator can be an important partner, an aggregator is an organisation which can distribute to more than one digital distribution platform, helping to streamline the process of distribution. After the label uploads an artist's production, Ditto Music distributes to over 100 streaming services globally. Ditto Music as an organisation, and as part of Sunbird Records network, is unusual because of its non-human character, automated digital services are progressively more accepted as a type or norm in the culture industry, which can have implications for networks.

Progressive automation creates a kind of barrier between a subjective human network and an objective digital network. In many ways this creates a more level dynamic between artists globally. The bulk of artists use the same channels of distribution, except for the more established actors such as major labels, which are still able to maintain their own in-house modes of aggregation. Automated aggregation offers little in the way of support for smaller entities, while larger organisations apply leverage through priority aggregation services such as having access to aggregation promotion. These priority services allow some labels access to featured artists, artist's pick of the week and new album features, which vary with each digital platform. What emerges is a series of biased distribution platforms, effectively governed by and persuaded by the control of the most established actors in the culture industry. These are the effects which the present study positions as the effects of culture held in a cartel.

There is finally a potential disconnection from Sunbird Records core network, with participants who are far removed from the label organisation and yet can have an impact on the label through indirect interaction with their peers. They are of course commentators, who act as producers that distribute culture on behalf of the label but quite often without the label or its participants ever knowing. There are commentators that operate within actors, where the trade of information resembles the trade described with BBC Radio Lancashire, between the currencies of content and exposure. The commentators we are presently concerned with however are those that are on the very fringe of the record label's actor-network. These entities don't necessarily input into the system but rather output its culture to interact with other networks. This description might better be thought of as noise, a type of distortion on an actor-networks most sprawling extremities. Interestingly this distortion of information or noise on the fringe of the network is very often a potential actant's first interaction with the label, which is why it can be assumed that making sure every outlet of the label's projected culture must be highly refined in order to convey the appropriate initial transmission.

After the development of a more global culture, it is not surprising that control develops and cartels begin to dominate the sectors of actor-network with the most transaction. Total globalisation might result in a type of self replicating culture, a culture which has dominated so effectively that it resorts to the reproduction of mass culture, whereas with micro-cultural propagations like neo-tribal cultural organisations we might see a less controlled cultural landscape encouraging fresh cultural conception and dynamism. For Vaneigem the notion of a genuine culture has yet to evolve, he suggests that: "Certainly the seeds of an authentic collective life lie dormant within that illusion itself—there is no illusion without a real basis—but real community has yet to be created" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.24). For Vaneigem the "collective life" which has laid "dormant" can bring with its reproduction an amount of authenticity. While authenticity may be relative to a participants subjectivity, the present study posits that subjectivity can be given its measure of relativity by the actor-network to which an actant is participant. Neo-tribes are micro-networks which socially present change, and in the design of Sunbird Records, within the confines of the culture industry, a record label can present change in a competitive and connected way.

Chapter Three

Documentary: Post-Produced Insight.

The communication of a label's narrative is critical to its development. When designing an independent record label, utilising film and documentary to mediatise its narrative can be an appropriate tool. With this in mind, the experience of music culture has become progressively more mediatized (Auslander, 1999) and in becoming so, it becomes evident that culture has transgressed the boundaries of medium. In this sense, the experience of music has moved far beyond the binary of live and recorded, becoming something much more equivocal. Researcher Philip Auslander's book *Liveness* considers the notion of live vs. recorded as he explains the way performing live eventually transformed into the "means by which mediatized representations are neutralized, according to simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the im-mediate" (Auslander 1999, p.38). Auslander highlights the antagonising discourse between live and recorded media which is requisite when considering the notion of documentary. In film, particularly the "rockumentary", we can often see a mediatized representation of 'real live' music, a synthesised re-interpretation typically mapping historical events. So-called rockumentaries re-curate information, resulting in post-produced (Bourriaud, 2002) media, usually from the subjective perspective of the director.

Early rockumentaries like D.A. Pennebaker's 1965 *Don't Look Back* and Robert Frank's 1972 *Cocksucker Blues* demonstrate a less calculated, analogue, desubjectivised (Nichols, 2016) portrayal of Bob Dylan and The Rolling Stones respectively, both films giving insights into the happenings and events which shaped the artists with less of a focus on the documentary as the product. Rockumentary as a medium, is now not only an advertising platform for producers, but also serves as a product to be advertised. The current culture industry (Adorno, 1981) demands productions that consume the subject and produce film for further consumption. This chapter now focuses predominantly on contemporary documentaries that inescapably have a position within the discourse of documentary and the culture industry.

In his 1964 book *Understanding Media*, media theorist Marshall McLuhan writes: "a new medium is never an addition to an old one nor does it leave an old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them" (McLuhan, 1964, p.158). McLuhan comprehends the way new media encroaches the territory of established media. Through documentary we can see an amalgamation of mediums, which desubjectivise narratives through the retelling of the subject's history. For most consumers,

film and documentary are perceived as real, providing an insight into the lives of artists and will typically hold some kind of projected significance, the film then provides access to insider information that would otherwise be impossible to distribute or mass-produce.

In 1964 McLuhan would never have been able to foresee the way that boundaries would blur between communicator and receiver, but now with live streaming, responsive visual performances and audience participation, we can see that the mediums become polyamorous and as a result the receiver can choose various methods to consume information. In 2010, independent label Ninja Tune were filmed hosting their annual event *Ninja Tune XX*, and one of Ninja Tune's artists Daedelus (Alfred Darlington), states: "it isn't that Ninja's been coming in to sign what's good, they have a sound almost, they have a mindset" (Ninja Tune, 2010, 01:00). What Daedelus is alluding to is the resonant dialect and shared ethos he believes he shares with his peers, this also suggests that for Daedelus, Ninja Tune utilises neo-tribal tactics. Founding member of Ninja Tune, Matt Black, is also filmed stating: "this is a community" (Ninja Tune, 2010, 04:24). What's interesting about this statement is that Ninja Tune's consumers would already expect its artists to share a type of dialect, belief and sense of community, yet still this information is restated for the film. The purpose of affirming a sense of community with the documentary's consumers is to assert exclusivity as a mechanism of neo-tribalism. Exclusivity in the form of inclusion, and reciprocally, exclusion can generate sub-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995), which as discussed in the previous chapter, is an important factor when designing an independent record label. It now becomes apparent that generating subcultural capital is equally as important when designing mediatised projections for an independent record label's narrative.

It has been established that the documentary can be important when generating various types of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) for an independent label, as it allows the label to establish new strategies of dissemination with greater resources. A label's participants position themselves in relation to its cultural capital, the value of that capital, the quantity of transactions and in general, the amount of movement created by the trading of cultural capital. Successful labels negotiate these transactions in order to meet their objectives and typically the rockumentary frames this movement to further its trajectory towards its goal. Documentary has the opportunity to capture this activity in a way that appears direct and therefore becomes an agent of the culture industry and a type of productive violation (Nichols, 2016, p.ix), especially for entities attempting to create a dialogue with the cultural cartel. Black goes on to say: "our ambitions from the beginning were freedom" (Ninja Tune, 2010, 03:08). He hopes to escape more oppressive techniques employed by other labels,

developing new tactics for independent culture, yet Ninja Tune is still in conflict with its own self-proclaimed ambitions. The documentary depicts an event, a ritualistic experience available to consumers at a price of £30, with a venue capacity of 2000. This event was a strategic promotional campaign engaging with consumers in an attempt to advertise Ninja Tune's culture, within the confines of the culture industry (Adorno, 1981). In this instance the notion of documentary is so far removed from an objective production, that even when desubjectivised, it still operates as a means of persuasion. Paradoxically for many labels, freedom can't materialise through persuading consumers, a greater sense of freedom can, however, potentially materialise for the producer or the post-producer, who may perceive themselves to have more freedom than the consumer.

The documentary is an opportunity to synthesise a label's features, to integrate events, characters and artefacts forming a concise and consolidated representation of the label. In its design, the documentary goes through many refinements, it is a signifier of the label, a post-production to suit its designer's objectives. In the case of Ninja Tune, the documentary acts as a platform to reaffirm its intentions to be an alternative to "McDance and McDJs" (Ninja Tune, 2010, 01:30). What Black is suggesting here is that dance music and club culture has already been commoditised, Black believes that Ninja Tune creates something in opposition to mass-media, and yet it uses all the same channels. What appears to separate mass-media from counter-culture is perception. The difference between Ninja Tune and a major label, at least for Ninja Tune's consumers, is that Ninja Tune can be perceived to hold a greater amount of subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995), which can, for some subculturists, have a greater worth than the cultural capital of a major label.

Each time a production is consumed it trades in numerous ambiguous currencies. When a documentary is screened, sold or streamed it conducts information, cultural capital and economic capital. Cultural anthropologist Sarah Thornton explains how in the era of constant representation and globalisation, our understanding of authentic music is "perceived as a cure both for alienation and dissimulation. As such, it is valued as a balm for media fatigue and as an antidote to commercial hype" (Thornton, 1995, p.26). When the consumer engages with music documentary they search for these same notions, yet the consumer's perception of authenticity is subjectively gauged in relation to their cultural capital. The consumer is never desubjective or objective, the consumer is only subjective, generating cultural capital by consuming culture, but in this sense at a much lesser rate than a producer or post-producer.

When developing new tactics for neo-tribal development, the documentary can play an important role, acting as a trusted medium for information rather than the more ephemeral vehicles like records, graphics or visuals. Narrative can communicate an explicit account of historic events. Theoretician Bill Nichols explains in his book *Speaking Truths With Film* that a film's narrative can provide a platform to represent a specific period of time, as well as provide a platform for a more subjective point of view, ethos or set of politics. Nichols also claims that all of this can create "a structure of closure whereby initiating disturbances can receive satisfactory resolution" (Nichols, 2016, p.19). Documentary provides a discourse for both spectacular happenings and the everyday, as well as situations where the author, creator producer and post-producer can frame subjective perspectives. For neo-tribalism, documentary acts as a platform to explore its culture and further its positioning, or repositioning, in relation to mass-culture.

The documentary operates as a more direct medium, a medium which better translates into economic value particularly when presented on streaming platforms. Socio-cultural theorist Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams write in their book *Media Culture and Society*: "It has been argued that what ultimately defines cultural capital as capital is its 'convertibility' into economic capital" (Garnham & Williams, 1980, p.123). In this sense, the documentary has the potential for the neo-tribe to be more direct than the artistic productions of its neo-tribalists. The documentary as a communicative tool can bring clarity to an otherwise indecipherable collection of multilingual practitioners, which makes the sum of separate pockets of neo-tribal capital more convertible. Where subcultural producers had a clearly defined target audience, neo-tribal producers are often disorientated, until they are collectivised under a broader framework like the documentary. When talking about his record label Daedalus states: "Ninja tune isn't a hierarchy per se, it's not a parliament either, it's kind of like a family" (Ninja Tune, 2010, 01:15). For post-subculturalists this lack of distinction can make these organisations appear more than just entities from which to consume culture. Despite lacking the biological code to scientifically label Ninja Tune a family, we can see some similarities between neo-tribal life and family life, a collection of individuals in relationships tied by both symbiosis and synergy. The only real difference between family and tribe is that one is free to join or leave a tribe at will.

Entrepreneurs Geoff Travis and Steve Montgomery founded Rough Trade, an independent record store based in London, in 1976. BBC Four produced a documentary in 2009 which depicts old footage of Travis speaking directly about his intentions when starting the Rough Trade record label, in this he asserts: "the market place is a false creation and has very little to do with the reality of what people might want given the options" (BBC Four, 2013,

0:43). What Travis is suggesting is that consumers are given an illusion of choice, that Rough Trade's creation might offer a greater variety of options than the major labels. Rough Trade was focussed on releasing punk music, content which articulated controversy in order to sell records. The footage in the documentary provided a window for consumers to comprehend the shop's attitude, ethos and intentions, acting as a lucrative opportunity for the sender, receiver and interpreter. Both Rough Trade and the consumer generate subcultural capital by translating punk information. The film-maker earns even more sub-cultural capital than the consumer, as a post-producer of Travis' ideals.

When the footage gets a further treatment, a second post-production as a BBC4 documentary, it changes its meaning again. This time when the footage is shown, instead of articulating controversy, it utilises nostalgia and homage, in the sense that Travis was instrumental as a mechanism for counter-culture, with a direct interpretation of the culture industry which he contextualised with his position within Rough Trade. This production is angled as if to inform rather than advertise, yet as culture is held as a commodity, communication can rarely be one without the other. Throughout the documentary there are graphic elements and digitised moving photography, designed to accentuate and even falsify information, to sensationalise historic events into something more colourful, or more accepted as mass-media narrative.

In their essay 'The Documentary Attitude', academic Erika Balsom and film maker Hila Peleg write in relation to documentary film: "Computer-generated animations with no tie to reality have increasingly usurped the lens-based image" (Balsom & Peleg, 2016, p.16). Again this alludes to the notion of undesigned as real and designed as unreal but as with live in relation to performance they are different mediums for culture to travel through. Thus the post-production of cultural artefacts for documentary finds new ways for culture to be interpreted.

When a platform looks for new tactics to develop culture that is subversive to mass-media, it often utilises the same mediums but with antagonistic content. As the platform evolves into something more in tune with mass-media, mass-media reciprocates this transition by enculturating its information, it engulfs alternative culture to become part of one massificated whole. The anonymous narrator of BBC4's Rough Trade Documentary, when talking about the shop in West London, states: "Its music policy and its communal vibe set it apart from conventional commercial record shops, and the middle of the road rock music that dominated the music business" (BBC Four, 2013, 4:12). This is an important point because at that time Rough Trade would have supported culture that sought to undermine

organisations like the BBC, and with this documentary the BBC celebrates and promotes counter-culture. Travis later states: "It [Rough Trade] wasn't a faceless mindless organisation attempting to exploit the general public from as much money from their pockets as you could get" (BBC Four, 2013, 4:47). In some ways it could be argued that Rough Trade were part of a movement that articulated a cultural ethos, an ethos that made alternative culture more accessible for subculturists, giving them content to assimilate and convert into a subcultural meaning. This movement is now susceptible for enculturation, particularly in the form of what may appear an objective, informative documentary, which inevitably has its own prerogative.

Platforms, like record labels, start—like any organisation—with objectives. Most of these objectives change as a label develops, participants re-organise and the productions evolve. When interviewed, Travis states: "You felt like you were participating in culture and community, you were building something" (BBC Four, 2013, 14:55). He vocalises the sense of movement and the connections made by running an organisation like Rough Trade. The primary participants of Rough Trade were eventually driven apart as the label began to sign more popular artists. The label previously had actively antagonised mass-media, yet post-expansion, Rough Trade found itself designing popular music in order to sell records. The narrator states: "Rough Trade's rapid growth had raised some difficult dilemmas, distribution demanded increased record sales to drive its ever expanding operation" (BBC Four, 2013, 05:04). The conflict of interests is evident here as Rough Trade is beginning to convert its subcultural capital into more accepted currencies. For vanity labels, it is often easier to stay true to initial objectives, but as they start to become more physical, labels are often forced to adapt, particularly as a label starts to employ participants.

In 2013, production team McFarland and Pecci published their short documentary *Rungs in a Ladder* featuring Jacob Bannon. Bannon is the frontman of seminal hardcore band Converge as well as founding member of Deathwish Inc., an independent record label and distribution company based in Massachusetts. What makes this documentary unusual is that it rarely depicts Bannon's band or label, it focuses instead upon Bannon's day to day life. The director strategically juxtaposes the viewer's expectations with a sense of normality in order to trigger a different response. In turn a new dialect for persuasion is developed, one different to the fantasmatic approach utilised in similar rockumentaries.

The film depicts artefacts and characters relevant to Bannon's narrative and perspective. What also makes this documentary unusual is the narration, since Bannon narrates his own documentary through retrospective commentary. He talks of his experience as a child

breaking his leg: "I hit a shopping cart in the water, everything in my knee exploded, I think without that happening, my life would be very different" (McFarland, 2:27). It is typical upon reproducing personal narrative to search for pivotal momenta and catalytic happenings to rationalise a trajectory, something we have come to expect from narrative, particularly in documentary. Recapitulated formulaic narrative is something consumers have become accustomed to and this accepted structure is a tool which can help make characters like Bannon be a more acceptable protagonist for a film.

Rungs in a Ladder appears to self-critique Bannon's lifestyle. The documentary's production serving to convince the viewer of Bannon's admirability, which then serves to promote both the subject's productions and the director's productions. Half way through the documentary the film takes a different tone, the music becomes more prominent, it starts to drive the documentary, designed to be emotive and add weight to Bannon's narrative. The documentary aims to convince its viewer that creativity is a positive thing and that Bannon is admirable in his dedication to "create something and make something happen" (McFarland, 7:03). The notion of creativity as a positive force is evidently a core value for rockumentaries, they typically envision creativity as something to be encouraged. The documentary, like music, often holds creativity in the spotlight, while unconsciously the viewer consumes strategic promotional material for a range of cultural productions, in this case the productions of Bannon, whilst never explicitly referring to them.

Rungs in a Ladder sits on the fringe of documentary, its musical score and narration are deliberate, far from audio captured while filming, which contributes towards creating a different type of production. A blurred kind of production that Nichols alludes to when he considers shared mechanisms of documentary and fiction: "the two forms also share another common goal: to give sensory embodiment to a representation conveyed by a voice that will engage us" (Nichols, 2016, p.92). The boundaries between what we consider documentary and fiction are removed and in the case of *Rungs in a Ladder*, the documentary serves to engage its audience, tactics like narrative and soundtrack enhance the film's ability to persuade in a medium that is neither fiction, nor non-fiction. The result is a narrative that attempts to captivate the viewer and translate information in a productive trade between producer and consumer.

The narrative of *Rungs in a Ladder* is also projected in a way that hopes to correlate with its consumers, particularly viewers that perceive themselves as sharing similar experiences, for example where Bannon states: "art and music for me, has made me feel not alone, that's made me feel like I had a place or had a friend, especially in a really dark time" (McFarland,

9:25). Bannon highlights a sense of isolation which he feels is relieved through art and music, what he means is that trading culture gives a sense of community. Bannon as the organiser of Deathwish Inc. has been instrumental in developing a niche dialect of hardcore and metal, which the label now trades on an international level, and it could be argued that in many ways he has worked to better connect the culture produced through Deathwish Inc. with the culture industry, by developing its network.

In 1983 Alan McGee founded Creation Records with Joe Foster and Dick Green and together they actively developed new tactics for independent record labels, eventually selling half of the company to Sony in 1992. In his 2010 documentary *Upside Down*, director Danny O'Connor depicts the label's narrative as rich and significant particularly for independent culture. The documentary begins by establishing its characters as outsiders, with McGee stating: "I was a loner really at school which was good because it meant I was invisible, nobody really picked on me" (O'Connor, 3:20). Following this, Bobby Gillespie of Primal Scream is filmed saying: "I didn't have too much of a relationship with other people" (O'Connor, 3:35). This information is presented to provide evidence for the director's positioning of Creation Records, as a type of outsider organisation empowered by an amount of subcultural capital. Bill Nichols writes: "all discourses, including documentary film, seek to externalise evidence" (Nichols, 2016, p.99). What Nichols explains is evident in O'Connors introduction to *Upside Down*, presenting circumstantial evidence to gently persuade the viewer towards the objectives of the producers.

The documentary's narrative proposed that Creation Records was founded upon the shared consumption of alternative culture, with Douglas Hart of The Jesus and Mary Chain stating: "we were just existing in this utter void, quite healthy in a way because it gave us a gang mentality, utterly underground" (O'Connor, 6:35). What he means by "utter void" is the sense of being disconnected and in an isolated space. For Hart, this space allowed other consumers of similar culture to collect and start to develop an alternative, which eventually became Creation Records. Later in the label's evolution McGee began working with Rob Dickens of Warner Brothers and created a sister company called Elevation Records in order to transition some of Creation Records' artists with mainstream potential onto a platform that could better enculturate them towards Warner Brothers, and make them more susceptible to co-option.

In O'Connors' depiction, McGee and Dickens are filmed discussing this happening, with McGee stating: "we did a deal off the back of the success of The Mary Chain, Rob Dickens the guy that ran Warners saw something in me that gave me a shot" (O'Connor, 22:20).

Dickens then replies: "when we put Elevation together it was because I wanted to have his spirit in A and R and he wanted to have distribution and finance to do the projects he loved" (O'Connor, 22:30). Importantly, this wasn't a discussion that actually took place, but a manufactured debate pieced together by the editors of the documentary. The editor then allows McGee to reply: "he gave me Elevation Records, which his record company suffocated at birth" (O'Connor, 22:40). This post-appropriated discourse allows an insight into the inner workings of major/independent symbiosis. Finally Dickens is allowed to summarise with his sense that Rough Trade couldn't work within the "framework of a normal organisation, their very dictatorial, it's all about their view of the world, and its very hard to slot that into a major organisation" (O'Connor, 22:50). This is an example of a major label's clear objectives to develop mass-media by sourcing and acquiring cultural producers from smaller organisations which are sometimes considered tastemakers. Independent labels effectively nurture emerging and often local cultural producers, presenting opportunities for larger organisations to capitalise on the successful development of subcultural capital. This situation is made more oppressive by the effects of a cartel which oppresses the dialogue between independent and major, and allows major labels to retain the ability to dominate and govern the distribution of less accepted cultural perspectives. The present study posits that because Warner Brothers capitalise on the distribution of more readily digestible culture, it is in Warner Brothers' interest to have control of the filters that impede the distribution of notionally subversive information.

Further into O'Conner's depiction of Creative Records' history, McGee states: "I do sign bands on songs, but I actually sign people, really on the off chance that they might make a great record" (O'Connor, 56:25). This alludes to McGee's belief in certain types of people, but it also allows the label to shape homogeneous participants into cultivated producers. Nurtured with the labels ethos, producers effectively become the labels productions. A label can generate artists, and the articulation of a record label can help shape these artists as the label's designs. In his 1998 book *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud writes: "the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living, and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist" (Bourriaud, 1998, p.13). In this sense the artwork is the label, designing an environment to nurture artists, to design and develop "ways of living" that provide opportunity. The artists' design and develop productions, and so the label becomes a tiered projection, with one layer of producers creating artworks and another tier of organisers designing an ecosystem for the producers.

Further into the Creation Records' documentary, Edward Ball recording artist and spokesperson for Creation said: "all the stories that we had read, were being translated and lived out at Creation House at Hackney" (O'Connor, 59:21). Ball highlights the retelling but more importantly the reliving of narratives. In a sense this is independent culture evolving through each generation of participants, demonstrating the adaption of narrative to new circumstances. As the dialogue between independent and supported culture develops, so to, do the situations that govern their trajectories. Bourriaud elaborates this notion as he writes: "the artist dwells in the circumstances the present offers him, so as to turn the setting of his life (his links with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world" (Bourriaud, 2002, p.13). This is generally the intention of independent culture, and the same for neo-tribal culture, to establish a climate geographically, economically and conceptually, that is sustainable and prosperous for its participants.

While speaking in relation to the future of independent culture, Gillespie says: "so really the Creation Records story is about the death, the end of the independent thing" (O'Connor, 1:31:09). Gillespie presents an apathetic point of view, a view which is typically shared by older music fans, especially participants of faded subcultures. Nostalgia hinders Gillespie's ability to accept new modes of independence. For independent culture must now create and occupy its own space, as well as create its own platform and develop its own distribution channels. Dickens goes on to state: "in all those deals which people made with independent labels, the successful ones inevitably end up being owned by the major labels" (O'Connor, 1:32:16). This demonstrates enculturation and the flow of information from fringe to mainstream and shows that the organisations—artists, promoters, designers, etc.—move in a similar way, towards massification. This movement in turn makes the transferal of culture cyclical, as the broader culture eventually becomes impetus for fringe culture to be repelled by mass culture.

Michael Winterbottom's 2016 drama of documentary *On The Road* follows alternative rock band Wolf Alice on their 2015 UK tour. Winterbottom situates two actors, as well as a narrative within the tour and in doing so develops a relatively unique approach to directing the band's tour as a commercial graphic production. The result is a film within a documentary or a documentary within a film, which attempts to depict the everyday life of a band on tour. The film presents a discourse between fiction and truth, objective and subjective, but more pertinently, and as Winterbottom intended, it questions which mechanism is more provocative, or insightful, as a vehicle to communicate.

On The Road gives the viewer a representation of touring with a medium sized band, particularly focusing on the conflict between life on tour and what is left behind at home. The return to home, or normality as Winterbottom perceives it, is something Neil Arthur evokes during an interview with the present author for 2018 publication *Distribution*, he states: “there is no therapy for the come down” (Arthur, 2018). What Arthur alludes to here, is the way in which the return to normality can be hard for many artists. This transition is something that academic John C. Buckner presents in his 2013 paper ‘Mastering the Post-Performance Blues’. Buckner terms it Post-Performance Depression or PPD (Buckner, 2013). *On The Road* utilises the normalisation and acceptance of PPD as a means of expression, also capitalising on this notion as a way of developing resonant themes with both consumers and producers. Furthermore it develops PPD into something more accepted or sometimes even imitated. Particularly as new producers begin to write their own narratives, it can be assumed that as PPD becomes a more everyday phenomenon—and as social pressures demand participants to perform progressively more elaborate roles everyday—more and more social participants will both suffer from PPD and claim to suffer from PPD in order to add weight to their trajectory.

On The Road is also laced with conjugations and inflections that strategically positions the band—and the documentary—in relation to other artists and productions. Presented as polite homage, these signs and references do more than simply pay tribute, they present the producer’s style (Hebdige, 1979). Selecting carefully curated signs, the designer can add additional layers, and in turn a deeper meaning and history within the documentary. These selections—of which we can only access the final refinement—add to the bricolage of signs within the film. For example at 51:22 an interesting edit in the film allows the viewer to see members of a few bands playing ‘Highway to Hell’ by Australian heavy rock band AC/DC. There is a sense of parody about this performance, as if the performers are too “hip” (Thornton, 1995) to take the AC/DC record seriously. Winterbottom’s edit of *On The Road* decides to show this happening, the result being a discussion of division, developing either a resonance or a discord with the consumers of the documentary, dependant on the the consumer’s position to AC/DC. The present study would argue that division through consumption is a mechanism of subculture and therefore, nostalgia, is articulated in this instance in a potentially polarising way.

The film also oscillates between live audio and recorded material. David Byrne, front man of American rock band Talking Heads considers the difficulties of meeting both live and recorded expectations in his 2012 book *How Music Works* when he explains the difficulties involved with producing and presenting music culture in opposing situations. Byrne

suggests: "the live venue, and the device that could play a recording and receive a transmission. Socially and acoustically these two spaces are worlds apart" (Byrne, 2012, p.25). Winterbottom's *On The Road* shifts this contradiction onto a more complex level, where the live and the recorded become even more separate. The live and the recorded become independent elements of a larger production running in parallel with film. The documentary almost sublimates both mediums. At no point in the documentary is a piece of music played in full, both the live and the recorded works are used as soundbites to underpin a fictional narrative that supposedly allows the viewer access to a more insightful interpretation of life *On The Road*. Viewers primarily accept Winterbottom's perception of music culture, which panders to the progressively shorter attention spans of consumers. Like most documentaries, *On The Road* is a heavily edited retelling of the best moments, making life on tour more dynamic than everyday life, and everyday life suffers as a result of this for both the subject, and the consumer.

The present study would argue that *On The Road* is less about the everyday life of a touring band, and more about a fictional narrative which is given tenure once contextualised as part of the lifestyle of a touring band. Developing his theory prior to his involvement with the Situationist International, Guy Debord in his 1958 paper 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation' writes: "this relation between the director and the 'livers' of the situation must naturally never become a permanent specialization. It's only a matter of a temporary subordination" (Debord, 1958, p.110). In relation to Winterbottom's role, Debord highlights the way he becomes the appointed director and assumes the role of situation constructor, whilst simultaneously becoming the objective observer. This makes *On The Road* an unusual case study as its design attempts to play both an objective retelling of events and a subjective fiction that intertwines with it.

It Might Get Loud is a Sony Pictures film directed by Davis Guggenheim and produced by Thomas Tull. The production features Jimmy Page of British rock band Led Zeppelin, Jack White (John Anthony Gillis) of American garage-rock band The White Stripes and The Edge (David Howell Evans) of Irish alternative-rock band U2. *It Might Get Loud* attempts to frame a singular happening, where it places the three musicians together and documents the situation, as well as retelling the narratives of each artist's career. Tull responds to a question about the significance of the film for its press release by stating: "this one is really about the relationship between these three men and their instruments. We tried to show what drives the artists" (Tull, 2008). Like *On The Road*, *It Might get Loud* is part of a new strain of documentaries that decidedly intertwines fact with what could be termed "mediatised-fact". It allows the characters to elaborate on their past, again with the hope of

sensationalising the truth, while simultaneously hoping to offer a more insightful account of each narrative.

The film quickly affirms each artist in different spaces of rock culture, so as to play the three narratives as a type of post-produced discussion. Cleverly, it speaks to three generations of consumers, by utilising three main characters from different musical sectors and time periods. Page evokes an interesting notion when he states: "both are really strong character guitarists" (Guggenheim, 2009). All three musicians perform under monikers: Led Zeppelin, The White Stripes and U2, but John Gillis and David Evans perform through the pseudonyms Jack White and The Edge respectively. *It Might Get Loud* is a production driven by theatre and by spectacle, and yet in some ways for some consumers it feels more real. Byrne encapsulates this paradox with his sentiment: "as a singer you can be transparent and reveal yourself onstage and at the same time be the person whose story is being told" (Byrne, 2012, p.79). Byrne sensitively highlights the way in which musicians can exist through layers of representation, through sound, aesthetic, narrative and even pseudonym, in order to develop something more revealing. When Page refers to the other guitarists as character guitarists, he positions them in relation to himself and we must assume that Page considers himself more of a musician than a character, and yet one can't exist without the other, either intentionally through production, or unintentionally through a consumer's interpretation.

Between February 23 and April 13 2017, director Roland Joffé produced, or rather post-produced the musical: *Million Dollar Quartet*, written by Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux. The musical tells the story of a landmark recording session that took place on the 4th of December 1956 at Sun Studios in Memphis, Tennessee. The recording session is now iconic and through its re-enactment symbolises a convergence between Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Ike Turner. Importantly, the recording session was just another session, it was only upon reflection that it gained any real significance. Among the progressively more mediatised re-enactments of this happening lies Joffé's subsequent eight part TV series *Sun Records*, adding yet more layers of narrative to an already conjecture saturated plot. The *Sun Records* series acts as a dramatised re-enactment of historic events, mostly for the benefit of entertainment, in many instances the facts are given far less significance than the evolving dramatisation of events. This is a repetition of an interesting discourse for consumers and producers, a tension between objective and subjective, between what is more valuable, the happening or the re-interpretation of the happening.

Documentary films about music culture have been progressively transformed into something more mediated and therefore marketable, labelled as “rockumentarys”. These have become but another commodified medium, hinged upon music culture. It is evident that due to the effects of the cultural cartel, any cultural dynamism is co-opted and re-produced as something marketable. Indeed, the demand for emergent dynamic culture is now rarely being supplied, and as a result of this deficit, mass-media producers are now finding new tactics to rapidly mass-produce. One tactic which is now employed by some of the major labels is to synthesise the entire process, creating character based re-enactments of similar narratives. One example is animated film *Rock Dog*. The film depicts Luke Wilson as Bodi the dog, and Eddie Izzard as Angus Scattergood the cat, in a typical “rockumentary” narrative, Bodi wants to be a musician, leaving home to follow his dreams he meets Angus Scattergood who recognises Bodi’s talent and works with him to produce a song and so on. The resulting film is a mediated form of a “rockumentary” narrative, so mediated in fact, that the film even has an album available on all major streaming platforms. This movement makes the need for emergent dynamic cultural entities like artists, bands or independent record labels redundant, because it allows major organisations—in this case Huayi Brothers, a multinational entertainment organisation—to generate their own synthetic characters and utilise existing narratives to vocalise the animated forms.

To conclude, Auslander’s notion of liveness has been considered in relation to a series of selected music-film documentaries, which covered objective, subjective and de-subjective forms, as well as synthesised re-interpretations of classic narrative. We can see a dramatic shift as the culture of documentary film is pressurised, again by the forces of the cultural cartel, to co-opt dynamic cultural movement faster than it takes to emerge, which eventually results in the need to synthetically reproduce cultural narratives. The present study suggests that this movement will continue to develop as progressively mediated forms reduce the need for a tangible music culture. The design of an independent record label is problematised by this happening, and must develop new strategies to create significance as mass-media’s productions—along with the effects of the cultural cartel—push neo-tribal organisations into zones of insignificance, forcing neo-tribal cultural organisations to rethink the communication of their narrative. Consequently Chapter Four examines the narrative of the present study’s primary case, Sunbird Records, in more detail.

Chapter Four

Narrative: Generating Cultural Capital With Narrative.

The trajectory now explores the appropriation of post-subcultural discourse in the design of an independent record label by examining the narrative of Sunbird Records in order to extend our understanding of post-subcultural theory and its practical translations. To this end, the present study auto-ethnographically examines Sunbird Records, in a way that is both self-reflexive and explorative. In his 1986 edited book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* writer and scholar James Clifford suggests that: "Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of visions and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways" (Clifford, 1986, p.9). For Clifford, auto-ethnography is characterised by an in-depth understanding of one's own language, yet simultaneously suffering from an amount of bias either for, or against, the subject. This can still lead to subjective and in some ways enlightening discoveries. The central aim here is to better understand the role post-subcultural tactics might play in the design, construction and cultivation of an independent record label, paying particular consideration to the tensions between subjective notions of dependent and independent, and the way these are presented through narrative to create Sunbird Records' ethical and cultural code.

Thirteen years old and diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, I spent twelve long weeks off school. Nauseous from a cocktail of prescription drugs, I felt trapped in an old leather sofa, and suffering with aching stomach cramps and constant sweats, I felt stuck to the sofa's skin. I absorbed a stream of second rate daytime television, each program designed to mildly amuse, like cheap jokes: superficial narratives, underwhelming conclusions and predictable plot twists. But I needed narratives with richer texture, so began sifting through my parents tape collection. After digesting films like Leon, Apocalypse Now and Bladerunner, I turned to my dad's record collection which was populated by the likes of Led Zeppelin, King Crimson and Peter Gabriel. Following an unhealthy consumption of dad rock and overly iconic cinema, my medication started to work and I became mobile again. Through this ordeal I accidentally kick-started an exploration. Unknowingly, this was twelve weeks of initial experiential research for a design project that would end up becoming my life.

A narrative's intention is sometimes better concealed when it appears to be rehearsing a familiar plot. Vaneigem explains this notion when he writes: "The modern world has to learn what it already knows, become what it already is, through a great exorcism of obstacles, through practice" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.3). Vaneigem alludes to the importance of practice based learning, observation rarely being enough to truly learn and respond to events in a meaningful way. For Vaneigem, the "great exorcism of obstacles" means the reinstatement of the everyday as a means of practice. For the present study this means taking a practice of the spectacular, and repositioning it as the everyday, creating a parallelism of the music industry, and positioning it as a practice of the everyday through neo-tribalism. This practice exists as part of the music industry and therefore generates a narrative in relation to it. Perhaps overused, narrative is often given agency by the weight of the struggle which underpins it. Evolving through repetition, this narrative device has long since been commoditised by the culture industry. As with any cultural mechanism, it evolves and develops a cultural coding, until such a point that its value is recognised by the industry, and is then co-opted by it. When such a mechanism is being co-opted for commodification its coding is reshaped, typically diminishing its tenure. However, for many subversive cultural producers it can open the door for content less familiar, operating like a double agent mechanism by camouflaging counter-culture's narratives.

Clinically underweight and now much shorter than everyone else—the steroids having impeded my natural growth—I returned to school. In need of some kind of positioning, I decided to be a skateboarder, soon becoming more interested in the aesthetic—street art, clothing and graphics—than the sport. The culture surrounding skateboarding was rich and I began buying brushes, spray cans and paint pens, as an in-road to my participation with subcultural design.

This development established an early appreciation of what can be termed compliant alternative consumption, using the narrative of skateboarding—which was, and still is, a popular sport, lifestyle and aesthetic—as a means of definition by affiliation, for Hebdige this would have been a clear example of participation within the comfort of an established subculture. That being said, different streams of cultural consumption allow for like-minded consumers to find peers sharing a similar narrative, therefore subculture served a purpose for subculturalists, a purpose which has since been superseded by new strains of post-subcultural participation. According to Vaneigem, culture can be experienced through three methods, each of which requires us to trade information as post-producers, rather than consumers. He states: "The will to live also draws its vitality and its coherence from the

unity of a threefold project: self-realisation, communication and participation” (Vaneigem, 1967, p.210). This suggests that Vaneigem’s notion can be fuelled by communication and participation, which are mechanisms of culture. The notion of self-realisation is therefore a development only achieved by participating and communicating. For post-subculturalists, “the will to live draws its vitality and its coherence from the unity of” evolved groupings like neo-tribes and their relationship with other neo-tribalists.

I used to swap music—a form of pre-internet piracy—with friends at school and eventually obtained a copy of Silent Alarm by Bloc Party, which was the first record that had a profound effect on me. At that time, I was unknowingly looking for a questioning language to help join the dots, this was my second attempt at defining myself through consumption, but this consumption was less about products and more about information and finding a perceived resonance and definition by affiliation. Silent Alarm was also the first time I recognised graphic design as a practice, and as something I wanted to be part of.

The distributors of culture held, and still cling to, the illusion of choice, while the programs designed to enable the commodification of culture are becoming progressively more efficient. As the tools of production are becoming more accessible, we can see “the scrambling of boundaries between consumption and production” (Bourriaud, 2002, p.19). Bourriaud highlights the way in which through post-production the role of consumer and producer is changing, for example now the consumer produces playlists which are curated for further consumption. What Bourriaud is implying is that the consumer can now participate through more than consumption alone—as we are now able to practice many disciplines on one device—and in turn search for, live through and develop new definitions through post-production. It also means that there is a shift towards a cultural trading environment, whereby production and consumption become interwoven. Where before cultural production was seen as the generation of information, now the receiver acts as an initial filter, piecing together components from a pool of resources. This could also be perceived as consuming information in order to regurgitate it as production, or in Bourriaud’s terms “post-production”. This component driven method of production can be experienced through the production of sample based music, collage based design and what we could consider the production of subcultural narrative.

The rest of the skaters at the park were listening to Slipknot and Green Day, but we were dressed like skaters listening to a revived form of indie music. By the time of University, I had only really engaged with popular music, I had yet to discover the value of alternative music. I downloaded BitTorrent—a peer-to-peer sharing program—and began illegally

torrenting music, beginning with Enter Shikari's Take to The Skies. This album was like finding my parent's tapes again utilising the power of internet piracy. I suddenly had access to limitless new music, which was usually accompanied by a badly scanned CD sleeve or booklet. At this time, access to culture was provided in the form of jpegs and mp3s, rendering it viable to be into music instead of just a genre, or illustration instead of just a style, due to the digital infrastructure which enabled content to be disjointed and disconnected in comparison with today's algorithm driven connectivity. All of a sudden, culture didn't need to be tied to style, which was for me, the final nail in subculture's coffin.

If subculturalists become active, they transfigure to meet their desired categorisation and mix consumer choices to define a representation of the self through the consumption of style (Hebdige, 1979). Living through the narratives of mass media, we can channel our definitions, but only through the limited choices available. These prescribed narratives can then be assumed by consumers for their own re-enactments. Vaneigem writes: "To consume is to be consumed by inauthenticity, nurturing appearances to the benefit of the spectacle and the detriment of real life" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.136). In Vaneigem's terms, culture could thereby be richer if new characters were prioritised, or more accurately, if everyday life was fuelled by the production of self-narrative. This is where the production of new information, less clouded by the agenda of marketability, could potentially expand the discourse on post-subcultural production. By articulating the independent record label and generating graphic productions packaged in narratives less rehearsed, the present study creates a discourse which opens a dialogue with mass-media, the aim is to develop a better understanding of independent culture, mass-media and the tension between the two.

Enrolled on the Graphic Design BA (Hons), I then spent three years experimenting as an illustrator, designer, animator and tenuously as a musician. Slowly, design and music became my occupations and upon graduating I became a freelance designer, working long days to be repaid with exposure, affiliation and occasionally less than minimum wage. Tired of pursuing a less than sufficient freelance career, I crumbled under the weight of organised exclusion—the creative industries way of sustaining a high turnover—and opted for a placement with Vice Magazine in the Netherlands. Vice's website projects its own narrative as it proclaims: "VICE is a global media channel focusing on investigative journalism and enlightening videos about everything from world news, travel, art, drugs, politics, sports, fashion, sex" (VICE, 2017). I didn't really know much about Vice at the time, I'd picked up a couple of copies in skate shops but that was about it. So I flew out to Amsterdam and attended my interview, leading to my second major run-in with what I considered counterfeit-culture, since being trapped with daytime television for twelve weeks. At this

point, I was still looking for a definition that helped me comply with a system that seemed unchallengeable, I was desperate to be a graphic designer.

Subculturalists search for definitions like skater or punk or freelance designer as a way of containing the self, something which the present study suggests is a paradoxical practice. Vaneigem writes: "True radicalism permits every variation and guarantees every freedom" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.246). Vaneigem celebrates the reversal of genres, stereotypes and definition while simultaneously undermining subculture. Vaneigem's notion of freedom is problematised when considered in relation to the cultural cartel's force, which moulds compliant consumers from everyday people. The cartel's forces oppress Vaneigem's notion of freedom through "true radicalism", pressurising consumers with persuasive culture, at a price, through its vast and omnipotent distribution network. We need only look at Vice's list of topics for evidence of mass-media's primary responsibilities: "world news, travel, art, drugs, politics, sports, fashion, sex" (Vice, 2017) which are centred primarily around the consumption of information.

During the interview, the hipsters at Vice criticised my freelance and voluntary work, as in their opinion it wasn't real work. Accused of lacking authenticity, at this point I became disappointed with the creative industry. Having been promised a thriving landscape full of opportunity and possibility, I felt excluded by an organisation that had the power to govern and denote worth. We were clearly vehicles for two conflicting cultures. I cared little for the commodification of creativity, and decided a career with a major advertising platform probably wasn't for me.

Mediatized mass-culture and its persuasive textures are the commoditized productions of a hierarchically structured consumer culture industry. For a more balanced cultural landscape the space between production and consumption needs to be stabilised, otherwise what situationist Guy Debord terms the "society of the spectacle" (Debord, 1967) envelopes all cultural activity. Where top-down cultural dissemination creates control, bottom-up cultural dissemination creates co-optable cultural dynamism, followed by the re-establishment of a new more powerful mode of control. The present study posits that the cultural cartel effectively holds the culture industry in an inescapable state of exploitation. It would also appear that the cartel exerts an impeding force against emergent cultures, forcing a shift towards the massification of culture. In order to remove consequential forces, such as the forces exerted by the cartel, we must redesign and rebuild the circumstances for emergent cultures in order to nurture and cultivate them.

Returning to Darwen in Summer 2010, I wanted to more precisely develop strategies for a new culture. The initial idea was for a localised conceptual incubator, sheltering producers from the filters that curate, supply and govern our communication. Creating a platform for ideas that would otherwise be crushed under the weight of the cultural cartel's oppression and a space that might allow the convergence between producers and consumers to be more transparent. This idea was by no means a new strain of thought, but I envisioned a more competitive situation for the post-production of post-subcultural theory, one that was capable of being informative, memorable and experiential. An organisation that might undermine the orchestrated notion of choice given by mass-media's giants.

The various modes of consumption are being progressively more mediatised, forcing the mass-media labels and distributors to consume post-subcultural activity with greater efficiency. Therefore, new forms of dynamic culture would need to utilise a re-articulated sense of practice in order to compete with the cultural cartel, for example: employ a more holistic design strategy in order to nurture the abilities of diverse neo-tribal practitioners. With the development of technology, the production of culture has been democratised and there is a comparison to be made between the capitalisation of the commodity, as opposed to the generation of cultural value. In his 2005 book *Beyond Civilisation* social critic Daniel Quinn writes: "Once you begin turning all the land around you into crop-land, you begin to generate enormous food surpluses" and locking this up "spells the end of tribalism and the beginning of the hierarchical life we call civilisation" (Quinn, 1999, p.70). For Quinn, neo-tribalism emerges when there is no longer a need to keep a commodity "locked up", which undermines the necessity for a "hierarchical life". Neo-tribalism allows participants to consume and produce information in close proximity to other participants as a redesigned social structure, which Quinn develops through Maffesoli's notion of the neo-tribe. A post-subcultural organisation—such as a neo-tribe—becomes capable of generating new possibilities in what French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu calls the cultural field (Bourdieu, 1993) in his collection of essays *The Field of Cultural Production*. If discourse exists in the space between its participants, neo-tribalism culture develops in the space between similar dialects. These collaborations are what unlock neo-tribal post-production from the ruins of subculture, allowing its participants to become more linguistic in the discourse of culture.

After graduating from university, it dawned on me that even the choice to skateboard was prescribed, skateboarding was only attractive because television proposed the idea as a marketable and controllable subculture. So I started processing an overly ambitious scheme to move away from the given mass-media, and towards something more contextually sensitive. The idea was to plan a narrative that pioneered some of the Situationist

International's theories on generalised self-management, allowing culture to be localised, independent and self-governing.

To underestimate the risk of culture-death (Postman, 2005, p.172), is to wallow in the compliant consumption of mass-media culture. Where mass-media inhibits free will by prescribing commoditised narratives and definitions, the post-production of post-subcultural theory, and its practical implementation, offers a more dynamic cultural discourse by generating new narratives and blurring the lines between definitions, even removing the need for definitions. Vaneigem proposes a tactic to replace boundaries drawn by the cultural cartel by building "a parallel society opposed to the dominant system and poised to replace it" (Vaneigem, 1967, p.246). These parallel societies already exist within culture, and with each movement comes new social structures creating new tactics for independent culture to exist. However the effects of the cultural cartel continue to co-opt new tactics, commodify new culture and oppress neo-tribalism. In order to escape media theorist Neil Postman's notion of culture death, the dialogue between independent culture and mass-media must move post-oppression, or more accurately post-cartel.

I contacted musicians and designers from school, college and university to arrange a gathering disguised as a catch up, where I planned to discuss my idea. It was decided that if we were to start anywhere, it should be primarily with music. As a graphic designer with very limited knowledge of the record industry I started to rebuild Sunbird Records, a label my father started in 1999 after leaving the consumption of popular music behind to start producing his own world fusion music, which was at the time a developing alternative scene. In the 1990s it was considered "uncool" to self release a record, risking accusations of it being merely a "vanity project", so independent artists began to launch their own independent record labels in order to appear "signed" as some form of validation. The foundations of such an undertaking at Sunbird Records were already in place but largely incomplete and out of date, and we spent a few years regenerating and reshaping the label.

Symbiosis between participants catalyses the organisation of a neo-tribe. Sunbird Records was originally formed as an egalitarian platform, but because certain components began to exploit their proportion of synergetic return, the partnership was forced to employ a more holocratic (Robertson, 2016) approach to its organisation. This provided a degree of independence with no structured hierarchy with neo-tribal critique necessary to ensure each production met certain criteria before being distributed. In organising the neo-tribes output certain measures evolved, as participants began to collectively consider each production independently, as well as in relation to previous releases.

The label began to develop systems, as an example it developed a set of criteria in order to decide whether to release its artists' productions, or not. Sometimes the label decided to hold back productions, waiting for a more suitable time to release them. Paradoxically, as the organisation developed, it became apparent that the organisation began to employ techniques that were more commonly associated with the producers of mass-culture, which positions the label problematically especially when attempting to plan its future trajectory. It became apparent that Sunbird Record's initial ethos towards the release of its artists culture was flawed and had to co-opt some techniques that were more commonly associated with major labels.

I enrolled for a PhD at the University of Huddersfield, it being one of the few places that would actively support an investigation into the design of an independent record label. Until this point Sunbird Records was hard to define, for different reasons it was similar to a collective, a co-operative, or a micro-society, but the closest definition I could find for its social structure was a neo-tribe. In a short space of time Sunbird Records signed lots of new artists, much to our surprise this was a mistake. We had numerous bands wanting to record, tour and distribute new material, but the label couldn't keep up. The label had to do something to satisfy all this unspent enthusiasm. It was time for a challenge, so we turned our attention to acquiring more local gigs for the label's artists. This proved to be a difficult task because there were very few live music venues left near our neo-tribe's geographic location, and realistically, the venues that were left, weren't very good. Collectively we decided to build our own venue, so we founded a new venture: Sunbird Venue Limited Liability Partnership and with this organisation we signed a lease agreement to occupy a decommissioned bank in the centre of Darwen, England. The initial lease was effective between 01/04/2016 and 31/03/2017 and the goal was to not only build a music venue the way it ought to be but more importantly, to run the venue in the way we believe music venues are supposed to be run.

Until this date the label was primarily a conceptual and digital practice, a suggested step forward for post-subculture, the lease agreement forced the label to re-think its priorities as well as practice some of the present studies suggested tactics for neo-tribal progression. Entering this more physical realm allowed Sunbird Records to create an experience, the labels participants designed and built a space that contextualised the label, and in doing so gave tangibility to its dialect, this evolving dialect is what makes the space distinct. Cultural commentator Sarah Thornton writes in her 1995 book *Club Cultures* that: "In the 1980s, with clubs and raves, enculturation is complete and it is 'live' venues that must announce

their difference" (Thornton, 1995, p.29). For Thornton, change occurs with movements, the categorisation of club culture creates definition, whereas in the present, the distinction becomes less clear. Now, due to technological advances, the live music venue can be far more adaptable, for example, thanks to digital DJing the music can shift in favour of whoever is present, which means that participants can "announce their difference" in a more improvised manner. Where a club was used by clubbers for clubbing, a neo-tribe uses a space for many different practices. The space becomes impromptu and without a clear use it becomes something more transient, a space less restricted by distinction and in its ambiguity the neo-tribe might be allowed to develop its dialect in a less binary manner. In 2018, Thornton's ethnographic work was re-envisioned by the Vitra Design Museum for a pioneering new show called *Night Fever: Designing Club Culture 1960-Today*, which explores club culture and the culture of night life as an emergent new discourse. In his opening statement for the show's catalogue, Director Dr. Mateo Kries suggests that clubs, discotheques and venues have been key cultural locations and have acted as: "focal points for questioning social norms and experimenting with other levels of reality" (Kries, 2018, p.9). In this sense, Sunbird Records encroaches the territory of club culture and while packaged as a record label questions social norms. This movement potentially experiments with other levels of reality through the curation of events, the independent record label can remould itself and the way its participants perceive it. The central mechanism then, is in creating temporary and fleeting movements within a more permanent organisation. It allows for the label to experiment with events and artists before the more committed semi-permanent act of signing a band.

The contract was daunting, as I had committed to a years commercial lease with only three months to renovate a derelict building, and launch a new business. With no experience in opening bars, studios or music venues, I had to get help, and fast. I started to recruit people who—like myself—were prepared to work for three months without any form of remuneration. This resulted in a team of the label's affiliates, musicians and friends, a team determined to turn an old bank into the next cultural hotspot of the Northwest.

The space, and its design remoulded the modes of contextualisation available to the labels primary participants. The organisation's contact went from virtual to something more sensory, a more tactile experience because its participants could now interact within a purpose built context specific space. This development offered new opportunities to consume, produce and feedback into an independent closed system. Thornton writes: "Crucially, in the case of dance clubs and raves, their marketing has been most successful when youth feel they have 'won' it for themselves" (Thornton, 1995, p.25). This is a

revealing statement for the label because the very system that allows a cartel to jeopardise the authenticity of our culture also provides all the necessary ingredients for a neo-tribe to develop, take ownership of a space and feel like it has 'won' it. The result is a continuing discourse between oppositional forces with direct symbiosis. In her foreword for *Night Fever*, Dr. Annette Winkler suggests that: "Although the facets of club culture over nearly six decades are extremely varied and diverse...: they all stand for radical change, unconventional thinking, and bold experimentation" (Winkler, 2018, p.13). While Winkler may be right about historical club culture, with contemporary club culture and its diversified forms—for example record labels opening their own music venues—a similarity can be drawn between what Winkler means by "radical change, unconventional thinking, and bold experimentation" and the chemistry required to create an organisation competitive enough to survive in a contemporary business landscape. While these traits of creative business management may appear extraordinary, in actual fact since the 1960s the present study would suggest that radical change within the realm of the culture industry is in fact rarely radical at all, it tends to utilise the notions of "radical change, unconventional thinking, and bold experimentation" as an ideology but like Sunbird Records ultimately yields to the constraints of an industry held in a cartel.

In the heart of a town which desperately needed a catalyst, we were developing neo-tribal culture with a unique dialect. Once we acquired the space, we saw the project as building a home for the record label, as packaging the label for consumers to experience, and in the process we found a home for the labels participants, this was the label's most exhausting expulsion of energy, and resulted in the most rewarding artefact to date.

Subcultures, underground scenes and countercultures are profitable for certain participants, depending on their roles within the parameters of each scene. This profit however is not always financial in a literal sense. Thornton explains that subcultural capital can be rewarding for the people that possess it: "people in these professions often enjoy a lot of respect not only because of their high volume of subcultural capital, but also from their role in defining and creating it" (Thornton, 1995, p.12). Subcultural capital, or what for neo-tribalism might be better referred to as "neo-tribal capital", is a notion, an invisible currency which can only have value when traded with people that can interpret the signs relaying this information. This is similar to the way Bourdieu envisions people reading culture: "A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.2). The development of alternate currency is evidence of neo-tribal maturity, french sociologist Marcel Mauss writes: "It is not individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each

other” (Mauss, 1925, p.6). The types of exchanges made with neo-tribal capital are trades of service, a neo-tribalist might lend another the use of their skill in order to receive an equal return from another practitioner. As a neo-tribe grows we can expect to see these exchanges evolve and a currency more accountable appear.

We were attempting to build a music venue, bar, studio, practice room, restaurant, etc. with a budget of £25,000, in hindsight even if this figure was more like £250,000 it still would have been a difficult challenge. The thing that made this possible was a collective determination to change Darwen, to build something that we wanted, that the people of Darwen needed. For a lot of the label’s participants, helping build the venue was also a way of making new friends with people similarly motivated.

The purpose of a music venue is assumed to be traditionally linear, it is a space that provides music for consumers, however for *Night Fever. Designing Club Culture 1960-Today*, Director Dr. Mateo Kries writes: “Many clubs developed into Gesamtkunstwerk, melding interior and furniture design, graphic and art, light and music, fashion and performance into a unique whole” (Kries, 2018, p.9). For Kries the venue becomes more than its title suggests, the venue becomes a post-definition phenomenon that in itself becomes art. *Night Fever* repeatedly demonstrates the venue, the club, or the happening as art, whereas the present study would posit that the art is in orchestrating and positioning a neo-tribe to then create the art. For Sunbird Records it was vital to orchestrate a neo-tribe in opposition to the cultural cartel in order to arrange a common ground against oppression. Philosopher Theodor Adorno writes: “The lack of conflict which in mass culture stems from the all-encompassing concerns of the monopoly can even be seen today in great art within those very works which most resolutely resist the cultural monopoly” (Adorno, 1981, p.63). Adorno notes the value of resistance through cultural mediums, something the label strives to articulate. Whilst it may not always be as visible as a piece of ‘art’, the organisation of the label is its defining feature, like the concept behind the artwork. The label must arrange and position itself as a form of resistance, through its signed artists—call them curated participants—and its positioning in relation to mass culture. The cartel, culture within its grip, isn’t just oppressing the content but the filters and spaces that culture breathes in. Therefore, the label cannot simply generate content, it must learn to address the culture industry with its dialect, belief and subjective qualities in order to further its potential development.

Collectively we all played, gigged and toured and so we knew how we wanted the venue to function. We didn’t want to be anything like the chain of Academies situated in most U.K.

city centres, hollow characterless rooms available to the highest bidder. These spaces are forced to support radio-friendly culture as they need to fill the venues in order to make money, and by scaling down the operation we could afford to be more experimental.

As venue monopolisation applies pressure it tends to fracture around independent and small scale cultural fields. As the more established ones can afford to spread risk, the sheer weight of these larger organisations gives them stability. The 'Music Venue Trusts' states that: "It is estimated 40% of music venues in London have closed over the past 10 years - reflecting a similar pattern in the rest of the UK" (MVT, 2015). 'The Venue Crisis' is a global issue, mostly affecting independent venues in city centres. Legislation allows property developers—the main threat—to build housing near a live music venue, let out the property, while just a few noise complaints are enough to shut down a venue. That being said, Catharine Rossi and Jochen Eisenbrand, in their introduction for *Night Fever*, suggest there might be more a more complex territory struggle beneath the surface of venue ownership: "the growing well-being trend exemplified by the rise of morning raves and midnight running clubs, as well as fitness centres such as Gymbox", they go on to elaborate that "the rise of festivals, digital dating apps and music sites are also considered to have contributed to the decline of night-clubs" (Rossi & Eisenbrand, 2018, p.22). Rossi and Eisenbrand suggest that actually clubs are declining in both number and relevance as organisations progressively encroach on the territory of music venues, this process demonstrates an amount of diversification in all sectors of the leisure industry. What this means for music venues, like independent labels, is that companies, organisations and businesses, in order to stay competitive, must move post-disciplinary, like many practitioners have done in the design industry.

Eventually we managed to open the space to the public, it took three months and we went over budget by over £10,000 but collectively we managed to stick together, resulting in a much stronger label. We were now confident and very excited to start organising events through its in-house promotions team '1988 Promotions'.

Sunbird Records generates narrative as a by-product, the narrative's framing becomes more refined as the label develops. The process of constructing a physical space for a neo-tribal organisation and space for graphic practice to happen is what Rossi and Eisenbrand consider when they write: "The catalogue (*Night Fever*) and accompanying exhibition position nightclubs as one of the most important spaces for design in contemporary culture" (Rossi and Eisenbrand, 2018, p.16). Interestingly until now, Club Culture as a serious discourse in design has rarely been given a platform to be considered, and yet it is clear that nearly all

factors affecting the sustainability of an organisation like a club or venue are processes of design. One additional development with the construction of a physical space is the development within it of a space for participants to generate real time narratives within the tangibility of a physical interpretation of a venue. Managing an improvised narrative is more difficult than managing the graphic design of the label because it is unplanned, because the narrative exists in the memories of each participant, observer, consumer, producer and as a result becomes something much more ambiguous. You can however, post-produce these moments through film, animation, photography, as graphic productions.

Initially the venue operated as a hub for alternative culture, bands travelled both nationally and internationally to perform on the Sunbird Records stage. The venue accommodated all types of performers, rappers, DJ's and musicians. The majority of these artists would, until now, never have been able to perform in Darwen, because practically there wouldn't have been a stage big enough to support them, but more importantly, until now there had never been a unified platform for alternative culture to instigate an audience.

The notion of an independent record label, acts in this sense, as a mechanism of definition, in the same way that the aesthetics of a subculture acted as a means of definition. Designer Peter Saville in his *Night Fever* interview with Rossi, suggests that: "The Hacienda was a phenomenon because Factory was a phenomenon. Factory inadvertently conjured an autonomous opportunity for all involved, and was very rare for doing that" (Saville, 2018, p.192). The present study posits that "autonomous opportunity for all involved" is the same happening that Vaneigem alludes to with his prophecy of the future belonging to "authentic guerrilla focus fighting for generalised self-management" (Vaneigem, 1967). In an overly simplified way, we might consider the orchestration of an independent record label as a graphic design, and therefore it evokes the ideology of Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life* as something which is possible to actualise.

The venue employed a team of bar staff, door staff, and managerial staff that had previously worked at other local bar or nightclubs. In fact some members of staff actually took a pay cut in order to come and work for Sunbird Records, this was partly due to staff believing in the project and partly due to staff wanting to start over with a new organisation. Generally throughout the organisation's first year of trading the staff were happy with their roles, there were a few mistakes, but overall the workplace felt positive, motivated and supported.

Sunbird Records employs what in post-fordist discourse is known as *flexible specialisation*, but for a holocratic neo-tribal cultural organisation this might more appropriately be considered post-disciplinary participation. This is not only because the artists affiliated with the label rarely specialise in one subject, but because the label's producers are simultaneously consumers and participants, making it much more difficult to assign a singular role to each participant than it might have been previously in an industrial workspace. The label's productions, especially the events hosted at *Sunbird Records Venue* are experiential and require the constant management of producer, designer, participant, consumer tension, rather than the more linear production of a service or product for a consumer. What sociologist Mike Featherstone suggests in his chapter for *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, is that in contemporary metropolises the young, wealthy and educated find ways to articulate this lack of distinction into something distinctive, as he writes: "there is a tendency on the part of some groups to take a more active stance towards lifestyle and pursue the stylisation of life" (Featherstone, 1994, p.389). Featherstone suggests, in a similar way to Vaneigem, that the recoding of life and lifestyle is what can revolutionise the way we experience it and alludes to the notion of stylising everyday life in order to create achievable change at an everyday level. He goes on to point more directly at: "the lifestyles of artistic subcultures" but also what he describes as "the painters who do not paint but adopt the artistic sensibilities in order to turn their lives into a work of art" (Featherstone, 1994, p.389). His statement is interesting, it suggests that this could be a very neo-tribal occurrence, for an independent record label like Sunbird Records, it would have been counter-productive for its artists to produce records prior to the label, in some ways the label's participants had to "adopt artistic sensibilities" in order to make their semi-permanent positions within the label, their lives. It could be argued that Featherstone's statements further reflect Sunbird Records in the way the label was originally designed, as a mechanism for excluded culture to appear included, and again when the label began to post-produce narratives resembling: "the lifestyles of artistic subcultures" in order to develop cultural territory for the label to occupy.

Concluding the organisation's first year, the partnership had achieved limited success, but critically had failed to realise some of its more challenging ambitions. The partnership collapsed in 2017 as one of its main investors pulled out and Sunbird Records Limited was founded on 1st. October 2017. The new organisation co-opted Sunbird Venue LLP's positioning and became the new improved vehicle for Sunbird Records' business facilities. After a period of leasing the space on a rolling contract, the label then decided to extend its initial lease agreement for a further 6 years between 01/07/2018 — 30/06/2024. This space continues to act as Sunbird Records headquarters, bar, venue, studio and shop, as well as

an evolving ideological platform, and physical shelter for its neo-tribe, whose participants develop increasing dependency on its existence.

As a result of the labels progressive steps towards physical presence, the label has also transitioned into what Featherstone terms a "cultural specialist" in that it acts on behalf of a neo-tribe of context specific cultural specialists. The term cultural specialist is unusual because essentially the term defines a broad-specialist or a specialised-generalist, but he later goes on to explain that these cultural specialists have an "interest in the stylization and aestheticization of life on the part of particular factions". For Featherstone the cultural specialist is interested in style and aesthetic. The present study would posit that Sunbird Records, acting as an organisation of cultural specialists, is not only interested in the design of style and aesthetic but also the design of the faction itself. The label is interested too in the holocratic design of its participants lifestyles, the lifestyles of its staff, its producers and its consumers. Where Featherstone believes that cultural specialists are: "the new middle classes who have been referred to as 'para-intellectuals' in their role of admiring intellectual and artistic pursuits and lifestyles" (Featherstone, 1994, p.403), he in some ways captures the labels participants in this generalisation. Most of the label's core affiliated artists and participants could be considered 'para-intellectuals', which for Featherstone means that they are interested in the lifestyle of musicians, artists and academics while existing on the fringe of those exact lifestyles. However, it would appear that the post-produced lifestyle and narrative performed as a neo-tribalist draws from a bricolage of different subcultural languages, as well as from artistic and intellectual cultures, in order to create an amalgamated lifestyle appropriate for an amalgamated neo-tribal organisation.

Roughly coinciding with the initial formation of Sunbird Records, Darwen Music Projects was founded in 2000 by Gary Ward, Terrence Walsh and Steven Lindley. DMP curated an annual music festival on behalf of the local council as primarily a platform for local artists. Initially situated in the centre of Darwen on one main stage, as the subsequent festival attendances grew, it began to employ smaller stages as secondary spaces, and nearby venues as tertiary spaces. Annually on the May Bank Holiday weekend, the festival now dominates the entire town and pulls over 30,000 people to Darwen. DMP was originally designed to help introduce world music, similar in a lot of ways to WOMAD Festival (WOMAD, 2017) which occupied sites in Reading for many years and has still it's founder Peter Gabriel as figurehead. When DMP initially launched, world music was being popularised by the alternative music scene, a movement that DMP tried to reflect. For a long period of time this was effective, however the way in which we interact with public events has since changed

and this has changed the way the festival is now organised and therefore the way we experience it.

It is difficult to decode the tensions between art and club culture and this is further problematised by the relationship between art and temporary club-cultural episodes like open air festivals. No amount of documentation can comprehensively reflect this development, which creates more individual disintegrated experiences for consumers, as opposed to club culture which in this sense can be considered easier to compose, curate and organise for its participants, potentially making these events even more *live*. Inspired by club culture, the result is a fleeting burst of cultural energy, these happenings are performed by Latour's "actors" beneath which a temporal network of actants connect, creating openings for performance and ritual on a more spectacular level than even club culture. For Heisler, when he considers the boundaries between art and club culture, he suggests that they only overlap at certain distinctions: "intentionally sought in the performances and installations of artists...or as a kind of dialectic movement between gallery space and club space" (Heisler, 2018, p.189). The present study would propose that there are more crossovers between art and club culture than even Heisler suggests, and the notion of a festival further proves this. The art performed by artists is a given vehicle for art's presence, as is the dialect between gallery space and club space, but there is also a reaction to conditions that create the necessity for new structures of cultural production. Both the semi-permanent club and the temporal festival create the conditions for "dialectic movement" as well as providing the space for "performance and installation". The present study would posit that in contemporary culture, and its subsequent critique, the platform which facilitates or incites cultural dynamism is becoming a focal point, whether its a gallery, night club, or music festival, and *Night Fever* is evidence of this happening.

The Darwen Live festival grew steadily over the course of the next few years, until eventually in 2007 the organisation of it was taken over entirely by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and it began to change, as would any organisation adapting to its new surroundings. The focus on fringe and alternative music shifted, concentrating on culture more readily produced—or rather culture more readily consumed—with most of the venues following suit. More recently the festival only hosts one main stage: The Darwen Live Stage. In effect this allows smaller bars and venues to curate their own Darwen Live line-ups in support of the festival. The main objective of the festival then, is to encourage music fans from far beyond the towns perimeter, to visit Darwen. Between 26/05/2017 and 29/05/2017 Sunbird Records hosted its first official Darwen Live line-up. Opening for 15

hours each day, the label showcased 30 original artists along with street-food vendors, tattooists, graffiti artists and vintage arcade games.

For the label's participants this weekend framed an accelerated cultural transfer. There is a constant general transfer of information, between actants and their connected network, but for every aspect of the label, this weekend was a hyper-active configuration of itself. This makes the weekend a natural spectacle worth documenting in film, photography and post-produced narrative, in the same way that Auslander articulates as he writes: "live performances are produced either as replications of mediatised representations, or as raw materials for subsequent mediatisation" (Auslander, 1999, p.162). Auslander is interested in the notion of *Liveness* and what is accepted as live and recorded. There are three phases of movement concerned with actualising an event like this, the first being the planning of the event, which in itself is a happening, involving meetings with booking agents, the production of graphic design material, the preparation of facilities, etc. This phase of the event is rarely mediatised, and yet it is vital to the second phase which is the actual happening, with the artists, the crowd and the trading of cultural information. This is the phase which later becomes mediatised as long as it is successfully documented and captured as raw media. The third phase is the post-production of film, image and audio and the distribution of this information through digital platforms. Where Auslander uses *live* and *recorded* in rock music, the present study would argue that there is an element of live and recorded apparent at all stages of the event, particularly through the first phase, the planning phase, in that each meeting and transaction gets documented in email, and in the third phase as the post-producer performs artistically as an editor. The contrast between live and recorded is blurred when we consider it in relation to expanded events management. It is important to note that as a music venue the three phases previously stated are in constant tension not only with each other, but with the same three phases of the next event creating a constantly shifting web-like grid of accomplished and yet to accomplish objectives. This grid is what, from the point of view of *live club culture* is what is *live*, this notional web-like grid is the product of organisation, it is the artwork produced by organisers which is rarely seen by the participants, but it is experienced by the performers, staff and consumers.

Sunbird Records was the only venue to host exclusively original music. While other venues capitalise on cover bands repeating mass-medias productions. The space continues to accommodate artists of any genre or sound, following an amount of curation by 1988 Promotions. Most of the selected artists were declined from other stages, which naturally situated them well within Sunbird's search for synergetic alternative narratives.

The notion of a festival: a customary, traditional and ritual happening, exemplifies subcultural and post-subcultural groupings, in this instance, each venue or stage curates a stream of artists which best articulate its organiser's network. Usually this materialises as themed stages for subcultural organisers, the stage might become a punk stage either through aesthetics or articulation, for post-subcultural organisers it might become something more brand orientated like a sponsored stage organised through its sponsors network. The Sunbird Records stage attempted to find a network not in genre but instead in the tension between mass-media and alternative culture, in effect that is how it develops a distinction as a neo-tribe, and in finding a level synergy between each curated artist, a collective of musicians formed to become Sunbird Records' Darwen Live line-up 2017. Maffessoli considers this when he suggests that collectively while generating definition and ethical code: "custom is surely a good way of characterising the everyday life of contemporary groups" (Maffessoli, 1996, p.20). In one sense, a music festival is fantastical, and far removed from everyday life, in another, *Darwen Live* being situated in the heart of a Northern post-industrial town centre could be considered a further blurring of lines between the spectacular and the everyday, as both notions continue to merge into one, leaving Maffessoli's "contemporary groups" to design through "aesthetic, ethic and custom", as we would expect from neo-tribal activity. Interestingly Waldemar Cudny's book *The Concept, Origins and Types of Festivals* extensively discusses the notion of the festival and its relevance as a cultural platform and happening, he suggests: "Festivals are a part of the non-material culture, as they present art, customs and cultural symbolism" (Cudny, 2016, p.13). For Cudny the festival which is a temporary happening, adds to our "non-material culture" which is an important notion when we consider Maffessoli's customs for neo-tribal groups. For subculturalists there was an underlying ethical code which was made more tangible by things like custom aesthetic, for neo-tribalists there too must exist an underlying ethical code but for each neo-tribe it is nuanced by its dialect and context specificity. Maffessoli and Cudny both suggest that by developing aesthetic and customary happenings, neo-tribes might develop a more tangible and vocal ethical code.

Participants of both subculture and neo-tribes are, for many reasons, searching for collaborative narrative, most commonly for companionship. Neo-tribes can collectively refine their narrative, for neo-tribal bands, labels or promotion companies, they usually present a redacted form of this narrative via the about section of their organisations corresponding web or social media pages. This space is now mediated and can help create distinction for an organisation. On the Sunbird Records Venue web page the following text exists: "Sunbird Records is a live music venue and bar located between Manchester and

Liverpool, nestled in the rolling hills of Lancashire. The venue resides within a decommissioned bank, it features a basement bank vault which is currently being converted into the Sunbird Records recording studio. The space was taken over in 2016 by a neo-tribe of artists and musicians that are the driving force behind the record label” (sunbirdrecords.co.uk, 2017). This particular quote was produced by Dale Grogan, 1988 Promotions most senior booking agent.

Interestingly, Grogan’s retelling of information is considered and different in a way that supports a booking agent. Firstly, it can be deduced that, for Grogan, priority is given to the “live music venue and bar” with it being his opening statement, while the record label is quite literally the last thing discussed. Misconstruing information in order to create a more valuable narrative can be a useful mechanism for small organisations like Sunbird Records. For example, in the instance of booking bands, especially touring bands, the venue being situated “between Manchester and Liverpool” presents the venue as a useful touring spot between larger venues in these cities, where bigger artists might otherwise see Darwen only as a small town not worthy of their attention. In this text Grogan prioritises the organisation’s outlets in this order: Venue, Bar, Studio and lastly Label. Chronologically, the label came first, then simultaneously the venue and bar materialised, while the studio is yet to be completed. In time these proposed narratives will fade as the label hopes to reclaim its initial relative superiority, but the label’s more senior position in the organisation requires authority, given tenure by successful signings, releases and distribution, something the studio should better facilitate.

The information produced by the label narrates these notions, but in refining the clarity of these communications the label hopes to create a more resonant dialect, particularly with consumers that are comfortable with mass-produced culture and alienated by alternative narratives. The graphic representation and organisation of the label are vital in making that initial relationship. By arranging opportunities to make new connections with new participants, the efficacy of the production is left to the artists to refine.

At first Sunbird Records naively designed a combative narrative, being in opposition with an evolved oppressive music industry. However as the label evolved, it made connections with other organisations and became part of the music industry, some of these connected organisations are mechanisms of the cultural cartel, for example the streaming platforms utilized to distribute media are heavily conditioned by algorithms, sponsorships and promoted media, meaning that the organisations with the most weight have the best chance of maintaining position. As the label started to converge with the music industry

instead of running parallel with it, the labels ethos also shifted, and in turn so did its projected narrative. This movement proposed a reinterpretation of what the label would need to become, in order to grow, resulting in an attentively cultivated synergetic narrative. The synergy between Sunbird Records and third party organisations, particularly functional ones like distributors, became a necessity after the label became dependent on their services. The same could be said of the label's participants, as they became dependent on the labels growth, the label and its employee's collectively became dependent on the development of this network and the integration of the organisation into the broader cultural network.

The effects of a symbiotic relationship between a label and the music industry can therefore be seen as a trade: on one hand the label might benefit by utilising its already established means of trading, on the other, the label accepts an amount of compliance with the established system. Re-writing the narrative of Sunbird Records is critical to the organisation's trajectory as well as pivotal while in correspondence with other entities or developing relationships with new organisations. For Thornton, subcultural capital plays an important role in justifying context-specific culture, with what she terms "hipness", she suggests that subcultural capital is not as easily converted into economic capital as cultural capital, where now post-subcultural capital suffers the same dilemma. However she suggests that there are other equally beneficial rewards, such as the roles that come with running a subcultural entity. Thornton gives examples: "Djs, club organizers, clothes designers, music and style journalists and various record industry professionals all make a living from their subcultural capital" (Thornton, 1995, p.12). The non-physical nature of subcultural capital, or "hipness", makes it unquantifiable, and yet the narrative which a label presents contributes to the determination of its "hipness" which has a knock-on effect deciding whether participants engage, or don't. A labels organisers, therefore, must take the cultivation of its narrative into consideration as the label evolves, it could be argued that this narrative is the single most important factor in the design of an independent record label, in this sense it is the narrative, spun through a multiplicity of mediums, that orchestrates the neo-tribe.

Conclusion.

It is useful to first summarise the extent of the present study's scope. Chapter one explored the discourse which surrounds an independent record label and positions the label as an appropriate vehicle to investigate post-subculture. The chapter considered the theory of post-subcultural discourse as a practice-based study, and in doing so, discovered a tension between independency and dependency, which for cultural organisations like record labels develops as a negotiation between neo-tribal culture and mass-media. It also positions the construction of a neo-tribal independent record label as a practice-based research methodology resulting in a distinct and context specific contribution to knowledge.

Chapter two investigated graphic productions as representations of musical forms. These productions were found to be given weight by their contextual situation. The chapter considered conceptual and contextual interpretations derived from selected pieces of work. It understood the way in which record label's graphic productions are typically designed in order to satisfy, persuade or manipulate consumers, particularly for productions rooted in the culture industry. Chapter one also explored the development of neo-tribal tactics, which allow some producers to create significant, context-specific graphic productions in relation to mass-media productions. Significantly, the chapter went on to critique Sunbird Records' graphic productions in relation to its findings, and in critiquing those graphic productions offered an innovative insight into contemporary post-subcultural dynamism.

Chapter three considered network theory in order to comprehend the nuanced and complex relationships created in the process of designing an independent record label. The chapter established some useable terms and then utilised them to better understand post-subcultural discourse through the design and critique of its primary case study: Sunbird Records. This chapter also uniquely considered Latour's actor-network theory (Latour, 1996) in relation to the organisation, design and critique of a neo-tribal independent record label. This chapter was primarily interested in understanding why—in a progressively better connected and globalised culture—alternative, sub and counter-cultural organisations emerge as neo-tribes attempting to create a significant disconnection with mass-media.

Chapter four analysed the mediated and post-produced narratives presented by artists, record labels and third party producers through visual media. It highlighted music culture's transgression from audible culture to a culture more immersive, such as documentary film, animation, and so on. This chapter explored the tensions between objective, subjective and de-subjective productions and post-productions of mediated culture, specifically the

“rockumentary”, as they are labelled in popular culture. It also distinctly critiqued the notion of the rockumentary in relation to the post-subcultural discourse in an academic context.

Chapter five investigated a less mediated narrative as a mechanism to appropriate post-subcultural discourse through text. The chapter developed an auto-ethnographic examination of Sunbird Records in a significant way, being both self-reflexive and explorative, offering the significant interpretation of a context-specific, neo-tribal organisation. It also considered narrative as a medium which is also designed and produced in order to organise and cultivate a neo-tribal independent record label.

It is useful to take a look at the impact the present study has had. The organisation employs and supports a network of producers, participants and staff, from promoters to sound engineers, studio managers, bar staff, door staff etc. All of which are fully enmeshed in simultaneously supporting the culture of Sunbird Records. The label, after receiving a grant of £5000 from the council developed its studio space and embarked on launching its youth support wing: Sunbird Academy, something that will continue to grow beyond the present studies timespan. Sunbird Academy is involved in teaching young people between the ages of 11 and 16 how to play instruments, write music, record and perform live, something which until now Darwen has never had. The label has raised the profile of Darwen’s music scene, through the dissemination of new music—via booking national and international touring artists—which has bolstered the town’s connectivity with the culture industry. This added connectivity can be seen through the label’s media presence which over the past 5 years has had an immeasurable impact, particularly in developing the label’s cultural-capital. To name but a few, the label has featured in Big Issue North, the BBC via radio interviews and online features, The Unsigned Guide, the Lancashire Telegraph, Love Music Love Life, the By Skill and Hard Work newspaper etc. but these features are far from the whole picture in a progressively more mediated culture. The real impact can be seen digitally through the label’s website, social media, video content livestreaming platform etc. this more mediated network of participation has developed into a network of activity where the tenure of independent neo-tribal can be felt.

Sunbird Records has hosted over 400 unique events at its venue, which equates to hosting over 1000 unique artists, the label has gone on to sign over 20 of them since 2013. The label has supported the release of over 300 songs, over 25 CD records and over 4 vinyl records. While statistically the impact of Sunbird Records is unquantifiable, it can be felt through the critique of its participants. In a feature for the ‘Big Issue North’, editor Victoria Bamber—who is also the head of communications for major ticket distributor Skiddle—

stated: "Sunbird opened its doors and immediately caused quite a stir in the neighbourhood. Originally a decommissioned bank, the start-up was launched by local lads looking to give a platform to alternative music and culture in an area sorely lacking in affordable and accessible live entertainment." She goes on to highlight the way in which the label attracts: "...artists from a range of genres, this community hub is proof that live music and local development can co-exist in harmony. With backing from local MPs and music fans buying tickets in droves, it seems that Sunbird has a bright future, bolstering the local economy and giving artists and music lovers a space to share and enjoy." (Bamber, 2019) This quite comprehensively presents the label as achieving its initial aim to design a record label, however the label has had some negative impacts on similar local businesses, for example some of the smaller less well equipped venues have since stopped supporting live music due to being in competition with Sunbird Records, which problematises its position as a neo-tribal post-subcultural entity, it inherently replaces some of the smaller neo-tribal groups through competition.

To conclude, the present study must first return to its primary question: how does post-subcultural discourse factor in the design of an independent record label? It would be problematic for the present study to posit that post-subcultural discourse factors in the design of an independent record label in any over-simplified way, indeed it is far more complex and nuanced. It could be argued that discourses are self-emerging, they occur simultaneously with cultural movements, they are then labelled, reflected upon and post-rationalised after their appearance, which further problematises the present studies research in relation to its research question. However, for some independent organisations, post-subcultural discourse can play an important role as, for example, when Sunbird Records utilises elements of post-subcultural discourse as stimulus to develop new tactics and strategies for the design of its cultivation and trajectory. Due largely to the label's dialect, context and geographic location, Sunbird Records strategically utilised its position on the fringe of the culture industry, where neo-tribalism was an intrinsic post-subcultural tool, and the utilisation of this tool, became an inherent process of itself.

With this in mind, post-subcultural discourse is perhaps better understood in the reflection of a labels activity. Since observers are seldom permitted to see the inner workings of independent or major record labels, the present study has purposefully sought to interpret the record label's discourse, graphic, network, documentary and narrative. These interpretations, paired with the design and critique of its own case study, Sunbird Records, create an innovative contribution to post-subcultural knowledge.

As a result of the present study's practical undertaking, Sunbird Records has grown from a single concept to a network of participation: engaging individuals, organisations, automated digital entities, and commentators, etc. Sunbird Records now manages a team of employees, an independent live music venue, a shop and a recording studio, as well as a roster of internationally touring artists. As the label's network has made more connections, its ethos too has adapted, and in turn its relation to post-subcultural discourse has changed. Sunbird Records was primarily powered by the ideals of neo-tribalism and the significance of self-management, now the label is better connected with established institutions of the culture industry, which has had implications as to the legitimacy of the label's self-proclaimed enactment of neo-tribalism. This additional connectivity renders certain elements of post-subcultural discourse as non-viable ideals in the current circumstances, particularly as the label continues to grow and its original participants are replaced by new ones.

In order to continue, Sunbird Records has had to adapt, and become associated with more of the culture industry's schemata. To create a more prosperous organisation—for both present and future participants—connections had to be made, its network has since integrated with institutes, companies and businesses in order to sustain itself and in turn facilitate its participants. Somewhat counter to neo-tribalism, the label has had to make some less desirable connections due to its almost depleted resources of post-subcultural capital. These connections involved trading what remained of Sunbird Records' post-subcultural capital for what made the organisation sustainable as a business, but potentially valueless as a post-subcultural entity. Due to the label's diminished post-subcultural capital, Sunbird Records' organisers have been pressured into trading in more accepted currencies, which has repositioned the label as a neo-tribal cultural business rather than a neo-tribal cultural organisation. This result is what the present study posits as another effect of the cultural cartel, a pressure which has forced Sunbird Records to change prematurely, a type of pressured move into a hyper competitive realm which the organisation is ill-equipped to mediate. The label's primary assets are under pressure from different organisations, for example, other businesses are in conflict with the music venue and are thus fiercely competitive. Other labels attempt to co-opt Sunbird Records' artists, other venues attempt to co-opt the label's event promoters and so on. This negative activity can leave the organisation bereft of key participants which could make it ill-prepared to survive, this becomes the critical challenge in sustaining a kind of 'post-neo-tribal' organisation after its initial neo-tribal emergence.

The shift from independent to dependent can be considered as a process of enculturation, a state of transformation which typically—but not exclusively—moves from “sub” to “culture”, from “alternative” to “mass” or from “underground” to “mainstream”. We can also interpret that the energy exuded back towards the “sub”, the “alternative” and the “underground” is then recycled as impetus, and acts as a repelling force pushing fringe culture to move to even more remote and explorative cultural zones. Neo-tribes encroaching unknown territory, can add dynamism to our culture, unless of course, a cultural cartel forces these neo-tribes to either morph into mass-media or face a premature state of disconnectivity. The present study would suggest that the cultural cartel currently exerts its most extreme force on the most vulnerable fringes of culture. In the instance of Sunbird Records these forces became too much, and pressurised the label to move closer to the massificated culture industry. Its transformation occurred as the culture industry flexed its cartel like forces, creating a state of submission in the label’s participants.

As part of designing an independent record label, Sunbird Records must now comply in order to stay competitive, to some degree now more as a semi-symbiotic entity transmorphing into the massificated culture, as the label moves deeper into the established culture industry. This movement is created by context specific circumstances, which simultaneously offers a series of unique critical forecasts.

From this study, it can be assumed that the major cultural operators, such as major record labels, will learn to benefit from the effects of the cultural cartel’s force with progressively more prowess. This asserts that the cultural cartel is not something to be operated, but rather a force that is created and exerted by the channels and systems of distribution superseding existing modes of cultural sharing and trading. The people that operate organisations within the culture industry will learn to mediate the effects of the cultural cartel through a greater consciousness of its causes, forces and mechanisms. Within these organisations we find real people, and it is important to note that the mediated productions created for, or by, these individual people, are never exceptionally different from the media produced by an independent entity, in the sense that they are video files, audio files, graphic files, etc. It only becomes massificated as it disseminates through the distribution channels of major organisations benefiting from the effects of the cultural cartel. This speculation posits a continuation, or rather a stagnation, of cultural austerity.

Currently culture exists in a situation where dependent and independent organisations share an overly complex relationship with one another, where a type of mutual co-existence might be more beneficial. The present study posits that a totally unchallenged cultural cartel

pushing for an inflated dependent would indeed make its co-existence with the independent impossible. A further cementing of the cartel's omnipotence might make circumstances so difficult for emergent alternative culture to take root, that it potentially creates a scenario, where mass-media impedes its own evolution. Without the tension between outward facing neo-tribal organisations and pursuant producers of mass-media, we enter a situation where the major organisations enculturate faster than alternatives to them emerge. This creates sinkholes, feedback loops and bottomless pits of mass-produced globalised culture.

Paradoxically, the same unchallenged forces might create such an overwhelming cultural need for subversion that a further movement—beyond post-subculture—might emerge. This movement might be so radical and prepared to nullify the reactionary forces of the cultural cartel, that it might entirely change the dynamics of tension which currently affect our culture. This could result in a type of resubmission of culture, however this development might happen without a relationship to mainstream culture at all. This happening might force new cultures to be even more remote than present neo-tribes, in a type of isolated manner, or perhaps it might force more aggressive neo-tribes with much stronger stimulus into opposition of massified culture. This third speculation posits a more radicalised subculture, one which might offer potentially more cultural dynamism or perhaps potentially too much cultural dynamism resulting in a situation where co-existence is again, not possible.

With these speculations in mind, the label's core organisers are now less interested in trading post-subcultural capital and more interested in trading economic capital, because the organisation has had to become a sustainable business in order to facilitate its artists. This puts the label under excessive stress considering its initial objectives, and also signifies its diminishing pertinence as a post-subcultural neo-tribal organisation. In other words, to generate more viable economic means of sustainability, in order to satisfy what have become "employees". Sunbird Records has perhaps failed to activate the revolutionary potential Raoul Vaneigem articulates throughout his book *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (Vaneigem, 1967). It has however, posed some interesting questions and shed light upon the nature of post-subculture and its functionality in the design of an independent record label.

The present study also posits that for new emerging organisations, post-subcultural discourse can be the catalyst that kick-starts an entity's development, however, post-expansion, the energy needed to maintain an independent entity like a record label typically changes. For Sunbird Records, its initial dynamism was generated by creating neo-tribal

capital through the creation and dissemination of narrative, this capital was used to trade with the label's participants, as a means of maintaining symbiosis between the organisation and its participants. As Sunbird Records expanded beyond the digital, occupying a physical space as a venue, the value of the label's neo-tribal capital diminished, forcing it to be more competitive economically, in that the label became a business. In many ways a business can operate more effectively as a neo-tribe than a collective of artists can, because part of the nature of neo-tribalism is to compete collectively and test relationships with other organisations as part of its network. Importantly, Sunbird Records is a design project, which means that in order to develop it must undergo an amount of incremental refinement, in other words it must be a malleable design and organisation, one susceptible to an amount of remoulding. Through its repeated remoulding it can continue to evolve and expand beyond the limitations of a research project, as something more competitive, something which can further investigate its relationship to the culture industry. Upon reflection we can see previous independent record labels like Factory, fail to remould, resulting in a type of obstinate label, which becomes simultaneously both stagnant and symbolic of an era or movement.

An organisation's status changes gradually as its "networky" (Latour, 2005) character transfigures, mutates or remoulds—in relation to the subjective perspective of an organisation's initial participants—this all factors into the fibre of an organisation, but also to the relationship participants have with it. For a neo-tribal record label moving from a conceptual entity to a business organisation, this shift can be felt through each of its communicative outlets and is typically visible through each platform, be it through social networks, digital distribution channels or physical distribution channels. For Sunbird Records this shift in character has been most prevalent in the communication of its own narrative, with participants each having a unique understanding of this narrative. The holistic character of Sunbird Records is held in tension, as part of the label's network. From this we can understand that there is no singular or definitive gesture a record label can convey to decide its own character. To further problematise the notion of designing a record label, so many crucial facets of the label's construction are incompatible with the process of design. No designer can specifically generate authenticity, and yet this is a value held in high regard, particularly with post-subcultural consumers. A record label's reputation, perceived integrity and authenticity are all responses, in that they are reciprocal participant notions resulting from the label's emanated culture, which are also in relation to their experiences with other cultural production organisations.

Finally, the present study also posits that the greater the allegiance an organisation has to a

specific discourse, ethos or set of politics, the more likely it can create itself a character with similar values. In utilising post-subcultural discourse in its design and construction, Sunbird Records developed a relationship with mainstream culture, a relationship which played with the existing tension between them. The residual factor beneath these forces is balance. Whilst Sunbird Records no longer attends to the notion of an oppositional relationship with mainstream culture, it does not deny that the relationship between underground and mainstream is a narrative which has become embedded in contemporary music culture.

The discourse created by a provocative "sub" and an all consuming "culture" is what creates dynamism and progression, which can be further catalysed by the designs of neo-tribalists in opposition to the inherent inertia of the established cultural cartel.

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