'You're My Best Friend' A Consideration of Country Music, Sounds, Scenes and Communities in Liverpool.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Susan Elizabeth Hedges.

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Abstract

This research thesis is a study of the Country music scene on Merseyside, carried out within a popular music studies framework. This Country scene was once considered by some to be the largest such scene in Europe, but after well over half a century, it now appears to be in terminal decline. This research examines the relationship between the music, the participants and the processes of the scene in order to understand how it developed, how it was sustained, and what might have been the circumstances, which contributed to its eventual decline.

The research covers a wide variety of inter-disciplinary areas such as oral history, document research, genre analysis, structural and semiotic analysis, considerations of scenes, 'thirdspace' and localities, cultural geography, etc, all in an attempt to understand how and why this particular music genre, thrived and then declined on Merseyside. The origins and pathways of the global flow of music into the city of Liverpool were considered by this researcher, as was the importance of key individuals, venues and physical cultural places in the construction and maintenance of the scene. This research also covers areas that could be regarded as holding great significance, both positive and negative, regarding this scene. These include issues related to translocal and virtual Country music scenes, the Cowboy image, the line-dance phenomenon, originality and pastiche and authenticity (or lack thereof) of certain artists and bands.

The demise of what now remains of the local scene involved research in situ over a fifteenmonth period at one of the last local Country music communities in Liverpool at The Melrose Abbey Public House, Liverpool. This research displays how this community had adopted, developed and displayed rituals and practices of immense significance that not only prolonged the scene's survival but also left an indelible mark on the local community.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Rationale, Aims and Methodologies

This research thesis is a study of the Country music scene on Merseyside carried out within a popular music studies framework, which is an interdisciplinary area of study that includes historical and context-based cultural studies, communication theory and semiotics, and social anthropological methods such as ethnography and autoethnography. This is a study of a scene that has existed for over 50 years and was once considered by some to be the largest Country music scene in Europe, e.g, Bill Harry's website Merseybeat The Birth of Merseybeat 2.1 Harry, because of this success described the scene as 'The Nashville of the North' and McManus (1994)² used this as the title for his book on the Liverpool Country music scene. Now though, it is a scene, which appears to be in terminal decline. Despite the important part that the scene played in the history of popular music in Liverpool, very little has been written about it academically. [See literature review, Chapter 2] What has been written, although important, is small, limited and much of which is old research and needs updating. This research project aims to provide a comprehensive study of the scene expanded to cover many aspects of the scene not researched in any depth, or in some cases, not at all. New areas of research not previously covered include the effect that the translocal scene and national attitudes, events and practices had on the local scene. Another new area of research is the line- dance phenomenon, which was the last occasion when any reasonable number of new members entered the British Country music scene. It will be argued that this was a transitional point: one which Straw (2001)³ describes as being crucial for any scene's stability.

¹ Harry, W. Merseybeat Ltd. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2*. [Online]

http://mersey-beat.com (accessed 7/5/2010)

² McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool.

³ Straw, W. (2001) 'Consumption' in Frith, S., Straw, W & Street, T. S. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 253-256

The research also includes a structural and semiotic analysis of the Liverpool Country music band, The Hillsiders', recorded work from the 1960s to the 1990s. This analysis has helped to identify genre influences on the music itself, e.g. via style indicators and/or synecdoches from American Country music, Irish music, Folk music, Merseybeat, etc. It will aim to resolve conflicting statements such as whether local Country music has its own distinct Liverpool style or is just a copy of American Country music of that era. This study includes what will probably be, because of the terminal decline of the scene, the last study of a Country music community in Liverpool. This is a study carried out over 15 months of the Country music community based at The Melrose Abbey public house in Kirkdale, Liverpool.

This research also examines the relationship between the music, the participants and processes of the scene in order to understand how the scene developed, was sustained and eventually declined. Therefore, this research will also have to pose the important question: 'what does or does not constitute a popular music scene?' To achieve some kind of answer to this significant question, a consideration of the academic texts and discussions in popular music studies on scene was required. This researcher's use of the word 'scene' in this study therefore draws from much of the critical work on the subject, however, not necessarily uncritically for it became obvious during periods of research that at times what was being discovered did, and at other times, did not necessarily fall into line with academic discourse concerning scenes.

The definition of what does or does not constitute a scene is not an easy one. Straw (2002)⁴ states that 'A decade of writing in popular music studies has sought to refine the notion of scene but the slipperiness remains' and that 'scene is the most flexible term in a social

⁴ Straw, W. (2002)' Scenes and Sensibility' in Straw, W and Marchessault, I. (eds) *Public*. Vol 22/23. York: York University Press. pp. 243-257

morphology'. Previous to Straw's statement, Cohen (1999)⁵ had explained that, for her: 'Scene is a familiar term in popular music studies but it has generally been used uncritically or interchangeably with terms like subculture or community'. Peterson and Bennett (2004)⁶ also stated that: 'As scenes ebb and flow with time, there is no hard line between what is and what is not a scene, consequently it is not useful to try to draw a hard line between scenes and non-scenes'. Despite this possible haziness, popular music academics have continued to define and re-define the term 'scene'. Peterson and Bennett in *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual* (2004)⁷ explain how (to paraphrase) primarily journalists originally used the concept of a music scene in the 1940s to characterize the marginal and Bohemian ways of life of those associated with the Jazz world. As Cohen (1999)⁸ also discusses:

'The term is commonly and loosely used by musicians, music fans, music writers and researchers to refer to a group or groups of people who have a shared musical activity or taste, but it was when scene was associated with place and referring to scene activity within specific geographical areas that it became a focus for research within Popular music studies'.

It was Shank (1988),⁹ who first presented the idea of scene as the relationship between different music practices unfolding within a given geographical space. In his publication *Dissonant Identities; The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (1994)¹⁰ Shank suggests that a scene was 'An overpowering signifying community', also, that this community, while being

⁵ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds) Key *Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 239-249

⁶ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 1-15

⁷ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds) Music *Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. p 2

⁸ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture. Oxford: Oxford Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp.239-249

⁹ Shank, B. (1988) 'Transgressing the Boundaries of a Rock and Roll Community' paper delivered at the first joint conference of IASPTA – Canada and IASPTA - USA

¹⁰ Shank, B. (1994) *Dissonant Identities: The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*. Hanover, N H: Wesleyan University Press. p. 122

part of the surrounding world had scene boundaries which separated it from the surrounding world. He also claimed: 'scenes derive their effervescence from the sense that the information produced within that is forever in excess of the productive ends to which it might be put'. ¹¹

Peterson and Bennett (2004)¹² award Will Straw credit as being the first to mention the concept of scene in popular music academic discourse. Straw (1991)¹³ explained that a music scene was:

That cultural place in which a range of musical practices coexist interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation and according to wildly varying trajectories of change and cross fertilization.

Straw's description was of a 'scene' where the music practices take root in a particular locale or in several locales. The linking of scene with place and locale became the focus of study within popular music studies. However, Cohen (1999)¹⁴ explained that Straw did tend to emphasize the fluid, loose, cosmopolitan, and transitory and geographically dispersed nature of local music activity in his description. Peterson and Bennett (2004)¹⁵ explained how discussions of scene should thus be widened to include 'the ways in which emergent scenes use music appropriated via global flows and networks to construct particular narratives of the local'.

¹¹ Shank, B. (1994) *Dissonant Identities: The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* .Hanover, N H: Wesleyan University Press. p. 122

¹² Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. p. 3

¹³ Straw, W. (1991) 'Systems of Articulation Logics of Change: Communities and Scene' in *Popular Music in Cultural Studies*. Vol 5. No 3. England: Routledge. pp. 368-388

¹⁴ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key Terms in Popular Music.* Oxford: Oxford Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 239-249

¹⁵ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 1-15

This research will therefore propose that the Liverpool Country music scene did not develop in isolation, but has always reflected non-local musical influences and will consider how these came to reside within the scene. The research will also show how significant the appropriation of music by global flow was in the construction of the scene, e.g. seamen such as the Cunard Yanks, American Army bases, AFN radio, etc. Wall (2003)¹⁶ also explained how, 'music from one locale is often adopted into the music making of other locales because the interpretations of the meaning of the borrowed music seem to resonate locally'. In this sense, this thesis will also consider Cohen's (2007)¹⁷ description of Country music as 'A travelling global culture that sets itself down where the sound and sentiment resonates homologically'.

This research will provide evidence to show that this was the case in Liverpool where members of the Liverpool Country music scene emoted with the simple lyrics that reflected the life and values they saw and lived. They also related to the Cowboy image that Country music portrayed, growing up with Cowboy comics, films and music, even though this was a mythical image created by the music and film industry and had little basis in reality. This image appeared to have a genuine authenticity amongst scene participants.

To paraphrase Peterson and Bennett (2004),¹⁸ because cultural space in a scene need not be in one geographical locality and that participants can also be participating in a wider scene, this has meant that, while the term scene was initially associated with music making processes in a particular locale, the definition of scene has since been broadened to encompass that of a local, translocal and even a virtual scene. The definition of local scene remains the same and

¹⁶ Wall, T. (2003) 'Case Studies and Conclusions' in *Studying Popular Music Culture*. London: Hodder Arnold. P. 215

¹⁷ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline, Renewal and the City' in *Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate. pp. 71-94

¹⁸Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 1-15

evidence will be presented in this thesis that the Liverpool Country music scene was a local 'scene' and that it had the assigned characteristics of a scene, according to the definitions of 'scene' by the works of the aforementioned popular music scholars. The scene had a musical and cultural identity, which set it apart from other practices and scenes and a critical mass of active participants whose ethos, shared values, and tastes set certain musical boundaries for the scene. The scene also had networks and patterns of interaction, a flow of information exchange, an infrastructure of vibrant venues and other significant cultural spaces where participation in the scene took place. Kruse (2003)¹⁹ believes that 'Music scenes are defined by those places within them'; in addition, she explains that, 'These spaces, institutions, venues, record shops, radio stations, etc, all help to locate music scene participants within particular physical spaces within a structure of social and economic relations'. Connell and Gibson (2003)²⁰ also state that 'Infrastructures of musical exchange solidify the presence of scenes providing concrete spaces and emphasizing cultural meaning for participants'.

For example, Kruse (2003)²¹ described record stores not simply as sites of commerce, but also as social spaces. My research will show that these spaces within the local scene, such as record stores were also places of social interaction or socialization, where scene participants, artists or fans could discuss with other scene participants or professional employees, the local music culture, exchanging information such as forthcoming gigs, new artists, festivals, venues etc. Kruse further states that, 'These can be much more amiable environments for discussion of music than a live performance.'

However, it is live performances, which were the essence of the scene, the dynamic force that sustained the scene. Therefore, this research will show the venues where the music was

¹⁹ Kruse, H. (2003) Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. pp. 94-96

²⁰ Connell, J. and Gibson, C. (2003) Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place. London: Routledge. pp. 90-116

²¹ Kruse, H. (2003) Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. pp. 94-96

performed were the most significant cultural spaces, as this is where the scene is most visible physically. It will also show that some performance spaces, e.g., social clubs, have not achieved the same significant historical and cultural value as others, such as the north-end Dock Road pub scene of the 1960s - 80s. These were the main cultural spaces that have shaped the perception of the scene by its participants; many of those who were interviewed saw this as the high point of the scene's life (and perhaps demise). This research will illuminate that these were important for the promotion of activity within the scene, which helped to maintain and expand the scene's growth and consequently perhaps even award the locality a certain identity. It will also show how certain factors such as the loss of significant cultural spaces led to the decline of the scene. Straw (2001)²² states that 'Scenes function more as spaces organized against change and that within them minor tastes and habits are perpetuated'. This was something that can be seen to have occurred in the local scene, which by not forming any new alliances and therefore not experiencing any of the transitional points which Straw points out is crucial for the scene's stability, was one of the factors which has helped lead to the scene's decline.

The research also examines the effects of translocal scenes on the local scene. Peterson and Bennett (2004)²³ describe translocal scenes as:

Translocal scenes are scenes where the participants are connected over large spaces by a common musical interest often widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle and have limited face to face social interaction.

²²Straw, W. (1991) 'Systems of Articulation Logics of Change: Communities and Scene' in *Popular Music in Cultural Studies*. Vol 5. No 3. England: Routledge. pp. 255-256

²³ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 8-10

There has thus far not been any substantive research published concerning translocal scenes' influences on the local Liverpool Country music scene, but my research will show that translocal scenes had a large influence on the local scene and that local scene participants were also participants in translocal scenes. An example of this was the music festival, which was a special sort of translocal scene. Dowd, Liddle and Nelson in Bennett and Peterson. (2004)²⁴ explained that, to paraphrase, while they resemble local scenes as they occur in a delimited space offering a collective opportunity for performers and fans to experience music and other lifestyle elements, they then draw musically like-minded individuals together on designated locations, taking those participants away from their normal lifestyle and the social control and expectations. This allows them to immerse themselves in the culture and enjoy the music and lifestyle free from the normal constraints.

The research herewith will show how festivals, such as the Wembley Festival, had a great influence beyond its own borders introducing local scene participants, fans and British artists, to artists and music they had not heard before which they carried into the local scenes rejuvenating and stimulating change within it. Research will also show festivals such as those at Presthaven and at the Americana Festival in Nottinghamshire, allow local participants to live for a short period, a lifestyle they would be constrained from living in their normal everyday lives, which reinforces their allegiance to the culture and music. Research will also look at the negative effects of this scene on participants e.g. reinforcing negative stereotypes about British artists. Whilst past research has been limited to the local Country music scene, it was not immune from key factors and events in the national scene. Because of this, the research covers areas such as national recognition for British Country music artists, the

²⁴ Dowd, T., Liddle, J. and Nelson, K. (2004) 'Music Festivals as Scenes,' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual.* Nashville. TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 149 -167

attitude of British Country music fans, record companies and journalists to British Country music and the lack of a central infrastructure for the National Country music scene.

The virtual scene is a relatively new concept coming in the age of electronic communication. Peterson and Bennett (2004)²⁵ describe how like translocal scenes, virtual scenes' participants are spread over a large geographical area but the participants occupy a common virtual space which allows them to interact and communicate directly, mediated by the virtual space they occupy, usually by communication spaces such as chat-rooms, discussion forums, social network sites. While these scenes played little part in the development and sustaining of the local and translocal scenes, research will show that now with the decline of the local and translocal scenes, these scenes, such as the British Country Music Association's website,²⁶ provides space for daily exchanges from participants, fans, bands, promoters. These forums discuss many subjects related to the scene e.g. bands, gigs and venue information, how to rejuvenate the scene, or just letting off steam. Local scene members informed this researcher that they regularly access this 'virtual' scene, e.g. YouTube, to watch videos of Country music artists, usually the older traditional artists. Many bands, clubs and festivals use the virtual scene such as websites and social media sites to advertise their events, e.g. Facebook.

Methodologies

The methodologies employed in this study contain both qualitative and quantitative research to enable this researcher to obtain an extensive range of primary and secondary source material.

²⁵ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 10-12

²⁶ British Country Music Website Forum. [Online]

(accessed 20/11/2013)">accessed 20/11/2013)

• Interviews and Oral History

It is a priority, because of the aging demographic of many members of the local, regional and national British Country scene, who are a source of valuable primary source material, that as diverse a range of participants in the community, are interviewed as soon as possible before this knowledge of the scene disappears. To obtain this primary source material over 60 people involved in the Country music scene have been interviewed, many of whom have had no previous input into academic research. This research includes conversations with Country music artists, fans, promoters, record dealers, journalists, radio presenters, line-dancers, line-dance teachers, line-dance artists and journalists. All interviews were conducted within the ethical guidelines laid down by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Liverpool Hope University. All informants were made aware that they were being recorded and that the recordings would be used as part of this PhD thesis. A full list of informants is provided. [Please see Appendix 1: Informants].

To obtain these interviews many Country music events, pubs and clubs were attended. Interviews were requested via local radio, line-dance magazines, social networking sites, e.g. Facebook, and many artists, fans and promoters were contacted directly such as Grand Ole Opry member George Hamilton IV, who provided valuable information on local acts who performed and recorded in Nashville, and Mervyn Conn, promoter of the Wembley Festivals.

Case Study

A fifteen-month case study of the Country music community at The Melrose Abbey public house in Kirkdale, Liverpool has been carried out using many of the ethnographical approaches as described by Fetterman (1998).²⁷ By becoming a member of the community this researcher was able to carry out a detailed study of the community. The research

²⁷ Fetterman, D. M. (1998), Ethnography Step by Step, New York [USA]: Sage, p. 1

techniques used in this study were participant and passive observation. Personal interviews with members of the community and documentary sources such as academic publications, websites and DVDs of the community prior to moving to its current location. [See Chapter 10: An Oral History of the Country and Western Community Based at the Melrose **Abbey Public House in Liverpool.**]

Literature Search

An ongoing literature search was carried out throughout this study to identify academic publications related to the local, national and American Country music scenes. This included publications about the local County music scene by Cohen, McManus and Brocken and by Malone and Jensen regarding the American Country music scene An extensive search of nonacademic publications such as websites, books e.g. autobiographies by members of the scene, and Country music and line-dance magazines, was also conducted. [See literature review Chapter 2] Other sources researched include radio programmes, DVD, videos and Country music record sleeves.

Semiotic Analysis

A detailed semiotic analysis of a number of mainly vinyl records by local artists, The Hillsiders, over a period from the 1960s to 1990 along with vinyl records by American Country music artists of the same era has been conducted. A semiotic model was used to facilitate the breakdown of the analysis into different categories and to define a structure for the analysis. This included the use of such key structural terms as generative, syntagmatic, paradigmatic and processual, as discussed by Brian Longhurst in his text 'Text and Meanings' in *Popular Music & Society* (2007).²⁸

Generative analysis helped to examine the characteristics, approaches and techniques as implemented by the musicians and assisted in identifying any evidence of genre synecdoches: e.g. Irish or Merseybeat influences in the style. This also included vocal approaches and grains and any other distinctive features in the voice, such as accents. Syntagmatic analysis was useful when analysing original compositions from The Hillsiders, which helped to identify whether standard structures of songs (such as AABA, V/C/V/C, etc) were apparent. Paradigmatic analysis identified any distinct 'licks' or 'riffs' (repeating motifs) within the songs to see if any became, not only synonymous with a particular band, but were also key elements of the songs, and processual analysis helped to identify the order in which instruments and vocals entered and exited the song. All such methods were considered of significance in identifying genre similarities to the USA, home-styles pertinent to Liverpool, and hybrid Country-Folk genres that might have developed because of the scene, itself, and the popularity of certain styles in and around Merseyside.

• Quantitative Research

Quantitative research techniques such as surveys and analysis have been carried out, e.g. five large local record stores, Country music and Folk sections, have been examined to compare the success of British Country music and British Folk music. The magazine, *Country Music People*, was examined to estimate the amount of space devoted to British acts. This magazine also included a list of the fifty 'Best Country Albums of 2008' chosen by the Country music journalists which was examined to compare the number of albums by both British and American artists included in the list *Linedancer Magazine* No 5 October, 1996.³⁰

²⁹ Country Music People. (Jan 2009). Vol 40, No 1, Issue 467. Warwick. D. (ed) Attleborough. England: Kickin' Cuts Ltd.

³⁰ Linedancer Magazine. (October 1996). Issue 5. Saletto, L (ed). Sunderland .England: Champion Media Group.

and *Linedancer Magazine* No 210 October, 2013,³¹ were also scrutinized, assessing the type of music that the line-dancers were dancing to, the type of clothing worn (via advertisements) and the clubs and events they attended in order to compare any changes in the line-dance scene during this period.

All of the above, and more, contributed to the rationale of this thesis: i.e. to recognize, record and report on a significant musical activity in Liverpool and on Merseyside, which has, to a degree, become a partially hidden history within Liverpool's various musical histories. As a consequence of changing demographics, mutating popular music sounds, and ever-changing fashions and authenticities, Country music in Liverpool has now reached a point where it is becoming a minority activity from what was once considered a powerful scene, it has lost networks which were both commercial and social, and is slowly but inexorably (for some) moving beyond living memory. While it must always be accepted that as times change so too do musical scenes, the impact and significance of Liverpool's Country music scene should not be forgotten, or merely half-remembered as a footnote in popular music histories.

³¹ Linedancer Magazine. (October 2013). Issue 210. Saletto, L. (ed). Sunderland England: Champion Media Group.

Chapter 2: Literature Review.

On conducting a literature review, it became clear that despite once playing a prominent role in the Merseyside music scene, very little has been written academically about the local Country music scene. This is in contrast to the Merseybeat scene, on which, because of the prominence of The Beatles, there is an abundance of academic work. However, the publications, Nashville of the North by McManus (1994)³² and chapter [3] 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North', from Cohen's Decline, Renewal and the City: Beyond the Beatles (2007)³³ provide information about the local Country scene, obtained not only from archive and other material, but also from face-to-face interviews with some major figures within the local scene. This provides a valuable oral history of the scene's birth and growth from those members of the local Country music scene actively involved in it. Whilst providing good primary source material, much of the research. e.g., interviews, is now dated and limited, covering only part of the scene and omitting the views of many important participants such as the fans, some artists and other members of the music industry. There also may be inaccuracies in the interviews due to such factors as memory lapses, or their perception of the part they played in the development of the scene may be overestimated. Cohen also has a paper published in *Ethnomusicology* (2005)³⁴ called, 'Country at the Heart of the City: Music, Heritage, and Regeneration in Liverpool'. This paper provided little new material and heavily relied on her and McManus's previous publications. This, as with her previous work, relied considerably on the life history and views of Hank Walters and covering the familiar ground of the Cunard Yanks, Burtonwood

³² McManus. K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool.

³³ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. Chapter 3 in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles.* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 71-94 ³⁴Cohen, S. (2005) 'Country at the Heart of the City: Music, Heritage and Regeneration in Liverpool' *Ethnomusicology*.Vol 49. No 1. (Winter 2005) Illinois. USA: Illinois University Press pp. 25-48

American Forces base, American roots, the sense of community in North Liverpool and its economic decline and regeneration using quotes from musicians.

Brocken (2010)³⁵ in Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scene. 1930-70s contains a chapter [5] entitled, 'I Like Your Hat. Country Music in Liverpool'. (pp 107-134), which covers the Country music scene and provides valuable information such as a prehistory of the scene discussing various important aspects, e.g., locality and authenticity. It is also a good source of information on local Country artists with observations about their music but has no detailed analysis to confirm these observations. As it is only one chapter however, it means that it cannot cover areas in any detail. In contrast Du Noyer (2002)³⁶ in his book, Liverpool, A Wondrous Place. Music from Cavern to Cream only vaguely discusses Liverpool's affinity with the American South as a reason for its passion with Country music. From his writing, he clearly has little or no interest in the genre and leaves the Country music researcher rather 'wanting' as far as information is concerned. It has been argued by the likes of Brocken that writers such as Du Noyer tend to ignore all other genres in Liverpool, other than those such as Merseybeat (and by association The Beatles) and Dance Music. Hence, perhaps, the need for Brocken's Other Voices text, which deals with those other popular music scenes partially obscured by the above. Du Noyer does discuss the overlap of repertoire and personnel between Country and Rock 'n' Roll acts in Liverpool in the 1950s and 60s, which was of some assistance to this researcher. The only other academic work to this researcher's knowledge was an uncompleted PhD thesis on the subject by Frances Hunt. Hunt was briefly assigned to the Institute of Popular Music in the 1990s but her thesis was not completed owing to family illness.

³⁵ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 107-134

³⁶ Du Noyer, P. (2002) *Liverpool. A Wondrous Place - Music from Cavern to Cream.* London: Virgin Books.

As part of the research into how the Liverpool Country music scene developed and was sustained, how it eventually declined, and to answer the question 'Was there a scene?' a number of academic texts and critical works in popular music studies on 'scene' have been examined. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, Barry Shank, in his paper, 'Transgressing the Boundaries of a Rock 'n' Roll Community', (1988)³⁷ first presented the idea of 'scene' as the relationship between different music practices within a given geographical space. While Will Straw in 'Scenes and Sensibility' (2002)³⁸ and Sara Cohen in 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds) Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture (1999)³⁹ both explain the difficulty in defining scene. Bennett and Peterson in 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual, (2004)⁴⁰ and Cohen (1999)⁴¹ explained how the concept of music scene was originally used, primarily to describe a group of people who have a shared musical activity. Shank (1994)⁴² in his publication *Dissonant* Identities: The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas suggests scene was an overpowering signifying community which, while being part of the surrounding world, had 'scene' boundaries which separated it from the world and that far more semiotic information is produced than can be understood.

³⁷ Shank, B. (1988) 'Transgressing the Boundaries of a Rock and Roll Community'. Paper delivered at the first joint conference of IASPM – Canada and IASPM – USA, Yale University 1/10/1988.

³⁸ Straw, W. (2002) 'Scenes and Sensibility' in Straw, W and Marchessault, I. (ed). *Public.* Vol No 22/23. York: York University Press. pp. 243-257.

³⁹ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 239-249

⁴⁰ Peterson, R. A Bennett, A (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A. and Peterson, R.A. (eds). Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp 1-15

⁴¹ Cohen. S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp 239-249.

⁴² Shank, B. (1994) *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press p. 122

Bennett and Peterson (2004)⁴³ explained how the definition of 'scene' has been broadened to encompass that of a local, translocal and virtual scene, how emergent scenes use music via global flows and networks to construct authentic narratives of the local, all of which were important in developing and sustaining a local scene. Many Liverpool scene participants were also participants in translocal and indeed global scenes and communities. Tim Wall's Studying Popular Music Culture (2003)⁴⁴ and Sara Cohen in the chapter 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North' in Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles (2007)⁴⁵ both discuss the importance of non-local musical influences on scenes. Dowd, Liddle, and Nelson, in 'Music Festivals as Scenes: Examples from Serious Music, Womyn's Music, and SkatePunk', Chapter 8 of Bennett & Peterson (eds) (2004), ⁴⁶ explain the importance of translocal scenes and how they can influence local scenes. Holly Kruse's Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes (2003)⁴⁷ and Connell and Gibson's Soundtracks: Popular Music Identity and Place (2003)⁴⁸ both discuss how music scenes are defined by those places within them and that such infrastructures have enormous cultural significances for those within the respective scenes. This proved to be important for this researcher, for the Liverpool Country scene contained highly significant places within it. Cohen (1995)⁴⁹ in 'Localizing Sound' in Popular Music- Style and Identity provides additional theoretical background material on the construct of locality and in 'Sounding Out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of

⁴³ Peterson, R. A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 1-15

⁴⁴ Wall, T. (2003) *Studying Popular Music Culture*. London: Hodder Arnold. p. 215

⁴⁵ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North' in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd pp. 71-94

⁴⁶ Dowd, T. Liddle, J. and Nelson, K. (2004) 'Music Festivals as Scenes,' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual.* Nashville. TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 149 -167

⁴⁷ Kruse, H. (2003) Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. pp. 94-96

⁴⁸ Connell, J, and Gibson, C. (2003) Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place. London: Routledge. pp. 90-116

⁴⁹ Cohen, S. (1995). 'Localizing Sound' in Straw, W, Et al (eds). *Popular Music - Style and Identity*, (Ed). Montreal. Canada. Centre for Research on Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions. IASPM, pp. 61-68.

Place' (1995)⁵⁰ describes the connection that music has with culture, place and space. Will Straw's 'Consumption' in *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop* (2001)⁵¹ explains how scenes function as spaces organised against change and that there are transition points crucial for a scene's stability. This is important because the local scene did not experience any of this type of transition points, and that could have been a factor in its decline.⁵²

The influence of 'otherness' and 'orientalism' on the emergence of the Liverpool scene was also researched. Belchem's Merseypride: *Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* (2000)⁵³ discusses the importance of 'otherness' in developing the Liverpool identity which Cohen, in 'Rock Culture in Liverpool,' in *Popular Music in the Making* (1991)⁵⁴ points out, made it more susceptible to America's cultural trends. Lane (1987)⁵⁵ in his book *Liverpool: Gateway to the Empire*, suggests that being a port has meant that although Liverpool looked outwards, not over its shoulder, it had, as well as its cosmopolitan nature, a somewhat insular reputation. Fowler, (2008)⁵⁶ in his book *Growing up in Liverpool Before Beatlemania*, discusses the attitude of Liverpool people in the 1950s and early 60s towards the City and the belief that they stood alone as a breed apart. Budd (2007)⁵⁷ in his book *The Modern Historiography Reader - Western Source*, explained Edward Said's original idea of an identity being considered superior in comparison with another identity or culture, a belief that was prevalent in Liverpool regarding its relationship with the rest of the country. This researcher will also investigate whether this idea was also prevalent in the Nashville Country

⁵⁰ Cohen, S. (1995) 'Sounding Out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographer's*. New Series. Vol 20 No 4 (1995) Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. pp. 434-446

⁵¹ Straw, W. (2001) 'Consumption' in Frith, S. Straw, W. and Street, T. J. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 253-256

⁵² Although with the line-dance phenomenon of the 1990s, one was available to them.

⁵³ Belchem, J. (2000) *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press. pp. XIII

⁵⁴ Cohen, S. (1991) 'Rock Culture in Liverpool' in *Popular Music in the Making*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁵ Lane, T. (1987) *Liverpool Gateway to the Empire* .London: Lawrence and Wishart. p 11

⁵⁶ Fowler. J. (2008) *Growing up in Liverpool Before Beatlemania*. Birkenhead. Appin Press. p. 79

⁵⁷ Budd, A. (2009) The Modern Histography Reader – Western Source. New York: Routledge. pp. 443-448

music scene and its music industry about other Country music scenes or types of Country music that differed from its own 'Nashville sound'.

This researcher has collected possibly, the largest and most comprehensive collection of oral testimony about the scene. Tosh's Why History Matters (2008)⁵⁸ explains the importance of oral history, and that today it is at the cutting edge of cultural history. He also advises to avoid reductionism and consider as much of the 'package' as possible so the researcher can understand what is really occurring. Brocken in Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930's - 1970s (2010),⁵⁹ while pointing out the problems of this kind of research tool also recognises the value of giving a voice to those who, previously, would never have been heard. There were two other academic publications that were useful in this study. Soja in Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-*Imagined Places*, (1996), 60 introduces the concept of 'thirdspace' which presents a different mode of spatial thinking, i.e., where the material and the imagined come together to create a 'thirdspace'. This was helpful in the understanding of The Melrose Abbey community and the north-end dock scene. While Frith (1987)⁶¹ 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in Leppert, R and McLarey, S. (eds). Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception, discusses the importance music can have on people's lives helping to put into play a sense of identity, which may or may not fit the way they are placed by other social facts.

⁵⁸ Tosh, J. (2008) *Why History Matters*. Hamps and New York: Palgrave, Macmillan. p .26

⁵⁹ Brocken. M. (2010), 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in Other *Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s.* Chapter 5. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 107-134.

⁶⁰ Soja, E. W. (1996), *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford: Blackwell, p 57

⁶¹ Frith, S. (1987), 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in Leppert, R and McLarey, S. (eds), *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* Cambridge: University Press. p. 129

Because of the small number of academic works on the Liverpool Country music scene, to provide a more detailed picture of the scene, minimise any possible inaccuracies, and to substantiate this literature, other sources have been researched. These include the website *The* Birth of Merseybeat, 62 by Bill Harry, a prominent member of the Liverpool Music community in the late 1950s and early 60s, and who was the editor of the popular Merseybeat music newspaper, and the New Musical Express Muze UK Ltd, 63 websites, which provided biographies on The Hillsiders, the most successful Merseyside Country music band. This site also has information on Hank Walters, one of the founders of the Merseyside Country music scene and Phil Brady another popular local act, who with his group The Ranchers were very popular in Ireland. The Metro Country website⁶⁴ has an interview in 1994 between Joe Butler, ex-member of The Hillsiders and Ray Grundy, where the former discusses the forming of The Hillsiders, the band's career, his song writing and his time presenting the Country music programme on the local Merseyside commercial station, Radio City. The audio CD *Tracing* the Roots by Jones (2007)⁶⁵ also has interviews with other local artists such as Birkenheadborn Charlie Landsborough, which tends to corroborate the statements on the roots of the local Country music scene.

The aforementioned research publications from Cohen and McManus contain a number of direct quotes from prominent members of the local scene about the state of the scene at the time of being interviewed, providing interesting primary source material. A problem with this ethnographic research was that only a small representation of the scene was interviewed and

⁶² Harry, W. Merseybeat Ltd. *The Birth of Mersey Beat.* [Online]

http://mersey-beat.com (accessed 7/5/2010)

⁶³ Muze UK Ltd. (1989-2008) [Online]

http://www.nme.com/artists (accessed 17/9/09)

⁶⁴ Grundy, R. *Metro Country*. [Online]

http://www.metrocountry.co.uk/TalkingCountryJButler.htm (accessed 21/1/2011)

⁶⁵ Jones. H. (2007) *Tracing the Roots: The Rolling Roots Review*. RRRCD0107 Copyright – Rolling Roots Review. 2007

most of these could be described as being part of the listening subculture in the Country music scene. Therefore, they all expressed similar opinions about the problems within the scene and blamed the other subcultures i.e. the line-dancers and those dressing as Cowboys for the scene's decline. Whilst highlighting the conflicts between these subcultures no attempt was made to present the views of the other subcultures. To balance this, an alternative academic view of the 1980s Country music scene was researched in Ruth Finnegan's book *The Hidden Musicians – Music Making in an English Town*. Chapter [9]. 'The Country and Western World' (2007)⁶⁶ is an ethnographic study of a Country and Western club involved in the 'Cowboy' subculture – but is set in Milton Keynes rather than Liverpool.

Finnegan states in this chapter that in 'The Milton Keynes Divided Country and Western Club', the members claim that whilst there was a recognised division between the listening and Cowboy elements of the club, that the two different groups co-exist on mutual beneficial terms and that audiences are actually attracted by the variety and glamour of the Cowboys. Whilst being important research in that it expresses the Cowboys' view of their role within the scene, as with the Cohen and McManus's research, it only presents one view, that of the Cowboys and does not present any alternative view of their participation in the scene. There is also a problem with the presentation of some of the ethnological observations as generalised facts without corroborative research. For example, the Western 'shoot-out', which was rather blithely described as, 'So typical of Country and Western events' (Finnegan

⁶⁶ Finnegan, R. (2007) 'The Country and Western World' in The *Hidden Musicians – Music Making in an English Town.* (2nd Edition) Cambridge. Cambridge: University Press. pp. 90-102

2007),⁶⁷ a statement which, at least according to this writer's research, would be hotly disputed across the Country music scenes of the UK.

It has been stated within the academic research and in other publications, that Liverpool was called 'The Nashville of the North', e.g., McManus in *Nashville of the North* (1994)⁶⁸ and Bill Harry in the website *The Birth of Merseybeat* 2.⁶⁹ One of the main reasons given for this was its large number of Country music bands (claiming to be in excess of 40 though there was no corroborative evidence to confirm this). Via research publications, Country music magazines, interviews, etc., this researcher was able to compile a list of over 60 Country music bands playing in Liverpool in the 1950s, 60s to mid-1970s [see Appendix 2]. *Plug In (The Forgotten Years)* (2006)⁷⁰ by Tony Bolland was extremely useful in helping to compile this list. The work deals with a local music shop, managed by Bolland; as such, it discusses the many bands that passed through the shop looking for equipment, gigs, and the like. This book provided important information on local Country bands such as The Everglades and Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers.

Line-dancing played an important part in the Liverpool and translocal scenes. The influx of line-dancers into the scene in the 1990s was the only time since the 1950s and early 1960s that a substantial number of people entered the local and national scene through the Country music clubs and festivals. This research will examine how these people were treated within the scene and why they left the scene to form their own local, translocal and virtual scenes. It will also cover how a scene that evolved from the Country music scene now has very little

⁶⁷ Finnegan, R. (2007) 'The Country and Western World' in *The Hidden Musicians-Music Making in an English Town*. (2nd Edition) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 90-102.

⁶⁸ McManus, K. (1994) '*Nashville of the North'* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool.

⁶⁹ Harry, W. Merseybeat Ltd. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2*.[Online]

http://mersey-beat.com (accessed 7/5/2010)

⁷⁰ Bolland, T. (2006) *Plug – In (The Forgotten Years)*. copyright 2006 Tony Bolland (no publisher)

involvement with that scene in terms of the music, the dress, the clubs, and the events and why many members of this scene now consider that, the image of its Country music roots produces a negative image of their scene. However, academic literature concerning line-dancing in Liverpool continues to be non-existent.

In fact, when researching line-dancing this researcher could find not one academic publication on line-dancing in the UK at all. Some American academic publications were found where line-dancing was mentioned but this was usually as a chapter or part of a chapter in a book. This included Neal (1998)⁷¹ 'The Metric Making of a Country Hit', in Tichi, C. (ed) Reading Country Music; Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars which gives a definition of line-dancing and explains how the use of line-dances that were choreographed to specific Country songs became an important marketing tool to the Country music industry. Some books on dancing, mainly American, do mention line-dancing but it is usually only a chapter or part of a chapter and again refers to the American line-dance scene, which almost exclusively covers the period in the 1990s when the line-dance craze appeared in America. Needham (2002)⁷² I See America Dancing discusses a visit to the Wild Horse Saloon, a significant place for line-dancers in Nashville. In Giordano (2010)⁷³ Country and Western Dance book, a chapter on line-dancing in America discusses its growth in the 1990s, which to some degree mirrors the growth of line-dancing in the local and national line-dance scenes in the UK. A book by Osbourne (1995)⁷⁴ Run to the Floor for Country Western Line Dancing analyses 34 line-dances in the USA. The book is merely a confirmation text concerning the

⁷¹ Neal, J. (1998) 'The Metric Making of a Country Hit' in Tichi, C. (ed). *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars.* Durham USA: Duke University Press pp. 323-339

⁷² Needham, M. (2002) 'All Lined Up at the Wild Horse Saloon (1997)' in *I See America Dancing, Selected Readings 1685-* 2000. Illinois USA: University of Illinois Press. pp. 81-84

⁷³ Giordano, R. G. (2010) 'Achy Breaky Heart and Line Dancing' in *Country and Western Dance*. Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press. pp. 91-134

⁷⁴ Osbourne, H. (1995) *Run to the Floor for Country Western Line Dancing*. Glendale California: Griffin Publishing. pp. 57-167

growth in the number of line-dances after the 1992 success of Billy Ray Cyrus' global hit 'Achy Breaky Heart'. An academic paper by Nadasen (2008)⁷⁵ 'Life Without Line Dancing and the Other Activities Would be Too Dreadful to Imagine. An Increase in Social Activity for Older Women' from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, discusses the social dimension to line-dancing, something claimed by many of the British line-dancers, interviewed by this researcher, who claim that this is as important to them as the actual line-dancing, a common narrative.

Because nothing could be found academically about line-dancing in the UK other than a brief mention in McManus (1994),⁷⁶ and Cohen (2007)⁷⁷ the line-dance culture was also researched through primary sources. This included interviews with line-dance journalists, line-dance tutors, line-dancers, and websites such as those of Dave Sheriff, the most successful artist in the line-dance field. Other websites also researched were: BBC h2g2. *Line Dancing*⁷⁸, Powell, D. *What is Line Dancing*? ⁷⁹ Walker, A. *Line Dancing - How did it Begin*? ⁸⁰ and Gutzwiller, R. *Line-dance History*. ⁸¹ All provide a similar yet far from in-depth history of the line-dance scene. Also researched were copies of *Linedancer* magazine, ⁸² comparing the music, the dances, the dress signifiers, the advertisements and the club gig

⁷⁵ Nadasen, K (2008) 'Life Without Line Dancing and the Other Activities Would be Too Dreadful to Imagine an Increase in Social Activity for Older Women' in *The Journal of Women and Ageing*. Vol 20 Issue 3-4 Routledge [Online pub] (accessed 3/6/14)">http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08952840801985060?journalCode=wjwa20#.Vcx0jbJViko>

⁷⁶ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 35

⁷⁷ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North' in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 86

⁷⁸ BBC h2g2. (2002) *Line Dancing*. [Online]http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A669512 (accessed 16/9/2010)

⁷⁹ Powell, D. (2003) What is Line Dancing. [Online]

http://www.roots-boots.net/ldance/history.html (accessed 6/9/2010)

⁸⁰ Walker, A. *Linedancing – How Did We Begin* .[Online]

http://ponyball.net/history-line-dancing.html (accessed 16/9/2010)

⁸¹ Gutzwiller, R. (Sept 2013) *Line-dance History*. [Online]

<www.gutz.ch/western/various/linedancehistory.htm>(accessed 11/11/2013)

⁸² Linedancer Magazine. (June 2013 - Feb 2014) Issue 206-214. Saletto, L. (ed). Sunderland. England. Champion Media Group.

listings, etc, in issues No 5 (1996)⁸³ and No 210 (2013)⁸⁴ to examine the changes and the extent of the move away from the Country music scene. On the website *Finding Line-dances* Bader (2011)⁸⁵ lists over a thousand websites for line-dance clubs in 38 countries, plus websites of line-dance archives, choreographers, videos and DVD's, newsletters, hard copy line-dance magazines, line-dance groups, forums and associations, musical artists and retailers. It is a good example of not only the international popularity of line-dancing but also how the line-dance scene is taking full advantage of the virtual scene created by electronic communications.

Two academic publications also of interest to this researcher have been Brocken's *The British Folk Revival* (2003)⁸⁶ and his chapter 'The Tarnished Image? Folk Industry and the Media', in Talbot, M. (ed). *The Business of Music*. (2002).⁸⁷ These publications describe the problems and conflicts related to the Folk-music scene that have hindered its progress and the problems of this scene in many ways mirrors those of the Country music scene that have led to its stagnation and decline. These include, its outdated concrete practices, its narrow market base and lack of understanding of how to market their product, deep-rooted hostility to change, failure to recruit new members or engage the youth market. This research will investigate similar problems occurring within British Country music.

The research will also show how two artists overcame some of these problems. Primary sourced material and information from Dave Sheriff's website⁸⁸ showed that by recognising

⁸³ Linedancer Magazine. (Oct 1996) Issue 5. Saletto.L. (ed). Sunderland England. Champion Media Group

⁸⁴ Linedancer Magazine. (Oct 2013) Issue 210 Saletto. L. (ed). Sunderland England. Champion Media Group

⁸⁵ Bader, W. (2011) *Line-dance Links* [Online]

http://www.billbader.com/line-links.htm (accessed 4/3/2011)

⁸⁶ Brocken, M. (2003). 'What of the Folk Scene Now' in *The British Folk Revival. 1944 - 2002*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate pp. 124-145

⁸⁷ Brocken, M. (2002) 'The Tarnished Image? Folk Industry and Media'. in Talbot, M. (ed). *The Business of Music*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press pp. 218-243

⁸⁸ Sheriff, D. *Dave Sheriff Biography*. [Online]

http://www.davesheriff.co.uk/index.html (accessed 09/12/2010)

the gatekeepers' (journalists, the media, DJ's etc) restrictions to exposure of his music to a wider audience, he found a novel way of circumventing them and so became a successful line-dance artist. From the website of Charlie Landsborough, ⁸⁹ and his autobiography *Storyteller* (2009), ⁹⁰ the research will show how Landsborough became the most successful British Country artist to date. It will illustrate that this was not only a product of having the right song in the right place, but was also a product of belonging to a major Irish record company, Ritz Records, whose infrastructure enabled the product to be successfully distributed and marketed.

It can be argued that the local Country music scene grew out of the American Country music scene. Liverpool always had close ties with America and the mythical image and values of the American Cowboy and American Country singer had a great influence on its success on Merseyside. A number of academic publications were researched to explain how this myth grew, why it was so successful in both America and other countries and also help to explain how this fabricated image was so successful in attracting local fans in the 1940s, 50s and early 60s.

Murdoch (2001)⁹¹ The American West, The Invention of a Myth explains how the myth of the American west was built and perpetuated by dime-store novels, paperbacks, films and television. This myth was important in generating interest in Country music with its perceived Cowboy image and Wolff and Duane (2002)⁹² Country Music, The Rough Guide also explains how the Cowboy fantasy has been romanticised and sensationalised to create a

⁸⁹ Landsborough, C. *Charlie Landsborough, Biography.* [Online]

http://www.charlielandsborough.com/biography.htm (accessed 09/12/10)

⁹⁰ Landsborough, C. (2009) Storyteller. Liverpool: Trinity Mirror North West & North Wales.

⁹¹ Murdoch, D. K. (2001) *The American West. The Invention of a Myth* Cardiff. U. K: Welsh Academic Press. Ashley Drake Publishing Ltd

⁹² Wolff, K. and Duane, O. (2000) *Country Music: the Rough Guide.* London: Rough Guides Ltd. p. 45

Cowboy mystique, an image that was embraced by early Liverpool Country music fans and by British Western dressers.

Peterson (1977)⁹³ Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity discusses the importance of authenticity to Country music fans and explains how the early negative 'hillbilly' image was replaced in favour of an invented positive Cowboy image of the performers, where signifiers such as boots, hats, and outfits were as important as the sound in projecting this authenticity. This may help to explain why many British bands were not seen as authentic because they did not fit this fabricated American image of a Country singer. Malone, B.C (2002)⁹⁴ discusses how the perceived close personal relationship Country music fans believe they have with the artists is usually developed from listening to recordings, explaining how Country music fans in Liverpool also feel 'close' to these artists even without seeing them perform live. He also confirms that the audience of the Grand Ole Opry was largely populated by Country music fans from outside Nashville.

In Cusic (2008), 95 Discovering Country Music explanations were found to show how American Country music continues to adapt, enabling it to remain commercial and attract new young audiences. This could help to explain why a rather conservative and perhaps continually localised British Country music never moved forward, in a commercial sense. Cusic also explained how in the 1960s, American Country music appeared speak for its 'silent majority', an attitude that seemed outdated and reactionary by many British teenagers. Grisaffe (2006)⁹⁶ Beyond Nashville, A True Story explains the importance of American commercial radio for the promotion of Country music in America and that there are over 1000 radio stations dedicated to Country music.

⁹³ Peterson, R.A. (1977) Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press pp. 55-66

⁹⁴ Malone, B. C. (2002) *Country Music USA*. 2nd Rev Ed. Austin Texas: University of Texas Press.

⁹⁵ Cusic, D. (2008) *Discovering Country Music.* Westport, Conn: Praeger. pp. 87-102

⁹⁶ Grisaffe, S. (2006). *Beyond Nashville, a True Story*. Bloomington: Autohouse. pp. 116-118

To enable a better understanding of the local Liverpool Country music and translocal scenes the history of Country music was researched concentrating on its commercial development and the Nashville Country music scene and industry, because, to most local and British Country music fans, Nashville was considered the spiritual and commercial home of Country music. As Tim Wall stated in *Studying Popular Music Culture* (2003)⁹⁷: 'Histories construct a narrative of the past in which the significance of certain events is emphasised over others and ideas of cause and effect are woven into an unfolding story'.

This research therefore will provide an introductory history of commercial Country music and that of a significant place in its growth and development, Nashville, as these are the narratives that have mostly influenced the Liverpool Country music scene. If, for example, the history of the Country music scene in Texas were researched, the narrative would be different. This research also concentrated on events that were considered significant to the Liverpool Country music scene and events in Nashville that had no effect and provided no more insight to the Country music scene than the other information provided, was not included in the chapter on Country music history.

In researching this history a number of books by academic researchers and Country music historians were consulted to help explain how commercial Country music developed, how its image was constructed and reconstructed and why British fans identify with certain constructs of authenticity while not identifying with others. Escott (2003)⁹⁸ *The Story of Country Music*, discusses the beginning of commercial Country music in the 1920s, the importance of Jimmy Rodgers, known as 'The Father of Country Music' on its national and Worldwide success and why the Country music industry settled in Nashville as opposed to

⁹⁷ Wall, T. (2003) *Studying Popular Music Culture.* London: Hodder Arnold. p. 215

⁹⁸ Escott. C. (2003) *The Story of Country Music.* London: BBC World Wide Ltd. pp. 20-27

other important Country music industry centres. Davidoff (1997)⁹⁹ In the Country of Country discussed the Carter family's importance in the development of Country music and the influence Sara Carter's vocals and songs had on their success.

Wolfe (1977)¹⁰⁰ Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee gives an interesting insight into how, after World War II, Nashville surpassed all other key (and perhaps more localised) centres in which Country music grew up, and how it became the economic and creative axis for commercial Country music enabling it to obtain mainstream and Worldwide popularity and economic success. Faragher (1992)¹⁰¹ in Music City Babylon: Inside the World of Country Music, a native of Nashville and notable Country music historian explains how in 1945, Nashville had no Country music roots and those involved in the Country music industry were considered 'outsiders', not part of the Nashville community, at all. He also describes the importance of the Country Music Association (CMA) in promoting Country music in America and around the World.

Jensen (1998)¹⁰² The Nashville Sound – Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music and Schafer (2012)¹⁰³ in Cashville: Dilution of Original Country Music Identity Through increased Commercialization, both discuss the important popular music concepts of authenticity and identity. They also discuss how the Nashville music industry was able to adapt their organisational structures, technologies and marketing strategies, which proved successful in creating and maintaining a profitable commodity. In addition, Jensen also

⁹⁹ Davidoff, N. (1997) *In the Country of Country: People and Places in American Music.* New York: Pantheon Books. p. 54

¹⁰⁰ Wolff, C. K. (1977) *Tennessee Strings: Story of Tennessee Music.* Tennessee. USA: University of Tennessee Press. Preface p. VII

¹⁰¹ Faragher. S. (1992) *Music City Babylon – Inside the World of Country Music*. New York: Carol Publishing Group. p. XIII ¹⁰² Jensen, J. (1998) *The Nashville Sound – Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music*. Tennessee: Vanderbil

¹⁰² Jensen, J. (1998) *The Nashville Sound – Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music.* Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press & the Country Music Foundation Press. p. 9

¹⁰³ Schafer, S. (2012). *Cashville: Dilution of Original Country Music Identity Through Increased Commercialization.* Hamburg: Diplomica. (P) Verlag GMBH. pp. 87-88

explains how the identity of Country music was constructed and reconstructed a number of times throughout its history.

Tichi (1998)¹⁰⁴ in *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars* discusses the importance of Country music radio stations and explains that by 1994 there were nearly 2,500 Country music radio stations in the United States. This is in contrast to Britain which had no dedicated Country music radio stations; Country music was a specialized music genre which, if it did appear on radio stations, it was usually a once a week slot not as part of its core programming.

Hinton (2000)¹⁰⁵ in *Country Roads, How Country Came to Nashville* also discusses the Nashville philosophy of marketing Country music and compares the United States and the United Kingdom's scenes in terms of recording and image. While Baker and Taylor (2007)¹⁰⁶ in *Faking It, The Quest for Authenticity* illustrate how listening to a certain kind of music causes people to find their personal identity and once part of this identity it often becomes enshrined, making it hard to change their views. This helps to provide an explanation why ageing British Country music fans identify with Country music from the 1950s, 60s and 70s but perceive Modern Country music as an 'inauthentic' form of the music.

Rogers (1983)¹⁰⁷ *The Country Music Message: All About Lovin' and Livin'* also discusses the need for constant change in Country music to keep it alive and the alternative is stagnation and death, a fate that appears to have befallen the British Country scene. Rogers also explains how the communication process applies to Country music. How the successful Country

¹⁰⁴ Tichi, C. (1995) 'Country Music; Seriously' in *Readin' Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars.*South Atlantic Quarterly. Winter. 1995. Volume 11, No 1. Durham. (USA): Copyright; Duke University Press. pp. 341-59

¹⁰⁵ Hinton, B. (2000) Country Roads. How Country Came to Nashville. London. Sanctuary Publishing Ltd.

¹⁰⁶ Baker, H. and Taylor, Y. (2007) *Faking It, the Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. New York & London: W.W. Norton and Co. p. 123

¹⁰⁷ Rogers, J. (1983) *The Country Music Message: All About Lovin' and Livin'*. Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall. p. 16

music song's topics, its attitudes, beliefs and behaviour do not deviate far from those of the audience. This was certainly the case with local Country music fans. Three papers were researched to provide reasons for the obsession that many of the local and British Country music fans had with the Nashville Country music scene. Bennett and Peterson (2004)¹⁰⁸ explain that the contemporary tourist industry helps perpetuate some music scenes. They promote and exploit the distinctive aspects of their Country music scene and that the tourist travels to the particular regions or cities with a stock of expectations, which Urry called the 'Tourist Gaze'. Urry and Larson (2011)¹⁰⁹ in *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (3rd Edition) explains such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist technologies such as film, TV, literature, magazines, CDs and DVDs reinforcing 'The Gaze'. Urry and Larson (2011)¹¹⁰ further explain that this anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, is on a different scale from those normally encountered. MacCannell, in his 'Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings' (1973)¹¹¹ believes the tourist is a contemporary pilgrim seeking authenticity in places away from their everyday life. He also explains that they even find pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions alongside the genuinely authentic ones calling them 'staged authenticity', which was observed by this researcher when visiting Nashville and Chicago. Grazian in his essay 'The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity' in Bennett and Peterson, (2004)¹¹² describes similar experiences in the Chicago Blues clubs and bars where some venues have been created to satisfy tourist desires for what they define as, an 'authentic Blues experience'. All of this relates to Liverpool in an interesting way, especially given the decline of the local Country scene for it

¹⁰⁸ Bennett, A. and Peterson, R. A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Petersen, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 1-15

¹⁰⁹ Urry, J. and Larson, J. (2011) The *Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage. p. 3

¹¹⁰ Urry, J. and Larson, J. (2011) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage. p.3

¹¹¹ MacCannell, D. (1973) Staged Authenticity. Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings. in *American Sociological Review*. 79 USA.:Sage Publishing pp. 589-603

¹¹² Grazian, D. (2004) 'The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity' in Bennett, A and Petersen, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual* USA. Vanderbelt University Press. pp. 31-47

not quite fitting into the 'tourist gaze' of invented authenticities surrounding the city and popular music; such an image that one might argue is set to continue and increase as Liverpool expands its tourism remit.

Moore's (2003)¹¹³ Analyzing Popular Music and C Tichi's (1994)¹¹⁴ High Lonesome: The American Culture of Country Music, both provide valuable information for the semiotic analysis of the local Country music. Moore discusses popular music analysis and describes the semiotic analysis of Country songs also explaining that the importance of tonal music phrasing for creating verbal space, while Tichi offers interesting perspectives on semiotic analysis discussing how simplicity of language, emotional voice and the style of music is important in projecting its message. Another book also valuable for semiotic analysis is Hawkins' (2002)¹¹⁵ Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics in which the analysis of popular music is discussed. Hawkins lists the types of compositional features, which may be included in appropriate popular music analysis. The aforementioned (in the introduction) Brian Longhurst's (2007)¹¹⁶ 'Text and Meanings' in Popular Music and Society discusses structural and semiotic approaches to analysing songs explaining the four dimensions along which music can be considered in structural terms. The work of Philip Tagg, one of the world's leading popular music semioticians is also of great use. The majority of Tagg's s¹¹⁷ work is online and his Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music was

¹¹³ Moore, A. F. (2003) *Analyzing Popular Music*. Cambridge. USA: New York University Press. pp. 27-38

¹¹⁴ Tichi, C. (1994) *High Lonesome: the American Culture of Country Music*. Chapel Hill. Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

Hawkins, S. (2002) Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics. Aldershot. Hants, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate. pp. 1-29

¹¹⁶ Longhurst, B. (2007) 'Text and Meanings'. In *Popular Music and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 150-79

¹¹⁷ Tagg, P. (1999) *Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music*. [Online] http://www.tagg.org/texts.html (accessed 10/8/2014)

of great help to this researcher as an undergraduate. Middleton (1992)¹¹⁸ Studying Popular Music also describes the four dimensions by which music can be analysed.

A number of publications relevant to the comprehensive study of The Melrose Abbey were researched. In Fox (2004)¹¹⁹ Real Country Music and Language in Working Class Culture, his ethnographic study of Texas Honky-Tonks, showed a number of similarities between those communities and The Melrose Abbey community in relation to ethnicity, gender, social status, the importance of talk and verbal expression, as well as musical performance. The Calgary Sun (March 28th 2003)¹²⁰ was accessed online to research an article where traditional Country singer George Jones criticises modern Country artists such as Shania Twain as not caring about Country and using Country music as a stepping-stone to success. This article shows that the views held by local Country music fans are also reflected by their Country music idols. The term 'community' is used rather than 'scene' in The Melrose Abbey case study as this researcher tended to feel that it fitted the differentiation of 'scene' and 'community' suggested by Straw (1991)¹²¹ in Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes, who states that community, 'presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable according to a wide range of sociological variables'. Brocken (2010)¹²² too, felt that a similar approach needed to be taken in regards to Merseyside's 'Folk scene' of the 1960s. Cohen (1999)¹²³ stated that Ruth Finnegan in her reassessment of the notion of musical worlds regarded community as being stable and close-knit.

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¹¹⁸ Middleton, R. (1992) *Studying Popular Music.* Milton Keynes. UK: Open University Press. pp.181-220

¹¹⁹ Fox, A.A. (2004) *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

¹²⁰ Calgary Sun. March 28th 2003 [Online]

http://www.abstracts.net/shania-twain/2003-03html (accessed 12/6/2013)

¹²¹ Straw, W. (1991) 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music' in *Cultural Studies*. Vol 5. No 3. England: Routledge. pp. 368-388

¹²² Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' Chapter 5 in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 107-134

¹²³ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 239-249.

Other research regarding the in-depth case study included Cohen's and McManus' (1991)¹²⁴ Harmonious Relations, Popular Music in Family Life on Merseyside. Here the researchers provided information on George Neild, key member of the Country music community and his musical family. MacElroy (ed) (2009)¹²⁵ Ward Profile, Kirkdale Issue 6, also provided useful information on the ward profile of Kirkdale, where The Melrose Abbey Public House is situated. This study indicated how the composition of the community reflected that of the local population regarding both ethnicity and the working-class nature of the district. Cohen (1993)¹²⁶ also published a research paper 'Ethnography and Popular Music Studies' in Popular Music, Vol 12. No 2, which was also very useful for the case study of The Melrose Abbey public house, explaining that ethnography involves a lengthy period of intimate study highlighting the historical, social and cultural specificity of events, activities, relationships and discourses. Fetterman (1998)¹²⁷ provided a helpful description of ethnography. Lee and Peterson (2004)¹²⁸ in 'Internet- based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt, Country' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R. A. (eds). Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual, while comparing the general characteristics of local scenes with those of the virtual scene, showed that understanding the nuances embedded in the discussions of a scene requires a long exposure to that scene, which was also helpful. This was especially important to The Melrose Abbey community study where rhetoric, rituals and practices would not necessarily be fully

¹²⁴ Cohen, S. and McManus, K. (1991).'The Neilds and McGarrys' in *Harmonious Relations. Popular Music in Family Life on Merseyside*. Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. pp. 38-41.

¹²⁵ McElroy, J. (Ed) (2009) 'Ward Profile. Kirkdale' Issue 6. Aug 2009. Publication No PMD455. Ward Profile 2009 – Kirkdale. Published by Liverpool City Council Economic Regeneration Division, Policy & Programme. Municipal Buildings. Dale St. Liverpool. L2 2DH 20/8/09

¹²⁶ Cohen, S. (1993) 'Ethnography and Popular Music Studies' in *Popular Music*. Vol 12. No2. (May 1993) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 123-138

¹²⁷ Fetterman, D. M. (1998) Ethnography Step by Step. New York [USA]: SAGE, p. 1

¹²⁸ Lee, S. and Peterson, R. A. (2004) 'Internet- based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt, Country' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R. A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual* Nashville. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press pp. 187-204

understood by the casual observer. Jetto $(2010)^{129}$ also described the characteristics of a virtual scene.

Another valuable source, was being allowed access to BBC Radio Merseyside broadcaster and renowned music journalist, Spencer Leigh's, personal archive of tapes of his 1989 twelve-part BBC Radio Merseyside broadcasts *Good Ol' Boys*¹³⁰ about the history of Country music. This provided a number of primary source quotes from people involved in the scene both locally and nationally, including artists, journalists, promoters and broadcasters as well as record company representatives. These programmes not only presented views on the origins of the local scene, but also its influences on local popular music acts. They also highlighted many problems that were perceived to be affecting the scene, such as the negative effect that Western dressed fans had on its image, the poor quality of British Country music recordings, the conservative attitude of the British Country music fans. Other factors they perceived as problems were artists not pursuing a British identity, how a regionalised scene restricted the progress of local acts, how, by not having the backing and infrastructure of a major record label, presented considerable difficulties for a British Country music act to progress into the mainstream market.

The flow of music into the local Country music scene was researched. A number of people interviewed in the local scene and quotes from a number of sources including those in the academic publications, and the Spencer Leigh programmes, claim that an important route for them in obtaining Country music was through Liverpool seamen bringing back records from America. This claim was examined through the academic research on the Liverpool scene by

¹²⁹ Jetto, B. (2010) 'Music Blogs, Music Scenes, Sub-Cultural Capital: Emerging Practices in Music Blogs. in Mousoutzanis, A. and Riha, D. (eds). *New Media and the Politics of Online Communities*. Oxford. U. K: Interdisciplinary Press. pp. 69-76 ¹³⁰ *Good Ol' Boys*. 27th May -12th August. 1989 BBC Radio Merseyside.UK. Aaccessed from Spencer Leigh's personal collection of taped radio programmes.

Cohen and Brocken and two websites, *Cunard Yanks* (2009)¹³¹ which discusses how Liverpool seamen regularly visited American ports and brought back various items not available in Liverpool, which included many albums. The second of these websites, Bill Harry's Merseybeat Ltd *The Birth of Merseybeat*¹³² discussed how he believed the 'Cunard Yanks' was a myth that had little effect on the music of Liverpool and that the local groups got most of their music from record stores. Clayson and Leigh (2003)¹³³ in *The Walrus Was Ringo, 101 Beatle Myths* also claimed that the Cunard Yanks 'is a good romantic story' that has persisted for more than forty years but it remains untrue. Brocken in his soon to be published work (2015)¹³⁴ concerning Beatles tourism in *Liverpool: The 21st Century Legacy of The Beatles* argues that from research thus far gathered, for him the Cunard Yanks story is a function myth, which worked in Liverpool due to its romanticising of both the sea and working-class cultures. He does admit the possibility of some recordings finding their way back to Liverpool but also holds the conviction that the story was essentially community rather than factually-based.

The narrative of the 'Cunard Yanks' has been repeated in a number of publications about Liverpool or its music. In *Our Liverpool: Memories of A Life* in *Disappearing Britain*, Dudgeon (2011)¹³⁵ describes how cooks, stewards and waiters on the Cunard Line from Liverpool to New York brought back clothing, cameras, reel-to-reel tape recorders and the latest 45s. Dudgeon states that many items such as clothes were much cheaper than in Britain as the rate of exchange was \$3.50 to the pound. He even states that a full jukebox of records

¹³¹ Cunard. *Cunard Yanks.* [Online]

http://www.cunardyanks.org/Tall%20Tales2.htm (accessed 12/3/09)

¹³² Harry, W. Merseybeat Ltd. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2*.[Online]

http://mersey-beat.com (accessed 7/5/2010)

¹³³ Clayson, A. & Leigh, S. (2003) The Walrus Was Ringo, A 101 Beatle Myths. Surrey U. K: Chrome Dreams. p. 54

¹³⁴ Brocken, M. (2015) (Due date) *Liverpool: The 21st Century Legacy of The Beatles* .Farnham: Ashgate.

Dudgeon, J.P. (2011) *Our Liverpool, Memories of a Life in Disappearing Britain.* London: Headline Publishing Group. pp. 254-256

was brought back which ended up in The Amber Club located in Hanover Street. Millard (2012)¹³⁶ in *Beatlemania, Technology, Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America* describes the Cunard Yanks, which he ascribes to all merchant seamen and not just those who worked the Cunard line, as one of the keys to unlocking the secrets of American popular culture to those who stayed at home. As such, they were agents of the Americanization of Liverpool and part of this included bringing back Country music records – but he provides little in the way of evidence for such claims. Millard also discusses other sources of Country music such as the P/X at the American Forces base at Burtonwood, near Warrington, AFN radio and record stores. Norman's (2004)¹³⁷ *Shout! The True Story of The Beatles* describes how young Liverpudlian deck hands and stewards were called Cunard Yanks because of their flashy New York clothes and that they brought home records not available in Britain – but again provides no evidence for such statements. Flannery (with Brocken) *Standing in the Wings* (2013)¹³⁸ describes how he observed American servicemen in local Liverpool pubs at that time helping support claims that American bases were facilitators of Country music records into the Liverpool scene.

Another important source stated by many of the local informants was the radio and in particular, the American Forces Network (AFN) and Radio Luxembourg and that many of them felt the BBC radio prior to the 1960s played very little Country music. These roots of Country music were researched. The research paper 'The American Forces Network in the Cold War. Military Broadcasting in Post War Germany' by Craig (1998)¹³⁹ explained how the AFN broadcasting headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany in the 1950s was powerful enough

¹³⁶ Millard, A. (2012). *Beatlemania. Technology Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America*. Baltimore. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press. pp. 70-71

¹³⁷ Norman, P. (2004) Shout! The True Story of The Beatles. London: Pan MacMillan. p. 38

¹³⁸ Flannery, J. with Mike Brocken (2013), *Brian Epstein, The Beatles and Me: Standing in the Wings*, Stroud: The History Press. p. 67

¹³⁹ Craig, R.S. (1988) 'The American Forces Network in the Cold War. Military Broadcasting in Post War Germany' in *The Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. (Vol 32. No 3. Summer 1988. (No publisher) pp. 307-321

to transmit across Europe and that it had a large 'shadow audience' of people listening to it. He states that in the year 1954, it received 21,000 cards from British listeners and, by 1955, it was transmitting 19 hours of programmes each day. Also, because it had an agreement with the entertainment guilds and unions to waive any fees and residuals on programme material, they could produce almost cost free music shows unlike the BBC or other radio stations. The website *This is AFN* Christman (2010)¹⁴⁰ discusses the history of AFN from its beginnings in London during the war to its move to its headquarters in Frankfurt in 1945 and the setting up of seven other stations in other German cities. Christman further explained that many celebrities visited AFN Frankfurt to entertain the troops via radio, which included Hank Williams and Hank Snow. Personal email correspondence about Country music programmes on AFN from Gary L Bautell, Chief AFN Europe Radio¹⁴¹ and Dr John Provan, ¹⁴² AFN historian were received.

Barnard (1989)¹⁴³ in his work *On the Radio, Music Radio in Britain* discussed how Radio Luxembourg could play sponsored inexpensive shows which incurred very little expense as Luxembourg was an outlying PPL territory and that by 1957 had dropped its quiz type shows to become fully committed to a Pop service. Critics of the Cunard Yank route might suggest it is here where one might be able to find an authentic 'antithesis' to the Cunard Yanks narrative. Barnard also explained how its decline was affected by pirate radio and BBC Radio 1 in the 1960s. The website, Whirligig Snippets *Programme Parade 1948* (2010)¹⁴⁴ discusses the BBC radio broadcast in 1948 showing the programme guides for one week from Sunday

¹⁴⁰ Christman, T. *This is AFN.* [Online]

http://www.usarmygermany.com/units/AFNEurope/USAREUR_AFNEurope.htm (accessed 5/3/2010)

¹⁴¹ Bautell, G. E-mail Jan 2010

¹⁴² Provan, J. E-mail Jan 2010

¹⁴³ Barnard, S. (1989) On the Radio: Music Radio in Britain. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. pp.32-49

¹⁴⁴ Whirligig Snippets. *Programme Parade of 1948.* [Online]

http://www.whirligig-tv.co.uk/tv/memories/snippets/snippets52.htm (5/3/2010)

11th January to Saturday 17th January 1948 for the Light, Home and Third services. It showed very little popular music was included in their programming. On the website, BBC Radio Rewind *BBC Radio History 1945-67* (2010)¹⁴⁵ discusses the lack of popular music in the Light and Home service programmes in the 1950s and explained, even with the emergence of Rock and Roll in the mid 1950s, popular music could only be heard on a few BBC radio programmes such as 'Pick of the Pops' *and* 'Two Way Family Favourites'.

Country music was played on the BBC radio in the forties and fifties and a number of informants remember listening to a regular Country music show by Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm. Campbell was Canadian but his band was made up of British artists. This show not only featured Country songs, but also acted out the Cowboy myth with Mounties, Indians, bunkhouses, and effects such as prairie winds and horses, reinforcing the image British Country fans had of 'The West'. On the website, 'BBC WW2. *People's War,-War Memories of John Percival*, Waugh (2010), 146 John Percival remembers how on VE Day in Birmingham the celebration street party was entertained by a Country band dressed in white fringed Cowboy costumes and he felt they were following a trend set by the popular radio programme, 'Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm'. Also obtained were two original songbooks by Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm in the 1940s, 147 which show that the songs performed were almost entirely the Singing Cowboy type of songs such as, Home on the Range, The Red River Valley and Bury Me Out on the Prairie. The foreword in these publications emphasises the Cowboy image of Big Bill Campbell. This image and myth of the American West was reinforced by Campbell in his

¹⁴⁵ Radio Rewind. *BBC Radio History.* 1945-1967 .[Online]

http://www.radiorewind.co.uk/radio2/light_Programme_page.htm (accessed 5/3/2010)

¹⁴⁶ Waugh, J. BBC World War 2. *People's War, - War Memories of John Percival.* [Online]

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/52/a5079152.html (accessed 5/3/2010)

¹⁴⁷ Big Bill Campbell Rocky Mountain Rhythm Songbook 1945. London: Victoria Music Publishing Co.

Big Bill Campbell Album No 3 1947 [songbook]. London. Victoria Music Publishing Co.

theatre shows to the British public. Arthur Lloyd's website *The Musical Hall and Theatre History*, ¹⁴⁸ discuss how after the war Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountaineers played the Pavilion Theatre, Liverpool to a sell-out audience and the show included Cowboys on horses, American Indian shows, rope tricks, Canadian Mounties, etc.

The national Country music scene was also researched. Kean (2005)¹⁴⁹ 'Country Music' in Kaufman, W and Macpherson, H.S. (eds). *Britain and the Americas Culture, Politics and History* discusses the difficulty that Country music has to obtain acceptance in the British market. He states that one issue has been the music's appeal in the United States itself, where its' white, working-class Southern roots have often been linked to an overt patriotism. This makes it more difficult for British audiences to draw a distinction between it as a form of cultural expression enjoyed for its own sake and the broader context of US political power. Kean points out that this is a distinction they had been able to make with regard to other music forms e.g., Blues, Soul, Jazz and Rock and Roll. Pierce, in *The Bottom Line is Money* (1994)¹⁵⁰ discusses the American Country Music Association's attempts to promote and market New Country into the mainstream Pop market in Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s with very little success. This may be because the marketing strategies were not able to persuade sufficient numbers of record buyers to purchase 'New Country' music in any large quantities.

Also researched was the British Country Music's website, ¹⁵¹ that provides a virtual scene giving information on forthcoming gigs and artists' information. This website provides a

¹⁴⁸ Lloyd, A. Arthur Lloyd.co.uk. *The Musical Hall and Theatre History Website*. [Online]

http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Liverpool/PavilionTheatreLiverpool.htm#Reflections>(accessed 24/9/2013)

¹⁴⁹ Kean, A. (2005) 'Country Music' in Kaufman, W and Macpherson, H.S. (eds). *Britain and the Americas: Culture, Politics and History*. Santa Barbara. California: ABC/LLIO. pp. 289-291

¹⁵⁰ Pierce, J. E. (1994) *The Bottom Line is Money.* Westport, Connecticut. USA: The Bold Strummer Ltd. pp. 274-275

¹⁵¹ British Country Music Website. [Online]

http://www.countrymusic.org.uk (accessed 11/11/09)

discussion forum titled The Trouble with Country, 152 which has quotes from fans, artists and promoters about the problems related to the present-day scene. These problems include the 'blame culture', the conservative attitude of members of the community and the perceived future of the music that still ties itself to its historical past with no attempt to form its own national identity. The website of the British Country Music Association ¹⁵³ provides further evidence of the problems of a declining scene. The association, formed in 1968 and was the main national organisation of the British Country Music community, which has recently (2009) announced it can no longer continue and is winding up.

Other researched areas include, publications such as Mervyn Conn's autobiography, Mr Music Man, My Life in Show Business, (2010)¹⁵⁴ which discusses his life as a promoter and how he established the Wembley Festivals dealing with artists and the problems associated with running a major festival. The Wembley Festival along with other large festivals such as Presthaven, were considered important translocal scenes by a number of fans and artists were researched. A number of websites were also researched such as Graham Lees' Country Music in Great Britain, 155 which discusses the British Country music scene from the 1940s including the first Country music clubs in Liverpool and Manchester, Liverpool and national artists, festivals etc. Stan Launden, radio presenter and Country music journalist's website Wembley, 156 provides a history of all Country music artists who performed at the Wembley Festivals from 1969 to 1991. The Shootist.co.uk¹⁵⁷ is the website of the British Western Re-

¹⁵² British Country Music Website. *The Trouble with Country* .[Online]

(accessed 11/11/09)

¹⁵³ British Country Music Association. [Online]

http://www.cmib.co.uk/bcma (accessed 10/12/09)

¹⁵⁴ Conn, M. (2010) *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business*. U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North.

¹⁵⁵ Lees, G. Golden Graham On Line. *Country Music in Britain* .[Online]

http://zoom.host-care.com/~grhamle/britishcountry.html (accessed 25/10/2010)

¹⁵⁶ Launden, S. Wembley .[Online]http://www.stanlaundon.com/wembley.html (accessed 21/10/2010)

¹⁵⁷ The Shootists.co.uk. *Club Links Sutlers and Resources for the Western Re-enactor* .[Online]

(accessed 20/1/2011)

enactors, whose scene grew out of the Country music Cowboy clubs and now claim to be 'authentic' re-enactors of what many of the researchers call the mythical image of the American Cowboy. These members have created their own reality where gunfights and singing Cowboys are authentic whilst line-dancing is not allowed, as it is perceived as inauthentic.

The websites of three local 'Western' Country music clubs, the Leasowe Castle Country and Western music club in Wallasey, ¹⁵⁸ the Phoenix Rebels in Southport, ¹⁵⁹ and the Phoenix Country Music Club in Runcorn, ¹⁶⁰ were researched. This showed they had many similar shared values, rituals and tastes, e.g. dressing in Western wear clothes such as Cowboys, Indians, Civil War soldiers, Mexicans, Southern belles and saloon girls, wearing replica guns and having staged gunfights. Many took Western aliases such as Doc Holiday and Rattlesnake Annie. In these clubs, they only danced to Country music partner and line-dances and they finished the night with the Trilogy, a ritual ceremony carried out to the Mickey Newbury / Elvis Presley song, 'The American Trilogy'. ¹⁶¹

Country music magazines, a number of which were produced in the 1970s were researched. They were important to the research as they provided valuable information about the local, British and international Country music scenes at the time. They also contain the views of Country music artists, fans, journalists and radio presenters. This is important because these are the views that they held at that time and are not a retrospective view of the writer's opinion that may be clouded by hindsight, memory lapse or how they may think now. These

¹⁵⁸ Leasowe Castle Country and Western Country Music Club. [Online] http://www.Leasowecastlecountry nwesternmusicclub.co.uk> (accessed 19/5/2010)

¹⁵⁹ The Phoenix Rebels .[Online] http://www.pheonix rebels.com/aboutus.html (accessed 20/1/2011)

¹⁶⁰ The Phoenix Country Music Club. [Online] http://www.pheonixcmc.co.uk/trilogy.html (accessed 26/10/09)

¹⁶¹ Phoenix CMC. (2009) *Trilogies* [Online]

http://www.phoenixcmc.co.uk/trilogy.html (Accessed 26/10/09)

magazines include, Country Music Spotlight, Country Music Searchlight, Country Music People, Country, The Okie Country & Western Magazine, North Country Music and Cross Country.

In summary, a review of the literature has shown that very little academic research into the local Liverpool Country music scene or into the wider British Country music scene has been conducted and because of this a wide variety of non-academic sources such as websites and Country music magazines have been researched. Where possible this non-academic research was used only to corroborate the more generic academic publications or primary sourced research.

Chapter 3: A Brief Narrative of 'The Narrative which is Country Music' in the USA.

To understand why a particular genre of American music, in this case Country music, became so popular in Liverpool we also need to understand its growth and development in the United States. This will help us to understand how both the local Liverpool Country music scene and the translocal Country music scenes developed and for a time sustained in Britain. It will also partially help to explain why people in these scenes identified with a particular 'construct' of authenticity and found other 'constructs' inauthentic, why certain signifiers were important to them, why most of them did not accept British Country music as authentic, and why they came to regard Nashville as the spiritual home of Country music. By understanding the growth and development of Country music in America, we can actually contribute to our understanding of several reasons for the developments, maintenance and decline of the Liverpool Country music scene. Another influencing factor to consider regarding American Country music is how its authenticities and identities have been constructed and reconstructed throughout its history. In addition, how Nashville, a city with no Country music roots, became the spiritual and commercial home of Country music and why the Country music coming out of that city today is considered an anathema to most British Country music fans. Wall (2003)¹⁶² explains that: 'Histories construct a narrative of the past in which the significance of certain events is emphasised over others and ideas of cause and effect are woven into an unfolding story'.

It must also be understood, however, that the history detailed here is also part of the greater narrative of all commercial music in America and that it provides us with a classic example of a spatial paradigm of popular music authenticity created by the US music industry,

¹⁶² Wall, T. (2003) Studying *Popular Music Culture*. London: Hodder Arnold. p.215

Nashville. Such strength has this creation-cum-narration that it has been a powerful influence upon possibly all parochial Country music scenes across the globe. If, for example, the history of Country music in Texas or of Bluegrass music was as powerful as that concerning Nashville, the narrative would undoubtedly be different.

The term Country music did not really exist until the late-1930s. It was originally called 'Old Time' music, which then changed to 'Hillbilly' music followed by 'Country and Western'. Malone (1974)¹⁶³ explains that originally the word 'Western' represented the importance of Western Swing, a west-Texas derived dance band music represented by the likes of Bob Wills and Spade Cooley. Later this came to represent the 'singing Cowboy' image. ¹⁶⁴ This moniker was eventually dropped during the 1970s in favour of 'Country' music, Peterson (1997). ¹⁶⁵ This term is still used, however; there are genre-based subsets in Country music (as in other genres) such as 'New Country' or 'Contemporary Country'. Charlie Louvin, of the Louvin Brothers, stated on programme 5 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series presented by Spencer Leigh *Good Ol' Boys*, (1989)¹⁶⁶ that their music was originally called 'Hillbilly' but went through so many name changes that when asked now, what type of music they play he simply replies 'Louvin Brothers music'.

Country music largely evolved out of the Folk songs, ballads and dances brought to America by Anglo-Saxon and Celtic settlers in rural areas such as the Appalachian Mountains in Tennessee. As with the Blues, the commercialization of this music tended to start in the

¹⁶³ Malone, B.C. (1974) *Country Music, U.S.A.* Austin Texas: University of Texas Press. p.160

¹⁶⁴ To many members of the local scene, 'Western' represented the Cowboy image of Country music

¹⁶⁵ Peterson, R.A. (1977) 'Fabricating the Image of Authenticity' in *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.55-94

¹⁶⁶ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 5. 24/6/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

1920s. As Peterson (1997)¹⁶⁷ explains (to paraphrase) at that time, there was great concern about America's dependence on Europe for models of artistic inspiration and many influential critics argued that America should attempt to search out authentic American music from its 'own' rural past (in spite of it being largely from Europe in the first place). This resulted in US record companies sending out A&R men across largely rural America searching for 'Authentic American Music'. As part of this, New York-based OKEH records visited Atlanta Georgia and one of the artists recorded was a 55-year-old fiddle player, John Carson, Escott (2003). Although the record label only reluctantly released his song, 'Log Cabin in the Rain' not believing this raw fiddle sound could be successful, (being used to trained voices and a more polished sound), the recording sold over 500,000 copies. Carson's success resulted in a number of other record companies sending A&R men to the Southern states to record this 'authentic' sound. Unfortunately, most of the artists signed were similar fiddle-playing, middle-aged men and they did not have the same lasting success as the original recording.

In 1927, however, Ralph Peers, working for Victor Records travelled to Bristol, Tennessee and advertised for artists in the local paper. He signed two artists on the same day and these became the backbone of his catalogue and the 'Hillbilly' sound: the Carter family and Jimmy Rodgers. Together they became massively successful signings. The Carter family had Sara Carter on lead vocals and as Davidoff (1997)¹⁷⁰ stated:

¹⁶⁷ Peterson, R. A. (1977) 'Old Time Image of Authenticity'. in *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.55-66

¹⁶⁸ Escott, C.(2003) The Story of Country Music, London: BBC World Wide Ltd. p. 21

¹⁶⁹ Although one semi-operatic balladeer by the name of Vernon Dalhart also scored a success with his rendition of The Wreck of the Old '97'

¹⁷⁰ Davidoff, N. (1977) 'Deep Country. Three Women, Sara Carter, Kitty Wells and Patsy Cline. Part 2'.in In the Country of Country: People and Places in American Music. New York: Pantheon Books. p. 54

She had a raw sombre tone that infused simply worded songs with intense layers of feeling [...] in time, the unembellished emotical character in Sara Carter's singing would make the Carter family immensely popular across the working man's South. She took tender subjects – orphaned children, worried men, abandoned women and with them stirred something powerful in people.

Jimmy (Jimmie) Rodgers sang and wrote songs about his life, loves and hardships, and these became successful throughout not only America, but also other parts of the world. He also influenced many future Country artists such as Hank Snow and Hank Williams. Rodgers came to be known as 'The Father of Country Music'. Davidoff (1997)¹⁷¹

To the American public the word 'Hillbilly' in the 1920s did not necessarily carry the negative connotations that it does today. These artists were seen as representing the pioneers who 'discovered' and built America. Honest, simple people who possessed the American values on which the Country was built, their music was seen as equally honest and uncontaminated by the commercial world. In real terms of course, the genre of 'Hillbilly' music was always going to be, once recorded, a commercial commodity.

Ralph Peers had also been involved in some of the early unsuccessful Hillbilly signings and as Peterson (1997)¹⁷² explains, that after these failures the record industry realised that to the consumer, authenticity was not synonymous with historical accuracy. They came to realise that signing artists who were accurate and authentic representations of the actual music, was no guarantee that the public would purchase these records across the US. They also began to realise that the idea of authenticity could be created and as such, it did not really have to be either an accurate or a real representation, but merely have to appear so. Peers appeared to understand that as far as the recorded 'sound picture' was concerned certain images and

¹⁷¹ Davidoff, N. (1997). 'Prologue: The Spirit of Jimmie Rodgers', in *In the Country of Country: People and Places in American Music.* New York: Pantheon Books. p. 3

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¹⁷² Peterson, R.A. (1997) *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. p. 5

signifiers fitted the American public's image of the simple Hillbilly life. As Bufwack (1998)¹⁷³ explains, the Carters wore Hillbilly-style clothes and Jimmy Rodgers often wore a railway brakeman's dungarees for affect. Unlike the Carters, Rodgers did not live on a farm and instead carried with him a working-class image of a railway brakeman. To the public this blue-collar image emphasised both his and the listeners' working-class roots. At that time railways were still regarded as not only having opened-up the frontiers, but having done so via the physical toils of the working-classes. This image of Country music coming from 'pure' rural and working-class roots remains one of the main signifiers of authenticity in Country music.

Even to this day, Country music artists emphasise their rural and working-class backgrounds so that they appear more authentic in the eyes of their audiences. As Tichi (1994)¹⁷⁴ explains, Country music presents itself via its 'authenticity' as the 'real' in human life: essential, unadorned and fundamental. Country songs were presented as realistic reproductions of life, with their themes such as family, love, heartbreak, religion and hardships presented via what might be described as unadorned language and rhythms. So, although they were often considered unsophisticated and over-sentimentalised, they were massively successful with many working-class Americans. It has been frequently discovered via this writer's research that such types of Country songs connected with people from the Liverpool Country music scene, with many often claiming they had lived these stories in their own lives. Country music, therefore can be seen to have fulfilled one of the primary requisites of all popular music in that, despite its commercial re-creations to suit a market, it is still able to be social in its own particular way, representing what popular music academics discuss as 'structural

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Carolina Press. p. 47

¹⁷³ Bufwack, M.A. (1998) 'Girls with Guitar and Fringe and Sequins and Rhinestones, Silk, Lace and Leather', in Tichi, C. (ed). *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars*. Durham USA: Duke University Press. p. 155 ¹⁷⁴ Tichi, C. (1994) *High Lonesome: the American Culture of Country Music*. Chapel Hill. Carolina: University of North

homology'. This helps us to understand that no music can be de-contextualised and that music can never be a reduction to the circumstances of its material presence or indeed its articulation – in other words people 'read' Country music as a text, which embodies their lives.

From the earliest days of professionally recorded Country music, the image projected was that of a performer who loved the music, performing his or her songs in a heartfelt and sincere way and it was this that helped gained recognition and fame. This image was highly affective, therefore successful. As Baker and Taylor (2007)¹⁷⁵ state: 'There was a belief that there was something innately authentic about the lives of the poor and downtrodden and that this music somehow emerged fully formed from the soul, from wells to which the affluent no longer have access'. As Jensen (1998)¹⁷⁶ also suggests: 'The authenticity of Country music is a narrative; a myth told by and passed on to those who care about the music'.

In reality, Jensen explains that:

Although the music is commercially constructed via technology. Those who create, perform and market Country music still work hard to maintain a rural, pastoral image; an image that appears detached from and is utterly uninterested in the technology and economic of commercial music.

It was in the 1930s that the next identity, courtesy of what might be described as an audio-visual compact, entered the Country music scene: the 'Singing Cowboy'. Singing Cowboys were partially due to the exposure of the Western image via the merging of sound and film and for a time both the Cowboy and the Hillbilly images were popular with the record-buying public. While this seems an improbable pairing, to the American public both had similar

¹⁷⁵ Baker. H. and Taylor, Y. (2007) 'Sugar Sugar'. in *Faking It. The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music.* New York & London: WW Norton & Co. p. 123

¹⁷⁶ Jensen, J. (1998) 'What Makes Country Music Authentic'. in *The Nashville Sound-Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music*. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press and the Country Music Foundation Press. p. 9

visible and audible narratives of self-reliance, freedom and individuality and these were considered foundational ingredients. However, as Country music historian Malone (2002)¹⁷⁷ explained, the Cowboy image was a construct and by no means reflected the lives of the original cattle ranchers and cow-pokers of the Nineteenth Century (many of whom were actually Mexican). Additionally Murdoch (2001)¹⁷⁸.states 'It was a myth deliberately invented by a relatively small number of mostly identifiable people with specific purposes in mind – to make the Cowboy a mythical hero'.

Wolff and Duane (2000)¹⁷⁹ further explain that:

As America drifted further from those 'wild west' days, nostalgia grows stronger and Cowboy legends grew tall and many of the West's best known figures (Wild Bill Hickock, Jesse James) and most famous stories (Gunfight at the OK Corral) have been sensationalised and hopelessly romanticised by pulp writers and journalists in magazines, newspapers and dime store novels.

Thus, the Cowboy hero myth succeeded beyond the inventors' hopes. This image struck a chord in the American psyche and continued to do so down the years. Murdoch (2001)¹⁸⁰ suggests that, for many Americans, what made America unique was exemplified via its conquest of the American West. He explains that to them this was their 'creation myth', which one might also argue acts to this very day as a function myth – something that has a particular function in real life. To the American public a world of prairies and open spaces where right triumphed and a person could solve their problems by simple choices and direct action, was 'real' in a kind of 'pure' sense, even though such a world never really existed in

¹⁷⁷ Malone, B. C. (2002) *Country Music U.S.A.* 2nd Rev Ed. Austin Texas: University of Texas Press.

¹⁷⁸ Murdoch, A. F. (2001) *The American West. The Invention of a Myth*. Cardiff. UK: Welsh Academic Press. Ashley Drake Publishing Ltd. p. XII

¹⁷⁹ Wolff, C. K. and Duane, O. (2000) 'Beyond the Sunset. Singing Cowboys and Western Fantasies'. in Country Music; The Rough Guide. London: Rough Guides Ltd p. 45

¹⁸⁰ Murdoch, A. F. (2001) *The American West. The Invention of a Myth*. Cardiff. UK: Welsh Academic Press. Ashley Drake Publishing Ltd. p. 14.

reality. Murdoch (2001)¹⁸¹ also states that this myth for the most part was created not by Westerners, but was invented by Easterners most of whom had no contact with the West. The growth of the myth of the West therefore coincided with the growth of modern mass media. It was a marketable product, which they not only successfully sold to America, but also successfully exported to many other countries.

As suggested above, this myth was transferred successfully to radio and then in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s to the cinema. 'Republic Films' made numerous successful Cowboy films and one of the characters in them was the 'Singing Cowboy', a complete invention as Cowboys contributed nothing to American music. In fact, probably the only Cowboys who owned guitars were the aforementioned Mexican vaqueros. The most successful Singing Cowboys, Gene Autry, Tex Ritter and Roy Rogers, 182 provided many signifiers such as the Cowboy hat, boots, shirts, guitars, etc and their songs became known as 'Western' songs. Their success led to many artists switching to dress in Cowboy signifiers such as Ernest Tubb changing his stage image from Hillbilly to Cowboy but he still sang the same Hillbilly-type songs. 183

Both the Singing Cowboy and the Hillbilly characters in Country music were constructed images selectively created to provide a positive image of the music, but while the Cowboy image continued to have a high positive profile, the Hillbilly image became burdened with negative stereotypes such as being uneducated, bootlegging spirits during prohibition, and via stereotypes such as 'shotgun marriages'. This led to those artists still dressing as Hillbillies switching to dress in Cowboy signifiers and the name of the music changing from Hillbilly or

¹⁸¹ Murdoch, A. F. (2001) *The American West. The Invention of a Myth*. Cardiff. UK: Welsh Academic Press. Ashley Drake Publishing Ltd. p. 26

¹⁸² Even John Wayne played singing Cowboy roles such as 'Sandy Saunders, The Singing Cowboy'

¹⁸³ When this researcher visited Ernest Tubb's record store in Downtown Nashville, there were numerous images of him in his Cowboy signifiers. There were none from his 'Hillbilly period'.

Western, to Western Swing and then Country and Western music. By the 1950s the Singing Cowboy image in the cinema had started to date, Rex Allen Senior was the last of the successful Singing Cowboys on the screen. (Dellinger, P. Website *Rex Allen*)¹⁸⁴ Cowboy films, however, remained very successful during that period, so too the many Cowboy TV series. Importantly, many local Country music fans in Liverpool grew up with this Cowboy image in the cinema, TV and in comics, e.g., The Eagle, The Knockout and Radio Fun. Their heroes and the music became an extension of an image, which for many came to represent shared semantic (or semiotic) states being transmitted not only from the United States to Liverpool via mass media, but also from generation to generation. For many locals, Country music had a 'voice' that focused meaning. The very sound of Country music enabled people to pull into focus what was perhaps previously unfocused. Country music became a matrix.

Nashville is considered the spiritual and commercial home of Country music but, in 1945, that was not the case as Wolff (1977)¹⁸⁵ explains. Country music grew up in several key centres across America, including for example, Atlanta - the first Country recording centre; Chicago – home of one of the first successful Country music radio stations; Southern California – home of the Singing Cowboys; Bakersfield California – home of 'The Bakersfield Sound' and Austin, Texas – home of 'Outlaw Country music'. There were also many separate styles of Country music, including old time[y] fiddling, square-dance music, Western Swing, Hillbilly, Cowboy music, and Bluegrass. It was in fact a horizontally integrated industry with many diverse aspects. However, by the late-1940s, the vertically integrated sector of the industry had settled in Nashville and a mainstream sound grew out of this organisational structure with newer artists such as Webb Pierce and Marty Robbins, using the same instrumentation and often the same musicians. Older forms of Country music

¹⁸⁴ Dellinger, P. *Rex Allen* .[Online] http://www.b-westerns.com/rallen.htm (accessed 3/5/2012)

¹⁸⁵ Wolff, C. K. (1977) *Tennessee Strings: Story of Tennessee Music*. Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press. p. VII

became marginalized and new artists had to fit into 'The Nashville Sound'. These new artists dressed like film stars in designer rhinestone costumes, drove expensive Cadillacs and Pontiacs, had large mansions with swimming pools but still stressed their poor rural roots.

This paradox did not alienate its Southern working-class fan base; in fact, these artists were seen as 'Country boys made good' and this was seen as their reward for their hard working talent. Since then Nashville has remained at the forefront of Country music's commercial development, and is mainly responsible for the music achieving worldwide popularity and significance. Yet despite this commercial dominance there still exist many local Country music scenes with different styles of Country music that are successful within their own areas and according to different paradigms of authenticity.

Perhaps the most important reason why Nashville came to prominence was the popular WSM radio show 'The Grand Ole Opry'. While today, to Nashvillians, the Country music industry is an integral part of the [music] business community, this was not how it was in the 1940s and 1950s. Nashville did not have a Country music scene, as such. There were few local Country bands and no significant spaces where Country music was played, except the Grand Ole Opry, which it seems was mainly attended by people from outside Nashville. Indeed Malone (2006)¹⁸⁷ states that by the late '40s the Opry was peopled by visitors from all over the United States, Canada and other countries who felt that before they died they had to make at least one trip to what was viewed as the 'Mecca' of Country music.

¹⁸⁶ These artists' expensive customised cars are prominently displayed in The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum of Country Music in Downtown Nashville.

¹⁸⁷ Malone, B. C. (2002) 'the Boom Period: The Emergence of a Big Business. 1946-53'. in *Country Music U.S.A.* 2nd Revised Edition. Austin Texas: University of Texas Press. . pp.199-246

Scott Farragher, who was born and raised in Nashville, in his book *Music City Babylon* (1992)¹⁸⁸ remembers how the Country music artists and industry personnel were called 'Those music people' or 'Hillbillies' (indicating a lower status stereotype) many coming from the American Southern states, and locals it seems, kept their distance. Farragher states:

They were there but our worlds never met and Country music was almost never mentioned and when it was mentioned it was usually with sarcasm as if to imply that it was a lower form of music. We did not know what to think of Country music. We never listened to it on radio and could not understand why anybody would drive down to Nashville to visit the 'Grand Ole Uproar' as we called it. 189

It was only as this vertically integrated Country music model of business grew and impacted significantly on the local economy, that popular music became accepted as a legitimate form of business: now, of course, it is an important part of the Nashville and Tennessee economy.

According to Faragher (1992)¹⁹⁰ The Grand Ole Opry, which was the main reason for this rise of the Country music industry in Nashville, was originally called the 'WSM Barn Dance', a programme of Hillbilly music broadcast from WSM radio studios in Downtown Nashville in 1925. The Mutual Insurance Company owned WSM and the WSM call signal stood for 'We Serve Millions'. By 1925, this was actually one of many barn dance programmes broadcast on US radio stations. It was only when competitor broadcaster NBC picked it up and syndicated it across America, that the show achieved national popularity. It was the popularity of the show that caused it to be moved in 1941 to the Ryman Auditorium

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¹⁸⁸ Faragher, S. (1992) 'Author to Reader'. In Music *City Babylon – Inside the World of Country Music*. New York: Carol Publishing Group. p. XIII.

Faragher, S. (1992) 'Author to Reader'. in *Music City Babylon – Inside the World of Country Music*. New York: Carol Publishing Group. p. XIII.

¹⁹⁰ Faragher, S. (1992) 'Author to Reader' in *Music City Babylon – Inside The World of Country Music*. New York: Carol Publishing Group. p. XIV

built originally as the Union Gospel Tabernacle in 1892, which was also used as a theatre and concert hall. The Ryman came to be known somewhat ironically, as 'The Mother Church of Country Music'. 191 The radio show worked both horizontally by attracting artists looking to play the Opry, to move to Nashville; this in turn worked vertically via attracting songwriters, publishers and major record labels. Once major record labels such as MGM and RCA Victor came to Nashville in the 1940s and early 1950s, they took commercial control of the Country music industry. They adopted standard organizational structures, technologies and marketing strategies, which proved to be highly successful. These companies wanted to take Country music away from its rural simplicities and into the mass market, but in order to do this, the Nashville sound needed to exorcise those aforementioned elements of ridicule and disdain. This included to a degree, the Hillbilly clothes, hay bales, wagon wheels and instruments such as the fiddle. As Jensen (1998)¹⁹² explains, in doing this, however, they also realised that by doing so they would exorcise the very generic markers that actually made it Country to the traditional Country music fans; such signifiers were intrinsic to the identity of Country music. The recording companies therefore needed to moderate rather than change how fans called forth meaning from Country music.

They did this by signing new artists who they hoped would be popular with the record buying public. The most popular signing was Hank Williams who held some of the older positive signifiers, such as working-class roots and singing unadorned songs that were realistic reproductions of life. Williams was an artist who sang about these problems - love, heartbreak, etc, and was immensely popular having eleven number-one hits in his short recording life, dying of alcoholism, prescription drug abuse and a weak heart in 1953.

¹⁹¹ Ryman Ryman Auditorium [Online] http://www.opry.com/history (accessed 3/6/2012)

¹⁹²Jensen, J. (1998) *The Nashville Sound – Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music.* Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press & the Country Music Foundation Press. p. 17

Williams is still regarded by most members of the Liverpool scene who were interviewed by this researcher as the most significant and influential person in Country music. Indeed many claimed his music first attracted them to Country music, giving it an authenticity that other music was unable to do. Yet, perhaps ironically as Escott (2003) states 'Older forms of Country music became marginalised. New artists had to fit into the mainstream sound or the record companies would be reluctant to sign them'. 193

This image of authenticity was so successful that Peterson in *Creating Country Music* (1997)¹⁹⁴ stated that *Billboard* in 1953 issue No: 42, talks about the genuine quality that sets Country music apart from Tin Pan Alley music.

There is nothing synthetic about Country music, unlike Tin Pan Alley writers who create music solely as a means of earning a living. Country music is not manufactured but rather bred by years of feeling a situation then projected by the writer into song. ¹⁹⁵

By 1953, the Country music industry in Nashville was fully institutionalised and its 'new' audience (part, perhaps, of 1950's America's domestic resettlement and upwards mobility) identified. An oligarchy of a few executives now controlled the record business in Nashville and the major labels dominated commercial Country music. Arguably, in spite of the occasional blip brought about by West Coast Country Rock incursions such as those by The Eagles, in the early to mid 1970s, they have never surrendered control.

Although there were still many different types of Country music being performed and listened-to throughout the US and Canada, no independent label could ever break their

¹⁹⁵ Peterson, R. A. (1977) 'Authenticity, A Renewable Resource'. in *Creating Country Music. Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p .210

¹⁹³ Escott, C. (2003) *The Story of Country Music.* London: BBC World Wide Ltd. p.74

¹⁹⁴ Peterson, R. A. (1977) 'Authenticity A Renewable Resource'. in *Creating Country Music. Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p .210

stranglehold on commercial Country music. The Nashville recording establishment had an 'orientalist' attitude to other forms of Country music. It treated other original Country music scenes such as 'the Bakersfield Sound' and 'LA West Coast Country Scene' as inferior, run by oligarchs with 'hippie' backgrounds, therefore deeply suspicious and inauthentic, perhaps only giving it some sort of recognition after it proved not to be a threat to its ultimate commercial control. ¹⁹⁶ Although artists did not have to come from Nashville to be part of its sound, they had to be part of the Nashville rite of passage to be signed by the major labels. ¹⁹⁷

The Country music artists who appear to have influenced the Liverpool and translocal scenes in Britain are almost exclusively those artists from the Nashville Sound, e.g., Hank Snow, Hank Williams Webb Pierce, George Jones, Jim Reeves, etc. The only exceptions are perhaps The Outlaws, (Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson), who moved from Nashville to Tompall Glaser and Jesse Colter's studio in Lubbock, Texas, to distance themselves from Nashville's influence in the mid-late 1970s.

Arguably, the biggest challenge to the Country music industry came in 1956 with Elvis Presley's arrival in popular music. Rock 'n' Roll opened-up the youth market and these teenagers did not want what they considered the old-style Country music; apparently even the Grand Ole Opry was three-quarters empty some nights resulting in NBC dropping it from its radio schedule. Some artists such as Webb Pierce and Marty Robbins released Rock 'n' Roll albums but teenagers did not want older Country singers performing Rock 'n' Roll. It became clear to the Country music industry that there had to be a drastic change of music styles, and perhaps a move away from the youth market and further into a mainstream which provided

¹⁹⁶ This researcher observed when visiting the 'Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum of Country Music' in Nashville that it now has an exhibition celebrating the deceased 'Bakersfield Sound'.

¹⁹⁷ The most commercially successful artists from both scenes, Buck Owens (Bakersfield) and Emmy Lou Harris (West Coast) eventually had to go and record in Nashville to be accepted there by the industry.

Nashville with a more 'upwardly mobile' sound for modern 'twenty-something's'. The three main major label producers of the time, Chet Atkins of RCA, Owen Bradley of Decca, and Don Law of Columbia, all decided to radically change their sound. Older artists were discarded and new ones signed such as Patsy Cline, Don Gibson, Jim Reeves, Johnny Cash, and George Jones, many of them poached from independent labels. The producers replaced the Country sound with harmonious string sections, trained voices and vocal choruses often using the same small core of musicians and choruses. This type of sound was called the 'soft shell' and it was immediately commercially successful, producing many mainstream hits; it was, however, less popular with the youth market on the one hand and the Country traditionalists on the other. As Jensen (1998) proposes: 'changes in cultural forms matter deeply to those who define themselves according to the cultural forms they sense are threatened.'198 To defend the change, the Country music 'establishment' stated that they were fighting for Country's survival against Rock 'n' Roll, thereby creating a kind of 'line in the sand' between an adult and a youth-oriented America. This claim of defending Country music as an authentic genre was reluctantly accepted by many Country music fans on perhaps demographic rather than musical basis. It remains interesting that Liverpool and British Country music fans who came into the music during the 1950s and early 1960s, regarded this sound as the authentic Country music sound.

From that time to present day, the identity and culture of Country music has been a product of negotiation and interpretation in which the boundaries continue to be contested. The Nashville Country music 'establishment' have continued to successfully defend changes in the Country music identity by using the argument that Country music is an evolving music genre – which, of course, it is. The success of the major Nashville labels in more recent years

¹⁹⁸ Jensen, J. (1998) 'What Makes Country Music Authentic'. in *The Nashville Sound – Authenticity Commercialization and Country Music*. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press and the Country Music Foundation Press. p. 9

has been that they were able to change the sound to appeal to a younger US 'Pop' audience, but successfully argue that it was still Country music. This argument, however, has been less successful in the UK, with, for example, most of the Liverpool and British Country music fans not accepting such statements. Rogers (1983)¹⁹⁹ also suggests that not all entertainers and fans in American Country music accepted this argument, in any case, and that attempts to crossover into the Pop market were not acceptable; nevertheless, it took place, and was indeed successful with the likes of Taylor Swift in recent years becoming a massive Country/Pop music crossover icon.

Back in the 1960s, the Nashville Sound came to be regarded as the voice of the silent majority in America against what they saw as the threat to their values from the liberal and Hippy movements of the day. As Cusic (2008) explains: 'Country music was the counter to the counter-culture'. For some, the Merle Haggard song 'Okie from Muskogee' personified this even though, arguably, Haggard was actually being ironic. Unfortunately, this did not resonate with the European and British teenagers who perceived such conservative attitudes and values as out-of-date, and the music out-of-touch and 'old-fashioned'. Country music's association with the stereotypical Southern white, working-class identity that many in Britain and Europe perceived as Redneck and potentially racist had a detrimental effect on the image of the music. By the late-1960s, this had begun to change somewhat as the hippy and post-hippy communities of the West Coast of the US came to recognise at least some Country music to be 'organic'. At first The Byrds, then The Grateful Dead produced what were essentially Country-Rock albums, acknowledging this important heritage. These recordings, however, were products from the West Coast of America and were not representative of Nashville per se. As such, they tended to be largely ignored and/or marginalised by the

¹⁹⁹ Rogers, J. (1983) *The Country Music Message: All about lovin' and livin'*. Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall. p. 16

²⁰⁰ Cusic, D. (2008) *Discovering Country Music*. Westport, Conn: Praeger. pp. 87-102

working-class 'conservative' Country-music-loving communities both in the United States and, interestingly, in Liverpool. Mike Brocken informed this writer that:

My own Country Rock band couldn't get regular gigs in Liverpool in the mid-1970s because we were considered a bunch of hippies. We covered bands like Poco and The Eagles, did a bit of Burrito Brothers stuff, you know. But that was too 'far out' for Liverpool Country fans – we did OK elsewhere, however.²⁰¹

This era of Country music in the 1960s did have some artists with their own distinctive sound but perhaps most important was that a new type of female artist was introduced. Bufwack in Tichi (1998)²⁰² explained that the new more sophisticated Nashville sound suited Country's heartfelt songs and female singers. There had been plenty of female artists in the past, e.g. Patsy Montana and Kitty Wells, but these new female artists such as Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton, followed Patsy Cline in becoming Country music superstars. They crossed-over into the mainstream popular music market but retained their identities as 'Country music women' – a confusing and sometimes ambivalent image, given the male dominated environments from which they emerged and performed. They sang and wrote songs about the problems of post-war American families such as divorce and infidelity, many of which were, it seems, based on their own life experiences. Again, these artists understood the importance of stressing their rural and parochial roots to their audiences. This researcher remembers attending a Tammy Wynette concert at the Liverpool Empire when she spoke about her poor Southern roots and joked that if all the Country music artists that claimed to pick cotton, really did, there would be none left in the South. Wynette then reiterated that she

²⁰¹ Mike Brocken to this writer August 2014

²⁰² Bufwack, M. (1998) 'Girls with Guitar and Fringe and Sequins and Rhinestones, Silk, Lace and Leather'. in Tichi, C. (ed). *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars*. Durham SA: Duke University Press. pp. 153-187

did her share of cotton picking, reinforcing to the audience the authenticity (or stereotype – take your pick) of her working-class roots.

The music continued to be popular using the same format into the 1970s but when solo artists, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard left the major Nashville labels to form an alternative Country sound, The Outlaws, the Nashville record industry felt it had to respond to their success. They realised that the public might be tiring of the 'Pop' image of Country stars and once again reconstructed the Nashville Sound introducing a more traditional sound, which it called 'neo-traditionalist': a mixture of traditional and/or Honky Tonk with modern Country music. By using acoustic instruments and stripping down recordings, as the West Coast bands had done, but also adding some modern Country instruments and sounds, e.g. modern drum sounds, they created a traditional but contemporary sound. The two artists that spearheaded this were Randy Travis and George Strait. Their successes continued Nashville's dominance of commercial Country music and again the major labels discarded the older artists, no matter how viable. Hank Snow was one of the artists who left RCA. Unhappy with the way that the sound was developing, Snow stated on programme No 7 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys*, (1989)²⁰³

RCA, we parted our relationship because I would not record the type of things that's going on today using some of the same type of musicians and backgrounds that's being played today. So the people at RCA said if you want to sell records you've got to try and get the teenagers and I said, Well I've been with you 45 years and you go ahead and be my guest and I will certainly not record anything unless I like it

²⁰³ *Good Ol' Boys.* Programme No 7. 8/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

Like Hank Snow, who was a mainstay of the Grand Ole Opry, many of these artists had large fan followings and continued a successful performing career for many years, subsequently releasing albums on independent labels which were purchased by their loyal fan bases; today many are treated as 'elder statesmen' of Country music. Dolly Parton in the Sky Arts television broadcast, Dolly Parton, Song by Song, (2013), 204 stated that despite having a successful career she too was dropped by her major record label because of their attitude to older artists and she had to form her own independent record label. Local Liverpool Country music fans were particularly loyal to these Country music artists. Diane Caine, owner of the Musical Box record shop in Liverpool, stated that her best-selling Country music albums were boxed sets of long dead Country music artists such as Hank Snow and Bobby Bare despite these boxed sets costing over £100 each to buy. Promoter Mervyn Conn, who promoted the Wembley and other international festivals, bringing over to Britain many top American Country music artists, also stated to this researcher: 'In America, Country music artists have a short life, not as long as they remain here in Britain. We give them more longevity in this Country. In America they seem to shake them off and want new fresh artists all the time'. 205 The success continued relatively unabated with this sub-genre of Country music until the late-1980s/90s and the tremendous success of Garth Brooks both nationally and internationally. Brooks sold over 100,000,000 units with his Country-pop style, which then led to a move back to Country-pop by Nashville.

From the 1990s at least to the present day, it has been stated by some Country music commentators that (arguably) the artist has become even more of a disposable commodity to the Nashville music industry; as in the rest of the popular music industries across the world an act, it seems now has little time to develop their skills. If a recording does not succeed

²⁰⁴ Dolly Parton. Song by Song. (2013). T. H .Entertainment LLC for Ovation. Sky Arts. Broadcast 2/11/2013

²⁰⁵ Mervyn Conn to this writer

right away and sell at least 250,000 – 500,000 units, artists will most likely be dropped by a record label. Further to this, one failure by an established artist can also result in them being dropped from the label. In this way, one might argue Nashville completely replicates other areas of the now faltering music industry. Gretchen Wilson is a good example of this policy. Her multi-platinum album in 2004 sold 5 million copies and produced the first No 1 hit single by a Country female in 2 years. Her second album sold 1 million copies and reached number 1 in the *Billboard* charts in 2005, but her third album in 2007 sold 178,000 copies, had no hit singles: Sony dropped her. Present-day successful Country artists such as Taylor Swift and Lady Antebellum sound no different from the mainstream pop artists, appealing to a broader mainstream audience for whom many of the original themes of Country music have never applied (and are perhaps not even known). In order to cater for these audiences, and to counter any threats to the identity of Country music as a specialized music genre that have been brought about by increased urbanization and industrialization, the Nashville record labels have created a broad mainstream sound to fit an equally broad national identity.

To many British, and in particular Liverpool Country music fans, Country music has defined boundaries with which they identify. When interviewed about Country music for this research almost all the informants stated that they regarded traditional Country artists such as Hank Williams, Hank Snow, George Jones and Patsy Cline as completely authentic Country music artists. Consequently, only those few modern artists that have a similar sound to these older types of artists, e.g. Randy Travis and Alan Jackson, are considered authentic. Further, some of those Country artists identified by Liverpool fans as authentic do not identify with

the modern Country music sound, either! Hank Snow stated on programme No 7 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys*. (1989) ²⁰⁶

I think that most, I could probably say 80% of today's Country music is a joke and a lot of it is not fit to listen to, really a lot of it you can't even understand the words, just a lot of loud music. I like what I grew up with and I like what I was successful with.

Moreover, George Jones in an interview in *The Calgary Sun* (2003). ²⁰⁷ stated:

They still call it Country music and that makes me madder than anything because to me they are using Country music as a stepping-stone. Shania Twain and people like that, they don't care anymore about Country music than Joe Blow from Kokomo

It is claimed by the critics of the British Country music scene that remaining true to what many regard as an outdated Country music identity has resulted in stagnation of the scene and is one of the reasons for its current decline.

The Country Music Scene in Downtown Nashville

The Downtown Nashville scene was important in the psyche of many local Liverpool Country music scene members who entered the scene in the 1950s/70s. To them the significant places within this scene such as the Ryman Auditorium, honky tonks and bars of Nashville was where Country music grew up. They often believed (erroneously) that the roots of the music came from these honky tonks and bars and that some of these, such as Tootsies, were to them as significant a place as the Cavern was to The Beatles. It was therefore

²⁰⁷ Calgary Sun. March 28th 2003 [Online]http://www.abstracts.net/shania-twain/2003-03html (accessed 12/6/2013)

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²⁰⁶Good Ol' Boys. Programme No 7. 8/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

important to this research to briefly investigate the development of the Downtown Nashville scene.

At the time that the Country music industry was growing in Nashville in the 1950s and 1960s, a successful music scene was developing in Downtown Nashville around the Ryman Auditorium, Honky Tonks with 'live' music, record stores, Western dress shops, etc. In 1974 because of Country music's success, The Grand Ole Opry moved to much larger purposebuilt premises with hotels, a large shopping mall and a theme park 'Opryland' on the outskirts of the city. The Ryman was closed, boarded-up and allowed to run into a sad state of repair. With the closing of the Ryman, the Downtown area deteriorated, many Honky Tonks closed, seedy shops such as adult sex shops replaced record stores and Western wear shops and it became a run-down area of the city. Fred Dellar from the *New Musical Express* and Paul McCartney both visited Downtown Nashville during this run-down era. Fred Dellar stated on programme No 6 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series, *Good Ol' Boys* (1989).

I didn't expect too much of it and I wasn't disappointed. It's not a very tourist place at all. It's a business city very much into insurance. There's not as much music and things like that. The Downtown area is tatty and having to be rebuilt. Most of the best parts of Nashville are now on the outskirts [...] so disappointing, it's not recommended for a long holiday. ²⁰⁸

In addition, Paul McCartney stated on the same radio programme, that he visited Nashville during this run-down era and everyone was guided up to the New Grand Ole Opry, but he, being from Liverpool and brought up on Country music, saw the Ryman Auditorium as the home of the Grand Ole Opry and went to visit it. He said it was an old building that had been

²⁰⁸ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 6. 1/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

allowed to run-down and people were not interested in it. When he asked for directions, they said it was, 'an old tabernacle' down the road. *Good Ol' Boys* (1989)²⁰⁹

The Nashville community were, it seems, rather slow to realise the tourist potential of the Ryman Auditorium and the Downtown area, believing tourism would just move to the new complexes on the outskirts of town. The Ryman was more fortunate than significant places of other music scenes such as the Cavern Club in Liverpool or the Star Club in Hamburg, which were knocked down before their significance to tourism was discovered. No redevelopment took place in Downtown Nashville or it would have suffered the same fate. It was when the city council came to realise the tourist potential of the Downtown area of Nashville that in the late 1980s, it started its Downtown Nashville redevelopment and the Gaylord Entertainment Company began its refurbishment of the Ryman. This breathed new life into the Downtown area. As Peterson and Bennett (2004)²¹⁰ explain:

The contemporary tourist industry helps perpetuate some music scenes that respond to the expectations of what Urry calls 'The Tourist Gaze'. That is, tourists travel to particular regions or cities with a stock of expectations based on visual print and other media generated information.

Urry. J & Larson, J (2011)²¹¹ suggests that:

Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist technologies such as, film, TV, literature, magazines, CDs, DVDs and videos constructing and reinforcing 'The Gaze'.

This they state: 'creates the anticipation and expectations especially through daydreaming and fantasy on a different scale to those customarily encountered.' This has perhaps meant to

²⁰⁹ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 6. 1/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio

²¹⁰ Peterson, R. A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes. Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press. . pp. 1-15

²¹¹ Urry, J. and Larson, J. (2011) 'The Tourist Gaze'. in *The Tourist Gaze 3:.0*. London. Sage. p. 3

many Liverpool Country music fans that Nashville is the Mecca of Country music. Brian Redman, of the Liverpool Country music group, The Hillsiders stated on programme 6 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989)²¹² that when the group arrived at Nashville airport he was so overcome that he wanted to go on his knees and kiss the ground. In the same programme, RCA's Lee Simmons said about the myth of Nashville: 'It's absolutely fantastic. To anyone who likes Country music it's like Nirvana. It's everything you could hope for [...] it's heaven to me. Anyone who likes Country music, they have got to go to believe it'²¹³

When visiting the Downtown area of Nashville in 2013 this researcher was informed that today, there are more Honky-Tonks and bars than during the original scene's heyday. Tootsies' Orchid Lounge is one of the significant places in the Nashville scene and is the oldest existing Honky Tonk opening in 1960 and it has a history of Country music stars such as Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson and many artists of the Grand Ole Opry visiting there. When visiting it this researcher observed that it has maintained its 'rundown' look with its old tables and faded and damaged walls, artists playing for tips, etc, to help maintain its authenticity, but it was also noticed that the place seemed to be mainly filled with tourists and was doing a brisk trade selling souvenir 'T' shirts, glasses, etc. Among other bars visited was The Wild Horse Saloon, which was a warehouse converted by Gaylord Enterprises in 1994 to take advantage of the line-dance craze. Despite having no historical significance in the history of the Downtown Country music scene, it has become a significant place for line-dancers to visit. Gaylord Enterprises who own the Wild Horse Saloon also owned Opryland, the Ryman Auditorium, the Nashville Convention Centre in addition to CMT and TNN

²¹² Good Ol' Boys Programme No 6. 1/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

²¹³ Ibid. 1989

television channels. It was able to utilise these two television channels to regularly present line-dance programmes from the Wild Horse Saloon. CMT's Country music programmes were available not just across America, but also in Canada, Britain and the rest of Europe. These programmes presented the Wild Horse Saloon to the relatively new line-dancers as the significant place for line-dancing in America, giving it an authenticity amongst them. Gaylord Enterprises also organised line-dance competitions in shopping malls across America recreating the Wild Horse Saloon as the stage for them to perform on. It also filmed Country music acts performing at the Saloon and held the CMT Country Music Awards there. All this reinforced to line-dancers the authenticity of the Wild Horse Saloon making it the most significant place for many line-dancers in America and Europe.

The Wild Horse Saloon is built on three floors with a large dance floor which, when this researcher visited it in 2013, was filled with line-dancers. Again, these were mostly tourists and over 50% of the music they danced too was Pop not Country music, e.g., The Killers and The Beatles. The saloon also had a large souvenir shop and restaurant to cater for the tourists. While some of the newer Honky Tonks have a modern appearance, others had a run-down look creating the impression of an older type of Honky Tonk. This researcher found similarities to this when visiting Chicago Blues clubs where one club, despite being opened less than twenty years, had the run-down appearance of a much older club. The club's house band and Blues singer were African-Americans in their 70s and, like the Honky Tonks, the audience appeared to be mainly consisting of tourists. Grazian (2004) ²¹⁴ explains that in the Chicago Blues scene, its commodification has meant some clubs have a manufactured authenticity to fit into the expectations of tourists. One might suggest that Mathew Street in Liverpool has a similar authenticity paradigm with which to engage tourists. In fact, Peterson

²¹⁴ Grazian, D. (2004) 'The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity in the Blues'. in Bennett, A & Peterson, R. A. (eds). *Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual* Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. pp. 31-47

& Bennett (2004)²¹⁵ suggests that partly to revive its local economy Liverpool exploited its connections with The Beatles. In addition to the Honky Tonks in the Downtown area of Nashville, there are a number of Western-wear shops, record stores, restaurants and souvenir shops. Road signs play Country music whenever tourists walk past and large metal statues of guitars and Cowboys are situated around the streets becoming tourist attractions in their own right with many tourists posing for photographs alongside them. MacCannell (1973)²¹⁶ explained that tourists even find pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, which he calls 'staged authenticity'.

The Ryman was redeveloped in 1994 into a concert venue and when this researcher visited Nashville in April 2013 as part of this study and attended a Country music concert there, it was noticed that the concert was sold out as were all the other concerts held there that week. This researcher also noticed that when visiting the Ryman during the day it had guided tours and housed a museum, a souvenir shop and a recording studio where tourists can select a backing track from a collection of Country songs and record their own vocals. During the guided tour, the guide kept stressing that they had kept the original old-time 'pew' seating and the original Tabernacle stained glass windows, as they wanted to maintain its authenticity. This authenticity is important, as the Ryman is still the most significant place in the Downtown area. Two further significant places in the Nashville Country music scene are situated well outside the Downtown Nashville area. They are the famous singer-songwriter venues, the Bluebird Café and the Douglas Corner Café. Although both only opened in the 1980s Country music fans regard them across the World as significant places to see aspiring

Peterson, R. A and Bennett A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett. A & Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes. Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press. p. 2

²¹⁶ MacCannell, D. (1973) 'Staged Authenticity. Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings' in *American Sociological Review* 79. USA: Sage Publishing. pp. 89-603.

Country music artists. Despite being small venues, holding fewer than two hundred people, almost all the Country music artists to emerge since the 1980s had played these premises including Garth Brooks and Alan Jackson.

The redevelopment of Downtown Nashville as a tourist area has meant the Museum of Country Music has been opened there and they have a Country Music Walk of Fame similar to L.A.'s movie star Walk of Fame. They also have a specialist entertainment centre housing the Nashville Hockey team, which is also available for large-arena concerts. While this researcher was there (April 2013) the arena was sold-out for the contemporary Country music artist, Keith Urban. Therefore, arguably, the redevelopment of the Downtown area directly coincided with the rise in the number of British Country music fans who could now afford to visit Nashville. Many of these people brought back stories of a city steeped in Country music history, which reinforced its celebrated yet created and staged authenticity to those fans back home.

Chapter 4: Origins of and Pathways for the Country Music Scene on Merseyside.

Country music became so popular in Liverpool that it produced a Country music scene which many claim was the largest in Europe and was known as 'The Nashville of the North' McManus (1994)²¹⁷. George Hamilton IV, the American Country music star and Grand Ole Opry member, informed this researcher that in the 1960s he called Liverpool, 'The Nashville of the U.K'. As McManus (1994)²¹⁸ explains: Liverpool was a port that was on the direct route for shipping traffic to and from America. This role as a port was important in the development of World trade, which became a migrant city and cosmopolis. Both Cohen and Belchem (2000)²²⁰ believe this city's trade routes and potential multiculturalism to be part of a pattern not found in other British cities until the late-twentieth century. Arguably, a cosmopolitan open-mindedness also made it receptive to new ideas and new music. We have already seen that historian Tony Lane in his book *Liverpool Gateway to* the Empire (1987)²²¹ states that, Liverpool as a port city looked outwards, rather than over its shoulder to the perhaps parochial hinterland of the UK; however, alone such ideas are rather speculative and speak of the indigenous chauvinisms to which Lane frequently clings. Actually, according to historians such as Belchem (2006)²²² and Brocken (2015)²²³, Liverpool's history also needs to be seen in historical terms as a 'modern city' with perhaps new formulations of ideas.

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²¹⁷ McManus, K. (1994) uses this as the title of his publication. *Nashville of the North*, Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music, University of Liverpool.

²¹⁸ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. .

²¹⁹ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 15

²²⁰ Belchem, J. (2000) *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press. p. XIII ²²¹ Lane, T. (1987) *Liverpool Gateway to the Empire*. Lawrence and Wishart. London: p.11

²²² Belchem. J. (2006) 'Celebrating Liverpool', in Belchem, J. (ed). *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character & History* .Liverpool: University Press. p. 9

²²³ Brocken, M.I (2015), *The Twenty-First Century Legacy of The Beatles: Liverpool and Popular Music Heritage Tourism*, Farnham: Ashgate. Due Date

Liverpool

New ideas, whether they support or oppose customary trends of thinking, tend to represent characteristics embedded in the period in which they came into being. Although ideas might be reformulated for future contingencies, any historian should always attempt to locate such ideas, attitudes, opinions, within the periods of time and localities from which they have at least appeared to have emerged. This, we might describe as an understanding of context, and context is everything. In paraphrasing Louis Althusser, eminent historian John Tosh (1984) suggests that: 'all historical documentation is tainted by the structure of thought and language, prevalent at the time of writing: the 'real' facts of history are beyond our reach, and the distorted images we have of the past are an irrelevance. '224 Tosh acknowledges Althusser's concerns about the appearance of so-called 'facts' and in doing so, recommends the researcher to actively participate in unpacking variegated discourses. Tosh argues that by doing so, reductionism so often found in a priori theory-bound histories, can be avoided. Within contexts, and discourses about varying contexts, we recognize the strengths of the varied and variable associations that we all carry with us. Such understandings and approaches reveal an incredible amount of diminutive contexts within which decisions are made (for better or worse).

These contexts allow us space for research-based questions. For example, in the case of popular music in Liverpool, one might ask how the rhetoric of place in the city might affect legitimacies in a popular music sense. This question further asks whether in certain places, pre-existing rhetorics of place may have posited that some genres of music were authentic, while others were not. As a consequence, one might also ask whether and under what circumstances a popular music heritage space in the city might have possibly struggled to

²²⁴ Tosh, J. (1984), *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods & New Directions in the Study of Modern History,* London: Longman, p. 176

emerge, and within which discourses and contexts. A place, properly researched, tells us about certain people who lived there, what they might have believed, and how they might have organized their lives. It does not always tell us the 'truth' about such people, for the rhetoric of place is also very important and full of identity-giving tropes. However, from within such cultural organizations as Liverpool's growing Country music scene, we can view popular music's interaction with ideas, and it is only by considering as much of the package that we can find, that something about where ideas might have come from, may possibly be pieced together. If we take an idea out of its context, the information about its maker is lost, so too are the motives, the inspirations and the variable oppositions.

For example, Liverpool as a modern place was culturally less fixed than one might at first imagine because by the twentieth century it was still a relatively modern city barely 200 years old. In fact, the celebrations in 1907 of the seven-hundredth year of its charter were as much to do with providing the city with a sense of identity via an element of invented nostalgia, as it was endorsing an old-established city (which of course it was not). Ramsay Muir, the academic historian based at the 'new' University of Liverpool wrote a *History of Liverpool* as a companion to the celebrations but according to John Belchem:

[Unlike fellow local historians] refused to invent a suitably venerable 'ancient and loyal' history for the occasion. Where earlier antiquarians such as J. A. Picton had sought 'the elements of medieval romance', Muir encouraged his fellow citizens to accept their city's former insignificance and obscurity, to take inverse pride, as it were, in its inauspicious distant past. For Muir, this was the benchmark by which to appreciate (and celebrate) the remarkable Progress and achievements of modern Liverpool, 'no mean city'. ²²⁵

²²⁵ Belchem, J. (2006), 'Celebrating Liverpool', in Belchem J [ed.] *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character & History*, Liverpool: University Press. p. 9

We should not be amazed that Liverpool attempted to invent its own mythologized past and/or space, for urban cultures can in their relative infancy deal in an imagined rooted antiquity. Over time, such artificial chronological ways of recording a past is discussed, but then perhaps dismissed, as the mechanisms of the marketplace come to mirror far more accurately, the dispositions of the urban dwellers within.

Brocken informed this researcher that outside the city, Liverpool was described by some during the early decades of the twentieth century as the 'New York of Europe' and Liverpudlians were occasionally identified via the moniker 'Dickie Sams'. 226 While the former portrayal was an attention-grabbing description of this provincial British city, the latter tag seemingly held little meaning within it (its definitions varied according to whom one spoke). Liverpool, therefore was known across the UK to be an important 'place', but was viewed more as a gateway, than a homogenized entity. Its direct links with London further bamboozled any fixed sense of place: it was not a Royal Navy city, but was an important mercantile maritime centre.²²⁷ It had direct links with the capital, both physically via train and metaphorically via money, but was geographically 'in the north', carrying with it certain stereotypes that might apply. In short, Liverpool did not have what we might describe these days as a straightforward image of legibility, and could not easily be transformed into a set of textural signifiers, able to compound into one singular homogenous image. This lack of understanding has also perhaps meant that over time, in addition to Liverpool's cosmopolitan nature, an insular reputation has also been cultivated, with rhetoric narratives frequently coming to the fore. Cohen (2007)²²⁸ discusses how such

²²⁶ Brocken to this researcher.

²²⁷ Fourteen warships appeared on the River Mersey during the 1907 celebrations, as if to 'invent' a military-maritime history for the city.

²²⁸ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 89

cosmopolitanism and insularity can co-exist and Belchem (2000)²²⁹ argues that a sense of apartness or 'otherness' has been crucial to Liverpool's identity. According to Belchem, the City has always been an exception within a British context. Belchem (2000)²³⁰ proposes that Liverpudlians consider themselves to be:

In the North of England but not of it, Liverpool (and its sub-region of Merseyside) was and has continued to be highly distinctive, differing sharply in socio-economic structure, cultural image and expression, political affiliation, health, diet and speech from the adjacent industrial districts.

This might be the case for some, perhaps, but Liverpudlians represent a complex set of different ideas and identities and cannot be arbitrarily united around such basic ideas. Instead, perhaps we should recognise that Belchem is suggesting that amongst (let us say) working-class Liverpudlians, certain important rhetorics of place have emerged – in our case surrounding popular music genres like Country music.

There also exists, what might be described as an attitude of 'orientalism' in otherness. While Said (1979)²³¹ originally defined 'orientalism' as false assumptions underlying Western attitudes of superiority towards the Middle East, Budd (2009)²³² explains that Said's original idea of 'orientalism' can be used to consider how an identity can consider itself 'superior' in comparison to other ideas or cultures. This was a belief that was (and often still is) prevalent in Liverpool regarding its relationship with the rest of the UK. The attitude of John Fowler in his autobiography *Growing Up in Liverpool Before Beatlemania* (2008)²³³ reflects this: 'I have never met anybody who is not proud to be born in the Pool. Liverpool is part of

²²⁹ Belchem, J. (2000) *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press. pp.

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²³⁰ Belchem, J. (2000) *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press. pp.

²³¹ Said, E. (1979) Orientalism. London: Routledge and Kegen Paul Ltd. pp. 5-8

²³² Budd, A. (2009) *The Modern Histography Reader – Western Source*. New York: Routledge pp. 443-448

²³³ Fowler, J. (2008) *Growing up in Liverpool Before Beatlemania*. Birkenhead. UK: Appin Press. .p. 79

Lancashire but Liverpool people are a breed apart [...] they stand alone with their own accent, wit, aggression and warmth'. Du Noyer (2002)²³⁴ also states that, 'As far as Scousers are concerned Liverpool is not a provincial city but the capital of itself, it's deeply insular yet essentially outward looking: it faces the sea and all the lands beyond but has its back turned on England'. Such opinions are simply that – i.e. opinions: they are not facts or truths in the common sense, but they do signify important issues surrounding rhetoric. This attitude has meant many people in Liverpool often felt they had more in common with America than with the rest of the country and that America was a mythical land they wanted to experience and emulate. For example one member of the local Melrose Abbey Country music community, Mick O' Toole, explained to this researcher: 'It was an attractive land full of both affluence and Cowboys. A mythical land based on films, comic books and stories brought back by Liverpool seamen.' It seems that many Liverpool people wanted to experience this in the clothing, language, hairstyles (one of the most popular hairstyles of the 50s was the 'Tony Curtis cut' emulating the movie idol) and through film and music.

While this partially helps to explain why American music was popular in Liverpool it does not explain why this genre of music was successful in establishing itself there. One of the reasons might be Liverpool people's romantic affiliation with the American Cowboy, which they saw on films, TV and in comics. As local Country music fan, Mick O'Toole also explained to this researcher:

Basically, your average Scouser thinks he's a Cowboy anyway so he got all the American culture that we grew up with watching Cowboy movies, buying Cowboy comics and the music came along a bit later. We all wanted to be Cowboys and Hank Williams in particular. That's what

²³⁴ Du Noyer, P. (2002) *Liverpool. A Wondrous Place - Music from Cavern to Cream.* London: Virgin Books. p. 5

started me, Hank Williams. You just find the connection between the music that he sings the way he sings, the way he looks and think, God! I'd like to look like that!

Even though this image was largely a mythical one created by the modern mass media and bearing no reality to the real Cowboys of the West who were often low-paid itinerant workers, this romanticised image of freedom, individuality, self-reliance and heroism resonated with many working-class people growing up in the socio-deprived areas of Liverpool. As Mick O'Toole further stated, 'You grew up in some pretty miserable years after the war and life was so bloody miserable, you're life came mostly from comics and movies with images of being a Cowboy and that led to the music'. One might argue that, for these particular Liverpool people, this was an authentic image and seeing images of Cowboys singing about life and love gave the music authenticity. Of course, we are discussing the rhetoric of a minority of active participants here. We should always remember that not every Liverpudlian was attracted by such images (indeed many might well have been repelled). Therefore we always need to remember that popular music imagery might be paradigmatic for some, but not so, for others.

Another reason why Country music became popular in Liverpool was Liverpool people's apparent affinity with the songs. Cohen $(2007)^{235}$ suggests that all Country Music is a travelling global culture and that the music sets itself down where the sound and sentiment resonate homologically. Liverpool was for some clearly, one such place. As local DJ and past presenter of BBC Radio Merseyside's Country music programme 'Sounds Country' Billy Butler, stated to this researcher:

²³⁵ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 72

Every record tells a story. You don't have to try and imagine what's happening, the words tell you what's happening and Country music more than any other record talks about life. They talk about break-ups, they talk about romance, they talk about life and death and I think Liverpool people like that kind of thing.

Butler also credits Hank Williams songs in particular as one of the major reasons Liverpool people identified with the music:

I, like everyone else started out listening to Hank Williams records. I think nearly 90% of people who were into Country started off listening to Hank Williams records. Liverpool people take certain people to their heart [...]; Hank Williams was one of them.

For many Liverpudlians, therefore it might be argued that the simple unadorned lyrics and uncomplicated values of Country music songs, echoed their own working-class values and experiences in a way they could relate to, as local Country music fan Chris Seddon stated to this researcher: 'Country music is about life, love and happiness, sadness and nostalgia. You can see yourself in it sometimes'.

In addition, local Country music fan Jim Donnigan stated to this researcher that 'It's the words; it's the songs, the way they are written, they mean something. There's a story behind most of them'. Local Country music artist Eddy Miller of The Miller Brothers also explained in an interview with this researcher why he became interested in Country music:

You listen to 99% of all Country music artists and the music has a story and it's the story of life. When I sing songs on stage, I've lived those songs in my life. You know, you've loved and you've lost all that kind of stuff. That to me is why Country music has come from the heart.

British recording artist, Lonnie Donnegan in programme No 3 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol Boys* (1989)²³⁶ also agrees with this assessment of Liverpool people's attitude to the music stating:

In the Liverpool area in particular, I find the people emote very easily. I can sing things here like 'Nobody's Child' and have the audience in tears here. I couldn't do that in London where they're quite brittle and cynical there, not here you see. So, here they do relate very strongly to the Country and Western ethos in this area.

Songs have words for very important reasons. As Frith (1987)²³⁷ suggests: 'what music (Pop) can do is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social facts'. Various senses of identity can be engaged by and through music and depending upon how we are positioned by other social, cultural and economic factors; music can play some very important parts in reaffirming our place as active human beings. Words also help here, for those who might listen to lyrics in songs wish to have life-affirming issues raised and dealt with in easy yet philosophical ways. Thus for some in Liverpool's Country scene such homespun philosophies were of great use and value.

Merchant Seamen

For the above interviewees it is also evident that for a Country music scene to both grow and develop in Liverpool, there had to be a flow of Country music into the City to facilitate and stimulate it – scenes need pathways and pathways are multiple – there is no single route into the development of a scene. Several such routes facilitated this flow, one of which was provided by Liverpool's large Merchant seamen community who, it seems brought back

²³⁶ *Good Ol' Boys* Programme No 3. 10/6/1989. BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives BBC Radio Merseyside. Liverpool. 27th May -12th August. 1989

²³⁷ Frith, S. (1987), 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in Leppert, R and McLarey, S. (eds), *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, Cambridge: University Press, p. 149

Country music records, amongst other items. In relation to recorded music, this community has since the 1970s been given the title 'Cunard Yanks', but historically, the story exists amid a great amount of debate, rhetoric and conjecture. Country music artist Hank Walters described Cunard Yanks in McManus (1994) as:

In Liverpool at the time (1950/60s) there was a massive Merchant Navy community that went to the States; we used to call them 'Cunard Yanks'. A Cunard Yank was a guy who went to the States for ten days and came back with an American accent, loud ties and a baseball cap, but they also brought records back with them. 238

Perhaps one unfortunate effect of calling the seamen Cunard Yanks was that it gave ownership of this flow of music into the City to one particular group of seamen; those locals who worked on the Cunard liners from Liverpool to New York. The problem with applying this title, Cunard Yanks, as a generalisation for the flow of music via the seamen route into the city, is that prominence is often given to this route for the music, over not only the other different routes, but also over other important Merchant seamen shipping routes (and perhaps over other genres of music). Another problem is that some popular music publications began to mention this route as the main source for different forms of American music to arrive in the city, whether they be Blues, Folk, R&B, 'quality singers', original soundtracks, Rock 'n' Roll or Country, e.g., Millard (2012)²³⁹ and Norman (2004)²⁴⁰

This route is also perhaps controversial because of claims of its involvement in the historical narrative of Merseybeat and The Beatles. This has led to widely differing claims about its importance in the birth and development of Merseybeat. The roles that individuals, groups

²³⁸ McManus, K (1994). *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. pp. 1-2

²³⁹ Millard, A. (2012). *Beatlemania. Technology Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America* Baltimore. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press.

²⁴⁰ Norman, P. (2004) *Shout! The True Story of The Beatles*. London: Pan MacMillan. p.38

and organisations played in this narrative is fiercely contested, as many of those involved attempt to claim what they consider to be, their rightful place in this history. This has led to widely differing accounts of incidences or events being put forward to validate or dismiss the legitimacy of claims of those involved, often offering little in terms of concrete evidence to corroborate these accounts. This has often made it difficult to separate myth from fact. The Cunard Yanks claim of their involvement in the birth of Merseybeat is a narrative that has become both strongly contested, and strongly supported, in, it seems, relatively equal doses. Brocken informs us that:

The Cunard Yanks-into-Merseybeat narrative continues to be a fascinating story, but is difficult to discuss in an evidence-based historical sense. This is because underneath what appears to be a manifest history there actually exists another latent historical narrative of complex parochial processes about which many contemporaries who readily adopted the narrative as 'real' were probably only dimly aware. It is partially a view of a local past, which serves to raise consciousness about the authenticity of the home-grown, using the place and the people of Liverpool and the River Mersey. However, it simply must be suggested that a great deal of this kind of story-telling, while inspirational, is romanticist in its nature. It specifies heroism, individuality, authenticity, and distinctiveness – all of which are problematic postulations, rather than historical evidence-based facts.²⁴¹

For example, the Cunard shipping-line's website, *Cunard Yank* ²⁴² contains a whole section dedicated to the Cunard Yanks, in which it romantically discusses their importance in bringing music into the City. On the BBC Liverpool website, local journalist Paul Coslett describes the Cunard Yanks in a documentary film 'Liverpool's Cunard Yanks' directed by

²⁴¹ Brocken, M. (2015) Liverpool: The 21st Century Legacy of The Beatles. Farnham: Ashgate, (due date)

²⁴² Cunard. *Cunard Yanks.* [Online] http://www.cunardyanks.org/Tall%20Tales2.htm (accessed 12/3/09)

Mike Morris as 'The Pop pioneers who brought music and fashion from New York to Liverpool and paved the way for The Beatles, are remembered in a new documentary film'.

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Such narratives of the Cunard Yanks' importance to the Merseybeat scene has also been repeated in a number of books about Liverpool and its music. Dudgeon (2011)²⁴⁴ in Our Liverpool, Memories of a Life in a Disappearing Britain describes how cooks, stewards and waiters on the Cunard line from Liverpool to New York brought back clothing, cameras, reelto-reel tape recorders, and the latest records. He even stated that a full jukebox of records came back to the city, and ended-up in the Amber Club in Hanover Street. Millard (2012)²⁴⁵ in Beatlemania, Technology Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America, whilst giving credit to other merchant seamen and mentioning other sources of the music, describes the Cunard Yanks as one of the keys to unlocking the secrets of American popular culture to those who stayed at home. Millard states that as such, they were agents of the Americanisation of Liverpool, which included bringing back music records. Norman (2004) in his at times, acclaimed and at other times heavily criticised, biography of The Beatles, Shout! The True Story of the Beatles, describes how young Liverpudlian deckhands and stewards (for Norman, called 'Cunard Yanks' because of their flashy New York clothes) brought home records not available in Britain. One critic of the Cunard Yanks documentary film is Steve Higginson the chief researcher for the film who is quoted in Brocken (2015 due)²⁴⁷ as stating:

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²⁴³ Coslett. P. (2007) *Cunard Yanks* [Online]

http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/content/articles/2007/04/03cunard_yanks_feature.shtml (accessed 12/3/2009)

²⁴⁴ Dudgeon, J.P. (2011) *Our Liverpool, Memories of a Life in Disappearing Britain.* London: Headline Publishing Group. pp. 254-256

²⁴⁵ Millard, A. (2012). *Beatlemania. Technology Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America.* Baltimore. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press. pp. 70-71

²⁴⁶ Norman, P. (2004) Shout! The True Story of The Beatles. London. Pan MacMillan. p 38

²⁴⁷ Brocken, M. (2015) (Due date) 'Liverpool: The 21st Century legacy of The Beatles' Farnham: Ashgate. p. 110

For some of the protagonists within the film they followed the historical narrative itself, then inserted more of their own historical claims without ever supplying any evidence. In effect, one could argue this film documentary then became a myth about a myth, due to the very 'Warholian' concept of seeing and being on a film screen, thereby creating one's own 'Fifteen Minutes of Fame' without ever having to authenticate statements of time and place.

In addition, while Brocken argues in the same work that the Cunard Yanks most certainly did exist he also stated 'it is this collector-cum-researcher's contention that their seemingly collective contribution to the histories of both Merseybeat and The Beatles has been retrospectively exaggerated and in some cases contextually fabricated to support a specific, somewhat "puritan" hierarchical narrative. '248

There are other critics of the narrative of the importance of this route or pathway. Bill Harry, editor of the local music paper *Merseybeat* states:

This is where truth and myth part, for the maritime heritage had no direct influence on the development of the Mersey sound. Cunard Yanks were the Liverpudlians who went to sea in the ocean liners and brought presents back to their families. The myth is that they brought American records for their younger brothers and sons and this is how the Liverpool bands built up their repertoire. Sounds nice but it's not true [...] Some of the Country bands such as Hank Walters and his Dusty Road Ramblers were able to obtain rare Country albums from Merchant seamen but the Cunard Yank theory remains a myth. 249

Clayson and Leigh (2003)²⁵⁰ in their work, *The Walrus Was Ringo* also states that 'It is a good romantic story that persisted for more than forty years but it remains untrue'. Bob

²⁴⁸ Brocken, M. (2015) Liverpool: The 21st Legacy of The Beatles Farnham: Ashgate, (Due date)

²⁴⁹ Harry, W. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2* .[Online]

http://www.mersey-beat.com (accessed 7/5/2010)

²⁵⁰Clayson, A. & Leigh, S. (2003) *The Walrus Was Ringo, A 101 Beatle Myths.* Chrome Dreams. Surrey. UK: pp. 52-54

Wooler, resident DJ in the Cavern in the 1960s also stated in Millard (2012):²⁵¹ 'NO and NO again! This is another of those myths about the Cunard Yanks – I never received any records from sailors at all'. However, in the sleeve notes of 'City with a Heart' - a community project recording made by Hank Walters and The Arcadian Ladies in 1998, Spencer Leigh contradicts himself and talks about how the music got into the city: 'The Cunard Yanks bringing back records from America, the Servicemen at Burtonwood and the background of the music itself are factors'. Further, the late David Deacon, music academic, stated to this researcher that his father went to sea during that period and that records were, indeed, brought-back to Liverpool; but it was certainly not on as large as scale as it was made-out to be.

The problem when researching the effects which returning seamen had on the development of the local Country music scene is that it can, and has become enmeshed within competing discourses about the narrative of the Cunard Yanks and the 'Merseybeat myth'. This is, in our case, important, for there appears to be very little discussion concerning if or whether records were brought back from the US for the development of Country music in Liverpool. This is not surprising because, as this researcher has already discovered, very little has been published either academically or non-academically about the local Country music scene, in direct contrast to the mountain of publications about The Beatles and Merseybeat. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the importing of records for Liverpool Country music fans, which does not carry the same romantic connotations or importance as claims of importing records that helped start the growth and development of Merseybeat, has been largely ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. Perhaps typical of this state of affairs is Bill Harry's aside that: 'Some Country bands such as Hank Walters and his Dusty Road Ramblers were able to

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²⁵¹ Millard. A. (2012). *Beatlemania. Technology Business and Teen Culture in Cold War America*. Baltimore. Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press. p. 72

²⁵² City With a Heart (1998) City with a Heart Community Project (no record credits) (CD)

obtain rare Country albums from Merchant seamen but the Cunard Yank theory remains a myth'. 253 While Harry appears to accept that this route might have existed for the import of Country music, he dismisses this route as mythology, regarding his arguments about the birth of Merseybeat.

In this work, this researcher discusses the importance of this route and other routes for the flow of Country music into the City and poses questions such as, 'Was it an important route of Country music flow into the City?' 'Was it a primary route for the flow of this music?' Alternatively, 'Did these seamen act as facilitators supplying a need that already existed among Country music consumers in Liverpool?' To do this, is there a need to extricate this County music route from the more rhetorically powerful Merseybeat discourses? This researcher spoke to a number of members of the local Country music scene who claimed to have returned with or received Country music records from abroad. It was clear when interviewing such scene members, the majority of these Country records were obtained in the early-1950s. This perhaps indicates that the import of Country music records happened largely a generation earlier in musical terms than those who claimed to have brought back records that influenced Merseybeat. The early-1950s was a time when Country music records were available in Britain but were not as easy to obtain as they were by the late-1950s. Brocken states:

One interviewee of mine, Les Johnson, informed me that his father was a publican. Les is a musician rather than a 'Cunard Yank' and lived for most of his youth in a variety of public houses across Merseyside. He recalled to me that recorded country music was played on a record player in one of these pubs, located in Old Swan, Liverpool (presumably before juke boxes had been installed 'across-the-board' in such establishments). Les remains to this day convinced that these

²⁵³ Harry, W. Merseybeat Ltd. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2* .[Online] http://mersey-beat.com> (accessed 7/5/2010)

were American and/or Canadian recordings brought back 'under orders'. He particularly remembers recordings by the Canadian (from Liverpool, Nova Scotia, in fact) Hank Snow being very popular among the locals. Les also made a point of stating that as far as he could remember, these records were LPs rather than 45-rpm singles and that time-wise this was perhaps the mid-late 1950s. Between March 1952 and October 1955 Hank Snow released five LPs on the US RCA Victor label. However, Snow's music was also readily available at this time in Liverpool on LPs and EPs. By the 1960s and the advent of the RCA Camden imprint many Hank Snow recordings were re-released on this budget label and were available right across the city.

At this time, there were still regular sailings to America. Copies of the *Lloyds List and Shipping Gazette*, ²⁵⁵ a weekly publication for the years 1952 and 1955 kept at the Liverpool Maritime Museum archives, were researched. It was found that for both years the number of Cunard passenger liners such as the Franconia, the Saxonia, the Media and the Arabia leaving Liverpool for New York, or Canada and the Canadian Pacific line's large "Empress" liners leaving for Canada showed that both firms averaged four sailings a month throughout this period. The Harrison Line sailings to the Caribbean also left regularly each month often calling at ports in the Southern states of America as part of their return route. This showed these three shipping lines, which were the most mentioned (but not exclusively) by local Country music fans for the flow of Country music by this route, had regular monthly sailings to America and Canada during this period. This researcher also found there were regular monthly sailings to America by other shipping companies such as the United States Line.

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²⁵⁴ Brocken, M. (2015) *Liverpool The 21st Century Legacy of The Beatles,* Farnham: Ashgate, (Due date)

²⁵⁵ Lloyds List and Shipping Gazette. (1952) (1955) London. Lloyds of London. Liverpool Maritime Museum Microfiche Collection. Accessed Feb 2014.

The Country music records that these scene members claimed returned with seamen were by artists such as Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Snow and Hank Thompson, artists who came to prominence during this period (the early-1950s). Even the non-Country music albums they claimed to have obtained were by the early and well-known Rock 'n' Roll artists such as Bill Haley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley who appeared on the scene prior to 1957. It is significant that while the local Country music fans were big fans of those music artists that appeared in the late-1950s and early-1960s such as Patsy Cline, George Jones and Jim Reeves and informing this researcher, they had many of these artists' albums in their collection, not one claimed to have obtained them via the Merchant seaman route. This might have been because of a reduction in the number of ships sailing from Liverpool; the numbers of local Merchant seamen sailing from the port were certainly in decline. However, it might also be the case that by the mid and late-1950s such Country music records were more easily (and cheaply) available from record shops.

Whilst it is claimed that some music records that were brought back from abroad for personal use by the Merchant seamen, or as surprise presents for relatives or friends, this was not often the case with those Country music fans interviewed. Many interviewed by this researcher were not just fans of the music, but avid collectors who took great pride in owning their Country music collection, and many claimed to own large collections of Country music from the 1950s and 1960s. These fans were enthusiasts, indeed connoisseurs of Country - even by the early 1950s - having listened to it via various routes including radio and records purchased from record shops. For them, the seaman route was often just a route to obtain Country music records not easily available in the UK at that time. Were one to examine record collecting across different genres of music, one might find similar stories and similar mythologies, although not essentially based around Cunard Yanks. In both Jazz and Folk

spheres (not to mention R&B and Blues) similar narratives emerge of connoisseurs collecting from the USA via any means possible. It might be argued that the rhetoric of the Cunard Yanks, however, is rooted more in issues related to place or 'locale'. The places and ideologies 'constructed' via music involve complex notions of difference and social boundaries. They help to create hierarchies of moral and even political echelons. These cannot be explained-away by the fact that the information is mythical, but instead should be regarded as important myth-making devices to identify and preserve cultural space. In some ways, one might argue that it is perhaps not important to discover whether the Cunard Yanks myth is real, but how it emerged and to what ends.

During the research, this researcher found only three occasions where a member of the local Country music scene specifically claimed to have been introduced to Country music via this route. Paddy Kelly, local Country music artist mentioned by Cohen (2007)²⁵⁶ said he was introduced to Country music through a sailor friend who brought Hank Williams records back for him. Of the forty-one local scene members interviewed by this researcher about this, only two claimed it was their first introduction to Country music. Phil Brady, of the local Country music band Phil Brady and The Ranchers explained to this researcher that he first became interested in Country music at the age of 14-15 years old. The father of a school friend, a 'donkey-man' on board the cruise liners going to America, returned with Country music records. Brady also stated that all the people on the big liners, donkey-men, engineers, stewards and firemen were travelling to New York every two weeks and buying records. He claims to remember US recordings by Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Webb Pierce, Hank Thompson, Hank Snow and Faron Young. Harry Sheppard, Liverpool Country music artist

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²⁵⁶ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p.82

²⁵⁷ A Donkey-man is someone who serviced the boilers and other machinery on board ships. The name came from the 'Donkey boilers' that were fitted on some ships.

and a member of The Old Dudes Country Music Band, was 16 when seamen brought records back and informed this researcher: 'I didn't understand what it was but I later found out it was Country and it was my introduction to Country and I've been with it ever since'.

While this latter statement sounds a little improbable, (i.e. that he did not know what Country music was), it probably has to be considered that, in 1950's Britain, Country music was not often separated from the genre of Pop music and was considered part of mainstream popular music. The modern Country music of the day, e.g. Hank Williams' 'Lovesick Blues', was often not distinguished from pop songs of the era, except of course to Country music fans. In programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989), 258 American Country music artist Slim Whitman stated that whilst in America he was described as a Country music artist; this was not the case when he toured Britain in the 1950s. In fact, his music was labelled as not belonging to any specific genre at all. Also in programme No 3 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989), 259 British Country artist, Kelvin Henderson stated that he had heard Country music as a teenager, but perceived it as 'just music', not a specific genre of music. British Country music artist Lorne Gibson explained on programme No 10 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989), 260 that when he signed to Decca in the UK they did not even have a category for Country music.

One of my informants worked on the Cunard liners at that time: Jerry Devine of The Blue Mountain Boys. Devine explained to this researcher that he went to sea as a steward with another local musician, Bill Whitty,²⁶¹ and brought back records such as those by Hank

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²⁵⁸ *Good Ol' Boys* Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

²⁵⁹ *Good Ol' Boys* Programme No 3. 10/6/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

²⁶⁰ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 10. 29/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

 $^{^{261}}$ Whitty later became a member of Hank Walter's 'Dusty Road Ramblers'

Williams, Bill Haley and Elvis Presley. Carol Mortimer (née Devine) remembers her father (Jerry Devine's brother) bringing back records to their home in Scotland Road and they would gather around the piano and sing along to them. Jerry's sister, Marie Rooney, told this researcher that the brothers brought back over 300 records over their time at sea. Rooney stated these records consisted of all different types of music including Country music artists Hank Williams, Faron Young and Hank Snow. The Devines were (and still are) a family heavily involved in the Liverpool music scene. Even to this day, a number of the family members perform in Liverpool bands, so music has always been an important part of their family life. Jerry Devine also stated to this researcher that when in the late-1950s he was transferred to Cunard 'Queen' liners sailing from Southampton; he continued to bring records back.

A number of the members of the local Country music scene interviewed also discussed shipping lines other than Cunard, where local seamen brought home Country music records. The Canadian Pacific Line was based at Seaforth Dock and for some, this was also a route for the records. John Colford, local Country music fan had a friend who worked for Canadian Pacific and brought him Country records back. He stated that when his friend's son went to work for them, he continued to bring records back. Norman Boasc was a seaman who went to sea with the Canadian Pacific Line and stated that while he never brought records back himself, he remembers other seamen on the ships did: including records by Hank Snow, Hank Williams and Elvis. Local comedian, Ken Dodd, in programme No 12 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989) explained that he also obtained records via this route,

A friend of mine joined the Merchant Navy and went on the Canada run and they brought these records back of this amazing man Hank Snow. He sang in a sort of real Canadian nasal twang [...]

to us who were brought up on David Whitfield and Victor Sylvester this was a great innovation, so Hank Snow became quite a favourite with the lads of Knotty Ash. 262

Eric Stoddard, a local Country music artist went to sea with the Blue Star Line in the 1950s and stated to this researcher that 'there were lots of lads who brought back records including Country', but his comments were unspecific.

Stoddard said he heard Country versions of, 'Please Release Me' and 'The Green, Green Grass of Home', well before they were Pop hits in Britain. Tony Kennedy, another local Country music artist explained that he had a friend who was a ship's carpenter and went on a run to Japan, bringing him back 'half a dozen' Country LPs that he obtained while he was in Japan. John Murphy was a Merchant seaman travelling to the Far East and stated to this researcher that he never brought back any records himself, but his friend's family went away to sea and brought back non-Country records such as Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry and Elvis. Charlie Landsborough, Country music artist informed this researcher that his brothers were all Merchant Navy men and travelled the World bringing back records including Country music artists Jimmy Rodgers, Montana Slim, Grandpa Jones and Hank Williams. Brian Toner, who ran a number of the Dock Road pubs, stated that he had many friends who were in the Merchant Navy who used to bring back records that you could not obtain in this country. Brocken $(2010)^{263}$ quotes Belchem $(2000)^{264}$ claiming that Jimmy Rodgers records were brought back from Galveston and New Orleans via the Harrison Line this holds some currency. For example, Colin Gatewood, local Country music fan stated to this researcher that this was a rich source of Country music records:

²⁶² Good Ol' Boys Programme No 12. 12/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

²⁶³ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 112

²⁶⁴ Belchem, J. (2000) *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press. p. 61

There was a friend who used to go away to sea. It was the Harrison Line, used to sail out of Liverpool and it used to go to the West Indies with machinery and all kinds of stuff from the U.K and what they used to bring was sugar. They used to call it 'the Sugar Run' and when they left the West Indies they used to call in at the Gulf ports in Texas, Galveston and places like that and this friend of mine, him and some of the lads off the boat used to go into this Café and they had a juke box there. It was all Country music 'cos in the Southern States that's all that there was really, and they got friendly with this guy and he said, 'When you come back next time all the records that were changed we'll save them for you', and they used to come back with all these records. They were singers really that nobody had heard of in this Country at that time, of course they became famous afterwards, people like Lefty Frizzell, and Hawkshaw Hawkins. John D Loudermilk was another that was fairly big at the time, that's how I got into it really, through a friend.

This researcher observed that while there were local people who claimed to have returned to Liverpool with Country music records, others claimed to have received them from 'seamen friends' or 'relatives'. Critics of the route might suggest that the romance of the myth is so strong that we all tend to invest in it. However, the narrative is questionable: not only by the fact that few people seem to have these recordings these days, but also because few interviewees claimed it was their first introduction to Country music. This might suggest that there was already a consumer demand for these records emanating from local Country music fans and that these seamen acted as facilitators for them – if it can be agreed that it actually happened, of course. Almost all the artists named as having been brought back to Liverpool, were popular Country music artists in America and would have been played regularly on American Forces Network Europe (AFN), a station that regularly played Country music and which this researcher will show was popular with many of the local Country music fans. Tony Kennedy, local Country music artist explained to this researcher:

Years ago, we used to rely on the lads bringing records back from the likes of the States because those records weren't on sale here. So many of the lads used to say to them who went to sea, 'Next time you're away see if you can get such a thing, such a thing and such a thing', and you'd give them a list. Nine times out of ten they'd say, well I can only get those this time but I'll get you the others next time.

This researcher found that Country music was readily available at the time in Liverpool, but not all records released in the USA were released in Britain. Diane Caine, owner of the Musical Box, a local record shop, informed this researcher that she now sells box sets of Country music CDs released on the Bear Family label, which hold 8-12 CDs in them with 32 tracks per CD. She noticed that some of these boxed sets by artists such as Hank Snow, Hank Locklin and Bobby Bare, contain albums that had never previously been issued in Britain. Caine stated that she knows this because these singers were so popular in Liverpool that it was quite an exciting event when an album by these artists was released. There were also time differences in the release of some records in the USA and Britain. Hank Williams' popular single 'Lovesick Blues' was released on MGM 10352 in America on 11th Feb 1949, but was not released in Britain until March, 1950 (MGM269) - some 13 months later. This record was a large mainstream hit in America and during that period was played regularly on AFN Europe.²⁶⁵ Williams performed the song on the Grand Ole Opry in June 1949 to tremendous acclaim (he got six standing ovations) and G Bautell, Chief AFN Europe Radio, told this researcher in a personal email (Jan 2010) that the 'Grand Ole Opry' broadcast was recorded, sent to Europe on a V-Disc or W-Disc and played on AFN. It is quite conceivable that many of the local Country fans who heard these records might have asked for them from the seamen who went to America. Therefore, when members of the local scene state that the records they received from seamen were not available in Britain, even though catalogues

²⁶⁵ Grand Ole Opry. *Hank Williams*. [Online] http://www.opry.com/artist/hank-williams (accessed 13/4/2012)

show that they were released in Britain, it might well be that such records were released later in Britain.

One of the questions about this route that is often posed is that, with all these records being brought back, why have so few (if any) actually turned-up in circulation? Brocken states:

[...] in all the time I have been interested in this topic: casually as a collector, entrepreneurially as a dealer, and academically as a researcher (since, at least the mid-1970s), I have never once come across in Liverpool a US 45 that was **known** to have been brought into the city from America, either by a 'Cunard Yank', **or** an American airman (white or black) during the 1950s. Since the age of 15 (1970) I have at no time come across an imported Rock 'n' Roll LP **known** to have been purchased by a 'Cunard Yank' or US Airman. Naturally, one should accept that the survival of said 45s is far less probable, given their possible uses and abuses at 'shebeens' ²⁶⁶ (one should also remember that 45s were regarded even by devoted popular music lovers as ephemera i.e. 'here today, gone tomorrow'). However, it remains difficult for this writer to consider that an elusive (let us say) Ray Charles LP might not have been preserved by somebody at some stage. Full-priced LPs were expensive luxuries; they were often cherished and were not normally cast aside 'at a whim'. Of course, it is entirely possible that even as the aforementioned collector, dealer and bootlegger of 40-plus years standing, I might have been looking in entirely the wrong places for such materials, although the aforementioned Mick O'Toole also perhaps correctly informed me that 'as a dealer, **they** should have found **you**, if they had existed!' ²⁶⁷

Brocken is specifically discussing Rock 'n' Roll and R&B here, rather than Country music *per se* but his observations are logical – where are these records if they feature so strongly in the Merseybeat mythologies? Further, could it be that the Country music pathways are the actual sources of such story-telling, and have been perhaps manoeuvred into position to suit

²⁶⁶ Shebeen -An unlicensed drinking-house.

²⁶⁷ Brocken. M. (2015) *Liverpool: The 21st Century Legacy of The Beatles*. Farnham: Ashgate. Due date.

another genre-based narrative? As far as Country music is concerned, Kevin McGarry, one-time lead singer of The Hillsiders offers a plausible explanation regarding what happened to those records in McManus (1994)²⁶⁸ 'Hardly any people will still have the old Country records because one album would do 5 or 6 streets. Someone would get it and say, "Have you heard this Hank Snow album?" and it would get passed around'

Some scene members claim they still have these records, although this researcher has not borne witness to this. For example, Marion Fox, Wirral-based Country music fan, in an interview with this researcher stated that she 'worked in The Pelican on the Woodchurch estate and the lads used to go away to sea and brought back all sorts of LP's e.g. Buck Owens. Every time they went away, they brought me back an LP [...] The middle was missing, they were American LPs you see and I've still got them all, boxes of them'. Carole Mortimer also informed this researcher that she still has many of the records her father and his brother brought back from the US.

Therefore, perhaps it is not unusual amongst those members of the local Country music scene who obtained Country music records in the 1950s/60s, to still have their collections intact. A few of these local Country music scene aficionados informed me they still have these albums (regardless of the route). Many Country music fans of this generation were avid collectors of Country music records who felt owning a record that others did not gave them status and authenticity within the scene. Diane Caine proprietor of the Musical Box record store stated that a number of her customers still have stacks of US LPs at home because they were never released on CD and they did not want to part with them.

Records were not the only articles to be brought back by this route that helped to stimulate the music scene. A number of Liverpool musicians who went to sea claim they learnt to play

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²⁶⁸ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 2

guitars while at sea, or had guitars brought back for them. Charlie Landsborough informed this researcher that he received his first guitar from his Merchant seaman brother; Tony Kennedy stated that his father was a seaman in the Royal Navy attached to the 6th Fleet in Hawaii and brought him back his guitar. Eric Stoddard explained how he learnt to play guitar playing along to Hank Williams records on his Blue Star Line trips to Japan, having plenty of spare time to do so. Tony Allen of The Blue Mountain Boys in McManus, (1994)²⁶⁹ also claimed that he learnt to play guitar while on board ship. Also in McManus, local Country musician, Carl Goldby stated that he bought his first guitar while on a voyage to New Zealand and learnt to play it when on board; Bunter Perkins of The Blue Mountain Boys was a ship's cook who also bought his first guitar on a voyage to New Zealand. In this Country music discourse, Liverpool was not the only port where local seamen brought back records; Barry Wallace, Scottish Country music singer, remembers Glasgow was 'the same'. He remembers 'many local men in the Navy who brought back LP records from abroad'. Because of the prominence often given to the Cunard Yanks route in the Merseybeat narrative, other routes for the flow of music into Liverpool have been neglected, or not covered to the same depth in many books and publications.

Radio

However, arguably, other routes for this flow of Country music were even more important than the Cunard Yank route. A less 'romantic' route but an important one, was radio broadcasting. A number of members of the scene interviewed by this researcher stated that they regularly listened to Country music on the radio, and it was often their first introduction to this music. One of the most popular stations was AFN, the American Forces Network. The American Forces Network started broadcasting on 4th July 1943 in the BBC studios at 11

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²⁶⁹ McManus, K. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool pp. 2-3

Carlos Place London. Trent Christman on the website *This is AFN* explains that this had its roots in the formation of the 'American Forces Radio Service' (AFRS).²⁷⁰ This came about in 1942 to formalise the supply of music and programmes for the American forces overseas. At a meeting in early 1943 between Army Chief of Staff, General George C Marshall and Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D Eisenhower it was decided that AFN be formed to provide a voice from home for the American and Canadian soldiers stationed in Britain. Morley (2001)²⁷¹ in his book *This is the American Forces Network* described how AFN, with its popular music and variety shows that the British public could not hear on the BBC radio, became very popular across the UK, gaining a large audience.

Gary L Bautell Head of AFN Europe explained to this researcher in a personal email²⁷² that these broadcasts during the war years included Country music records but the station did not have specific Country music shows until the late-'40s. Dr John Provan official AFN historian²⁷³ also explained in a personal email that during World War II AFRS produced a total of 21 Country and Western War Department Label records. These were the 'W Series' which held between 10 and 14 songs per record, meaning that between 200-300 Country music tracks were played on the radio; five of these records apparently still survive. He also stated that artists featured included Bob Willis and The Texas Playboys, Spade Colley and Gang, Gene Autrey, Happy Perryman, Roy Acuff, The Happy Go Lucky Mountaineers and Roy Rogers. He explained that the 'W Series' of AFRS by 1987 had produced just under 3000, Country and Western records, which meant AFN had approximately 30-35,000 Country and Western tracks in its library. Popular artists also came to the London studios of

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²⁷⁰ Christman, T. *This is AFN*. [Online]

http://www.usarmygermany.com/units/AFNEurope/USAREUR_AFNEurope.htm (accessed 5/3/2010)

Morley, P. (2001) This is the American Forces Network The Anglo-American Battle of the Airwaves in WWII. Westport. CT: Praeger. Preface.

²⁷² Bautell. G. Personal e-mail Jan 2010

²⁷³ Provan, J. Personal email Jan 2010

AFN during the War to perform live on the radio. These included non-Country artists such as Glenn Miller, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Marlene Dietrich; Country music artists were also featured on some of these shows. After the War, the station moved to Frankfurt, West Germany (where General Eisenhower had his headquarters in 1945) broadcasting from Radio Frankfurt and six other studio stations. Most of the stations transmitters could only cover a small area but three were still powerful enough to reach Britain. Gary L Bautell stated that AFN Frankfurt had one of the strongest transmitters and could reach England; John Provan confirmed AFN Bremen and AFN Bremerhaven had transmitters large enough for programmes to be heard across most of England. Morley (2001)²⁷⁴ estimated on figures provided by *The BBC Listener Researcher*, that 3.5 million people in the UK regularly listened to AFN.

Craig (1998) in his paper 'The American Forces Network in the Cold War: Military Broadcasting in Post-War Germany' 275 also discusses how music programmes were usually supplied by AFRS 'air ready' – in other words pre-recorded programmes which had been broadcast on commercial US radio networks. Because the US entertainment guilds and unions had agreed to waive their customary fees and residuals on programme materials, this gave AFN almost cost-free access to virtually all record and radio programmes made in America. As Craig explained, this gave AFN an advantage over other radio stations in Europe, allowing them to present many hours of popular music. By 1955, AFN was broadcasting 19 hours of programmes each day. While the purpose of the station was to broadcast these programmes primarily to the American forces such shows had a large

Morley, P. (2001) *This is the American Forces Network: The Anglo-American Battle of the Airways in WWII.* Westport. CT: Praeger.p.138-39

²⁷⁵ Craig, R. S. (1988) 'The American Forces Network in the Cold War. Military Broadcasting in Post War Germany' *The Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. Vol 32. No 3. Summer 1988. pp. 307-321

'shadow' audience across England. Craig also stated that in 1954 AFN reported receiving nearly 21,000 cards and letters from the British Isles.

Country music artists such as Hank Williams and Hank Snow visited the station in Germany to perform live shows. John Provan²⁷⁶ stated that the two most popular shows with the American troops were 'Stick Buddy Jamboree' which ran between 1953 -57 and 'Hillbilly Gasthause' which ran between 1953 -1969. 'Stick Buddy Jamboree' was the first specialist Country music programme produced by AFN. This programme came about when a poll was conducted by AFN amongst the service men as to who their most popular artist was. Country music performer Roy Acuff topped the poll, gaining over 7,000 more votes than second-placed Frank Sinatra, which indicated that a Country music programme would be popular amongst the servicemen. The shows appearing to be popular with the local Liverpool fans who listened to AFN were 'Stick Buddy Jamboree' and another very early Country music shows 'The Grand Ole Opry'. Country music scene member Colin Gatewood stated to this researcher 'I used to listen to the 'Grand Ole Opry' on the American Forces Network in Germany. It used to fade in and out but you could still get it. I used to sit at that radio for an hour and a half listening to The Grand Ole Opry'.

In addition, Marion Fox also stated about listening to AFN that she:

[...] used to sit on the stairs on Sunday night. They used to have Country music on. I lived in rooms with my Mum with a shared kitchen; the landlady had a radio upstairs on a Sunday night from half six to seven o' clock. It had Country music on and I used to sit on the stairs by her room and listen from there. As I say we grew up with it in our house from an early age.

²⁷⁶ Provan. J Personal email Jan 2010

Other original members of the local scene informed this researcher that they used to listen to Country music on AFN. These included George Poole who listened to AFN in the morning before he went to work, Richie Styles who used to listen to the Country 'top ten' on Saturday mornings. Bernie Bullen and Tony Kennedy both stated that they listened to AFN at various times, and Diane Caine, owner of the Musical Box record shop, explained that many of her customers used to listen to AFN. John Colford stated that he regularly listened to Country music on AFN and CAE (Canadian Army Europe), while stationed in Germany as a British soldier. Local Country music artist, Eddy Miller also stated that while in the band, The Miller Brothers, he and his brother Ronnie learnt many Country music songs from listening to AFN:

We used to listen to AFN, American Forces Network programme, which used to be in Germany, put out for the American Forces in Germany, and they used to play a lot of Country. We used to 'twiddle' our radio and pick up AFN and we used to learn a lot of songs that way and it meant we were singing Country songs and nobody knew them at first; but where we were playing them they seemed to like them and when we went back they were asking us to do certain Country songs.

Tony Barnes in McManus (1994)²⁷⁷ stated his cousin got him interested in AFN in 1952. Barnes claimed, 'You could hear all the records that you couldn't get here- Saturday morning was 'American Country Top Seven'. You couldn't buy the records here but then I got to know fellas who were going to sea and I asked them to bring certain records home'. Brocken (2010)²⁷⁸ also states that Albert Connor informed him that he was listening to 'Jimmy Rogers and that kind of thing' on AFN during World War II. Cohen (2007)²⁷⁹ reports that local

²⁷⁷ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 8

²⁷⁸ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s.* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 112

²⁷⁹ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In 'Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles' Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 83

Country music artist and Radio DJ, Kenny Johnson used to listen to 'Stick Buddy Jamboree' and 'The Grand Ole Opry' shows on AFN.

Radio Luxembourg, the European-based commercial station with offices in London, was also extremely popular with many local people in the late-1940s and 1950s. My own father stated that [to paraphrase], it was the only radio station that his family listened-to in the evening. This was also a route for Country music into the scene. Country music fans Colin Gatewood and Marie Rooney both recall listening to Country music on Radio Luxembourg and Brian Toner remembers there being lots of Country music on Radio Luxembourg. He stated that in those days if one was not old enough to see Country bands in a pub, the radio was 'a main source of the music'. Radio Luxembourg played Country music as part of its mainstream programming, but it also had a specialized Country music programme 'Zeke Winters and The Rocky Mountaineers'. Zeke Winters was a pseudonym for Big Bill Campbell who also hosted a similar programme on BBC radio. Radio Luxembourg came into operation in 1933 and was a popular station with the British public playing its blend of popular music, comedy and quiz shows including, in 1948, the first chart countdown show broadcast throughout Britain. It was a commercial station with many sponsored shows. Barnard (1989)²⁸⁰ discussed how Luxembourg could play these sponsored inexpensive shows as they incurred very little expense, Luxembourg being outside of PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited) royalty collection territory. The BBC and the British government regarded it as a 'pirate' radio station, but this was never tested by law. It switched its programming to be fully committed to a popular music service to attract the teenage audience in the late-1950s making further inroads into BBC listenership as a consequence. The beginning of its decline came in the 1960s

²⁸⁰ Barnard, S. (1989) 'Pop and Piracy' in *On the Radio: Music Radio in Britain*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. pp. 32-49

due to competition from the pirate radio stations and then from the revamping in 1967 of BBC radio stations, Nichols (1983).²⁸¹

BBC radio appears to have had little early influence on Country music on the local scene members with the exception of the hugely popular, 'Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm' programme. This was because on the old National programme of the 1930s - 40s, the BBC broadcast very little popular music programmes. It was World War II, which changed the sound of BBC Radio due to the large popularity of AFN Radio. To try to respond to this and to win back some of its listeners after the War; the BBC launched the Light programme to provide a station of music and comedy. While there was a number of comedy and game shows there was still very few popular music programmes, such as 'Housewives' Choice' (1946 -1967), 'The Billy Cotton Bandshow' 1949 - 1968 and 'Two Way Family Favourites'. The website, 'Whirligig Snippets, *Programme Parade 1948*, ²⁸² has a programme guide for one week from Sunday 11th January to Saturday 17th January 1948 which showed that very little popular music was included in their programming. When it was included, it was frequently programmed in-between non-music shows, e.g. 'Two Way Family Favourites', a popular music programme, was sandwiched between the drama, 'Dick Barton Special Agent', the News and Wilfred Pickles' game show, 'Have a Go'. During that week, Big Bill Campbell was broadcast on Wednesday 14th January at 9-10 pm on the Light Programme, but a general lack of popular music programming led to many younger listeners listening to AFN and Radio Luxembourg for their popular music. It was only after the advent of Rock 'n' Roll that the BBC started to introduce music programmes aimed at the young market, e.g. programmes such as 'Skiffle', later 'Saturday Club' (1958 – 69), 'Easybeat' (1959 - 1967) and 'Pick of the Pops' (1955 - 1972). However, arguably during these years

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²⁸¹ Nichols, R. (1983) 'Jolly Roger' in *Radio Luxembourg Station of the Stars*. London: WH Allen and Co Ltd. pp. 123-137

²⁸² Whirligig Snippets. *Programme Parade of 1948.* [Online] http://www.whirligigtv.co.uk/tv/memories/snippets/snippets52.htm (5/3/2010)

BBC radio did not fully understand the changing role of youth in society, or indeed reflect the musical preferences of this young audience, which is why many of the local music fans continued to listen to AFN and Radio Luxembourg into the early-1960s.

'Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm' show was very popular with local fans. Diane Caine told this researcher it was Liverpool's standard Country show on the radio; Bernie Bullen stated how he and his mother listened to the show every week. Both Colin Gatewood and Mick O' Toole said that they listened to the show regularly. Big Bill Campbell was born Clarence Church Campbell in July 1891 in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. Brian Goldby on the sleeve notes of the album, Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm Vol 2 'Mighty Fine' BACM CD D119 states, that Campbell claims, he came over to Britain with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War 1 and remained. His successful radio show ran on the BBC from the 1930s to the early-1950s. His show consisted of staged scenes normally from his 'bunk house' or around his log fire, with the sound effects of the wind, horses, etc. He was joined on the show by fellow Cowboy characters such as Norman Harper, the 'Yodelling Buckaroo', Mervyn Saunders, who was later replaced by Eddie O' Docherty, as 'Sgt Ted of the Mounties', Peggy²⁸³ his 'Bunk House Sweetheart', while Ronnie Braun would play 'his old squeeze box'. The songs were often the standard Cowboy songs of the time and Campbell would say his catchphrase 'Mighty Fine' after each song. Bill Campbell also released popular songbooks and albums of his group's recordings. Two of the songbooks obtained by this researcher are Big Bill Campbell's Rocky Mountain Rhythm Songbook 1945²⁸⁴ and Big Bill Campbell's Album No 3. 1947. ²⁸⁵ Both portray Campbell dressed in full Cowboy regalia and the forewords are filled with references to the mythical images of the 'West': Campbell is called a 'Big Westerner' and he writes about his Cowboys and ranch

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²⁸³ Peggy Bailey became Campbell's wife.

²⁸⁴ Big Bill Campbell Rocky Mountain Rhythm Songbook 1945. London: Victoria Music Publishing Co.

²⁸⁵ Big Bill Campbell's Album No 3 1947 [songbook]. London: Victoria Music Publishing Co.

girls, log cabin, bunk house and how he was born and raised on the Great Canadian Prairie.

Many of the songs in the books are songs that reinforce that image including 'Home on the Range' 'The Red River Valley' and 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'.

This researcher also obtained a CD of his 1940's recordings entitled Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm, VOL 2 'Mighty Fine' (BACM008). ²⁸⁶ It contains twelve songs as Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm and ten under the moniker of The Rocky Mountaineers. The CD includes similar Cowboy songs such as 'Log Cabin Melody' 'Dreamin' of my Rocky Mountain Home', 'Prairie Lullaby', 'Empty Saddles', 'and 'Rocky Mountain Melodies'. Big Bill Campbell also took this show on theatre tours and was hugely successful. He came to Liverpool and played the Pavilion Theatre in Lodge Lane. James Harrison, a stagehand in the post-WWII era remembers that the shows were a sell-out. Campbell had horses on stage, men dressed as Indians, Mounties and trick Cowboys. On Arthur Lloyd's website, The Musical Hall and Theatre History Website, 287 Stan Hall son of Arthur Ellison a fly-man at the Pavilion Theatre confirms that Bill Campbell brought his show there. Neither the website nor Harrison gave dates for this but Harrison believes it was the early 1950s. Reproduced on the CD sleeve of the aforementioned Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm Vol 2 'Mighty Fine, is a poster of the tour 'Way Out West' the New Theatre Oxford's performance, which, describes the show as having Indians, Cowboys, an Indian village, prairie fire, dance of the Indian maidens, rope throwers and Mounties. Campbell died during a theatre tour in Ipswich in 1952. He was an important conduit, not simply because of his radio show, but also the theatre shows and records where the imagery and mythology helped to reinforce the 'Cowboy Myth' to the public.

²⁸⁶ Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm Vol 2. *Mighty Fine* BACM CD D119 (2005)

²⁸⁷ Arthur Lloyd. *The Musical Hall and Theatre History Website* .[Online]

The BBC broadcasted another interesting 'Wild West' radio show: 'Riders of the Range', which ran from 1949 to 1953 for six series. This show called itself a 'musical drama of the West' and covered different stories of the West each week such as Billy the Kid, Jesse James and the opening of the Chisholm Trail. It used sound effects such as thundering hooves and claimed to be an authentic picture of the West. The main character was Cowboy Jeff Arnold played by Charles Chiltern, with his faithful sidekick called 'Luke' and a dog, 'Rustler'. Its theme tunes included 'Tumbling Tumbleweed' and 'Riders of the Range'. ²⁸⁸ It was, it appears, popular but never reached the popularity of Bill Campbell's show.

Burtonwood

Another important source for the dissemination of Country music into the Liverpool scene post-WWII was via the American bases stationed in both the UK and Europe, especially the Burtonwood American Base situated just outside Liverpool, near Warrington. The stationing of US troops in the UK during World War II in preparation for the invasion of mainland Europe exposed the British public and troops to, what was to many of them, new styles of indigenous American music. After the war, many GIs remained stationed in several bases in the UK and Europe. The Burtonwood US servicemen base opened in 1943 and remained open until 1993. Cohen (2005)²⁸⁹ states that many local musicians performed at the base or went there to watch visiting American musicians performing a number of styles such as Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, and Country Music. McManus (1994)²⁹⁰ also explained that local Country music acts such as Hank Walters, The Hillsiders, and The Drifting Cowboys appeared at the bases. These bases exposed the bands to Country music via records given to them or music

²⁸⁸ Whirligig. Radio Days. *Riders of the Range* .[Online]

http://www.whirligig-tv.co.uk/radio/riders.htm (12/3/2010)

²⁸⁹ Cohen, S. (2005) 'Ethnomusicology' 'Country at the Heart of the City; Music, Heritage and Regeneration in Liverpool' in *Society for Ethnomusicology*. Vol 49. No 1. (Winter 2005) Illinois. USA: Illinois University Press. pp. 25-48

²⁹⁰ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 4

played in the servicemen's clubs, which they brought back into the Liverpool scene, often incorporating the songs into their acts. Bernie Green of The Drifting Cowboys in McManus (1994)²⁹¹ explained that he was approached by a staff sergeant from Burtonwood in the mid-1950s, and asked to play at the base. The group ended up playing there twice a week for four years in the GI Servicemen's Club and the Officers' Mess. As Green states: 'They in their turn gave us a load of records so the learning material was endless'. Additionally in Kevin McManus (1994),²⁹² Kenny Johnson of The Hillsiders remembers listening to the jukeboxes in these service clubs, with Country music recordings such as those by Webb Pierce, Hank Williams, and Ernest Tubb amongst many others. These local bands also played the American bases in Europe, which was also a source of Country music absorption.

Local Country music artist Charlie Newport explained to this researcher that he and his band played bases in Britain and around Europe and had to learn songs that were popular with the American troops such as songs by Charlie Pride, Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. A number of other local Country music acts also informed this researcher that they played the American bases at Burtonwood, in Britain and in Europe. Phil Brady, of Phil Brady and The Ranchers, Eddy Miller, of The Miller Brothers and Jerry Devine, of The Blue Mountain Boys, all stated that they played these bases both in Britain and in Europe including in Germany, Turkey and Greece. The Burtonwood base was not only a route for bands to obtain Country music, as American GIs also came into Liverpool for entertainment and socialised with the local population, perhaps bringing records with them as presents or to sell. Mick O'Toole explained to this researcher how these American servicemen became a source of spreading Country music in the local community:

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²⁹¹ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 4

²⁹² McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 4

That's another element 'cos they brought them in with them obviously. So, the fact that you've got that huge base on your doorstep, and these people were coming down here and dancing in the Locarno and the Grafton, obviously carrying on with our girls, and the Americans were obviously a lot more healthy and wealthy than us and they had a lot more money than us and of course they had records. So, there is another element of feeding those songs through which you wouldn't have heard otherwise. Say you had a big sister and she started carrying on with a Yank as we called them in those days and he started coming to the house. He'd bring the stuff with him and all of a sudden, you're hearing stuff nobody else had heard. Obviously, nobody else has heard it 'cos you need that American base on your doorstep.

George Poole, another member of the local Country music scene, also informed this researcher that he remembers American servicemen from Burtonwood frequenting pubs in Liverpool town centre such as The American Bar in Lime Street and The Duck House in Gerrard Street at the rear of St John's Market. He also remembers American servicemen bringing records including Country music records into The Duck House and supplying them to the landlord to play in the pub. Joe Flannery, close friend of Brian Epstein in Brocken, (2015)²⁹³ also remembers Country music being played at the Duck House in 1952 and it being frequented by American aviators from the Burtonwood base. Flannery states that prior to his leaving Liverpool for National Service that year he was:

[...] listening to honky-tonk music for my long goodbye – how apt that now seems. By this time the scene in the Duck House had developed even further and was very exciting. Not only was this Hillbilly Country and Western music being played, still attracting several US airmen from Burtonwood, but also other odd styles of music were being performed in the pub.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ Brocken, M. (2015) *Liverpool: The 21st Legacy of The Beatles.* Farnham: Ashgate. Due date.

²⁹⁴ Flannery, J. with Mike Brocken (2013), *Brian Epstein, The Beatles and Me: Standing in the Wings,* Stroud: The History Press, p. 67

Here, Flannery brings to mind hearing recorded Country music played on this pub's gramophone player, and in a later discussion with Brocken he presumed (but did not actually know whether) the recordings were of US origin.

The American bases were not only a route for Country music into the Liverpool scene, but also a route for the music into the National Country music scene. Barry Wallace of the Scottish Country music duo Jolene and Barry told this researcher that he remembers in his first band the drummer had spent a year working the American Bases in Europe and brought back to Scotland over 100 LPs which he bought from GIs who were returning to the United States. Wallace stated to this researcher, 'I remember saying who are these guys [...] it was very hard to get Country and Western LPs then, imports was the only way to hear artists like Hank Thompson'.

Wallace and his band played American bases in Norfolk and Suffolk such as Bentwater and Allconberry and he found that Country music was popular in areas around these bases stating, 'There were thousands of Yanks stationed there and they get to know the locals and they became friendly with the locals, so all music sort of seeped into the locality.' Peter Fairhead, a Country music journalist, promoter and DJ confirmed to this researcher he found 'pockets' of Country music popularity in East Anglia and Yorkshire around the American air bases situated there.

Retail

It is important to understand that, while these networks were significant for the flow of Country music into Liverpool, the city did have record shops where Country music fans could purchase Country music records. Mick O'Toole stated to this researcher, 'In those days we had umpteen record shops, there were record shops everywhere'. He also stated that it

was common for cycle shops among other types of stores, to carry records. Diane Caine, owner of the Musical Box record store in Tuebrook Liverpool, informed this researcher that when her mother took over the shop from her brother in 1951 they were selling 'a lot of Country music records which were all the old shellac 78s'. Caine's uncle took the shop on in 1947 after leaving the RAF and he also sold toys and fancy goods at the front and records at the back including a selection of Country music. She recalls customers coming into the shop to listen to and purchase records by artists such as Jimmy Rodgers and Hank Williams. Caine also remembers growing-up in a family, which owned 78s of Jimmy Rodgers, and The Carter Family. Perhaps, then, we should consider and research the fact that plenty of British Country music releases were available to buy on British labels on a reasonably regular basis.

For example, a number of members of the Liverpool Country music scene interviewed by this researcher, purchased or listened to Country music records bought from local record stores in the 1940s and 1950s. Bernie Bullen remembers listening to his brother's Country music collection of 78s by artists such as Hank Williams in the early-1950s, which his brother had bought from a local Liverpool record shop. Alfie Crowley's brother also regularly purchased records by Hank Williams, Jimmy Rodgers and Webb Pierce. Tommy Melville also stated to this researcher that listening to his father's locally purchased records of Jimmy Rodgers, influenced him to be a Country music musician. John and Elsie Colford stated they regularly purchased records from a local record shop in the Strand in Bootle and then from Edwards' in Kensington when the Strand record shop closed. George Poole explained he did not have a lot of money and so joined a record club in work. The workers would all put in enough money for one of them to buy someone a record each week; when it was his turn, he would go to the

²⁹⁵ This dual-purpose use was not uncommon. The famous NEMS Record store was originally a furniture store owned by Brian Epstein's father, where Brian Epstein had a record section.

Musical Box and buy a Country record. Chris Seddon stated her late-husband George would go to a record shop in Stanley Road called The Northern and she still has most of these records including 78s of Jimmy Rodgers and 'a Hank Williams record on the yellow MGM label he bought in 1951'.

Joe Corke told this researcher that he visited a number of record shops in the 1950s to purchase Country music records such as Hill's in the Strand, Bootle and Allen's by Orrell Park Station. Corke explained that he preferred going round the smaller record shops in his search for Country music, because the larger record stores did not keep stocks of unsold records. When he asked in the smaller shops for Country music, they would often go into the back and bring out older Country records that they still had in storage. Corke said that 'in those days there was no taping of records, so either you owned it or the only other way to listen to it was to borrow it off someone who did'. He said it gave him a sense of pride when he showed other Country music fans, records that he had obtained. Corke felt that it gave him a status among other Country music fans by owning these records.

McManus (1994)²⁹⁶ quotes Bernie Green stating that he first heard Country music when he was 12 (1950) and they were records that his friend had bought locally. He also stated that in the 1950s he saw records by Webb Pierce, Carl Smith, Lefty Frizzel and Hank Williams for sale in the Musical Box record shop. In Cohen (2007)²⁹⁷ he also remembers going into a record shop and seeing a large poster of Hank Williams and being fascinated by it. Brocken (2010)²⁹⁸ stated that a 78 rpm record of Jimmy Rodgers in the Robert Shelton Recorded Music Archive at the Institute of Popular Music, The University of Liverpool, has on its

²⁹⁶ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 17

²⁹⁷ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North' in *Decline, Renewal and the* City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 72

²⁹⁸ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 112

sleeve the name and address of the local retail stores of Strothers, Davies' Arcade, and Lewis'. He also reported that Hank Walters stated that he first heard Hank Williams in 1949 in a place he recalled as The Blue Bird Café in Aintree, Liverpool on their jukebox; this would most likely not have been an imported recording for juke boxes were stocked with British-pressed products.²⁹⁹

On the national Country music scene, record shops were also sources of Country music in the 1940s and 1950s. Ron Sutton, a Country music fan from Yorkshire, informed this researcher that he listened to Country music records in the 1940s and 1950s, which his father bought from their local record shop. Local scene member Richie Styles worked for a while in London and while there, purchased his Country music records from a record shop in Croydon called the Beano. Styles also explained that the shop owner informed him he could 'get you any record you asked for'.

Conclusion

Liverpool's development as a cosmopolitan port together with the insular nature of its people arguably made it more susceptible to American culture than other cities and via one of these routes, Country music songs resonated with Liverpool people who identified with many of the sounds and sentiments. This music however, was initially an imported culture and for it to take hold in the City and a local scene to develop, it needed a variety of networks to facilitate the flow of music into the City: Liverpool did have a number of routes for this flow. Whilst one route, the Cunard Yanks, claims ownership of a singular route, they were, in truth only part of a series of diachronic conjunctions, which came together, to create a synchronic event: the advent of Country music as an authentic scene in Liverpool.

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²⁹⁹ There is though, a date discrepancy. The record he claims to have heard 'Lovesick Blues' was not released in the U.K till 1950 (MGM 269)

For this music to affect such a large minority of people in and around the city other routes such as radio programmes, American airbases and British record shops were also required to give birth to, nurture and develop a scene. It would be difficult to assign importance to any of the routes above the others, for often scene members received their Country music by more than one of these routes. John Colford, for example, was someone who was buying Country music records in Liverpool in the 1950s; he listened to Country music on AFN radio and obtained Hank Williams records from a seaman friend of his father's. Eddy Miller received records from seamen friends, listened to Country music on AFN and was exposed to the music while playing at the American bases. Bernie Green also listened to Country music on AFN radio, obtained records from the American bases, bought records from local record stores and when these were not available, his friend and partner in one of the first local Country music clubs, Carl Noviski, would contact Noviski's mother-in-law in California and have her send records over from America.

One of the most obvious characteristics of Liverpool's culture throughout the twentieth century has been not the singularity but the variety of its musical activities. Within the city diverse genres of music representing some equally diverse scenes, came to represent analogous forms of authenticity. Country music represents a **comparable** authenticity and, for the popular music scholar, there is evidently still much to unpack regarding the authenticities, authorities, and legitimacies surrounding the roots/routes of the Country music scene. One thing that can be stated with some degree of certainty, however, is that the mass media systems played a vital part in the development of Liverpool's Country music scene.

Chapter 5. The Growth of the Local Scene and its Significant Cultural Spaces.

While there was evidently a global flow of non-local Country music into Liverpool from a number of important trajectories (i.e. 'routes'), for the music to 'take **root**' in a community, and the scene to flourish, more research is required. It needs significant people driving it and an infrastructure of vibrant venues and other significant places where a critical mass of active participants with similar shared values can meet up. As Brocken (2010) states

Musical scenes are developed through a variety of cultural geographical and personal circumstances. Networks of individuals have to band together in order to create something that lasts longer than a one-off gig or a night in a pub. 300

Whilst Country music was popular across Liverpool, and there were Country music gigs in social clubs and pubs, this actually reveals very little on its own, other than the fact that Country music, as previously stated, travels well. Further, from this writer's research it appears that many early Country performances were rather ad hoc and were often part of the venues' mainstream entertainment programmes. These were not regular events, as such. However, as Spencer Leigh correctly stated to this researcher, it only needs a small number of motivated people for a scene to develop and three such significant people in the early development of the scene were Hank Walters, Bernie Green and Carl Goldie. All of these, besides being local Country music performers, were 'entrepreneurial' in the sense that they were instrumental in setting up specialised Country music venues in Liverpool.

Cohen (2007)³⁰¹ explains that Hank Walters was born William Ralph Walters on 2nd Aug 1933, and claims to have followed Country music from being a schoolboy; forming the first

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³⁰⁰ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 107

Country band in Liverpool, Spike Walters and His Hillbillies in 1946, while still at school. He was conscripted for National Service in 1951 and, after serving in the Middle East, returned to Liverpool and formed his own Country band 'Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers' (this unit was named after a band he had formed while serving in the army out in Khartoum). Walters, an ex-docker, is known as 'The Father of Country Music' in Liverpool (McManus. 1994). 302 While initially just playing local venues in the north-end of Liverpool, 303 he had the determination and drive to promote Country music in Liverpool as a major popular music form, and part of this was setting-up the first specialist Country music club in Liverpool at The Black Cat Club (McManus 1994). This club was situated on the top floor above Samson and Barlow's Restaurant in London Road, Liverpool and was taken over by Walters one evening each week for the purposes of promoting Country music.

Walters helped to successfully promote Country music significantly in Liverpool, later in life even promoting the genre in Liverpool as part of the city's cultural heritage. In addition, Walters was excellent at promoting himself as the most significant person in Liverpool Country music, making many claims, e. g, that he formed the first Country band in Liverpool. Another claim was that he owned the first Hank Williams record in Liverpool; another that his authenticity was linked to his grandfather's 'Cajun' roots. So much so, in fact, did these narratives carry weight that Cohen, (2007)³⁰⁵ even provided three different Walters explanations concerning how he claimed to have obtained the first Hank Williams record in Liverpool. Notwithstanding these attempts to place himself in the forefront of Liverpool

³⁰¹ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. in Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 72-3

McManus, K. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 1

³⁰³ This is interesting, for it suggests a parochial base, which was evident in the early Liverpool scene – especially in the days when public transport was essential, and car ownership far less common.

³⁰⁴ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 9

³⁰⁵ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.p. 72

Country music, such urban myths should not detract from the fact that to this day, Walters is still regarded by many researchers, local Country music musicians, promoters and fans-alike as the most significant person in the development of Liverpool's Country music scene. Thus confirming that, as Brocken (2010)³⁰⁶ suggests, scenes require key individuals.

McManus (1994),³⁰⁷ states that the Country evening at The Black Cat Club opened on 12th February 1957. It was a showcase for Country music performances every Friday night, and was more often attended by a full house of circa two hundred people. A number of people in the scene claimed, that it often packed-in many more than two hundred. Bunter Perkins who at that time was a member of Hank Walters' band stated in McManus (1994):

You wouldn't believe the amount of people we got in there. We called them 'Underground People' because there had been nowhere for them to go. They were all in their houses listening to this stuff and then the club opened up. 308

It not only attracted Country music fans looking for a venue where they could listen to their type of music with like-minded people, but also those new to the scene. Renowned actor and comedian (and local Country music artist, 'Hobo Rick') Ricky Tomlinson stated to this researcher:

I was a teenager and there was a club on London Road over Samson and Barlow's. One night, there was a big queue and I thought what's going on in there and I waited in the queue, and there was a band called Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers [...] I was captured by it. Then once I heard that music and the laughter and the sounds I was just captivated by it, and so I sort of followed Country for a long time.

McManus, K. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 9

³⁰⁶ Brocken, M. (2010) *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s.* Aldershot .England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 123

³⁰⁷ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 9

Local BBC Radio Merseyside DJ and past-presenter of the BBC Radio Merseyside Country show Billy Butler, stated to this researcher just how important such a venue could be during the early stages of a scene:

Luckily, the early leaders of Country and Western like Hank Walters, The Bluegrass Boys and The Hillsiders; they all had a base in Samson and Barlow's The Black Cat Club. So if you did like the music and listened to it on the radio then you could go into town and see it and there weren't many clubs that did that sort of thing.

Hank Walters' band were resident at The Black Cat for twelve years and one of the important features of The Black Cat Club was that Walters encouraged and developed new young talent in the club, encouraging them to play on stage with his band. Tommy Melville, a local Country music musician with The Whisky River Band, informed this researcher that he first started playing Country music when Hank Walters invited him up to play at The Black Cat Club. Paddy Kelly stated in McManus (1994):³⁰⁹ The Black Cat was magic. You'd see a seven piece band on stage all different bands playing together. You'd walk in with your guitar and you'd get up and play. A magic atmosphere you'll never see that again'. Brocken (2010) even states that Walters was: 'The lynch pin in the development of a real active scene. He brought in other artists less traditional - Tony Allen, Jerry Devine, who formed their own band and found a residency in The Temple Bar, Dale Street'. ³¹⁰

However, it should be noted that Bernie Green, another significant person in the Country music scene with The Drifting Cowboys, also started a Country music club with local Country music fan Carl Novoski. Green informed this researcher that it was based in a small Labour club in Deane Road, Kensington. This was advertised by posters in local shops and

³⁰⁹ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 20

³¹⁰ Brocken, M (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 119

record shops, together with an advert in the Liverpool Echo newspaper. Green informed this researcher that it was only a small club holding about one hundred people, often packed with two to three times that number. After three months, it was moved to bigger premises above shops in Islington. Mick O'Toole, who frequented both clubs at that time, informed this researcher that the original club was no bigger than a 'cubby-hole'. The club ran successfully for an indeterminate time and Bernie Green stated that it was at this club that Carl Goldie and Bunter Perkins while playing in The Blue Mountain Boys approached him that night to join their band. Green felt it would be too much work helping to run the club and playing with The Blue Mountain Boys. Therefore, he gave up running the club to concentrate on a career with the band. This is something he now regrets as he enjoyed his time running the club. Green continued to play in a number of local Country music bands including Phil Brady and The Ranchers, The Everglades and with Hank Walters' Dusty Road Ramblers for a period. Green continued to perform into the Twenty-first Century when finally; ill health meant he had to come off the road. However, he continues to frequent local Country music venues regularly, where he is treated by both the artists and fans from the Liverpool Country music scene as an 'elder statesman' of local Country music - another key part, perhaps, of the scene's jigsaw puzzle.

The origins of the scene's development could perhaps also be described as being somewhat competitive, for both Hank Walters and Bernie Green have continued to disagree on which club actually started first. Green does not feel that the issue is important enough to overshadow their early achievements in promoting Country music on Merseyside, whereas Walters is much more adamant on which club commenced first, stating in Cohen (2007):

'The Black Cat took off. You won't find any Country music clubs in Britain as long ago as that'. 311

Mick O'Toole stated that he frequented both clubs from the start and informed this researcher that he recalls Green's club to be the first to open. The argument about whether or not they were the first Country music clubs in Britain is difficult to establish, for at that time a coordinated Country music network simply did not exist across the UK. There were small regional scenes often growing up in isolation from each other. Country music journalist, Graham Lees on his website *Country Music in Britain* ³¹²stated that the first Country music club in Manchester was the York Club, which opened in 1956; if correct, this was earlier than both Liverpool clubs. Lees also stated that in the 1950s as Country and Western took hold, clubs opening up exclusively for Country music were occurring all over Britain making it difficult to establish if the York Club was the first in Britain.

Carl Goldie opened-up another significant Country music club in Liverpool. This was at the already well-established Ossie Wades' club in Everton, the real name of which was the Walton Lane Social Club. As McManus (1994)³¹³ explains (to paraphrase), Ada Wade owned (or leased) the venue and Carl and Joan Goldie promoted Sunday night Country music events. Wades took the bar money, and the Goldies the entrance fee. Wades' held approximately 200 and at most events, some were turned away. The original compere was Tony Barnes, but Ricky Tomlinson informed this researcher that he also became a compere at Ossie Wades stating:

³¹¹ Cohen, S. (2007)'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.p. 81

³¹² Lees.G.Golden Graham On Line. *Country Music in Britain* [Online] http://zoom.host-care.com/~grhamle/britishcountry.html (accessed 25/10/2010)

³¹³ McManus. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p.21

I was the resident compere at Ossie Wades'. It was on the corner of Lathom Street by Everton F.C football ground. It was facing a pub called The Blue House (Stanley Park Hotel) and I was there for many years as the compere. It was a great driving scene in them days; there were all sorts of bands, The Miller Brothers, The Kentuckians, Phil Brady, Bernie Green, and The Saddlers. There were loads an' loads of Country bands.

A number of local Country music artists informed this researcher that they played regularly at Ossie Wades: George Neild in a duo with his brother John and then in The Saddlers, Charlie Newport in The Paddy Kelly Band, Bernie Bullen in The Nevadas, and Eddy Miller in The Miller Brothers, for example.

Carl Goldie was also important to the scene as he was instrumental in promoting local Country music artists and events in larger venues in Liverpool and around the UK. McManus (1994)³¹⁴ stated that in 1964 Goldie promoted the first local festival of Country music at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, filling the 1,700 seats. The event featured local acts such as Phil Brady and The Ranchers, The Hillsiders and Goldy's [sic] Country Cousins. He also promoted the first national UK Country music tour of local Country music artists using the same bands along with American artist Tommy Collins. Ricky Tomlinson informed this researcher that he compered the shows, but there was mixed success with two shows cancelled because of lack of support. McManus (1994)³¹⁵ states that Goldie also promoted three Country music shows at The Grafton Ballroom called 'Liverpool Goes Country' and two Royal Iris³¹⁶ Country music cruises on the River Mersey, also that he formed the North West Country Music Association (something also claimed by Hank Walters!). The association was in truth an agency for Country artists, but it also gave them a chance to meet

McManus. K (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool (1994) p. 23

McManus, K. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 23

³¹⁶ The Royal Iris was a ferry boat that ran between Liverpool, Seacombe and New Brighton, but also had musical cruises in the evenings. It was given the title 'Royal' in recognition of its part in the Zeebruge raid in 1918.

up and socialise. Goldie even promoted Johnny Cash on his first tour of England at the Liverpool Empire, on behalf of Mervyn Conn. Once again, a key individual – a promoter who also played – brought together another required piece of the Country music scene; something that Straw, Cohen and Brocken all feel is vital for any scene to develop.

There were other Country music clubs that opened-up after the aforementioned, including one at Blair Hall. O'Connell (2011)³¹⁷ explained this club was situated above the Co-op departmental store on Walton Road. The first floor consisted of offices and the second floor was used for dances and social gatherings. Most local bands played this venue including The Hillsiders, Phil Brady and The Ranchers, Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers, The String Dusters (later to changing their name to Harvey), The Kentuckians, and Western Union. McManus (1994)³¹⁸ also states that The 21 Club on Croxteth Road in the south-end of Liverpool (owned by George Bolt) featured Country music nights every Thursdays with Gordon Fleming and The Miller Brothers as resident acts. It was also at The 21 Club where Alan Sytner – future Cavern owner – began his Jazz promotions.

The growth in popularity of Country music in Liverpool initiated by these individuals, clubs, and artists brought about an increase in artists wishing to perform the music (even though at this stage, there was only a little money in it). By 1960, a numbers of venues were increasingly putting on Country music acts as part of their regular entertainment. Hank Walters rhetorically claimed to Brocken in 1994 at a University of Liverpool seminar that, when *he* formed the North West Country Music Association, he had a list of one hundred and twenty Liverpool-based Country music bands. Unfortunately, he could not provide any evidence of this, but it is probable that there were many local bands working regularly by the

³¹⁷ O'Connell, B. (2011) *People's Stories- The Co-op and Blair Hall* .[Online] http://peoples-stories.com.php/i=7UW6TZWRB&n+8&s+your_stories&t+all&il+JPAXHLPBBBC&f+date&p+1 (accessed 20/3/2012)

³¹⁸McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 21

1960s. In the course of this study, this researcher compiled a list of local Country music bands performing between mid-1950s to mid-1970s. [Appendix 2] This list almost organically emerged from research publications, books, informants and Country music magazines. It does not include popular Country music solo artists (or duos) such as Lee Brennan and George. C. Smith.³¹⁹

Country music could be heard in various clubs and pubs across Merseyside including Catholic parochial clubs, Labour and Conservative clubs and company social clubs such as those at English Electric, Metal Box, Crawford's Biscuits, Dunlop's, Yorkshire Imperial Metals, and AC Delco. McManus (1994)³²⁰ states that Alan Clayson in his biography of George Harrison (The Quiet One) claimed that at that time there were over three hundred venues affiliated to the Liverpool Social Club Association. This gives an indication of the number of social clubs that could possibly be available for the Country bands to play in. It is also rhetorically claimed that a number of pubs also included Country music as part of their entertainment. However, as Brocken (2010)³²¹ suggests, we should perhaps not go overboard about pub entertainment and live music, for not all pubs presented live entertainment for a variety of reasons, e.g., size or shape of the premises, brewery policies, financially viable, etc. Therefore, this perhaps meant that certain pubs in an area had a particularly strong reputation for playing Country music. The Blue House (Stanley Park Hotel) in Everton was one such popular Country music pub attended by many of the informants. George Neild with his brother John would perform there regularly being watched by scene members Patsy Duggan and Mick O'Toole and local Country music artist Tony Kennedy had a residency there. Mike

³¹⁹ Appendix 2 contains the names of 60 local Country music bands. It may not be a complete list and as it does not include the large number of solo artists and duos, Walters' claim of 120 artists may be correct.

³²⁰ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p.11

³²¹ Brocken, M. (2010)' I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 17

Brocken recalls The Wellington pub on Green Lane being another small pub that was known for live Country music, and it was here that he tentatively played his first Country-style gig.

Certain districts of Liverpool and Merseyside had parochial reputations for Country music. Cohen (2007)³²² claims Huyton to be particularly strong, and several local musicians confirmed this to this researcher. Local Country music artist Charlie Newport stated that The Yew Tree Public House in Huyton was known as a Country music pub, as was The Dog and Gun, in Croxteth. 323 Two areas of Liverpool where it is claimed Country music was also very popular were the north-end and the south-end of Liverpool. Alfie Crowley, south-end Country music musician, stated that he played in a number of pubs in the south-end during this period including: The Dingle, The Pineapple, The Toxteth, The Ponderosa and The Royal Oak on Park Lane. He also played The Neptune and The Little Woodman on Mill Street, The Coburn and The Angel on Stanhope Street, and The Island Home and The Seven Steps on the Dock Road. He actually stated to this writer that there were 'not a large number of social clubs' (which was odd) but those that did present Country music were the United Services Club at the rear of Park Road, The Thirty Nine Steps also at the rear of Park Road and two Orange Lodge Clubs. Alfie Crowley stated to this researcher: 'Where I lived in the south-end they used to have music on every night and it was always Country music'. It has been argued by others, however, that Country music was not as strong in the south-end of the city as it was across the north-end.

The north-end of Liverpool – particularly in the Dock Road area - had many pubs including The Goat, The Union, The Atlantic, The Bramley Moor, O'Gorman's, The Langton Castle,

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³²² Cohen, S. (2007)'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 74

³²³ This venue still had Country music acts on in the 1990s. This researcher remembers Paddy Kelly playing there at that time.

The Boathouse, The Regent and The Griffin. There was in fact a local rivalry between the north and south-ends of the city, concerning ownership of Country music in Liverpool and a number of acts were known *as* south-end bands, such as The Miller Bros, Phil Brady and The Ranchers, Ernie Smith and Andy Campbell, Jeff Hawk Trio and Gordon Fleming. The north-end claimed Hank Walters and the Dusty Road Ramblers, The Saddlers, The Joe Rogers Band, and The Blue Mountain Boys. Alfie Crowley informed this researcher that he first met north-end musician Sonny Phillips while he was working in a bar with a band that included Jerry Devine, Crowley stated: 'Jerry Devine got me up to sing and Sonny Phillips said to me "I never heard you before or seen you before. What part of the north-end do you come from?" I said "The south". He said "What?" I said, "I'm a south-ender". "No south-ender sings like that". I said, "I'm a born-and-bred south-ender and I sing like that".

This friendly but competitive rivalry still exists today. This researcher was in The Melrose Abbey in Kirkdale conducting an ethnographic/oral history study of the community when two members of the audience both from the south-end performed; there was a shout of 'the south-end has taken over!' from a member of the audience. While observing The Bar Room Boys at The Old Campfield Hotel in Everton, their leader Terry Fletcher introduced one performer as 'Bobby Harris, that well-known singer from the south-end' (who was actually from a well-known north-end musical family), which provoked much laughter from the audience ³²⁴. Bands from both the north-end and south-end regularly played in both communities, but there was additional competition brought about by this rivalry. Alfie Crowley informed this researcher that he first saw George Neild playing at The Angel pub in the south-end and he regularly played The Bramley Moor in the north-end. According to Crowley, there were so

³²⁴ This friendly rivalry also occurred within families. This researcher remembers a woman at a venue she attended talking about her Mother stating 'She's in heaven now' to which a man in her company replied 'She won't be in heaven. She's a south-ender'.

many clubs and pubs that bands were never short of work. Tony Kennedy also stated to this researcher:

When we were younger we used to do the clubs. Every Catholic Church had a club so you were never short of bookings in this city [...] Most of the big factories had their own clubs and they were always well attended. In Kirkby, all the factories down the main road all had their own clubs and you had the two supporters' clubs, Liverpool and Everton.

Tony Ainscough who played in the bands The Country Boys and The Country Five in the 1960s and then later in The Everglades, told this researcher that he played in hundreds of clubs and Eric Stoddard who played in The Dalton Brothers stated 'There was a pub on every corner. Clubs everywhere! I played a lot of Labour and Conservative clubs. There was so much work I used to turn it down. Everyone wanted entertainment. There were so many Country bands in Liverpool it was unbelievable!' Charlie Newport concurred: 'You could come along the Dock Road - even the south-end at the Dingle; you would have bands on in every pub.' Stoddard also explained that as a semi-professional, to him performing was 'well paid in those days'; he earned £3 per night performing and was only paid £11.15s 8d per week for working on the docks.

Many artists discussed with this researcher about the amount of work that there was in the 1960s – 70s. Peter Dee of the band Hobo stated: There was more work for us then. It was vibrant. There's not many pubs we haven't done. [...] You could go out every night and there was something on (Country music) we played every pub on the Dock Road.' Eddy Miller informed me that: 'In the 1970s we were playing seven nights a week [...] It got that bad in the '70s I packed in: 24 hours a day, seven days a week - we were killing ourselves. So I said no, and packed it in for a while.' Tony Kennedy added:

In the 60s, we could go week-in, week-out and never not have a booking unless you wanted not to have one. But there was that many church clubs, factory clubs, and Liberal clubs across the City. There was practically on every corner a venue. At The Blue House Friday, Saturday and Sunday there would be three different groups on!

Keith Thornhill of the band West Virginia also discussed playing in the 1970s: 'There was someone playing on every corner. It was in abundance, everywhere. We could actually work eight nights a week afternoons and nights.³²⁵ It was very popular'. John Fairclough, exdrummer also stated about the Country scene in Liverpool:

You could go out in Liverpool any night of the week, certainly six-nights-a-week you had half-a-dozen venues that you could make a choice of going to: The Dockers club, The Brickwall, The Goat on the Dock Road. There was always stuff [...] in this area, I just dread to think how many Country bands we had. Unfortunately, somebody passes away, somebody dies, and that's the only time we all see one another, that's at the funeral.

Many of the Country music bands enjoyed the comradeship and sense of belonging; many had known each other for a considerable length of time. They played in each other's bands and consequently built lasting friendships, rivalries, etc. As Tony Kennedy further explained:

A lot of bands when they weren't working would come and watch other bands and they would invite them up. They'd say, "Come up and do a spot" and that was a regular thing. If there was someone not working and say, somebody was ill out of another group, it was easy to just phone around and say,

"Anyone not working tonight?"

"I'm not working"

"Right well we're stuck, one of our lads has got the flu"

³²⁵ Eight nights a week is probably a play on the words of The Beatles song 'Eight Days a Week'.

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"I'll do it" And the lads would do that with each other. Help each other out all the time. We were one big family'

Eddy Miller also discussed the scene in a similar fashion: 'It's changed quite a lot because years ago we'd go on stage and if someone hadn't turned up there would always be another band member in the audience and he would get up and play. It's not like that today.'

In addition, John Fairclough told this researcher that Country music clubs such as at the Prescot BICC, were meeting places for local band members who might not be working. He explained that they would, 'Chat and find out what's going on. What's the latest gossip. Who's swopped what band and who fell out with who.' This helping out of each other also extended to providing equipment to other artists. Eric Melville, local steel guitarist, stated to this researcher, that he remembers meeting Joe Rogers on the Dock Road as Joe was just getting into a taxi, carrying his guitar. Melville explained that he had just been asked to fill-in with a band that night, but did not have a guitar with him. Rogers handed him his guitar, got into the taxi and left. Melville said he never even asked when he would get the instrument back. Tony Bolland's Plug Inn instrument and equipment shop also facilitated this in later years, with little remuneration coming to him.

Interestingly, bands from outside the area felt the effects of so many Liverpool bands playing, as such, work for them in Liverpool was very difficult to obtain. Andy Boggie of the Welsh duo, Iona & Andy expressed these feelings to this researcher:

What Liverpool always was, was a law unto itself. They say what goes on in Vegas stays in Vegas, what mostly went on in Liverpool stayed in Liverpool. Apart from The Hillsiders and West Virginia who came out, bands stayed in Liverpool, presumably because there was so much work they

never got out [...] Conversely, most bands from outside the area never got to play in the Liverpool scene. It was almost sewn-up.

Boggie also explained that this meant that some popular Liverpool bands were practically unknown outside the local area. Local Country music journalist Mike Storey, in an article in *Country* (1973 Vol 2 No 7), ³²⁶ was of the same opinion stating: 'Liverpool groups in the main tend not to work very much outside of Merseyside and clubs there tend to be residencies rather than featuring artists from different parts of the Country like clubs in other areas.'

The success of Country music in the local pubs and social clubs meant that many of the larger cabaret clubs also started to book Country music artists; Brocken (2010) states: 'By the late-1960's club-land in Liverpool had begun to embrace Country music. [Such as] Several cabaret clubs, The Coconut Grove also known as The Annabel Suite on Green Lane, Stoneycroft, The Shakespeare in the City Centre and The Wooky Hollow in Anfield.' 327

The late-1960s and 1970s were probably the most successful periods within the Country music scene. There were many venues, festivals, and many professional and semi-professional bands. It was at this time when factors that contributed to the decline of the scene began to develop. When Merseybeat exploded onto the national popular music scene, there was a revolution in music throughout both the UK and the USA. This was concomitant with a youth-based public becoming more politically aware, self aware and visible. Many in the Liverpool Country music scene associated Country music with the romanticised image of America especially the mythical Cowboy image created by the cinema and television. These images, for example the characters played by actors such as John Wayne in films like

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 $^{^{326}}$ Country (1973) Vol 2, No 7, Chalker, B. (Ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd

³²⁷ Brocken: M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 123

Stagecoach and The Searchers presented an adult 'hero' image standing for the stereotypes of decency, law and order. In conversation with this writer, many local Country fans claim to have been naive or unaware about the social problems that existed in America. However, with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in America becoming featured more regularly on television and in the news, it brought these injustices to the attention of the British public. Society became more enlightened, and politically aware of what was happening in the American South. Country music was (perhaps erroneously) perceived as having its origins only in the White cultures of the Southern states of America and so became associated with these images of injustice. As Country music author, Bill C Malone stated in Tichi (2005) 'That associating the music with Southern white Folk, America also associated it with racism, bigotry, ignorance and cultural degeneracy'. 328

This was similar to the views held in Britain, especially with young people. Mike Brocken informed this writer:

By the late-'60s I thought Country music was really uncool, to be honest. I liked some of it but hated a lot of it, not because of what it sounded like but because of what it came to be associated with. It created a bit of a taste crisis for me as a kid because I was a big fan of The Byrds and they made the first Country-Rock album and I thought 'what's that all about, then?' I eventually came to reconcile it all in my head, but it was a bit of a problem and I still have a few problems with it, to be honest.

In America, Country music artists such as Merle Haggard with his seemingly proestablishment and patriotic songs such as 'Okie from Muskogee' and 'The Fighting Side of

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³²⁸ Tichi, C. (1995) 'Country Music; Seriously' in *Readin' Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars*. South Atlantic Quarterly. Winter. 1995. Volume 11, No 1. Durham. (USA): Copyright; Duke University Press. pp. 341-59

Me' appeared to speak for the Conservative silent majority.³²⁹ In Britain, for many young people such lyrics seemed to support an outdated, discredited system and found the Cowboy image faintly ridiculous. To this younger generation, Country music appeared more and more the music of an older generation with whom they had nothing in common. Brocken (2010) confirmed this quoting Joan Bimson a local Rock musician stating that in 1970 to her: 'Country music belonged to another part of society.' In addition, ex-Liverpool Stadium roadie Ged McKenna stated: 'As a fifteen year old in 1970, Country music was older people's music'.³³⁰

This researcher's own father remembers, while working as a trainee technician in the 1960s, comparing with his work colleagues, the LP sleeves of The Beatles' *Revolver* with Country music artist Marty Robbins' *Return of the Gunfighter*. The radical Klaus Voorman artwork of The Beatles impressed the young trainees, while the cover of the Robbins' album (with him dressed as a Cowboy drawing a gun as if he were in a 1950's Western 'B' movie) had them commenting on how old-fashioned it looked. Genre had become important and it was these 'older', more demographically situated connotations of Country music during this period that, perhaps more than at any other time, helped to demarcate Country as a product, whilst also perhaps unwittingly deciding the future of the local Country music scene. Indeed, from that period to the present day (with perhaps the exception of a small period in the 1990s at the beginning of the line-dance phenomenon), both local and national scenes were unable to attract new young members in any reasonable numbers.

From research thus far undertaken, it appears clear that the local Country music scene members did not conceptualise Country music with racism and bigotry, although it would

Haggard now claims these songs were parodies, not his own beliefs.

³³⁰ Brocken, M. (2010)'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 111

have to be stated that perhaps some did indeed think this way. Overall, however, Country was indeed locally associated with values such as loyalty, family and independence. It had certainly not taken on the counter-cultural affiliations with which Rock music had flirted from the mid-1960s onwards, and was not as politicised in the same way as the local Folk music scene on Merseyside. The Country music scene did address issues surrounding politics, but these were more to do with house, home, jobs and the community, and were not existential in any form, other than the usual desires to be conceptualised within the American Dream and the Wild West. However, while inwardly the scene appeared healthy and vibrant to members during that period, because of the way it was conceptualised with the negative elements of the American South by society in general, the foundations for its eventual decline had already been laid. All scenes are kinetic and genres experience highs and lows; however, the very nature of Country's global visage deeply affected its capacity to revive itself, thereby contributing negatively perhaps to Liverpool's scene. Such downward spiralling did not happen overnight, but this syndrome can be seen to have worked negatively throughout these years, gradually altering the kinetic scene into a community of stasis. At perhaps the peak of the local Country scene, community began to take over as a discourse, perhaps reducing for some the possibilities for change. Cohen (1993)³³¹ also suggests that in Liverpool morals related to Roman Catholicism might also prevail in relation to music and scenes. Although this writer feels that one would have to take great care discussing such matters in Everton and Kirkdale given the disparate religious communities surrounding on the one hand (e.g.) the Orange Lodge, and on the other St Anthony's Catholic Church.

The Hillsiders did bring freshness and vigour to the local Country music scene and to a degree took Liverpool Country music out of Liverpool to a national audience, especially via

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³³¹ Cohen, S. (1994), 'Identity, Place and the Liverpool Sound' in Stokes, M. (ed), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music,* London: Berg, pp. 128-9

their TV appearances with George Hamilton IV. They had been performing during the Merseybeat era as Sonny Webb and The Cascades. Kenny Johnson and Joe Butler had been in a Country music band before Merseybeat and in McManus (1994), Johnson stated about their return to the Country fold':

'The Hillsiders started around 1964/5, The Beatles had all gone. I noticed that the younger generation didn't want to know. The crowd that had followed us (The Cascades) weren't interested in us. We were too old for them. It was forced on us really to go full Country because we weren't doing it any more. That was it.³³²

It must be said, however, that in spite of the above diagnosis, the scene in the 1960s and 1970s was still vibrant. By 1976, the scene even had its own Country music awards ceremony. According to Derek Wakefield in the Country music magazine *Country Music Spotlight* (1/1/1977)³³³ the first award ceremony was held in Annabel's Suite in Liverpool, 25th November 1976 and was organised and sponsored by Pat and Gerry Allan the Country music record retailers AMS Records of Lodge Lane. Over five hundred Country music fans were reported to have attended the event, which was presided over by Radio Merseyside's Billy Butler and Eddie Hemming, as well as club owner Terry Phillips (brother of Country music artist Sonny Phillips). A panel of independent judges decided a large number of awards. Amongst the winners were:

Top Male Vocalist - Kenny Johnson

Top Male Group - Kenny Johnson and Northwind

Most Promising Group - Hartford West

Most Consistent Group - The Miller Brothers

³³² McManus, K. (1994) Nashville of the North. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p.15

³³³ Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 1 Jan. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (No publisher details)

Most Progressed Group - Paddy Kelly for his band Kellie

Top Female - Little Ginny³³⁴

Terry Phillips, who owned a number of the cabaret clubs in Liverpool, was presented at the first award ceremony with a special plaque for his services to local Country music. The second award ceremony reported in *Country Music Spotlight* by Derek Wakefield (1/12 December) on December 8th 1977³³⁵ was again held at Annabel's Club to a full house. Amongst the award winners were:

Top Group - Kellie (Paddy Kelly)

Top Male Singer - Eddy Miller

Most Entertaining Group - Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers.

Most Promising Group - Frisco

Most Progressed Group - Hartford West/West Virginia

Top Female Artist - Carol Weston ³³⁶

This researcher can find no record of these awards continuing after these two ceremonies. Norma Swallow in *The Okie Country and Western Magazine* (31, May 1974) ³³⁷ wrote about a festival of Country music at The Shakespeare Club on March 31st that year organised by the Denton Brothers after their successful Skelmersdale Country music festival. On this latter show were Hartford West, Hank Walters, Phil Brady, Gold & Silver, The Tennessee Five and The Abilenes. Billy Butler compered it, and it was a large success. The April show featured Phil Brady, The Idle Hours, Georgie Cash and Gold & Silver. The Philharmonic Hall also featured local Country music acts in its shows 'Country meets Folk' where local Country acts

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³³⁴ It is interesting that in a largely 'lads' club'-based scene, female performers were also beginning to make their presence felt. This continued with the likes of Carol Weston, although like most popular music scenes, this one continued to be a male-dominated environment from a performance perspective.

³³⁵ Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 12 Dec. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (No publisher details) ³³⁶ It is surprising that the most popular and most successful local Country music band, The Hillsiders, do not appear as winners of any categories at either of the awards.

³³⁷ The Okie Country and Western Magazine (May 1974) Swallow, N.E. (ed). Vol 31. Bradford: Okie Enterprises.

such as Phil Brady playing on the same bill as local Folk artists such as Jackie & Bridie and The Spinners.

Significant Space

In spite of the popularity of Country in the larger cabaret clubs of Liverpool, almost all of those interviewed stated that the most significant space for Country music in Liverpool was the north-end Dock Road. As we have seen, there were a number of pubs grouped together providing a vibrant environment where a large number of scene members were able to gather in very close proximity to each other. Pubs along and around the north-end Dock Road included The Union, The Goat, O'Gorman's, The Langton Castle, The Glendower (also called The Long Bar), The Atlantic, The Griffin, The Regent, The Iron Horse, The Bramley Moor and The A1 at Lloyds. Darren Neild, a member of The Everglades and Whisky River, played a number of such pubs on the Dock Road and stated to this researcher, 'When the Dock Road was alive every pub had a band on'. Country music fan, John Colford explained about what might be described as the Dock Road 'sub-scene':

We used to go to the Dock Road on a Friday night. You could go to four or five pubs and they'd have a different band on each one. We'd go to The Goat and see Phil Brady. Cross the road to another pub and see Joe Rogers then go down to The A1 at Lloyds and they'd have a Bluegrass band there. They all had their own entertainment on.

I refer to this activity as a 'sub-scene' because several Liverpool bands, such as The Hillsiders, did not play these venues, considering themselves rather 'above' them. This meant that by the mid-late 1970s there was a recognizable echelon system of groups and performers. Those, for example who might work away, even perhaps work for Mervyn Conn were bands who regarded themselves as 'a cut above the rest' such as The Hillsiders, Northwind or (from

Warrington) Poacher. Those who might be considered a 'group's group' – such as The Joey Rogers Band or The Paddy Kelly Band - were at the bottom of the pyramid, working their way up from and/or simply along the Dock Road.

The fact that a large dock force including ancillary industries with over 40,000 men working along the Dock Road in the early-1970s (but this number was also declining) resulted in a large concentration of public houses to serve this workforce. This meant that the north-end provided an interesting close spatial concentration of music venues, which is one of the factors that contributed to making it the most vibrant area in the geography of the local Country music scene. This ability to wander from one end of the Dock Road to the other, popping in and out of a number of different pubs to watch Country bands was a major feature, indeed, of the scene. Charlie Newport explained that upon visiting Nashville he felt that the Downtown Nashville Country music scene, with its concentration of Honky Tonks and bars in some ways paralleled the north-end Dock Road scene. On a Sunday afternoon, for example, fans would often arrive just after lunch, begin at one end and finish in the early hours of the morning, at the other end, having watched any number of Country bands. Scene members recall fleets of taxis waiting to collect fares. Phil Brady discussed with this researcher his 'doing The Goat', which was like a transit camp. As soon as you finished everyone moved out and went across the road to O'Gorman's. So I'm sitting there and Joe Rogers came in and I said, "Alright Joe. I thought you were playing tonight"; he said "I'm looking for my audience aren't I?"

The Joe Rogers Band was one of the most popular bands to play along the Dock Road.

Theresa Turner was manageress of The Nelson Pub, where Joe and George Neild used to drink before they played the Bramley Moor, and stated: 'They had a massive following.

They'd come from near and far to see them. You couldn't get a car space'. George Poole also explained:

Going back to the '60s it was fantastic. You would go in and there would be Country playing. We always used to go to the Union at the top of Sandhills and we would follow Joe and George. They would play there every Saturday and Sunday night. At the end of the night in the '70s, they used to do 'You're My Best Friend' and everyone would hold hands around the table. It's still a fantastic time when you go out with Country people.

Josie Fox, a Country music fan who attended on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday stated: 'It was always packed tight. You had to struggle for a seat. Everybody used to move in and out the different pubs along the road and they would all have entertainment on. You used to move along and go and see your favourites'. John Murphy agreed:

Most of the pubs on the Dock Road had live music Friday, Saturday and Sunday and we'd walk out of one go into the next have a few drinks. Go into the next and that's what they were all like. It was fantastic. Nobody knows what it was like now because it doesn't happen now. And good singers in all the pubs [...] I didn't go out to follow A, B, C. I just enjoyed live music and where it was on. You'd just go down the pubs that regularly had stay backs and lock the door.

The 'stay behind' (or 'lock-in') was a major feature of the Dock Road pubs mentioned by fans, artists and proprietors. Country music artist Eric Stoddard stated that he played all along the Dock Road:

Them days the Dock Road was buzzing. Every pub had a band on. You could walk from pub to pub to pub. All live music everywhere. Packed - every one! Everyone knew everyone. Smiling and joking. There was audience participation. In the '60s everyone was working. Everyone had money.

Stoddard enjoyed a residency in The Brown Cow on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. It was often after hours, and the police raided it on several occasions. George Neild who played with The Joe Rogers Band for over forty years played Dock Road pubs such as The Bramley Moor, The Regent and The Union. He played The Union on Saturday nights, Sunday nights and afternoons and stated that they filled the place. He also explained that the local constabulary regarding stay behinds, regularly raided The Union, 'Me and Rogers were always at the stay behinds. At the time all the places closed at three o'clock and when the police used to raid the place they would say "Not that stupid band again!""

Norman Boasc explained that he and a girlfriend who lived by The Union Pub off Stanley Street went there every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Country and Western, he said was 'old style such as Hank Williams. At the end of the night, everyone would sing 'You're My Best Friend' and everyone would stand up and hold hands'. Overall, The Joe Rogers Band was considered by many informants to be one of the most significant bands of that Dock Road sub-scene. They did not progress up the aforementioned pyramid, preferring to stay close to what was becoming their community of followers, right through until the late-1990s. Locals and former locals creating a feeling of 'kinship' frequented the pub. These 'former locals' award us an interesting insight into the changing demographics of the area, for many had by the early-1970s moved away, when entire streets were demolished, yet they still returned for the intimacy and community spirit engendered by these gigs. Cohen (2007) acknowledges that such 'Country performance events were social occasions characterised by spontaneity and a sense of collective intimacy'. 338

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³³⁸ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 77

Cohen also stresses the emphasis on the interaction between performer and audience, which was highlighted by interviewees as a significant feature of Rogers' act. Another important point was the number of Country music musicians who would turn-up waiting to be invited to play along with The Rogers Band – a kind of 'come all ye', in Folk parlance. For example, Elsie Colford who followed the band for many years and still attends The Melrose Abbey where the remaining members of the band still play, explained to this researcher: 'Every artist in Liverpool seemed to be attracted to Joe's band and where they played. [...] It was like they used to queue up to get on and they couldn't put everyone on. Every week there was just too many. We've seen some fantastic artists who appeared with them'.

Harry Sheppard of The Old Dudes Band also informed this researcher that he remembers seeing The Joe Rogers Band in both The Bramley Moor and The Union with numerous artists almost queuing-up to 'jam'. According to Sheppard, there were 14 to 15 with guitars waiting to play. However, while the band had a wide repertoire of songs, to some fans, there were musical boundaries of the genre that should not be crossed. Joe Cork another long-time follower, speaking about the lead singer of the band George Neild stated that 'He could sing anything, but if he sang a song that wasn't Country someone would shout, "Give us a Cowie Song!" 339

By the 1980s, at least according to interviewees, the owner of The Union Pub was Brian Toner who was significant in promoting Country music in pubs in the area. Though initially a docker, he was no stranger to the scene. His wife Maureen's family had managed The Union before him. Apparently, Toner accepted a redundancy payment from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in 1981 and decided to invest it in public houses. He took over the leases

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³³⁹ This illustrates the link between Cowboys and Country music, also still existed in the minds of scene members in the 1980s.

of The Union, The Griffin, The Royal, The Roundhouse, and The Glendower (Long Bar). In 1989, he also took over the lease of The Bramley Moor. Informants told this researcher how his love for Country music meant that he presented the genre regularly. Toner, however, also benefited from a pragmatic business outlook and stated to this researcher that he was not strictly a Country fan: 'Technically, No! I wouldn't say I dislike it, but I wasn't a Country and Western fan. I liked Hank Williams and what have ya, Roy Rogers and things like that [...] but to be honest with you, when Bill Haley, Elvis and Cliff Richards [sic] came out, that was me as opposed to Country and Western'.

What Toner claims to have realised was that when Country music bands were presented, they attracted more drinking customers. At The Union, he presented Country at the weekend but on a Sunday afternoon he had 'a man called George playing piano in the backroom' who he felt was good. However, wanting to increase his profits he, replaced 'George' with The Joe Rogers Band and his profits soared. Toner wanted The Joe Rogers Band to move to The Griffin, which was a bigger pub, but Rogers preferred the intimacy of The Union and would not move. The band then consisted of Joe Rogers, George Neild, Terry Fletcher and Nick Denuncio. Toner explained that stay behinds were an important part of the pubs profit margin in the evenings and also in the afternoons, speaking about the dockers and factory workers around the area stating to this researcher: 'In the afternoon a lot of lads who worked in the area wanted a few pints before they went home. They'd knock on the door and we'd let them in'.

John Murphy also informed this researcher that he regularly attended stay-behinds in Dock Road pubs and can remember how he and other customers had to hide in the rooms upstairs when police raided the premises. Carol Mortimer further informed me that she remembers going to The Atlantic public house on the Dock Road and staying until two- o'clock in the

morning (with everyone getting up in turn and giving a song). Toner explained that although it was against the law, it was common practice (almost 'traditional') across Liverpool, and he never witnessed any trouble. He explained, when the scene was declining it became an important part of his income, for alcohol always featured strongly in the local Country music scene.

As suggested previously, the urban regeneration and closure of large parts of the docks and supporting industries created a period of disruption and instability for the north-end community. Cohen $(2007)^{340}$ describes it as: 'A community in flux disrupted by post-war planning and industrial decline'. Moreover, Brocken (2010) states: 'It was a community facing marginalisation and decay [...] it was a transient time for residents'.³⁴¹

Kirkdale hosted a particularly close-knit community, bound closely together by shared values of kinship, identity, ethnicity and religion. The moving of large parts of the community to geographically dispersed locations such as the new towns of Kirkby, Cantril Farm, and Runcorn meant that such community not only felt under threat, but also perhaps that such shifts in the work-leisure relationship, coupled with new representations of space and time created a world that was unfamiliar and dis-orientating. To paraphrase Cohen (2007), ³⁴² this might lead to people seeking-out spaces of stability and continuity, where their collective identity could be reasserted, and their symbolic boundaries reinforced. Those cultural spaces such as the remaining public houses in the north-end duly offered stability (or a nostalgia of stability) and continuity. It was no surprise, therefore, that Joe Rogers at The Union provided themes and values of family, community, independence and heartache that connected with

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³⁴⁰ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 78-79

³⁴¹ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p .121

³⁴² Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 92

many of the community members. When change happens too quickly, people often reach into the past for their feelings of stability. As such, The Union Pub became a gathering place for those still residing in the community and for those relocated. Cohen (2007)³⁴³explains that at that time The Union was patronised almost entirely by members and ex-members of the Kirkdale community.

Performance

As part of this study, this researcher obtained a number of DVD copies of videos of The Joe Rogers Band dating from 1987-2007. The venues on the DVDs included The Melrose Abbey, The Red Triangle Boxing Club, The Linacre, The Eldonian Village Hall, and three performances at The Union in 1987, 1992, and 1994. The performances at The Union provide valuable ethnographical material relating to the Dock Road scene and in particular the community in The Union, late-1980s and early-1990s.

Rogers at The Union

On the DVDs of the performances at The Union, 1987, 1992, and 1994, The Union appeared to have a traditional shape with two rooms. The room the band performed in was small and the band was seated on stools or chairs in the corner. The Joe Rogers Band had a number of local musicians playing in it over the years. In the 1987 DVD the band consisted of Joe Rogers, Harry Chambers on vocals and guitar, Charlie Allmark on bass guitar, Eric Melville on steel guitar, and George Neild on vocals and percussion. On the 1992/94 DVDs Eddie Clayton³⁴⁴ had replaced Eric Melville on steel guitar. In all DVDs the band were casually dressed in T-shirts, jumpers and in the 1987 DVD Neild wore denim jeans. The style of

³⁴³ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 92

³⁴⁴ Ringo Starr was once a member of Clayton's skiffle group

performance was relaxed and they drank and smoked during the performance. There was good-humoured interaction with the attendees throughout the night. Many of the attendees in contrast to the band were dressed for a night out: men in suits, shirts, ties, and women in smart dresses.

At the start of the performance on all three DVDs, there were approximately 45 attendees seated in chairs around tables but as the performance proceeded, this appeared to almost double, with people standing at the bar and all around the room leaving very little spare space. In the 1994 DVD, attendees were even standing in the doorway. While there may have been casual attendees there, most appeared to know each other, talking, laughing and greeting one another in a friendly, intimate manner. Despite the time differential between the three DVDs, many of the attendees were recognisable in all three of them, and a number were sitting in the same seats or standing at the same places at the bar. Whilst there was a time gap of over twenty years between these DVD and this researcher's ethnographic study of the band and the community at The Melrose Abbey Public House, some attendees were still recognisable as those interviewed by this researcher during the study. These included George Poole, Jim and Mary Donnington, and John Murphy.

The performance on all three DVDs also followed the same format this researcher observed at The Melrose Abbey during the study. The first set consisted of traditional Country music songs with Neild, Rogers and Chambers sharing lead vocals. Many of the songs were the same canon being performed by Neild at The Melrose Abbey today. These were songs such as 'On the Other Hand', 'There's a Tear in My Beer', 'Hurt', 'Some Days are Diamonds' and 'When My Blue Moon Turns to Grey'. Two-way audience participation and good-humoured banter took place throughout the sets. Neild was the main band member participating in this, obviously knowing the audience intimately, addressing them by their first names, and making

personal jokes about them. He cracked jokes about the performance being videoed, stating at the start of the evening of the 1987 DVD: 'If anyone is sitting next to someone they shouldn't, move now!' In addition, when one attendee danced in front of the camera he said 'It's OK Penny you're on television now!' – Evidently knowing the attendee on first-name terms.

The audience would often return a joke back to the band. On one occasion on the 1992 DVD when Joe Rogers stood up in the middle of a song obscuring the camera view, a female attendee can be heard shout a humorous rebuke, 'Joe Rogers, Sit down!' The attendees were singing along, swaying and clapping throughout the night, and seemed to know each and every song. The second set on all three DVDs contained the guest performers and was introduced by George Neild on the 1987 DVD as, 'We've got loads and loads of guests on for you tonight'.

There was a vast difference in the standard of performers on all three DVDs, some were accomplished guitar players and their vocal quality, control of the voice and vibrato suggested they could have been professional performers in their own right. One accomplished banjo player introduced as Billy had been sitting by the band playing along on his banjo all night on all three DVDs and was later given a solo spot. One performer introduced as 'Sheila' appeared on all three DVDs and sang the same three songs. There was a performer on the 1987 DVD called Dave dressed as a priest or vicar (who sang gospel songs) and was introduced by Neild with 'I hope you've been to church today'.

However, regardless of the standard of the performers, they were all greeted with enthusiasm by the attendees singing along and clapping in the same way as they did with the band in the first set. Only two songs that could be classed as Modern Country were performed on any of

the three DVDs. One, on the 1994 DVD was 'Look at Us' a Vince Gill song sung by Neild, is a modern Country song with a traditional Country arrangement. The other, on the 1992 DVD, was 'Every Second Every Minute' a Colin Raye song sung by one of the attendees who appeared to be a professional performer accompanying himself on guitar. After midnight, on the 1992 DVD, the band played 'You're My Best Friend', the 'anthemic' Don Williams song that always finished the night at The Union. The whole audience stood up holding hands and enthusiastically swayed and sung along. It was obvious from the reaction of the attendees that this meant more to them than just a song; it was more of a political anthem that stated that the north-end community was more than simply physical spaces. It was also kinship, alliances and friendships and an aural representation of dispersment. The last two minutes of this DVD also appeared to show a 'stay behind' with the doors closed, and the lights dimmed.

The urban regeneration of the docks and supporting industries resulted in fewer consumers going to the public houses and therefore a reduction in numbers attending the Country music scene along the Dock Road. Toner explained to this researcher that it also coincided with a particularly strict Police Chief Constable being appointed and he was determined to stop these stay-behinds; Toner often had to hide people in the cellar because of the raids. He stated that on one Bank Holiday, he had an extension, but it only began at 3.30pm in the afternoon and the police had arrived at 3pm. They told him to close for half an hour, get the customers out and then waited in their car until the pub re-opened at 3.30pm. He also stated the following Bank Holiday he also had an extension for the music room. The police came in and told him to clear the bar, as he only had an extension for another room. Toner said this intimidation worked: 'They [the police] had licensees terrified of the stay-behinds as they were frightened of losing their livelihood'.

Toner also considered that such activities had a detrimental effect on the numbers of people attending this sub-scene. Many locals had been relocated to areas such as Kirkby and Speke but had started returning. However, the limited opening times and the enforcement of new drink-driving regulations meant it was an expensive (and short) night out, with most people only having one or two drinks before leaving; eventually the numbers were to further reduce. Toner also informed me that he 'officially' represented the licensees tied to Whitbread's (the brewery), yet despite explaining to them that there were no industrial businesses left in the area (Tate & Lyle, Tillotsons, John West, the BA, etc., had all closed or reduced their workforce), the brewery would not re-negotiate a reduction in rates. Toner also said that during the time that the pubs were successful, the breweries wanted more rent, but would not reduce it, when trade fell away. In the end, Whitbread sent in the bailiffs and closed a number of pubs. By the late-1990s, only a small number of public houses remained along the Dock Road. These were mainly privately owned free houses, such as The Atlantic and The Bramley Moor.

Retail

Although live performances are the 'meat and drink' of any music scene there are also non-performance spaces that are important significant places within the scene. Holly Kruse (2003) ³⁴⁵ states that record shops are not just sites of commerce but significant cultural and social places, where there is social interaction, where scene participants, either artists or fans can discuss with other scene participants or the record shop employees, the local music culture. Kruse suggests: 'These can be much more amiable environments for the discussion of music than the live environments'

³⁴⁵ Kruse, H. (2003) Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. pp. 94-96

The most important of these to Liverpool's Country scene was the aforementioned Pat and Gerry Allen's music shop at AMS Records in 123 Lodge Lane. Brocken (2010)³⁴⁶ explains that it was a shop, which had feelings of warmth and communality between fans and supporters central to the scene. At that time, it sold all kinds of popular music but later on, it specialised in Country music. Brocken (2010)³⁴⁷ stated it was also a space where gigs were arranged, even promoted by the Allen's, for example, coaches to Country music shows in London were arranged and they would even go to Country music festivals to sell records. Brocken (2010) further states: 'At that time, Saturday mornings at Allen's' shop were feasts of music and information. Rare imports were regularly sourced from America and networks of collectors developed and maintained'. 348

The shop moved from Lodge Lane further south to Aigburth Road³⁴⁹ but as the scene declined in the 1980s, Brocken informs us that he felt it had more of the nature of a deteriorating second-hand shop. This researcher met Pat Allen at a week-long Tony Best Leisure Country music event in Tenerife in the 1990s. Gerry had died some years earlier and she was there with local Country music artist Paddy Kelly, with whom she had both a personal and business relationship. Allen took an interest in me, probably because I was a young girl involved in Country music (something rare in Liverpool by the 1990s), her two sons having no interest in Country music. Often this researcher and her family would attend Paddy's gigs with Allen and on Saturday afternoons, I would spend a couple of hours in the record shop. Allen had an incredible knowledge of the genre, often offering advice on e.g. which new female artist I should buy and ordering them for me from America. She would

³⁴⁶ Brocken, M. (2010)' I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular* Music Scenes 1930s-1970s; Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd pp.131-133

³⁴⁷ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular* Music Scenes 1930s-1970s; Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd pp.131-133

³⁴⁸ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s; Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd pp.131-133

³⁴⁹ This was a result of the Toxteth riots (July 1981).

also have me answering the phone, finding it amusing that when artists such as Kenny Johnson would ring the shop, a young girl would answer. It was obvious that the shop was in decline, even to someone as young as I was, with often only one or two people coming in per hour. Any regulars who entered were offered a cup of tea or coffee and Pat would often say to me: 'I would have done better giving the records away and selling the coffee'.

As suggested by Brocken (2010), 350 the merchandise at that time consisted of mostly secondhand vinyl LPs with only a few CDs for sale. Pat was still a source of imported albums and people would come in and ask for them. Besides local scene members, some of the local Country music artists, often bringing in their latest albums to be sold, also visited the shop. This researcher remembers local Country music singer and Radio Merseyside DJ, Kenny Johnson bringing in a number of copies of an album that he had produced for female Country singer Julie Finney called Something Called Love. In addition, Nicky James, another local Country singer bringing in copies of his album *The Way Back Home*. Neither sold very well. Allen's shop finally closed in the mid-1990s, mirroring the declining scene and I remember her stating that she had only taken £40 in the last week. Even trying to sell the LPs at very low prices in the closing-down sale did not produce much in the form of income and she gave me her remaining stock, numbering over fifty albums, to take home on the shop's last day. Although it was the declining customer base that caused this important shop to close, there were a number of contributing factors that led to this. The traditional consumers who were in the past her main customers did not buy new sub-genres of Country music in the required amounts. The more traditional Country music artists favoured by these consumers were now either deceased or on independent labels and most of these consumers already had most of

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³⁵⁰ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s-1970s;* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd p. 132

the artists' records in their collections, with re-releases being infrequent and largely undesirable. These were mostly music fans rather than record collectors, *per se*.

Another death blow was that the distributor of Ritz Records stopped supplying Irish Country music acts to Allen's store. This record label had signed most of the popular Irish Country music acts, such as Daniel O'Donnell, and these were popular with members of the Liverpool Country scene. Allen stated that the wholesaler had secured a deal with the high street record stores and he would no longer supply her. While she could obtain them from other suppliers, margins were far too tight to make such purchases viable. Norman and Pat Cass had also appeared on the scene, running a mobile Country music record stall, which visited almost all the local clubs selling Country music recording, and this, too, affected sales in Allen's shop.³⁵¹ Allen also blamed the advent of CMT (Country Music Television), which for her meant that the high street record stores increased their modern Country stocks, which prior to CMT were only available as imports. She simply could not afford to compete with their lower prices. This increase in the major record stores stocking a wider selection of Country music records may also have been due to the fact that as Pierce (1994)³⁵² explained, in 1986 the American Country Music Association and the UK divisions of the major record labels jointly organised their first Country music marketing campaign to expand the market for Country music records in the UK.353 There were other record stores that sold Country music such as Diane Caine's Musical Box shop. It not only sold Country music albums but also imported them (as it continues to do, today).

The only other specialist supplier of Country music based in Liverpool other than Pat Allen was the previously mentioned Pat and Norman Cass. They were a mobile store and were a

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³⁵¹ Pat and Gerry Allen had in the past sold Country music records at clubs and festivals but since Gerry's death this had almost ceased and the shop was the main point of sale.

³⁵² Pierce, J. E. (1994) *The Bottom Line is Money*. Westport, Connecticut. USA: The Bold Strummer Ltd. p. 274

³⁵³ This was unsuccessful in terms of mainstream Country music sales.

significant space in the 1980s and 1990s; they continue to supply Country records today. By the late-1980s, Country music events in social clubs were usually held once a week or fortnightly on a specialist night and were mostly run by Country music enthusiasts. The Cass family would attend most of the Country music clubs in both Liverpool and the Wirral, and local festivals. Cass would erect their stall in the club and would sell not only records, but also tickets for local events such as specialist acts brought over from America such as Gene Watson and Tompal Glazer. They sold Country music magazines such as North Country Music, Country Music Roundup, and Pathfinder, together with albums by local Country music acts, such as Kenny Johnson & Northwind, West Virginia, Daytona, and the Cheapseats. They were also a source of information about what acts were performing at what clubs, would give advice to both scene members and club organisers about the bands, and new Country artists. Apparently, according to Cass, they were not charged for having a stall at the clubs, organisers realizing that they were an added attraction to the Country music fans. This researcher visited their stall on numerous occasions in the 1990s and there was always a crowd around the stall socializing as well as buying records. They were an important source of Country music CDs especially modern Country (Norman Cass informed this researcher that the most popular were Alan Jackson and George Strait). 354 Cass explained when interviewed: 'Record shops didn't have the CDs we had because we imported the CDs. Most of the CDs were never released over here'.

It appears to have been a much more financially viable enterprise than the static record shops: they did not have to pay rates, rent or utilities, and they had a valuable consumer base of 100-200 different Country music fans at each different event visited. It was also easy for the

³⁵⁴ These two artists belong to the Neo-traditionalist Country music artists who in the 1980s-90s blended Traditional Country music signifying instruments such as, fiddle and steel guitar with modern ones such as a modern drum sound giving them authenticity with Liverpool Country music scene members unlike the Country Pop artists that followed them.

consumer: if they did not have a record, Cass would order it and they could pick it up from them at the club at the following event. Cass informed this researcher that perhaps, unlike Pat Allen or Diane Caine, the line-dancing phenomenon of the 1990s was very beneficial to their store, for in the beginning, the new line-dancers mostly knew nothing about Country music and he could advise them on which albums contained which line-dance songs. Today with the loss of so many clubs, the Cass's business has dropped-off considerably and they informed this researcher that they were just attending events to try to sell off existing stock. Cass blames the internet for the major drop in his sales stating:

It's come to an end more or less because of the internet. You've got to blame the internet. The internet killed the CD business. All the people that had businesses selling CDs have finished. We're still going, but just about. It has come to an end [...] You can go onto the internet and buy one track, where they had to buy the CD before.

These record stores and spaces were not simply places of commerce, but vehicles of social interaction between scene participants. They were significant cultural places for the participants where social interaction and socialization would occur, where scene participants could exchange information about artists, gigs, festivals etc with other like-minded people sharing the similar values and tastes. When a scene is deprived of such interactive socialisation processes, for whatever reason, we can see that perhaps that popular music is moving in a perhaps different direction and that the scene becomes more of a community of taste rather than scene with genre activities.

Local Radio

The two local radio stations were also important local cultural spaces. 'Sounds Country' on BBC Radio Merseyside was presented initially by Don Allan, then by Billy Butler. Billy Butler informed this researcher that it not only introduced scene members to the latest Country music, but also provided information about local Country music events, artists and Country music clubs in the local area. It informed listeners of what night a club might be run, its location, which artist was performing at which club, the club or events contact phone number, any major artists visiting the area and where to purchase tickets, etc. The programme also played requests from local Country music fans. This was something that this researcher also observed when listening to the programme for over 15 years. Billy Butler also informed this researcher that he had a punishing schedule presenting a daily mainstream show, a Sunday afternoon show, and 'Sounds Country' and this was to prove too much for him; he therefore recommended Kenny Johnson to BBC Radio Merseyside to take over as presenter. Johnson continued the successful format of the show and the fact that he was in bands such as The Hillsiders and led Northwind meant that he often knew the people who were sending in the requests from appearing at local gigs. This created an intimate atmosphere for the show, which became the most successful local Country music show in Britain for a number of years. Johnson has continued presenting the show in the same format up to the present day.

In 1975, the new local commercial radio station Radio City started up and decided it wanted to broadcast a similar Country music programme to Radio Merseyside's. They hired another member of The Hillsiders, Joe Butler, to present its Country music programme. Butler was very popular with members of the local Country music scene and his show ran successfully for 25 years. At that time both shows were aired at prime-time spots because of the number of listeners they were attracting. Radio City changed its name and owners a number of times calling itself '194 Radio City' 'City FM' 'City Gold', 'Magic 1548' and 'Radio City 96.7'. During this period, it dropped its Country music programme along with other specialist programmes including its talk shows, to concentrate purely on playing playlist music: non-

stop pop music with the slogan 'Never more than a minute away from music'. *194 Radio City* website³⁵⁵ BBC Radio Merseyside has continued with its Country music programme to this day, but it has appeared to some to be increasingly out-dated, playing mainly older Country music to its aging listener base. It now has a shorter time – one hour – and has been relegated to a spot on Sunday evenings with the other minority speciality programmes, such as the programme for the Liverpool Chinese community 'Orient Express'. Johnson has over more recent months up-dated the musical content of his programme, somewhat, but listenership is now more fragmented than ever, especially now that terrestrial radio is competing so many other forms of online-streamed media.

As Liverpool moved into the last decade of the twentieth century, the city was clearly undergoing change and decline. Most of the significant places belonging to the Country scene had closed, many of the social pubs and clubs had changed direction or disappeared. The local scene members began finding fewer venues to cater for their tastes. In response to this, local scene members, mainly amateurs who loved the music, began organising specialist Country music clubs. These were usually held in the social clubs where Country music had once been part of the popular mainstream entertainment. Clubs such as The Metal Box in Speke, The Netherley British Legion, St Aloysius Catholic Club in Huyton and The High Lane Conservative Club ran their own Country music nights, separate from the mainstream entertainment bills. Country music in Liverpool effectively became a minority strand of music in specialist clubs, played by specialists and attended almost exclusively by specialists. This was also happening in areas such as Runcorn, Skelmersdale, the Wirral and Ellesmere Port (and throughout the UK). Ellesmere Port in Cheshire, where many Liverpudlians had relocated to work in the car and oil industries was particularly strong for Country music

³⁵⁵ 194 Radio City. [Online] http://www.nige-194radiocity.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk. (accessed 1/11/2013)

having a number of Country music clubs held in social clubs such as The Shell Club, The Castrol Club, The Octel Club and The Straw Hat public house. Most of the people who ran these clubs were committed Country music fans with varying degrees of business acumen. For many, profit was a secondary consideration and the primary aim of each club was to keep Country music alive. Typical of such dedication were Eddie and Marion Fox who ran a Country music club in Ellesmere Port for a time in the 1980s and explained to this writer how it closed:

It didn't actually fold up. We thought it was ticking over and we went one night and one of the lads on the committee with us said, "I've cancelled the band for next week" We said "Why?" And he said "No money". But we weren't interested in the money side. We just wanted somewhere to go that did the type of music we wanted.

Unfortunately most of the organisers and attendees of these clubs were traditionalists whose ideals of Country music was the music that they grew up with between the 1950s-70s, bearing little relation to the Country music coming from America at that time. Such devotion to a music perhaps even decades outdated made it almost impossible to attract new younger members. The clubs became bastions of conservatism and restrictive practices where a reluctance to make any changes that affected the 'purity' of the music dictated policy.

Hank's Place

In 1994, Tony Allen, formerly of The Blue Mountain Boys, opened a large Country music venue in Liverpool, 'Hank's Place' in Green Lane, Stoneycroft, Liverpool 13. Allen's dream was to have a Country music club similar to the Honky Tonks in Texas, or the large bars in Downtown Nashville where live Country music was played seven days per-week. Allen was

³⁵⁶ Only The Shell Club now renamed 'The Whitby Sports and Social Club' still has a Country music club

a successful businessman, and able to subsidise his dream. The club opened in Liverpool to wide acclaim with the opening night featuring both The Hillsiders and Kenny Johnson and Northwind, the two most popular bands on Merseyside. The club was full on opening night and within 48 hours club membership was closed as it had reached its capacity. Unfortunately, however, Allen did not appear to have the same level of business acumen for the club, as for his other business ventures.

First, he opened the club at a time when Country music and its fan-base were beginning to recede in Liverpool, so he was perhaps moving into an already shrinking market. Secondly, he did not seem to understand the psyche of the local Country music fans. These fans treated attending Country music clubs as social occasions: they often dressed-up, attended once or twice per week. Therefore, it was going to be difficult to attract these people throughout the week. Even those who drank regularly tended to do so in their local public houses. In addition, these Country music fans were now embedded in their own local Country music clubs or pubs (for example along the Dock Road) where they felt they were part of a community. Further, whilst one might attract some to attend on a particular night if their favourite band was playing, it was difficult to prise away their loyalty on a regular basis. In addition, as odd as it might seem, British Country music fans have always been very reluctant to pay 'good' money to watch British Country music bands, with the exception of a select few, such as Raymond Froggatt. As Billy Butler stated to this researcher: 'With Country and Western fans, I have always found that they will go and pay £15 for an import, but they won't pay £8 to see a British Country band, live. They're not the most supportive fans in the World'. Debbie Jones whose father ran a Country music club stated to this researcher, 'Country music fans won't pay to come through the door. If you put a band on in a Country music club, it will be packed. If you put a soloist on there will be hardly anyone there, but they expect to get in free to the band'.

Crucially, perhaps, Allen as a traditionalist determined the club would be a 'listening club' and banned line-dancing from Hanks' Place. This was at a time when line-dancing was starting to take off in the UK and the numbers of new younger participants were looking for venues to attend. He therefore deprived himself of a number of potentially new younger members.³⁵⁷ This researcher has visited Honky Tonks and bars in America such as the 'Broken Spoke' in Austin, Texas and 'Tootsies' in Downtown Nashville and observed some fundamental differences from the type of establishment Allen was hoping to achieve in Liverpool. Firstly, in both these areas Country music was the dominant music genre, awarding these establishments a much wider customer base from which they could attract people to their clubs. Secondly, these clubs celebrated dancing as a major part of their entertainment. They also played a wide range of modern Country music, which attracted younger consumers into their premises. Whilst having bands playing on most days and nights, those bands that played during the week (and in some bars even at the weekend) played there for tips only, therefore cutting down considerably on the clubs' overheads. This researcher also noticed that in Nashville, the Downtown bars had a considerable number of tourists adding to their customer base. Hank's Place, while being reasonably popular at weekends had a very low number of Country music fans attending during the week. This researcher recalls Pat Allen informing her that one local band had claimed to her that they played one night to only half a dozen people. To try to mitigate his losses Allen then allowed line-dancing on some nights during the week with a Country music disco replacing a live band. Unfortunately, its reputation as a listening club meant it did not attract the line-dancers

³⁵⁷ This is surprising as Allen's son Ethan and his band The Cheapseats embraced the line-dance phenomenon almost from its inception.

in the numbers he hoped. Allen then decided to close the venue during the week, opening only at weekends but even this was not sustainable and in just over a year he had closed the club and sold it to a supermarket chain as the site for a new store.

It is always sad to report on the demise of a scene and even more so in Liverpool with regards to the cultural wealth embedded in its Country music scene because it has meant so much to so many people, over a long period of time. However, while it is important to acknowledge the significant key individuals, sites, and services all required to keep a scene together and networking, it is also vitally important that as popular music researchers, we also record their demise. Popular music is a kinetic practice, cities are not static enterprises, and people and society constantly change and mutate. Therefore, while it is sad to witness the contraction of such an important scene, it is also of significance that we acknowledge that things cannot remain the same and that time, effectively, waits for no man.

Chapter 6: Local Bands and Repertoires: Authenticity, Recording and Covering.

The Liverpool Country music scene had a large number of Country music bands, soloists, duos, etc, providing semiotic information for us to consider the scene. Appendix 2 provides an index of Country music bands that played locally from the mid-1950s to mid-1970s. This is not a comprehensive list, for it only contains those bands discovered as part of this research, and there may be other bands that played but are not listed, (e.g. solo artists such as Lee Brennan, Georgie Cash are not listed). Despite this, sixty bands is a considerable number playing within a specialised scene. A number of these bands played regularly but never made any recordings and therefore left no musical recorded trace of their contribution to the scene, thus making it difficult to assess many factors such as style, influences, originality, etc. Some of these were significant members of the local Country music scene for a number of years such as the aforementioned Joe Rogers Band. It appears that Rogers did not have any interest in recording his band's music. As far as this researcher has been able to establish, the only record of their music are the previously mentioned nine DVD copies of videos taken of the band's live performances at local venues from 1987-2007. These copies are in the possession of a small number of Kirkdale-based Country music fans from the surviving Melrose Abbey community, where The Rogers Band also became residents. Becoming a participant in this community as part of the extensive case study enabled this researcher to obtain copies of these DVDs.

Some local Country music artists recorded infrequently, providing us with a small account of their musical contribution. For example, The Kentuckians produced one EP in 1966 and one album in 1971. The Miller Brothers produced one EP in 1966 and one album in 1975. (They later combined these two records onto a CD for gig sales). The Idle Hours appear to have produced only three EPs, and The Saddlers have two songs on The Hillsiders *Goodbye*

Scottie Rd. album. Complete albums on major labels during the vinyl era are scarce indeed, but were occasionally produced by a few local acts. These included The Hillsiders, Kenny Johnson and Northwind, West Virginia, Phil Brady, Lee Brennan, Georgie Cash (also called George C Smith) and Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers. Artists such as The Miller Brothers occasionally appeared on compilation albums.

The ability to produce cheap cassettes and later cheap CDs led to a number of bands (both locally and nationally) producing albums for point-of-sale transactions during the late-1970s right up until the twenty-first century; however currently what little is left of the scene tends not to produce runs of recordings, even though CD pressing costs have recently dropped exponentially. Brocken (2010)³⁵⁸ lists Lee Brennan, Jo and Gerry Clark, Poacher, Jerry Devine, Val Sutton, Carol Western and Whisky River amongst the local Country music artists/bands to have recorded point-of-sale albums during recent decades. The main point-of-sale for Liverpool Country bands (even those releasing albums on major labels) has frequently been the gigs.

In the mid-1970s as Brocken (2010)³⁵⁹ explains, Liverpool had its own label, Stag Records, for such point-of-sale products. This gig-based label, naturally, provided another potential source of income for bands. In the case of Stag Music in Liverpool in the seventies, their label encompassed a variety of styles more in line with the newfound cabaret scene. The flexibility of adjusting their record pressing production was an important part of their mostly point-of-sale retail and marketing strategy. Although they were restricted by lack of distribution and minimum quantity ordering by the major pressing plants employed, (500

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³⁵⁸ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool'. In *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 131

³⁵⁹ Brocken, M. (2010) 'Cabaret – reality amid the fake'. in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930-70*. Farnham. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 192-96

units usually, 45rpm or 331/3 rpm), they were seldom left with an excess of product on an inhouse production. If retail demand deemed a re-order, their organisation could re-order and accommodate the demand quite efficiently, mainly through a personal level association with the shop-floor management at the pressing plant, who as a favour would fit the re-order from Stag in between a major run at the factory. This meant that short runs were both possible and mostly profitable. As part of these short runs a Liverpool Country music compilation *Stag Country* was released; however, this was actually a poor seller, for it was based around bands playing north-end pubs rather than nightclubs and therefore the point-of-sale opportunities were less reliable.

This researcher has frequently played on the local scene and noticed that Country music fans caught up with the atmosphere of the performance would often buy albums by British Country music bands that they would never purchase if they were in shops. It is a paradox that the Country music fans who were often very knowledgeable and discerning in purchasing records for their collection, might also purchase an inferior product when caught-up 'in the moment' as it were, of the live performance. John Fairclough a member of the local Country music scene, who also owned a national CD and cassette pressing company, informed this researcher that gig albums were big business for his company for a while. In one year, he processed over one million gig cassettes for artists throughout the music industry as a whole. This researcher when growing-up in the Country music scene also acquired and assembled a large collection of these gig CDs and cassettes by British Country music acts.

This researcher has found in this collection an immense difference in the quality of product. Some artists such as Stu Page and Kelvin Henderson have high-quality products, while others are very poorly produced. For example, albums are not EQ-ed properly, voices drift out of tune, wrong notes are played, and artists at times do not sing the correct lyrics. The overall

impression of some of these albums is that the performer has utilised the cheapest production possible to maximise potential profit margins. The problem with these inferior products on the local market was it reinforced the view to many Country music fans (even those who bought these albums) that those British Country music artists were not on the same level as those from America.

The gig as a main point-of-sale was also a problem for local and national Country music artists (even those few on major labels). John Fairclough informed this researcher, artists might have preferred record shops sales as a form of legitimacy, but resorted to 'playing sales' where fans might also get a product autographed. Joe Butler of The Hillsiders stated in an interview with Bob Powel in *Country Music People* (Dec 1975)³⁶⁰ that, while the band were signed to Polydor Records, they actually sold more albums through their gigs, than the record company were able to via record shops. The problem with the gig sales being the major point-of-sale was that it was counter-productive, making it more difficult for record companies to obtain space for the artists' albums in major record stores.

This researcher performed a number of times in the late-1990s with the top British female Country artist Sarah Jory, who was signed to Ritz Records at that time, the major Irish label. Jory stopped selling her albums at gigs, informing this researcher that it was to stimulate sales of her albums in record shops, as high street sales were poor. Jory felt that there was a danger of the stores not stocking the records if there were very little sales via that route. This researcher remembers that during Jory's performances she would often ask the audience to go and buy her latest release from the record shops. Sadly, this strategy did not work and eventually Jory was dropped by Ritz.³⁶¹

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³⁶⁰ Country Music People. (December 1975), Vol 6, No 12, Powel, B. (ed). Sidcup, Kent: Country Music Press Ltd.

³⁶¹ Jory now performs with Van Morrison's band as his steel guitar player

Another problem with gigs providing the main point-of-sale route was that artists often bought their albums in bulk, then usually took 2-3 years to sell their stocks, something this researcher can corroborate when signed to the independent Goldrush Records. What this meant was that, while to the record company total sales for the first year did not appear to be bad due to these artists' purchasing directly from them, the following year's sales without artist-purchases looked very poor, ending in album deletion. Mike Storey, writing in the magazine *Country* (April 1972)³⁶² stated that Geoff Greenwood, a specialist in Country retailing, rang Pye who distributed Lucky Records, a British Country music imprint, to order some copies of a British Country music album. The sales department told him that despite there being plentiful stocks of records, not one Lucky release had been ordered by any other retailer over the course of the year and that in fact Pye, to all intents and purposes, had deleted this label.

There have been at times conflicting claims about the music produced by local Country music scene bands. Joe Butler in McManus (1994) stated:

I've travelled all over the UK and Liverpool bands definitely play with more 'meat' behind the music. They tend to attack the music a lot more. Out of town they tend to be pretty sounding with a front line singer and a backing band, but Liverpool seem to have taken the Merseybeat thing a stage further and you get three or four front singers in a band. 363

Kenny Johnson of The Hillsiders, and Kenny Johnson and Northwind stated that: 'The 60s gave us a lot of edge on other bands in the country', which actually makes a lot of sense from a 'musical chops' perspective. George Hamilton IV, Country music singer and member of the Grand Ole Opry, also agreed with these statements informing this researcher that he saw The

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³⁶² Storey, M. *Country*. (April 1972). Vol 1 No 2 Chalker, B. (ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd

³⁶³ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 15

Hillsiders in Nashville in the 1960s and he felt that in many ways they were as good as or better than the Nashville bands stating:

In the '60s when I met The Hillsiders and some other Liverpool bands, their music was much more progressive. They had a good strong drumbeat and a good bass. The Liverpool bands tend to play with a good strong rhythm section [...] It seemed to me that the Liverpool bands had a little bit of a Rock edge to them. They were much further along in that direction than Nashville was at the time.

Hamilton also informed me, however, that he did not feel The Hillsiders style was sufficiently different from the American Country style of music to stand-out.

While praising The Hillsiders, renowned producer and guitarist Chet Atkins in his sleeve notes for The Hillsiders' *Leaving of Liverpool* album,³⁶⁴ seems to indicate that their style was very much indicative of American Country music stating: 'I feel The Hillsiders are the number one exponents of Country music in England. It is most gratifying to realise the English are fast becoming more Country music orientated, orientated into the American Country music style that is'. However, Mike Storey in *Country* magazine (Vol. 3.No. 2, 1974)³⁶⁵ has a contrasting view about The Hillsiders, stating in his article that they: 'Failed to project any recognisable style and desperately lack a lead singer with his own image and sound'.

Liverpool music academic, the late Dave Deacon, also stated to this researcher that he considered Liverpool Country music bands such as The Hillsiders did not have their own sound, and were according to his reading 'straight copies 'of the US Country sound. Deacon also stated that he felt many of the Liverpool Country acts were little more than glorified pub

³⁶⁴ The Leaving of Liverpool. The Hillsiders (1968) RCA VICTOR RD 8002

³⁶⁵ Storey, M. Country. (1974) Vol 3, No 2, Chalker, B. (ed). London, Hanover Books Ltd

singers. Cohen (1999)³⁶⁶ on the other hand called (to paraphrase) The Hillsiders a 'young' band with a fresh approach that provided a new and exciting beat to Country sounds, which is odd, given their long apprenticeship in the beat music of the early-1960s. Also in Cohen, Paddy Kelly, Liverpool Country music artist actually stated: 'Liverpool has got a style of its own because we don't use all the gadgets other bands use'. This is also rather odd, when one considers the above 'copyist' critiques. According to Cohen (2007)³⁶⁷ on his website, Hank Walters draws attention to his own distinct style of Country music claiming 'A unique sound of Country mixed with hints of Cajun and Tex-Mex.'

Brocken (2010)³⁶⁸ has provided a small discography of the local Country music records and provides some information about them. No one, however, has attempted any structured analysis of these recordings to resolve conflicting statements about the music and/or to provide additional important information regarding genre-based histories of the bands. This researcher felt some kind of analysis of the recorded local Country music was important to this study.

When this researcher carried-out a genre-based analysis of over 490 tracks by 12 of the most prominent local Country music artists, it was found that the number of covers of American Country music songs on the albums far exceeded the number of original songs, with less than 30% of the songs being originals. I also looked at 60 albums of 52 different British Country music artists and bands and found a similar trend, with 41 of these albums having less than 50% original songs and 23 containing no original material, whatsoever. This in itself

³⁶⁶ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 239-249

³⁶⁷ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. in *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 75

³⁶⁸ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool'. In *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 124-131

highlights the previously mentioned problems of authenticity and originality within the local and national scene: directly to the listener, too. Joe Butler of The Hillsiders, confessed in a *Country Music People* article from 1980: 'You can work on a popular song and no matter how hard you try the influences are still there'. ³⁶⁹

Many of the Country music fans in the local scene still have extensive knowledge of the genre. They usually might hear the American original and this is usually where authenticity lay: the production, vocal musicianship and arrangements were often superior to the copy by the local and British Country music bands. When British groups did attempt to perform their own material, some artists resorted to a degree of subterfuge. Denis Collier of the Yorkshire Country music band The Collier Dixon Line explained to this researcher that when he wanted to perform one of his own songs he would say 'Here's one from Merle Haggard' explaining: 'If you did a song of your own you had to say it was a Merle Haggard song to get it over. In them days you daren't say, here's one I wrote.' Local Country music artist of note Charlie Landsborough also stated to this researcher: 'It's a horrible sort of dilemma you're in as a performer because people want to hear the songs that they know. I was a real coward when I started doing my own stuff. Initially I'd stick one of my own songs in the middle of a medley so nobody noticed.'

The authenticity paradigm of British Country music fans therefore continues to be ambiguous, ambivalent, and downright confusing to British bands. Fans appear to want British bands to play American covers, rather than their own material, but they then consider such covering inauthentic and unoriginal. Local artist Charlie Newport explained this genrebased dilemma:

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³⁶⁹ Country Music People. (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, Byworth, T. (ed), Dartford, Kent: Country Music Press.

You get some fans of Country music that always for some reason think that the Americans can do it better than we can. It shouldn't be like that because we can. I understand it to a certain extent because when you get the Americans singing a Country song they have a certain twang in their voice that we don't have. From a fan's point of view, I understand why they shun us. I always get the impression that even if we had a band that was ten times better than a band from the States they would always go for the band from the States because they are from America. They look on it, as being, well that's real Country and what we're doing isn't. I don't think it's the musos who are like that I think it's the ones going to the show'.

Country music journalist and broadcaster Spencer Leigh informed this researcher that even to this day he feels there is a stigma attached to British artists performing American-style Country music, stating: 'I think it's because you can't sing Country music in anything other than an American accent. You can sing Rock 'n' Roll through all sorts of accents so therefore people are going to think these people are a bit phoney' He further explained:

Many of the American Country songs are specific in the time and place they are about. They mention American place names and you've got to do them with an American accent to make it work otherwise it just sounds daft. They're in a cleft stick namely if they don't put on an American accent they sound daft. If they do, they sound daft'

In programme 10 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989), ³⁷⁰ Irish singer Val Doonican explained he would not have British Country acts on his TV show because he felt he could not employ British people singing what he felt was American Country music. He regarded this as an impressionist doing an impression of Country music. Genre analysis is a fundamental part of all popular music studies for genre-based authenticities in all popular music runs, for some, very deeply.

³⁷⁰ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 10. 29/7/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

Although a number of local and British Country music acts did feel they had to follow the path of singing Country music songs with an American accent to gain acceptance with British audiences, the most popular artist singing Country music outside of the American continent remains Irishman Daniel O' Donnell, who successfully sings Country music songs with an Irish accent and 'generic' appeal. Similarly, the two most popular British Country music acts Raymond Froggatt and Charlie Landsborough do not sing with American accents and perform mainly their own material. However, conversely, they are still regarded by British Country music fans as authentic British Country music artists. Yet, in their early days both suffered prejudice from British Country music fans because they performed original songs. Ken Alley in his review of the 1978 Wembley festival in *Searchlight*³⁷¹ described how Froggatt's set of his own material did not receive a very encouraging response from the British Country music fans in the arena. It should of course be taken into account that Froggatt began as a Pop writer (e.g. 'Red Balloon' sung by the Dave Clark Five) and his crossing of the generic floor of authenticity might have had something to do with this assessment, at this time.

This attitude to artists attempting to perform original material was not restricted to British Country music fans, as British Country music 'gatekeepers' often shared them. Derek Wakefield in *Searchlight* (1978)³⁷² also stated that the British Country Music Association had threatened to boycott the American Country Music International Festival in Nashville because they had invited Froggatt to perform there. The BCMA felt that a more authentic British Country music artist, Frank Jennings, was a better choice to represent British Country music. Both had recently released albums. Froggatt's contained original songs (including

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³⁷¹ Alley, K. *Country Music Searchlight.* (1978) Vol 2, No 3. Wakefield, D. (ed). Merseyside. England: Searchlight Country Publications.

Wakefield, D. Country Music Searchlight (1978) Vol 2, No 1. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (no publisher listed)

songs that British Country music fans now regard as classics such as 'Because of You'). Jennings' album *Heaven is my Woman's Love* contained covers of traditional American Country music artists such as Hank Williams, Bob Willis and Faron Young as well as contemporary material by Kris Kristofferson and John Denver. He also covered songs by Irish singer Val Doonican and American crooner Perry Como. Jennings himself stated in *Country Music Spotlight* (1977)³⁷³ that he was aiming for a laid-back, easy on the ears, middle-of-the-road market. Whether this was achieved remains debateable. It was an excellently produced album, but contained no originality and was clearly aimed for an older middle-aged market, much larger, one suspects, than the one Froggatt was attempting to enter.

The views expressed by Leigh to this researcher about the specificity of Country music are also an interesting authenticity paradigm. Many British Country music fans feel that American place names and subjects are authentic but British place names and subjects are not. Despite this attitude, a number of local and national Country music artists did write original songs based around subjects particular to their locale. In Liverpool Hank Walters wrote a number of songs about Liverpool, ('Sweet Liverpool') and the north-end Liverpool district in which he grew ('Everton'). His song 'River Keeps Rollin' was about how he left the docks to become a Country music artist, how he misses the atmosphere there but how the river remains unchanged. His song 'I Remember it Well' recalls days out as a child in New Brighton, a popular seaside resort across the Mersey. Hank's daughter Pauline Walters, a member of The Arcadian Ladies group, wrote about Liverpool and its people in the song 'City with a Heart' and about a Liverpool flower-seller in 'Bucket of Love'. Her sister, Lorna Gail Walters, wrote a song calling for racial harmony called 'Colour of Skin'. Kenny Johnson

³⁷³ Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 1 Wakefield, D. (Ed) Ellesmere Port, England: (No publisher listed)

also wrote about growing up in Liverpool ('Old Hutte Lane'), while local Country music artist Lee Brennan in 1976 released an album on the Sky 1001 label called *The Merseyside of Lee Brennan* on which all eleven selections were Country/Folk-based songs about Liverpool. They had titles such as 'Dockers' Lament' and 'River Mersey', and the songs contained many Liverpool colloquialisms. The songs also mention a number of Liverpool spaces and places such as Yates' Wine Lodge and districts such as Speke. This researcher also wrote a song about a young girl growing up in Dockland Liverpool ('River City Girl').³⁷⁴

Some American artists sang about the social plights of working men in America such as Johnny Cash ('US Steel', a Tom Russell song) about the closing of the steel mills. Equally, British Country music artists have written about the social plights affecting their locale. Local artist Hank Walters wrote about the redevelopment of Liverpool and how he believed the town-planners no longer took account of the feelings of the communities who lived in the areas they had redeveloped, questioning whether this form of progress really was progress. ('Progress'); Denis Collier wrote about the plight of the Yorkshire miners under Thatcherism ('Old King Coal'). Alan Cameron wrote a Country song about his Yorkshire heritage ('I'm a Yorkshire Man'). Wes Cardy wrote about British soldiers who did not return from the war ('Special Absent Friends') and this researcher wrote about capital punishment ('She Stands Alone'). Some songwriters wrote satirically about the British Country music scene; for example, Dave Sheriff wrote a humorous song about a British Country music club ('The Alamo'). Alan Cameron and Hank Wangford both wrote about the fans always wanting the same canon of Country music songs. Cameron wrote 'The Crystal Chandelier Gets up My Nose' as a protest about being regularly asked to perform it at British Country music clubs.

³⁷⁴ Partially based on the researcher's Grandmother's experiences.

Hank Wangford on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys*, $(1989)^{375}$ explained how he wrote a song about this attitude, stating:

'Crystal Chandeliers' is the rallying call of British Country music fans and I actually wrote a song once called 'I Know What I Like and I Know That I Like What I Know' and in the middle of it we break into 'Crystal Chandeliers'. In which point when we play it to Country audiences they would all get up and dance to the two lines that I sang and then sit down again. I'm not taking the mickey out of them. They are no more narrow minded than Heavy Metal fans.

Yet, arguably, such local and national Country music songwriters attempting to create a British identity for the music were too small in number to make a difference. The vast majority of songs recorded by local and national Country music artists have remained covers of American Country music hits causing many people within the scene to regard them as pallid imitations. It is a paradox that while the same American Country music song would be recorded by a number of American Country music artists, and many local and national Country music fans would already have copies of these songs in their collection, when the songs are recorded by British artists, the charge laid against them by British Country music fans was that they were just copies of the original and so lacked the essential authenticity. It was in fact the policy of Acuff Rose, the largest Country music publishing company in the US, to try to place a hit song with as many Country music artists as possible to maximise its profits.

Charlie Landsborough explained to this researcher that he felt it was a mistake that many British Country music artists did not form their own identities by writing their own material

³⁷⁵ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

and singing Country music in their own accents. He cited Australia as having a large and successful Country music scene by following such a policy:

Country music is almost on a par with Pop music. The nice thing is they are not trying to be Yanks. I went to a great festival there in the Outback and there were singers on every corner singing about Australia with Australian accents [...] It's got its own flavour where at home all we tend to do is imitate Americans. There's nothing wrong with Americans but we haven't got a Country music identity of our own, whereas the Aussies have.

Some members of the scene believe British Country music artists must also share some of the responsibility for their lack of success. Kenny Johnson explained on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989)³⁷⁶ that in the past many British Country music artists, without record labels, were forced to work in small studios, which unlike today did not have the equipment to match the quality of the American recordings:

When you get the record on the deck, you have to prefade it to get it so that each record comes out the same level when you cue them in. There's minus and plus. The American records it's like minus three and the British records you have to go to plus eight or something to get the same volume out. The cut is very low, it doesn't do the boys justice and for all the hard work, the records let you down.

The aforementioned John Fairclough co-founded with Joe Butler the local Country music label Jee Cee. Fairclough released Country music albums on their Barge and Canal imprints. Fairclough believes British Country music acts did not have a professional approach to the business, and suggested that local Country music artists often brought inferior songs to their label's publishing arm:

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³⁷⁶ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

They would bring tracks and say, "Here are some tracks I've recorded." There would be no care in the recording done on a tacky old cassette that had been used thirty times before recorded in their back room. They haven't even brought you the lyrics and they want you to make a decision and possibly sign that song and get it to an artist who is going to record it.

This researcher owns over one hundred British Country music recordings on vinyl, cassette and CDs dating from the 1960s to the present day and found a truly variable quality in the recordings. While some are well-produced and recorded, others are of a very low quality, which could not be put down to just small studios, poor equipment or age of the recordings. Some have glaring errors in the production that have not been addressed such as vocals out of tune, wrong notes played. It would also appear that on a number of albums each producer (who might also be the artist) appears to have a lack of knowledge and experience in recording the genre, often showing in the arrangements of the song. Country music broadcaster Peter Fairhead also confirmed to me that he felt a number of the British Country music albums were of a low recording standard, stating 'Sometimes you get sent stuff you wouldn't play your Mum in the kitchen [...] that goes for tracks on the Hot Disc, there are some people who are too old to sing now. It's just a vanity product'.

Hot Disc

The Hot Disc is a monthly compilation disc produced by Country music journalist and DJ, Stuart Cameron. Artists pay Cameron to put a track on it and CDs are then sent out to appropriate DJs in Britain, Europe and Australia. The CDs are usually a mixture of newer young acts trying to obtain wider exposure for their music³⁷⁷ or older British Country music artists, for many of whom Hot Disc is a vanity product. DJs are expected to send back a list of songs they like and this is compiled into a European chart. The charts are actually

³⁷⁷ When a teenager this researcher used the Hot Disc a number of times for this reason.

meaningless in that an artist can be number one in the European Country Music Chart (as a number of British artists do) without selling a single copy of their song, but it perhaps helps promotion somewhat. The Haley Oliver Band, a British Country music band, claims in their publicity, to have had ten consecutive European Country music No 1 tracks but state on the website of the British Country Music Forum³⁷⁸ that such listings had no recognisable impact on sales of their tracks or indeed on the group's career.

The Hot Disc is an example of the lengths to which British Country music artists will go in search of a market that overall largely ignores their music. A number of acts have complained that it was very difficult to obtain national distribution for their records and even those previously signed to major labels have stated that it was difficult to find their albums in major high street record stores. In 2008, as part of a BA honours project, this researcher looked at the then local major high street record shops comparing the number of British Country music artists with the number of American Country music artists on sale. In a similar manner, I also compared the number of English Folk music artists with the number of American Folk music artists. Table 2 shows the results:

Table 2

Store	Country Music		Folk	Folk Music	
	English	American	English	American	
HMV Bold St	2	159	58	35	
HMV Liverpool 1	2	161	57	37	
ZAVVI Clayton Sq	0	37	31	20	
ZAVVI Liverpool 1	0	42	29	11	
HMV Pyramids	2	56	23	10	
(Birkenhead)					

³⁷⁸ British Country Music Website Forum [Online]

(accessed 20/11/2013)">accessed 20/11/2013)

The chart shows that British Country music artists stocked in the local high street record stores were just over 1% of the total Country music artists stocked. The only local British Country music artist stocked was Charlie Landsborough, who at the time was signed to the major Irish record label Ritz. The chart also shows that the British Folk artists, whilst still being a specialist minority genre, were able to obtain significant national distribution for their albums. In 2013, this researcher examined the situation in the only remaining local high street record store HMV at Liverpool 1 shopping precinct. This researcher found that of the 288 Country music artists, there was only one British artist: once again local musician Charlie Landsborough. The increase in the number of artists for sale was almost exclusively the new young American Country artists, which is a reflection of the recent attempts to sell new American Country to a wider British audience. The data appears to confirm that, as in the past, the major point of sale for British Country music artists remains at Country music venues or at festivals.

Record labels, radio and TVs' unwillingness to promote Country music are pointed to by a number of scene members as one of the reasons for the failure of both British and American Country music records to make any significant impact on the British Country music scene. As far back as 1978 Derek Wakefield,³⁷⁹ in *Country Music Searchlight*,³⁸⁰ discussed attending 'The British Country Music Radio and Television Seminar', stating the main subject in terms of time taken was the non-availability of records from various record companies to radio stations. John Fairclough explained to this researcher that his record label partner Joe Butler when presenting Radio City's Country music programme was so

Wakefield, D. *Country Music Searchlight.* (1978) Vol 2, No 3. Wakefield, D (ed). Eastham Merseyside, England: Searchlight Country Publications.

³⁸⁰ Spotlight and Searchlight are in fact the same magazine. The name change was due to threatened legal action over the use of the name 'Spotlight'.

disgruntled with not receiving Country music records from major labels that he was forced to contact the labels directly. He asked them to send the records to his home address to ensure it was not his radio station company that were responsible for the non-distribution of the albums. Joe Fish, Country music broadcaster and journalist, who presented a long-running weekly Country music show on BBC Radio Lancashire also complained about the record companies unwillingness to promote Country music records stating in *Spotlight*(1977)³⁸¹ 'Why bother if you aren't going to promote it. Very few singles of Pop or Country would be successful without some kind of promotion [...] If only they would have a little more confidence in their product their sales and Country music would benefit enormously'. British Country music artist Frank Jennings in *Spotlight* (1978)³⁸² also complained about the lack of support from his record company, EMI. He explained that when they went on the prime time TV talent show, *Opportunity Knocks*, they asked EMI to release the single 'Heaven is a Woman's Love' to coincide with their appearance but EMI refused. Jennings stated ruefully:

We lost out on that one. We'd won with the song and nothing happened [...] When somebody wins on that show a single appears in the shops about two weeks later, Hughie (Hughie Green, the programme's presenter) plugs it like mad and they usually have a hit record. None of that happened for us. Ann (Ann Dex their manager) said that EMI were not interested in doing that.

Apparently, EMI did release a single by his band a few months later, but, by then, the momentum had seemingly disappeared. BBC radio and television also came into criticism by British Country music scene members about their attitude to Country music. Dave Allen, who presented BBC2's Country music series in the 1970s, tried to present a modern image of

³⁸¹ Fish, J. *Country Music Spotlight*. (1977) Vol 1 No 1 Wakefield, D. (ed) Ellesmere Port. England: (No publisher details listed)

³⁸² Jennings, F. *Country Music Spotlight.* (1978) Vol 1 No 12. Wakefield, D, (ed). Ellesmere Port England: (No publisher listed)

Country music. Allan complained in an article in Country (No.1 March 1972)³⁸³ that when he met the woman from the Radio Times who was arranging to promote the series in the magazine, she stated 'Yes, but surely it's basically Cowboy music tarted-up a bit'.

Peter Fairhead who presented a weekly Country music programme for local BBC radio in Leeds stated to this researcher that he felt the BBC had a 'snobbish' attitude regarding Country music. When he was first given the Country music show to present, he explained to them that he did not know anything about Country music, but the BBC did not seem to care. It was not considered a genre of music that needed special attention such as ensuring employing a presenter who understood the music. Radio Merseyside presenter Billy Butler also complained about the attitude of the BBC to programming Country music:

The BBC regard Country music as a specialist programme so the only time you hear it is on a specialist programme but you know your audience. I know this area; I've been playing records here for a very long time. We don't pick our music anymore. A few years ago I played 'I Love this Bar' the Toby Keith Country music song, people loved it but you can't play it now.

Back in the 1970s, Derek Wakefield in Country Music Searchlight (1978)³⁸⁴ discussed how he encountered open BBC prejudice against British Country bands. He stated that at a British Country music radio and TV seminar, BBC producer Douglas Hespe stated that he was interested in producing more Country music on TV but expressed the opinion that British Country music acts did not have the presentation or personality that was essential for a lively TV show. Even by the twenty-first century, local Radio Merseyside broadcaster Billy Butler still feels that record labels do not know how to promote **any** Country music properly:

³⁸³ Allen, D. *Country*. (March 1972) Vol 1 No 1 Chalker, B. (ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd

³⁸⁴ Wakefield, D. Country Music Searchlight. (1978) Vol 2, No 3. Wakefield, D. (ed). Eastham, Merseyside, England: Searchlight Country Publications.

I think the record companies haven't the faintest idea how to promote Country music and I can remember when Garth Brooks was breaking every single record in America in the Pop and in the Country charts but he couldn't break bread here cos' the record companies didn't know how to promote him. Now this radio station (BBC Radio Merseyside) used to play Garth Brooks records, Radio City never played Garth Brooks but EMI used to send them not us (Radio Merseyside), all the Garth Brooks records. It was a matter of the distributors not knowing the outlet for the music to send it to.

Whilst there appears to be a number of contributing factors that acted against the breakthrough of recorded British Country music, the most important factor was still the attitude of British Country music fans towards them. Renowned British Country music artist Albert Lee who now resides in America and is regarded as one of the World's top Country music guitarists stated on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989):³⁸⁵ There is still this reluctance on the part of British Country music fans to accept British musicians and British players and put them on a par with the Americans'.

Derek Wakefield complained about this unwillingness of British Country music fans to accept originality of British Country music artists stating:

If we want originality from our own groups we have to give them a chance with their own material. Don't pick up an album say I don't know any of the songs on that one and then put it down again. When a British artist has the courage to put the track down on an album, which is British he has much difficulty in selling the record because we do not recognise it as being one of George Jones or Merle Haggard's cast-offs. 386

³⁸⁵ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

Wakefield, D. Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 5. Wakefield. D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (No publisher listed)

This researcher experienced these problems with her own British Country album releases. Being signed to Goldrush, a Scottish independent label meant that the albums had national distribution and were placed in the large high street stores such as HMV. Both albums of original songs received positive reviews in the Country music press and the second album *Crimson Love on Velvet Black* was singled-out by all four of the largest National British Country music magazines as their record of the month (or their equivalent title) i.e. *Country Music People, Country Music International, Country Music Round Up* and *Maverick*. It also received similar reviews in regional magazines. Despite these reviews in the Country music press, sales in the record shops were negligible. When in one week the *Independent* newspaper's magazine featured a three-page article on the album and this researcher performed on *BBC Breakfast* and *Granada Reports*, all two thousand copies of the album sold-out in a few days. Unfortunately, because of the record label's knowledge of the attitude of British Country music fans towards original British Country music albums, they only had three thousand copies printed.³⁸⁷ This meant it took a month to get the album re-pressed and back in the stores, by which time the impetus was lost.

This researcher also recalls performing at a festival and sitting at the merchandise table with the Welsh Country music duo, Iona and Andy, and Adam Caldwell. Iona and Andy's original album was the most expensive album up to that date that Sain Records, the largest recording studio/company in Wales, had produced. Adam Caldwell was a seventeen-year old British Country music artist and songwriter who had just been signed to Acuff Rose in Nashville as a songwriter and had recently finished a tour with Reba McEntire, then the top female Country music artist in America. The British Country music fans ignored all three of us whilst there was a queue buying a gig album by an unknown Canadian Country music artist of Gene

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³⁸⁷ This researcher had purchased 1000 CDs herself to sell/promote and had to send 700 back to Goldrush to pass onto the distributors (Proper) because of the demand.

Autry covers (The 1940/50's 'Singing Cowboy'). ³⁸⁸ This inability to sell this type of product led to Sain Records never releasing another British Country album, concentrating on their successful Folk and traditional catalogue in Welsh. It also resulted in Adam Caldwell leaving the British Country music field and writing hit songs in the Pop music field, such as number one singles for Mel C and Ollie Murs. I also changed the direction of my recording career because of the lack of sales.

Both myself and the other two artists never experienced any problems in receiving recognition in the British Country music field in terms of favourable articles and record reviews in the Country music press, or in terms of obtaining bookings at large festivals and Country music events. In fact, I found that British Country music journalists and promoters tried very hard to promote original British Country music acts performing their own material, but it appeared to be the fans amongst whom these artists did not receive any recognition or support; they preferred bands performing covers. I also recall when performing at one festival, sitting in the audience of British performer Stu Page's set observing the fans who had been attentively listening to a cover band performing standards by Johnny Cash, George Jones and Merle Haggard. They left the marquee in droves as he performed his original material. Page himself left British Country music because of his frustration at this attitude, to form a successful Eagles tribute band. Frank Jennings of The Frank Jennings Syndicate, explained in *Spotlight* (1978) why his band played covers at British Country gigs stating, 'If we do the likes of 'Crystal Chandelier' it's only because it's been requested not because we

³⁸⁸ This is another example of the British Country music scene's musical tastes which was as entrenched in the past as that of local Country scene members.

want to do it. I hate the song. Can't stand it. But I do it every night because the people pay their money'. 389

Perhaps the general attitude of the fans towards original British Country music acts can best be summed up by Brocken (2010) who wrote:

Even the British Country music fan will still not purchase in required quantities any British Country music product on record and as a consequence, there remains to this day only a small localised and under-represented discography bearing witness to the existence of Country music in Liverpool. 390

Local Country music artist Charlie Landsborough had been performing around the pubs, Country music clubs and festivals for over thirty years. However, his live performance on RTE TV's *The Pat Kenny Show* was instrumental in moving his career forward to the next level. Landsborough performed his original emotional song 'What Colour is the Wind' at the end of the show, just prior to the lottery results being announced, which meant that he had a very large audience in Ireland. Within a very short period, the song had reached number one in the Irish charts and Landsborough was a success, filling theatres in both Ireland and the UK. He has since sold over one million albums. His own website even states: 'He has proved that despite the knocks life throws at us and the twists and turns of fortune, talent will always win through in the end.' 391

This somewhat romantic story is often repeated across British Country music circles as an example of how a British Country music artist can succeed in the business. What is often left

³⁸⁹ Jennings, F. *Country Music Spotlight.* (1978) Vol 1 No 12. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port England: (No publisher listed)

³⁹⁰ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool'. In *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 134

³⁹¹ Landsborough, C. Charlie Landsborough, Biography .[Online]

http://www.charlielandsborough.com/biography.htm (accessed 09/12/09)

out in these stories, however, is the part played by Ritz in this success. Ritz was Ireland's biggest record company achieving enormous success marketing such artists as Daniel O'Donnell and Brendan Shine. After a handful of Liverpool-based releases on Pastafont, Landsborough was signed to Ritz who did not consider him one of their major artists during his initial time with them, at least until the success of his performance on RTE. However, Ritz had the infrastructure of distribution, radio pluggers, PR men, tour organisers and finance to take full advantage of it. Ritz was able to place large numbers of Landsborough records in all the major record shops in both Ireland and the UK, and was, in fact, able to present all the Irish radio stations with a full PR package in a very short period. Ritz was also able to quickly organise a theatre tour for Landsborough, with a full backing band (up until then Landsborough had performed as a solo artist).

Due to the success in the UK of its other Irish artists, Ritz already had the infrastructure in place to promote Landsborough. Another advantage to Ritz was Landsborough's long career had given him enough original material for Ritz to be able to place his products when they would obtain the most consumer reaction. It is questionable that without such infrastructure and backing, Landsborough would ever have been able to attain the same level of success. He is a demonstrable example of how vital integrated approaches and a reliable infrastructure are in supporting a successful Country artist (something other local and British Country music artists have never really enjoyed).

Gender

Despite the fact that members of the local scene consisted of relatively equal numbers of male and female fans, there were very few female performers across the local scene. Patsy Foley was a female performer on this scene for a number of years. She was a vocalist with The Blue Mountain Boys before embarking on a solo career and performing in pubs and

clubs singing Patsy Cline material. This researcher could not find any recordings released by her, sadly. Carole Weston performed in the band, Carole Weston and Country Sunshine before she went out as a solo artist. Weston performed in pubs and clubs on the local scene until her death in 2014. She did record a gig-based album, but this researcher could not obtain a copy.³⁹² Little Ginny was on the local scene for some years in the 1970s. Originally, from Kingston-upon-Thames, she moved to Liverpool and, after working as a solo artist, teamedup with a band of Liverpool musicians and went out under the name Little Ginny and Room Service. Local bass player, Paul Kirkby produced her albums as well as a number of other well-known Country music artists, such as Charlie Landsborough, George Hamilton IV and Slim Whitman. She was twice-voted UK Top Female Country Vocalist and appeared on the Wembley Festival and the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. She moved to Yorkshire and recorded her first album in 1978 called Coming on Nicely LP Music, SRTZ/LP003 at Fairview Studios in Hull. She also recorded two albums in Nashville with Nashville session men. Her career appeared to take a dip in the 1980s, and she formed a duo, Two Hearts with Yorkshire Country singer Tammy Cline and they subsequently performed on the national scene together for a number of years. She eventually returned to the south of England where she starred in musicals such as *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, and in pantomime. Ginny still performs under her own name Ginny Brown, but no longer on the Country music circuit.

In the 1990s The Arcadian Ladies, the three daughters of Hank Walters, Pauline, Claire, and Lorna Gail performed mainly with Walters in the local pubs and clubs. They were known for their close three-part harmonies. All of them were songwriters writing a number of songs. They recorded an album with Walters and other artists called *City with a Heart*, a community project to support local Country and Folk singer-songwriters. Pauline Walters also produced

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³⁹² Neither could Spencer Leigh when he was presenting *Sounds Country* for BBC Radio Merseyside in 2014 and wanted to play a song by her as a tribute when she died.

the album. Unfortunately for The Arcadian Ladies, they entered the scene when it was in decline and opportunities limited, eventually retiring from performing. Although not performing professionally anymore, this researcher observed them perform without Walters at The Campfield public house in 2013, guesting with The Bar Room Boys.

McManus (1994)³⁹³ states that Joan Goldie performed in Country music bands with her husband Carl in the 1960s and that Rikki Allen performed as a duo with husband Tony Allen after he left The Blue Mountain Boys. There were others with brief appearances on the local scene such as Jodie Stephens and Julie Finney, but with the possible exception of Little Ginny, none were able to make a lasting impact on the scene. In the late-1990s, a female duo, Blue Orchid, appeared but despite making an album with Nashville session men, they did not make a large impact on the national scene and split-up. One half of the duo, Chrissy Byrne still performs on the Country music circuit, both in the duo Savannah and the band Louisiana. Louise Rogan still occasionally appears in local Country music clubs but her main career is performing as 'Stevie Nicks' in the tribute band, Rumours of Fleetwood Mac.

Women did play other significant roles, however. McManus (1994)³⁹⁴ informs us that Joan Goldby ('Goldie') assisted husband Carl in running the aforementioned local Country music venue 'Ossie Wades' in the 1960s. Pat Allen, alongside her husband Gerry, ran the Country music record shop, AMS Records in Liverpool for many years. We have seen that this store acted as an important cultural space and conduit where local artists and Country music fans met. Pat Cass ran the mobile Country music store with husband Norman for over 25 years, operating from various Country music clubs, thus creating another significant cultural space for the dissemination of information and sounds. Women, while taking an active part in the

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³⁹³ McManus, K. 91994) *Nashville of the North* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 17

³⁹⁴ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p .17

local scene are now a minority and their roles are very heavily gendered both on and off the stage. While it is not uncommon for a female to perform, the remains of the Liverpool scene is still very much a male-dominated environment, with women playing at times subservient and stereotypical roles: one which is still associated with the typecasting of Country girls living in a 'man's world'. At The Melrose, for example, food is prepared by the hostess for the guests, as if for tea at a cricket club and women are regarded almost as support for their men. This stereotype has literally contributed to the scene's demise, for the ageing images of women as depicted through this lack of musical and social progress has limited the number of women attracted to such binary stereotyping, and if the truth be told, has little place in the twenty-first century, however nostalgic, for some, it has become. Of course, gender is a signifier of social and political order, so the control of gendered behaviour is a means to control any order. It might be argued that, in the local Country scene, gender boundaries speak of deeply entrenched forms of domination, yet at the same time appear completely 'natural'. In fact, via Country music's very self-perpetuating mythology it can be seen that at least locally, 'appropriate' (yet now out-dated) gender relationships are both taught and socialized.

Image

As British Country music failed to have practically any impact on the national British popular music scene, and as American Country music only made a rare crossover appearance in the British Pop charts, those involved in British Country music e.g. artists, fans, club organisers etc, began to question why this was the case. British Country music was, and remains, populated by an older demographic who hold a conservative attitude to the music (and gender stereotypes – as above). There was reluctance to examining closely why there was a decline in the scene; perhaps because it would produce answers unpalatable for various reasons.

These included still hanging-on to a style of Country music that was outdated and old fashioned, failure to engage the youth market, and failure to make any modifications to their behaviour that might compromise the perceived 'purity' of 'their' music – as with other genres of popular music issues related to ownership were never far away from discussions of authenticity. Actually, across the local scene, scapegoats were often found within rather than outside the scene.

The first scapegoats were the 'Cowboys', those wearing Western dress; secondly the line-dancers were also heavily criticised. The line-dance entry into the scene and the attitude of scene members towards them is discussed in detail in the chapter 'British Country Music and The Line-Dance Phenomenon'. The Cowboys were always a minority in the local and national Country music scene, but attracted an almost venomous disdain, out of all proportion to their numbers. Many of the local scene members have been in the past very critical of the effect that these individuals' image had on the scene. Hank Walters in Cohen (2007)³⁹⁵ stated: 'The scene has gone foolish all over. Certain places have Country music on but it's these Cowboy things. Its fantasy island merchants wearing guns and posing thinking they're Cowboys. It isn't Country music. All they are doing is dancing and posing in their gear.' Further, Bernie Green in McManus (1994)³⁹⁶ stated 'I don't agree with it at all. It's derogatory to the music. The music is not about Cowboys. I don't mean to be a killjoy but I don't like them to be associated with Country music.' Local Country music record shop owner Pat Allen also stated in Cohen (2007) that:

People dressed up as Mexicans, Confederates, Unionists and Indians. All they are interested in doing is parading around showing off who has the largest Mexican hat, the most flashy gun or

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³⁹⁵ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 86

³⁹⁶ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p .35

Cowboy belt and performing sequence dancing. Nobody seems remotely interested in the music or the artist performing. That's not what Country music is about and most bands don't like it. It makes Country music look silly and gives it a bad name. 397

Brian Chalkier, writing in *Country* (1974) stated he had no objection to anyone dressing-up, but also felt that the image had damaged Country music in Britain. Chalkier stated he felt that the press singled-out the most outrageously dressed Cowboy for interviews, stating:

The press say, "What do you think of Country music, Sir?" and old matey with his Stetson hat and his Winfield shirt and his Acme six-guns who is hardly the best spokesman turns around and tells them. *The Radio Times* thinks we're all bloody idiots. *The Sunday Times* thinks we're all idiots and *The Sun* thinks we're all bloody Cowboys. I've never worn a Cowboy hat in my life and never will.

This researcher had a similar experience, when being interviewed by the press while performing at the 2002 North Wales International Country Music Festival. When asked after the interview to put on a Cowboy hat for the photograph, I refused. The photographer then wandered around the festival trying to find a group in Cowboy dress for the accompanying photograph.

It is perhaps more than ironic that the mythical Cowboy image that attracted most of the older Country music fans into the music is one that is now disowned by many scene members. Yet, almost all the local Country music bands in the 1950s and early-1960s (including artists such as Hank Walters who is now critical of it), frequently wore Cowboy clothes. These artists appear to see no connection between the Cowboy image they portrayed on stage and the image of these Country music audiences – suggesting perhaps a delineated dichotomy

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³⁹⁷ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 86

³⁹⁸ Chalker, B. Country (1974) Vol 3, No 2, Chalker, B. (ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd

between 'acceptable' performance and audience behaviours. Of interest to this researcher, who has wide musical tastes, is that connections were not made between the needs of all fans to wear similar costumes to their idols: something that happens in many other genres of music such as Heavy Metal and Punk.

Cowboys were regarded as fantasists and eccentrics, yet it could be argued that they fully understood the boundaries between their Country fantasy world and that of the real everyday world. Their dressing-up was completely identified with their relationship to the music. It was a statement of their involvement in this Country music world, which rarely if ever crossed over into their non-Country music world. This also meant until the onset of the line-dance phenomenon very few people outside the Country music scene saw these British 'Western' dressers. Most people's Cowboy image of Country music in this Country came from the clothing they saw American Country music artists wearing on television etc, and the signifiers of Country music on these shows, which presented a Western image such as barns, hay bales, and wagon wheels. Eventually Hank Walters was to swap his Stetson for a flat cap, as he changed his image from Cowboy to working-class. As local radio broadcaster, Billy Butler suggested to this researcher:

A lot of the Country music bands in Liverpool went with the image everybody now tries to get away from, the Cowboy image. There were a lot of Country bands in Liverpool who had the Country shirt on and the Cowboy hat, cos' everybody connected Country music with Cowboys and that's the image now that they are desperate to get away from and it's an image they reckon has harmed its popularity.

The fans who wore Western dress were often grouped together by their critics but in reality were two distinct types of groups. One type was the Western dresser or urban Cowboys. These western dressers took great pride in their clothing and wore what could be called

modern Western clothing, which usually meant smart Western shirt, trousers, shoes or boots. Some wore the American type of Stetson worn by artists such as George Strait and Garth Brooks. For them, it was an important part of their identity and experience while watching and listening to 'their' Country music. Although they attended Country music events, they never formed large groups in a kind of sub-cultural way - just attending with partners or a few friends.

Western dresser Alan Bates explained to this researcher that his smart Country music dress was part of his identity and today, now that very few people dress-up in the clothes, he feels his identity has been eroded stating, 'We don't get geared-up the same like we used to do for Country music. When you go to a Country music festival, it's not the same now. The atmosphere's gone out of it in that respect. There's not many people get dressed up to go to a Country festival as there used to be.' Bates also expressed that he had noticed these changes were occurring in his local Country music club:

'We'd all get dressed up and everything. They'd go in their jeans and shirt just like they're dressed now. It's just a natural thing like they'd come off the streets. They don't go to a Country event really. I think these are the little things that knock the shine out of it and it takes you away from the Country atmosphere.

This view was confirmed to the researcher by local Country music fan Colin Gatewood who confessed 'I just don't think it's fun anymore. To begin with, dressing up was a really big part of it. It did add to the atmosphere. They don't really do that so much now'. Colin's wife Edna Gatewood, who attended many Country music clubs and festivals with other Western dressers Eddie and Marion Fox, stated:

It was part of what we were. The more you got into it the more clothing we got and when we used to go to Presthaven (a Country music festival in North Wales), Eddie (Fox) made their trailer. It was literally like a wardrobe on wheels that was full of clothes [...] That's how dedicated we were to looking the part'

The second group, the Cowboys were somewhat different. They dressed in what they considered to be authentic Cowboy or Wild West costumes, similar to the images in Western movies and comics. Despite this image being largely mythic, it was also authentic in the participants' eyes. They carried signifiers of this image including replica six-guns, rifles, swords and Bowie knives. These type of Cowboys usually only wore such clothing and accessories at their specialist Cowboy Country music clubs or Country music festivals. These specialist types of Country music clubs on Merseyside included The Metal Box Country Music Club, The Leasowe Castle Country Music Club in Wallasey and The Transport Club in Birkenhead. Such clubs developed for a while all over the UK and were particularly strong in areas of Lancashire. Large numbers of dressers would come together at Country music festivals where they could meet like-minded people and exchange information and form kinship and bonds. It is important to understand that these people did not consider themselves as Western re-enactors groups such as the US Civil War re-enactors.

Despite originally aligning themselves to an American music form and an American Cowboy myth, specialist Cowboy Country music clubs have also formed their own specifically British rituals and practices, which have helped to bind the club members together. By attending Country music festivals and forging links with other local and national Country music clubs, they have spread these rituals throughout the UK scene. The most important ritual, which quickly spread to this type of British Country music club, was the 'Trilogy'. The 'Trilogy' was a specific ritual that occurred at the end of the evening in all the Cowboy Country music

clubs. The ritual is only open to those in Western dress, but everyone was expected to stand and be silent throughout the ceremony. Participants would line up in ranks facing flag holders and the person responsible for directing the ritual. The flag holders would carry a number of different flags but the most common combination was an American flag (on occasions the Confederate flag), a Texas (Lone Star) flag and a Union Jack. The ritual would start with the playing of the 'Trilogy' – i.e. the song 'The American Trilogy' written by Mickey Newbury. It was always either the Elvis Presley recording of the song or a live Country music band singing the song. Scottish Country music singer Barry Wallace informed this researcher that there were so many Cowboy Country music clubs in Scotland that a Country music act could not survive there without learning the 'Trilogy'. At the end of the ceremony, flags were lowered and those carrying guns fired a salute. At some of the Country music festivals such as Presthaven, Cowboy Country music clubs would join in a large spectacle of Western dress and flags, which, for many of them, enhanced the experience of the festival and reinforced their allegiances. These Western dressers did not feel their image had a detrimental effect on attracting new members into the British Country music field. In fact, in Finnegan (2007)³⁹⁹ they explained to her that rather than putting people off attending their club, this glamorised image actually attracted people into the scene.

Any contextualised research such as this must be concerned with both continuity and discontinuity. After all, these two perspectives are both complimentary and partial, the local and the national. Liverpool's Country scene of the post-WWII era represented shared common values and attitudes, towards not only music, but also perhaps even life in general. Country became a sub-culture in its own right because it helped to shape attitudes, beliefs,

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³⁹⁹ Finnegan, R. (2007) 'The Country and Western World' in *The Hidden Musicians – Music Making in an English Town*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 90-102

actions, and create social bonds. But its decline also suggests to us that it became a hidden history in time partially due to its generic catalogue of poor or ill-conceived recordings, its lack of acceptance amongst Country music lovers nationwide, over-prolonged gender stereotypes, and its scapegoating of new movements such as dancing and re-enactment. Culture changes are inevitable, yet British Country music is now faced with an uncertain future with a market that has all-but faded away. Therefore, the very history of recorded British Country music is an important hidden history in its own right for its connections to the vibrant scenes and its relevance in promoting the careers of provincial artists on to the national stage are not historically secure. Indeed one might argue that recorded Country music did not serve local artists well. Even though locality shaped the business of producing and consuming local Country music in Liverpool, and specific local conditions made a difference to what was performed and heard, what recorded sound legacy remains, merely displays its business and cultural frailties.

Chapter 7: Authenticity or Pastiche? A Structural and Semiotic Analysis of The Hillsiders' Recorded Output 1964-1975.

Whilst Brocken (2010)⁴⁰⁰ provides a comprehensive but not definitive discography of the local Country music scene's recordings (including a little information about them), scholars have thus far not attempted any structural analysis of these recordings. This researcher therefore felt it was important to include in this study a genre-based structural approach to analysing recordings made by the most prominent artists within the local scene. The rationale for this is two-fold: a) it will help identify any style influences and synecdoches in the music and perhaps b) resolve conflicting statements regarding whether Liverpool Country music had its own distinct Liverpool style, or was merely a copy of the American Country music of that era. To that aim, a structured semiotic analysis of mainly vinyl records (but also some cassettes and CDs) from the 1960s-90s of the most prominent local Country music band, The Hillsiders was be carried out. Therefore, **chapters 7 and 8** contain an analysis of arguably the most important band to emerge from the local Country music scene, The Hillsiders.

The structural approaches used in this analysis are based upon the approaches described by Popular music studies specialist Longhurst (2007)⁴⁰¹ quoting popular music musicologist d Middleton (1992),⁴⁰² which consists of four basic continuae which assist the analysis of the sounds and structures reflecting authenticities for the listener. Such analysis is also concomitant with more progressive criticism of popular products, which tends to emphasise how meaning resides in the text for the listener, irrespective in some cases of the intentions of composer/author.

⁴⁰⁰ Brocken, M. (2010) 'I Like Your Hat, Country Music in Liverpool 'in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s.* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 124-131

⁴⁰¹ Longhurst, B. (2007) 'Text and Meanings' in *Popular Music and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp. 150-79

⁴⁰² Middleton, R. (1992) *Studying Popular Music.* Milton Keynes. UK. Open University Press. pp. 181-220

The approaches:

Syntagmatic

Songs were examined for structural qualities; for example, whether the songs have AABA shapes, verses, choruses, middle-eights, pre-choruses or solos, and where each might occur in a song. In addition, did the structure follow a conventional pattern and if not, how did this affect the song? Was it positive, innovative or did it disrupt the flow of the song?

Paradigmatic

The songs on the albums were listened to in order to identify specific musemes: riffs, licks or drum patterns that attempt to give specific originality to the song and whether these were created by the artist performing it on the record, if it was a cover; for example, was this museme part of the original song? There are songs with uniquely recognisable riffs, which often identify the song without having to hear the melody or vocals, e.g. The Beatles' 'Love Me Do' or 'Eight Days a Week', Country songs such as Steve Earle's 'Guitar Town', etc.

Generative

Albums were listened to in order to find evidence of elements in the album that helped determine the generative capacity of genre representation, for example via steel guitar, Dobro and banjo can be style indicators. Other indicators can include whether instruments such as the lead guitar played Country licks, has a Country timbre, or if the vocals possess a Country tonal quality or grain. Evidence of genre synecdoches was also examined (see Tagg 2013). This might include riffs, licks or chord sequences, which may normally be characteristics of other genres of music such as Merseybeat/60's Pop, Folk, Soul, and Irish music. This also includes evidence of instruments, equipment and effects usually associated with other genres

⁴⁰³ Tagg, P. (2013) *Music Meanings*. New York: Mass Media. Scholars Press. pp. 524-528

of music such as 12-string electric guitar, Lesley cabinets, 'Wah' pedals and distortion effects. Vocals (lead and harmony) were also examined for evidence of distinct tonal qualities associated with other genres, for example, Beatles-style harmonies or Everly Brothers 1950's Rock 'n' Roll-style harmonies.

Processual

The songs were examined in order to determine where instruments and vocals enter and exit the song as this can sometimes help determine the genre. Also examined was whether the placing of the instruments in specific orders, affecting the song in positive and/or negative ways. For example, steel guitar is a style indicator for Country music but is used sparingly in most American Country music. This is usually to enhance a particular part of the message. Overuse of steel can result in the loss of its intentional impact and it can decrease diversity resulting in a more monotonous feel to the song.

Where relevant, these albums were compared to the vinyl records produced by American Country music artists of the same era and comparisons of covers with the original American songs were occasionally made. This researcher also considered other aspects of the albums e.g. whether there was a social or economic context in the choice of songs or instruments; whether these choices were affected by fandom; whether contemporary Nashville songs influenced the choice, etc. Such analysis of recorded repertoire is a yardstick in enabling bands to be judged against other local Country music bands and American Country music artists.

The Hillsiders

Possibly the most important band to emerge from the Liverpool Country music scene was The Hillsiders. They were regarded as **the** number one British Country music band for many years. Both this and the following chapters will therefore contain an analysis of all fourteen of The Hillsiders' albums dating from 1964 – 1989. It has been separated into two chapters because of the volume of material analysed. This chapter contains analysis of albums recorded before 1975 and the subsequent chapter will cover the period 1975 – 89. This is a natural split in the work for two reasons. Firstly, it was when the recorded work changed from major to minor and vanity labels and secondly it was when lead vocalist, Kenny Johnson (founder and an important influence on the band) left.

The Hillsiders effectively formed in 1964 when Kenny Johnson and Joe Butler, who had been in a Country band 'Sonny Webb and the Country Four' came back together to play Country music. (The name 'Sonny Webb' was an amalgamation of Johnson and Butler's two favourite artists, Sonny James and Webb Pierce), McManus (1994)⁴⁰⁴ During the Merseybeat era Johnson had changed the direction of the group as a Pop band, entitled 'Sonny Webb and the Cascades' while Butler continued in Country music. With the decline of Merseybeat, together with a lack of opportunities and dwindling audiences, Johnson decided to return to Country music: thus, he and Butler created The Hillsiders.

However, The Hillsiders did represent a somewhat different approach to Country music. Their sound was perhaps a little more progressive than older, more traditional Liverpool Country music groups of the early-1960s. Their image reflected this, as they chose to wear 'normal' clothes, looking similar to many local Pop bands of the era. The Hillsiders also took a very professional attitude on stage, e.g. they did not drink or smoke on stage and while entering into humorous banter with their audiences they maintained a distance, and a professional stage persona. The band also claimed to play with a slightly heavier-driven rhythm section and to be the first local band to have a pedal steel guitar. This fresh approach

⁴⁰⁴ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 15

to Country music made the band an immediate success, not just locally but also nationally. They rose very quickly to be the top British Country band, winning numerous UK awards including the British Country Music Association 'Best Band' three years running. They were also Liverpool's first fully professional Country music band.

The Hillsiders' successes meant they were quickly invited to tour with visiting American Country music acts, such as Red Sovine and Bobby Bare. Bare's UK tour led to them being invited to Nashville to record an album with him, which was produced by the legendary Country music producer/artist, Chet Atkins. Although only in Nashville for a few days, they appeared on numerous Country music shows, the highlight of which was appearing on stage at the Grand Ole Opry. Band members Brian Hilton and Kenny Johnson have often stated how they felt it was a mistake to return home to Liverpool, as they might have made it in Nashville had they stayed. They had a built-in gimmick, their Liverpool accents, which drew comparisons with The Beatles. However, as we have seen, George Hamilton IV, whilst recognising the ability of The Hillsiders, informed this researcher that he felt they were not sufficiently different from American acts at the time and there was an attitude in Nashville of 'bringing coals to Newcastle' regarding acts from outside Nashville. Therefore, Hamilton believed it might have been more difficult to break through than the band realised.

In Britain at that time (the mid-1960s), a young British Country band being invited to play at the Mecca of Country music was unheard of. The Hillsiders quickly became the highest-paid British Country music band and unlike most other local Country bands, they stopped playing public houses and restricted their performances to clubs and festivals that could afford them. They obtained a major recording contract with RCA and appeared regularly on TV shows and regional broadcasts – most notably backing George Hamilton IV on his TV Country music

series. In *Country Music People* (1975)⁴⁰⁵ The Hillsiders' manager since 1967 George Edwards, claimed most of the credit for their success, stating: 'They had been going three years when I took over; they were playing four hours a night for £8.50 so I think my job speaks for itself'.⁴⁰⁶

Edwards also stated that he was hoping to arrange an American tour (which never materialised) and that they had now started their own record label (having split from the major record company Polydor). By the mid-1970s, the group were still the top British Country music band but problems were already beginning to show *Country Music People* (June 1980). 407 Kenny Johnson was having differences with Edwards and duly left in 1975. There were also new British Country music bands appearing on the scene such as Spellbound and The Frank Jennings Syndicate, challenging the band's top position. The Hillsiders replaced Johnson with Kevin McGarry. McGarry (who did not play an instrument at that stage), had been the lead vocalist in local Liverpool band, The Westerners for several years before leaving them to tour Europe with American artist Marvin Rainwater. McGarry had returned to Liverpool and was singing vocals with the local Country band, The Saddlers, when he was approached by Joe Butler and George Edwards to join The Hillsiders. George Neild informed this researcher that he remembers observing The Hillsiders standing at the back of the pub The Saddlers were performing in, shortly before his nephew Kevin was asked to join them.

By the late-1970s The Hillsiders were being further overtaken by new British Country music bands such as Warrington-based Poacher and they experienced some difficulty obtaining gigs at their usual higher fees (high by British Country music standards). John Stafford in *Country*

⁴⁰⁵ Country Music People. (December 1975), Vol 6, No 12, Powel, B. (ed). Sidcup, Kent: Country Music Press Ltd.

⁴⁰⁶ Surprising if correct, for by then The Hillsiders were already the top British Country band, had toured with major American Country artists, and had already received an invitation to record in Nashville.

⁴⁰⁷ Country Music People. (June 1980) No 6. Byworth, T. (ed). Dartford. Kent: (no publisher details)

Music People (June 1980) stated: 'After 1975 things started to go wrong and for a couple of years The Hillsiders became The 'Hillsliders' as they hit a rut in their career so much so that many people in Britain were under the impression that they had disbanded'. 408 In 1977, The Hillsiders changed management and Joe Butler in the above article blamed the past management (Edwards) for their slump, confessing: 'We were going downhill fast. The management that we had at the time did no pushing at all. He just sat waiting for the telephone to ring'. 409 The new management team of Colin Ward and George Slinger of Live Promotions wanted to take the band in a new direction. In the same above article, Butler explained that the new managers felt the band could be accepted into a wider popular music field, and so steered them in the direction of playing cabaret clubs and theatres, mixing genres along the way. This change of direction was ultimately not successful, so The Hillsiders returned to their Country music roots, until they finally disbanded in 1999.

Butler left the band in 1993 (replaced by Mick Kinney) to continue his radio broadcasting and to play in the excellent local band Hartford West. He caused a little consternation amongst the rest of The Hillsiders, when in 1997 the British Country Music Association awarded The Hillsiders, 'The Ambassador Award' for thirty-three successful years in the Country music business. The band would not accept the award, feeling it should have been awarded on their thirtieth anniversary. It did actually appear something of an afterthought, questioning whether their role in promoting British Country music was fully appreciated. Joe Butler, however, did turn-up at the ceremony and accepted the award on behalf of The Hillsiders, which caused some bitterness between the band and Butler. In 1999, all past band members appeared and played together at The United Services Club in Widnes: the last time The Hillsiders appeared together.

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⁴⁰⁸ Stafford, J. Country Music People. (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, Byworth, T. (ed), Dartford, Kent: (No publisher details)

⁴⁰⁹ Butler, J. *Country Music People*. (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, y Byworth, T. (Ed), Dartford, Kent: (No publisher details)

This researcher saw The Hillsiders on a number of occasions in the 1990s, by which time the band were middle-aged and were playing many of the old traditional Country songs, popular on the Liverpool scene. Their performances tended to give an impression to this researcher of a somewhat tired, out-of-date band, going through the motions. However, The Hillsiders' importance in the history of both the Liverpool and British Country music scenes is undeniable. Their professionalism certainly breathed new life into a local scene beginning to stagnate in the mid-1960s. They also paved the way for many new-style Country music bands from that period-onwards, both locally and nationally. This analysis will take a detailed look at their recorded output, examine production, arrangements, song choice, vocals and, where possible, compare them to their contemporaries in the American Country field at that time. One of the crucial issues, which will be raised throughout, concerns the term 'pastiche'.

Pastiche

While one might see a great deal to value in postmodern musical parody and self-reflexivity, Jameson (1991) suggests that 'Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. However, it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter. For Frederic Jameson, postmodern cultural productions (such as those emanating from the popular music industry, for example) therefore amount to 'the cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion, and in general what Henri Lefebvre has called the increasing primacy of the 'neo'. In such a world of pastiche, according to Jameson, we lose our connections with real history, and instead an endless series of styles, genres, and subsets come to take over. Jameson describes this as simulacra: 'The new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be

⁴¹⁰ Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism*. USA: Duke University Press. p. 17

⁴¹¹ Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism*. USA: Duke University Press. p. 18

expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time. In such a situation the past as referent finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts. It appears that the past is only a repository of repeating genres, styles, and codes, ready for commodification. It is with such a theoretical model in mind that this analysis of The Hillsiders' output begins.

The Hillsiders Play Their Country Hits. 1964

The Hillsiders released their first album *The Hillsiders Play Their Country Hits* in 1964 on the Rex label LPR1003, a subsidiary of the Decca record company. It is a landmark album because although the group had previously released three (unsuccessful) singles, it was The Hillsiders first complete album and as such, many music presenters, record company officials, DJs, music journalists and Country music fans would have been hearing the band for the first time, forming an impression of the band based on this album. Spencer Lloyd Mason was their agent at the time and it was he who 'produced' the album. The LP contains fourteen tracks, three original songs composed by The Hillsiders and eleven covers most of which were originally hits for American Country music artists (popular on the local Country scene), such as Hank Snow, Don Gibson, Buck Owens, Hank Locklin and George Jones. The sleeve notes written by Mason state that the album was made in only three hours and every number was recorded on their first take. The notes also state that the band included a steel (guitar) player and had a truly original sound. Mason's notes also refer to their single 'Please be My Love', which it claimed was a tremendous hit (it was not).

The production is inconsistent throughout, as the mixes range from good to poor. Instruments are often not recorded to their full potential, sometimes resulting in them sounding 'thin' and

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⁴¹² Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism*. USA: Duke University Press. p. 18

the drums sound indistinct, as though they were not properly mixed. On 'Please be My Love' for example, it is hard to determine whether we hear rim-clicks or hi-hats. The musicianship is also not as tight as on later albums and while the standard of playing is generally of good quality, the album has a 'loose' feel to it – not what one might stylistically associate with Nashville music at this stage, which (love it or loathe it) was always well-produced. Indeed to a US Country music fan arguably an album such as this may resonate as a genre synecdoche - in other words signifying musical synecdoches and metonyms, which together might connote 'Englishness', rather than Country music, per se. However, for British listeners, the genre of music is quite clearly Country, as the steel guitar is a major style indicator of the genre, and the lead guitar plays evident 'Atkins-style' Country licks throughout. Also the vocals are delivered with American (or might that be 'cod-American') Country music vocal techniques such as via long vowel sounds, words which are somewhat indistinct, and the occasional stylised yodel in the voice. Evidence of genre synecdoches, however, can be found with 1950's Rock 'n' Roll/Everly Brothers-style vocals on 'Please Be My Love' and 'Please Release Me'. Additionally, the Rock feel of the up-tempo walking bass in, 'Cotton Fields', and the lead guitar playing R&R licks throughout are reminiscent of those played by Elvis Presley's original lead guitarist, Scotty Moore.

Inconsistencies in production and arrangement can be seen throughout the album. The pedal steel guitar is poorly recorded and has a 'thin' sound, lacking character and dynamics (and is often overused). On 'Please Release Me', the steel is poorly recorded with the EQ on the steel lacking 'bottom-end': there is far too much treble. The 'steel' plays a short four-bar intro entering before all the other instruments (anacrusis), but throughout it can be heard in overabundance: in-between vocal lines, mapping out chords during the vocal lines, and swamping other instruments such as the acoustic rhythm guitar. In 'Cotton Fields' the steel is again

poorly EQ-ed and there is evidence of similar overuse via an arpeggiated pattern which recurs throughout the piece, apart from the bridge (guitar solo), and the moment where all instruments drop-out. One feels that, sonically, the style indicator is both poorly and over-used.

Further, because the steel guitar cannot produce the diversity of a double-necked steel on 'Every Minute, Every Hour, Every Day' there are attempts to simulate it by playing 'block' chords and arpeggios through verses, with a small ascending chromatic run segue-ing into the chorus. In the chorus the steel plays between lines, performing a 'call and response' with the vocals. The lead guitar only plays the required Chet Atkins'-style lick in the second verse and then later, via a solo in the same style, but is swamped by the steel playing its own arpeggiated solo. Overall, the lack of sonic diversity in The Hillsiders' steel guitar playing is a problem: their 'single-neck' instrument does not have the capacity to produce the slides and swells of a 'double-neck' used in US Country music. 414 In 'You're the Reason' for example, the steel solo plays a more rhythmic pattern than the riffs found in American Country music songs; these are usually more melodic and colour the sound, to add dynamic contrast and expression.

On 'Please be My Love' in particular, the lead guitarist plays a simple yet imaginatively distinct paradigmatic riff that recurs processually throughout the track. This notably has a different reverb, giving the track a 'fuller' sound, drawing the listener to the riff and helping them to engage more with the song. The riff has a feel of 'Western'-style songs such as 'Ghost Riders in the Sky'. Often the acoustic rhythm and bass guitar are too far back in the mix e.g. on 'Every Minute, Every Hour, Every Day', where the bass can only be faintly heard, thus any style indication is not processed by the listener creating a level of codal

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⁴¹⁴ Either cost or lack of knowledge of steel guitars was probably the reason, something The Hillsiders rectified on future albums.

incompetence. The drums are also poorly recorded: for example on 'Please Release Me' and 'What Am I Going to Do?' the rim-clicks sound thin and weak, not full-bodied as would be expected. On 'The Window Up Above' and 'Please be My Love' the drum recording continues to be indistinct. On 'Cotton Fields' the drums are poorly EQ-ed, and while they correctly attempt to place more emphasis on the middle-eight to draw attention to that part of the song, they are not pronounced enough. The lead vocals by either Johnson or Butler are at times expressionless. Not enough care is taken in recording the vocals. E.g. Johnson drifts out of tune four times in the first track, Buck Owens' song 'Act Naturally': on the third line of the first verse, 'They'll make a film about a man who's sad and lonely', on the opening line of the third verse 'I hope you'll come and see me in the movies'; also when the verse is repeated, and the line 'The biggest fool who ever hit the big time'.

In 'Please Release Me', the lead and harmony vocals successfully emulate the styles and timbres of The Everly Brothers and have that particular reverb on them. All the harmony vocals are either two-part or three-part male harmony vocals. In the main, they are recorded and mixed well, with attempts at variation to add interest. For example on the track, 'Please be My Love' there are two-part harmonies in the verses and chorus except on the third line of each verse; on 'You're the Reason' there are three-part harmonies in the verses. However, in the middle-eight, the harmonies switch to two-part 'Aaah's' with unison singing on the hooks, with the exception of the 'tag line', which is sung in three-part harmonies. On 'Every Minute, Every Hour, Every Day' there are interesting Bluegrass-style vocal synecdoches in the timbres of the chorus-based three-part harmonies. However, sloppiness occurs here and there, as there are problems with the recording of some of the harmonies, and timing issues are neglected. 'Please Release Me' has two-part harmony backing vocals that appear to lag on the tag of the last line, 'release me and let me love again', while 'Abilene' has three-part

harmonies throughout the song creating a rather monotonous feel. George Hamilton IV's 'original' is faster, uses harmonies more sparingly, and also uses a mixture of male and female harmonies awarding more contrast, and producing a 'warmer' composite anaphone being both 'kinetic' and 'tactile' for listeners.

Many of these tracks are covers of well-known American Country songs, which presents a problem: music critics and Country music fans-alike will always compare them to the originals. Three of these songs are therefore compared to the originals by this researcher. Firstly, 'Window Up Above' was originally a George Jones ballad released in 1961. The production on the Jones version brings in a number of instruments: steel guitar, fiddle, piano, acoustic rhythm, bass and lead guitars, and drums. These instruments complement the vocals and are used to help convey the Country-based emotion of the ballad, but also to provide variance and interest in the track. The production on The Hillsiders version does not (in fact could not as he was recorded in a major Nashville studio with the latest equipment and a production team and session men experienced in producing the Nashville Sound) copy Jones, but lacks imagination in the arrangement. Other than those used in the line-up of the band, i.e., lead, rhythm, bass, steel guitar and drums there are no musemes which might suggest style indication. Further, the single neck pedal steel is far too thin, stylistically.

George Jones's vocal phrasing is more syncopated, achieving more expression. Jones also uses more backing vocalists both male and female, and these are used to emphasise the hook and tag lines, giving the song more 'anaphoric' variation: sometimes kinetic, sometimes tactile via vocal nuances and always 'sonic' – in other words, para-musical, suggesting place as much as sound: in this case Nashville. This makes them far more distinguishable, and draws-in the listener to this Nashville-produced piece of music. Kenny Johnson's vocals are rather expressionless and his phrasing is limited: singing on the beat (but not syncopated

naturally, as such). The backing vocals on The Hillsiders' version appear throughout, therefore are less dynamic. They lack the 'Nashville' reverb; therefore sound less of a style indicator of Country than Jones' version. In the Jones' version the tag line, 'How I wish I could be dreaming and wake up to an honest love' which helps to reinforce the message, is curiously left off The Hillsiders' version.

'Diggy Liggy Lo' is originally a Buck Owens' song. In The Hillsiders' version, the production is very poor. The lead guitar has too much treble, is far too low in the mix throughout the song, and although it is intended to be the main instrument, particularly in the intro, it is effectively defeated as an authentic communication device by the steel guitar's long chords. The drummer plays rim-clicks on alternate beats that make the song sound tentative and lethargic. There are few attempts to alter the dynamics of the song, even though variances occur via the steels' arpeggio-ed patterns, and the walking bass. The production in the Buck Owens' version, however, awards a fuller sound to the instruments, they can be heard more clearly, and overall the song has a more interesting Country arrangement. Even though the steel guitar is used more sparingly in this original, it still has a fuller sound and is an important processual anaphone and style indicator, throughout. The fiddle is also used prominently, giving a Cajun synecdoche, giving the song more genre-based variation. The fiddle acts as a geographical metonym in two senses: as a style indicator of the Californian 'Bakersfield sound' of which Owens was part (and for a period challenged the Nashville sound), and for the previously mentioned Cajun/Louisiana influence. The Hillsiders' vocal and harmonies try to emulate Owens' in pronunciation and vocal approach, but are less convincing stylistically. Owens' vocals are more vibrant and ultimately carry more authenticity for many fans of British Country music who expect Country music to be sung in the American style of Country music.

Both George Hamilton IV and Waylon Jennings originally recorded 'Abilene'. Despite connections with the former, stylistically The Hillsiders version is taken from the latter's version: perhaps because in the 1960s, Waylon Jennings was considered a progressive artist, atypical of Nashville artists of the time. The Jennings' version, however, is more up-tempo than that of The Hillsiders. The instruments used in the original are drums, bass, acoustic rhythm and lead guitars (Jennings does not use a pedal steel in the song). The lead guitar is used sparingly but while the licks are minimalistic, they help add variation to the song and contrast with the rest of the instrumentation – as all good Country picking should. The drums play a rim-click pattern throughout and these are well-mixed with a full sound, making them comfortable on the ear. The Hillsiders also play a rim-click pattern, but the drums are not mixed well, making them too prominent and less comfortable on the ear. Jennings uses one backing vocal in the choruses and this helps emphasis and differentiation; The Hillsiders use three-part harmony vocals all the way through the song, creating a rather odd drone, which is not effective, genre-wise. These harmonies, in addition to the drums playing a slow constant rim-click throughout, decrease the dynamic contrast, resulting in a dirge-like sound to the song.

On The Hillsiders' version, the steel guitar is poorly mixed and lacking a full sound with not enough 'bottom-end' to keep the song 'motoring along' – *de rigeur* for a Country music kinetic anaphone. It is used throughout the song playing long chords that further enhances the dirge-like sound. Whereas in the original Jennings' lead vocals are expressive and authentic, portraying the message of the song well, The Hillsiders' vocals, while EQ-ed and balanced sufficiently well, have no 'Country' reverb. This lack of expression in their vocals means they are less engaging and authentic than Jennings.

The Hillsiders have three original songs on the album all crediting 'Hillsiders' as the songwriters. 'Every Minute, Every Hour, Every Day' is a mid-tempo song. The genre is clearly Country because of the steel guitar playing Country trills and the lead guitar playing Chet Atkins-style Country licks. There are Bluegrass synecdoches in the tonal quality of the three-part harmony vocals, which are interesting to note. The lyrics are simple, literal and typical of the Country 'lost love' sub-genre. The melody is very simple and traditionalsounding. It therefore has potential, with the chorus having a sing-along melody and a strong hook; however, it is let-down by inconsistent production. The vocals are well mixed and the steel does try to add variety to the song by playing a mixture of blocked chords and arpeggios through the verse, together with a small ascending chromatic run, which segues into the chorus. In the chorus, the steel guitar plays in-between lines almost performing 'call and response' with the vocals. The lead guitar also adds authenticity by playing the previously mentioned Atkins-style licks in the second verse of the solo. The problems with the production are that the steel guitar once again sounds 'top-ended', lacking 'bottom end' and 'middle' parts of the sound spectrum, therefore lacking the authenticity to indicate a home style. The drums are too far back in the mix and the rim-clicks sound very 'thin' due to either not being properly EQ-ed or mic-ed up incorrectly. The acoustic guitar is also too far back in the mix, which is a pity, while the bass guitar can only be heard faintly. All such production failures mean that there is little to commend in this pastiche: it lacks processual development; as such, paradigms fail to generate from within the syntax of the song.

'What Am I Gonna Do', is an up-tempo song, its genre is evidently Country because of the prominence of the steel guitar-playing, together with the vocals containing American Country-sounding accents. There are, however, evident genre synecdoches with Rock 'n' Roll due to the lead guitar playing arpeggiated Rock licks. The lyrics are simple, literal and

might be categorised as typical of a Country 'cheating song'. The melody is also simple but shows potential: although the hook is not weak, it still needs the rest of the melody in the verses to help support it. Perhaps the song might have benefited from the hook being stronger. The song itself is well-structured, has a Buck Owens-type melody, similar to 'Act Naturally' (also on this album). Yet again the song is let down by inconsistent production, therefore conveying what Philip Tagg might describe as 'codal incompetence'. The lead and harmony vocals are well mixed, but the steel guitar throughout does not have a full sound, with the result that it sounds (once again) as if there is too much treble. The drum rim-click sound is also weak and needs to be better EQ-ed/ mic-ed.

'Hillsliding' is an up-tempo lively instrumental, which is possibly the strongest track on the album providing the group with a platform to show-off their 'Country virtuosity'. While the steel is still rather one-dimensional, the lead guitar is more syncopated and played with more expression, very much in the style of Chet Atkins, using a variety of '7^{ths}' often used by Atkins – classic style indicators referring back to the 'master', one might argue. The bass guitar plays an authentic walking bass solo and the drum patterns vary from hi-hat to ride cymbal, giving the song processual dynamics and movement. This is the only song on this album where evidence exists of The Hillsiders' high-energy driving rhythms. It is indicative of what could have possibly been achieved if more time was spent in the studio.

This Hillsiders' first album was let down by inconsistent production and appears to be produced by someone who does not fully understand how one communicates the genre's authenticity tropes on record. One can only speculate that it was recorded very quickly, with minimum expense incurred. The instruments are often badly mixed and/or not well arranged. A major problem with the album is the overuse of steel as a style indicator, which is also often thin, arpeggiated, and one-dimensional compared to American Country music

production – thus becoming a pastiche. The main reason for The Hillsiders use of scalic and arpeggiated licks rather than the slides and swells played in American Country music songs is that it is only a single-neck steel guitar. When steel guitars are used in American Country music songs, they are used in key points in songs to emphasise the message. Arguably, overuse of pedal steel dilutes its purpose. Another problem with the production is there is no evidence other than in the instrumental 'Hillsliding' of the driving rhythm section claimed by Joe Butler in McManus (1994),⁴¹⁵ and others in the field. The steel often swamps the acoustic rhythm guitar, the bass is too far back in the mix and can at times hardly be heard; the drums are consistently indistinct.

The choice to cover many well-known Country hits also presents problems. While covering songs popular in the local Country music scene might seem good idea, these hits were recorded by the major American Country music artists of the day, well-known to many in the local scene. George Jones was considered by some to be the best Country music balladeer of the day; he was very popular on the local scene. Buck Owens and The Buckaroos were one of the top American Country music bands, once again very popular in Liverpool. Owens also claimed his own (Bakersfield) sound. These were major recording artists, produced in studios with the latest recording equipment, by producers who were experienced at recording the genre They were supported by a team of top-class session musicians, engineers and back-up staff. Therefore, The Hillsiders were always going to be unfavourably compared.

The claim of the producer that the album was recorded in 'one take' and in less than three hours leaves him open to criticism, for there is clear evidence of basic production mistakes. In addition, expense **was** undoubtedly spared. Perhaps the truth of the matter was that Decca

⁴¹⁵ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 15

considered the music to be worth a 'punt', but little more, and they were not prepared to award the project an experienced (and costly) producer.

The English Countryside (The Hillsiders & Bobby Bare) 1968

The English Countryside was recorded by The Hillsiders and Bobby Bare in 1968 on the RCA Victor label SF7918 and was produced by Chet Atkins. It was recorded at RCA Victor's studios in Nashville, Tennessee. It consists of eleven songs, eight of which are by Bobby Bare and The Hillsiders, and two by The Hillsiders alone; there is one other by Bare without The Hillsiders. It was recorded when The Hillsiders were on a four-day visit to Nashville in 1968, when they also appeared on the Grand Ole Opry and a number of radio shows. The songs are all covers, in a home style, seven of which are 'lost love' songs and two are 'road songs'. In contrast with the Decca/Rex album, the production is of a very high standard and it is obvious that the producer understood the genre fully and knew how to produce Country music. The instruments and vocals are recorded and mixed well to optimise their place and purpose in the song. The standard of musicianship is on a par with many other Nashville albums recorded at the time.

The home genre is undoubtedly Country, due to the lead guitar playing-style indicating Country licks and the pedal steel being a direct style indicator of Country. Bare's grain of voice also carries an authentic Country tone and drawl. The album has a number of recognisable anaphones found in the Nashville Country: e.g., the bar room/honky tonk piano following the bass line and plays chords on alternate beats. This is typical of the style used by a number of Nashville Country music artists of that time such as George Jones. There is also a little genre synecdoche with Blues harmonica solos appearing in some songs. The instruments used connote a Country bar room band via lead guitar, steel guitar, acoustic rhythm guitar, drums, piano, bass guitar, harmonica, wood block, marimba, vibraphone,

shaker and tambourine. The marimba plays rapid glissandos in 'Going Home', the wood block plays on alternate beats in 'Find Out What's Happening', the harmonica plays Blues licks in 'The Great Snowman' and 'Six Days on the Road' and vibraphone playing sustained chords on 'Please Release Me'. The piano fills out the sound in 'I Love You Drops' and 'Blue is my Lonely Room'. The tambourine helps to emphasise the message in the chorus and the shaker adds variety in 'You All Come' (Y'All Come').

All instruments are played to a constantly high Nashville industry standard. The signifying pedal steel guitar is used sparingly and is further back in the mix. It is not used on all songs and when used, is in either the chorus **or** the verse, but never both – a style indicator of Nashville yet again. It is played in a dynamic and expressive manner and uses a variety of techniques such as glissando, vibrato and swells, and bending notes more frequently, which helps add colour, emotion, and variety to the tracks.

While the lead guitar plays predominantly Country riffs throughout the album, the producer adds variance with a number of greatly differing effects and approaches. In 'Find Out What's Happening', for example, the lead guitar is played through what appears to be a Leslie cabinet creating a different texture to its sound and in 'The Great Snowman' it plays through a tremolo effect, while in 'Six Days on the Road' it plays staccato riffs, all of which helps to add variety to the song. The drumming is well controlled, of a high quality throughout, and suggestive of a Nashville session-man.

The Hillsiders sing harmonies on all but 'Find Out What's Happening' in which they play no part and Bare uses male and female session singers. Bare sings lead vocals on all but 'Going Home' and 'Blue is my Lonely Room' where he plays no part in these recordings. All the lead and harmony vocals have a lingering yet subtle reverb – highly indicative of Nashville – making them more comfortable on the ear. 'Dry', i.e. no reverb on the vocals, can suit some

genres such as Folk music, but not Country at this stage of its history. The lead vocals of both Bobby Bare and Kenny Johnson are dominant and up-front in the mix. Bare's vocals are syncopated but Johnson's, while more confident than on the previous album, are still very much 'on the beat'. The producer uses harmonies in the choruses, which help to emphasises the messages of the songs. He also adds variation of the harmonies by switching between two-part and three-part harmonies adding further variation to keep the listeners' attention. The Hillsiders' tone and phrasing in the harmonies is unified with Bobby Bare's voice and this greatly helps the textures of the vocals – in fact, such harmonies are classic Nashville tactile anaphones.

The song 'Please Release Me' on this album also appears in another version on The Hillsiders album *The Hillsiders Play Their Country Hits*. When comparing the two versions the contrast in the production is extremely evident. The vocals on the Bare album are very tight. The harmonies are three-part in the chorus and there is only one vocal in the verse, which is expressive; this is the dominant sound in the mix providing a dynamic contrast. On The Hillsiders version, harmonies are two-part with less body; they are heard throughout the song achieving little dynamic contrast in this version. The instruments in Bare's version include a Joe South-style 'sitar' guitar as an episodic marker in the intro and vibraphone in the verses, both of which create recognisable episodes to the song. The steel guitar only enters on the second verse, which slides adding to the dynamics. On The Hillsiders version, the steel guitar enters the song before all other instruments as a basic but unimpressive style indicator. It can be found in over-abundance throughout the track mapping out chords and playing licks in-between the vocal lines, but these decrease the variety in the song, effectively removing episodic markers, rather than creating them. The Bare version comes across to the listener as superior in production, arrangement and communication of the vocals and

instruments – it is in effect 'codally competent' throughout. The Hillsiders' version of the song appears poorly produced and arranged, lacking in imagination and creating the impression that little time and effort was spent on it – it is in effect, according to Tagg, 'codally incompetent'.

The Leaving of Liverpool. 1968

The Leaving of Liverpool, was also released on the RCA Victor label RD8002 in 1968 and was the first album produced by Ian Grant. The album contains sleeve notes by Chet Atkins, which praise The Hillsiders and their 'American Country music style'. It contains twelve songs: two original songs and ten cover versions. The covers include songs by Country music artists such as Ernest Tubb's 'I Will Miss You When I Go', Charlie Pride's 'One Mile More', and Waylon Jennings' 'Don't Waste Your Time' together with songs by Emmy Lou Harris, Glen Campbell, and Delbert McClinton. Grant produced several BBC Folk programmes during the 1960s and his Folk music background is obvious in the choice of some of the songs including 'Doesn't Anybody Know My Name?' by Rod McKuen, 'One Time and One Time Only' by Tom Paxton and the 'traditional' 'The Leaving of Liverpool'. Therefore, the synecdoches and anaphones for this LP are interesting in that they differ considerably from the previous album.

It must be stated that Grant's production is of a high standard throughout. All instruments and vocals are well-mixed to optimise their characteristics and have been correctly EQ-ed with appropriate 'Country-style' reverb applied. The genre is Country because of the usual home style indicators such as pedal steel and lead guitar playing Country licks and the harmonica playing in a Country (i.e. pentatonic but non-Blues) style. The vocals are mostly American synecdoches connoting the USA generally and Country music more specifically. For example

on the track 'Old Memories Never Die', Kenny Johnson even tries to emulate George Jones' phrasing.

However, strong Folk genre synecdoches are also present. Some of the songs could be described as Folk (or Folk-influenced) and instruments predominantly found in Folk songs are used. These include a twelve-string acoustic guitar and a cello – both to be found in Folk recordings of the day by the likes of Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Al Stewart and/or Vashti Bunyan. Occasionally the shape of the melody has a Folk 'modal' feel such as in both 'Coming Home' and 'The Road'. It is clear that at the height of the British Folk revival, the producer was attempting to give The Hillsiders 'extra' contextual appeal – effectively creating a Country-meets-Folk pastiche – which also represented how the genres merged somewhat in Liverpool, especially via the Liverpool Philharmonic 'Country Meets Folk' concerts. One might describe this as evidence of how musicians pick up, transform and reinterpret genres via their own communicative hybrid devices. It might be retrospectively argued that a niche awaited The Hillsiders, had they developed along such lines: as at that time, this niche was only partly filled by popular Liverpool Folk group, The Spinners.

The steel guitar is used more dynamically and sparingly than on the first album. It is further back in the mix, coming to the fore only via bridges and solos, the latter of which are not always featured. Techniques such as 'swells', 'sliding' and playing a mixture of staccato and legato notes gives variance and colour. The electric lead guitar plays identifiable Country style indicators: flat picking, alternating bass string picking, some 'Travis picking' is used in the more Country sounding songs: 'One Mile More' and 'Don't Waste Your Time'. The acoustic twelve-string guitar creates a softer 'Folkie' series of anaphones: sonic connoting rurality, tactile connoting feel, kinetic connoting travelling and movement; but all are

different to the usual electric Country stylistics, suggesting the songs of, for example, Dylan, Paxton, Baez and Ochs, rather than Nashville.

A variety of drum patterns can be heard. The drums are clear throughout, with a great deal of definition on the rim-clicks; there is more depth on the sound of the snare drum. The drum patterns also add variance to the tracks: on 'If You Really Want Me To, I'll Go' the pattern switches in the middle-eight from a single bass pedal to a double bass pedal. While the harmonica plays riffs adding a Country flavour, the cello and claves when applied to 'Coming Home' creates an acoustic, Folk feel to the song.

Joe Butler's vocals are well produced. The songs on which he is lead vocalist have also been chosen to suit his range and ability. In the song 'On the Road' (concerning a prisoner working on a road gang, longing for home) Butler sings with a cry in his voice, which along with the harmonica solo, gives an authentic poignancy to the song. Because Butler's voice is not polished and trained, its character brings out the emotion of the lyrics, making the message feel 'real' to the listener. In 'I'll Miss You When I Go', the song is also suited to Butler's voice and displays characteristics in its tonal quality, which are reminiscent of Kris Kristofferson with gentle overtones of a Liverpool accent. Kenny Johnson's vocals display more confidence than in the first album. However, technically, although the strongest vocalist, his vocals still lack in character somewhat, for example on 'Travelling Man'. On 'The Leaving of Liverpool', a Folk song (shanty) arranged in a Country style, the octave leap in the Folk version is replaced with a perfect fourth, which makes it easier for Johnson to sing and sounds relaxed. On the equally Folk-sounding song 'Coming Home', he appears to be singing with a softer tone, which along with the lack of 'Country' reverb, creates wistfulness and longing. In the Folk-sounding 'Doesn't Anybody Know My Name?' and 'Coming Home' Johnson's tonal quality suits the style and one wonders whether Johnson might have been a 'natural Folk singer, had he chosen, so to be. 'Doesn't Anybody Know My Name?' in particular, is a story-song about a blinded soldier seeking help in a railway station; on key phrases Johnson sings with a genuine connotative tremble in his voice, thus adding to the song's emotional dynamics.

The harmony vocals are also used in a variety of different genre-based ways such as switching from two-part in the verse to three-part in the chorus of 'Don't Waste Your Time' while 'Ooos' are used to build-up the inter-texturality between Folk and Country in 'The Leaving of Liverpool'. Backing vocals sometimes sing on alternate lines in the chorus such as on 'Someday, Someone, Somewhere'; also in 'Doesn't Anybody Know My Name?' the harmony vocals reply to the lead vocals question in the chorus. Both techniques are 'Folksy' as much as 'Country'. There are some songs on the album with no backing vocals, which suggest the unaccompanied tonality of a Folk singer and which place Country music into or on the borders of the Folk genre - perhaps in the way a Rod McKuen, Ian & Sylvia or Gordon Lighfoot album of the day might also connote.

There are two Hillsiders originals on this recording 'Someday, Someone, Somewhere' has a Country melody but contains acoustic Folk elements. The song appears to sound like two separate songs pasted together as it switches from a 'double-time' feel in the verse to 'half-time' feel in the chorus, with both sections in different keys. The lyrics in the chorus invoke an ideology suited to evoke the emotions of a Country audience. The lyrics in the verse are Anglicized with such signifiers as wicker chairs and grandfather clocks not usually found in American Country music. However the rhyming is poor e.g. 'down' is simply and rather lazily rhymed with 'down'. The second self-penned song 'Travelling Man' is undoubtedly a Country song, heavily influenced by Jerry Reed's 'Guitar Man'. The intro plays a rhythm and contains an inversion using '7^{ths}, as in 'Guitar Man'. The vocal phrasing of the lyrics in the

lines of the verse is also similar to 'Guitar Man' and the guitar riff segues from the chorus to the next verse in an equally similar style. While the lyrics and melody are not outstanding, the musical influences of 'Guitar Man' improve the song via familiarity.

Although this is an excellently produced album, the sound created shows no signs of the energy and driving rhythm section claimed as characteristic of The Hillsiders' live sound. For fans, therefore the style indicators do not quite work as they might, with a confusing stylistic repertoire made up of synecdoches that might not be associated with the group by fans. It is difficult to see, therefore where the producer feels the direction of the group actually lay. The album is connotatively a 'halfway house' between Country and Folk. Perhaps this was deliberately so, given the roots of the producer, the popularity of Folk music at that time, and The Hillsiders' rather directionless recording career thus far. Indeed, one cannot but help feel that what we have here is an example of a 'Country Spinners' 416.

The Hillsiders 1970

The Hillsiders LP was released on the Lucky label LUS3002 and was produced by British Country music champion Gordon Smith. It contains nine covers of American artists such as George Jones, Bill Anderson and Charlie Walker and three original songs. Although it was released in 1970, the fact that it appeared in-between records produced by Ian Grant suggests it was contracted and perhaps recorded before The Hillsiders began their partnership with Grant. Lucky was a budget imprint, a subsidiary of Pye, yet in 1970 they were signed to RCA Victor. The overall production is inconsistent, ranging from well-mixed vocals with appropriate reverb to 'thin' sounding pedal steel guitar and other instruments lost in the mix due to either poor mic-ing and/or bad EQ-ing. The producer does not attempt any diversity

 $^{^{416}}$ The Spinners were a well-known Folk group from Liverpool, whose career spanned over 30 years.

across the songs, (e.g. adding other instruments such as strings, tambourines, backing vocals, etc.). The genre is clearly Country; the steel guitar is a classic style indicator and along with the lead plays recognisable home-style Country licks. Owing to its rather monotone Country sound right across the recording, there is very little evidence of genre synecdoche, except via lead guitar playing a distinctive pentatonic Blues 'run' in the intro of 'Tiger Woman'. In 'You Just Can't Quit', originally recorded by 1950's Rock 'n' Roll star Ricky Nelson (who by the early-1970s was becoming a pioneer of Country Rock), the lead and bass guitar plays an ascending chromatic run in the intro, which is found in several Rock 'n' Roll songs.

There are several problems with production and arrangement on this recording. The steel guitar (now double-necked) is used for a variety of staccato and legato notes to help give expressiveness and diversity but is still too 'thin' in texture and does not fully indicate stylistically 'authentic' Country music. The acoustic guitar plays rhythm throughout the LP but is badly recorded, also appearing at times 'thin' and at other times unclear, too far back in the mix. Acoustic rhythm guitars are important signifiers of 'rural' and non-technological impressions of the genre, emphasising its simple roots. However, because of poor recording the acoustic guitar does not achieve its signifying purpose across this album.

The lead guitar is played to a high standard, with Country licks in a noticeable Chet Atkins-influenced style. His warm, rich tonal quality is evident. Staccato and legato are used well and in the song 'Dear Heart' arpeggiated chords are played through a tremolo effect, which adds variety to the song. 'Dear Heart' has been recorded reasonably well but the guitar is not dominant enough in the mix as was found in most American Country music songs of the time. The bass guitar sound was recorded well in some songs, but is out of tune and lacks 'bottom-end' in 'Big Job'. Variety is attempted in 'I Don't Love You Anymore' by the switching from a tonic-dominant bass pick in the verses, to a walking bass in the middle-

eight. Bass, along with the lead guitar, plays an interesting ascending chromatic run as a kinetic anaphone-cum-episodic marker in 'You Just Can't Quit', suggesting the movement indicated by the title and lyrics. The drums are poorly recorded and arranged; the drummer uses mainly rim-clicks, which either does not produce a full sound or are too far back in the mix. Even when the drummer switches to snare drum in 'You Just Can't Quit' and brushes in 'Take Me' to give variance and complement the songs generically, these appear indistinct.

Vocals, however, are well-recorded and fit comfortably in the mix, but arguably the song selections are sometimes unsuitable for each lead vocalist: especially those sung by Brian Hilton and Joe Butler. In 'Tiger Woman' for example, Hilton's vocals cannot quite reach the lower notes and drift out of tune. There is no vocal attack, giving it a lacklustre feel. Butler's vocal on 'Isn't It About Time' creates codal interference as they appear unsuited to the Country genre: rather monotonous and not fully projecting the message. In 'I Don't Love You Anymore' Butler's vocals are again unsuitable and curiously lacking in emotion. Butler and Hilton also attempt, unwisely, to introduce humour into the songs. In 'Big Job', the American drawl is accentuated into a parody and Butler speaks some of the lines in this overexaggerated and embarrassing American drawl. In 'He's a Jolly Good Fellow' Butler starts laughing and 'hiccups' in the second verse and in the last chorus laughs again. The harmonies are varied throughout the album to help add variety: some songs have three-part harmonies, some two-part; some have none. Vocals are also used in different ways to add variance, such as in 'Tiger Woman' where short, clipped staccato harmonies sing the words 'Tiger woman' in-between alternate lines in the verses, then switch to 'Aaah's' in the penultimate line. In the song 'A Lot of Money', the lead vocal is double-tracked.

As for the three originals on the album, 'Sincere Best Wishes' is a 'leaving song' commonly found in Country music, with a strong melody. The lyrics are simple but the tempo makes it

difficult to convey any emotion. As musicologist, Moore (2003) might suggest: 'the potential of verbal space depends crucially on the speed of the song and the way it is phrased'. In this case, the audience might have difficulty connecting with the communication, unlike the way they might emote with similar American Country music songs of that time such as Kris Kristofferson's 'For the Good Times', Merle Haggard's 'Silver Wings' or Buck Owens' 'Crying Time'. 'Sincere Best Wishes' contains no original elements: it has a traditional Country 'feel' but does not fit with the above sub-genre of emotional Country balladering. The poor production also hinders the song: poor mixing places instruments too far back making them difficult to distinguish. In American Country records of the early-1970s, each instrument would enjoy a distinguishable level of clarity.

The melody in the verse of 'Isn't It About Time' is reasonable as a style indicator, but the melody's shape allows little room for communicative expression in the chorus, which is a pity. The melody overall sounds traditional, but by 1970 rather out-dated, containing very little of the effects that Rock music was having on the genre of Country music. The lyrics are simple, but un-original. The instruments are well-recorded, in particular the lead and steel guitar solos. The steel uses a number of staccato notes giving the song character. The song is let down by the vocals which are yet again incongruous via their monotony. Country music is an emotional genre and for The Hillsiders to sing in such a seemingly disinterested way appears odd at this stage of their career. In fact, one might be given to think they are uncaring and one wonders whether the tracks across this album might have even been demos.

'We Don't Know' is an instrumental and contains the strongest melody of the three original tracks. The lead guitar plays an arpeggiated Atkins-style sound, which breathes life into the tune. The steel solo uses vibrato slides and swells, creating a texture that adds colour. The

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⁴¹⁷ Moore, A. F. (2003) *Analyzing Popular Music*. Cambridge. USA: New York University Press. pp. 27-38

drum rim-click (whilst too far back in the mix) suits the tune. An interesting and unusual modulation occurs from 'E' to 'G', also adding interest. This is probably the most original piece of the three, communicating a strong style indication of Nashville-based Country music via different anaphones being used across the track suggesting irony to the name of the instrumental – they evidently *DO* know (what they are doing).

Heritage 1971 (George Hamilton IV and The Hillsiders)

The Heritage LP was recorded by 'George Hamilton IV and The Hillsiders' and was released on the RCA Victor label LCA3043. Side one contains George Hamilton IV backed by The Hillsiders and side two consists of The Hillsiders singing six original songs, four of which were written by Johnson and two by Butler; the album being produced by Ian Grant. On side one Hamilton has a softer tonal quality to his voice than many Country music artists which can lend itself to both Folk and Country, and the majority of the songs on this side are Folk songs such as 'The Leaving of Liverpool', 'Dirty Old Town', 'Streets of London' and 'Fairy Tale Lullaby'. The Hillsiders instrumentation and backing vocals for George Hamilton IV are of a very high standard. The Hillsiders vary their approach adding interesting sonic synecdoches to the tracks, e.g. in the intro of 'Dirty Old Town', the steel has a chorus effect – Country-fying Folk, as it were. On 'Teach Your Children' (a Crosby, Stills and Nash song) the drums switch from snare to tom-tom, alternating in the verses creating a 'US Folk-Rock meets Country' synecdoche reminiscent of (by 1971) the important Country-Rock movement. On 'The Leaving of Liverpool' Hilton plays a Country harmonica sound, further creating synecdoches of Folk music, but within that wistfulness one often associates with the harmonica, indicating perhaps the Liverpool roots of the group. The Hillsiders backing vocals complement the timbre and texture of Hamilton's smooth Country vocals, adding warmth. The production standards are high; a range of effects has been used such as a Leslie cabinet and a chorus effect. Diversity has been encouraged on this side of the album with several elements of 1960's style of Pop and Country-Rock riffs added.

On side two of the album, The Hillsiders perform alone. Here the style indication is strictly Country, with the steel and lead guitars playing recognisable Country licks. There are, however, a number of genre synecdoches. In 'Georgia Woman', the lead guitar plays a 1960's-Pop style descending syncopated riff; in 'The Loving Kind' the twelve-string lead guitar plays a 1960s riff reminiscent of Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Proud Mary'. In the 'Game of Love', both texture and approaches are similar to Merseybeat band, Billy J Kramer and The Dakotas, and some of the chords and parts of the melody are reminiscent of the 1960's Pop song 'A Kind of Hush' by Herman's Hermits. The backing vocals on 'I Will Show You a Fool' connote the song 'I'll be True to You' by The Hollies. The album also displays genre synecdoche with Folk such as the Folk acoustic guitar picking in the verses of 'I Will Show You a Fool', similar to those of Donovan or Bert Jansch and the texture of Butler's voice has a close mic-ed softer approach creating a Folk synecdoche. In 'The Loving Kind' there is also a genre synecdoche of Blues with the twelve-string lead guitar playing Blues licks throughout.

In the arrangements, the pedal steel is used more sparingly, but when used helps create variety. While using conventional Country approaches such as swells and slides on tracks such as 'Going Back Home' it also uses a number of effects to add further variety, such as playing through a Leslie cabinet giving an interesting Hammond organ synecdoche effect on 'Georgia Woman' and 'It's Not That Simple'. Hammond organ by this stage might connote, for example, Soul music or artists such as Georgie Fame. A chorus effect is also used in 'The Loving Kind' which helps to further emphasise the hook. To add even more variation, the lead guitar parts are shared between electric lead, acoustic lead and twelve-string electric lead

guitar. In 'The Game of Love', the lead guitar plays through a slap-back echo effect, a riff reminiscent of the opening bars of the tune 'Love Story'. The acoustic lead in 'I Will Show You a Fool' plays arpeggiated chord inversions involving 9^{ths} and 6^{ths}, unusual for Country that gives a Folk feel to the song. In 'Georgia Woman' the lead guitar plays descending 1960's style syncopated riffs in the solo, while in 'Going Back Home' the acoustic lead plays the solo on the pivotal chord to the modulation, again this is unusual for Country and displays a degree of musical virtuosity. The drummer plays a standard bass and rim-click, or bass and snare, across most songs but in 'The Loving Kind' plays an elaborate 'fill' in the intro: unusual for Country but not for 1960's Pop. In the middle-eight of 'It's Not That Simple', a syncopated snare pattern helps give aural variety. There is also a brief harmonica solo on 'Georgia Woman', which adds to the melancholy feel of the song and is perhaps a synecdoche of Ray Charles (given the title – similar to Charles' 'Georgia').

Johnson's vocals in the four songs that he sings: 'Georgia Woman' 'The Game of Love' 'Going Back Home' and 'The Loving Kind' are strong and confident. In the latter two, he has a tremble in his voice creating tinges of sadness suited to the mood. Butler's two songs 'It's Not That Simple' and 'I Will Show You a Fool' are close mic-ed and have a softer Folk-like approach. On 'I Will Show You a Fool' in particular, Butler displays expression and character giving the song an intimate, 'Folksy' feel. The harmony vocals are all male two-part or three-part harmonies, but they are often varied for diversity. In 'Georgia Woman', for example there are no harmonies in the first verse while in the second and third verses there are two-part harmonies on alternate lines and three-part, double-tracked harmonies in the chorus.

Johnson wrote 'Georgia Woman': an up-tempo unrequited love song sub-genre of Country.

The lyrics are simple with the 'Georgia' reference probably added for authenticity. The

melody is simple and catchy with a strong hook. It is well-structured and the production offers clarity, but recorded with a softer tone than many Country songs. 'I Will Show You a Fool' was composed by Butler; it is a mid-tempo song about appreciating the simple things in life. The lyrics are simple and the strong melody contains synecdoches of Folk in the verses and 1960's Pop in the chorus. The syntax of the song is unusual in that the middle-eight appears after the first chorus where but this does not seem to affect the song's processual development. 'Going Back Home', written by Johnson, is a mid-tempo Country song about wanting to return home. The lyrics are simple and the song well structured but let down by a weaker melody.

'The Loving Kind' is an up-tempo love song also written by Johnson, the lyrics are simple, as is the verse's melody line, although it does contain a strong hook. In the verse, the chord progression follows the same 1-4-5-1 pattern as the previous song on the album, but arranged in such a way as not to sound similar. 'It's Not That Simple', composed by Butler is a slow-tempo 'cheating song' – another interesting Country sub-genre. The lyrics are simple and although the melody is probably the weakest on the album, the guitar riffs carry it through. There is no chorus in the song, which is not unusual for some Country songs e.g., 'There Stands a Glass' and 'She Thinks I Still Care', but the melody in both verse and middle-eight is not strong enough to keep the listener's attention. Another problem with the syntax of the song is the main lead guitar riff occurs before the middle-eight, which interrupts the song's processual flow: in this type of song, this usually occurs after the third verse. 'The Game of Love' written by Johnson is an up-tempo song about the 'ups and downs' of love. It is well-structured, the lyrics and melody are simple, and it contains a catchy paradigmatic hook. The chord progression in the second part of each verse is 1-4-5-1, which is similar to the syntax of other songs on the album. The song contains strong 1960's Pop elements to it.

The album is produced and arranged to a very high quality with considerable time having been taken to provide diversity. The six original songs, while they are simple compositions, show the potential of the two songwriters, with some good melodies. The problems with the production are that firstly, it again does not show any signs of the energy-driven rhythm section, which made The Hillsiders, stand out against other British Country bands. The whole rhythm section is again recorded too softly, similar in a way to many Folk songs: a reflection, once again of the producer's background. The second problem is that there are many elements of Merseybeat or 1960's Pop music in the songs and while making them sound different from Country songs of the time, as the album was recorded in 1971, making the 1960's-style indicators sound dated.

By Request 1972

By Request was released on the UK/German 'major' label: Polydor (2460-151) in 1972 and was again produced by Ian Grant. The LP contains thirteen covers of songs that The Hillsiders claimed at that time, were their most requested songs. Sadly (especially following some evidence of song-writing development on the previous recording) no original material appears. The majority are either by renowned Country artists such as Merle Haggard, George Jones, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings, and there are also covers of Roy Orbison's 'Blue Bayou', Dean Martin's 'Little Ol' Wine Drinker Me' and Bob Dylan's 'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight'.

The production of all songs is of a very high quality and all instruments and vocals have been well mixed. The genre is Country, the steel lead guitars plays 'home-style' Country licks throughout; the band also sings with American Country accents throughout. There is some genre synecdoche; for example in 'California Blues' where the lap steel guitar plays Blues licks, and in The Everly Brothers' song 'Crying in the Rain' where vocals are reminiscent of

the 1950's Everly Brothers' ballad style of delivery. There is also a small genre synecdoche with 1960's Merseybeat in 'Okie from Muskogee' with a guitar riff which sounds similar to The Searchers' 'Needles and Pins', or the 'picked' twelve-string guitar sounds of The Byrds. Grant uses both instruments and vocals to help produce diversity in the album and to maintain interest so each of the covers do not sound like direct copies. Steel guitar is used processually throughout the album, often appearing in intros and choruses as an episodic marker. The steel uses a number of techniques and approaches such as slides and swells and can be heard playing through a Leslie cabinet altering, for example, the texture of the sound in 'Yes Virginia'. It also plays solos on 'Proud Mary' and 'Racing the Mule'. The lead guitar plays recognisable Country licks in most songs: on 'I'll be Your Baby Tonight', it plays Chet Atkins-style riffs, while in 'Racing the Mule', the lead plays the melody as Roy Clark, the composer, wrote it. The electric rhythm guitar strums the chords of the song helping to fill out the sound and on 'Crying in the Rain'; is played through a 'tremolo' effect; in 'California Blues' it is replaced by a rhythm mandolin – an interesting addition of a synecdoche of the ever popular Bluegrass genre. The drummer plays either rim-clicks and snare patterns, or rim-clicks and bass patterns, except for in 'Blue Bayou' where it plays a bass and hi-hat pattern similar to the original version. In addition, there appears an intricate rim-click and tom-tom pattern in the chorus. On 'Remember the Alamo', a Johnny Cash song, the snare and tom-tom in the intro and verses play a military style episodic marker: the snare's rolls and the tom-tom's punctuating beats create the 'battle' atmosphere of the song. This is a classic example of a composite anaphone where kinetic, sonic and tactile musemes are used to create connotations of sounds, places and times – in this case the Battle of the Alamo. There is also a 'comic-style' kazoo solo on 'California Blue', while on 'She's Mine', the producer uses claves rather than drums to enhance synecdochial diversity, thus interest.

The vocals are by Johnson, Butler and Hilton. Hilton's vocals on, 'I'll be Your Baby Tonight' are the weakest vocals and should have been performed by Johnson or Butler. Both Johnson and Butler's lead vocals appear confident and strong, but they often lack the expression and emotion that the original singers (or indeed a Hillsiders' live performance) might add. The harmonies vary from songs with no backing vocals, to those with two or three-part harmonies in the chorus. To add variety, harmonies sometimes appear in verses and sometimes switch from words to 'Ooos'.

While By Request is well-produced and the musicianship excellent (trying not to fully emulate the songs from the original artists), there is not enough significant difference from the originals to avoid criticisms of pastiche - indeed there are undoubtedly elements of pastiche on display. This can especially be heard in 'She's Mine', an overly sentimental song by today's standards. It is a George Jones song about a father singing of coping with his young daughter after the death of his wife. The Hillsiders' version is slightly slower than the Jones' version. Both versions use pedal steel guitar but in the Jones' original, it is further back in the mix fitting in more with the by then contemporary Nashville sound. Jones also uses piano throughout, swapping with steel guitar in verses to add different signifiers of character – not unlike Wagner's leitmotif. However, The Hillsiders' version offers far less variety and is a rather pallid pastiche in comparison. The Hillsiders have no backing vocals, while Jones uses two-part harmony backing vocals on the end of each line of the verses, and in the middle-eight to emphasise the message of the song. In the original, the drummer uses brushes; The Hillsiders use claves in the verses and rim-clicks in the middle-eight, both of which in their own way emphasise the message, but are rather clumsy in an aural sense. Of course, Jones was one of the best vocalists and balladeers in Country music and his vocals in this song are very expressive and emotional. Johnson's by comparison appear somewhat

monotone and expressionless. By not making it significantly different from the original, the song was always going to be seen by many on the local scene as a pastiche. It does not really do the band any favour – we are actually listening to a degree of codal incompetence here – which is odd, given the group's status as the leading British Country music group of the day.

This is all further frustrating when The Hillsiders, in live performance, were known for their use of different instrumentation and arrangement. For example on the recording of 'Proud Mary' the episodic marker chord sequence in the intro is different from the Creedence Clearwater Revival version, but does not stand-out enough to make a signifying impression. Yet in the Buck Owens' medley, The Hillsiders use the same Buck Owens' syncopated style, phrasing, vocal attack, and two-part harmonies. On the Roy Orbison song 'Blue Bayou' comparisons are far too obvious. Orbison's unique expressive vocal style is difficult to replicate, so too Johnny Cash's on 'Remember the Alamo'. On 'Crying in the Rain', The Hillsiders use The Everly's style of harmonies making it difficult not to criticise the recording as a pastiche.

The song on which The Hillsiders did achieve a level of originality is 'Me and Bobby McGee'. This song was written and performed by Kris Kristofferson and was covered by myriad local Country music artists. Kristofferson's original is slow with an intimate vocal approach giving a truly reflective feel to the song. Kristofferson uses harmonica, Dobro and brushes on the drums, all of which processually connote authenticity throughout. The Hillsiders create a more 'party' atmosphere to the song, speeding up the tempo and playing it in a higher key. They also add clapping, laughter and cheering to the song and at one point a shout of 'Liverpool for the cup!' can be heard. The Hillsiders use steel in the chorus, the drums play a bass and snare pattern and there are two-part harmonies in the chorus and the 'Ba ba ba's' but three-part harmonies in the 'La la la's' in keeping with the 'party'

atmosphere. Although original in its interpretation, the synecdoches and style indicators are incongruous. While The Hillsiders were possibly trying to reflect how they used the song in their live repertoire, they merely succeed in making the song appear ambivalent – it is at this stage that the listener begins to wonder why this 'live' concept did not actually include the recording of a live album in front of a real audience.

Another prominent example of this ill-conceived project is 'Little Ol' Wine Drinker Me' where Johnson emulates the crooner's vocal style, but over-exaggerates it with one of the band interjecting 'You sound like Deano' (Dean Martin being the original singer). Johnson then switches to an over-exaggerated Louis Armstrong-style, mimicking 'Satchmo's' tonal quality, timbre and texture. He also 'Scat' sings in the Armstrong voice closing with Armstrong's trademark 'Oh Yeah!'—it is all, in retrospect, perhaps a little too embarrassing.

Our Country 1973

The Hillsiders released *Our Country* in 1973 on the Polydor label (2460-203). It was again produced by Ian Grant and was The Hillsiders first attempt at recording an almost complete album of their own material. The album contains eleven original songs composed by Butler and Johnson, and one cover: 'Whiskey Man'. Grant produced the album to a very high recording standard; interestingly the drums were recorded with a slightly harder 'Rockier' edge than those previously produced.

The genre is Country due to the steel and the lead guitars playing Country licks. However, considerable genre synecdoche with Merseybeat and other 1960's Pop songs can be heard. Johnson's tonal quality of the vocals in 'Take It or Leave It' and Butler's in 'Love's Funny That Way' have a Merseybeat connotation to them. Also in 'Love's Funny That Way', the shape of the melody is very similar to 1960's Merseybeat. The lead guitar intro plays a

Merseybeat style episodic marker, which becomes processual in 'Charleston, West Virginia', there is also an 'accidental' found in several Merseybeat riffs. In 'Take it or Leave It', Merseybeat-sounding riffs predominate paradigmatically. The steel guitar in 'So Long Girl' also (oddly) plays a 1960's Pop riff, while in 'Blue Kentucky Morning' the drummer plays 'Ringo Starr-type' fills. In 'So Long Girl' the intro chord sequence and drum patterns are similar to a 1960's Pop song and the melody in the verses has the essence of Bacharach-David's 'Twenty-Four Hours from Tulsa'. In 'Take It or Leave It', the chord sequence in the verses and the melody in the middle-eight also have a 1960's Pop style about them. In the chorus of 'I Want to Know', a 1960's Pop style harmony is used to emphasise the hook. The chord changes at the end of the verse of 'K John Red' are also reminiscent of a 1960's Pop song style. There is also genre synecdoche with both Blues and Rock 'n' Roll in 'Name and Address', with a harmonica playing pentatonic bent-note Blues licks; the very shape of the melody is similar to 1950's Rock 'n' Roll, especially in the hook. Grant therefore added a considerable amount of synecdochial diversity to the songs to try to maintain the listeners' interest - which is an interesting device considering The Hillsiders' profile as the UK's leading Country band: one wonders what the musical and/or industrial motivations were, behind such significant genre-based changes?

There are also a number of other attempts to add variety to the album including in 'Across the Mountain' the steel guitar playing an unusual arpeggiated pattern including 9^{ths} and 6^{ths} in the high register, through a Leslie cabinet. In 'Love's Funny That Way' the steel also plays at a higher pitch than normally heard and switches in the chorus to expressive slides and swells which add variety. In 'I've Got to Know', the steel solo changes key and slows down at the end to help add to the feeling of uncertainty. In the intro and turnaround on 'Whiskey Man'

⁴¹⁸ This is sung as 'Cajun Red' so the title is obviously a humorous reference to Kenny Johnson

the steel plays a riff in a lower register than usually heard to help maintain interest, while in 'I Won't Be Here Anymore' it has a texture emulating a steel drum, which helps alter the genre of the song. In 'Charleston West Virginia' the band changes time signature during the steel solo (similar to Lennon's part in The Beatles' 'We Can Work it Out'), a change not normally found in Country. The lead guitar in 'Across The Mountains' plays the same riff as the steel but in a lower octave giving further 'body' to the texture. In 'K John Red', the lead guitar plays a Waylon Jennings-style Country lick through a Leslie cabinet; in 'Take it or Leave it' it also plays through a Leslie cabinet. On 'Got To Know', it plays low notes through a distortion unit, which adds to a feeling of uncertainty in the song. In 'Blue Kentucky Morning', it plays a Funky-style rhythm using Country chords, creating a degree of genrebased intertextuality.

The drums, besides playing conventional bass and snare pattern or 1960's Pop fills, in 'Love's Funny That Way' switches from its original bass/snare pattern to a 'half-time feel' on alternate lines on the last four lines of each verse to help maintain listener interest. In 'Blue Kentucky Morning' the drums in the intro play an unusual hi-hat pattern switching to a bass/snare pattern in the verses which changes to a double time 'feel' for half of the chorus, helping to 'lift' the song. In 'Take it or Leave it', the drums play a rapid semi-quaver hi-hat pattern in the middle-eight to add variety to the song. While in 'I Won't be Here Anymore' the drums play an exotic elaborate tom-tom pattern similar to The Hillsiders' version of 'Blue Bayou' on the previous album, and it also plays a less elaborate tom-tom pattern on alternate beats in the version of 'Got to Know'. In 'So Long Girl', the bass line switches from tonic dominant in the verses to a walking bass line in the chorus, which helps to 'lift' the song.

Johnson and Butler perform the vocal duties; both are mostly expressionless making it is difficult to tell. However, the harmonies are produced in such a way as to help compensate for this. Many of the songs have two or three-part harmonies in the verses and choruses arranged in differing ways. 'Whiskey Man' has a combination of two and three-part harmonies at the end of the verses, which are not double-tracked, but in the choruses, the three-part harmonies are double-tracked. 'I Want to Know' has two-part, Everly Brothers-style harmonies in the verse and three-part harmonies in the chorus. 'I Won't Be Here Anymore' has two-part harmonies in the verse and three-part harmonies in the middle-eight. In 'Across the Mountain', the three-part harmonies are double-tracked to produce a fuller sound, as they are in 'Blue Kentucky Morning' where the lead vocals in the verses are also double-tracked. Other instruments used to add diversity include a harmonica in 'Name and Address', a Dobro in 'Charleston West Virginia,' and an oriental-sounding string instrument in the intro of 'I Won't Be Here Anymore'. The album is evidently a Grant-led project and great time and care has been taken by the producer to create a piece of recorded sound up to industry standards of the day. However, in spite of the producer's best efforts to add diversity to the songs and maintain the listeners' interest, the sound picture is still lacking for the quality of the songs is not high and there is only a certain amount that can be done.

It is of this researcher's opinion that the original songs on the album are not of a high enough standard. Song-writing is a craft with certain formulations and conventions intended to create responses from listeners. Issues related to aforementioned syntax, paradigms, generative moments and processual developments are all vital parts of a song-writer's arsenal. However, here, the song-writing is inconsistent, with many basic flaws and errors that would normally only be found in novice song-writing. The lyrics of the songs are often unimaginative and clichéd, following no recognisable song-writing structures. In 'Across the Mountain', there are no rhymes in the verses. In 'Take It or Leave It' there are no rhymes in the verses or choruses, only in the middle-eight, something this researcher has never encountered in the

many thousands of songs that she has listened-to. The chorus also does not rhyme in 'Blue Kentucky Morning', in 'Charleston West Virginia' and in 'Got to Know' where there are no regular rhyming structures. In 'I Won't be Here Anymore', the verse consists of twelve short lines, but the rhyming pattern is irregular with line one rhyming with line two, line three rhyming with line six, four with five, seven with eight, nine does not rhyme with any and lines ten, eleven and twelve all rhyme with each other. In 'So Long Girl' in the six line verse, lines two and three, and five and six rhyme, while in the six line chorus, only lines five and six rhyme. Rhyming is an important syntagmatic device, which helps to smooth the flow of the song, making it sound easier to listen to and helps the listener to digest the message. When rhyming does not follow a regular pattern, it disrupts the processual flow making the song less generative and harder to absorb the message. There are also basic rhyming mistakes such as in 'Love's Funny That Way' where the word 'around' is rhymed with 'around'. In song-writing, rhyming with the same word, unless it has a different meaning, is difficult to justify.

Often lyrically, the choruses also appear unimaginative. In 'Across the Mountain', the chorus consists of the same lines repeated three times. In 'Name and Address' the chorus is four lines long, three of which are the same line repeated; in 'I Want to Know', the chorus is three lines, two of them are the same line repeated. While repetition can be an important part of song-writing, it is done for a purpose, such as emphasising a particular part of the song or the hook. In each of these songs, it is written in a similar way, again suggesting lack of imagination. The melody also has to be strong enough to complement the repetition producing a memorable hook. However, the melodies in these songs do not quite achieve this effect. This could also be partly due to expressionless vocal delivery.

Therefore, the melodies of the songs are inconsistent with most songs having strong but also weak points within them. For example, in 'Blue Kentucky Morning', while the verses are strong melodically and the chorus starts out promisingly, the hook is poor and fails to deliver — thus we do not have an important paradigm at the crucial moment: the hook is normally the strongest part of the song but in this song, it is the weakest. In 'Take It or Leave It' the middle-eight has a strong melody, but is let down by a weak melody in the chorus. In 'I Want to Know', the melody is strong in the verse; however while the chorus starts strongly it only has three lines and so creates an anti-climax. In 'Name and Address' and 'Charleston West Virginia' the melody in the verses is stronger than in the chorus. In song-writing it is usually, the other way around as the chorus is usually the most memorable part of the song to the listener. In 'Got to Know', the verse that is in a minor key is stronger than the chorus, where little emphasis has been placed on the hook.

The melodies are also let down by the irregular syntax of some of the songs. Of the eleven original songs, nine do not have middle-eights. Although some Country songs do not have middle-eights, it would be unusual to find an album where only two of the tracks have middle-eights. Middle-eights are there to provide variety and emphasis at one and the same time and can contain stronger melodies than the verses. In 'K John Red' (pronounced Cajun) while the verses themselves are relatively short, the song still comes across as too long at four verses and would benefit from losing a verse, making the song more succinct and 'snappy', in the process. The cover version: 'Whiskey Man', while not a standout track, is actually a well-crafted Country song! It has a strong melody, with the writer understanding where to put the emphasis so the listener can connote a 'real' person saying it, particularly on the last line of the chorus. The lyrical narrative - about an alcoholic band member also shows more imagination and a deeper vocabulary than The Hillsiders' songs.

The problem, therefore with this album is that while the audio picture is produced up to a high standard, the musicianship is also good, and the band have deep knowledge of the genre, they have a naivety about crafting songs. This creates the impression that either too little time has been spent on crafting the songs, or the songwriters are still at the learning stage regarding song-writing. Therefore, while The Hillsiders might have been the UK's best Country band, it is yet again not reflected by their recorded output – once more this is a great pity for it does not leave us with an accurate reflection of just how important this Liverpool-based group was to the British Country music scene.

As a footnote, it is also surprising that on this album, Kenny Johnson in particular, except perhaps for the song 'Across the Mountain', shows little of the song-writing potential of the later-composed well-crafted songs. Songs such as 'Today' and 'City Lights' which he wrote with co-writers O'Brien and Murray (the latter being the nearest Johnson ever came to scoring a hit record) and the excellent 'Summer Nights' and 'One Kiss', which he wrote alone.

Conclusion.

This chapter contains a semiotic analysis of The Hillsiders' recordings, which were on major labels from 1964 to 1974. After this time, all Hillsiders' albums were recorded on their own minor labels and were 'vanity products' with the main point of sale being at gigs. The albums included their first album, *The Hillsiders Play Their Country Hits* (1964), which was poorly produced with a number of recording flaws. Their Nashville album, *The English Countryside* (Bobby Bare and The Hillsiders 1968), which was an excellently produced album by Chet Atkins in RCA studios, Nashville and 4 albums by Ian Grant that were all well-produced but

did not appear to capture the essence of The Hillsiders' sound claimed by Joe Butler in McManus (1994).419

The following chapter, Chapter 8, will cover the semiotic analysis of the recorded work of The Hillsiders from 1975-1989 (Their last recorded work). Chapter 8 will also contain a discussion of the entire recorded work of The Hillsiders analysed in both chapters 7 and 8.

Glossary of Semiotic Terms⁴²⁰

Anacrusis. Anacrusis is a note or series of notes that comes before the first complete measure of a composition; an introductory (and optional) measure that does not hold the number of beats expressed by the time signature, sometimes referred to as 'the upbeat'.

Anaphone. Sonic anaphone - perceived similarity to paramusical sound

Kinetic anaphone - perceived similarity to paramusical movement

Tactile anaphone - perceived similarity to paramusical sense of touch.

Codal incompetence. This arises when transmitter and receiver do not share the same vocabulary of musical symbols.

Codal interference. The intended sounds get across and are basically 'understood' but that 'adequate response' is obstructed by other factors, such as the receivers' general like or dislike of the music and what they think it represents, or by the music being recontextualised either verbally or socially.

Episodic marker. This is a short, one-way process highlighting the order or relative importance of musical events.

Generative. Having the ability to originate and generate meaning.

⁴¹⁹ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p.15 ⁴²⁰ Tagg, P. (1999) *Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music*.[online] http://www.tagg.org/texts.html accessed (10/8/2014)

Genre synecdoche. Unlike anaphone, genre synecdoche connotes the intermediary of another musical style.

Metonym. The use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated.

Museme. A museme is the smallest unit in any music that has significance or meaning.

Paradigmatic Is an outstandingly clear or typical example in the song.

Processual How musical events relate forward.

Style indicators. Any musical structure or set of musical structures that is either constant for, or regarded as, typical of the 'home' musical style.

Syntagmatic. Relates to syntax. It involves the order of the song lyrics, and examines it this way, and in terms of units.

Chapter 8: Authenticity or Pastiche? A Structural and Semiotic Analysis of The Hillsiders' Recorded Output 1975 -1989.

This chapter contains a continuation of the analysis of The Hillsiders' albums, in this case from 1975-onwards, a time when The Hillsiders only recorded on minor labels and the main lead vocalist Kenny Johnson was replaced by local Country music artist Kevin McGarry. While all the albums are recorded on minor labels (or their own vanity releases), their 1980 album *The Hillsiders* was regarded by the band as their best and the only album up to that time when they had total control over their choice of songs and the sound production. Bandleader Joe Butler was to remark in *Country Music People* in June 1980 that 'This has got to be the best one we have ever made'. 421

To Please You 1975

To Please You was released on the Stile record label, Stile 2001, in 1975 and was also produced by Ian Grant; Stile is effectively a 'vanity' imprint. Such recordings were popular amongst British Country music artists by the mid-1970s, for these artists found it increasingly difficult (in fact almost impossible) to obtain recording contracts with major labels. Country music, although popular as a live activity, was problematic for a recording industry that found record sales increasing in some genre directions but rapidly decreasing in others. Although album sales were reaching their peak towards the end of the decade, the industry was coming under pressure from Punk, by 1976 for being out-dated and slow to react to trends. It was also finding that in a sales-dominated marketplace, recording minority interest genres such as Country and Folk music was a loss leader, with sales at times verging on the miniscule. Many Country and Folk artists therefore came to rely upon point-of-sale products and using pressing plants such as SRT Productions in London, who pressed one-off products for

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⁴²¹ Country Music People. (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, Byworth, T. (ed). Dartford, Kent: (no publisher)

specific artists. SRT might use their own moniker on such pressings, or another of their imprint such as 'Cannon', or else allow the artist/s themselves to select their own 'label' name. Runs were often in the region of 1,000 with up-front payments made to the pressing plant, so that the responsibility for recouping money lay solely with the group/artist. It was seldom ever the case that such sales recouped outgoings, hence the 'vanity' descriptor – describing, in effect, piles of unsold albums.

The Hillsiders' Stile release consisted of twelve covers of Country songs such as Waylon Jennings' 'Sally Was a Good Old Girl', 'Canadian Pacific' by George Hamilton IV, J D Loudermilk's 'Google Eye', and 'Silver Wings' by Merle Haggard. The production by Ian Grant is largely good but there are few attempts to produce originality and diversity. The production appears technically advanced, producing a clearer sound. The genre is evidently Country due to the steel and the lead guitars playing predominantly Country licks. Kevin McGarry, now lead vocalist, sings with a more pronounced southern American accentor 'twang'. The only evidence of genre synecdoche is the rhythm guitar playing a Funky rhythm over chords on 'Canadian Pacific' similar to some Soul records, a Blues-style harmonica solo on 'Google Eye' and via Country-Rock backing vocals on the cover of Rick Nelson and The Stone Canyon Band's 'Garden Party' and Haggard's 'Silver Wings'. The tonal qualities of the voices are overall rather similar to those of 1960's Merseybeat – an odd genre synecdoche for a Country band to include at this stage in their recordings, but perhaps, indicative of the growing interest by 1975 of popular music's own repertory status and the importance of Liverpool-based groups in this history. In 'Garden Party', the drums play typically, 1960's Merseybeat fills.

The album contains twelve cover songs. It is arguably the most Country-sounding Hillsiders album that Grant produced, however, there are generic selections which, it might be argued

fall outside of a Country band's repertoire, such as perhaps 'Amazing Grace', which had recently become a hit recording for Folksinger Judy Collins, 'Albatross', the Fleetwood Mac instrumental from six years previously. Also the aforesaid 'Garden Party', which although noticeably containing Country music tropes throughout, was regarded by many at that time as Rick Nelson's embracing of West Coast Country-Rock. Therefore, the album is generically patchy owing to such an abundance of genre synecdoches and perhaps represents a selection of material by a group attempting on the one hand to remain strictly Country, but on the other having to respond in some way to the changing tastes of their live audiences.

The drum patterns are predominantly Country-sounding bass and snare except for the aforementioned 1960's fills in 'Garden Party' and in the two instrumentals. On 'Amazing Grace', the drummer plays a raw tom-tom pattern, while on 'Albatross' it plays a softer sounding tom-tom pattern. The replacement of Johnson with McGarry provides a stronger and more commanding vocal approach to some of the songs. Unfortunately, the strength and vocal delivery of McGarry's voice only emphasises the weakness of Butler's lead vocals. Another problem with the loss of Johnson was that his acoustic rhythm guitar playing was replaced, either by lead guitarist Hilton, or Bennett's steel blocking-out the chords creating over-use of pedal steel across the album.

Because, for the most part, this is a more predominantly Country album, direct comparisons with the original Country songs selected are easier to make. Waylon Jennings originally recorded the song 'Sally Was a Good Old Girl' ten years previously (Roy Clark also recorded it); despite this, the 'Nashville' production sounds better quality. It has greater clarity and there is more depth to the instruments. The Jennings' version is faster with the rhythm guitar playing Rock 'n' Roll chords throughout; the lead guitar solos are typically Rock in style. In place of rhythm guitar, The Hillsiders use pedal steel guitar playing Country licks throughout,

while the lead guitar also plays Country licks. The drums in Jennings' version plays interesting drum patterns: using a bass drum on every beat, which is not usually found in Country songs; these kinetic anaphones help to power the track along. In The Hillsiders' version, the drum pattern is a standard Country bass and snare pattern but the drummer plays elaborate fills when the chorus repeats several times at the end of the song. The Jennings' version has a three-part harmony, which fills out the song more than The Hillsiders two-part harmonies. Butler's vocals are weaker than Jennings' with Butler even speaking some of the lines (Jennings does not do this). The Hillsiders try to add their personalities into the song by laughing and making comments such as 'One for Noddy now!' Although the group have effectively made the song perhaps more stylistically 'Country' than the Jennings version, the production of the Jennings original awards the song more kinetic drive, making it sound more dynamic and authentic.

In the Merle Haggard song 'Silver Wings', while the original 'Nashville' production has an arrangement that appears to have been thought-through far more, this is actually one of The Hillsiders' best recordings on the album. The sub-genre is a Country 'leaving' song, which lends itself better to the slower tempo of the Haggard original, highlighted specifically via his lead vocals. Therefore, although McGarry is capable of delivering expressive vocals, the tempo of the song does not allow enough space to do this comfortably. Haggard is able to get the message of the song across better by putting in more emotion and creating a melancholy tactile anaphonic 'feel' to the track. Haggard's version uses a string pad to 'thicken' the texture in this tactile manner, and this naturally aids the melancholic feel. The lead electric guitar is used sparingly with the piano playing the main signature processual riff; throughout the verse, familiarity is therefore created via tactility and sub-genre style indication, which helps the listener remember the riff better as the song proceeds uni-directionally. Haggard's

drums use brushes on the snare creating a softer, tactile sound. While both versions use tremolo on the lead guitar, Haggard's is more pronounced helping to add to the melancholic feel of the track via this kinetic anaphone. The Hillsiders use pedal steel more prominently but this sometimes swamps the lead guitar when it plays the main signature riff; the drummer also uses sticks on the skin instead of brushes making the sound too 'hard'. Overall Haggard's version better creates the melancholic atmosphere of the song. The remainder of the album is adequate but in the same way as described above, rather unremarkable. The codal competence of the group is noticeable, yet at the same time, the listener is left thinking that they do not really fully grasp the subtleties of Country music recorded sound, in all of its textures and layers of anaphonic and episodic markers. Therefore, throughout, this album does not have enough elements of originality to distinguish it. Because of this, the album creates the impression of being a well-produced 'gig' or 'vanity' album bordering on the incongruity of the pastiche.

Goodbye Scottie Road 1976

Goodbye Scottie Road was also released on the Stile 2002 label, this time in 1976 and was again produced by Ian Grant. Technically one might describe the recording as a 'concept album' to mourn the re-development of Scotland Road in Liverpool. Scotland Road was the centre of a great deal of working-class life in north Liverpool. At various stages it was home to most of Liverpool's migrant communities, and has been described by those living there as 'a city within a city'. The area also became renowned for its religious demarcations between Catholic and Protestant. Urban clearance together with the construction of the Wallasey Tunnel in the 1960s and 1970s led to a decline in the population of the area and a shift to modern housing developments across the outskirts of the city, leaving Scotland Road in a state of decline.

The album therefore consisted of covers representative of the Country music scene in this area of north Liverpool and these performed by local Country artists such as The Hillsiders, The Miller Brothers, The Saddlers, Scottie Rd, Rory Kain, and Countryside. The title song 'Goodbye Scottie Road' was recorded by the 'imaginary' band 'Scottie Rd' featured in a *Liverpool Echo* cartoon strip. The singers were actually four Liverpool comedians: Steve Faye, Mickey Finn, Billy Moocho and Joey Kaye. It is a comedy song sung to the tune of 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm' and contains numerous references to Liverpool characters and history such as 'Judies' and 'Marys', (Irish shawl ladies) 'May queens' and 'pawnbrokers' and also uses colloquial phrases. This particular track became a very popular song in Liverpool and was broadcast many times on local radio, especially by presenters such as Billy Butler, Bob Azurdia, and Norman Thomas.

Although being well-produced by Ian Grant, the rest of the album contains unoriginal and/or rather unimaginative tracks: three by The Hillsiders (two standard Country songs and a cover of the Pop group Bread's song 'If' to display the strength and capability of Kevin McGarry's voice). Two other artists, the band Countryside and solo artist Rory Kain are also featured, performing two cover songs each. Curiously, neither of these two artists were well known on the local scene either before or after the album's release. The album's significance mainly lies in the fact that it contains two songs recorded by the local Country music band The Saddlers. The Saddlers were important contributors to the local Country music scene and were very popular on the scene for over fifteen years, playing all the significant venues within the scene. The Saddlers' songs on the record, therefore, are important historically because they are the only extant recordings of The Saddlers. The lead singer of The Saddlers on this album is George Neild who, as we have already seen, later joined the rather symbolic Joe Rogers Band. It would have to be stated, however, that The Hillsiders' contribution to

this recording does not really do themselves or their reputation justice and only further contribute to the growing vanity/pastiche profile that they had begin to accrue at this stage of their career.

On the Road 1978

Generic London-based pressing plant operator SRT Productions recorded this LP in 1978, LP SRTX/L1001. No producer is therefore named and there are, perhaps predictably no sleeve notes. There is therefore a rather 'classic' (if that is the word) micro-cum-vanity 'feel' to the recording: perhaps typical of a 1970s point-of-sale product. The artwork is minimal and does not reflect the title of the album, which is *On the Road*. The photograph on the cover is of The Hillsiders on a boat. All songs are covers of popular American Country and Country-Pop music artists such as Glen Campbell, Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard, John Denver and Don Gibson. Four of the tracks are technically non-Country New World/Smokie's 'Living Next Door To Alice', Tom Jones' 'She's a Lady', Albert Hammond's 'It Never Rains in Southern California' and an instrumental 'I Can See Clearly Now'. This album is the first following the band parting company with Ian Grant, and sonically, it shows. It was also at a time when there was a dip in the band's career and they split from their long-term manager, George Edwards.

The only instruments that are played on the album are those used in the band's line-up; unlike Grant's produced albums, no other instruments are added to give diversity or create and sustain interest. There are no distinct standout signature riffs or licks to set the band apart from other British Country music bands. For most of the album, the production is adequate. All instruments can be heard clearly and are balanced well in the mix, and for the majority of the songs appropriate 'Country-style' reverb has been added. The only flaw being the minimal vocals on the instrumental track 'I Can See Clearly Now' where too much reverb

has been added to McGarry's voice. The genre is largely Country even though some of these tracks were originally Pop songs, they have been 'countrified', therefore synecdoches abound for those listeners who might be aware of the original Pop songs. All songs on the album contain typical Country style indicators and are arranged in a standard Country style with little attempt to interpret songs in an original way. There appears to be a 'hurried' feel about the album, as it does not appear to display the same level of preparation and thought observed in several of the previous albums.

Despite being excellent musicians, The Hillsiders did not make full use of their technical skills on this recording. Kevin McGarry, by this stage one of the best vocalists in British Country music, was not used to his full potential even though they were able to tackle songs that the vocal limitations of Butler and Johnson previously restricted them from performing. On the one hand, McGarry's vocals on the Glen Campbell song 'Country Boy from LA' is on par with Campbell. On the other, his interpretation of both 'Brothers of the Bottle' and 'She's a Lady' do not take advantage of the expressiveness and power in his voice. Further, in spite of McGarry's evident ability, Joe Butler with his limited vocal range and timbres still sings three of the album tracks — as 'leader', one presumes.

The Hillsiders chose McGarry for his vocal ability and yet Butler still takes lead vocals on some of the songs on the album and even Hilton, who has the weakest voice of all The Hillsiders still takes the occasional lead on the album. This was something that has been criticised by Country music journalists. For example, Mike Storey in his column 'Meanwhile Back Home' in *Country* (1973), complained about British bands that do not have a recognised 'front man' and singles out The Hillsiders for criticism. He stated 'On record therefore, these bands fail to sound anything more than competent and in the case of The Hillsiders whilst musically brilliant fail to project any recognisable style and desperately lack

a lead singer with his own image and style'. 422 Yet Joe Butler was always a supporter of this style policy and later in McManus, (1994) dismissed the one lead vocal type of bands as one used by 'out-of-town' bands. He calls them 'A pretty sound with a front-line singer and a backing band', [further stating] 'Liverpool seems to have taken the Merseybeat thing a stage further and you get about three or four singers in a band'. 423 Overall, one would have to state that this is perhaps one of The Hillsiders' least convincing albums, yet historically one that marks an interesting point in their career. This album therefore provides an interesting historical document in the trajectory of not only The Hillsiders as a leading British Country band, but also in the narrative of Country music pastiche. The very terms of reference provided by this SRT album, allow us to consider the changing genre-based profile of the group. The musical content further assists the researcher to consider just how the materials presented reference ideas and musical conventions within which they were working. A conclusion can be drawn that this was certainly not a high point in the group's career.

A Day in the Country 1979

The Hillsiders recorded *A Day in the Country* in 1979 on the 'LP' record label SRTXLP004. The catalogue number suggests that this was, therefore, another SRT pressing plant point-of-sale product. Once again, no producer is named; the album contains nine covers and two original songs: 'When I'm With You' a Butler/Johnson song presumably written before Johnson left the band in 1975 and 'Stainless Steel' is a Hilton/Bennett song. This time, the sleeve notes are considerable and concentrate mainly on The Hillsiders' past achievements including their Nashville album with Bobby Bare, their appearance on the Grand Ole Opry and Wembley festival, their TV appearances, and their British Country music awards.

⁴²² Storey, M. *Country*. (April 1973) Vol 2, No 7, Chalker, B. (ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd. p 35

⁴²³ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North.* Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 15

The production is very inconsistent with percussion being the main problem. The drums on 'Love Revival' and 'Here I Am, I'm Drunk Again' have too much treble and not enough 'bottom-end', while on other songs such as 'My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You' the texture of the drums, despite them using sticks on the snare, sounds very weak in the mix. The percussion is also a problem on 'John Henry' and 'One More Time' being too far forward in the mix. The levels might be fine for a 1960's Pop song but for a Country song, they sound incongruous, especially as the rest of the band play with a softer edge. The rest of the production is mostly adequate with all other instruments and vocals being mixed reasonably well, they are clear and appropriate EQ and reverb has been applied. One presumes that perhaps the group were learning 'on the hoof' or that Joe Butler, in light of his radio presenting work, was getting to grips with studio mixing desks. The genre is Country with some elements of genre synecdoche, for example, Merseybeat in the Butler/Johnson song 'When I'm With You' predominant in the intro with syncopated drum fills, tambourine roll and a syncopated, picked electric guitar, all playing in a *faux* Merseybeat style. The backing vocals on 'Love Song' when sung in unison also have a Merseybeat feel.

Most of the songs are well-arranged and more attempts have been made to increase diversity in comparison with to the previous album. Different instruments are introduced including, harmonica in 'She Thinks I Still Care' and 'John Henry' and piano in 'Love Revival' and 'She Thinks I Still Care'. The backing vocals, however, lack diversity across the album, as all are three-part male harmonies. On 'Love Song' they do alternate in the chorus, being double-tracked when they sing in harmony and single-tracked when they sing in unison on alternate lines. Kevin McGarry's vocals are, as usual, expressive and strong and are especially energetic on the song 'Love Revival'.

Joe Butler sings on three songs; however, as usual his delivery is not strong and lacks the style indicating character one needs for Country music. This is especially the case on the selfpenned song 'When I'm With You'. The song has a strong melody and chorus and the lyrics are also well-structured (with the first verse particularly descriptive). Unfortunately, Butler's ambivalent 'generic' vocals make it hard for the listener to engage with the lyrics in a 'Country' sense for there is little authenticity. This problem with the vocals is further emphasised by the song following this one on the album, the cover of George Jones' 'She Thinks I Still Care' on which McGarry is lead vocalist. This is a Jones 'classic' with an excellent melody and lyrics and the contrast in McGarry's expressive vocal grain and delivery on this song only emphasises the weakness in Butler's voice. One is reminded of Roland Barthes' 'Grain of the Voice' essay when he analyses Panzera and Fischer-Dieskow's vocal grain, calling one (Panzera) a genosong and the other (Fischer-Dieskow) a phenosong. The former has the required grain of voice to deliver a generative feeling that for him is 'jouissance', whereas the other, pleasant though it is, is merely phenomenological 'plaisire'. Such affects via vocal grain are certainly significant when we consider the mythologies and authenticities surrounding Country music. One cannot hope to reproduce such mythologies vocally if one does not have the 'correct' grain.

In terms of authenticity, the majority of songs have (by this time) an 'old-style' Nashville Country feel about them, with the notable exception of 'Love Revival' which has a more modern contemporary Country feel, with a driving rhythm section. There are two instrumentals on the album: 'John Henry', The Hillsiders arrangement of a traditional song made famous by Leadbelly and in the UK Lonnie Donegan and 'Stainless Steel' written by the band members, Hilton and Bennett. Both are short tracks, being less than two minutes long and for this listener sound like 'fillers'. 'John Henry' has an up-tempo feel with the

primary instrument being the harmonica. There is a pedal steel solo in it at which point the song oddly changes key (from E to G), and a Dobro also enters playing sliding chords perhaps tuned to open G. The percussion throughout is far too dominant but perhaps exists as a kinetic anaphone to represent the railways from which the 'Henry narrative' emerges. 'Stainless Steel', as a short up-tempo instrumental, actually helps to break up the album. The predominant instruments throughout this track are pedal steel and lead guitar, both of which play together in a two-part harmony. Although the musicianship is excellent and very tight throughout, the songs, with the exception of 'Love Revival' do not represent the material coming out of Nashville in the 1970s from bands such as Alabama, Restless Heart and Sawyer Brown. These groups were becoming perhaps more adventurous with chord sequences, arrangements and production techniques, whereas The Hillsiders appear to be making a genre-based statement concerning 'classic' or authentic Country from a bygone era. It is perhaps via such a statement that their sound is deliberately dated – signifying a rejection of the newer, more 'Rockified' Country bands mentioned above. However, by 1979, who might be interested in such variable musical authenticities on record was the burning question, for it seems that to make such a statement required correct and consistent vocal and audio 'grains' – which, if this LP was anything to go by, The Hillsiders did not have.

Hillsiders 1980

Hillsiders was released by The Hillsiders on the 'LP' Records imprint, LP005 in 1980 and was produced by the group at the renowned Amazon Studios, Kirkby, Liverpool. One presumes that this was another SRT pressing, although Amazon might have dealt with another pressing plant for they were, by this time, a successful 'one-stop' recording service in their own right. The LP consists of twelve songs, eleven of which are original: three written by Hilton, four by Butler, one by McGarry and three by Butler and McGarry; there is one

cover: 'Sail Away'. This was written by Rafe VanHoy, and first recorded by American country music artist Sam Neely. It was later popularised by American Country music group The Oak Ridge Boys in 1979 and it is probably this version that The Hillsiders covered.

The Hillsiders themselves regarded this album as their most important to date. In *Country Music People* (1980), 424 Butler stated:

The album we're working on is the one we've always wanted to do for years and years. With this one, we've got total control over production and the choice of material. Our management said, "You go ahead and do it" [...] We've got to not only prove it to ourselves but to others as well [...] This has got to be the best one we have ever made.

In addition, in the same article, McGarry stated:

We've been doing this album for six months now using a beautiful 24-track studio in Liverpool. We've spent a lot of money on the album but all feel it's been worth it and we're sure that the work we've put into it will be all worthwhile' We've gone over and over every track playing it back on little speakers, talking about it amongst ourselves. Adding bits to it, rearranging bits [...] But it's something we're going to be proud of when we've finished. Everybody is totally involved [...] It's the best thing we've ever done.

The album features new steel player, Dave Rowlands, Ronnie Bennett having left the previous year. Also apart from The Hillsiders on the album, five other artists are listed as performing: Leo Duffy, Ray Duffy, John Fitzpatrick, Mike Bersin and Liz Crampton. The Hillsiders also thanked their management (Live Promotions) for the chance to 'have a go by themselves'.

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⁴²⁴ Butler, J. *Country Music People.* (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, Byworth, T. (ed). Dartford, Kent: (No publisher details)

The production is extremely good with all instruments mixed and EQ-ed clearly with mostly appropriate reverb. An exception is 'Last Dollar' a McGarry/Butler composition which features slap-back echo on certain lines of the vocals. The genre is clearly Country although some of the songs have a Bluegrass style to them such as the banjo in 'Harpin' On' (a Hilton composition) and the Dobro and banjo on 'The World to Him is Kind' (a Joe Butler number). There are also synecdoches with a number of other genres. For example, a 1950's Everly Brothers-style in the track 'She Was my Only One'. The drum pattern plays a part similar to the Everly's 'Cathy's Clown' and McGarry and Butler's two-part harmonies at the beginning of the song singing in parallel thirds is also similar to the Everly's harmonic style. There is also a Merseybeat synecdoche in 'Yesterday's Lovers' via the lead guitar intro playing a syncopated Searchers-style riff. There is an odd synecdoche with disco music in the synth and bass playing in 'Let Me Be the One'. In addition, there is Folk synecdoche in the melody and chord sequence in the verses of 'The World to Him is Kind' and the backing vocals on this song also exhibit a Folk feel.

The arrangements are well thought-out and diverse. A considerable number of instruments are used including electric and acoustic guitars, a pedal steel guitar, bass, Dobro, synthesiser, drums, percussion, mandolin, fiddle, banjo, mouth organ, piano and male and female backing vocals. Despite the large number of instruments used, none of the arrangements sound cluttered or overproduced. The instruments are used in such a way as to give diversity to the album and maintain the listeners' interest throughout. For example on 'I Never Slept a Wink' the steel guitar plays Western Swing-style licks involving chords that contains 9^{tth}'s and 6th's and 7^{ths} throughout, and the fiddle in the verses plays syncopated blue notes in a similar Western Swing style. The drums open the song with a Swing hi-hat pattern and play an

interesting tom-tom pattern in the middle-eight. The song itself has a strong melody but is unfortunately let down by the ineffective lead vocals of Hilton.

On 'The World to Him is Kind' the Dobro and acoustic guitar harmonise with each other in the intro and the banjo plays an intricate arpeggiated Bluegrass picking part throughout. The melody and chord sequences in the verses have a 'Folksie' feel to them, as does the female backing vocals in the chorus. On 'Let Me be The One' a synthesiser plays a glissando riff in the intro and the turnaround similar to that heard in the intro of the Disco song 'Ring My Bell' by Amy Stewart. The bass line in the latter half of the verses reverts from a Country tonic dominant bass line to playing in octaves, as heard on many early Disco songs. The lead guitar plays Country licks throughout and the lead vocals by McGarry are Country sounding and sung in an energetic way. The performances throughout the album contain more energy and passion than across the previous two albums. Although the musicianship is always of a high quality on a Hillsiders' album, there is a positive feel about this album almost as though the musicians were enjoying performing on it. The album's diversity also gives the impression of considerable time and energy in the arrangements of the album.

However, although the standard of a number of the songs are good, with strong melodies and well-written lyrics, others are weaker. The vocals are the only other weakness of the album. McGarry's vocals have a dynamic and expressive sound whereas, as usual, Butler and Hilton do not have the same quality of vocal grain or delivery as McGarry. When performing an original song that the listener has not heard before, more dynamic and expressive vocals are necessary to display the song to best advantage. The particularly strong songs on the album are 'She Was my Only One', which has the strongest melody with well-written lyrics, making the song easy to sing. 'Driver Get Me Home on Time', a McGarry/Butler song, has a strong melody, chorus and hook. However, the lyrics, while well expressed in the verses, are simple

in a rather unimaginative way in the chorus. The song itself has a modern contemporary Country feel to it similar to contemporary American Country singer Colin Raye's 'Excusez-Moi, My Heart'. 'I'll Never Need You Again' by Brian Hilton has a strong melody in the verses and choruses and the lyrics, while not very imaginative, are written well. This song also has a modern contemporary Country music sound similar to up-beat contemporary Country music songs by American artist Sammy Kershaw. 'Sleepy-Eyed Sam', a Joe Butler song, has a strong melody and well-written lyrics and again has the feel of an up-tempo contemporary Country song similar to American Country music artist John Michael Montgomery's 'Be My Baby Tonight'.

'The World to Him is Kind', another song by Butler, has a strong melody with a powerful chorus and well-written lyrics; 'I Never Slept a Wink Last Night' written by Hilton, also has a strong melody but the lyrics are poorly written with a lack of imagination in the rhyming. Other tracks on the album not as strong as the previous songs include 'Last Dollar' a McGarry /Butler song which has a good melody with a contemporary Country style to it but the lyrics are poorly structured, and 'Yesterday's Lovers' a Butler song, which does not have a particularly strong melody, although the lyrics are well-written.

The weakest songs on the album are 'Hold on to Me' by Butler, and 'Let Me Be the One' by McGarry. 'Hold on to Me' has an average melody and poorly written lyrics. It lacks repetition and a definable hook. Its style has a Jimmy Buffett feel to it. 'Let Me Be The One', has a melody range in the verse which is too close to its range in the chorus which means the chorus, while catchy, has not the breathing room for it to stand-out. The lyrics however are well-written and the song has a Bellamy Brothers-style to it. The instrumental 'Harpin' On' by Hilton is an up-tempo energetic piece that has possibly been put in to break up the album.

The one cover 'Sail Away' is in a 'Glen Campbell Country style' and is not as memorable as might have been expected from this one cover on the album.

The album is undoubtedly the strongest that The Hillsiders produced. However, its style indicators and synecdoches suggest that it remains somewhat derivative and lacking in authenticity. This attempt by this writer to sort out the genre-based structures and processual developments of the songs on this album (those that underpin the genre category of Country music) is not intended as any form of judgement upon the excellence or otherwise that is contained. Rather, while structural, the observations are also historical in the sense that the analysis is wedded to an understanding that a kind of 'faith' in Country music authenticity is paramount when attempting to historically place such British (and Liverpool-based) Country music sounds. Historically, therefore the structures inform us that (unfortunately) the album came at a time (sixteen years into the bands recording history) when although still very popular as a live touring group, their career had started to take a downward turn. The textual symbols embedded throughout this LP inform us that timelessness in British Country music did not exist. Instead, groups such as The Hillsiders were subject to time, restricted by time, and somewhat 'at odds' with time. These musical responses of The Hillsiders on this recording to the wider musical entities that were Country music were time-bound, not timeless.

Only One You 1984

The Hillsiders released *Only One You* on the Suitbag imprint HS36001 in 1984. It was recorded at the Studio One Studios in Saughall, near Chester and no producer was listed. The band had split from their previous management, for the local Ricky McCabe Entertainments are listed on the sleeve notes as now handling them. Only the band members play on the album, which perhaps suggests that the budget was somewhat less than the previous project

(and that maybe studio costs had risen). The album consists of thirteen covers: mostly of American Country artists such as Webb Pierce, George Jones, George Strait and Eddie Rabbitt, together with covers by artists such as Roy Orbison, Guy Mitchell. There is also a song recorded by a soft Rock trio Hamilton, Jo Frank and Reynolds, and what appears to be an unusual choice: a song recorded by the actress Sissy Spacek from her debut (and as far as this researcher can ascertain also her only) album.

The production is inconsistent and the overall mixes lack clarity; additionally the drums lack treble, although appropriate reverb has been applied to all instruments and vocals. The genre is Country with all instruments playing in a Country style and there is no evidence of genre synecdoche with any other genres. Some songs are by older Country artists such as 'I Ain't Never' by Webb Pierce and 'You Can't Get The Hell Out Of Texas' by George Jones. There are also covers of contemporary Country artists such as George Strait's 'Right or Wrong' only released the previous year (1983). Spacek's 'If I Can Just Get Through the Night' also comes from 1983. There are songs from the 1950s e.g. Guy Mitchell's 'Singing the Blues', the 1960s: Roy Orbison's 'Dream Baby' and the 1970s: 'Don't Pull Your Love' by Hamilton, Joe Frank and Reynolds and Dolly Parton's and Kenny Rogers' 'Islands in the Stream'.

The arrangements of all the above songs do not really display sufficient musical characteristics to make them stand out as original interpretations. The instruments played on the album are lead guitar, steel guitar, bass guitar, acoustic rhythm guitar, drums, tambourine, mouth organ and a Jew's harp. However, the musicianship is excellent and on a par with the Nashville recordings of the time. The songs: 'Singing the Blues' and 'I Ain't Never', both have a driving rhythm section perhaps reflective of the bands' live performances, particularly helped by the electric rhythm guitar playing Rock chords. On 'Short Road to Love' Hilton plays a rapid Chet Atkins-style, that displays his excellent guitar playing. The Dave

Rowland's'-plated steel guitar in 'You Can't Get the Hell Out Of Texas' is intricate with licks and chords including 9^{ths} and 6^{ths} played to a standard as high as Nashville steel guitarists.

The vocals of McGarry are both expressive and dynamic and are particularly strong on 'Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye' the John D Loudermilk cover, and 'Don't Pull Your Love,' the Hamilton, Jo Frank and Reynolds cover. Again, the problem with the vocals is again the weakness of the lead vocals of Butler and Hilton, both of which are inferior to those of McGarry. Unfortunately, attention is drawn to this weakness by the choice of songs recorded by Butler. For example, American Country artist George Strait had recently recorded 'Down in Louisiana'. Strait at that time was the most popular contemporary Country music artist and still holds the record for the most number one singles in the American Country music charts. His blend of contemporary and traditional elements in the style of his songs (often referred to as a Neo-traditionalist style) also made him popular with the local and national Country music scenes. His vocals were very strong, dynamic and expressive with a distinct tonal quality and he had great vocal control in his delivery. He was considered by many in the Country music industry at that time to be the best Country music vocalist to come out of Nashville since George Jones. By choosing this song, Butler's weaker vocals only helped to highlight the differences between the two artists.

Butler was also lead vocalist on the Roy Orbison song 'Dream Baby'. Orbison too had a distinct and rich tonal quality and a wide vocal range; because of this, his songs were difficult to cover as attention was always drawn to the uniqueness of his style in performing the song. 'Islands in the Stream' was a duet originally performed by two Country music artists whose vocals were of a high quality, Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton. While both had contrasting tonal qualities and timbres in their vocal grains, they blended well to produce a unique sound

enabling the song to cross over into the Pop charts. Again, Butler's weak vocals highlight the differences in the two versions.

Even though the musicianship is of a high standard throughout the album and the band to a degree put their own spin on some of the songs, the album lacks imagination. It also gives the impression of being hurried with insufficient time spent on the production side of the album; in fact, the overall recording and mix is inferior to the previous album. The album does not do justice to the band's musicianship. It is not known by this writer whether the album being recorded in a different studio to the previous album, with a different engineer and different equipment had a detrimental effect on the recording quality of the album, or whether it was simply a gig album with little time was spent on its production. Nevertheless, it does tend to symbolise the massive gulf that had emerged between (supposedly) the 'Best of British Country' and the original Nashville material. Here was a group that once again could not only not afford to sound like their Nashville-produced counterparts in the United States, but could not even afford to sound like themselves in a live situation, making one consider whether it was actually a worthwhile project.

15:25 1989

15:25 was the only Hillsiders album released on CD. The Hillsiders recorded it at Soundhouse Studios on Merseyside in 1989; it was 'released' on the Suitbag imprint HSD36002 and produced by the band. In addition to the present band, guesting on the album were past members: pedal steel guitarist Ronnie Bennett and Kenny Johnson on guitar and vocals. Ian Bradshaw, keyboard player with the Raymond Froggatt Band, and Shaun Hunt who played keyboards and engineered the album were also present.⁴²⁵ The album contains

⁴²⁵ Terry Fletcher of The Bar Room Boys, a member of the Liverpool Country scene for over 40 years playing in bands such as The Joe Rogers band informed this researcher that Hunt owned this studio and he had recorded there.

twelve songs, two composed by Butler: 'World Without You' and 'Love Within Your Eyes', one by Hilton: 'Home to You' and one by Johnson: 'This Time'. The other songs are covers of Country music artists such as Buck Owens' 'Made in Japan' and 'Diggy Liggy Lo', Ronnie Millsap's 'Smokey Mountain Rain', and Earl Thomas Conley's 'Love Out Loud'. The album also contains a Roy Orbison track 'Blue Avenue'. Other songs were 'I Will Whisper Your Name' by Folk/Country artist, Michael Johnson and 'I'm Beginning to Forget You' a song previously recorded by Elvis Presley and Jim Reeves.

The production is excellent with all the instruments being heard with greater clarity than on previous Hillsiders albums. The drums in particular have the distinct 'crack' one associates with many Nashville recordings of the era. In addition, appropriate reverb has been applied to all instruments and have all been correctly EQ-ed and mixed. The genre is undoubtedly Country but there also exists genre synecdoche with Funk on the song 'This Time', composed and performed by Kenny Johnson with the rhythm guitar and bass guitar playing Funky Chic-style syncopated riffs in the intro and turnaround. The only other synecdoche is the Japanese Shakahoutsu woodwind instrument in the intro and the pentatonic lead guitar riffs played in perfect 4th intervals in the solo in the song 'Made in Japan'. The arrangements are also excellent with a wide variety of instruments used to create diversity, including drums, bass, acoustic rhythm guitar, electric lead guitar, Dobro, percussion, steel guitar, keyboards, electric piano, a keyboard playing strings and accordion, and the Shakahoutsu woodwind and Japanese sounding hand cymbals. There are also sound effects such as exotic birdcalls and gentle waterfalls on 'Made in Japan'.

McGarry, Butler and Johnson perform the lead vocals. McGarry and Johnson's vocals are both expressive and dynamic with McGarry showing particular emotion on songs such as 'Smokey Mountain Rain'. Johnson only sings lead vocals on 'This Time' and a verse of

'Diggy Liggy Lo'. On 'This Time', his vocals are mellow and emotional, in keeping with the mood of the piece. His voice is stronger and displays more character than in his earlier recordings with The Hillsiders. Butler sings on four songs including his own two compositions, 'I Will Whisper Your Name' and 'Love Out Loud'. His vocals on 'Love Out Loud' whilst not being the most polished are certainly more expressive than on other recordings. McGarry's harmony on 'World Without You' helps to disguise the weakness in Butler's voice. Unfortunately, all the lead vocalists have an 'older' sound to their voices similar to 1960's and 1970's-style Country vocalists, which is different from the then modern American Country music artists such as Garth Brooks and Alan Jackson. This style and tonal quality of vocals tends to date the album and suggest a particular demographic regarding the purchasers. The backing vocals are all male, ranging from two-part to three-part harmonies, and used in such a way as to vary the song and enhance the message.

On 'World Without You' there is a strong inviting melody and a mid-tempo laid-back, warm and tactile anaphonic feeling about the arrangement that complements the lyrics. The lyrics are well-written, but the song is poorly structured as the solo appears after the first verse followed by the middle-eight, before the verse is repeated again creating too long a gap to the hook. This makes the song harder for the listener to digest and consider connotation. 'Home to You', a Hilton composition, is well structured with a strong hook and the up-tempo feel of a modern Country song. Whilst McGarry does a reasonable performance on the vocals, had the song been recorded in a higher key he might have been able to give more expression to the song and make more of the melody in a Country sense.

The other Butler song on this album, 'Love Within Your Eyes' is an up-tempo song. The chorus has a soaring melody, the lyrics are well-written, and the song well structured. The melody however is very derivative of 'Okie from Muskogee' in the verses and Butler phrases

some of the words in a similar fashion to that song, which loses Butler authenticity credits, as a consequence. 'This Time' was written and performed by Johnson and has the strongest hook of the four originals. It is a slow tempo song but the Funky riffs and the key change in the chorus give it a funky energy and help lift the song. The lyrics are well-written; the song is well structured and has a strong melody.

The strongest covers are 'I'm Beginning to Forget You' and 'Smokey Mountain Rain'. Both have good melodies, good lyrics, are well structured and arranged. McGarry's vocals on both these tracks are particularly expressive and the musicianship is excellent. On 'Diggy Liggy Lo', all past and present band members perform parts of this song including solos from several instruments, such as steel guitar, electric lead guitar and bass guitar. There is a 'feel good' atmosphere to the song (previously recorded by the group in the 1960s) and energy is in abundance in their performance. It is as if they are celebrating the bands history, friendship and achievements – a valedictory song, one might suggest. It is almost as though they appear to be saying 'This is (or was) The Hillsiders'. It is also significant that this is the last track on the album which was also the last album released by the group.

Concluding remarks

The Hillsiders were the most successful Country music band on the local and national Country music scenes. Their influence on both scenes was tremendous, as they presented a professional, modern approach to the music and a modern image for British Country music bands. They and Charlie Landsborough are the only local Country music acts to have produced a Country music legacy on record. Yet, whereas Landsborough only started recording in the 1980s, The Hillsiders record career lasted from 1964 to 1990, producing 14 albums. This researcher has therefore examined all 14 albums, which comprise 154 tracks, of which only 43 were original compositions written by The Hillsiders. 111 were cover versions

mainly but not exclusively of American Country music songs. However, style indication of the US 'home-style' was ever-present via the group's use of important anaphones and episodic markers of Nashville and, at times, Bakersfield Country music. There also appeared synecdoches of Bluegrass, and a little West Coast Country Rock and Western Swing. Little evidence was found in the albums, however, of their live driving rhythm sound, which, it is claimed, set them (and other Liverpool bands) apart from other British Country music bands. Whilst there were some attempts at originality and there were synecdoches with other genres within the tracks, their sound was not significantly unique from American Country music; in fact, one might argue that ultimately production methods and approaches rendered the sound of The Hillsiders to be at times, little more than a pastiche of the originals. One might argue that the costs of studio time, the lack of a reliable major label, the endless touring leaving little time to record, and the general lack of interest in British recorded Country music, left The Hillsiders with structural deficiencies throughout their recorded career.

There were considerable differences in the production, recording and mixing of each album. This is not surprising considering the band used five different producers, and recorded the albums in at least seven different recording studios (some albums did not have the recording studio named on the sleeve, so this figure may be higher). The production ranged from inconsistent to well-produced albums. Ian Grant produced six of The Hillsiders' albums, which were all well-produced and considerable time was spent creating diversity in the albums – especially paying an important genre synecdoche 'nod' to Folk music. For this listener, Grant however, never really captured The Hillsiders' 'essence'. This could have been because of Grant's background as a producer, which was mainly in the 'Folk music field', and often the albums had the softer feel associated with Folk.

Another problem with the production on almost all the albums was the weak vocals, not of the main lead vocalist Kevin McGarry, who indeed had a voice with the expression and dynamics normally found in American Country music, rather, the problem was the persistence of alternating weaker lead vocals, i.e. Joe Butler and Brian Hilton. This problem was compounded by the choice of songs for Butler and Hilton, which often did not take account of their (lack of) vocal abilities or indeed their vocal grains — which were not always suited to the sub-genre of Country attempted. It is in fact hard to understand why the band did not stick with the strongest vocalists for all the tracks that were recorded. Whether this was to avoid jealousy, or pacify egos within the group (or whether the group genuinely thought it was an advantage to have two or three lead vocalists) is not known. What was captured on the records, however, was the excellent musicianship displayed by all members of the band.

While their early style appealed to the aesthetics of the local and national scenes, the group did not appear to progress very far from this sound: at least on record. This is especially the case post the arrival internationally of bands such as The Eagles. So in later years their sound fitted into what became regarded as the traditional genres' signifiers commonly associated with British Country music, and we can hear this across their body of recorded works, which are at times entertaining, but largely patchy. The exception was their 1980s album entitled *The Hillsiders*, which consisted mainly of original songs and was produced by themselves. Many of the tracks on the album had a modern contemporary feel to them, similar to American Country music songs at that time.

The Hillsiders were one of, if not the most, popular Country music bands on the British scene for many years. Yet their main point of sale for their records was still at gigs, even though a number of the albums were released on major labels. Many of the cover songs recorded were those by artists that were popular on the local and international Country music scenes such as

George Jones, Hank Snow, Buck Owens and Kris Kristofferson. Whether the group were victims of localised 'fandom' in making these rather pastiche-based choices, or whether they thought that songs popular on these scenes might 'cross-over' well to recorded sound is not known, however, semiotic issues related to pastiche are of constant significance throughout their recorded career. Either way, sadly The Hillsiders were never able either to sell enough albums across the British Country scene or to penetrate the mainstream market to produce a hit album.

The Local

This researcher as part of this study also examined 341 tracks from 11 local artists/bands on 28 albums, 2 EPs and 1 single record. This study included major artists on the local Country scene including, Phil Brady and The Ranchers, Kenny Johnson and Northwind, and Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers. The records covered a period from 1964 to 1998 as none of these artists other than Charlie Landsborough recorded albums after this date (See Discography for full list). The production on these albums varied not just between artists but also between albums from the same artist, and even between songs on the same album. There could be a number of factors for this: the standard or experience of the producer, not just in producing albums but also in producing the genre; the quality of recording, studio equipment, instruments used etc.; the cost of recording an album which may account for less time being spent on recording, mixing and adding diversity to the albums. The standard of musicianship is also a reason for poor quality on records, although this researcher found most of the musicianship to be of a very high standard. Brocken (2010)⁴²⁶ also suggests that because these were working bands they may have had little time to spare for the preparation and recording of albums.

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⁴²⁶ Brocken. M. (2010), 'I Like Your Hat' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s'*. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp. 128-129.

This researcher also found that of the 495 tracks (including The Hillsiders albums) that were studied, only a minority of songs, less than 30%, were original compositions either written by the artists or writers based on the local scene, and of the 188 tracks recorded before 1976 only 12% were original songs. As we have seen, the most popular band on the local and national Country music scene, The Hillsiders, recorded less than 30% original songs on their fourteen albums. The covers recorded by these bands were often songs recorded by artists that were popular on the local scene and possibly with the bands themselves. In a number of instances, they appeared to allow this to cloud their judgement in the selection of songs, e.g., songs not suitable for the singer's voices or arrangements clearly inferior to the original songs. Even when the band/artists recorded original material and did on some occasions try to put originality into a song, these tracks were not sufficiently different from the original type of Country music popular in the local and national Country music scene.

Perhaps the only exceptions to this scenario are those of Hank Walters' rootsy fusion of Cajun/Tex-Mex, Kenny Johnson's later original compositions, which had his own middle-of-the-road Country-Pop style, and the Lee Brennan album *The Merseyside of Lee Brennan* whose genre was basically Folk. However, even with these three artists, their earlier recordings showed strong elements of pastiche in their choice of traditional Nashville songs. Landsborough was the only local artist who had his own unique easy-listening/Folk/Irish style throughout his entire recording career. Unlike the Merseybeat era, where a distinct 'Merseybeat sound' could often be found in recordings by Liverpool bands, this researcher could find no evidence of a distinct 'Liverpool sound' in the recorded music of these local Country music bands/artists.

The choice of these popular American Country music songs for these albums also contained a social and economic element to them. The Liverpool Country music scene consisted of

mostly white, working-class members who identified with the traditional values and emoted with the message in the lyrics of many of the American Country music songs of the 1950s-70s. Most of the bands and artists were participants of the local scene, not only as performers, but also as consumers, so were exposed to the same music and attended many of the same performances as other scene members. They were therefore aware that this was an identity-based scene with firm musical boundaries often rooted in the past, a scene that was content with these boundaries and with no critical re-examination of the existing boundaries. This meant the scene did not advance musically in the way the Nashville scene did and nor did it or the national scene, attempt to form its own musical identity in the way local artist Charlie Landsborough claimed that the Australian Country music scene had. It was also a scene that, largely, rejected originality from local artists.

Live performance is the primary system by which a scene sustains itself and these local gigs were often the main source of income for local scene artists. To most artists on the local scene conforming with these boundaries often meant financial survival in terms of the number of bookings obtained. This was also the case for record sales, which for most bands the main point of sale was at gigs. These bands knew the type of music and artists favoured by the scene members and believed that this type of music would sell. This financial consideration often affected the choice of material, and even original songs recorded did not often veer from these music boundaries. To some of the local bands/artists, having a record was often a vanity product, where they paid all the costs themselves and sold them exclusively at gigs. Being working bands, they also needed to recoup this financial outlay and often felt that recording an album of recognisable well-known Country songs was the quickest way to do this. Until the decline of the scene, most of the bands played the majority of their gigs in and around the local scene. This is not unusual for local music scenes as

Bennett (2000) explains most bands in local scenes, 'Remain tied to their local communities and continue to play to local audiences at local venues'. 427

Therefore, the local scene was still influencing these bands. This meant that bands in the local scene were in a dilemma, if they performed and recorded original material local and national Country music scene members ignored them. If they recorded covers of the popular American Country music, songs that the fans at the live performances wanted to hear, the fans considered them inauthentic copies of the original artist. Although it is fair to say that these American Country music artists were also very popular with the local bands, which also influenced their choices of material. Unfortunately, these original artists were mainly top American Country music artists, produced by top producers who were also experienced in recording the genre; they used the latest recording equipment and the most experienced Country music session men. These, often underfinanced local artists could not afford this level of production. Despite this, the bands were highly respected by local scene members and had an important status within the scene, especially their live performances. It is ironic therefore that scene members who attended the live performances and were enthusiastic about the bands performing these covers of their favourite artists, often regularly requesting these songs, were unwilling to purchase in any numbers, records by these local artists and were often critical of the bands recordings of these songs.

⁴²⁷ Bennett, A. (2000) *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place.* London: MacMillan. pp. 107-134.

Chapter 9: British Country Music and the Line-Dance Phenomenon

For most popular music 'scenes', dancing is both a fundamental requirement of the body's vicarious response to sound, while also being a way of meeting and socialising with others of a similar mindset. Dancing can be seen to have been at the very root of meaning for popular music in Liverpool throughout the twentieth century. Not only was it at the very centre of the Grafton and Rialto Ballrooms before, during and following WWII, but it was also at the nexus of understanding how and why groups such as The Beatles at the Cavern became popular on a local level. The 'beat' groups simply had to make people dance otherwise they were not deemed successful. The Beatles, therefore were popular with 'Cave-Dwellers', (Cavern Club regulars) precisely because they could get people on their feet. Yet at the same time, some popular music activities can also be seen to have been 'anti-dance' to a degree. One only has to consider the Bop scene in New York in the 1940s where some clubs actively discouraged dancing, or the Progressive Rock scene of the early-1970s where dancing was frowned upon, to realise that dancing is not only a matrix for acceptable behaviour, but also a signifier of the unacceptable. The line-dance phenomenon was important in the local and national Country music scenes for several reasons such as communality and socialization and even keeping fit. However, for our purposes it has significance because it was one of those events which Straw (2001) described as 'transitional points crucial for a scene's stability' 428 as it was the only time in the scene's history since the 1950s and 1960s that new members entered the scene in any sizeable numbers.

This researcher could find very little published academically about line-dancing. There were no in-depth contextual or ethnographic studies that she could locate, if mentioned, they

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⁴²⁸ Straw, W. (2001) 'Consumption' in Frith, S, Straw, W and Street, T. J. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

almost exclusively refer to the American line-dance scene, such as Jocelyn Neal in the chapter 'The Metric Making of a Country Hit' in Tichi (1998). There are a number of books concerning American dance and a few on the subject of Country and Western dance, but these books are instruction manuals and mainly concentrate on the two-step and partner dances usually performed in Honky Tonks or Barn Dances in the Southern States of America. A few of these mention line-dancing but usually as a chapter or part of a chapter such as in Giordano (2010)⁴³⁰ Country and Western Dance or Needham (2002),⁴³¹ I See America Dancing. There is an academic paper in the Journal, Women and Ageing (2008) by Nadasen (2008)⁴³² which discusses the increase in social activity that line-dancing brings to older women. This researcher could not find any research published in Britain, other than passing comments in publications such as McManus (1994)⁴³³ and Cohen (2007).⁴³⁴

Mick O'Toole informed this researcher that even in the packed atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s Black Cat Club and Ossie Wade's, people found spaces where they could dance. On the DVDs obtained by this researcher of the Country music scene in The Union Pub on the Dock Road, people were dancing even in this very confined space. From this writer's experiences, in the more specialist Country music clubs, some clubs allowed dancing, and in some clubs dancing was even encouraged, such as the genre sub-set 'Cowboy' Country music clubs. However, it was discouraged in the listening clubs where Country music 'purist'

⁴²⁹ Neal, J. (1998) 'The Metric Making of a Country Hit' in Tichi. (ed). *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and* Honky Tonk Bars. Durham USA: Duke University Press. pp. 332-339

⁴³⁰ Giordano, R. G. (2010) 'Achy Breaky Heart and Line Dancing'. In *Country and Western Dance*. Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press. pp. 91-138

⁴³¹ Needham, M. (2002) 'All Lined Up at the Wild Horse Saloon (1997)'. in I See America Dancing, Selected readings 1685-2000. 'Illinois USA: University of Illinois Press. pp. 81-84

⁴³² Nadasen, K. (2008) 'Life Without Line Dancing and the Other Activities Would be Too Dreadful to Imagine an Increase in Social Activity for Older Women' in The Journal of Women and Ageing. Vol 20 Issue 3-4 Routledge. [Online pub] http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08952840801985060?journalCode=wjwa20#.Vcx0jbJViko> (accessed 3/6/14) p. 329

⁴³³ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 5

⁴³⁴ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the* City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles. Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 86

aggregations, rather like those at Folk clubs, discouraged the activity. The organisers and consumers of these clubs felt they were there to listen to the music and believed that if one was dancing one was not listening to the artist: the primary purpose of the club.

It was during the 1980s that choreographed line-dancing started to enter the scene, with dances such as 'The Tush Push', 'Elvira', 'The Electric Slide', and 'The Freeze'. As this researcher could find very little about it academically, it is difficult to give a definitive definition of what line-dancing actually is, other than it being something of a phenomenon. Neal (1998)⁴³⁵ discusses line-dancing as part of her chapter and describes line-dances as 'Choreographed patterns in lengths of usually 16-40 beats. The dancers dance the pattern repeatedly during the course of the song. No partner is required for many of them so any number of men, women or their combination form lines on the dance floor to execute the patterns'. While David Powell on his website *What is Line Dancing* (2003) defines 'Line-dancing [as] a choreographed form of popular music incorporating a repeating sequence of steps and which is identically performed by a group of dancers in one or more lines'. 436

Both descriptions appear to be relatively accurate definitions, at least as far as this study is concerned, but does not deal with the dancing as, historically, part of a social phenomenon. One would have to re-iterate that more research is most certainly required. For example, the roots of line-dancing are hard to trace. Roland Gutzwiller author of the website *Line Dance History* stated on his site that when Cathy Hellier, dance historian at the Williamsburg

⁴³⁵ Neal, J. (1998) 'The Metric Making of a Country Hit' in Tichi, (ed) *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars*. Durham USA: Duke University Press. p. 322-339

⁴³⁶ Powell, D. (2003) What is Line Dancing. [Online]

http://www.roots-boots.net/ldance/history.html (accessed 6/9/2010)

Research Foundation in Virginia, was contacted about the history of line-dancing, her rather puzzled reply was: 'Line-dancing is a modern form of dancing, isn't it?' ⁴³⁷

A number of line-dance websites have attempted to trace the roots of line-dancing. Most claim it has its roots in the Folk dances, such as circle dances and contra dances, which were brought over from Europe by the immigrants in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and that by incorporating patterns from these dances, this distinct American dance style evolved in the American West and Mid-West. While this may be the case, the websites examined by this researcher offer no concrete evidence for such claims and one might speculate that one site merely replicates information gleaned from another, e.g, Walker, ⁴³⁸Powell, ⁴³⁹ and Bowen. ⁴⁴⁰

Locality

In the Merseyside area (except for the previously mentioned 'Cowboy' clubs), line-dancing in the Country music clubs that allowed it, was often strictly controlled. This was something that this researcher observed on numerous occasions when attending many of these clubs in the 1990s. There was often a (paid) line-dance instructor who taught the steps and decided which dance would be performed to a particular song. There were evidently strict parameters, musically and this regimentation was not popular with some line-dancers. Line-dancer and now line-dance instructor, Debbie Jones stated to me: 'When I first started out people did the

⁴³⁷ Gutzwiller, R. (Sept 2013) *Line-dance History.* [Online]

<www.gutz.ch/western/various/linedancehistory.htm>(accessed 11/11/2013)

⁴³⁸ Walker, A. *Linedancing-How Did We Begin*. [Online] http://ponyball.net/history-line-dancing.html (accessed 16/9/2010)

⁴³⁹ Powell, D. (2003) What is Line Dancing [Online]

http://www.roots-boots.net/ldance/history.html (accessed 6/9/2010)

⁴⁴⁰ Bowen, R. *Dance:- The History of Line Dance* .[Online]< http://www.country-time.com/ldance/history/html> accessed 16/9/2010

dance exactly how it was written. There were no variations and nobody put their own sort of turns in, or left turns out'.

Line-dancer Jayne Barnes who attended line-dancing at The Metal Box Country Music Club in Speke, Liverpool⁴⁴¹ explained to this researcher that (to paraphrase) she did not like the very structured approach to the dances at that particular club. She now prefers the more modern dances and relaxed atmosphere of the club that she now regularly attends. Edna Gatewood, another local line-dancer remarked: 'We had people come up to us and say you're doing that wrong and we would say, "We couldn't care less". It was pure and simply enjoyment for us, we weren't getting marked on it'. Gatewood also felt this regimented regime meant that dancers often concentrated more on not getting the steps wrong than enjoying the dance, stating 'Groups [i.e. Country music acts] we were quite friendly with, they would say, they (line-dancers) never smile: they're too serious'.

Often at these local clubs, the dancing took place before the band came on stage or during the intervals. Some clubs allowed dancing during the second set as they felt this gave the listeners a chance to appreciate the music and to show respect for the artists' performance. This was something with which several Country music line-dancers agreed; line-dancer for many years across several Country music clubs, Edna Gatewood, stated:

Let's face it, people who weren't into line-dancing, they were there to see the group and listen to the music so for the first set we didn't get up at all. The dance floor was clear and they could see the group and everything, and then in the second set, we would get up but we would never get up in the first set and line-dance.

⁴⁴¹ This club has now recently closed.

In addition, line-dancer Marion Fox commented: 'Our maxim was, we liked the line-dancing but the Country music came first for us. The line-dancing was secondary. It wasn't the be all and end all for us. We went to see the groups and the music'. Her husband Eddie Fox further explained: 'It was respect for the group and they would come up and thank us [...] You got to see how good the group was and they had a chance to be professional'.

The exceptions to this were the Cowboy clubs where this researcher noted that dancing, talking, socializing etc., carried on throughout the evening whether a live act was on, or not. Line-dancers usually wore Western dress as 'signifiers', as also noticed by McManus (1994). He Because of this, many participants of the Country music scene developed a strong antipathy towards the line-dancers, feeling perhaps that such dressing-up had no place in authentic Country music because it was perhaps 'cartoon-like' and reinforced the negative stereotype of Country music often portrayed outside the scene, e.g. by UK media. From research conducted by this writer, they also believed that the very act of dancing was rather disrespectful; participants in the scene expressed such views to this researcher on a number of occasions. Some artists felt that line-dancing restricted their repertoire and thus connection with the audience. Peter Richardson from the local Country music act The Old Dudes even stated: 'The line-dancers fill the floor but the person who wants to listen to Country music can't because they are doing some silly dances. They'll line-dance to anything'.

Denis Collier of the band, Collier Dixon Line, promoter of DCL Country music events and organiser of The Mirage Country Music Club in Castleford, Yorkshire painted an interesting picture. 'The only trouble with them (line-dancers) is the dance floor is always at the front of the club. People who go to listen sit at the back looking at the dancers not the artists so they don't come back, they stop going out and when the line-dancers move on the club struggles'.

⁴⁴² McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 35

Local line-dancer and Country music fan Eddie Fox, related to this researcher: 'Years ago when Kenny (Johnson) came on, we would go out. He hated Cowboys and line-dancers. In Blackpool he gave us a dog's life, complaining about line-dancing'. It is quite clear, therefore that there are important oppositions created by the very act of dancing, yet, as has been previously suggested, line-dancers were probably the first newcomers to join the scene *en masse*, for several decades.

Places

By the time that McManus (1994) was investigating the scene in the late-1980s, several strategic changes were already taking place, which he noted. The decline of the local Merseyside's pubs and social clubs had set in. Some such venues, which stayed open, cancelled their Country nights, preferring other types of music or other activities such as karaoke, digital dance music or merely providing ambient sounds to the serving of food. This meant that many local live acts drifted out of Country music. Both Paddy Kelly and Kenny Johnson expressed their views about this in McManus (1994), Add Kelly stating:

The Country music scene in Liverpool is really down. There's a lot of good bands here but no venues for them to play [...] the venues are closing down and we're all competing against taped backing [...] There's not many of us left. There's Hank Walters, Bernie Green, us. As George Jones sang, "Who's going to fill their shoes" There's no-one to fill our shoes.

In addition, Kenny Johnson thought that the scene was

⁴⁴³ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool p. 35

⁴⁴⁴ McManus, K. (1994) *Nashville of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool pp. 31-32

[...] dying at the moment. There's no new blood, not to warrant another twenty years anyway. You can't see who is coming up and there's not the same opportunities now. [...] There's not many venues. The Liverpool Country scene compared to what it used to be is finished. It's dead.

Many of the local Country music bands performed almost exclusively within the Merseyside area. This large decrease in the number of venues meant that to perform every week they would have to seek venues outside of Liverpool, or perform mini-tours to make it financially viable, something bands from other parts of the UK were already doing. Almost all the local artists (Kenny Johnson, The Hillsiders and West Virginia being the exceptions) were semi-professionals with day jobs and were not prepared to make this transition, so many bands left the field.

Most of the specialist Country music clubs, although losing members, were still sufficiently attended to enable committees or management to afford to book Country music bands. These clubs preferred to offer a different band each week, so a local band might only expect one or two bookings a year: not enough to sustain them as working groups. To fill the void, club organisers brought in a number of bands from other parts of the Country. These bands such as Memphis Roots, Kalibre, and The Dirty Hat Band, were used to playing dance clubs in the South of England and had a number of line-dance songs in their repertoire. It was noticeable to this researcher that by the mid-1990s such bands used more up-tempo 'New Country' songs in their repertoire than local bands, whose Country music 'classics' and ballads were often the mainstays of their act. These new songs such as 'Elvira' by The Oakridge Boys and 'One Step Forward and Two Steps Back' by The Desert Rose Band, were songs that almost instantly became synonymous with line-dancing, meaning line-dancers were more likely to attend those clubs where the acts played what was becoming a line-dance repertoire. Evidently, issues surrounding sub-genres were becoming important demarcations of

authenticity. This was something noticed by this researcher when attending local Country music clubs on a regular basis, at that time. I used to attend 3-4 different Country music clubs each week in the Merseyside and Greater Merseyside area and often met the same people attending at different clubs. Two local clubs that were particularly welcoming to line-dancers at that time were at The Metal Box Social Club in Speke and The Conservative Club in Stoneycroft, both in Liverpool. Line-dancing became intrinsic to these clubs, but they never accrued the significant authenticity credits attached to other venues on the local scene.

So, the club scene's balance changed dramatically; especially in 1992 when line-dance choreographer Melanie Greenwood, choreographed a line-dance to Country singer Billy Ray Cyrus' song 'Achy Breaky Heart'. This was a seminal moment, for it not only created a massive hit for the artist, but also effectively kick-started the line-dance 'craze' both in America and in Britain. As Neal explained in Tichi (1998)⁴⁴⁵ The Country music industry realised that (to paraphrase) line-dancing could be a successful marketing tool for the music and therefore ensured that specific new Country music songs were choreographed upon release and that this took place in a media blitz. Country Music Television was especially important regarding promotion. This increase in line-dances can be seen in Osbourne's instruction text (1995)⁴⁴⁶ where the number of different line-dances he analysed was 34.

The success of 'Achy Breaky Heart' in Britain resulted in a large number of non-Country music fans wishing to line-dance, but at that time the only way to do so, was through their local Country music clubs. Country music radio presenter, journalist and line-dance DJ, Peter Fairhead, stated to me about these newcomers: 'They wouldn't have been seen dead in a Country music venue until they got involved in line-dancing'. While an influx of new people

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⁴⁴⁵ Neal, J. (1998) The Metric Making of a Country Hit' in Tichi. (ed). *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars and Honky Tonk Bars* Durham USA: Duke University Press. pp. 322-339

⁴⁴⁶ Osbourne, H. (1995) *Run to the Floor for Country Western Line Dancing* Glendale California> Griffin Publishing. pp. 57-167

should have been welcomed by these clubs (many of which were struggling for numbers) this was not strictly the case. As Straw (2001) points out, at such times: 'Scenes [can] function as agents against change'. 447 Many of the Country music clubs with their 'concrete practices' and, in this case, outdated music, were not willing to make any changes to accommodate these newcomers. The Country music clubs' attitudes had in many ways come to mirror that of the Folk scene, described by Brocken (2003) as 'Continu[ing] to champion and attempts to merchandise a way of life that is in several aspects whole decades out of date',448 and these Country clubs like their Folk club counterparts often act as bulwarks against reality. Peter Fairhead remarked to me: 'Line-dancing gave a declining scene a kick up the backside by introducing a lot more fans but the old fans didn't want to hear all the new music'. These local clubs, by the 1990s insular in nature and steeped in significant rituals and practices reacted, perhaps quite naturally, negatively. The clubs at first welcomed the new consumers into their ranks. However, many were run by willing amateurs whose purpose was to keep Country music alive (they saw it as a threatened genre), and they gradually came to resent the 'newcomers'. This resentment stemmed from the realisation that in many cases they came to the club to dance. As these new consumers had no allegiance to Country music, and were often only interested in their dancing, many club organisers, members and artists began to resent their presence in the Country music scene. Andy Boggie from Birkenhead and part of the Welsh duo Iona and Andy pointed out: 'A lot of people came into line-dancing as a keep fit exercise. They hadn't come through Country music and really weren't interested in Country music'. Thus the 'newcomers' were seen as not being 'pure' in the Country music sense, and therefore not authentically 'versed' in Country communal allegiances and rituals.

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⁴⁴⁷ Straw, W. (2001) 'Consumption' in Frith, S, Straw, W and Street, T. J. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 255-256

⁴⁴⁸ Brocken, M. (2003). 'What of the Folk Scene Now' Chapter 8 in 'The British Folk Revival. 1944 - 2002' Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. pp.124-145

If the band performed a song they could dance to, they would get up and dance, if they could not dance to it they would sit and talk. To the Country music club members, this was perceived as disrespectful to the artist and to Country music in general.

Wanting to be part of the line-dancing scene the newcomers purchased the clothes that they considered to be the correct 'signifiers' of line-dancing, which were what the older line-dancers wore and the images they saw on TV such as CMT (Country Music Television). These included Cowboy hats and boots, gingham dresses, Cowboy shirts, bolos, etc. While this was an image that the newcomers thought would give them authenticity within the scene, it was an image that many Country music fans and artists already thought was ridiculous and one they were trying to reject. As previously, stated, most local bands and artists already resented this influx of new people into the Country music scene. Cohen (2007), while recognising that line-dancers had attracted new audiences to Country music, spoke to local musicians who stated they felt there was little interaction between themselves and the line-dancers, and that their music actually meant very little to dancers.

Dave Sheriff

On her travels, this researcher also found similar views from both local musicians and musicians from other parts of the UK. Many acts across the UK regarded line-dancing as a fad that would run its course, so were slow to adapt their repertoire to accommodate. However, one Country music artist who did realise the commercial potential of line-dancing early on was Dave Sheriff. Sheriff had been a singer-songwriter on the Country music circuit since 1970, playing a mixture of Country music covers and some of his own compositions, which were written in the traditional Country style. This was not well paid and he

⁴⁴⁹ Cohen, S. (2007) 'Music as City Heritage: Decline and Renewal in the Nashville of the North'. In *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond The Beatles.* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 86

supplemented his income by working as stage manager for Tony Best Leisure (TBL)⁴⁵⁰ at their Country music weekends and festivals. Sheriff personally informed me that he had realised 'early on' that these new arrivals on the British Country music scene did not have the preconceptions or prejudices about British Country music artists that many of the British Country music fans had. He considered that, if he could market a product that satisfied the requirements of these new 'Country' consumers, they might purchase it. In a personal email to this researcher, Sheriff explained:

At that time, there were loads of dances coming from American choreographers to American music and it came to the stage where they would learn the dance, but when it came to going out to socials very few DJ's had the American import track. So I spoke to a lot of UK teachers to find out what sort of music they were looking for and began to write songs in the same tempo that would fit the dance. I obtained the scripts for the dance and my music would fit the dance. In many cases better than the original, as I actually 'phrased' the music directly to the sequence of the dance. ⁴⁵¹

One example of this was his album *Line-dance Stomp* DS004CD, on which all the songs were written by Sheriff. He also lists for each track, the title, its BPM and its style, together with dances that could be performed to it. For example, the first track reads:

Song	Speed	<u>Style</u>	<u>Dances</u>
'Four Wheel Cowboy Blues'	128BPM	Shuffle	Four Wheel Blues
			Paul's Dance
			Cold Run Shuffle

⁴⁵⁰ Tony Best was previously a Country music artist whose business acumen and knowledge of the scene resulted in Best becoming the biggest organiser of Country and Western weekends and holidays in the 1990s.

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⁴⁵¹ Sheriff, D. Personal E-mail 12/12/2009

Sheriff had been in the Country music scene a long time and had enough traditional selfproduced Country music albums recorded in the facilities in his own home, to realise that
providing a product that the consumer required was not enough. He knew he had to get past
the 'Gatekeepers' i.e. major record labels, mainstream record shops, traditional Country
music DJs and Country music magazines all of which carried prejudices about British
Country music. He did this by starting his own record label (Stomp) and bypassing these
'Gatekeepers', dealing directly with the British line-dance teachers and providing them with
customised teaching materials. This not only encouraged these new line-dance students to
buy the albums, but also, whereas they were often tempted to purchase an American Country
album just for one line-dance track, they now had, via Sheriff, several appropriate line-dance
songs for which the dances, speeds, etc were detailed on the album sleeve. So successful was
Sheriff, that he ended up employing four staff to package and send off his material to
customers and, of course, to sell them at gigs. Those he employed were already from within
the Country music scene so knew the market.

Sheriff also came to realise that, to be successful with these 'newcomers', he had to present an image they regarded as authentic; to them, these images were provided by the most visible artists such as Garth Brooks. Sheriff, who had always worn traditionally 'everyday' relaxed stage clothes, duly changed his image. He started wearing Cowboy hats, patterned shirts, Cowboy boots, and a head microphone. He fully immersed himself in this new identity calling himself 'Mr Line-dance UK'. He also forged links with the new line-dance magazines *Line-dance* and *Line-dance UK*, offering cash prizes for new line-dances choreographed by British choreographers. All this helped to establish him as the number-one line-dance artist in Britain, and one of the most significant people across the scene. This

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⁴⁵² Sheriff, D. Dave Sheriff Biography. [Online]
http://www.davesheriff.co.uk/index.html (accessed 09/12/2009)

success enabled him to market a range of line-dance merchandise such as instruction videos, dance scripts, stickers and T-shirts. His marketing strategy was so successful that his records were soon being stocked by the major record shops - a very unusual scenario in the history of British Country music, as we have already seen.

However, while this made Sheriff very successful commercially, this success was (arguably) in certain quarters resented across the British Country music scene. This researcher recalls that many of the local Country music artists and club organisers considered Sheriff to have 'sold-out' and 'betrayed' the music; they therefore resented him his success. From being a low-paid solo artist, he could now command three or four times more than local acts were earning, many of whom considered that they, and not he, were amongst the top UK Country music bands. It also annoyed local club organisers, many of whom had hired him in the past. Sheriff could now command far higher fees, placing him well out of their price range. Accompanying his later albums, he provided a list of clubs that held line-dance classes throughout the UK. These were mostly the more recent line-dance clubs and/or classes; this further antagonised many of his previous employers in the pre-existing Country music scene.

Of course, issues related to sell-outs, taking the dollar, and abandoning authenticity have always existed across the spectrum of all popular music genres. From Punk to Folk to Techno there are innumerable calls of artistic integrity being challenged by what are usually seen as financial motivations. Such sell-out calls are also frequently made by those from within a scene which has existed for many years and which has mutated into a community-based activity. However, popular music remains kinetic, is subject to several pressures at one and the same time, and cannot be demarcated by static concepts such as sell-outs. Just as it is

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⁴⁵³ This researcher had many conversations with local and national Country music participants who held this view, including local artists Paddy Kelly, Kenny Johnson, local Country music record shop proprietor Pat Allen, club organisers, and artists, Denis Collier and Tony Best.

inevitable that such calls emerge, similarly it is also inevitable that changes will always be wrought. In this case, those wishing for things to 'remain the same' spurned an opportunity for the local Country music scene to regain its kineticism. One would have to suggest that, although based upon genuine social, musical and cultural signifiers of great significance, such an important decision was in retrospect not the best one to make.

Some British Country music acts followed Sheriff into the new line-dance scene such as The Dean Brothers and Paul Bailey. However, most of the Merseyside acts e.g. Kenny Johnson & Northwind, West Virginia, etc., remained entrenched. One local act that did move into the line-dance scene was a young duo called The Cheapseats. Both musicians were already well-known on the local scene. John Pettifer was a guitarist who had played with many Country music bands, whereas Ethan Allen (son of Tony Allen from The Blue Mountain Boys) had been around the local scene from a very young age. Unlike Dave Sheriff, the duo attempted to keep a foot in both camps, performing at both types of Country venue. At line-dance events they would use backing tracks produced in Pettifer's studio, accompanying themselves on guitars. They made full use of CMT by producing videos that were shown regularly on the channel. The duo, who this researcher observed on several occasions, included in their repertoire non-Country songs such as 'Mustang Sally' for the line-dancers, and they built up a reasonably-sized local following among young line-dancers.

This, however, presented a problem for the duo because while the ability to fill a club with followers would have been seen as a distinct advantage in most professionally-run clubs, the Country music clubs were by and large run by amateurs whose priority was, as the phrase goes, 'the music rather than profit'. The new line-dancers who followed the duo did not distinguish between the different types of clubs in which The Cheapseats performed and would turn-up whenever and wherever they were playing. This researcher well remembers

Ethan Allen informing her that, when being booked by the organiser of one Country music club, he was told not to bring any of his followers as the event was 'just for them', by which he meant the traditional Country music fans. Owing to professional differences, the duo broke-up after two years with Allen going to America to work with Raul Mallo from the successful American Country band The Mavericks. Pettifer returned to his recording studio to produce line-dance backing tracks for the increasing number of Country music artists working the line-dance circuit, before returning to play in The Charlie Landsborough Band.

UK

Many Country music artists across the UK realised that they reluctantly had to change if they wanted to remain in the scene, especially after the organisers of more commercially-run Country music events and weekends began to realise, not only the potential of this commercial market, but also that it was needed for commercial survival. As Pete Bethell of the Country music band Desert Wind explained to me: 'When line-dancing came along, we all had to do line-dance songs'. This researcher regularly attended TBL (Tony Best Leisure) Country music events across Britain and abroad, both as a performer and as a consumer. Such events were primarily listening events and in most cases, there was either only a small dance floor or no dance floor at all. After a two-year absence, I returned to play at a TBL event and was surprised to find the main ballroom had over 200 people line-dancing on the floor. Those listening to the artists were relocated to one of the smaller rooms. Only when popular Country music artists such as Raymond Froggatt performed was the main ballroom allocated for non-dance performances.

⁴⁵⁴ Allen recently returned to Liverpool to manage a recently reopened 'Eric's Club' in Mathew Street, a legendary club in the Punk era.

Others such as Denis Collier were not prepared to adapt to these new consumers' requirements. He stopped touring and concentrated on his 'listening events' at his Country music weekend breaks, and his weekly Country music club at The Mirage in Castleford. Collier stated to this researcher: 'If you don't play them the songs they want they don't dance and it's too late to change'. For some Country music artists, however, an undoubted boost to their career was provided, as Peter Fairhead stated. 'One or two of the artists were people who weren't being particularly successful in what was already a failing music scene and saw an opportunity in line-dancing and there were Pop artists who just got backing tracks and learnt a few Country songs'.

Choreography

By the time of this line-dance boom, Country music had its own channel on television, CMT, and the American line-dance teachers were choreographing different line-dances every week via this channel. From personal experience of attending many of the local Country music clubs and from interviews with a number of line-dance scene members such as Debbie Jones, Jayne Barnes, Steve Healey and Peter Fairhead, it does appear that the British line-dance instructors were initially mostly Country music fans who became instructors. These might usually teach the same small canon of line-dances. However, many new line-dancers wanted to learn the new line-dances they saw on CMT and became bored with the same dances each week even though many of the traditional line-dance instructors were reluctant to change. At the same time, aerobic and dance instructors, who felt the financial impact of the loss of their customers to line-dancing started to come into the field of line-dancing. As line-dance instructor and past regular member of her parent's traditional Country music club Debbie Jones, explains:

When we first started it was just starting so you would go to small Country clubs and you just went along and learnt about six dances and everybody did those six dances throughout the night and we just kept doing them and everyone was happy with their six little dances. Then as it progressed, they wanted to learn more and more and around about the time of 'Achy Breaky Heart' it was booming. So in every hall you had line-dancing. Ballroom teachers started teaching line-dancing and you got a lot of keep-fit instructors dancing to line-dancing. That's where it started to change, when you got a lot of ballroom and Latin American teachers coming in and that's when I think it all started to change and started to become what it is now.

Peter Fairhead further elucidated:

Initially it was driven by Country music people. They resented the fact that a lot of people who got involved were from the land of aerobics. If you look back and think about it certainly with the benefit of hindsight, these people were probably relying on the income to pay anything from their children's school or University fees or even paying the mortgage if they are a single parent or whatever, and we came along and took their living. What did they do? They fought back and they said if you can't beat them join them and that is exactly what they did[...]. They brought with them a benefit, which was a far more professional attitude and they brought with them business sense.

The new instructors who saw line-dancing as just another form of income (and the dancers as paying customers) had few problems teaching these new dances, making them even more popular and sought-out by the new battalion of dancers. This made line-dancing, for them, a new key income stream.

However, a pivotal change came about when CMT was removed from the air. The instructors lost their main source of dances with which to teach, and in many cases had to resort to

choreographing their own line-dances. These new instructors, many of whom were not from the Country music scene, realised that the primary reason for new line-dancers attending a Country music club was to dance, not listen to the music, and that they would dance to any genre of music with the correct BPM (beats per minute). U.K choreographers then started to choreograph line-dances to different genres of music. Initially, only a few choreographers did this, but there then arrived significant new people in driving the scene in a new direction. In Liverpool, it was Rob Fowler, in the Midlands, Maggie Gallagher. Debbie Jones discussed this change with me: 'Rob Fowler came along. He started writing stuff (dance scripts) that was totally different to what anyone's done before. It was all quite energetic.' Mainstream popular music genres became musical favourites amongst the dancers (naturally, they listened to these away from Country music clubs). Dave Sheriff explained in a personal e-mail to this researcher: 'Sadly when we lost CMT it deprived the UK of the choice of good Country music and the choreographers began writing to the Pop genre. I think that was the turning point.' Steve Healy dance editor of Linedancer magazine further explained: 'Things are changing and have been over a long period of time [...] line-dancing came out of Country music and its popularity was largely due to Country music but then it's been evolving [...] People started using all kinds of music to dance to so it just became more diverse.'

Peter Fairhead expressed his view to this researcher that he believed it was inevitable that Pop music would enter line-dancing, stating:

Country music fans for some reason expect you to only listen to and enjoy Country music. I don't know anyone who enjoys one sort of music. So if you're listening to it it's inevitable you will dance to it but Country music fans also act surprised[...]The point I'm trying to make is, it is not anything that will not normally happen, it's not a religion, if people hear a piece of music they will dance to it.

So, the new line-dance instructors, unlike the traditional Country music line-dance instructors, had largely arrived from the commercial dance sector where dancers were considered paying consumers, not essentially fans of a music genre. They soon realised that the primary aim of these new line-dancers was to have an evening of dance and (unlike the traditional line-dancers); they had no special allegiances to Country music. Many new instructors decided that by cutting out the Country music club, they might have their own memberships and so increase their earnings. A number of them moved away from the Country music clubs and some even established their own line-dance clubs, booking evenings in other social clubs, such as the class run in The Whitby Sports and Social Club in Ellesmere Port, which actually still takes place in a separate room to the Country music event, on the same evening. Other instructors tended to set-up line-dance classes in the premises they had been using for their aerobic or dance classes. These line-dance instructors also realised that by using recordings, rather than any live music they could directly tailor the music to suit the class, which was not the case in the Country music club. This also proved popular with the students, who in some cases preferred learning to recordings. Many felt that by using CDs rather than live music, the line-dance instructor could accommodate everyone at each level in the group, which was not always the case when a live artist performed at the club. To the commercially-minded instructors, this further increased their profit margin. It also took the music further away from live 'traditional' forms of Country music. Giordano (2010)⁴⁵⁵ explains that this also happened on the American line-dance scene, stating: 'In a short time professional dance instructors looked beyond Country music for songs of interest to appeal to a diverse group of individuals who enjoyed line-dancing but were not necessarily concerned

⁴⁵⁵ Giordano, R.G. (2010) 'Achy Breaky Heart and Line Dancing' In *Country and Western Dance*. Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press. pp. 137-138

over the strict Country music format.' He further explained that these songs were distinctly non-Country and were basically Rock, Pop and Rhythm & Blues.

Further, traditional Country music dress signifiers seemed out of place with the new music, so gradually came to be discarded. Jayne Barnes who started line-dancing at The Metal Box Sports and Social Club in Speke, Liverpool in the early-1980s explains, 'It has totally changed in my eyes when I was eighteen with the frilly dresses and Cowboy boots and the Country music doing "The Trilogy" and everything. I know that's still done but where we go it's throw on your jeans and whatever on and do your dancing'. Barnes also explained about the music they danced to: 'A lot of people say, "Do you dance to 'Achy Breaky Heart' or Dolly Parton?" and all that. No we don't, sometimes there's Country and Western songs, Shania Twain and others, but at the moment we learn to dance to '1-2-3 Summertime' by Beyoncé. We've done dances to music in the charts, at the moment 'It Hurts' by Jennifer Lopez [...] It's not just Country music, its diverse'. Lorraine Du Bois, line-dance instructor also stated: 'What we do is more sort of Pop tunes like Alexandra Burke and Lady Gaga. There are dances as soon as the record comes out, choreographed and then they become line-dances.'

For many people in the line-dance scene there is a problem with the image of line-dancing as portrayed via the media. This Country or 'hoe-down' image has a negative effect on attracting new members and, for them, paints an inaccurate picture of today's line-dance scene. *Linedancer* magazine dance editor, Steve Healey stated to this researcher:

The problem is the media portray an image of line-dancing that is not true. It is not reflective of that. If you ever hear line-dancing mentioned it's always related to Country music. You've always got someone saying 'Yee haw' and wearing a gingham skirt and Cowboy hat. So the younger

population unless they actively went to a line-dance are not necessarily going to think any different.

He further explained: 'You are not going to notice anyone wearing anything in particular that would be seen to stand out as line-dance gear. They are just going to be wearing everyday stuff, unless it's a special occasion it might be a bit more sparkly.' Debbie Jones agreed with these comments:

It absolutely drives me mad and drives everybody mad. If you see anybody on telly line-dancing, they've got Cowboy boots on with their jeans tucked into them. Cowboy hats, they've got their hands in their belt loops, the trousers and the hat and they're doing dances we would have danced to years ago and it's totally not like that now.

Line-dance instructor Dawn Morgan also complained that:

When they portray it on TV, it's always the Cowboy 'Yee Haw', 'Achy Breaky Heart' and it's not like that. When I tell people here, they say, "Yeah you all slap your sides, say 'Yee Haw' and wear your Country boots". I think it's quite rare to see people like that now. They tend to wear just normal trousers, T-shirts and dance trainers.

Local line-dancer Maureen Jones discussed this important change, stating:

It's thought that line-dancing is only Country and Western but it's not, it's all kinds of music. If you get a proper Country and Western 'do', you get the Stetsons and the boots but line-dancers aren't Cowboys. It's changed from Country, the dress code especially, because everyone used to wear boots, jeans, denim skirts and stuff. Now people dress up in nice clothes like you're going out for the evening. That was one of the big differences and the music of course[...].it was a gradual process, it didn't just suddenly happen, one day it was Country and Western, the next day it was Pop. It sort of got introduced gradually.

Many line-dancers today regard line-dancing as a dance form that evolved from the Country music scene. However, they also believe it is this specific 'early' image of the scene, which is detrimental to it and now does not reflect the scene that it has evolved into today. While it is this early image that has helped shape the perception of the scene to those outside of it, to many members of the scene such perceptions are rooted in a stereotypical past within the historical narrative of the scene. These members wish to distance themselves from what they view as negative, perhaps even 'corny' images and connotations of its Country music past. Jayne Barnes, a line-dancer who was originally part of the traditional Country music scene states about her current allegiance 'I don't class myself as a Country music fan. I class myself as a line-dancer.' There are still a handful of traditional line-dance clubs where some people still wear Western clothing. Even the line-dance national awards (now in their nineteenth year) still retains the title, 'The Crystal Boot Awards' (a statuette in the shape of a Cowboy boot). Such an image still connotes it to its past roots, which makes it difficult to shake off this image of the scene, and will more than likely change as the years go by - unless, of course, there is a resurgence of interest in Country music in the UK.

Mediation and Evolution

Linedancer magazine is the largest national line-dance magazine, first published in June 1996. A comparison of *Linedancer* magazine No 5, 456 published October 1996 with a copy of the magazine No 210⁴⁵⁷ published in October 2013, seventeen years later helps to illustrate how the scene has been evolving away from its Country music roots. In the 1996 edition, the magazine published six choreographed line-dance scripts, all to Country songs. There were seven adverts for Western clothing, hats, boots etc. Three line-dance events were advertised

⁴⁵⁶ Linedancer Magazine. (October 1996). Issue 5. Saletto, L. (Ed). England. Sunderland: Champion Media Group.

⁴⁵⁷ Linedancer Magazine. (October 2013). Issue 210. Saletto, L. (ed). England. Sunderland: Champion Media Group. (Publisher)

and its UK club guide listed 236 clubs. The magazine's line-dance chart (provided by clubs) contained 27 Country songs; the other three were by The Eagles and Mark Knopfler – both (technically) Country Rock.

The 2013 edition of the magazine published nineteen choreographed line-dance scripts of which only six were based on Country songs. There were four adverts for line-dance clothing, three of which were for line-dance trainers, shoes, and one for 'fancy belts'. There were 35 line-dance events advertised and its UK club guide listed 302 clubs, only one of which, 'The Sheffield City Liners' was originally advertised in the 1996 edition, perhaps suggesting growth but also rapid turnover. The magazine also listed 53 clubs from 15 countries outside the UK in its international club guide, which included clubs in Spain, Germany, Australia, South Africa and the USA. The *Linedancer* line-dance chart (based upon subscribers' votes) contains no Country songs; artists include The Wanted, Pitbull and Robin Thicke. The magazine also has four top-10 dance charts based on the dancers' ability levels (also based on subscribers' voting). The 'Beginners' chart contained six Country songs, the 'Improvers' had four Country songs, the 'Intermediates' contained no Country songs and the 'Advanced' level had one Country song, 'Begin Again' by Taylor Swift.

This magazine shows us that the movement away from Country music as the sole genre of music, to which line-dancing is performed, is not confined to the local or national scene. *Linedancer* publishes club charts from different countries each month. From June 2013 to Feb 2014, it published 10 club's charts from eight countries: Germany, South Africa, Australia, Norway, Cyprus, Canada, Israel, and the USA. In all countries, with the exception of the USA, Country music only comprised 50% (or significantly less) in these charts. In the USA, a line-dance club in Texas had 90% Country music in their charts, (possibly the

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⁴⁵⁸ Linedancer Magazine. (June 2013 - Feb 2014) Issue 206-214. Saletto, L. (ed). England. Sunderland: Champion Media Group (Publisher).

dominant genre in Texas) while one from California had 40%. These charts appear to show a movement away from Country music in many countries. The USA charts though, also show there can be large variations within countries or between clubs. The national scene charts were published for three countries: Spain, which had 20% Country music on its charts, Singapore, which had 10%, and Norway, which had no Country music on its charts.

This researcher visited The Wild Horse Saloon in Nashville, Tennessee in April 2013. While it only opened in 1994 to take advantage of the new line-dance 'craze' in America, The Wild Horse Saloon is considered one of the 'significant places' for line-dancing, calling itself 'The Home of Line Dancing'. By taking ownership of this title, this relatively new club has given itself 'authenticity' in the line-dance community, and it is now a place that many line-dancers from both the USA and UK visit (perhaps in a similar way Country music fans visit the Grand Ole Opry). Maureen Needham in *I See America Dancing* (2002)⁴⁵⁹ states in her chapter 'All Lined Up at the Wild Horse Saloon 1997' that this was the venue used in the TNN television programme *It's Live at The Wild Horse Saloon*, which featured line-dancing, and was broadcast daily. Such programming undoubtedly helped to reinforce the image of The Wild Horse Saloon as the significant place for line-dancing; however, such programming would never have been likely in the UK owing to line-dancing's 'dubious' (rather than 'authentic') associations with Country music.

This researcher found that many of the dancers in The Wild Horse Saloon were not wearing the Cowboy signifiers, but everyday clothes, and that the line-dance lessons were conducted to a variety of genres, not just Country music. When the house band played for the dancers, true to tradition, they played Country songs. However, they also performed a number of non-Country songs such as selections from The Beatles, Elvis Presley and The Rolling Stones.

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⁴⁵⁹ Needham, M. (2007) 'All Lined Up at the Wild Horse Saloon' (1997) In *I See America Dancing, Selected readings 1685-2000.* Illinois USA: University of Illinois Press. pp. 81-84

The standard of line-dancing varied from the less complex dances performed to the Country music songs to much more complex dances when up-tempo Pop songs were played. This was quite different from what Needham observed in 1997, where the local line-dancers wore Western-wear clothing and normal clothing was generally only worn by tourists. She also observed that the dancing was less complex.

Socialisation

During this study, I found that, to line-dancers, performance events have a deeply social function offering an opportunity for the participants to interact. This researcher spoke to a number of line-dancers and other members about their scene, and they all expressed the view that the social side of the scene was as important as the actual dancing. Jayne Barnes who now goes to a line-dance club every week at St Margaret Mary's social club in Liverpool stated 'The social side plays a big role in it. It's like a little community, like a little family.' Jayne also expressed the view that part of this was due to the relaxed atmosphere stemming from the more relaxed attitude towards the dancing stating: 'When you go to a line-dance night not everybody's dancing the same way. They're dancing the same dance but half of them will be turning and half of them won't be turning and it doesn't matter that everybody is not in a line and that everybody is not spot-on.' Jayne also explained that they danced to records, but stated that they have a live artist on once a month and it always a sell-out event with members from other clubs and classes also attending; she enjoyed the interaction with these other dancers. Maureen Jones also stated about the social aspect of the scene:

It's not just dancing, it's everything. It's the music, it's the dancing, it's the friendship. I've been on my own for a very long time and I've tried loads of different clubs and societies but line-dancing is the one thing that has helped me through everything, because you don't need to have somebody with you, you don't need a partner.

She also talked about being part of a wider network saying: 'You can go all over the Country. I went to see my son in Birmingham and I went to a club there and you just blend in. People welcome you wherever you're from, wherever you are. Line-dancing is universal.'

Steve Healey stated that he believed line-dancing plays an important part in people's social lives: 'It gives them a reason to get out of the house. To a lot of people that could be extremely valuable so I think that line-dancing is very important in the community sense.' Dawn Morgan also felt this sense of community was vitally important, stating: 'If you get new people joining you don't want them to feel alone, you treat them as a friend'. As evidence of the importance of such socialization networks, Lorraine Du Bois, who runs The 'Boot Scootez' line-dance club in Huntingdon, has had to move to a larger venue to accommodate new members. She explained this feeling of community: 'People even bring plates of food to share. Most people know each other and if they don't they soon do. There are always volunteers to set out and bring raffle prizes, decorations, etc. Lots of people have made friends and see each other outside dancing'.

Nadasen (2008)⁴⁶⁰ in the *Journal of Women and Ageing*, studied women over 60 years of age, who line-danced. She displayed results that appear to support the above views in that the participants claimed that they also expanded their repertoire of social activity, leading to further community involvement, and personal development and happiness. In fact, as part of this study, this researcher attended a number of Country music and line-dance clubs and events.

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⁴⁶⁰Nadasen, K. (2008) 'Life Without Line Dancing and the Other Activities Would be Too Dreadful to Imagine an Increase in Social Activity for Older Women' in *The Journal of Women and Ageing*. Vol 20 Issue 3-4 Routledge. [Online pub] http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08952840801985060?journalCode=wjwa20#.Vcx0jbJViko (accessed 3/6/14) p. 329

As previously stated, The Whitby Sports and Social Club venue is unusual in that both the line-dance and Country music clubs are held at the same venue, on the same night. The Country music club is a traditional type of club booking live solo, duos and bands. The evening consisted of two live sets and, in the intervals, there were birthday announcements, raffles, etc. Dancing is only allowed during the second set, which usually occurs in the last thirty minutes of the evening. This researcher had attended this club on a number of occasions and recognised many of the customers, not only from that club but also as past attendees of the three or four Country music clubs that used to exist in the area, but are now defunct. Almost all the members appeared to be over sixty years old and about equal regarding gender. None of the participants wore Cowboy signifiers, but were dressed in clothes that one would normally associate with an evening out. The club opened at eight o'clock with the live music starting at nine.

The line-dance club opened at 7.30pm and dancing started around 8pm. There were about 70 people attending the line-dance club (half the number that were attending the Country club) The line-dance club charged £3 entry, while the Country music club was free. The members attending the line-dance club were aged between 30 and 60 and almost exclusively female, with fewer than five males present on that particular night. In this club, the participants also wore casual clothes and there were no Cowboy signifiers. The dancers tended to sit in groups, talking and socializing throughout the evening. The line-dance instructor, Debbie Jones who wore a head microphone, took to the floor and welcomed the members, made the social announcements, and explained how the night would progress. The structure of the dancing followed was similar to those described to me by a number of line-dancers and instructors from other clubs, interviewed as part of this research. All dances were performed to CDs played via the PA.

The dancing started with, what was called, the beginners' level. The instructor would stand in front of the line-dancers and demonstrate the dance steps, breaking down the various parts of the dance, e.g., turns, etc. It is at this level that the Country songs and those Pop songs whose tempos and levels of energetic intensity, suit these easier levels. After the instruction, people dance two or three times to the song with the instructor circulating around to help the dancers out. After the instruction section, songs are played to allow the members to dance whichever style they wish, with the instructor still helping anyone who needed it. Most members danced at this level, even those of a much higher standard. The dancing was performed in a relaxed atmosphere, with members often talking and joking while dancing and walking on and off the dance floor at will. This section usually lasted for about half an hour and was followed by a break of twenty minutes where members would sit and socialize, walk around talking to other groups, with a few practicing dance steps to the background music.

After about twenty minutes, the next level of dancing expertise took place: the intermediate level. This followed the same pattern of the beginners' class, but there were no Country songs; older members or beginners sat this section out, not taking part in this or the advanced level that followed. Very few of them left at this stage of the evening, choosing to stay on watching the more experienced dancers or socialize at their tables. This again lasted about thirty minutes followed by a further twenty-minute break. The background music played in the break covered all levels of dances, allowing the beginners to dance again if they wanted. It was in the breaks that this researcher spoke to a number of the line-dancers. Almost all informants expressed how important the social side of the evening was to them. A number of them had attended line-dance holidays, breaks and festivals, both in the UK and abroad, indicating a thriving translocal scene. They felt that this gave them an opportunity to meet other line-dancers, discuss the dancing and to network with different nationalities making

them feel that they were part of a larger scene. The advanced level session had the much more expert dancers; it was all Pop music to which they danced with much faster tempo or more energetic level of intensity, involving many more turns and intricate steps. The evening finished around 10.30 pm when the line-dancers left, passing the Country music club on their way out. None went into the club to dance or listen to the music.

Concluding evidence and remarks

Line-dancing effectively emerged from the Country music scene and many of their members still feel they have ownership of it. The organiser at the Whitby Country music club, Joey Quinn stated he could not understand that, while the line-dancers pay to go into the line-dance club, they do not attend his which is free and provides live music, stating. 'We have a room next door that does line-dancing on Wednesday and Monday night so that if anyone wants to line-dance they can go next door and pay to line-dance, but if they come in here and listen to the music it's free'. 461

What surprised him is that they leave at a time when they can come in and dance to a live act at his club, but they still will not come in. Debbie Jones, the line-dance instructor at Whitby explained what she believed to be the reason why the Country music club cannot persuade the line-dancers to come in:

The problem being is that, personally, I feel you hear all those groups especially like the ones in there (the Country music club) and they play old Country and they haven't progressed any [...] They don't want modern Country and it's very difficult to bring new people in because it's all about hanging your dog and your wife's run off.

⁴⁶¹ Quinn regularly complained to this researcher that the blame for the demise of Country music clubs lies at the feet of line-dancers.

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Such new members in the line-dance club are only really used to dancing to a little modern Country together with (mostly) mainstream Pop music, so hearing the older material in the Country club holds no attraction for them – in fact it probably sounds to them rather archaic. Furthermore, the actual membership of the Country club could equally be regarded by the line-dancers as archaic, with the demographic being clearly in the region of 60-years plus, whereas the dancers range from a variety of ages.

Many line-dancers pointed out to this researcher how important it was to them to be able to attend line-dance festivals and holidays. These festivals have many of the characteristics of translocal scenes as described by Dowd, Liddle and Nelson (2004), 462 in that they occur in a delineated space, draw dispersed individuals together on designated occasions and offer a collective opportunity to enjoy both dance and other lifestyle elements allowing them to immerse themselves in a line-dance festival 'culture'. Jayne Barnes discussed attending the line-dance festival at Powys Castle in North Wales, which is attended by over one thousand people from all over the UK. The organisers of the club she attends and other Liverpool line-dance clubs organise two coaches to take people. She enjoys socializing with other line-dancers, learning what they dance to, the stalls where they can buy music, etc. and the general atmosphere and hubbub of the festival.

Dawn Morgan goes to festivals and breaks, often with her line-dance group, and feels she experiences warm, friendly atmospheres. There is camaraderie between the different groups of line-dancers. Lorraine Du Bois said she attends a number of festivals and events to keep in touch with other instructors, keeping abreast of news and developments. At Hornsby, for example, there is a mixture of DJs and live music and she enjoys the atmosphere of everyone

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⁴⁶² Dowd, T. Liddle, J. and Nelson, K. (2004) 'Music Festivals as Scenes,' in Bennett, A and Petersen, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville. TN: Vanderbilt University. pp. 149-167

mixing together. She has also attended a line-dance festival in France and felt it was like one big community stating: 'Line-dancing is like another language. Everybody gets on the floor and you all join together, everyone knows the same dances.'

Steve Healey has attended festivals in America, Australia, Singapore, and Africa. Maureen Jones also has attended festivals both at home and abroad, in places such as Turkey. Both Steve and Maureen expressed their all-round enjoyment of the festival experience. The line-dancers who attended these events expressed the view that the intimate atmosphere in these events facilitated communication and interaction amongst participants, exchanging information about dances, choreographers, music, etc, and sometimes this information was brought back and introduced into their local scene.

The line-dance community also has a strong and active virtual scene. Unlike the Country music scene, they have been fully able to embrace modern web-based digital technology almost from the scene's inception. Dancers, choreographers and artists now have chat rooms, notice boards, forums and social-media sites. There are online-dance magazines and *Linedancer* magazine has a virtual edition. In addition, many video clips of the latest dances are available on social-media sites such as YouTube. The web provides valuable networks of communication locally, nationally and internationally allowing the line-dancers to immerse themselves fully in a global scene. A good example of this is Bill Bader's website *Line-dance Lists* where he lists the websites of virtual line-dance magazines and newsletters, hard copy line-dance magazines, choreographers, line-dance video suppliers, line-dance groups and forums and line-dance associations. His website covers 38 countries and provides a list of links to 1165 line-dance clubs or classes across these countries.

⁴⁶³ Bader, W. (2011) *Line-dance Links* .[Online] http://www.billbader.com/line-links.htm (accessed 4/3/2011)

Blame?

There are many members of the local and national Country music scene, who like Joey Quinn at Whitby, consider the line-dancers responsible for the decline of the Country music scene. This was a view put to this researcher on a number of occasions by scene members, but none offered any evidence or even a coherent argument why this was the case. Peter Fairhead believes these comments are unfair and that line-dancing has always paid for the sins of the British Country music scene, stating that, at least for him 'Country music [In the UK] has been a declining form since the mid-1980s, with falling numbers and clubs closing and Cowboys and then line-dancers being made the scapegoat.'

Yet, to other members of the Country music scene, Country music will always have ownership of line-dancing and they resent the incursion of other genres of music into what they see as exclusively a Country music product. This is somewhat 'at odds' with the arrival of line-dancing across the local scenes (such as on Merseyside) in the UK, for, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, it was not welcomed by many. However, in the authenticity paradigm stakes, this does not appear to matter. Lorraine Du Bois stated she has found that these days: 'You get people who are adamant that line-dancing should still be about Country music'. Genre and cultural contradictions, therefore, continue to abound; for example, local Country music artist Charlie Newport complained about this incursion into the Country music domain stating to this researcher:

I do a gig in Old Swan on a Wednesday. They'll have a Country night and before you go on they'll have a line-dancing disco going. Nearly all the tunes they put on aren't Country but they are line-dancing to them. The famous one they do now is the one by T-Rex 'I Love To Boogie' and the other one by the Killers: 'Human'.

Eddie Fox also expressed his disapproval of this by stating

We went to Llandudno last week. There was a big party in the other room. They were a line-dance group. We said what group have you got on and they said CDs and they had travelled from all over and they probably wouldn't know a Country music group if you asked them to name one.

Because of the decline of Country music clubs and a general lack of venues, many local artists have been forced to take a more pragmatic view of line-dancing. Local band West Virginia, who, for a number of years, have been organising Country music, breaks and holidays, in both the UK and abroad (including a 4-day event at The Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool) now advertise them on their website as Country music **and** line-dance events. Kenny Johnson, local Country music artist and Country music radio broadcaster of great renown, has now acceded to pressure and plays line-dance clubs as a solo artist with backing tracks. Eddy Miller, now also a solo artist even expressed his support for line-dancers stating:

I always find some clubs you go to they sit and listen and another club you go to as soon as you start the first number, they're on the floor line-dancing. I always say to myself, some people have a different attitude to Country music, some like to sit and listen to it and some like to line-dance to it so I don't mind either of it really[...]Some artists don't like them line-dancing, I don't mind 'cause they're enjoying themselves. They come to the club to enjoy themselves.

For many line-dancers, their scene is like all popular music scenes, dynamic and continually evolving. As Lorraine Du Bois stated: 'Like anything, it will always evolve; even now there is a new strain of line-dancing which is much more modern and funky [...] Probably more for the younger folk and it has hip rolls and all sorts of things that they would like.' Debbie Jones even suggests there is now an over-production of dances being choreographed stating: 'There

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⁴⁶⁴ Cloud 9 Entertainments, *Mersey Magic.* [Online]< http://www.cloud9.countrymusic-festival.co.uk/mersey-magic-2010.php>(accessed 14/9/2010)

are that many dances it's unbelievable. There are about one hundred dances coming out every week so you tend to stick to the choreographers you like and you know.'

Music producer Glen Rogers, who states that he has created over 1500 pieces for line-dancers and choreographers appears to concur with the views in this statement; when writing in *Linedancer* magazine in July 2013: 'There appears to be a frenzied rush for choreographers to turn out as many dances as they possibly can in the shortest space of time [...] The majority of dancers and instructors (at club level) complain there are far too many dances'. ⁴⁶⁵

Giordano (2010) discussed a similar problem in the American line-dance scene where the challenge to keep up with the new dances coming out actually overwhelmed many American line-dancers. He explained that in some clubs, if a person missed a couple of weeks, on their return dancers were performing different dances to different music with dances and the music they had learnt a couple of weeks previously having been discarded by the instructors.⁴⁶⁶

Optimism/pessimism

Unlike the pessimistic attitude of the members of the local Country music scene conveyed to this researcher about the scenes' future, this researcher found that line-dance members are optimistic about their scene. As Steve Healey stated: 'We want to embrace the future, and I think it will be around for a long time'. Many members of the line-dance scene expressed the view that they had good reasons to be optimistic. Their scene has a network of clubs that appears to be growing and contained strong local, translocal, and virtual dimensions. Within the local, translocal, and virtual scenes there is social interaction and a thriving network of information flow and exchange. Line-dancing is also attracting new and young members into

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⁴⁶⁵ Linedancer Magazine. (July 2013). Issue 207. Saletto, L. (ed). England. Champion Media Group.

⁴⁶⁶ Giordano, R.G. (2010) Achy Breaky Heart and Line Dancing' In *Country and Western Dance*. Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press. pp. 137-138

their scene and its members are open to evolution in order to sustain the scene. They are not afraid of change or cross-fertilisation from other genres of music, or other dance styles. This is in stark contrast to the negative views expressed by local Country music scene members. This researcher interviewed a number of them and all had a pessimistic view about their scene's future. Peter Dee ex-of Hobo, now a solo artist, stated 'It's virtually nonexistent in Liverpool. Now Country music is still liked by a lot of people but I think it's the venues that are the problem. Now a lot of pubs and clubs have closed so it's hard to find somewhere to go'. Tony Ainscough of The Everglades, who went from a group to a duo with Darren Neild and now works as a solo act, expressed the view that 'The scene's changed drastically. The killer is all the duos and single acts. If you're in a band now you're doing it for love, you're not doing it for the money. You have a job'. Charlie Newport of Charlie Boy, now also a solo artist, expressed similar views: 'There are not many Country bands. Everyone you knew was in a Country band, now there's no work. A lot of venues have gone and clubs can't afford to pay.'

Moreover, Eddy Miller of The Miller Brothers, now also a solo artist, said about the scene's future:

I think it will eventually go less and less because there are not many new Country bands in Liverpool. When we were playing Country all the bands were playing Country in their teens and in their twenties and thirties, now you've got to go few and far between to find a band in their twenties playing Country.

The last professional local Country music band was West Virginia who disbanded in 2012. This researcher interviewed them before they disbanded, and they expressed their disillusionment about the way the scene was declining. Keith Thornhill stated to this researcher:

You would go along to a club and play and they would give you 3 or 4 dates then and there. Today it's harder. There's not many live bands knocking around. They are few and far between on the Country scene. It's like that all over. The Country clubs are closing down.

Tony Peck, the band's drummer, also reiterated this view stating 'They say things go round in a circle but I can't see this Country music completing the circle now'. Many of the local scene members also expressed to this researcher a pessimistic view of the future of the local scene. John Colford stated that 'The scene now, I think, is finished, there's not a lot of Country bands' also stating 'the young ones have a different outlook on the music. They're not into Country music. If there's nobody there, it's finished'. While Norman Boasc stated 'It's all changed now, there's not many groups out there. All the groups have packed in'. In addition, Carol Mortimer stated: 'I don't think there's much Country in Liverpool nowadays. You have to hunt for the Country'.

Local radio broadcasters Billy Butler and Spencer Leigh, who were both involved in the Country music scene and have both, presented the BBC Radio Merseyside Country music programme 'Sounds Country' also expressed their pessimism about the scene to this researcher. Billy Butler, when discussing the weekly gig-guide broadcast on 'Sounds Country' stated, 'The list is almost down to nothing for the clubs in Liverpool'. Moreover, Spencer Leigh stated 'There just isn't the interest in Country music *per se* any more [...] These days how many people grow up and say I'm a Country music fan'.

Joey Quinn explained to this researcher the changes he has observed stating; 'It's unbelievable the way it's changed. There's not many bands on the scene now. It's changed to solos, duos and trios. All the bands have broken up now so it's really changed. You're fighting now to get artists that's why we go to solos and duos and we can't afford to put a band on every week.'

The only scene member who spoke to this researcher who was not pessimistic about the future of Country music on Merseyside was Ricky Tomlinson ex-Liverpool Country music artist, comedian and owner of the successful local cabaret club The Green Room in Duke Street. The Green Room is run in a style reminiscent of 1960's cabaret clubs such as The Wooky Hollow, The Coconut Grove, and Allinsons. It has cabaret-style entertainment and once each month, of a Sunday afternoon, holds a Country music show that is well-attended. Tomlinson stated to this researcher: 'People seem to be not only coming themselves but bringing their friends with them [....] Today there are five acts on. We are the only club who would put on five Country music acts.'

When this researcher attended the club I found almost all the audience were over 60 years old (some much older). The five acts performing, consisted of four solo artists and one duo, all using backing tracks either on their own or to support their guitar playing. All the songs performed were Liverpool-style Country music songs, in the 'traditional' sense. The only act this researcher recognised was Eddy Miller. This researcher felt the standard of the acts, other than Miller, was not high, often singing out of tune to poor quality backing tracks. Nevertheless, the attendees appeared to enjoy the afternoon.

The contrast between the apparent futures of the two scenes highlights the relevance of the line-dance phenomenon as an important transition point in both the local and national Country music scenes. Whether this transition point of a large number of new consumers wanting to enter the Country music scene was an opportunity missed because of the intransigent attitude of its members, or whether these new consumers were always going to move out of the Country music field and take ownership of their own scene, is a question that will remain unanswered. It remains though, an important, if not **the** most important transition point for the local Country music scene, for it was the only time since the 1950s, / '60s that

any significant numbers of consumers entered this scene both at a local and national level. Their loss to the Country scene has sadly meant that, at least up until the time of writing, it has continued along its pattern of decline.

Chapter 10: An Oral History of the Country and Western Community based at The Melrose Abbey Public House, Liverpool.

The previous chapter suggests that perhaps the decline of the existing local Country music scene appears to be to do with the inflexibility of a community, rather than the kineticism of a scene. In the light of the information previously presented, this case study consists of an oral history of one of the last surviving Country music communities in Liverpool. It took place over a fifteen-month period at The Melrose Abbey public house. The Liverpool Country music scene consists of an increasing ageing demographic audience. Many of the venues have now closed, or else have switched to other forms of music entertainment. Public houses in Liverpool have decreased in number and the demographic make-up of the city has irrevocably changed. Additionally, the aforementioned line-dancing phenomenon, which began within the Country music fraternity, has mutated, generically, and now only seems to be vaguely attached to the genre which once, albeit reluctantly, gave it meaning. All that now remains is a very small number of disparate communities or individuals, and these numbers are dwindling so much each year that soon there will be no Country music scene in Liverpool.

This is, therefore, a very timely study of one of those very few remaining communities and shows how through its shared alliances and values it has developed rituals, rhetoric and practices that have helped maintain the group cohesion and stability, but which will also ironically ultimately lead to its demise. This researcher continues to consider the remains of what has taken place at The Melrose Abbey as a 'community' because it fits well the popular music studies academic descriptions of community, which suggests that a community is a static, close-knit group, not open to change, with specific boundaries, both musically and

socially. For example, Straw (1991)⁴⁶⁷ differentiates scene from musical community stating that a community 'Presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable according to a wide range of sociological variables.' Cohen (1991) also states that Ruth Finnegan, in her re-assessment of the notion of 'musical world', felt community presented local music making as stable and close-knit.⁴⁶⁸

Methodology

The methods used in this study revolved around participant observation, personal interviews and documentary sources, but were not strictly 'ethnographic', in these approaches. Because of the inclination of this researcher to support a historically-bound thesis, it was considered that ethnography in the purest sense was not really at the heart of the research. Fetterman (1998)⁴⁶⁹ defines ethnography as 'the art and science of describing a group or culture'. He also suggests that participant observation 'combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data'. However, ethnography is not the same as oral history: although they both begin with an engagement with the lives of others, an ethnographer tends to be interested in the present, whereas oral historians attempt to grapple with pasts, as presented by their informants. The ethnographer wishes to generate understandings of culture through the representation of what might be described as an 'emic' perspective. This allows meanings to emerge from the ethnographic encounter, rather than querying them from within existing models (by contrast, an 'etic' perspective refers to a more distant, analytical orientation to experience). Oral history, on the other hand, collects memories and personal commentaries of

⁴⁶⁷ Straw, W. (1991) 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music.' In *Cultural Studies*. Vol 5. No 3. England: Routledge. pp. 368-388

⁴⁶⁸ Cohen, S. (1999) 'Scenes' in Horner, B and Swiss, T. (eds). *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 36-38

⁴⁶⁹ Fetterman, D. M. (1998), *Ethnography Step by Step*, New York [USA]: SAGE, p. 1

⁴⁷⁰ Fetterman, D. M. (1998), Ethnography Step by Step, New York [USA]: SAGE, pp. 34-35

historical significance largely through recorded interviews. An oral-history interview generally consists of a well-prepared interviewer questioning an interviewee and recording their exchange in either a written, audio and/or video format. Recordings of the interview can be transcribed, summarized, or indexed according to the matrix of the enquirer, who might also place material in a thesis or archive for future research. It is this latter stance that this researcher feels her research should be encapsulated by an historical thesis of change and stasis. For this researcher, oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own specific experiences. An oral history of Country music in Liverpool does not have its basis in (say) folklore, but instead is an attempt to bear testimony to a thus far partially hidden history and to place such testimony in an accurate historical context.

In this particular case, the oral history collected throughout this thesis has depended upon human memory and the spoken word. This has meant that my methods of collection have varied greatly: from taking notes to various forms of electronic recordings, to collation of data from secondary sources, and so on. Nevertheless, it became very clear at an early stage of this research that the human life span put boundaries on the subject matter that I was collecting. This, in turn, led to the realization that irretrievable information was slipping away from me with every moment that passed – hence the need to conduct the following observations and collect interviews at The Melrose Abbey.

The observations carried out consisted of personally participating in the community both as a performer and as an audience member, observations of the premises and the participants, listening to the musical performances and informal conversations with members of the community. I decided on participant observation as opposed to being a passive observer, as it was a relatively small and close-knit community with strong kinship ties and did not readily

welcome outsiders, so I felt that this depth of participation might facilitate acceptance into the group. This researcher's experience both as a moderately well-known Country music artist and as a Country music fan meant I could quite easily involve myself in that way. Further, it was simply not ethical to conceal from the group that I was studying their community as part of a larger study on the local Country music scene. I therefore identified as the main 'gatekeeper' of the group the bandleader George Neild establishing a rapport with him, gaining his agreement and through him the agreement of the rest of the community, to carry out the study.

Gaining the trust of the group in this way and participating in each night's performances enabled this researcher to obtain more and accurate information in addition to a better understanding of the community than if I were a passive observer and considered an outsider by the group. Obviously becoming accepted as a member of the community and participating in their culture meant I always had to be aware not to become so involved in the community that I lost my historical perspective, thus impartiality. I believed that being aware of this along with a number of other factors such as, (a) the fact that it was only part of a larger study, (b) my own musical career away from the community and (c) that there was a large (40+ years) age difference between myself and community members, meant I had little in common with them outside of the community. I believe all such factors enabled this researcher to maintain the level of detachment needed to remain at least relatively impartial, which I believe was central to the study. I also had to be aware that, in becoming at least a temporary member of the community, I did not have an undue influence on the social, cultural or psychological fabric of it; I therefore remained a minor participant in the community activity.

This researcher carried out this study over a long time period attending regularly for over fifteen months and then periodically returning to the community for further study/information. I felt this long period of time was required to fully understand its shared alliances, values, rituals, rhetoric and practices. As Cohen (1993)⁴⁷¹ explains, this type of study requires a lengthy period of intimate study highlighting the historical, social and cultural specificity of events, activities and relationships. Lee and Peterson (2004)⁴⁷² also explain that understanding the nuances embedded in the discussions of a scene requires long exposure. Personal interviews were carried out at The Melrose Abbey public house with members of the community, which included band members, participants and audience members. This researcher defines 'participants' as the amateur and semi-professional members that actually took part in the musical performance on the nights I was there. This is opposed to those who still took part in the night's performance singing-along, participating in two-way banter with the band, and/or carrying out other activities on the night but did not get up to perform with the band.

Personal interviews took the form of recorded interviews that were conducted in a way so that the participants were encouraged to talk freely about their experiences of their community and of the local Country music scene, in a relaxed and informal way without interruption other than the asking of the occasional relevant question by myself. Following the policy set down by Liverpool Hope University's ethical committee, this researcher ensured that all participants in the interviews were made aware that they were being recorded and had given their consent. As these interviews were fundamentally important in enabling

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⁴⁷¹ Cohen, S. (1993) 'Ethnography and Popular Music Studies' in *Popular Music*. Vol 12. No2. (May 1993). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 123-138

⁴⁷² Lee, S. and Peterson, R. A. (2004) 'Internet- based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt, Country' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R. A. (eds). Music Scenes, Local, Translocal and Virtual, Nashville. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press p. 192

this researcher to understand the community, my participation enabled me to develop relationships within it, which helped facilitated this task.

Liverpool's Country Music Scene.

As we have already seen, it is generally accepted that the Liverpool-based Country music scene was the first British Country music scene to emerge, starting in the early-1950s and becoming so large that Liverpool became known as 'The Nashville of the North' McManus (1994), 473 or to George Hamilton IV 'The Nashville of Britain'. There were numerous venues where Country music artists performed throughout the city. Bill Harry stated on his Merseybeat website that at one time, the City boasted 'over 40 bands regularly playing Country music.'474 At the time of this growth of Country music in Liverpool, there were a large number of venues, such as clubs, pubs and social clubs that featured live music by a variety of Country acts, giving the acts an abundance of venues to perform in. At the scenes' height, the largest concentration of Country music venues was located around the Dock Road area of north Liverpool. At weekends there might be up to ten pubs, each with a different live Country music act performing there. It was the most popular type of music along the Dock Road and consumers could find Country music being performed every night and most afternoons. Brian Toner, who ran pubs on the Dock Road in the 1980s including The Union and The Griffin, explained to this author how, though not a Country music fan himself, he saw the potential to increase his income by regularly putting on Country music bands as this was the music that filled his pubs. Community members remember that in the 1960s and 1970s all the public houses were full of listeners and people had to arrive before the pubs opened to be sure of getting a seat.

⁴⁷³ McManus, K. (1994) 'Nashville of the North' Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. (Title).

⁴⁷⁴ Harry, W. *The Birth of Mersey Beat 2.* [Online]

http://triumphpc.com/mersey-beat/birth/birth2.shtml (accessed 07/5/2010)

We have also seen, however, in **Chapter 5**, that this Dock Road scene now no longer exists due to a number of complex factors, including the urban redevelopment of the surrounding areas, a reducing and then re-located population, and the closure of a large part of the docks due to 'containerization'. It was along this part of the Dock Road out of which the community studied at The Melrose Abbey was formed. Initially, these Country music fans, started to follow one band in particular, The Joey Rogers Band, and as this band settled in residencies in Dock Road pubs, their shared values and realities meant they began to merge and solidify into a recognizable community. By the early 1990s, this community eventually took up residency at The Melrose Abbey Public House in Kirkdale, which is half a mile from the Dock Road and it has remained there.

The Venue

The 'Melrose Abbey' public house is over 100 years old and stands on the corner of Westminster Road and Melrose Avenue at 331 Westminster Road. It once had Victorian terraced houses on either side of it, but now, due to redevelopment, stands alone on the corner. It is situated in the north Liverpool district of Kirkdale, which is still primarily a white, working-class area. In the Council's 2009 ward census, 475 it was shown to have a population of 15,354 of which 95.8% are classed as white British. Despite some urban regeneration programmes resulting in a little piecemeal modern housing, 67% of the ward is still classed in the lowest 1% of deprived areas in the index of multiple deprivations. The ward has a number of problems associated with deprived areas. Joblessness is significantly higher than the average, and income and qualification levels lower than average. Its sickness

⁴⁷⁵ McElroy, J. (Ed) (2009) *Ward Profile. Kirkdale*. Issue 6. Aug 2009. Publication No PMD455. Ward Profile 2009 – Kirkdale. Published by Liverpool City Council Economic Regeneration Division, Policy & Programme. Municipal Buildings. Dale St. Liverpool. L2 2DH 20/8/09

and mortality levels are significantly higher than average. The composition of the community reflects the long-standing ethnicity and working-class nature of the district.

The pub itself, despite some efforts to redecorate it, has a rundown appearance, although the exterior has recently been repainted. The internal layout is typical of the old Brewery-owned licensed premises that were built in abundance over 100 years ago, consisting of a bar and a parlour (snug). The parlour is a square room with tables around the edge. It has no door on its entrance and patrons wishing to buy drinks need to do this in the bar. The parlour is the room, which almost all the regulars use on the Country music nights, there being a separation of the regulars, and those attending for the music. The bar, where the Country music night is held has a traditional long bar stretching most of the length of the room. It is adorned with photographs of past members of the community and pub regulars; many of these photographs are now faded and upturned. A long padded bench, tables and stools run alongside the opposite wall. The windows are the old frosted glass-style and there are pictures of views of old Kirkdale on the walls. An old station clock, permanently stuck at 4.25, protrudes from the wall. There is a dartboard at one end of the bar and incongruously, a flat screen TV and DVD player at the other end. The bell used for calling 'time' that hangs behind the bar, is an old ship's bell belonging to the cargo-cum-passenger ship 'The Nestor', which was a ship of the Liverpool Blue Funnel Line. It was built in the 1920s for the Liverpool to Australia run and scrapped in 1972. 476 The licensee and her family, who have a history of running Dock Road pubs in Liverpool, brought the bell with them when they left The Nelson, a Dock Road pub, to take over the license at The Melrose Abbey. The band plays at the end of the bar where the PA system is set-up on beer crates; around the wall surrounding the band are large photographs of deceased band members.

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⁴⁷⁶ Rhiw. (2003) *The Blue Funnel Line 'H' Boats.* [Online]

(Accessed 4/1/2010)

The Licensees

Up until very recently (see afterword), The Melrose Abbey was a family-run pub, the business being owned by husband and wife John and Theresa Turner, their daughter Karen and daughter-in-law, Marie. The Turners come from a traditional pub family who ran a number of public houses in Liverpool. Theresa was actually born in a Liverpool pub, The 'Old Clock', and along with her daughter, Karen has lived in pubs all her life. The Turners had run a number of pubs prior to moving to The Nelson on Liverpool's Dock Road in the 1970s. It was there that they first met The Joey Rogers Band, who were playing at the pub next door, The Bramley Moor. Theresa remembers how the band had a large following and always played to a packed audience. The Turners moved to The Melrose Abbey pub in 1981 and the band frequented it regularly for a drink before performing their residency at The Union. Following the closure of The Union in the early-1990s, Theresa invited the band to play at The Melrose Abbey; the band and the rest of the community moved there in 1994 and this has been the community's home ever since. The members of the community feel that the welcoming family atmosphere that the Turners created for them is still an important factor in the maintenance of a community feeling. Community member Chris Seddon states: 'The Melrose has never changed. They're lovely people, the manager, their daughters, her husband and the people that go in there. It's just a lovely pub'. The atmosphere generated is more important to the community, than the decor and the surroundings. As member Billy Whelan stated: 'It's not a classy pub, you'd class it like a dump but the atmosphere in it, you wouldn't find anywhere else in Liverpool and you wouldn't find musicians like you've got here'.

The Community

The community studied has been a long-term representation of the Liverpool Country music scene (for over forty, and in some cases, fifty years). They were originally either followers of

The Joe Rogers Band or else regulars of the Dock Road Country music entertainment scene, where they then became followers of the band. It was during the band's residency at The Union in the 1980s that their shared values and principles, together with the realities of living in the north-end of riverside Liverpool began to create a sense of community amongst them. Many of the rituals that now help to maintain the stability and bonding of the community began at that time. Cohen, (2005) described these performance events, in the construction of the community at The Union, as 'Social occasions characterized by spontaneity and a sense of collectivity and intimacy' 477 - which is correct, even to this day. However, it must also be stated that such acts of community are not necessarily 'political' in the conventional binary left/right understanding of the word. Local politics have often been mistakenly historicized, locally, to be Hard Left. However, while many of the Country community were undeniably Labour Party voters, others were certainly not so, and it would have to be stated that especially amongst dockers and ex-dockers, issues related to time and leisure, working to better oneself, and the constant threat of unemployment, were prioritized as being more important on a day-by-day basis, than 'Party' politics. It was clear from the many discussions that I had with the various members of the community that this was indeed the case. That music as a communication device, was effectively 'political' in perhaps the purest sense of the word, i.e. by communicating heart-felt feelings and real emotions with which the community could identify, but also which actually created a structural resonance across the community - something (arguably) that conventional politics could not.

Therefore, Country music came to represent for many, a symbolic representation of escaping the tyranny of conventional work-time practices. The music, the way the music was performed and shared, and the way in which certain venues and artists who respected their

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⁴⁷⁷ Cohen, S. (2005) 'Ethnomusicology' 'Country at the Heart of the City; Music, Heritage and Regeneration in Liverpool' in *Society for Ethnomusicology*. Vol 49. No 1. (Winter 2005) Illinois. USA: Illinois University Press. pp. 25-48

local communities came to be revered, actually reflected the dockers' 'welt' system, as much as a specific formal political stance. The 'welt' was a way in which a docker might use the terrible work system imposed on him to his advantage. While he might be forced to stand in a cage being 'selected' by a foreman for zero-hours dockside work, he was always aware of the fact that a comrade might fill-in for him at the docks, while he either worked as a cellar man in (let us say) The Union pub, or drove a taxi. The use of the 'welt' has yet to be fully historicized, but it was clear from this researcher's interviews and observations at The Melrose that such characters encountered during this study, reflected this long understood semi-freelance, 'entrepreneurial' attitude to the methods of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (or indeed any other such riverside employer). In this way it is worth considering how the songs, styles and sounds of Country music did more than merely 'reflect' their experiences, but how for some they literally embodied it.

Three DVDs of The Union in 1987, 1992 and 1994 show the performance of The Joey Rogers Band as previously mentioned in **Chapter 5**. They highlight the audience participation, the good-humoured interaction between the performers and the audience, and song requests and sing-a-longs, described by Cohen (2005)⁴⁷⁸ which later became an integral part of the community events at The Melrose. When The Union pub closed down, this community briefly moved to other venues in Liverpool such as The Eldonian Village Hall and The Red Triangle Boxing Club in Everton, until it found its permanent home and a seemingly more appropriate atmosphere at The Melrose Abbey in Kirkdale. There are now about sixty members of the community, of which about thirty-or-so attend regularly almost every Friday night, with the others attending one or two nights a month. They are also sometimes joined by past members of the community from their days at The Union, some of

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⁴⁷⁸ Cohen, S. (2005) 'Ethnomusicology' 'Country at the Heart of the City; Music, Heritage and Regeneration in Liverpool' in *Society for Ethnomusicology*. Vol 49. No 1. (Winter 2005) Illinois. USA: Illinois University Press. pp. 25-48

whom had not attended for years. The core members of the community that regularly attend show an incredible level of commitment and loyalty towards the community and the music and if for any reason they cannot attend an evening, will even go to the lengths of contacting the pub or other community members, just to inform them.

The Band

The original band that moved to The Melrose Abbey in the early-1990s comprised of Joey Rogers, George Neild, Harry Chambers, Eric Melville, and Dave Whitehead, of which only George and Eric are still alive and the band now consists of George Neild, Tony Kennedy, Eric and Tommy Melville. Harry Chambers was still a member of the band at the start of the study but died during it. All of the band members are long-standing and well-known musicians in the Liverpool Country scene. George (Georgie) Neild is the charismatic leader of the band and since the death of Joey Rogers, the lynchpin that holds the community together. George is so devoted to the community that he accepts no payment for his performances, choosing to divide the money up between the other band members. He is the last surviving member of the original Joey Rogers Band and is now over seventy years of age. George comes from a renowned musical combination of Liverpool families, the Neilds and McGarrys, as described in Cohen and McManus (1991). 479 Brother John, and nephews Darren and Kevin, were all members of well-known Liverpool Country music bands, with George also performing Country music for over fifty years. He originally formed a 'Country and Western' band with his brother John, Harry Chambers and Eric Melville before leaving them to join the local Country outfit, The Saddlers. George left The Saddlers in the 1960s to join with Joey Rogers. Rogers had left well-known and highly respected local Country band

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⁴⁷⁹ Cohen. S. and McManus, K. (1991). 'The Neilds and McGarry's'. *Harmonious Relations. Popular Music in Family Life on Merseyside*. Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. pp. 38-41

The Blue Mountain Boys to form his own band in order to play his own particular 'take' on Country music. Unlike (say) The Hillsiders or Phil Brady and The Ranchers, the band did not rise through the echelons of the local scene into national prominence for several important reasons.

For example, Rogers insisted on continuing to play at many of the venues in the north of Liverpool (mainly in the Dock Road areas of north Liverpool and Bootle) which restricted his ability to play away from the city. He felt an affiliation with the local community, which, it has been stated by Mick O'Toole, rose above the desire to spread the 'Country' word across the region. He did not record any vanity or local label products, feeling that his live performances were the most authentic expression of his ability, and he felt genuinely part of a local heritage. Rogers' emphasis on locality, traditions and music heritage are actually key to our understanding how and why Country music emerged and solidified in certain districts of Liverpool (but perhaps, not in others). His eventual move to The Melrose Abbey was not simply a musical statement, but part of a code in which music became a translator for several different but connected pressures inflicted by the global on the local, such as economic downturn, protectionism concerning loss, and expressivity regarding lack. Cohen (1994) suggests that such formulations become motifs for 'assertions of difference.' As such, George Nield is apt to recall when there was so much work along and around the Dock Road, that The Joe Rogers Band worked seven nights a week, as well as two to three afternoons each week, and there was no need to move outside Liverpool to find more musical work.

Band member Eric Melville was brought up on Country music. He played with George Neild over fifty years ago before moving around various Country bands playing steel guitar, Dobro and lead, returning occasionally to play with Joe and George in The Joe Rogers Band. He was

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⁴⁸⁰ Cohen, S. (1994), 'Identity, Place and the 'Liverpool Sound', in Stokes, M. (ed). *Ethnicity, Identity and Music,* London: Berg, p. 130

permanently reunited with George, Joe and Harry at The Melrose Abbey in 1994. Eric, while feeling he has a special relationship with the band and community members, felt deeply the recent loss of key band members Joe Rogers and Harry Chambers stating, 'I love coming here; it's the people you know, but I can hardly think about Joe and Harry. I'd known them more than half my life. That's longer than I've known my Mum.' Rhythm guitarist Tony Kennedy had been playing with the band at The Melrose Abbey for eight years and was originally in The Saddlers with George over forty years ago; like the other band members he played in a number of Country music bands over the years. Tony saw the whole Country music scene then as a large family, with bands knowing each other, regularly switching between bands, stepping in to help each other out, and forming lifelong friendships with bands and community members. He believes that other than at The Melrose, these feelings of community have all-but disappeared and such beliefs reflect not only the decline of the local Country scene as it stands, but also the power of Country music in the aforementioned riverine communities.

Bass player Tommy Melville, brother of Eric, is the newest member of the band, who joined them in early 2009 when band member Harry Chambers' illness meant he could not play every week. He had previously played in a number of local Country bands, e.g. Hazard County and Denver Rose, for over forty years. He started-out by 'guesting' with Hank Walter's and The Dusty Road Ramblers at The Black Cat club over Samson and Barlow's on London Road. Tommy has played in most of the clubs in Liverpool and remembers the time when Country music was one of the most popular music styles in Liverpool stating that: 'Liverpool was really Country then and more or less all you could get away with down the Dock Road was Country music'. Tommy was a friend of George and Joe for many years and had been asked previously on many occasions to join the band. Tommy is the only member

of the band that also plays in another band, in this case, The Three Aces, who play old standards around the pubs and clubs of Liverpool. Harry Chambers, an original member of The Joe Rogers' Band, sadly died shortly after this researcher began her work. Harry, like previously deceased member Eddie Clayton and Joe Rogers, was regarded as one of Liverpool's Country music legends. His funeral and wake was attended by over five hundred people, many of them past and present members of the local Country music scene.

The band is a vitally important (indeed integral) part of the community: not simply as providers of music, but for initiating most of the rituals and rhetoric that take place during the night. The rest of the community consists of the observers and participant observers of the community who sit along the left hand wall or stand at the back of the bar. Almost all of this community are followers of or have been friends with the band for over forty years. The members tend to gather into four groupings in what appears to be a strict seating arrangement. Members will not sit where another member normally sits, even if their own seat is taken by a visitor, choosing to stand at the bar all night or waiting until they are sure that the member has not turned up. Those that sit at the front of the bar next to the band include people such as Mick O'Toole, a well-known lifelong supporter of Country music and Rock 'n' Roll. John and Elsie Colford also sit at the front and John Colford informed this researcher that he became interested in Country music when he was a conscripted soldier serving in Germany in the 1950s. While there, he regularly listened to AFN radio (American Forces Network) and CAE radio (Canadian Army Europe) both of which played considerable amounts of Country music. Elsie first heard Joe Rogers and George Neild playing in The Bramley Moor pub on the Dock Road in the 1960s and both have been following them ever since, in Elsie's words: 'wherever they went, we tended to follow them'. Jim and Mary Donnegan also sit in this front group and explained that they had followed the band at all the

Dock Road pubs such as at The Griffin, The Union, The Bramley Moor and The A1 at Lloyds for nearly fifty years.

Amongst the community members that sit in the middle are Mary Neild, George's older sister, and Joe Chambers, the brother of deceased member Harry Chambers. George Poole and his partner Josie Fox and Norman Boasc, are also in this grouping - again all are long-term followers of the band. George Poole followed the career of George Neild when he was in The Saddlers and both he and Boasc remember the Dock Road scene when 'the band played every night and all the pubs were full'. At one end of the pub, sit members Christine Seddon, and Margaret and Joe Cork all of whom are also long-term followers of the band. Seddon's deceased husband and Joe Cork were best friends and all four had always been Country music fans and avid record collectors, still owning some of the records they bought in the early-1950s. It was in this less conspicuous area that that this researcher regularly sat.

The last group stands at the end of the bar and consist of those semi-professional Country music artists who admire the house band and occasionally sit-in. They are exclusively male and include well-known local Country music singers such as Sonny Phillips, Alfie Crowley, and Jimmy Forbes who wait patiently, sometimes with their guitars next to them, for their opportunity to perform with the band. Sonny Phillips is known as 'the hard man' of the community, based on the reputation he obtained for his uncompromising style of running night clubs in some of the toughest areas in Liverpool. Sonny is now over sixty and though only about 'five feet seven' tall is still regarded as 'a man you don't mess with' by community members. He stands at the bar with a dour, unsmiling expression, throughout the night, not taking part in the banter that goes on with the band and within the community, and only engaging in conversation with the other semi-professionals at the bar. Sonny has a band that has a residency at The Peacock public house, one hundred yards away from The Melrose

Abbey each Saturday night playing a mixture of genres. It was surprising that when I attended The Peacock there was only one other member of The Melrose community present despite its close proximity. Phillips related to this researcher in his own indomitable style that this was not unusual.

For some reason Sonny appeared to take a liking to me and, unlike his initial demeanour and apparent attitude to the other community members, he was friendly and had a good sense of humour, often asking me to come and play with his band or fill in when they were a member short. Despite the fact that we had many informal conversations about the community, (who he often referred to as 'lemmings') and the Country music scene in general, I never formally interviewed Sonny who always made the excuse 'Ask me when I haven't had a drink' or 'I will ring you in the week about a time,' both of which never happened. When Alfie Crowley performed with the band, he was often announced by George Neild as 'Alfie from the southend'. Once, when semi-professional Jimmie Forbes, also from the south-end, followed Alfie Crowley, there was a cry of 'The south-end are taking over' from a member of the community, showing as previously mentioned in **Chapter 5**, just how locality is still very important to the mainly 'north-end' community members (despite only about 4 miles of Dock Road separating the two areas of Liverpool). Many of Liverpool's original Country music artists such as Jerry Devine from the 1950's Country band The Blue Mountain Boys sometimes join the semi-professionals at the bar. This tradition of other artists playing with the band came to be a feature of The Joe Rogers Band – they were, in an important sense a 'band's band'.

Billy Whelan sits next to the band and at 85-years old, is one of the oldest members of the community. Billy in many ways does not fit the profile of other community members, as he was never a Country music fan or Country music singer. His musical roots lay in Music Halls

and the crooners of the '40s and '50s. He is a ukulele player and a baritone singer who found the community through a friend eight years ago; he took along his ukulele to the event and started playing along with the band. He sings every week, but does not play any Country songs, as such. He has learnt to hone his repertoire 'on the hoof' and selects songs the community also like such as Al Jolson sing-a-longs, or standards such as 'Autumn Leaves' and the 'September Song'. Billy feels he has now been fully accepted by the community and says 'I'm really part of the furniture now.'

Billy is always smartly dressed in a style that was described to me by one member of the community as 'something out of a 1940's Noel Coward musical'. This makes him the butt of a few well-honed George Neild jokes every time he gets up to sing, but he takes it all in a good-humoured manner. This researcher's ability to sing the type of traditional Country songs popular with the community facilitated early acceptance into it. An amusing incident showed me that I was considered a member of their community. Mary Donnegan sometimes made sandwiches for the community members to eat during the interval and was uncompromising to the point of obsessiveness in ensuring only community members ate her sandwiches. Mary would often move along the audience handing the sandwiches to members but ignoring strangers and guests. She never offered me a sandwich, until one night when the community members who sat on either side of me stopped her. They pointed out to her I had been missed out, so Mary then handed me a sandwich. I realised that to those members of the community I had been accepted. Not the rite of passage into the community I expected, but an acceptance, nevertheless.

The Event

The event always takes place on a Friday night with members arriving about 8.30pm and the music starting about 9.30pm, finishing around 1am. The events are not advertised even in the pub itself and while casual attendees can be present, most are known to the members of the community as past members from The Union. While the atmosphere is never hostile to strangers, as such, no attempt is ever made to make them feel welcome. The performances are in two halves; the first usually runs for about an hour and a half, is exclusively the band performing. The music is almost entirely older American Country music songs from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s by artists such as Hank Snow, Webb Pierce, and George Jones. Other songs performed include a few 1950's ballads from artists such as Perry Como or Eddie Fisher. There is a clearly defined canon of songs performed, with many repeated every week. It was noticeable that neither the band, nor other participants performed songs that would be considered 'New Country'. These modern Country songs appear to have no authenticity with the community: in conversation many such songs were considered a kind of global antitheses to 'real' Country music, indeed they were spoken of in the same derogatory terms as Rap or Punk music.

The atmosphere is one of an informal easygoing nature and the dress styles of the community members reflect this, ranging from jeans, denim shirts and boots through to suits, shirts and ties, and 'smarter' dresses. There is regular interaction throughout the night between the band and the listeners with songs being requested, which are always performed in addition to joking and personal comments made between the band, mainly George Neild, and the listening audience. Requests for songs are a regular part of the evening for there is no set list, and the running order is decided on a song-by-song basis, normally dependent upon requests for the same songs each week. Interestingly, songs are often introduced, not as songs by the

original artist, but as songs by the deceased band members; here, ownership of the songs are awarded thus: 'here is a Joey Rogers' number', or 'here's one of Harry's' to introduce a Hank Williams or George Jones song.

The pictures of the deceased band members that are displayed on the wall beside the band are often addressed in a way that treats them as if they are still part of the community, normally in a joking fashion such as, 'I'll do your song, Harry, but I'll get the words right'. George was always careful not to let the night drift into melancholia about past members. On one occasion, George reminisced about Joe Rogers when he sang the Kris Kristofferson song, 'For the Good Times', explaining how when Joe was terminally ill, he sang this song. He could hardly look at him during his performance, but he quickly stopped the mood of the community becoming melancholic by making the joke, 'Joey, we know you're up there swopping wigs with Hank Snow'. Often lyrics of the songs are changed to include band members so for example, 'I Won't Forget You', will have the line 'Joey Rogers, Harry Chambers, Eddie Clayton, we won't forget you' added, but even this was sung in a positive manner.

Another interesting way in which the community keeps alive the presence of past band members is by renaming the band after the last-deceased band member. In recent years, the band has been called 'The Joey Rogers Band', 'The Eddie Clayton Band', and now is called 'The Harry Chambers Band'. While the continued changing of the band name might be confusing to others in the Country music scene, the community has little interest in what anyone outside the community thinks. For them, it is far more important to maintain the real and 'living' continuity with each deceased member, just as it is to continue the continuity of the North-end Country community.

As we have seen, [Chapter 5] the spiritual home of the community was previously The Union public house where the community began and where it was at its most successful; so much so, that the Don Williams song 'You're My Best Friend' is always called 'The Union Song' by the community. It was the last song to be performed in the evening at The Union pub every night, a DVD of an event at 'The Union' in the early-1990s shows how members stood-up and joined hands together as they sang it. [Chapter 5] This obviously helped to heighten the sense of identity and bonding inherent within the community. It is significant, however, that this song is now only performed on special occasions such as birthdays or on rare occasions when a community member requests it. It is now never performed at the end of the night indicating recognition by the community that because of their low numbers at The Melrose, compared to The Union, the performance might sound diluted, reinforcing to the group, its fragile existence.

The interval usually lasts for about 30 minutes and one of the characteristics of the group is the spontaneity and flexibility of the evening's performance. The band stops and starts at a time it thinks is most appropriate, spending the interval socializing with members of the community. This was always a feature of The Joey Rogers Band, in any case, and along with the intimacy of the pub setting, is probably one of the reasons why they preferred playing pubs to clubs. Entertainment manager Joe Mullen explained how after the closure of The Union, he persuaded Rogers to bring the band to work in the 'Perrie' club in Liverpool. After eight successful weeks, Rogers told him that they were quitting the club because they did not enjoy the rigidity of starting and finishing at a certain time, and that the night lacked the spontaneity and intimacy of the pub scene.

The second part of the evening begins when George Neild decides the performers are ready to start. One or two of the pub regulars often come out of the parlour and join the audience at that stage, usually standing with the semi-professionals at the back. While the regulars did not appear to have any animosity about being relegated to the parlour every Friday night, one did point out to me that they were regulars at the pub for over thirty years, long before the community came to the pub. It is in the second session when the community members perform with the band. These range from semi-professional members such as Sonny Phillips to amateurs such as Mick O'Toole, but whatever their standard all are allowed to perform at least three songs and at this stage it is somewhat reminiscent of the Folk Club 'come all ye', in some ways, where floor singers are invited to participate. Brocken (2003)⁴⁸¹ The semi-professionals who play their own guitars are always invited up to perform first; this ritual dates back to the Dock Road and reflects the social importance the community places on musical skills.

This phenomenon is similar to that found by Aaron Fox when carrying out an ethnographic study of a Texas honky-tonk bar where his ability to play guitar gave him 'an elevated level of social importance in the group of people, there' Fox (2004). Sonny Phillips is highly respected by the community for his excellent guitar picking and, as such, is always the first semi-professional to perform. In a similar note of respect, community member Mick O'Toole is always allowed to be the last singer of the night. Some community members have a repertoire of about five or six songs, while others sing the same song/s each week. None of the audience seems bothered about this and always sing-along enthusiastically. Sometimes, usually late into the evening, a community member who does not normally sing will attempt a song, often forgetting the words part way through. If this happens, George and the other community members will immediately join in to help them through the song. Whatever the

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⁴⁸¹ Brocken, M. (2003) 'Bert Lloyd and Ewan MacColl: a critique of the leading protagonists' in *The British Folk Revival.* 1944-2002. Aldershot. England: Ashgate. p. 35

⁴⁸² Fox, A.A. (2004) *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. pp. 50-51

level of performance, when the song is finished the members will always cheer and applaud loudly to show the singer the community's support and appreciation.

Despite the 50:50 ratio of female to male community members mentioned previously, the singers are almost exclusively male. In all the time, this researcher spent observing or participating in the community, only one other female singer performed and she was a member from The Union days that visited the group. This male dominance accurately reflects the male/female artist ratio in the Liverpool Country music scene. This scene was overwhelmingly male with few females in it and those that were, mainly fitted into a Patsy Cline/Tammy Wynette type of singer. Guitar playing is still considered a male preserve and if a female singer used an acoustic guitar, this was considered an accompaniment to their act and they were still not considered able to 'pick' like the male lead guitarists.

George Neild felt the audience participation at the event was an important part of the night, stating to this researcher: 'It's the people that get up that make the night for everybody most people come here because they want to hear who sings with the band. There's some great singers that come in, and that's what makes the night'. This singing and interaction was also of course integral to the days of The Union. John Murphy, a regular attendee of the community during its Union days explained that one of the reasons he liked attending then, was that he was given the opportunity to sing with a good band. The evening can end between 1am and 1.30am depending on when the band feels the community is ready to end the night. It will never end before everyone in the community who wants to sing has had the opportunity so to do. At the end of the night, a number of taxis are ordered, indicating that although many of the community were originally locals from the Kirkdale area, they now live, with one or two notable exceptions such as Mick O'Toole, outside of the immediate district.

As previously stated, long-time band member, Harry Chambers died during the course of this study and his funeral took place at Anfield Crematorium in Liverpool on the morning of Friday 15th May 2009. A testament to his popularity in the Liverpool music scene was that over 500 people attended which, besides his family and community members, included a large number of past and present members of the Liverpool music scene, including many veterans of the Liverpool Country music scene. The congregation was so large that many had to stand outside the Chapel of Rest throughout the service. After the funeral there was a large reception held at the Eldonian Village Hall in Kirkdale, attended by over 600 people. Many past and present members of the Liverpool Country music scene performed throughout the day including Lee Brennan, Ricky Tomlinson, and Charlie Newport. George Neild, Sonny Phillips and this researcher were the community members who performed there, that afternoon and evening.

Two weeks later, a benefit concert for Harry's family was held at The Liverpool Dockers Club in Clubmoor, Liverpool. It was a 600-ticket sell-out and once again many prominent Liverpool artists, both Country and mainstream, performed. Again, George, Sonny and this researcher represented the community members in performance. The expectation from the community that I would attend Harry Chamber's funeral and perform at both Harry Chamber's wake and benefit concert, gave this researcher the full realization that I had been accepted as a member of the community. In addition, that participating in the community at this level also brought with it expectations from and responsibilities to the community way above that of the musical experience at The Melrose Abbey pub.

On the evening of Chamber's funeral, the community gathered in The Melrose to have their own tribute to Chambers. Members of his family, members of the Liverpool Country music scene and past community members increased the numbers attending the event to over 100,

filling both the bar and the parlour. Far from being a sad and melancholic night, the atmosphere was vibrant and electric. The banter and humour that was so much a part of the normal community event continued unabated throughout the night and continued until two in the morning. Chamber's picture had already been put on the wall without ceremony performed. George kept referring to the band as the 'Harry Chambers Band', similarly without ceremony. When he first called it by that name, one member of the community shouted 'When will it be the George Neild band?' to which George replied 'Hey I've not gone yet'; such was the light-hearted atmosphere in which the night was conducted.

The Future

The members of the community are realistic about the future of both their community at The Melrose Abbey and concerning the Country music scene in Liverpool, believing that both are in their final days. As member Elsie Colford puts it, 'We're clinging on to what's left, hanging on to the wreckage.' Moreover, band member Eric Melville said about the scene: 'They have gone. All the faces have gone. All the pubs are shut. It's on its last legs.' Members, however, are determined to continue at The Melrose until the end, so much has it played a part in their lives. However, they also recognise that their community will probably not survive after George Neild, the last key individual of the community, goes. As one member stated: 'it's ten to the hour, and when George goes, the hour's up'. Elsie Colford is also realistic about the community's future stating: 'It's slowly dying a death but I think while I am still able to go out and he's (George) still playing here, it will continue. If George stopped playing here, that might be the death knell for my social life.' Mick O' Toole agreed with this sentiment:

Sadly, I think it's the last bastion of the really good stuff. George Neild is a one off [...] My ex-Missus says what are you goin' to do when George packs in? I say, I'll stop going out. There's no one in Liverpool like George.

Mick also sees little future for the Country music scene in Liverpool stating:

If kids were coming through with an interest in Country music, you might see a future. No kids are coming, through. There is no future. When all this goes which wouldn't be very long, 5 or 10 years maximum, there would be no Country left in Liverpool.

Jimmy Donegan also commented on how rare it is to find Country music events in Liverpool stating, 'At one time you could look in *The Echo* (main local newspaper) and there were a dozen pubs you could go to, now you're lucky if there's one.

Despite the realisation that the scene is living somewhat on borrowed time, the community does not attempt to secure its survival beyond George Neild. When George was in hospital for a couple of weeks and local Country artist, Mark Smith, who is known and is popular with the community, took over the lead singer role with the band, the numbers of the community attending The Melrose on these nights significantly decreased, and some of those that did attend left early. It appears that the community are happy for their existence to end when George goes, rather than see the community survive in a changed format or run by someone the community considers not to be an authentic member.

Conclusion

This study of the Country community at The Melrose Abbey public house will probably be the last in-depth study of a community in the Liverpool Country music scene a scene that is now on the verge of extinction but was once, according to Brocken (2010): 'Part of several vibrant interconnected Country music 'Folk ways'. As The community at The Melrose pub is one in which a passionate and deeply felt musical-social authenticity continues to be expressed on a local level, in spite of the music having a global reach. It is truly a translocal experience, which has real authenticity even if this authenticity is rooted in the imagined realities and simple, uncomplicated values of a manufactured authenticity, a constructed image of a world that never really existed, in the first place. It is a world that has changed little for those enacting it since the first beginnings of the Liverpool Country music scene of the 1950s and helps to hold together a community consisting of shared values, tastes and cultures.

This is now an inflexible culture, resistant to change; that revels in stability and conformity where members would rather see the community die out, than allow changes to be made that might compromise the believed authenticity. In addition, this community has suffered in recent years the loss of key individuals but has moved to negate the effects of these changes by a series of rituals, rhetoric and practices. These are meant not just to keep alive the memory of key individuals of the group, but also their 'presence' within the community, helping to maintain the group's innate stability. While these attempts to maintain this stability will eventually lead to its demise, this stability has also fostered the shared alliances and values that have enabled the group to bond together and produce strong yet reducing community solidarities. These have enabled them to survive for so long, where other similar communities might have folded, or altered irrevocably.

⁴⁸³ Brocken, M. (2010)' Vibrant Pathways' in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s.* Aldershot. England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 107

Afterword

This researcher visited the community after approximately a year's absence, in 2013. Despite this prolonged absence, I was still warmly welcomed into the community. There had been a number of changes to the community in that time. Band member Eric Melville's arthritis in his hand had become so bad that he could no longer play, forcing him to leave the band. He informed this researcher that this inability to play his instruments had affected him badly and he could no longer bear to attend The Melrose Abbey community as a non-performer. His brother Tommy Melville also decided to leave the band to concentrate on his other band 'The Three Aces'. These were replaced by Eddie Young, on lead guitar, a member of the Liverpool Country music scene for many years and presently playing in both The Bar Room Boys and Blue Ridge Country music bands, and Jimmy Cross on bass, also a member of Blue Ridge.

The other changes to the community had been the deaths of community member Mary Neild, George Neild's sister and Theresa Turner, landlady of The Melrose Abbey who died of a heart attack a week following an attempted armed robbery at the pub. Mick O'Toole who had also left the community informed this researcher that he had become bored attending each night but a number of other community members provided a different explanation of why he left. Mick's good friend Mike Brocken also suggested that he had become rather morose after the deaths and could not bring himself to attend. Billy Whelan and his wife still attended but not on a regular basis, and by the end of 2013 had stopped attending. Billy was the oldest member of the community, so this was not altogether surprising. This researcher attended the Country music nights a number of times during that year and into 2014. For a period, George Neild went into hospital for a quadruple by-pass and female singer, Chris Robinson, the singer with Blue Ridge took his place until he was able to return. Despite losing George,

there was no significant drop in the numbers, members informing this researcher that they believed George would return to perform within a few weeks, which in fact was what happened.

The main upheaval for the community occurred in 2014 when landlord, John Turner, sold The Melrose Abbey to a developer. Turner, despite a lifetime running public houses informed this researcher that neither he nor his daughter or daughter-in-law wanted to continue running the premises after his wife's death. The last night was an emotional affair with the last song to be performed being 'The Union song' which is, 'You're My Best Friend', which all the community joined in with, holding hands and singing along. The resident band was offered relocation to The Hawthorne public house in Hawthorne Road around the corner from The Melrose Abbey. Although The Hawthorne is less than fifty yards from The Melrose Abbey a number of community members chose not to make the move. This list included Joe and Margaret Cork, George Poole and Josie Fox, and band member Tony Kennedy. Jim and Mary Donnegan regular community members at The Melrose Abbey now appear to attend the new venue only sporadically.

The losses regarding this critical mass of community members were not the only changes affecting the remnants of this Country music community. The shape of the lounge in The Hawthorne, where the band now performs, is a large square room and this has resulted in changes in what were the rigid seating arrangements at The Melrose Abbey. This has resulted in some community members unable to sit together or forced to sit in different seats, each week. This change is compounded because those Melrose Abbey regulars who used to drink in the back room and played no part in the community now sit in the same lounge area amongst the community (as do some of The Hawthorne's regular customers). On the nights this researcher attended, there were less than twenty of the original community members in

the lounge, although the non-members increased the number to over forty. This researcher also observed that many of the non-community members who drank in the lounge appeared to have no interest in the music being performed and they also left the premises before twelve-o'-clock with only the few community members remaining; this gave a typically 'hollow pub' feel to the large room. There have been attempts to retain some of the rituals and practices, such as the references to past band members by George Neild, and his two-way banter with the audience. Sandwiches and cakes are still supplied to community members in the interval, but now it is Chris Robinson who organizes it, having joined the band in Tony Kennedy's place.

This researcher also observed that some of the rituals and practices carried out at The Melrose Abbey no longer take place. The pictures of the deceased band members are no longer displayed, and the band is not referred-to by a past band member's name. While non-band members still perform in the second session there is no order concerning who performs and when. I also noted that the atmosphere was decidedly muted with the loss of the intimacy previously observed at The Melrose Abbey. I attended the new venue on a number of nights, but was left with the feeling that only loyalty to the lynchpin George Neild was holding the community together; many of the rituals and practices that also helped to bond them together were now absent. It appears to this researcher that the community is now very rapidly declining and of course going beyond living memory. As oral historians we are made aware (often too late) that every person is vital, and that every step along the 'historical road' (so to speak), removes us one stage further away from the event as it appeared to have happened. The need therefore for more research of an oral history into the Liverpool Country scene is more urgently required than ever — we may never see the likes of these people again.

Chapter 11: Concluding Commentary: Liverpool, Country Music and Translocal & Virtual Scenes.

Liverpool, Space and Place

In an evaluation of spatially-related issues, Edward Soja's work, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, (1996)⁴⁸⁴ has developed an important theory of what he describes as 'Thirdspace'. Here he sees all activities, whether real or imagined, subjective or objective, the everyday or the historical, being able to come together and be represented through human agency. Soja (1996) sees place as,

An important lynch-pin in our understanding of how realities and mythologies can help us to understand [...] and act [...] to change how we think about how 'space' works regarding creativity, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicality-sociality.⁴⁸⁵

Effectively, Soja attempts to broaden previous Marxist-style dialectic materialism into a (trialectic) discourse, which includes the merger of one's imagination with ideas of place as a meeting point for creativity of thought: what might be described as the co-creation of affective and creative space e.g. the song 'You're My Best Friend' sung at The Union and Melrose Abbey. One might argue that it is via such trialectics of place that we can historically situate the Liverpool-based Country music scene – a place where all meanings and associations of value have come together, developed incremental meanings throughout time. Further one might also suggest that although Country music is perhaps one of the most transglobal forms of popular music to have ever existed, it is also, because of spatial trialectics, translocal. Forming meanings and associations directly because of specific spatial

⁴⁸⁴ Soja, W. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford: Blackwell. P. 57

⁴⁸⁵ Soja, W. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford: Blackwell. P. 57

activities and values that could never be constructed in the same way elsewhere (even five miles down the Dock Road into Liverpool's south-end). Such conceptualizations not only help us to understand just how significant Country music has been, creatively in specific places, but also how, for example, Marxist dialectic materialism cannot, philosophically, sufficiently accommodate the importance of sounds in spaces and places (such as The Melrose Abbey Pub, Kirkdale).

Just like the development of recorded sound, which preceded the post-WWII era by approximately a half-century, the production and reproduction of popular music affects and their collective subjectivities, have provided significant space for important historical activities, which are true embodiments of experience. Such activity as revolved around Country music in Liverpool helped its citizens to understand their situations via an imagined (but not imaginary) 'thirding'. This was probably an inevitable consequence of their existences, for an understanding of the power of any cultural communication of the subjective is part of appreciating what is actually going on around us. We cannot then turn that subjectivity into objective discourse without acknowledging the subjective imaginations that brought it into focus in the first place. 'Thirding', one might argue, is actually a matrix of meaning: bringing into focus that which was previously unfocused.

Thirdspace is a radically inclusive concept; thus, it enables the contestation and renegotiation of boundaries and cultural identities in places that conventional political binary oppositions often consider to be fixed. Soja's ideas closely resemble Homi Bhabha's theories surrounding cultural hybridization, in which:

All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity [that] displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives [...] The process of

cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.⁴⁸⁶

This 'cultural hybridity [which] gives rise to something different' that Soja writes about actually describes well Liverpool during the era in which Country music emerged and took control of taste cultures, re-negotiating meaning and representation, along the way. By the 1950s, imagination began to take hold as an entire stratum of society, i.e. the working-class, in many cities across the UK began to change. One consequence of this was that a fascinating spatial argument came to emerge from within Liverpool concerning the value and the historical meanings of its varied places in relationship to popular music.

As explained previously, Liverpool as a place was culturally less fixed than might be first imagined because by the twentieth century it was still a relatively 'modern' city, barely 200 years old. As such it has attempted to invent its own mythologised past and/or space. It is a city that did not have a straight-forward image of legibility and could not easily be transformed into a set of text-based signifiers able to compound into one singular homogenous image. Popular music in all its disparate forms and imagined roots therefore represented Liverpudlian myths of origin perhaps more adequately than many others.

By the mid-twentieth century, Liverpool's places existed largely because of commerce and empire, but changes came about in such a way that gradually transfigured the relationship between the city and many of its inhabitants. For example, the designated places for music and leisure such as ballrooms, theatres, public houses and even the living room, came to be challenged by coffee bars, the re-articulation of pubs into Country music clubs, the uses of, for example, Co-Operative meeting rooms and Church halls as venues. Also including the development of new-style 'hang-outs' for teenagers such as The Cavern and The Mardi Gras

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⁴⁸⁶ Soja, W. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 57

clubs (at first, little more than member-based coffee bars). These re-invented and rejuvenated places were spaces of the imagination as much as anything else. While they appeared in the minds of those involved to be magical spaces connoting (for example) the Wild West, they were still only, what they actually were: meeting rooms and church halls. However, they appeared at a time when many workplaces across the city were also changing and reconfiguring, and the cultural ingraining of understood space was coming under severe pressure. Popular music came to challenge conventional city and suburban spaces by reforming or re-claiming both performance and listening spaces and spatialities through the uses of literally 'different' genres of music.

Soja suggests that such re-articulation of place also affect people's imaginary spaces. We have evidence to suggest that young Liverpudlians were at times living in a world of their imaginations. Brocken stated to this researcher that Mick O'Toole recalls a recurring experience concerning his father:

[...] Not understanding me in the slightest as I moved from job-to-job with consummate ease. He had used his influence to get me into a white-collar job at Littlewoods, which he probably thought would be perfect for me — I suppose it could have been in many ways, but all I wanted to do was buy records and chase girls. My experiences as a teenager in Liverpool were also a mystery to the Christian Brothers who tried to teach me at De La Salle. My entire world revolved around Elvis Presley, Lonny Donegan and Country music. Both of these represented freedom and the generation gap in Liverpool. I loved to wander around the city centre, going into record shops and music shops, looking at women, buying the *NME* or *Hit Parader*, spending time at Beaver Radio on Whitechapel, listening to records in the booths, ordering them. Liverpool

became a city of the imagination for me – I was kind of here, yet not here. Little wonder I eventually joined the merchant navy, I suppose.⁴⁸⁷

So, Liverpool perhaps unwittingly for some, became a space for 'Thirdspace' discourses via an assortment of hybridities emerging from pre-existing approaches to time, work, place and space, and popular music. Such animations were also taking place at a time in Liverpool's history when the city as a place was losing its recognizable cultural and economic capital. Therefore, many of Mick O'Toole's imaginary spaces were actually diametrically opposed to the very patriarchal meanings foisted upon those places (and the city), in the first place. For example, the Dock Road was already in decline when pubs began to use Country music as a 'scene', The Locarno was previously a dance-band ballroom but by the late-1950s had become a bingo hall and a Rock 'n' Roll and Country music venue. In the mid-1950s, even the Picton Library reading room became a Jazz venue of some significance, while various church halls were colonized as jive hives. By at least 1960, from Lark Lane in the south to Walton Road in the north, coffee-bar culture had democratized most major shopping streets in Liverpool: so much so, in fact, that socialization processes for the young had irrevocably and visibly changed. Spatial etiquette was being challenged from the very bottom layers of popular culture: Country music was intrinsic with the long road to spatial re-examination and re-evaluation.

This was an era in Liverpool in which practically all spaces came to be re-defined (even domestically) as house ownership came to present new imaginary places of suburbia and the riverside areas of Victorian and Edwardian Liverpool came under pressure. There were physical changes to North Liverpool as entire streets were knocked down and new estates were constructed on the margins of the city. 'New' finance came to the fore via mortgages,

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⁴⁸⁷ Personal correspondence with Mike Brocken, January 2014

rents, hire purchase and credit. One might argue that the 'old' (let us say pre-war) Liverpool had become so shorn of meaning that, for a younger generation it was that which was beginning to be regarded as 'strange', not actually what **they** did. However, popular music responses were able to re-install meaning in different places and in different ways and, in Liverpool, Country music was at the centre of such re-negotiations. Given such a diverse scenario, by the 1960s, The Beatles found themselves central to an emerging discourse, but so too were The Hillsiders. Both groups were probably without even realizing, part of a logical drive towards what might be described as an era of **non-**material labour (and with it, non-material capital).

The understanding that social informationalization and identity is relational has been acknowledged, but often misunderstood by popular music studies researchers. Perhaps this is because many such scholars have emerged from a modernist failure to appreciate how information technologies have irrevocably transformed the industrial production process and questioned what our 'normality' was supposed to be. The Liverpool-based Country music scene (and then community) helped to present an outstanding example of non-material capital in interconnected and transformative ways: firstly, by personifying what a scene might consist-of; secondly, by symbolizing creative and intelligent production, and thirdly by reemphasizing the importance of human agency. These three types of affective informational capital helped to re-create the immediate age, forcing change to accommodate different social and musical pre-requisites. It is worth reminding ourselves that Country music was able to offer real affective labour alternatives to those who played. Informants were at pains to inform this researcher that they could earn at least as much via their hobby as their 'real' job, some having to turn paid work away. Many also informed me that they did not have the time to travel across the UK to play, preferring instead to work on their music at home, surrounded

by colleagues they knew and respected. This is not 'casual' in the conventional way of understanding part-time music making, but is actually a way into understanding how affective labour came to aid Liverpool during one of its direct economic periods. One would have to seriously ask what might have further happened to the north-end Docks communities had they **not** had their music! Country music actually played a very significant part in the gradual move towards the informationization of the global economy in Liverpool – what might be accurately described as a 'Translocal' culture.

The Translocal

Peterson and Bennett (2004)⁴⁸⁸ describe translocal scenes as, 'Local scenes that connect with groups of kindred spirits many miles away'. They further explain that: 'Local music scenes that focus on a particular kind of music are in regular contact with similar local scenes in geographically dispersed locations interacting through a number of routes, fans, artists, magazines' In respect to Country music in Liverpool, the translocal might refer to two specific aspects for the researcher. On the one hand, it refers to global connectivity, to the fact that today's locales are often closely connected, and that media, new and old, helps to facilitate and indeed even enforce connections (in our case between, say, Nashville and Liverpool musical activities). So while the local still matters a great deal, it tends to matter in relation to other locales, attitudes and conceptualisations of authenticity – hence, for example, the way that line-dancing was partially and then perhaps fully eschewed by the local Country community. On the other hand, translocality denotes a specific understanding of culture in which a musical scene is seen as outward looking, and focused on hybridity, translation, and identification; the global explains authenticity from the outside in: the translocal explains from the inside outwards, the scene retracts and reconvenes into a community of delineation.

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⁴⁸⁸ Peterson, R. A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett. A and Peterson, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual, Nashville*. TN: Vanderbilt University Press pp. 1-15

Such territoriality and de-territoriality are reference points for authenticity, meaning making, and identification. For example, when North Liverpool Country fans listened to the resident band at The Melrose Abbey in Kirkdale, they did this in a situated place, but at the same time the activity transgresses its locality via its de-territorial links with the United States and its associated Country mythologies. However, such translocal activities are also fragile and subject to the whims and developments of technology. For example, perhaps in more recent years, when a Liverpool Country music fan communicates with other fans on the web s/he is operating translocally, by creating hybrid discourse, by translating the American mythologies of place for local purposes, and by identifying with both his/her local reference group as well as the group out there, beyond his/her territory. One might argue, therefore, that this latter activity might actually be able to contribute to replacing the former.

Locale

When Country music started to grow in Britain in the 1960s, it was mainly via local scenes that grew in differing parts of the Country according to disparate cultural matrixes; scenes were often independent of each other with little or no national network of communication. Translocal influences played only a small part in this and other local scenes. This therefore led to variations between scenes, some were predominantly listening scenes: some were dancing scenes; others were Cowboy scenes, while a few were a mixture of some or all of these types of scenes. For example, South Yorkshire had a large listening scene based around Doncaster with a number of local Country music bands including The Collier Dixon Line, The John Aston Band, Country Craze, Jack Parks and The West Coast Sound, Ken Harrison and The Playboys, Mustang, Stu Page, Dez Crane, Larry Hinchcliff, The Kansas Sound, Phil Lloyd Trio and The Davidsons. This scene also produced a number of local interesting place-

based singer-songwriters who at times reflected not simply Country music as a genre, but also hybrid sounds, meanings and even dialects, according to their locale.

As with Liverpool, the strong and independent personalities and working-class values of these South Yorkshire scene members resonated with the simple, honest lyrics of many Country music songs. Country music artist Denis Collier and Country music fan Ron Sutton from this scene both stated to this researcher that they believed Doncaster was the real centre of the Country music scene in Britain. In addition, they highlighted that both the Doncaster and Liverpool scenes tended to be completely separate from each other, with only a small number of bands playing in each other's scenes. This was usually The Hillsiders from Liverpool and The John Aston Band from Yorkshire. Later, Liverpool bands such as West Virginia, Kenny Johnson and Northwind and Phil Brady from Liverpool and The Haleys and Stu Page from South Yorkshire regularly played in each other's scene. Mike Storey in the magazine Country (1973)⁴⁸⁹ reporting on a show in Doncaster described the 'Liverpool Comes to Doncaster' event, which featured John Aston, Jack Parks and The West Coast Sound, and The Kansas Sound from Doncaster and from Liverpool, Phil Brady and The Ranchers, The Miller Brothers and The Idle Hours stating. 'It was decided to present a show which feature acts from the two towns in the North of England which played a major part in the development of Country music in Britain.' He further reported that:

Although Country music acts now come from almost everywhere in Britain and clubs featuring the music are in most Counties, it was certainly Doncaster and Liverpool, which saw most activity in the early and mid-1960s

The Doncaster Country music scene in some ways replicated the Liverpool scene in that it had a strong live performance circuit and a large number of local bands performing in it, but

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⁴⁸⁹ Storey, M. *Country*. (April 1973) Vol 2, No 7, Chalker, B. (ed). London: Hanover Books Ltd

it too was strongly indigenous with its own sets of matrixes and authenticities. For example, Storey further explains in same article that Doncaster also had significant places of its own, such as the first specialist music club in Doncaster, The Bay Horse Country and Western Club, and a specialist Country music store run by BCMA secretary, Goff Greenwood. Therefore, it was extremely localised and individual, despite any apparent similarities.

On the other hand, in Scotland there tended to be a predominance of mainly dance-orientated scenes. Scottish duo Jolene and Barry informed this researcher: 'When we play Scotland we have to play exclusively dance music. We couldn't make a living at home if we didn't learn to play enough songs to keep the dancers happy'. Les Payne of the Liverpool-based band Stroller also informed this researcher that when they played Scotland, they felt they had to entertain a dance-scene audience. This researcher also played a number of Scottish venues in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, and Irvine and experienced a mainly dance-oriented scene. Although networking was an important feature between each of these scenes, each grew independently of the other and geography was not often the deciding factor regarding what type of scene developed. Barry Wallace of the duo Jolene and Barry informed this researcher that Country music was also popular in Norfolk and Suffolk, where they used to perform many gigs. While these scenes tended to develop around the American air force bases such as Bentwater and Allenbury (and were predominantly dance scenes), on the east coast of Norfolk and Suffolk there were strictly listening clubs and some clubs even displayed warning signs on their doors, 'Absolutely no line-dancing'. Wallace stated to this researcher that because of this, they had to incorporate different repertoires for different types of clubs – a common feature, perhaps of all localised popular music scenes.

Ron Sutton explained to this researcher that this often presented a problem for some Southern bands playing listening clubs 'up North' stating: 'The bands that came from down South were

a bit nervous playing up North because they played mainly to dance clubs, even before line-dancing it was dancing 'down South'. This researcher remembers attending one of the local Country music listening clubs as a customer, when a Southern band, The Dirty Hat Band, stopped in the middle of their first set and asked if they were playing the right material, for no one was dancing. In areas of Lancashire such as at Preston, Blackpool, Morecombe, and Wigan the dominant clubs appeared to be Cowboy or Western dress clubs.

This lack of a National network meant it was difficult to have a single co-ordinated policy on promoting Country music nationally. Until the Country music festivals, the only link many British Country music fans had between scenes was via a small British Country music column in the National Country music magazines such as *Country Music People* or *Country Music International*. The regional Country music magazines such as *North Country Music*, *Southern Country, Spotlight* and *Oprey* did concentrate on British Country music artists; these magazines were usually only sold at the Country music clubs, festivals or via subscription. Bob Powel the former editor of *Country Music People*, the largest selling Country music magazine in Britain, explained on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989) how these regionalisation splits affected the promotion of Country music artists stating:

In the Merseyside area, The Hillsiders and Kenny Johnson and probably some groups I've never heard of are very popular although they do travel. In the London area you have people like Spellbound (later renamed Memphis Roots) and Moody (later renamed George Moody and The Country Squires) who are extremely popular but not up North and vice versa. Some up North are not popular down South, so it's regional in other words. Most of the British Country music artists

are semi-pro so if you put a British artist on a cover that means a lot in London it can mean absolutely nothing in Liverpool. 490

This meant that in the first twenty years of Country Music People magazine, (Feb 1970 Vol 1 No 1 - Jan 1991 Vol 21. No 1) of its 240 editions, only four British acts appeared on the cover: The Hillsiders twice, Poacher and Miki and Griff. This lack of a co-ordinated national network to help promote British Country music showed in the number of different British Country music awards occurring annually. These included the British Country Music Association Awards, The Country Music Association of Great Britain Awards, the Record Mirror Awards, and the BBC Country Music Awards. There were also awards organised by Country music magazines such as Country Music People, Country Music International, North Country Music and Southern Country, all of which had their own award ceremonies, which resulted in many different artists claiming to have won the Best British Artist/performer/group, etc! There were so many British Country music awards that they became meaningless in terms of promoting an artist or group. Denis Collier of The Collier Dixon Line stated to this researcher 'If you're top of Country music in Britain you're nowhere'. It was not until the 1990s that such organisations decided to group together to have one National British Country music award called, The British Country Music Awards. This award, however, came too late as most of the scene was in decline. Little wonder, then, that independent, yet translocal, scenes developed in cities such as Liverpool, where locals clung not simply to a local community, but also to the global myths associated with Nashville, the USA, and Country music authenticity.

⁴⁹⁰ *Good Ol' Boys* Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

Festivals and the Translocal: Wembley

There was a dire need for local scene members to meet-up with other like-minded individuals from other scenes, sharing ideas, information and the musical experience and this need was met by a particular translocal event: 'the Country music festival'. These translocal events had the biggest effect on local Country music scenes, as many members of the local scenes also became participants in these types of translocal events. The music festival as described by Peterson and Bennett (2004)⁴⁹¹ is a special sort of translocal scene as most festivals involve the interconnection of several local scenes. They further explain that such festivals draw geographically dispersed individuals together for a designated period, allowing them to enjoy their kind of music. It also allows them to live a lifestyle associated with the music, at least for a brief time, without having any worries or concerns for the expectations of others outside of the festival boundaries.

Dowd, Liddle and Nelson (2004)⁴⁹² believe that festivals resemble local scenes as they occur in a delineated space which offers collective opportunities for performers and fans to experience both music and 'other' lifestyles (an imagined 'thirdspace', perhaps?). Country music festivals allowed members to meet other members of Country music scenes or even from their own scene. This interaction for these Country music fans with their shared values and beliefs often created bonds amongst them, which contributed to the festivals' meanings and intensities. Many of the fans attending the festival immersed themselves in the culture and lifestyle associated with it, often adopting other identities, e.g., Cowboys, Indians, Mexicans, away from the constraints of their 'normal' lifestyles. To many of these Country music fans, interviewed by myself, travelling to the Country music festivals had pilgrimage-

⁴⁹¹ Peterson, R.A. and Bennett, A. (2004) 'Introducing Music Scenes' in Bennett, A and Peterson, R. A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual.* Nashville. TN: Vanderbilt University Press pp. 1-15

⁴⁹² Dowd, T. Liddle, J. and Nelson, K. (2004) 'Music Festivals as Scenes,' in Bennett, A and Petersen, R.A. (eds). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville. TN: Vanderbilt University Press. p. 149 -167

like associations. These festivals also often exposed the local fans and artists to music they had not previously heard and which was then often brought back to the local scene, stimulating it. To the local artists it also helped them network with other artists from the UK and the USA; such connections often continued long after the festival. It also brought them to the attention of other Country music industry members such as Country music journalists, promoters and club organisers.

The most significant Country music festival for both local and national Country music fans was The Wembley International Festival of Country Music. This festival ran from 1968 - 1991 and was the forerunner of hundreds of Country music festivals in Britain. Before the Wembley Festival, Country music festivals in the UK were usually no more than one-day local events, mainly featuring local acts and sometimes with a little-known American artist topping the bill. One such one-day festival was described by McManus (1994)⁴⁹³ who stated that Carl Goldie had organised a 'Festival of Country Music' at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool in 1964 which attracted a capacity 1,700 audience. It featured local bands such as The Hillsiders, Phil Brady and The Ranchers, Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers, and Goldy Country Sounds with Pete Sayers from London and American bluegrass artist Bill Croften.

However, the Wembley festival forever changed the landscape of Country music festivals in Britain, as it was a large international Country festival featuring many of the most popular American Country music artists of the day.

The Wembley festival was the brainchild of one man; Mervyn Conn. Conn had a successful pedigree in the music business as a promoter who had promoted numerous shows from The

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⁴⁹³ McManus, K. (1994) Nashville *of the North*. Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music. University of Liverpool. p. 23

Beatles⁴⁹⁴ to Roy Orbison, Conn (2010).⁴⁹⁵ He had his own record label and at the time of the festival, he was promoting over 150 shows each year. In his autobiography, *Mr Music Man*. *My Life in Show Business* (2010),⁴⁹⁶ Conn explained that even though he had no Country music experience, he was the first promoter to bring Johnny Cash over to England. He noticed that Cash's tour was very successful. While he was in a hotel in London, he noticed that several hundred members were attending a meeting of the British Country Music Association, this sight gave him the idea that there were enough Country music consumers in Britain for him to organise a large International Country Music Festival in Britain.

Conn was a successful businessman. He brought into the British Country music field a professional business-like approach into what was largely a scene run by amateurs who merely loved the genre and wanted to promote it, often without any considerations regarding profit. For Conn, the purpose of the festival was profit; he knew that to achieve this, the commercial side had to be professionally organised. He had directed the *Melody Maker* awards ceremony at Wembley arena and had built a good relationship with the arena's management team. This enabled him to obtain the venue for his festival. CBS, the distributor of his record label and one of the biggest record labels for Country music in the USA, also advised him to go to Nashville and deal directly with the Country music industry there.

Conn further explains in his autobiography, that in Nashville he hired a PR person knowledgeable about the Country music scene who arranged a meeting for him with Herbert Long. Long was an influential figure in the Nashville Country music scene. He was a founder board member of the US Country Music Association (CMA) and an agent who represented

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⁴⁹⁴ Conn promoted The Beatles Christmas shows at the Finsbury Park Astoria. London. Dec 1963-Jan 1964

⁴⁹⁵ Conn, M. (2010) 'Breaking into Show Business' in *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business*. U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North. pp. 68-69

⁴⁹⁶ Conn, M. (2010) 'Establishing the Festival' in *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business* U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North. pp. 102-103

the biggest artists in Nashville, (Conn 2010). 497 Conn, who could not afford these artists for his festival, was able to convince Long that exposure at the Wembley festival could produce large potential earnings in the UK and Europe. Long then persuaded some of the artists on his books to go to the UK and perform at the festival for what Conn describes as 'peanuts'. 498 Bob Powel, editor of *Country Music People* magazine on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989), 499 stated not one of the artists was paid for either the first or second festivals, and that it was not until the third festival that they received some form of remuneration. Conn then dealt directly with the artists' record companies persuading them of record sales exposure from his festival, thereby getting them to pay artists' airline tickets. The American acts at the first festival included Bill Anderson, George Hamilton IV, Loretta Lynn, Jan Howard, and Conway Twitty. The two best-known Liverpool acts at that time, The Hillsiders and Phil Brady and The Ranchers, also appeared at the first festival.

This festival, which was a one-day event, took place on April 9th 1969 and was a huge success. Conn then immediately started to plan and organise the second festival. He was an astute businessman always looking for some way to minimise his costs and increase his profit margin. He sold booths/stalls space for exhibitors in the car park outside the main arena, which were taken up by record stalls, Western wear and Country music magazines, etc. This space became so popular with exhibitors and fans immersing themselves in the festival experience that at later festivals he hired the Wembley conference centre to hold these exhibitors. Conn also obtained sponsorship for the later festivals from tobacco firms, such as

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⁴⁹⁷ Conn, M. (2010) 'Establishing the Festival' in *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business*. U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North. pp. 107-108

⁴⁹⁸ Conn, M. (2010) 'Establishing the Festival' in *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business*. U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North. p. 108

⁴⁹⁹ Good Ol' Boys Programme No11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

Marlboro and Silk Cut. After the success of the first festival Conn entered into negotiations with the BBC for them to film and broadcast the festival and by giving them control over the stage-sets, ensured that they paid for the cost of supplying and erecting them. By getting the BBC involved, it not only reduced his costs, but also increased the number of American artists wanting to appear at the festival, as Bob Powel on the same programme explained: 'It was a tremendous way to get a lot of exposure. You're on the telly; it was a big audience and a way to get exposure to a European audience and possibly a throwback to America'. ⁵⁰⁰

The festival quickly grew from a one-day event to a four-day festival and the BBC was programming eight 'thirty-minute shows' plus a Christmas special of the festival. Conn could have his pick of the biggest American Country music artists of the day, who were eager to break into British and European market. These artists included Ernest Tubb, Hank Snow, Hank Thompson, Tammy Wynette, George Jones and Crystal Gayle. Conn was in no doubt as to the effect his festival had on the British and European careers of these artists, stating in an interview with this researcher:

I think I brought over every major Country artist that ever existed from Ronnie Millsap to Johnny Cash, to Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton[...]There would have been no Country music industry in Britain if I hadn't started them (festivals). Some became stars from them, Tammy Wynette, Willy Nelson, Boxcar Willie, Don Williams to mention a few who came to Britain and became big stars and stars in Europe.

While these American acts had been relatively unknown to many of the public, to members of the local and national Country scene, many such as Hank Snow, Hank Thompson and Ernest Tubb were already Country music idols. This meant the opportunity of being present

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⁵⁰⁰Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

at a gathering of these performers was unmissable for these fans. A number of local scene members discussed with this researcher about the positive experiences they had attending these festivals, finding it a vibrant experience with the meeting of many like-minded people increasing the intensity of the festival experience. Some local fans, such as Marion and Ed Fox, formed friendships with other Country scene members from other parts of the country, and some of these friendships continue to this day. Others also developed lasting friendships with other members of the local Country music scene. John and Elsie Colford met local Country music musician Eric Melville on one of the special coaches that took local fans from Liverpool to the festival and they remain close friends today.

Country music fans such as Elsie Colford described the festival experience as 'vibrant', but local and national Country music artists have expressed to this writer mixed views concerning the festival in promoting British Country music artists. Some viewed it as an excellent experience that opened up opportunities for them, whilst others saw it as an exploitation of the acts. Local Country music band West Virginia informed this researcher that when they entered and won Mervyn Conn's Wembley mini-festival held at the Conference Centre, it increased their exposure in the field and led to a number of bookings including a tour with American Country music artist, Marty Robbins. The band also explained that this was also instrumental in them leaving their employment and becoming a full-time professional band. Local Country music artist Charlie Newport stated to this researcher that he played the Wembley festival in 1977, along with his band Charlie Boy, supporting American acts Don Williams, Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton and George Hamilton IV, and they were allowed to perform three songs in the Wembley Arena. Newport also stated that he felt it was the biggest venue they ever played and there was a great atmosphere all day. Some artists, however, did not feel the same way. Kevin McGarry of The

Hillsiders stated on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys*. (1989):

I think the British bands get ripped off because you get some good British bands and they back American artists and when the whole show finished and they're promised a TV slot and it never comes off. It's always the Americans that are on TV and even when the Americans are getting good backing and very cheap backing from those fellas who are promised a TV slot, they never get no thanks for it. The American artists will walk off, he gets a round of applause, never mentions the band is from Great Britain and the people in the audience think, that's a nice band.

Billboard/Record Mirror voted British Country music artist Brian Maxine the most promising UK talent (solo artist) in 1973, receiving the award from Hank Snow at that year's Wembley Festival. Maxine claimed in the same programme, that he also felt the festival did not do anything to help establish British Country music artists stating:

You don't really see British bands performing unless you go into the British section which is around the corner in some other place, you know, away from the main stage, in the afternoon. It's as if the British bands are just kept as a sideshow to stop people getting bored during the day, which is a great shame. Occasionally you will see a band on stage in the Wembley arena and the only reason they have a band on that stage there and give them like, 5 minutes of prime time is so that they'll back all the American artists that haven't got bands of their own. 502

British Country music artist Lorne Gibson⁵⁰³ also on the same programme reiterated this gut feeling of exploitation by stating:

⁵⁰¹ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8 /1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

⁵⁰² Ibid (1989)

⁵⁰³ Ibid (1989)

No, I never did play the Wembley Festival. When the festival was offered to me, the money was never anywhere good enough. I always felt the British bands shouldn't cheapen themselves by charging either less than the Americans or in fact sometimes paying to be on the show'

Country musician John Fairclough, who also opened the largest cassette production factory in the North of England, told this researcher that he remembers British acts complaining to him about this. They informed him that Conn had approached them, saying they could be on the Wembley Festival, but that he would not pay them: it was just for the privilege of being on. Fairclough remembers a Country band from Peterborough for whom he mastered a cassette had written a song about this entitled 'Don't Pay the Band, They're British'.

Derek Wakefield editor of *Searchlight* magazine also expressed his feelings in *Country Music Searchlight*. (1978).

The Wembley Festival has now become an institution but I think it is wrong to call it an 'international' festival. The entire proceedings are dominated by Americans and British acts such as Jeannie Denver and Culpepper Country are relegated to two or three songs at the beginning of the show to get it warmed up[...]It's time outstanding British acts were allowed to figure more prominently in the main body of the show instead of just being fill-ins.⁵⁰⁴

The main complaint coming from a number of British Country music acts was that they did not get to play in the main Wembley Arena, but rather, at first in the car park around the perimeter where the merchandise stalls were placed and then, later in the Wembley Conference Centre beside the arena. Those that did appear in the Arena were given small three song spots and were often used as free backing bands for American artists. In John Stafford's, review of the fifth Wembley Festival in *Country Music People* magazine (June

⁵⁰⁴ Wakefield, D. *Country Music Searchlight*. (1978) Vol 2, No 3. Wakefield, D. (ed). Eastham, Merseyside, England: Searchlight Country Publications.

1973, Vol 4 Issue No 6),⁵⁰⁵ he described how British band, Country Music Fever had a small spot, and then backed American artists such as George Hamilton IV. Also in his review of the 1980 festival (June 1980, Vol 11 Issue No 6)⁵⁰⁶ he describes how British band White Rose did the same; after playing a small spot, they backed American artists such as Ronnie Prophet and Dallas Harms. Mervyn Conn, when discussing with this researcher why he did not give more British artists full spots on the main arena blamed the attitude of British fans to the British Country music artists, many of whom felt there was no authenticity to British Country, and that bands were just poor imitations of the American acts. Conn stated to me that: 'That's because the public didn't accept them. They want the Americans all the time. I think the only one who made a huge difference was Daniel O'Donnell and he was Irish and I wouldn't call him Country'.

For Conn, as an entrepreneurial businessman, the festivals were large commercial gambles and his first concern was to provide what the consumers wanted or see the venture fail. Facts have also emerged that appear to contradict some of the criticisms that Conn did not do anything to help promote British Country music artists at his festivals. Not all bands that Conn gave three song slots to were required to back American artists. He also organised the Marlboro Talent Shows at twenty locations across the UK. The winners of the twenty shows competed at the Wembley Conference Centre before a panel of judges, which included members of the record industry and Country music journalists. Conn's company also sponsored British Country music artist Raymond Froggatt, who had appeared at his festival, to record an album in Nashville. The album *Southern Fried Frog* (1978) on the Jet label JETLP209, was recorded in the Jack Clement studios in Nashville, along with top Nashville session artists such as The Jordaniares on backing vocals, Buddy Harem on drums and ex-

⁵⁰⁵ Stafford, J. *Country Music People.* (June 1973), Vol 4, No 6, Powel, B. (ed). Sidcup, Kent: Country Music Press Ltd.

⁵⁰⁶ Stafford, J. Country Music People. (June 1980), Vol 11, No 6, Powel, B. (ed). Sidcup, Kent: Country Music Press Ltd.

Buddy Holly bass guitarist, Tommy Alsup. In the programme for the 1988 Wembley International Festival of Country Music, four pages entitled 'Best of British' are devoted to the twenty British acts performing at The Wembley Conference Centre.

Those four British acts performing on the main Wembley Arena stage also had considerable space in the programme devoted to them, e.g. Sarah Jory, Raymond Froggatt and Colorado being awarded two pages, and West Coast one page. Albert Lee, British-born, but permanently based in America, was awarded three full pages devoted to him. 507 Conn also allowed organisations such as the British Country Music Association to hold their awards, which were awarded to mainly British bands on the main festival stage. This researcher also knows from experience that paying unknown bands little or no money to appear at large festivals is something that is common across many festivals of other genres of music. As Conn himself states, many of the American acts were performing at the festival for little or no money, so his attempts to pay artists the minimum was not a practice purely restricted to British Country music acts.

As the Wembley Festival continued into and through the 1980s, Conn also organised festivals and events with mainly American artists in Europe. In 1988, he organised events in Germany, Holland, Italy, Ireland, plus a large two-day festival in Switzerland. By the late-1980s, the Wembley Festival began to lose some of its popularity. Conn, in his autobiography, 508 blamed the recession for lower numbers attending the festival and the growing government hostility to tobacco sponsorship on the BBC, both of which were key income sources for the festival's continued success. During this period, Conn found it harder to attract top-class American Country acts that he had, in the past. Most of these acts were now well known in

⁵⁰⁷ Mervyn Conn Promotions Ltd. (1988) 'The International Festivals of Country Music. 1988' Programme. . Hastings Sussex: Hastings Printing Co

⁵⁰⁸ Conn, M. (2010) 'Other Avenues' in *Mr. Music Man. My Life in Show Business*. U. K: Tonto Books Ltd. Produced Up North. pp. 183

this country, enjoyed large record sales and had performed their own successful theatre tours, so could now command much higher fees. He found that to minimise these effects, he had to use more British acts on the main stage simply to fill the festival programme, often turning to those British acts who had previously performed at the Conference Centre. Andy Boggie of the duo Iona & Andy explained to this researcher:

The Wembley Festival were all major artists from America and they had a British section which always took place in the Conference Centre and we used to go to represent Wales. In the last year, British acts were booked on the main stage and our claim to fame was we were the last British act to play Wembley.

By 1991, Conn decided that the festival had run its course; that year's festival was to be his last.

In 2012, he resurrected the festival, but it ended in failure with the event only selling around four thousand of the eleven thousand tickets available. One of the problems was that Conn turned to the older Country music acts such as Reba McEntire, Ricky Skaggs and Asleep at the Wheel, hoping to attract his previous festival-goers. However, the aging demographic of these Country music fans meant that there were considerably fewer of them either able or willing to attend. Country music radio DJ Jim Duncan, interviewed on *Country Roots News Blog* Website (2012)⁵⁰⁹ by fellow Country music broadcaster Steve Morris was asked whether the festival would bring about a re-emergence of the big Country music festivals: 'Quite frankly, No! It wasn't a big festival; half of Wembley was sheeted off. It wasn't used: Very undersold'. Morris added, 'In a sense, unless you've got a long memory Reba McEntire is not a name to excite a kind of mass festival-going audience', to which Duncan replied,

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⁵⁰⁹ Morris, S. *Country Roots Newsblog*. [Online]

http://countryrootsnews.blogsite.co.uk/2012/03/wembley-2012-country-music-festival.html (accessed 20/5/2013)

'That's the problem. It's been 20 years since the Wembley festival stopped and he, [Mervyn Conn] went to start them again and he went back to all the old acts that he knew. He didn't ask anyone what the new current acts were'.

Other Festivals

The success of the Wembley festivals in the 1960s-1980s caused an explosion of Country music festivals throughout Britain over the following years, attracting large numbers of fans wanting to be part of the festival experience. Some fans would attend a number of festivals throughout the year. As Lorne Gibson on programme No 11 of the BBC Radio Merseyside series *Good Ol' Boys* (1989) stated, 'They're always well attended, often by the same people. They travel from all over the country, some of them are really well organised'. ⁵¹⁰

Many such festivals were organised by people from across various Country music-related scenes, some of whom had no business experience in organising large events. Some, such as The Country Music Festival at Portsmouth Airport in August 1986, were big successes attracting American artists such as Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell, and Billy Jo Spears. These organisers understood the requirements of British Country music fans, knowing the type of American Country music artist the fans would want to hear. They also knew what other requirements were needed to provide the fans with a successful festival experience catering for the Cowboy 'myth' that interested many fans. Some examples of which were the building of an Indian village with displays of bead-making, traditional crafts and hoop dancing. They also provided Cowboy displays, such as saddle-making and Cowboy 'trick' riding.

However, a number of festivals failed, some before they even took place, often because enthusiasts, without the professional knowledge of organising large events, attempted to run

⁵¹⁰ Good Ol' Boys Programme No 11. 5/8/1989 BBC Radio Merseyside. UK. Accessed from Spencer Leigh's personal radio archives

them. Some might let their own beliefs and prejudices interfere with the financial side of the festival, which could result in unsound financial decisions. Some examples of these were the first All British Country Music Festival organised by 5 Star Promotions to be held at Chelmsford Football Club on 30th- 31st July 1977. A two-page article in *Spotlight Country* Music (Vol 1 No 5, May 1977)⁵¹¹ discusses this festival explaining how important this event would be to British Country music, featuring as it would 26 top British Country music bands including Liverpool bands, The Hillsiders and The Everglades. In the following issue of Spotlight Country Music magazine (Vol 1 No 6 June, 1977), ⁵¹² a small paragraph announced the cancellation of the festival by the promoters, due to severe financial difficulties, resulting from an agency to which over half the acts belonged, wanting half the fees in advance of the event. The promoters did not have the financial backing to do this and unlike a professional organisation, they had not attempted to consult the agent about details of payment or put a clause in the contracts detailing when payment was due. Spotlight magazine in the same article also states that they also did not have substantial financial backing to underwrite any cash flow problems. It would appear he organisers also believed that the British Country music fans felt as they did about British Country music artists and would purchase tickets in sufficient numbers to cover the event. This was despite the fact that in the 1970s most of the larger festivals featured American acts.

Two other festivals, that were initially successful but failed for different reasons, were the Worthing Festival and The Great North Festival. Neil Coppendale was the organiser of the Worthing Festival and had successfully organised Country music festivals for a number of years. These festivals attracted a considerable number of consumers in Western dress. Coppendale was very active in promoting British Country music and, like many of his

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⁵¹¹ Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 5. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (no publisher)

⁵¹² Country Music Spotlight. (1977) Vol 1 No 6. Wakefield, D. (ed). Ellesmere Port. England: (no publisher)

contemporaries in the British Country music field, felt this Western image held the music back. He therefore decided he would ban Western wear from his Worthing Festival. Charlie Landsborough explained to this researcher that he remembers people dressed as Cowboys, Confederate troops, Indians, etc, creating a great atmosphere. Landsborough stated: 'Neil Coppendale ran the Worthing Festival and tried to get away from the Cowboy image and said he didn't want anyone in Western dress and it ruined the atmosphere'.

What Coppendale did not appear to understand, however, was that wearing such signifiers at a festival (and acting-out this apparently *faux* identity) was for some, the singular most important part of the festival experience. Therefore, when they were not allowed to participate in this way during the Worthing Festival, many just found other festivals to attend. This removal of the Cowboy image from the festival did not attract other Country music fans who shared his opinions about this Cowboy image. This researcher remembers local Merseyside Country music fans who did not attend festivals blamed the Cowboy images as one of the important reasons for deterring them from attending; yet as Coppendale found, their removal from the festival did not reveal any significant increase in consumers; the festival declined and eventually closed, in any case.

Even today, this attitude of placing the music above any financial consideration still exists with some festival organisers. A press release from John Tallon of the Great North Festival (2011) announced its closure after twenty years. It explained that, due to a loss of £6,000 from the previous festival and as they (the organisers) worked on a voluntary basis, they would not be prepared to subsidise it further. The statement read: 'They have no intention of diluting the quality of the festival by introducing artists with backing tracks or any other cost

savings that would change the nature of what we consider the festival should be'. ⁵¹³ For the organisers, this festival was not run for financial gain, but for their love of the Country music experience and whilst the festival may have continued with solo artists or run for a reduced number of days, this was not acceptable. Despite the adverse consequences of festivals such as these, there were a number that were financially well run and organised.

Three festivals that became significant translocal places to local scene members were the Americana Festival at Newark, the North Wales Festival in Llandudno and the Presthaven Sands Festival in Prestatyn, North Wales. Presthaven Sands was the festival attended by most local scene members, being close to Liverpool. It had a rail link and special coaches would take fans from Liverpool to the site. Many fans were also familiar with North Wales as it is still a popular holiday destination for Liverpool people. This Country music festival became so popular that some of the Merseyside Country music clubs did not have a club night on the week of the festival because their numbers would have been substantially depleted. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the festival ran for a week over Easter allowing whole families to attend. A number of scene members both locally and nationally informed this researcher that it was also a festival popular with Western dressers, giving them the ability to immerse themselves in those identities. Ed and Marion Fox, local scene members attended the festival regularly over many years and remembered how similar dressed Cowboys would gather in groups: Confederate and Union soldiers, Mexicans, gunfighters, etc, to live out their fantasy lifestyles and/or mythologies.

Caravans were draped with Confederate, Texan and American flags; soldiers would regularly join in their respective identities, conducting military ceremonies such as marching around

Tallon, J. *The Great North Country Music and Camping Holiday*. Press release.[Online]http://www.great-north.countrymusic-festival.co.uk/main.html (accessed 18/2/2011)

the camp, raising flags or standing guard with rifles, etc. Cowboys would have gunfights and fast-draw competitions, etc. Edna Gatewood, another local scene member, remembers that there were many 'characters' amongst the Western dressers, thus adding to the festival experience. Amongst them were an 18-stone Confederate soldier who always carried around a large 'blunderbuss', an outlaw called 'The Kissing Bandit' who would kiss everyone in the concert room, and an undertaker with a bible, which was hollowed out to contain a whisky bottle. There were also a number of buglers on the campsite who played reveille every morning at different times. Edna also stated that 'the Trilogy' was for many of the Western dressers, the highlight of the festival and was a ritual that bonded groups together. They would all gather and march around the main concert hall with the many different flags and perform the ceremony while one of the live bands played 'The Trilogy'.

While some of the participants at these types of Country music events adopted a singular Western identity for the duration of the festival, others adopted multiple identities. This researcher remembers attending one such event where a participant dressed in a different identity each day of the event, these identities were a frontiersman, a Cowboy, a Mexican and a gambler. Ed Fox stated to this researcher that they had such a large wardrobe of Western clothes that they needed a trailer behind their car in which to carry them. There were normally over twenty, mainly British Country music acts performing during the week. Almost all the local Liverpool Country music bands from Hank Walters to West Virginia had at one time performed at this festival. There was often a featured American act, which was the musical highlight of the festival and Tammy Wynette, Billy Jo Spears and Guy Mitchell were amongst the American acts that appeared over the years. Throughout the week, there were also talent contests, Country music quizzes, line-dancing, Country music films and fast-draw competitions all of which added to the intensity of the festival experience. Presthaven

festival was always successful and only ended when the organisation who owned the camp complex decided to take the holiday camp in a different direction.

The Americana festival was another translocal scene that was popular with local scene members. The festival was for many years the largest Country music festival in Britain and at its most popular; it had over 40,000 consumers at the festival. The Americana website⁵¹⁴ states that Bev and Chris Jackson founded the venture in 1980 at Donnington Park; it then moved to the Newark Showground, which was previously RAF Whinfield Airfield. The Jacksons showed sound business acumen and the festival was meticulously planned, and always ran smoothly. It was a four-day festival, usually held in July or sometimes in August. The festival had two main outdoor stages; a large Country music stage and a smaller Rock 'n' Roll stage. There was a large camping/caravan site called 'The Settlers Camp' to accommodate attendees. Thursday night was the start of the festival and was only for those four-day ticket holders, mainly those camping on site or staying in nearby hotels. The music consisted of British Country music artists and held in the indoor arena (an old airplane hangar). Friday, Saturday and Sunday consisted of music starting at midday and going on until late-evening on both stages. The British Country music acts were usually on first on the Country music stage and the American acts finished the evening. The 'Rock 'n' Roll' stage was usually manned by British Rock 'n' Roll artists.

The Jacksons realised that American Country music acts were the music's mainstay attractions and, as with Mervyn Conn, understood that they needed to go to Nashville to sell the festival to the artists and their agents. Over the years, Nashville acts such as The Bellamy Brothers, George Hamilton IV, Jimmy Dale Gilmore and Gail Davis performed at the

⁵¹⁴ Americana International. [Online] http://www.americana-international.co.uk/americana/next_bar.htm>(accessed 20/7/2011)

festival.⁵¹⁵ The Jacksons also realised that just being an American Country act had an authenticity with the British Country music fans and they would often sign unknown American acts to appear and as with other festivals, in their advertisements wrote USA in brackets after their name to emphasis their American authenticity. This researcher attended the Americana, both as a performer and a consumer and noticed that often British Country music artists attracted smaller audiences than even the unknown American artists. Many British Country music fans could be seen spending this time wandering around the hundreds of stalls or in the bars when British artists performed.

Most of the popular Liverpool bands performed at this festival. Kenny Johnson played both stages: the Country stage as Kenny Johnson and Northwind and the Rock 'n' Roll stage as one of his early incarnations: Sonny Webb and The Cascades. While the American acts were accommodated in local hotels, a campsite was established for the British acts, situated behind the stage. This researcher remembers Kenny Johnson complaining to her about the conditions that British artists had to face at this and other festivals, advising her that being on the road in British Country music is no life for a young female act.

As with the Presthaven Festival many Country music fans were dressed in Western wear clothing, often remaining in this identity throughout the festival and their caravans and tents were a sea of American, Confederate and Texan flags. The Jacksons also realised that if on the Saturday and Sunday they could provide some alternative entertainment to the general public they might attract them in by selling 'day tickets'. This they did this by having events such as classic car competitions, Harley Davidson exhibitions, RVs (recreational vehicles), custom bikes, US hotrods, the Wall of Death, children's rides and many stalls not just selling

⁵¹⁵ Americana International. [Online] http://www.americana-international.co.uk/americana/next_bar.htm> (accessed 20/7/2011)

Country music or Western wear but also numerous different items rather akin to a car boot sale. This attracted many non-Country music people such as locals who wanted a family day out and automobile and motorbike enthusiasts from around the country and considerably increased the festival's revenue.

Over recent years, the number of Country music fans attending the festival has been dropping. Chris Jackson, on the festival website often complains about the lack of support from Country music fans and in 2013, the festival was nearly cancelled. This caused the Jacksons to downsize and change the direction of the festival, reducing it to one stage. Of the 44 bands playing the 2013 festival, only fifteen were Country music acts and the others consisted of Pop and Rock tribute acts, Rockabilly bands and the headline act were cockney duo Chas and Dave. In 2014, the festival moved to a smaller site. Unfortunately, for the Jacksons, these changes have not been welcomed amongst Country music fans. Some local fans informed this researcher that because of the changes, they would not be attending this festival.

The North Wales Country Music Festival was held at the North Wales Theatre complex in Llandudno and ran from the 1990s to the early-2000s. As with the Presthaven Festival, because of its close proximity to Liverpool, it was a very popular festival with local scene members. The nature of the festival made it especially popular to those Country music fans who were part of an ageing demographic. The main part of the festival was held indoors in a comfortably-seated theatre and accommodation was provided in nearby hotels. There were also numerous cheap bed-and-breakfast accommodations near the venue and its easy access from Liverpool meant fans had the option of travelling to the festival each day. The organisers were a Welsh duo, Iona & Andy. They obtained considerable financial and other

⁵¹⁶ Americana International. [Online] http://www.americana-international.co.uk/americana/next_bar.htm> (accessed15/9/ 2013)

support from Conwy Council, who owned the complex. The theatre management team dealt with all financial matters leaving Iona and Andy to deal with artists and attendees. The festival ran for four days, Thursday to Sunday.

Thursday night consisted of a Welsh Country music night in the main theatre. Sain Records the largest Welsh record label owned by OP Hughes and Daffyd Iwan (a future Plaid Cymru President 2003-2010) sponsored the night and provided all the artists. Sain would only produce Welsh artists normally recording in the Welsh language. This researcher though, recorded her first commercial song (in Welsh) guesting with the Welsh duo, Iona and Andy for Sain and so was regularly invited by the record label owners to attend the Welsh Night. All artists and presenters spoke and sang only in Welsh, although the songs were recognisable as Welsh versions of standard American Country music songs. The theatre was always sold-out for this performance, but the audience were different from those who attended the remainder of the festival. Even though it was advertised as a Country music evening, the atmosphere was like a Welsh cultural evening. Despite the songs being covers of well-known American Country songs, the fact that they were performed in Welsh gave the artists a different set of cultural authenticities and identities with the audience.

The main festival always followed the same formula, each day. There were three venues within the complex. In the afternoon live music was provided in Ben's Bar, which was held in a large lounge area (The Ocean Lounge) and was hosted by Merseyside Country music artist Ben Rees. This was strictly a listening event and no dancing was allowed. The artists, who performed throughout the afternoon, were mainly British Country music acts. This venue was always popular with the festival attendees and was always full, with seats and tables taken-up early and people standing around the sides. This researcher often met many

⁵¹⁷ When this researcher recorded in Sain Studios, the staff were only allowed to converse in Welsh.

local Merseyside scene members at this venue, especially those from the Country music clubs.

In the ground floor part of the complex, there were stalls selling such items as Country music albums and Western wear. Upstairs there was a large ballroom devoted to line-dancing, which had British Country music acts and DJs playing line-dance songs throughout the afternoon, which was also very well attended. The evening performances were held in the 1,500-capacity theatre, which was also usually full. This followed what appeared to be the usual festival format with British acts opening the show and American acts closing it. This researcher remembers that if the British Country music fans did not like a particular British act they would leave the auditorium and stay in the bar until the American acts or a British act they liked, appeared. The more unpopular British acts were those such as Adam Caldwell, who performed either modern Country or his own material.

When the theatre performances finished, entertainment was provided in the large hotels, such as The Clarence Hotel, booked by festival attendees. During the history of the festival, this researcher had performed in the main theatre, Ben's Bar and The Clarence Hotel. The hotel entertainment was very informal with guests sitting, talking and drinking, often with the artists who had been performing at the festival. These artists would often join-in with the entertainment in spontaneous 'jam sessions', providing many festival attendees with a unique experience. This researcher remembers during her performances in The Clarence Hotel, British Country band Memphis Roots and American artist Gail Davis's band joining jam sessions with her. I also remember one evening when local Liverpool artist Kenny Johnson was performing in the hotel. He never sang more than about six songs; he knew so many Liverpool scene members in the audience that two-way banter and jokes took place all night.

All of the above added to the festival experience for the attendees, giving them a sense of kinship and belonging to a collective identity. The festival sadly folded in the mid-2000s after the Council were forced to inflict cutbacks and introduced a new theatre management team. The main casualties were the replacement of American acts with only British artists and less hotel accommodation being provided, with no 'after-show entertainment' in the hotels. A number of local scene members informed this researcher that this diminished the enjoyment of the festival, resulting in reduced numbers of fans attending and the festival finally closing.

Some concluding thoughts

Numerous festivals differing in some ways from each other have been able to provide similar (yet different) experiences for the participants. These events allowed Country fans to immerse themselves in their myths, legends and realities of the genre, experience the intensity of the festival with others who held the same shared values, and to communicate with others also receptive to and knowledgeable about the genre. Further, by enabling fans to effectively live the lifestyle of the festival, often adopting identities away from the usual agents of social control, many returned to their local scenes with renewed vigour, often taking elements of the festival back into the local scene e.g., information about new artists, new music, etc. When the numbers of local venues were declining from the 1980s-onwards and local contacts within the scene were becoming more limited, festivals provided local scene members with fresh opportunity to reinforce their Country music identities, by immersing themselves in the collective identities of those others attending — a 'thirdspace' was undoubtedly created.

Arguably, however, for local and national UK Country music artists, festivals had both positive and negative effects. While providing a useful source of income and also increasing their exposure and facilitating networks with other artists, club owners etc, the bands still

frequently had to play a secondary role to their American counterparts, even being expected to back the American artists at some of the larger festivals. In addition, if a British band played original material, or even newer Country songs, this often proved unpopular with the musically-conservative festival audiences. This meant that those bands that played a traditional canon of songs by such artists as Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and George Jones were popular with festivalgoers and often obtained more bookings than bands attempting to be original or indeed modern. Local Country music artists Peter Richardson and Harry Sheppard informed this researcher, after forming the band The Old Dudes fifteen years ago, they had a successful career performing at festivals because their set consisted of songs by American artists 'such as George Jones and Merle Haggard and they did not play anything after the 1970s. When they played the Welshpool Festival in front of 20,000 people, the write-up in a Country music magazine stated they were the only band that 'played proper Country'.

The Virtual Scene

Activities within new media have now become important social and interactional sites for many Country music fans, often complementing, or even replacing the kinds of activities described above and awarding opportunities and frameworks for negotiating social action, identities and a sense of Country music belonging. Such activities are now key means of engaging with translocality, rather than the organisation of 'mass' events. In new media activities, the only semiotic resource required for self-expression, communication, meaning making, and identification via which the local and translocal can be negotiated, is mastery of computer circuitry. This virtual scene evidently did not exist at the beginnings of the local or translocal Country music scenes, so played no part in their development. Now, however, with these scenes declining and local and translocal scene members becoming more dispersed

geographically and isolated, it is now playing a very important role. Jetto (2010) describes virtual scenes as, 'Virtual scenes are formed in virtual spaces on the internet such as chat rooms, on-line forums and websites'. 518

These virtual spaces have become significant communal spaces for British Country music fans and artists to communicate, listing up-and-coming artists, concerts, music events, providing detailed artist information, uploading videos, chat rooms and forums. As the scene declines these spaces, enable the fans to have a shared commitment to keep the genre alive and to reinforce to them the authenticity of the music. Local scene members who have little interest in modern Country music when discussing with this researcher the virtual scene, stressed the importance to them of being able to watch videos via sites such as YouTube of performances by their Country music idols, many from over thirty or forty years ago.

Chat rooms and/or forums have become important lines of communication for members to discuss a number of related topics and provide information about the scene. While membership of such scenes are open to the entire World when this researcher examined one such space, The British Country Music Association Forum, it was noted that social hierarchies are not exempt from the virtual scene. I observed that when on-line discussions are carried out on the forum, those members who had long exposure or perceived important roles in the local or translocal scenes, such as, Country music journalist, artists, etc, appear to have the same perceived authenticity in this virtual scene. Sometimes they are the only members to pass comment on some of the subjects so maintaining their influence and roles within the scene. e.g. The subject 'British Real Country' posted in July 2012 while having

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Jetto, B. (2010) 'Music Blogs, Music Scenes, Sub-Cultural Capital: Emerging Practices in Music Blogs. 2010' in Mousoutzanis. A & Riha, D. (eds). *New Media and the Politics of Online Communities* Oxford. U. K: Interdisciplinary Press. pp. 69-76

⁵¹⁹ British Country Music Website Forum. [Online]

(accessed 20/11/2013)

919 views, only had four replies, while the subject 'Country Music People' posted in Feb 2013 had 1,329 views but only seven replies, some of whom this researcher recognised as being perceived as 'influential' members of the traditional scene, e.g. Country music journalists, artists, etc.

This researcher also noticed that even posts considered important to scene members and had a large number of views by the members, still had a much significantly smaller number of replies. e.g. 'Ideas for British Bands' posted on Friday March 17th 2006 had 52,659 views and only eighty-eight replies and the post titled 'Wembley 2012' posted on Monday Oct 11th 2010 had 43,691 views and 376 replies. Some issues though show that the fans on this virtual scene are still as passionate about the Country music and recognise the problems that are causing its demise. This can be seen in some of the posts that discussed the scene's decline in 2008. This included 'Pastor Joe' (Wed 13/9/08) 'The only way British Country music can evolve is by appealing to a younger audience. Nothing else will allow it to survive. If we don't attract the teens we'll disappear in a very few years. Teens will not go into a club where the audience is predominantly over 60'. 'Bony Donny' added, (Wed 10/9/08) 'Until someone comes along and grabs Country music by the scruff of the neck and dares to be different it will keep it's [sic] old fogey image and of course there has to be broadminded people to accept this'. Further comments from other forum members include 'East Coast Outlaw' (Thurs 4/9/08)

No-one is suggesting that audiences need leading like sheep but I think it's fair to say Country music in Britain has in the main stagnated for whatever reason. Certainly, in the South East and from the comments on these forums the rest of the country there is a tendency for existing audiences not to be responsive to the new styles of Country music that the rest of the World has embraced.

TJ added, (Fri 15/9/08):

We all know what is wrong with the scene but no-one seems to know how to put it right but we do need to get the support of a younger audience and by accepting third rate performances of the same old done to death covers just to keep some of the audiences happy this will never happen. For example, I've lost count of the number of times I've heard 'Folsom Prison Blues' at festivals this summer. At one time, I heard it from all three bands in one session [...]⁵²⁰

Whilst on the virtual scene, members conduct their communication solely via the internet, rarely if ever meeting face to face. The discourses are still important, not just as a source of communication and information but to help scene members retain their collective identity and reinforce their commitment to the genre. Now with the onset of iphones, ipads, tablets etc, this has also become a 'portable' virtual scene in which members can participate, not just at home but in a number of spaces such as cafés, at events or on holiday, etc.

Frith (1987) stated many years ago that: 'what music (Pop) can do is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social factors.'⁵²¹ For this researcher, there is no doubt that Country music in Liverpool has repeatedly called forth a sense of identity by people simply thinking about it, never mind listening or performing it. Music in places can allow us to convert, at times, oppressive social conditions into 'third' spaces of creativity and the imagination. The Liverpool Country scene therefore remains a partially-hidden historical example of a popular music history that allowed music to spatially embody and represent 'true' experience.

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⁵²⁰ British Country Music Website Forum. [Online]

(accessed 20/11/2013)">accessed 20/11/2013)

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However, the above information also suggests that we are on the cusp of change for Country music fandom, scenes and communities across the world. As for Liverpool, perhaps we might suggest that in some ways the Country music scene has not therefore 'breathed its last gasp', as such, but has merely become electronically translocal and transglobal – in effect, changed with the times and the technologies. However, where this leaves the sense of community engendered by the past fifty-or-so years of scenes and communities is anybody's guess. All that can be ascertained is that, like all popular music scenes, the Liverpool Country scene or community has contracted and mutated, and we wait with interest the next development in its ever-changing hybridity. While some fans have become active agents in web-based resources, and spend free time writing and editing texts for the web, discussing music with others, as well as administering and monitoring many of the spaces in which they might be frequent participants, a few others continue to attend the one remaining listening venue in Liverpool in a vain attempt to turn back the hands of time.

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the 1980s, The Linacre Pub, and The Melrose Abbey in 2007, also the Joe Rogers' Benefit

Concert at The Eldonian Village Hall, Liverpool. 2007.

Personal Correspondence

Argyll. A. (Adam Caldwell) E-mail June 2013

Bautell. G. E-mail Jan 2010

Lee. A. E-mail June 2013

Hall G. E-mail June 2013

Provan. J. E-mail Jan 2010

Sheriff. D. E-mail Dec 2009

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Discography

Albums studied as part of the semiotic analysis of the recorded work of The Hillsiders. All albums are vinyl unless otherwise stated.

The Hillsiders

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- 2. The English Countryside (with Bobby Bare) (1967) RCA VICTOR SF -7918
- 3. The Leaving of Liverpool (1968) RCA VICTOR RD 8002
- 4. The Hillsiders (1970) Lucky LUS 3002
- 5. Heritage (with George Hamilton IV) (1971) RCA VICTOR LSA 3043
- 6. By Request (1972) POLYDOR 2460-151
- 7. Our Country (1973) Polydor 2460-203
- 8. To Please You (1975) Stile STILE2001
- 9. Goodbye Scottie Road (1976) Stile STILE2002
- 10. On the Road (1978) LP SRTX/LI001
- 11. A Day in the Country (1979) LP SRTX/LP004
- 12. The Hillsiders (1980) LP LP005
- 13. Only One You (1984) Suitbag Records HS36001
- 14. 15:25 (1989) Suitbag Records HSD 36002 [CD]

American Country music albums. Vinyl unless stated.

George Jones

- 1. The Race is On (1965) Sunset Records SLS 50428
- 2. The Best of George Jones (1971) Pye International NSPL 28150

3. Country Music (1981) Time Life Records STW 103

Merle Haggard

 Merle Haggard Sings (no date but songs dated from 1968-75) Music for Pleasure MFP 50392

Merle Haggard and The Strangers

 Songs I'll Always Sing (no date but songs dated from 1973-77) Capitol Records SLB 8086

Waylon Jennings

- 6. Just to Satisfy You (1969) RCA Victor LSP4137
- 7. The Ramblin' Man (1974) RCA LSA 3196
- 8. Don't Think Twice Its Alright, Waylon Jennings, The Early Years (1979) Music for Pleasure MFP 50517
- 9. The Early Years (1988) RCA 9561-1-R

Kris Kristofferson

10. Songs of Kristofferson (no date but songs dated from 1972-77) Monument MNT32106

Chet Atkins

11. More of That Country Guitar (no date) RCA Victor LSp3429

Buck Owens

12. Buck Owens in London (no date) Capitol Records ST232

Don Gibson

13. Touch the Morning/ That's What I'll Do (1973) Hickory Records HR450

Bobby Bare

14. The Winner and Other Losers (1976) RCA Victor APKI 1786

Hank Snow

15. The Hank Snow Album (1976) Pickwick ACL 7025

George Hamilton IV

16. Reflections (no date) Lotus Records WH 5008

John D Loudermilk

17. 12 Sides of John D Loudermilk (1962) RCA NL89993

The Everly Brothers

18. The Very Best of the Everly Brothers (1988) Hallmark SHM 3246

Jimmy Buffett

19. All the Great Hits (1994) Prism Leisure Corp PLAT CD 4903 [CD]

George Strait

20. Greatest Hits Volume 2 (1987) MCA Records MCAD 42035 [CD]

Johnny Cash

21. Johnny Cash's Greatest Hits Volume 1. (1992) Columbia 4711492 [CD]

(First released 1967 vinyl recording on Columbia label CS9478)

The Recorded Work of Local Bands Researched in This Study.

Kenny Johnson and Northwind

22. Lakeside Highway (1976) Northwest Gramophone NWG76103

Kenny Johnson

- 23. Let Me Love You Once (no date) OBM Ltd OBM 1
- 24. A Tree in the Meadow (1981) OBM Ltd OBM 1002
- 25. The Best of Kenny Johnson (1982) OBM Ltd 1003
- 26. Summer Nights (1991) STOX Records SXCD 1001 [CD]

Kenny Johnson and Northwind

27. City Lights (1977) EMI International INT545 [45 rpm single]

Phil Brady and The Ranchers

- 28. Brady Country (1968) Hallmark Records HM585
- 29. Songs of Nashville (1969) Sunset SLS 50105E
- 30. No 1 in the Country (1970) Lucky Records LUS3007
- 31. A Little Bit Country 91971) Philips 6414107
- 32. Me and Bobby McGee 91974) Emerald Gem GES 1117

Phil Brady and Rainbow County

33. Liverpool Country Sounds (1976) Sweet Fox and Country SFA034

Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers

- 34. Hank Walters and the Dusty Road Ramblers (1975) Liverpool Sound LS1791
- 35. Progress (1979) ROX ROXLP003
- 36. City With a Heart (1998) (no record credits) [CD]

West Virginia

- 37. Country Dreamer (1978) ROX ROXLP002
- 38. Fresh Tracks (1981) ROX ROXLP004
- 39. Blue Rendezvous (1993) (no record label credits) BFAD005 [CD]

Lee Brennan

- 40. The World of Country Music Vol 7. A Tribute to Johnny Cash (1975) Decca SPA 389
- 41. The Merseyside of Lee Brennan (1976) Sky Records Sky1001

The Miller Brothers

- 42. Louisville (1975) Westwood Records WRS077
- 43. Through the Years 1959-1979 (no date) Glengary Records GGR11004 [CD]

The Idle Hours

44. Just for You (no date) Idle Hours (no catalogue No) [45 rpm, EP]

Georgie Cash (George C Smith)

45. Local Boy from Mersey (1973) Stag Music SG1017

George C Smith

- 46. The Country World of George C Smith (1975) Emerald Gem GES 1134
- 47. Dreams and Schemes (1977) Decca MOR 505
- 48. George C Smith Sings Country Gems (1980) Jungle Records JR 12047S

The Kentuckians

- 49. The Kentuckians (no date) Major Records MM8001 [45rpm EP]
- 50. Kentucky Breakdown 91971) Avenue Recordings Ltd AVE080

The Kelly Band

- 51. The Kelly Band Live (no date) RTS1658 [Cassette]
- 52. From England to Nashville (no date) RTS2159 [Cassette]

Paddy Kelly

53. All My Cloudy Days Are Gone (no date) CD3529 [CD]

Charlie Landsborough

- 54. I Will Love You All My Life (1983) Pastafont PF3008 (45rpm single)
- 55. Songs from the Heart (1992) Ritz Records RitzRCD 521 [CD]

Appendices

Susan Elizabeth Hedges

November 2014

Doctor of Philosophy. Music

Appendix 1: Informants.

Those interviewed spoke about many aspects of the local and national scene, e.g. how they were introduced to Country music, why they were attracted to it, the changes in the scene, the pub and club scene, events they played, etc.

Amongst the information they provided was,

Tony Ainscough

Local Country music artist and ex-member of The Everglades spoke about the local Merseyside Country music scene up to the present day and the difficulties in maintaining a Country band.

Jayne Barnes

A line-dancer talked about the line-dance scene from its early development in Country & Western clubs, how it has changed and how they are now forming their own identity outside of the Country music scene and the reasons why this has come about.

Alan Bates

Country music fan and Western dresser gave information about how important his Western wear was to his identity as a Country music fan and feels he loses his identity when people do not wear Western wear.

Peter Bethel

Bethel, a member of the Country music band Desert Wind explained how the advent of line dancing meant the band had to change their repertoire.

Andy Boggie

One-half of the duo Iona & Andy, gave an insight into how vibrant the Liverpool scene was

and how closed it was for acts outside of Liverpool wanting to obtain gigs in the City.He also discussed regional differences in attitudes to songs.

Lorraine Du Bois

Line-dance instructor at the Boot Scootez's Club, Huntingdon. She described the line-dance club activities etc, confirmed information from other line-dancers about the many changes in the Line-dance community such as switching from Country music to Pop which have occurred not only locally but in clubs located further south in the UK.

Phil Brady

Phil Brady was an important local Country music singer who had been playing on the scene since 1962. He discussed his introduction to Country music and Liverpool people's affinity to Country music. How with his band, The Ranchers he toured with acts such as Willie Nelson and Hank Snow, played the London Palladium, the air force bases and many of the pubs and clubs around Liverpool including those on the Dock Road.

Bernie Bullen.

Local Country music singer in the 50s onwards, played in local bands such as the Nevadas, spoke about how important pubs and clubs like Ozzie Wades were to maintaining a successful local Country music scene.

Billy Butler.

Billy Butler, BBC Radio Merseyside DJ and past presenter of Radio Merseyside's 'Sounds Country', spoke about how many local Country scene members became involved with Country music and he felt that part of the reasons for the decline of Country music was the lack of knowledge of the Country music scene by the people in the record industry. He quoted as an example, the people responsible for placing the records with radio station's,

programmes were continually sending Country music records to djs that did not play Country music and dj's that did play Country did not receive them.

Diane Caine.

Owner of The Musical Box, record shop, Tuebrook, gave her insight about the types of Country music records that were available in Liverpool and its popularity with local scene members. She also discussed how a number of early American Country music recordings were not released in Britain.

Norman Cass.

Record dealer ran, along with his wife, Pat, a music record stall both locally and nationally at clubs and festivals. He explains how it was once a very profitable business, dealing only with Country music records, which were mostly imports from America, many of which were not released in England and how the internet sales have all but ended their business. His store was also a place of social interaction where scene members, bands, etc, would discuss a number of topics including festivals, events, new bands, record releases and generally exchanging news.

Denis Collier.

National Country Music artist and promoter of 'DCL Country Music Events', spoke about the Yorkshire & National Country music scene and the reluctance of British Country music fans to accept original British material.

Mervyn Conn.

Conn was the promoter and organiser of the Wembley Country Music Festivals, which ran from 1969-90, and who organised many other festivals. Conn brought over many American Country music artists and claims responsibility for breaking such acts as Johnny Cash and

Dolly Parton into Europe. He also spoke about the reluctance of British Country music fans to accept British Country music acts as authentic and the difficulty of putting on a Country music festival today.

Dave Deacon

Country music academic and fan spoke about the local scene. He mentions the difference between local and American Country music bands and reasons why British Country music never became popular nationally.

Peter Dee

Local Country and Western singer and ex-member of 'Hobo' gave information about the local scene and why he thought no new people are attracted to the scene. He also discussed the difficulty in maintaining a Country music band in the scene today.

Jerry Devine.

Local Country music artist in the 1950s played in The Blue Mountain Boys spoke about the Liverpool Country scene and the importance of the Dock Road scene. He also discussed his time working on the Cunard liners travelling to New York in the 1950s/60s and bringing back many American records.

Carol Mortimer (née-Devine).

Niece of 1950s local Country music artist Jerry Devine reinforced the importance of AFN Radio in promoting Country music locally and that in the 1950's record shops were available where the fans could buy Country music records. She also discussed how her father and uncle Jerry brought back hundreds of records while working on the Cunard liners.

John Fairclough.

A prominent member of the local music industry for a number of years, who started the first

local Country music label with Joe Butler, from The Hillsiders. He gave valuable information about British Country music recordings and why British Country music was never able to break into mainstream. He also mentioned the difficulty in matching the American quality of recordings.

Eddie and Marian Fox.

Country music fans spoke about the early Country music dance scene, running a local Country music club and attending national Country music festivals.

Bernie Green

Bernie Green was one of the earliest members of the local Country music scene and was the organiser of possibly the first Country music club in Liverpool. He played in many local Country music bands including The Everglades and Phil Brady and The Ranchers. He provided important information about the local scene, its venues and significant spaces such as record shops.

Edna and Colin Gatewood.

Spoke about the importance of AFN radio and the sailors (especially the Harrison Lines 'sugar run') who brought home records from America, were to promoting the local Country music scene. They also spoke about attending national festivals and the decline of the local scene.

George Hamilton IV

George Hamilton IV has been a member of the Grand Ole Opry for over 50 years and he has also been a regular visitor to Britain for many years receiving the title 'Ambassador of Country Music' He worked regularly with British band, The Hillsiders during the 60s and early 70s both in Britain and Nashville. George provided a unique insight into why he felt

British bands such as 'The Hillsiders', never achieved any real success in Nashville at a time when their Merseybeat counterparts were conquering America. He also compared the standard of Liverpool Country bands in the 60s with their Nashville contemporaries.

Steve Healy

Dance Editor- *Linedancer Magazine*, spoke about the line-dance culture moving away from the Country music scene to the formation of its own distinct culture and the future development of Line dancing.

Debbie Jones

Line-dance instructor at The Whitby Sports and Social Club Ellesmere Port also attended her Father's Country music club from a very young age. Debbie gave valuable information about the line-dance scene during her Country music days and at present highlighting how the scene has developed.

Maureen Jones

Line-dancer from The Whitby Sports & Social Club, Ellesmere Port. This interview also involved others from the club and gave an insight on the line-dance scene such as its relationship with Country music, festivals, holidays, etc.

Charlie Landsborough.

Successful local Country music artist spoke about whether he felt his identity fitted within the Country music scene, the problem of the British Country music scene not forming its own identity, Western dressers within the Country music scene and his experiences working in the Dock Road pubs.

Spencer Leigh.

Local Radio presenter and music critic spoke about the local Country scene and raised the

question 'Was Liverpool the biggest Country scene in Britain?'

Tommy Mather.

Tommy ran the Welcome Country music Club in Leigh, spoke about how the club ran for 34 years, and was now forced to close due to falling numbers and the reasons for its decline.

Terry McCusker.

Local musician who was a drummer in various local Country music bands including, Hambone, The Bogtrotters and The Ben Rees Band, spoke about the local scene and highlighted the regional differences from his experiences travelling around the Country.

Eddy Miller.

Local Country music singer since the 1950s, last surviving member of The Miller Brothers Country music band. He spoke about the scene in the 1950s and 1960s and how the scene has changed today, why he felt people were attracted to Country music and his attitude to line-dancers and Western dressers.

Dawn Morgan

Line-dance instructor at Boot Scootez, Huntingdon confirmed that the evolution of the line-dance communities in other parts of the UK mirrored that of the local Merseyside line-dance communities.

John & Ann Murphy

Local Country music fans and regulars on the Dock Road Country music scene gave information about the local Dock Road scene.

Darren Neild

Local Country music artist and member of the Neild family spoke about the local Merseyside

Country music scene from the 1980s to the present day.

Charlie Newport

Local Country music artist, worked with other local Country music acts such as Paddy Kelly.

He discussed the differences in playing modern line-dance clubs and Country music clubs.

He also spoke about the difference in local artists and American Country music artists and

about playing the Wembley festival.

Les Payne and Stroller.

This Lancashire based Country music band spoke about the Lancashire Country music scene.

Joey Quinn.

Promoter of Country music events and organiser of the weekly Country music event at The

Whitby Sports and Social Club, Ellesmere Port, describes how the scene has changed over

the years.

Peter Richardson & Harry Sheppard.

Members of The Old Dudes Country band and Country music fans gave valuable information

about the Country scene in Liverpool and Country music at the Dock Road pubs.

Marie Rooney.

Marie Rooney (née Devine) discussed how her two brothers worked on the Cunard liners in

the 1950s and 60s and brought back records.

Eric and Sylvia Smallwood.

Country music fans and line-dancers spoke about how the line-dance scene has changed and

how the scene has declined.

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Eric Stoddard

Local Country music artist and member of the local Country music band 'Dalton Brothers' gave information about the local Merseyside Country music scene.

Ron Sutton

Country music fan spoke about the scene in Yorkshire and how they considered Doncaster as the main Country music city in Britain.

Ricky Tomlinson

Comedian and actor discusses how he was introduced to Country music and how for many years he was the MC/compere at Ossie Wade's Club on Country nights also performing at many venues with his band, Hobo Rick and The City Slickers. He also discusses the Sunday afternoon Country music show at his cabaret club, The Green Room.

Brian Toner

Brian Toner ran a number of Dock road pubs during the 1980s including the Bramley Moor, The Union and the Griffin and was instrumental in booking many of the Country bands into these pubs including The Joey Rogers Band, Whiskey River, Hazard County and the Everglades. He describes the atmosphere and popularity of Country music in these pubs. He gives reasons why this music was popular there and reasons for the decline in popularity of the late 1980s.

Barry and Wendy Wallace

Scottish Country and Western duo Jolene and Barry, discussed regional differences in the national scene. How they had to change their material to cater for regional tastes. They also spoke about how line dancing was more popular in Scotland and the South than in the North West and how Country music communities often grew up in areas near American bases such

as in Scotland, Norfolk and Suffolk. Wallace also explained how he became interested in Country music when he was given Larry Gatlin and The Gatlin Brothers records brought back by a Glaswegian seaman. He also discussed how difficult it is today to mount a tour due to lack of venues, now they play mostly in Scotland.

Hank Walters

Founder member of the local Country music scene on Merseyside who claims to have formed the first Liverpool Country music band. Hank gave valuable information about Country music influences on the 1960's Merseybeat scene including The Beatles.

West Virginia.

Local Country music band, formed in 1975 and still performing, spoke about how the scene has changed over the years and talked about their musical influences including local Country music band, The Hillsiders.

Informants Melrose Abbey Study

Norman Boasc

Norman spoke about being a long-term follower of the band and of the live Country music scene in the past.

John & Elsie Colford

Long time community members John spoke about how his interest in Country music came from his time as a conscripted soldier in Germany listening to Country music on AFN Europe. Elsie was a follower from the Dock Rd days. They stated how important the scene is to their social life, recognising the importance of George Neild in binding the community together and that the community is in its last stages.

Margaret & Joe Corke

Long term followers of Country music for over 50 years and of The Joey Rogers Band, spoke about the kinship in the community, its atmosphere and alienation of modern Country music. The Corkes also explained that they were avid collectors of Country music from the early 1950s.

Gerry and Vera Crellan

The Crellans discussed the closeness of the north-end community and how they had close bonds with George Neild and his family before the family became Country music musicians and it has continues throughout Neilds' musical career.

Alfie Crowley

Country music artist, often referred to as 'Alfie from the south-end', spoke about the importance of past community members and how their loss affected the community. He also spoke about regional variations within the British Country music scene. Crowley also discussed how there was a musical rivalry between the north and south-ends of Liverpool.

Jim & Mary Donnegan

Spoke about how they were followers of The Joey Rogers Band for over 50 years and about the social life of the community and the decline of the Country music scene locally.

Pat Duggan

Duggan discussed the close ties of the north-end community and his lifelong friendship with the Neilds explaining how he became a follower of George Neild and the bands he played in.

Josephine Fox

Fox explained how vibrant the north-end Dock Road Country music scene was and how members had to arrive early to obtain seats in a number of the venues because they became 407

so crowded.

Tony Kennedy

Tony Kennedy plays rhythm guitar in the band and was originally in The Saddlers with George Neild. He talked about the lifelong friendships and feeling of community within the local Country music scene, which he believes, except for The Melrose, has all but disappeared.

Eric Melville.

Eric plays the lead guitar in the band and had played with George Neild 50 years ago. He played in a number of different bands and was reunited with George in 1992 at The Melrose. He talked about the loss of key members of the community and why he is attracted to the community.

Tommy Melville

Tommy is the newest member of the band and spoke about the local scene, playing with Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers, Denver Rose and Hazard County giving valuable information on the Dock Road Country music scene.

John Murphy

Murphy was a community member from the days when it was based at the 'Union' on the Dock Road. He spoke about those days and the importance of participation in the community's success.

George Neild

Leader of the band and the key member of the community as he is the last surviving member of The Joey Rogers Band. He also sang with other local bands such as The Saddlers for over 50 years. Neild initiated many of the rituals and practices, which help the community to bind

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together. He talked about the importance of the community members to the entertainment.

Mick O'Toole

Talked about growing up in Liverpool and what attracted him to Country music. The importance of Burtonwood in the growth of the Country music community on Merseyside. He also contributed ideas on the decline of the local Country music scene.

Georgie Poole

Talked about the local scene in the 1950s/60s and how American servicemen brought Country music into the local pubs. He also talked about the distinct audience participation in the scene.

Chris Seddon

Community member spoke about how she became attracted to Country music as it echoed her values and about the community spirit of The Melrose.

John & Theresa Turner

Melrose Abbey pub landlords, spoke about how they came from a traditional Liverpool pub family and how they ran pubs all their lives. They also spoke about how they had known The Joey Rogers Band since the 1970s and invited the community to use The Melrose Abbey pub as their home after the closure of The Union pub in the 1990s. The group felt that the welcoming atmosphere they provided was considered important in sustaining the feeling of community.

Billy Whelan

The only community member who came to the community without an interest in Country music, talked about the community, the venue, and how he adapted his canon of songs to fit in with the community tastes to be accepted into it.

Appendix 2: List of Liverpool Country Bands: mid-1950s to mid-1970s.

Abilenes [1960s/70s] Savannah [1970s]

Becketts Kin [1970s] State Express [1960s/70s]

Blue Country Three [1960s/70s] The Blue Mountain Boys [1950s/60s]

Bojangles [1970s] The Country Boys [1960s]

Buffalo Creek [1960s/70s] The Country Five [1960s/]

Charlie Boy [1960s/70s] The Dakotas [1960s/70s]

Carol Western & Country Sunshine [1960s/70s] The Dalton Brothers [1960s/70s]

Country Comfort [1960s/70s] The Drifting Cowboys [1950s/60s]

Country Cousins [1960s/70s] The Everglades [1960s/70s]

Country Sound [1960s/70s] The Freewheelers [1970s]

Cy Con and the Westernaires [1950s/60s/70s] The Hillsiders [1960s/70s]

Denver Rose [1960s/70s] The Idle Hours [1960s/70s]

Fair Enough [1970s] The Jo Piper Band [1960s/70s]

Flatbush Country [1970s] The Paddy Kelly Band [1960s/70s]

Frisco [1970s] The Kentuckians [1960s/70s]

Gold and Silver [1960s/70s] The Miller Brothers [1960s/70s]

Gold Dust [1970s] The Nevadas [1960s/70s]

Hank Walters and The Dusty Road Ramblers

[1950s/60s/70s] The New Schooners [1970s]

Hartford West [1960s/70s] The Joey Rogers Band [1960s/70s]

Harvest Gold [1970s] The Saddlers [1960s/70s]

Hazard County [1960s/70s] The San Antones [1970s]

Hobo [1970s] The Statesiders [1970s]

Kenny Johnson and Northwind [1970s] The Stringdusters [1960s/70s]

Liverpool Country [1970s] The Texans [1960s]

Lock Stock and Barrel [1960s/70s] The Virginians [1960s]

Pegasus [1970s] Toledo Country [1960s/70s]

Phil Brady and The Ranchers [1960s/70s] West Virginia [1970s]

Phoenix [1960s/70s] Westward County [1970s]

Rainbow County [1960s/70s] Westward Union [1960s/70s]

Rodeo [1970s] Whiskey River [1960s/70s]

This may not be a definitive list as there may be other bands not found during this research. The list only includes the period mid-1950s to mid-1970s a number of bands were still performing past these dates, some, such as West Virginia, Kenny Johnson and Northwind and The Joe Rogers Band were active into the 2000s. The list does not include the large number of solo or duo acts, many of which were quite famous on the local and national Country

music scenes e.g.

Lee Brennan [1960s/70s]

Lorne Walker [1960s/70s]

Patsy Foley [1950s/60s/70s]

George Cash [1960s/70s]

Charlie Landsborough [1960s/70s]

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