

**‘Make Them Meaningful’:
An Examination of Popular Music Awarding
Institutions 1957-2019**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by
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July 2021

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Grandad,

Paul Eugene Beatty (1943-2015)

Thank you for your encouragement, your wisdom and your love.

How I wish you were here to see this; my final promise to you, complete.

I would like to offer my thanks to Dr Marion Leonard and Dr Rob Strachan for all of their support and encouragement. Marion; it has been an honour to work alongside you and have your knowledge and care as a constant throughout this trying process. Rob; your difficult questions have equally scared me and made me a better academic. Thank you both.

I would like to send a special thank you to my Mum and Dad who have been an absolute bedrock throughout. Your love and understanding is more than any daughter could hope for. I could not have done this without you. To my Nan, your quiet resolve is an inspiration that pushes me on. Your hugs are always very welcome too. To my wonderful brothers, Matt and Chris, our obsession with music started all of this. Thank you for inspiring me and always reminding me why I love music so much. To Sarah, Archie, Teddy, Paul, Sam, Wilson, Cooper, Catherine, Tom, Callum, Louise and Craig, Emily and Becky; you'll never know how much I've needed the mad gang to get me through this herculean task, thank you. To Megan, the brightest ray of sunshine and the best of friends. Thank you seems insufficient for how much encouragement you've given me throughout the past four years, and all the years before that. To Edd and Beth, your friendship, understanding and kindness has meant so much to me over the last few years, thank you. To Beth, your friendship and support has got me through this PhD. Thank you for picking me up when I've been down. To Samiran and Jon, the original BNOC, I look forward to our continued adventures in academia. To Ian, Tom and Nick; I count my blessings to have friends as wonderful, supportive and always willing to go for a beer as you. And to Fergus, who came along at exactly the right moment. It truly takes a village to get through something as monumental as writing a thesis, I consider myself very lucky that I've had such a strong support system around me. Thank you all.

The irony of the cliché award-winning thank you speech here is not lost on me.

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Abstract

‘Make Them Meaningful’:

An Examination of Popular Music Awarding Institutions 1957-2019

Emma-Jayne Reekie

Anglo-American major popular music awarding institutions are world renowned yet scarcely examined within academic fields. This thesis will illustrate why it is important to study these institutions and how they can be used as means through which we can better understand how power is established within, and value is consecrated by, the recording industry. The two highest profile popular music awarding institutions within their respective recording industries – the Grammy Awards (US) and the BRIT Awards (UK) – will be examined and, though there is a perception that these awards are independent from the industry, it will be argued that the awards are deeply connected to their major recording industry, can reveal how aesthetic value is constructed in accordance with institutional structures and can also be understood as a means to reinforce the industry’s practices, preferences and prejudices. A combination of methodological approaches accommodates an in-depth analysis of popular music awarding institutions.

Original data collected for this thesis informs each of its five chapters. Archival research, including information collected from industry periodicals, such as *Billboard Magazine*, and the Grammy Living Histories archive facilitates an exploration of the 1957 formation of the academy behind the Grammy Awards which establishes the inextricable relationship between major awarding institutions and the major recording industry. An analysis of all the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners establishes that the awards champion the music most commercially valuable to the major recording industries. When analysed in conjunction with the ‘bestselling albums of all times’ charts and the *Rolling Stone* and *NME* magazine’s *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists, this argument is widened to claim that awarding institutions offer a different set of values to those espoused by the popular music canon. Representation and diversity are examined through statistical analysis of the nominees and winners of the major award categories at the BRIT Awards revealing a lack of gender and racial diversity in those recognised by nominations and awards. The award ceremony is explored

through a case study approach to understand the ceremony's performative role as the awards' public face. Finally, two case studies of non-major UK music awards – the MOBO Awards and the Mercury Music Prize – are analysed in comparison with the BRIT Awards to demonstrate how major and non-major awards work in tandem.

Ultimately, the arguments and evidence presented in this account establish how the unique position of awarding institutions can shed light on the practices and values of the major recording industry. This thesis highlights the implications of the major awarding institutions' annual cycle and what can be learnt from examining music as a snapshot in time rather than on the retrospective basis we have become accustomed to. Major popular music awarding institutions will be positioned as imperative to the further understanding of the major recording industry and how the creation of value, representation and institutional structure function within it.

Introduction

This thesis will develop an understanding of the meanings and functions of US and UK popular music awarding institutions in order to address a significant gap in knowledge within popular music scholarship. Beginning with the formation of the US based Grammy Awards in 1957, extending through to the creation of the UK's BRIT Awards in 1977 and the further establishment of other, non-major awarding institutions and their practices through to 2019, this thesis offers an analysis of popular music awarding. The meaning and value, both aesthetic and economic, of these institutions have been topics of debate within public discourse since their establishment. Five years after the first Grammy Awards, in 1963, a *Billboard* editorial urged the academy behind the Grammy Awards to 'make them meaningful' (*Billboard*, 1963: 6). The awards, they argued, were held in high esteem by the recording industry but were too far removed from the record buying audience. For the awards to be successful, *Billboard* argued, the record buying consumer had to understand what the awards stood for. Twenty years later, at the 1996 Grammy Awards ceremony, upon receipt of Pearl Jam's award for *Best Hard Rock Performance*, lead singer Eddie Vedder said to the audience, 'I don't know what this means, I don't think it means anything' (Shamsai, 1996: 367). The BRIT Awards have been regularly criticised throughout their tenure for their preoccupation with 'lauding commercial success over musical innovation' (Sullivan, 1994: 8) and celebrating the 'bland and banal' (O'Connor, 2015). As institutions capable of bestowing value onto popular music and musicians, the meaning of popular music awards must be examined and debated to shed light on a process that seeks to determine value within the field of popular music. This thesis provides the first substantive, academic examination of Anglo-American popular music awarding institutions in order to understand the purpose of these awarding institutions, their motivations and their impact across the recording industry.

As the dominant, major popular music awarding institutions of the Anglo-American recording industries, the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards are the primary focus of this thesis. Acknowledging these awards as institutions is a key contribution of this research that broadens our understanding of how these institutions operate beyond the public ceremony. Despite a general understanding that these awarding institutions are independent from the recording

industry, it is argued in this thesis that major popular music awarding institutions are directly linked to the major Anglo-American recording industries and act as industrial strategies. In their role as industrial strategies, the awarding institutions champion the major recording industry's most economically valuable assets through the promotion of key formats, such as the album, and also through the act of awarding and culturally elevating the major recording industry's most commercial forms of popular music. Consequently, this examination of major popular music awarding institutions offers a way to better understand the major recording industry's practices, preferences and motivations due to the reflexive relationship between the industry and the major awarding institutions. Due to the nature of major popular music awarding institutions awarding in a specified twelve month period, and their alignment with the major recording industries, this research offers a new approach to assessing commercially successful, mainstream music across time. As such, this research offers an alternative approach to evaluating value and success within popular music that is not reliant on the rock-centric popular music canon that assesses a much wider timeframe. Examining artist nominations and awards also offers a way of exploring gender and racial representation within the awards and, by extension, the major recording industry. This thesis will present detailed analysis of awards over time to argue that they demonstrate biases within the Anglo-American recording industries. The multi-disciplinary nature of this research expands beyond popular music studies and offers a significant contribution to the newly emerging field concerned with the study of cultural awards, offering a blueprint for the further study of other cultural awarding institutions linked to their respective cultural industries.

Although the awarding institutions explored throughout this thesis are high profile in nature, they have been afforded little examination within popular music scholarship. The Grammy Awards and BRIT Awards are prominent, coveted awards within the US and UK's recording industries that bestow cultural and economic value and prestige onto recipients as well as acceptance and promotion into two of the world's largest music markets. In addition, the celebrated and glamorous ceremonies of these awarding institutions play an important and central role in their recording industry's annual calendars, operating as an occasion to see and be seen in an exchange of cultural capital between the institution and the stars necessary to generate the ceremony's allure. These televised events hold broad appeal with the Grammy Awards' regularly attracting tens of millions of viewers and a record amount of 51.67 million viewers in 1984 (Gallo, 2012). These events inspire discussion and debate across the public sphere, ranging from the worthiness of someone winning a particular award to the institution's

oversight in not recognising a certain music genre or artist. In recent years, award ceremonies have been used to address more general issues within the wider entertainment industries concerning a lack of diversity and representation which highlights how closely aligned awarding institutions are to their respective industry. The public and prominent role that major popular music awarding institutions and their ceremonies play within both mainstream society and the recording industry indicates that there is much to be learnt from their examination. That these institutions remain overlooked within popular music scholarship is an oversight that this thesis seeks to address.

The term popular music awarding institution is used in this research to better convey the complexities of these awarding bodies. In an attempt to combat the common conflation that the ceremony is the awards, and vice versa, the term awarding institution indicates that there is a much larger operation in play which expands the potential for what we can learn from and about these institutions. Although the ceremony is the public facing component of the awarding institution, the process leading up to this event, the functionality of the awards and the motivations and connections of the institution are all equally fundamental in building a thorough appreciation of the institution. Moreover, the long-standing status of some popular music awarding institutions, like the Grammy Awards, has embedded them into the recording industry. Their infamous status has overshadowed their origins, and the lack of knowledge concerning why an awarding institution was founded can prevent a proper understanding of the motivations behind the formation of the institution and its original aims. As a term, awarding institution expands our perception of the purpose of these awards. This research has taken this further by also categorising awarding institutions into major and non-major entities. Major awarding institutions, like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards, sit at the apex of their recording industry and are the awards that set the parameters for what is valued within the major recording industry. Non-major awarding institutions are those that operate at a national or regional level but award to a different set of criteria that tends to address a gap within the major's purview, such as the UK based Music of Black Origin (MOBO) Awards or the US city based Detroit Music Awards. Categorising awarding institutions in this way expands our understanding of these institutions and how they operate, not just at an institutional level but also how they operate in relation to each other as part of a wider field of popular music awarding institutions, which is an essential contribution of this thesis.

By expanding current perceptions of popular music awarding institutions and establishing their purpose, motivations and links to the recording industry, this thesis contributes to distinct areas of existing popular music scholarship including work concerning the recording industry and discussions around mainstream and the popular music canon. As these terms will be used throughout this work, it is essential to contextualise their use providing a brief overview here before continued examination in the literature review. It is argued throughout that popular music awarding institutions should be understood as industrial strategies of the recording industry, designed to promote and protect the industry's most economically valuable music, and formats. Within popular music scholarship, there has been a tendency for the term music industry to be used interchangeably with the various music industries but in particular, in reference to the recording industry (Williamson and Cloonan, 2007: 312). Using the term music industry in this way belies the more complicated reality of the three prominent music industries: the recording industry, live industry and publishing industry. It has been argued that the use of the term "music industry" is increasingly untenable' as the fortunes of the once dominant recording industry have dwindled in the face of digitisation in the early twenty-first century alongside the expansion of the live and publishing industries (Williamson and Cloonan, 2012: 24). Furthermore, it has been argued that the 'recording industry is not a homogenous entity, having instead different contours in different localities' (Marshall, 2012: 1). This indicates the complexities of the various music industries and demonstrates the importance of selecting the correct terminology to best represent the particular section of the vast music industries that is being discussed.

For the purpose of this research, the term recording industry is used, rather than the more general 'music industry', because it is specifically the recording industry that is most closely linked to the popular music awarding institutions because they recognise and award recorded music in the formats most valuable to the industry i.e. the album and single. Moreover, the term recording industries is also used to reflect that awarding institutions situated in different countries are connected to the separate recording industries of those countries. For example, the BRIT Awards is directly related to the UK's recording industry through the awarding institution's foundation by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) which is the trade association for the UK's recording industry. This thesis establishes a direct link between the recording industry and awarding institutions which expands our current understanding of how the recording industry strategizes and implements devices to culturally elevate its economically successful outputs.

The music recognised and celebrated by the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards, as the two major US and UK popular music awarding institutions, tends to be commercially successful, 'mainstream' music. Consequently, this thesis contributes to existing scholarship examining mainstream music. The notion of a 'mainstream' is multifaceted and often viewed negatively due to early popular music studies favouring the examination of subcultures which were positioned against the mainstream (Hebdige, 1979). More recently, the term has been revisited, problematised and acknowledged as an area that needs further study. Mainstream music can be considered as a site of diverse cultural practice that brings together a range of social groups across large geographical locations (Baker, 2013: 14; Huber, 2013: 5; Toynbee, 2002: 150). It has been argued that the popular music charts, such as the Billboard Hot 100, is a good indicator of the music populating the mainstream at any time (Toynbee, 2002: 154) which demonstrates how broad the term mainstream music is and the variety of genres of music encompassed within it. It is also indicative of the evolving nature of mainstream music and its ability to change over time. Across this research, as part of the study of major popular music awarding institutions, mainstream is conceived of as music with commercial, mass appeal, most likely to be signed to major record labels and, therefore, the music most likely to be awarded as part of these major awarding institutions. The mainstream music and artists awarded by major popular music awarding institutions is generally distinct from the music that is most valued within the popular music canon. In this pursuit, it became clear that the major popular music awarding institutions were recognising a particular type of commercially successful, mainstream music and, as such, were performing a different function to the popular music canon.

In many ways, mainstream is set up in opposition to the popular music canon in that it is a catch all phrase for music that does not share the values prescribed by the popular music canon as most worthy, such as authenticity. As with the term mainstream, popular music canon is a complicated and evolving term that has a fluid definition. In this research, the two terms are considered as opposing terms that are descriptive of different approaches to the evaluation of music. Within popular music scholarship, the popular music canon operates as a retrospective collection of the greatest artists and musical works, primarily albums, that adhere to a set of particular values most consistent with those prescribed within rock. It is generally accepted that the popular music canon has been formulated through the circulation of *Best Album of All Time* and *Best Artists of All Time* lists in the music press in magazines like *Rolling Stone* and

NME (Kärjä, 2006: 4, Von Appen and Doebling, 2006: 21; Jones, 2008: 25) which have been instrumental in defining the parameters of valuable popular music. These lists often feature the same sets of artists and albums with the most valued, or a 'golden age', becoming more enshrined in time (Von Appen and Doebling, 2006: 22). The Beatles, for example, are most likely to consistently appear in these lists followed by their contemporaries like Bob Dylan and the Beach Boys. Consequently, the popular music canon is dominated by white, male rock artists making it a much more exclusive collection of music than that which is housed within the mainstream. The popular music canon, within this research, is most concerned with the canon as defined by the popular music press through the publication of *Best Album of All Time* lists as this is directly comparable to the albums awarded by major popular music awarding institutions.

Major popular music awarding institutions award the best albums, singles and artists of the preceding twelve month period which make them a tool through which successful mainstream music can be assessed on an annual basis over time. As the pool of canonic popular music is restricted by a more rigid set of values and much longer period of hindsight, major awarding institutions can be viewed as an alternative system for assessing valuable popular music within the mainstream. Artists like Barbra Streisand and Adele are not considered as part of the popular music canon due to their pop aesthetic but both artists have won a number of Grammy Awards and BRIT Awards and are highly valued within the mainstream. Streisand was first recognised in 1964 at the 6th annual Grammy Awards and in 1983 at the BRIT Awards and Adele has been regularly awarded by both institutions since 2009. Streisand and Adele represent a particular type of traditional popular music that characterises the major recording industry's most championed production, craftsmanship and artistry. They also represent some of the industry's most profitable artists with Streisand the 12th bestselling artist of all time, having sold 68.5 million units and Adele the 66th bestselling artist with 28 million units sold (RIAA, 2021). Their success and celebrated status within the mainstream and exclusion from the popular music canon demonstrates a clear clash of values within the evaluation of popular music. In their role as industrial strategies, major awarding institutions can be utilised to assess valuable mainstream music overlooked by the aesthetic considerations of the popular music canon. As such, this thesis contributes to existing discussions of mainstream music and contributes a new way of evaluating music to a different set of values.

Popular music awarding is a diverse and varied field whose academic examination will expand and contribute to a range of key areas within popular music scholarship and the study of cultural awarding. These institutions are unique, complex bodies that play a significant role within major recording industries. Despite their public and prominent status, popular music awarding institutions are underappreciated for their ability to convey highly insightful information about the mechanisms of the recording industry. As institutions that have the authority to bestow value and prestige onto music and artists, their study is essential for assessing the type of value being recognised. Considering the impact that these institutions can have on an artist's career, and the boost it can provide to their sales (Molanphy, 2013), the oversight of their examination is overdue to be addressed. Popular music awarding institutions are not uncommon. From the dominant, major institutions whose names are instantly recognisable to the more local, non-major variety, awarding institutions are recognised as ways to celebrate and promote all kinds of music. The expansive collection of popular music awarding institutions forms a field of its own where there are expected conventions and tacit rules that govern their practice. The interaction between these awarding institutions further expands insight into the recording industry by reflecting different sectors within the industry and the ways in which emerging music will challenge the status quo of the mainstream before eventually being subsumed into it. This thesis highlights the value in exploring popular music awarding institutions and demonstrates the breadth of knowledge that can be gleaned from them.

Literature Review

There is not a clear, defined scholarly field that deals with the study of popular music awarding institutions and only brief mentions within existing popular music scholarship. In light of this, this thesis accommodates a broader approach to the study of popular music awarding institutions which is reflective of the multi-disciplinary nature of awarding. To appreciate the impact and importance of popular music awarding institutions, it is necessary to observe the context in which they take place. Popular music awarding institutions naturally operate within the field of popular music, but they also operate as awarding institutions and as such must also be understood as part of a wider field of cultural awarding. Consequently, there are two broad, yet oftentimes overlapping, areas of research that underpin this thesis which will also act as the structure for this literature review. The first field is the broad area of popular music studies which encompasses a number of sub-fields that will complement and enhance the study of popular music awarding by placing them within their broader field of operation. Most relevant

here is industry studies and work concerning the mainstream and the popular music canon. The second field is literature concerned with cultural awarding which comes from a broad range of disciplines. The large majority of this work is recent as this is a developing field and its examination demonstrates how much can be learnt from analysing cultural awarding but also highlights how much more work there is to be done. As the first work of its kind exploring popular music awarding institutions and their links to their recording industry, this research is situated at the forefront of this developing field. The range of literature used to support observations and arguments demonstrates the broad and original approach taken in this thesis to understand the role that popular music awarding institutions play within the field of popular music.

Popular Music Scholarship: Industrial Context, Mainstream and Popular Music Canon

Popular music awarding institutions have been overlooked and undervalued within popular music scholarship. Though there are some instances of these institutions being discussed within scholarship, which will be explored in the second half of this literature review, there is a general underappreciation of the close relationship that these institutions have fostered within the recording industry. It became clear that in order to better understand awarding institutions and their motivations, it was essential not to approach the study of awarding institutions as isolated entities but as institutions with clear ties to the industries to which they are linked. Historical studies of the US recording industry (Laing, 2012: 37-40; Peterson, 1990; Tschmuck, 2006) have failed to recognise the deep connection between the major recording industry and the formation of the NARAS and Grammy Awards which highlights the original contribution of this thesis. Fostering an appreciation of the events impacting the recording industry prior to its formation of the NARAS reveals both the extent of the connection between the two and why awarding institutions should be understood as an industrial strategy. By establishing the industrial motivations behind awarding institutions, we can learn more about the machinations of the recording industry and the strategies implemented to protect and promote its most valuable assets. In turn, this provides a template for the examination of other popular music awarding institutions in order to gain a fuller appreciation of their purpose, motivations and links to industry.

As the first popular music awarding institution of its kind, in the world's largest popular music market (Bakker, 2011: 309), the Grammy Awards have determined the scope of awarding

popular music. As such, contextualising the major US recording industry in the years leading up to the foundation of the NARAS and Grammy Awards in 1957 gives insight into what was happening in the industry that might have prompted the establishment of an awarding institution. The year 1955 is lauded within popular music as the genesis of rock'n'roll, but Peterson (1990: 98) has made clear that there was no zeitgeist moment that brought about rock'n'roll as we know it, but rather a mix of social, cultural and technological events that preceded it. A handful of work has been essential for building an image of what was happening in the US major recording industry in the decade before the NARAS' foundation (Bakker, 2011; Keightley, 2001a, 2004, 2008; Millard, 1995; Peterson and Berger, 1975; Tschmuck, 2006). Demand for popular music had dramatically increased in the US since 1945, growing at a rate of 10% annually between 1945 and 1978 (Bakker, 2011: 319). In 1948, there were 11 record labels in the US recording industry and four major record labels – RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca and Capitol – who released 81% of all singles that reached the Top 10 demonstrating the majors' oligopolistic control of the industry (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 160). In order to keep up with demand, however, the market would inevitably have to expand which would require change that the major labels were reluctant to implement. The four major labels established control not through the diversity of products that they offered but through controlling the production flow from start to finish (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 161) with financial support from their parent companies (Bakker, 2011: 331). The major record labels' control of the distribution channels hinged on the high costs and fragility of the 78rpm shellac records which prevented smaller labels from distributing their own records, ensuring that smaller labels were reliant on the major labels (Tschmuck, 2006: 92). This control enabled the major record labels to keep competition at bay and dominate the market.

Technological change facilitated the increasing competition within the popular music market by diversifying the amount of product available. As a result of the increased demand in music, record companies were experimenting with formats that could extend the playing length of records (Tschmuck, 2006: 92). In 1948, engineers at Columbia invented the 33rpm vinyl LP record, which stored more music and was significantly less fragile than the shellac record, and in 1949 RCA-Victor followed up with the 45rpm single (ibid.). The introduction of these new formats revolutionised the US record market and created more space for independent record labels to effectively compete in the market (Millard, 1995: 229), introducing artists outside of the mainstream's repertoire. Alongside other technical developments like the introduction of the magnetic tape (Tschmuck, 2006: 94) and regulation changes in the radio industry which

resulted in more local radio stations that could play an increasingly diverse set of popular music (Tschmuck, 2006: 100), the oligopoly of the major recording industry was being unsettled if not dismantled. Rock'n'roll offered variety in an industry that was stalled with 'a homogeneity of cultural products' (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 163). Indeed, the high market share that the major record labels had enjoyed in 1948 had majorly shrunk to 36% by 1958 and the amount of record labels in the US market had grown from 11 to 35 (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 160), demonstrating the expanding market and increased presence of independent record labels. The major record labels, however, were less concerned with rock'n'roll artists and the teen audience they appealed to, as they were with adult audiences and the popular music standards they preferred.

The new LP and single record formats allowed the major recording industry to prioritise its most profitable markets. In the early 1950s, the vinyl LP only represented 19% of the sound recording market but by the end of the decade in 1960, LP sales made up 80% of the total expenditure on records (Keightley, 2004: 378). The year 1955, famed for rock'n'roll, was the first year that LP sales accounted for more than 50% of the market (Chapple and Garofolo, 1977: 44), which gives an important insight to what was happening in the recording industry at this time aside from the emergence of rock'n'roll. The new formats essentially created two sections within the market; the LP market for adults and the singles market for teens. A 1957 breakdown of sales by age showed that 25% of pop singles were bought by teenagers, 45% of popular albums were bought by adults, 21% of classical albums were also bought by adults and the remaining 9% were divided among recordings (Keightley, 2004: 379). Pop singles cost about 89 cents whereas albums cost between \$1.49 and \$4.98 (ibid.) which demonstrated the market segment that was more profitable to focus on for the recording industry. Understanding the key markets and products of the major recording industry is essential for a more thorough understanding of the supportive role that major popular music awarding institutions play within the major recording industry.

Alongside the growing LP market, the major record labels were keen to 'build and exploit its back catalogs, exploiting the overlap between the longterm marketability of nonephemeral songs and the putative aesthetic timelessness of standards' (Keightley, 2001a: 25). The major recording industry effectively abandoned the teen oriented singles market and instead focused on the promotion of the adult pop album which 'simultaneously minimized risk, maximised profit for record labels and contributed to a heightened symbolic capital for LPs, which were

more and more perceived to occupy a cultural space similar to that of books' (Keightley, 2004: 385). It is clear that the major record labels were differentiating the certain type of music more popular on LPs, standards and traditional popular music, from the teen based rock'n'roll. Though there was a distaste for rock'n'roll within the industry¹, the decision to prioritise the LP, and the traditional popular music it was more likely to hold, was made with consideration for the industry's long-term profitability and the promotion of its most valuable assets. Keightley (2004: 385) posits that the LP, back catalogue and extended performer careers² should be understood as 'long-play institutions'. These long-play institutions 'simultaneously propelled profitability for the record industry and cultural legitimacy for popular performers and music' (Keightley, 2004: 377). It is clear to see that the major recording industry preferred to prioritise certain artists and a particular type of popular music as it faced increasing industrial, social and technological change. Though the long-play institutions favoured a particular aesthetic, they more importantly supported the industry's key industrial strategies designed to protect and promote their most valuable assets.

Contextualising the changes within the US recording industry before the formation of the NARAS has been essential for understanding the challenges and changes the major record labels were facing. Understanding these challenges and changes accommodates a more detailed insight into how the establishment of an awarding institution could support the major recording industry during a time of restructure and increased competition. In particular, Keightley's (2004) work regarding long-play institutions has been integral to the development of a key argument in this thesis. If the LP, back catalogue and extended performer careers can be considered as long-play institutions (Keightley, 2004: 385) due to their support of the major recording industry's priorities, then an awarding institution established by a group of major recording industry executives must be considered as an industrial strategy designed to support the major recording industry and their priorities. Examining the formation of a major awarding institution is enriched through the examination of its industrial context and demonstrates the worth of combining awarding studies with more industry specific literature.

¹ Tschmuck (2006: 94) wrote of rock'n'roll: 'the majors did not want to be associated with a form of music that they considered common and obscene'.

² This can be understood as adult-pop performers who 'were serious about building extended careers and enduring popularity, unlike the one-hit wonders of teen pop's overnight sensations' (Keightley, 2004: 386).

The established strong relationship between the major recording industry and major awarding institutions highlights the disparity between the rock historiography that dominates popular music discourse and its positioning against the popular music mainstream. In order to better understand the role that major awarding institutions play within the major recording industry, it became clear that the popular music mainstream needed to be explored alongside notions of the popular music canon and the values associated with both. Writing in the 1970s about subculture, Hebdige (1979) understood the mainstream in its opposition to subcultural values. No definition was provided for how the mainstream could be understood, but Hebdige (1979: 16) contends that there was a connection to be made between mainstream and hegemony which can be understood as certain social groups exerting ‘total social control’ over other subordinate groups through the framing of ideological space as permanent and natural. The mainstream was, therefore, established as a type of bogeyman devoid of meaning and value beyond its purpose of retaining the status quo. The popular music mainstream was to be primarily understood as the music and culture against which ‘valuable’ music and culture rebelled.

This understanding of the mainstream has permeated popular music studies and is borne of the values espoused within rock historiography which has dominated serious discussions of popular music in journalism and scholarship alike. Toynbee (2002: 149) acknowledges that there has been a ‘dismissive ring to the word “mainstream”’. It suggests a type of music which is standardized, popular and easy to listen to’. Consequently, academic accounts of mainstream have echoed ‘the pejorative discourse used by fans’ (ibid.) which undercuts and demonises the mainstream as general. Similarly, Thornton (1995: 94) argues that the ‘mainstream has been devalued as normal, conventional majorities’ and Huber (2013: 11) writes that ‘the spectre of negativity haunts the mainstream’. Indeed, the lack of mainstream examination goes some way to explaining the lack of interrogation regarding awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards. Major awarding institutions sit at the heart of mainstream popular music culture which has been undervalued and overlooked within popular music scholarship.

The mainstream has started to be unpacked and appreciated for the vast amount of musical styles and genres it encompasses. The mainstream, Baker (2013: 14) argues is ‘actually a site of diverse cultural practice’ which is certainly reflected across traditional mainstream methods of assessment like Top 40 album and singles charts. The sheer breadth of music that can be considered mainstream problematises its definition but Toynbee (2002: 150) suggests that the mainstream should be thought of as a process rather than a category which is why he advocates

for the use of the verb ‘mainstreaming’ rather than reference to a single mainstream. The notion of a mainstream is beneficial to the music industry as it is within its interest to address ‘a large market which traverses geographical and social space and can be sustained over time’ (Toynbee, 2002: 154). Toynbee (ibid.) argues that the popular chart has been a key means for achieving this and I would argue that the examination of major awarding institutions expands this argument. Major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards are designed in conjunction with their major recording industries to support their most profitable and valued artists and formats, as such they function as a key part of the popular music mainstream by promoting and celebrating the mainstream music of any given time. This thesis will add to our understanding of mainstream through the evaluation of institutions that support the major recording industry which hold up and endorse mainstream music.

The mainstream and non-mainstream do not exist separately; rather, they overlap, interact and influence each other. Hebdige (1979: 130) writes that each subculture moves through cycles of ‘resistance and defusion’, resulting in the mainstream inevitably incorporating subcultural styles and genre. Examining major awarding institutions demonstrates this phenomenon in a quantifiable way. The Grammy Awards, for example, did not include a category to recognise rock’n’roll music at its inaugural awards in 1959 despite the popularity of the genre but by 1962 the *Best Rock and Roll Recording* category was included, demonstrating the increasingly mainstream popularity of the genre. Similarly, rap was not included in the Grammy Awards until 1989 with the *Best Rap Performance* category which was awarded to the Fresh Prince and DJ Jazzy Jeff for *Parents Just Don’t Understand*. Rap and hip-hop had become increasingly mainstream throughout the late 1980s, however, its anti-establishment nature resulted in more critically acclaimed rap songs from the qualifying year, like N.W.A.’s *Fuck Tha Police*, being entirely overlooked in preference for more palatable rap like *Parents Just Don’t Understand*. Examining the genres of music being included at major awarding institutions can indicate when a genre has achieved mainstream success and recognition which can enhance our understanding of how the mainstream operates. This can also help to explain the absence of artists whose careers were established in non-mainstream genres not being recognised for their early, yet definitive, work at major awarding institutions. Furthermore, examining non-major awarding institutions can demonstrate what artists and music are overlooked within the major awarding institution, and by extension, the mainstream. The establishment of the MOBO Awards in 1996 as a non-major awarding institution, for example, highlighted how genres like jungle and jazz were being overlooked at the BRIT Awards.

Examining the interaction between major and non-major awarding institutions teaches us more about representation within the major recording industry and mainstream.

If major awarding institutions operate in support of, and therefore reflect the trends of, the mainstream, then assessing those recognised by a nomination or award demonstrates the music most popular and valued within the mainstream at any given moment. As such, we can understand major awarding institutions as institutions that offers insight into the most valued types of mainstream popular music. This value system operates differently to the popular music canon which operates as a retrospective collection of the best artists and music according to particular aesthetic judgements. The popular music canon ‘is not a rigidly defined collocation of works in the manner of the periodic table of elements; rather, it is an imaginary collocation of great works and artists that no one person has authority to define’ (Jones, 2008: 15). There is a consensus, however, that the popular music canon has been structured through lists numbering the best artists and albums of all time that have been published in notorious popular music magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *NME*³ (Kärjä, 2006: 4; Jones, 2008: 25). Consequently, the music and artists that feature most prominently in best of lists are those that are most valued by magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *NME* which are magazines that have long championed the aesthetics most valued within rock like authenticity and anti-commercialism. Citron (2000: 19) writes that ‘canons simultaneously reflect, instigate and perpetuate value systems’ which is why the popular music canon includes those most revered within the popular music press like the Rolling Stones, The Doors and Pink Floyd.

Best of lists are assessed by Von Appen and Doehring (2006) from a sociological and aesthetic perspective to demonstrate how these lists consistently feature the same artists and albums and contribute to popular music canon formation. Through the compilation of 38 *Best Album of All Time* lists from a range of popular music press publications including *Rolling Stone* and *NME* into one meta-list, it is found that out of a possible 950 positions only 273 are occupied which demonstrates how ‘the higher an album is positioned, the stronger the consensus gets’ (Von Appen and Doehring, 2006: 22). The meta-list shows a clear preference for a very particular type of album and artist that adheres to a set of aesthetic values championed within rock: innovation, expression, authenticity and song writing (Von Appen and Doehring, 2006: 31).

³ When referring to the popular music press it is these type of publications I am talking about, not trade magazines like *Billboard* that focus on the recording industry.

The 30 albums are performed by 21 artists with The Beatles featuring four times, Bob Dylan three times and Radiohead, Rolling Stones and U2 featuring twice each (Von Appen and Doehring, 2006: 23). The rest of the artists can all be considered as rock artists with the exception of Marvin Gaye and the only woman featured in the list is Stevie Nicks as part of Fleetwood Mac (ibid.). If best of lists are generally considered as representative of the popular music canon, then Von Appen and Doehring's work illustrates the narrow lens of value projected and preferred by the popular music canon as prescribed by the music press. As such, there should be alternative ways of assessing value within popular music which is what this thesis offers in its examination of popular music awarding institutions.

As the popular music press has had a significant role to play in the creation and perpetuation of the popular music canon, it is important to understand the function that the popular music press has played within popular music. Worley (2017: 28) writes that 'from the late 1960s, the music press became a vehicle for writers keen not just to report on the comings and goings of chart-toppers and the hit parade, but to inject a cultural and political significance into popular music that took it beyond the realms of commerce and entertainment'. The popular music press prescribed aesthetic values associated with other forms of art considered culturally superior, like classical music, jazz and literature, which effectively created a binary between rock and pop as high and low popular music. This aided the demonisation of the mainstream as a homogenous and inauthentic mass art form primarily concerned with the commercial. The popular music press' unwillingness to acknowledge the role that the recording industry played within rock (Jones and Featherly, 2002: 20) has further perpetuated the illusion of distance between the commercialised pop and the authentic rock. Understanding the influence that the popular music press has had on the popular music canon and the ways in which it is formulated, such as through best of lists, is essential to this thesis. Contrasting the winners at major awarding institutions to those included in canonical best of lists provides an insight into contrasting value systems within popular music and broadens the insights and understanding of the popular music mainstream.

This thesis addresses the significant gap within current popular music scholarship that omits the exploration of popular music awarding institutions. Establishing the context in which popular music awarding institutions operate is essential for understanding the purpose, motivations and impact of these institutions within the recording industry. What's more, recognising the omission of these awarding institutions within popular music studies highlights

how our knowledge and understanding of key concepts within the field, such as mainstream, canon and industry functionality, can be enriched and expanded. Pairing this information with the insights offered by cultural awarding literature facilitates a novel approach to the study of popular music awarding.

Cultural Awarding Literature

To truly understand and appreciate popular music awarding institutions, it must be established that they operate not just as part of their own recording industry but also as part of a broader field of cultural awarding institutions. As such, the field of cultural awarding literature has been integral to this thesis for establishing what it is to award across the various contemporary cultural industries and the shared features and conventions within this. The genesis of the field of cultural awarding studies can be attributed to the seminal work of English (2002; 2005). English's work comes from the field of literary studies but he offers an overview of cultural awards and prizes rather than just literary ones which makes his work expansive rather than detailed on any one particular organisation. English (2002: 127) reflects on the key role that cultural awards have come to play in the cultural landscape and requests more meaningful studies to be carried out on the study of cultural awards. English's book *The Economy of Prestige* (2005) expands on his earlier work and focuses in more detail on prizes, awards and the circulation of cultural value. English (2005: 17) questions the lack of examination of cultural awards despite their presence in everyday life, again emphasising the need for more detailed studies around the phenomenon of cultural awarding. The book predominantly explores the symbolic, cultural and economic value of prizes and awards, and the exponential growth of awarding throughout the latter half of the twentieth century which he correlates with the increasing importance of the cultural economy (2005: 71). English's work sits at the centre of the newly emerging field of cultural awards studies and his ideas and approaches to the study of awarding has heavily influenced subsequent studies based around awarding in literature (Marsden, 2019; Marsden and Squires, 2019; Moseley, 2019; Neuwirth, 2019; Roberts, 2011; Smith, 2019; Squires, 2013), popular music (Reekie, 2019; Street, 2012; Street, 2014), comedy (Pérez, 2017) and gin production (Thurnell-Read, 2019). It's clear that English's work has sparked an interest in the examination of cultural awarding, which is expanding at a rapid pace, and his work has been integral to this thesis and underpins some of its core arguments.

One of English's key contributions, which has been particularly influential on this research, is the notion that awards and prizes should be examined as a cultural game which adheres to particular rules. English (2002: 127) contends that this game is not to be understood as involving two sides or two teams, nor should we be concerned with who is winning or losing, but instead we should focus on the 'careful study of the game itself'. By considering awards as a cultural game, awarding is conceptualised as a 'competitive spectacle' that brings together a wide variety of 'players' including critics, journalists, sponsors, artists and consumers (English, 2005: 51). All of these separate players within the broader field of awarding, including the awarding institutions, are playing and competing for the 'authority to produce cultural value' (ibid.). Despite the game not being outwardly acknowledged within public discussion of cultural awards, there are 'unspoken rules and unconscious strategies that structure everything from acceptance speeches to op-ed commentaries, and that cue observers to praise an adept or expert "player"...while deprecating a maladroit one' (English, 2005: 188). Though it has been subject to scant academic examination, there is a public understanding of how cultural awarding operates and what to expect. English (2005: 189) acknowledges that criticism is an obligatory part of the game of cultural awarding, but that if academic examination of cultural awards is preoccupied with 'the long-dominant tendency to abuse them' then it will be impossible to understand 'what prizes are and how they work'. Instead, and what this thesis has set out to do, the study of cultural awards should consider the awarding institution's players and motivations as well as acknowledging the institution's place within the broader field of awarding and the competition inherent within the field. In doing this, a greater appreciation of awarding institutions, their motivations and purpose can be established alongside facilitating a greater understanding of how awarding institutions engage and compete with each other as part of this cultural game.

English's observations about scandal within the cultural game of awarding and, more specifically, the awarding ceremony have been fundamental in my own theorisations about the necessity of controversy, spectacle and scandal at popular music awarding ceremonies. Scandal, English (2005: 196) argues, is a form of currency within cultural awarding that is primarily established by journalists. For journalists, awards and their ceremonies provide regular opportunities for them to 'align themselves with "higher values", or more symbolically potent forms of capital' (English, 2002: 116). Criticism has been mentioned as a significant part of English's conception of the cultural game of awarding, and it plays an important role in the creation of scandal that adds to the award's capital rather than detracting (ibid.). There is

now an expectation that scandal will occur at an award ceremony and journalists knowingly ‘play around’ with scandal (English, 2002: 117) which simultaneously increases their journalistic capital and accelerates the awarding institution’s symbolic capital or cultural prestige (English, 2005: 208). This exchange between the awarding institution and journalists is emblematic of the cultural game of awarding in play; both parties are players whose actions are legitimising the awarding through promoting its position within the cultural economy. There are other ways in which the cultural game of awarding is played out through scandal. English (2002: 114) acknowledges the importance of television for scandal which is featured as an important part of this thesis’ expansion of scandal in awarding. The television network is another key player within the game of awarding that has its own expectations and requirements of the award ceremony regarding its viewership and audience appeal, for which scandal is an essential draw. Artists are key players within the game who have the potential to earn coveted cultural prestige through their participation in the awarding process and the ceremony which is explored within this thesis. English (2005: 218) highlights how artists can disrupt the cultural awarding game through their rejection of an award. Awarding institutions and their ceremonies are ‘rituals of symbolic exchange, requiring all participants to acknowledge and show respect for the conventions attendant upon the giving and receiving of gifts’ and indifference or ingratitude of a recipient can disrupt this process and bring the award’s validity into question. This is demonstrative of the many aspects and players involved in the game of cultural awarding and the necessity of scandal to keep the process interesting and why its further study, particularly within specific cultural industries, is so essential.

English’s work draws heavily on the work of Bourdieu which has resulted in subsequent cultural awarding studies also drawing on Bourdieu’s theories and ideas. English’s (2005: 8) theoretical framework is based on Bourdieusian notions of the relationships between culture, economics and sociology, with cultural capital featuring as a central idea. Cultural capital can be understood as the assets one possesses that can propel social mobility. Bourdieu (1986: 243) theorises that cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state. Bourdieu (1986: 243) talks of cultural capital in the institutionalised state in reference to academic institutions and educational qualifications but its application can be easily transferred to awarding institutions. Bourdieu (1986: 248) states that the institution in question confers institutional recognition on the cultural capital already possessed by a person. When this notion is applied to the Grammy Awards, for example, we can understand that the awarding institution confers additional cultural capital through the

award onto an artist who already has some form of cultural capital through their existing standing in the popular music field. Bourdieu (ibid.) further states that cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, which can again be applied to the example of the Grammy Awards, or other such awarding institutions, which regularly see an increase in sales for artists who have been nominated or awarded. Though Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital were not created with cultural awarding in mind, their application to awarding reflects the complex social, cultural and economic role that awarding institutions play within society. Indeed, the very act of awarding bestows cultural capital onto a winner, giving them a value denied to others. This is why it is so important to investigate awarding institutions: they are capable of defining and bestowing value in society based on their purview of what is, or is not, valuable.

Bourdieu's concepts have been further applied to cultural awarding through the specific lens of the literary Booker Prize (Norris, 2006), established in 1969 and awarded to the best novel in English published in the United Kingdom and Ireland with a cash prize of £50,000. Bourdieusian concepts of corporate sponsorship, habitus and symbolic violence have been used by Norris (2006: 139) to demonstrate that 'a Bourdieusian analysis sheds light on the underlying nature of this award, and on the social, political and economic factors that have helped to shape it'. Awarding institutions and prizes often require corporate sponsorship in order to operate, such as the BRIT Awards who are sponsored by Mastercard or the Mercury Music Prize who has had a range of corporate sponsors over its lifespan. Bourdieu (1996: 344) wrote that corporate sponsorship within the arts would facilitate a greater overlap between the world of art and the world of money. Indeed, Todd (1996: 71) has observed that the Booker Prize has been responsible for the creation of 'a kind of commercial canon'. Norris (2006: 153) argues that 'business-sponsored literary prizes are essentially promotional devices for the companies involved', similarly criticising the increasingly close relationship between art and commerce that has become essential for the continued operations of awarding institutions. Driscoll (2014: 132), also writing about the Booker Prize, disagrees with this application, arguing that the presence of a corporate sponsor encourages the awarding institution to prove its values and legitimacy. My assessment of popular music awarding institutions illustrates the close ties between major, and some non-major, awarding institutions with the major recording industry which demonstrates the close alignment of art and commerce in the field of popular music awarding. This does not necessarily diminish the value judgements of those awarding institutions, it rather highlights the necessity of commerce for championing and celebrating art on a national or global stage.

Norris (2006: 141) argues that Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, the continued dominance of the ruling class, is applicable to the Booker Prize as the people involved in the prize, as both jurors and authors, tend to be from a 'particular class'. If a prize is dominated by people from a particular class, for example, if they have all attended similar elite schools or universities, then it can be argued that the prize is recognising existing dominant social hierarchies and failing to recognise proportionate representation. Driscoll (2014: 128), however, disagrees with Norris' application of symbolic violence to the Booker Prize arguing that despite the jurors' similar background and attitudes to the prize, they have been unable to present a 'coherent idea of literary value' which disproves the notion that the prize is only recognising a certain type of author or novel. In regards to popular music, the establishment of an awarding institution such as the NARAS in 1957 by members of the major recording industry with similar backgrounds, education and social circles could be argued as an example of symbolic violence. This theory is less applicable, however, to more modern popular music awarding institutions such as the Mercury Music Prize which has a varied range of jurors, in part due to the non-academic nature of popular music. Norris (2006: 149) further builds on the interconnected nature of jurors at the Booker Prize by arguing that it 'indicates the existence of a common habitus' which suggests that the awarding institution is a 'site of social reproduction'. This observation is a prudent one; as I will argue throughout this thesis, major awarding institutions reinforce the values of the major recording industry they represent and champion the mainstream music they promote. Consequently, awarding institutions can be understood as sites of social reproduction.

Beyond Bourdieusian perspectives on the Booker Prize, the prize is the most examined within the field of literary studies and awarding literature. Moseley (2019: 206) writes that the prize is 'neither the oldest nor the richest award given for novels in English, but is nevertheless conceded to be the pre-eminent recognition'. As the dominant prize of its field, its examination is necessary for understanding how the fields operates. Furthermore, as an art's prize, the Booker Prize has influenced other arts prizes in different cultural fields like the Turner Prize for art and the Mercury Music Prize (Street, 2005b: 824), demonstrating how awarding institutions operate as a separate field of awarding in addition to their role in their own cultural field. There is a general consensus that the Booker Prize's ability to generate scandal and operate as a media spectacle has elevated the prize above its competitors (Driscoll, 2014: 134; Squires, 2013: 296; Street, 2005b: 824). Scandal is part of the awarding currency and facilitates

a transaction between the awarding institution and awarding beneficiaries including nominees, winners, and stakeholders like the judges and press. The scandals associated with the Booker Prize have increased the prize's visibility and 'critics increasingly acknowledge the importance of controversy to the ongoing success and smooth working of the award' (Driscoll, 2014: 141). It is important, therefore, to approach an awarding institution's controversies and scandals with a critical eye, assessing how they can benefit those involved in the awarding institution.

Novels that win the Booker Prize experience a significant increase in sales (Street, 2005b: 834) alongside winning prize money. Squires (2013: 295) has analysed the press release announcing the establishment of the Booker Prize and concluded that was a clearly signalled 'double desire for "artistic and commercial success"', which indicates that there was always a clear intention for the prize to increase book sales. In this sense, though not explicitly outlined by any academic, the Booker Prize functions in a similar fashion to its popular music cousins; it can be considered as an industrial strategy for the major literary industry. The examination of the Booker Prize demonstrates that awarding institutions operate in similar capacities for their particular field or industry. Squires (2007: 97) does point out, however, that literary awards 'are not, on the whole, initiated, let alone controlled, by publishers' which can in part be contributed to the majority of literary awards being juror based rather than academy based like their major entertainment counterparts. Literary awards support the literary industry by acting as a marketing device and boosting sales but wins are certainly not dictated by invested publishers. The examination of popular music awarding institutions in this thesis illustrates how there are shared themes between awarding institutions, such as the necessity for scandal and an institution's ability to support its industry, which demonstrates the notion of an awarding field. Though awarding institutions operate within their cultural industry, they also operate in their own field of cultural awarding institutions learning and borrowing from each other.

It is essential to first examine the major awarding institution of any field as it defines what it is to successfully award within that field. Squires (2013: 299) writes that 'at the heart of any literary award are issues of literary value, taste and judgement, of representation and gatekeeping, and the uneasy equations of artistic and commercial value'. All of these issues have been discussed in relation to the Booker Prize in the literature discussed above. The notion of representation and gatekeeping in awarding is one that is closely linked to the contemporary issues of diversity in cultural awarding which, as indicated earlier, have become increasingly

centred in the dialogue surrounding cultural awards. The Booker Prize has recently been examined as a prize that excludes the majority of Commonwealth writers and perpetuates a colonial narrative of superiority and authority in the authors that it recognises (Morris, 2020: 261). As one of the major awarding institutions in the literary field, the Booker Prize is situated to recognise the authors and novels that reflect the field's established canonic features. Morris' (2020: 267) examination of the prize, however, highlights the 'dominant voices in anglophone literature' of the Booker Prize despite the seeming eligibility of Commonwealth authors. Morris (2020: 265) points out that most Commonwealth authors will not be eligible due to the reluctance of the major UK and US publishers to 'share rights with home markets', showing the disparity between authors represented by major publishers and those by independent publishers. There are non-major literary awarding institutions that cater to the authors not eligible for the Booker Prize, such as the Commonwealth Writers Prize, but these do not have the same international cache that the Booker Prize holds. The examination of the lack of Commonwealth authors recognised by the Booker Prize demonstrates the power structures that operate within major awarding institutions and further demonstrates how they can operate as sites of social reproduction.

The detailed examination of the Booker Prize as a major awarding institution of the literary industry has created space for the examination of other literary prizes, both major and non-major. Squires (2013: 297) briefly explores the academy-based UK National Book Awards. Similarly to the Grammy Awards, the National Book Awards operate as a type of industry champion as 'the winners are books that have obviously benefited the industry' (Squires, 2013: 297). This further demonstrates the close relationship that can exist between industry and awarding institution, illustrating how major awarding institutions can be used as a tool to better understand industry motives and practices across a range of cultural industries. Similarly, Smith (2019: 2) writes that the Constable Trophy and the Northern Book Prize are literary awards initiated by publishers who share the similar goal of championing new writing from the North of England. Non-major awarding institutions such as these seek to fill gaps within the major awarding institution's remit. These Northern prizes seek to uplift regional writers that can be left out of the London-centric publishing industry. This does not mean, however, that non-major awarding institutions seek to operate in a different way to the major awarding institution. Indeed, the Constable Trophy in its foundation sought to deliberately imitate the Booker Prize (Smith, 2019: 10) in an attempt to emulate its success. As this thesis will explore in Chapter Five, non-major popular music awarding institutions also seek to fill gaps within

the major awarding institution's purview and will often, though not always, arrange itself in a similar way.

The representation of women in literary awards has started to be analysed. Griffith (2015) conducted a fifteen year analysis, between 2000 and 2014, of the gender balance at the Booker Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Critics' Circle Award, the Hugo Award, National Book Awards and the Newbery Medal and found that women are less likely to win awards and when they do win, it is more likely that the books are written about a male protagonist. Similarly, Marsden (2019) conducted an analysis of the representation of female authors at the Scottish Saltire Society Literary Awards which is the oldest award that recognises literature from and about Scotland. Marsden's statistical analysis of the winners of the Saltire Society Literary Awards focuses on the *Book of the Year* and *First Book of the Year* prizes awarded between 1988 and 2014. Women comprised 32% of shortlisted entries for the *Book of the Year* prize but only represented 12% of winners (Marsden, 2019: 54). Women were better represented at the *First Book of the Year* prize where they made up 39% of the winners (ibid.). This type of statistical analysis is invaluable for demonstrating representation within awarding institutions which is why I have also used this methodology in this thesis and my other work exploring the representation of female popular musicians within the British Honours System (Reekie, 2019). Furthermore, Marsden (2019: 48) found that the lack of women represented at the Saltire Society Literary Awards was 'reflective of the status of women writers within Scottish literary and publishing culture more widely'. This is demonstrative of why it is so important to study awarding institutions as they are reflective of the culture from which they emerge.

There is rather less literature concerned with popular music awarding institutions than their literary counterparts. While the bulk of literary awarding literature examines one of the field's major awarding institutions, the work thus far exploring popular music awarding institutions is somewhat disjointed in its approach to the field. There has not been a systematic examination but instead a focus on particular awarding institutions of a higher cultural cache, like the Mercury Music Prize, or on particular moments that take place at award ceremonies. There are two important articles that use the Grammy Awards as case studies but they come from outside of popular music scholarship which results in a slightly different focus.

Anand and Watson (2004: 59) use perspectives from ritual theory 'to show how award ceremonies are an important institutional mechanism for shaping organizational fields' and use

the Grammy Awards as its case study. It is stressed, however, that the theory developed through the study of the Grammy Awards ‘applies to the phenomenon of field evolution in general’ (Anand and Watson, 2004: 60), demonstrating how cultural awarding institutions share important features. Taking a joint qualitative and quantitative approach, Anand and Watson (2004: 63) analysed 161 articles from across 3 trade periodicals and a number of specialist genre magazines⁴, conducted interviews with ‘knowledgeable music industry informants’ and analysed sales data. From this, Anand and Watson (2004: 67) theorise that the various symbolic elements of the ceremony, such as the setting, the artefacts and adherence to a tight script, give meaning to the ritual of ceremony. Their collected data showed that the ceremony provided ‘an opportunity for the media to create a focus of attention within the field by selectively highlighting great achievements, prominent mishaps and unexpected outcomes’ (Anand and Watson, 2004: 67). This outcome is similar to what has been found in scholarship examining literary awards; scandal and controversy are important for the award ceremony. Anand and Watson’s focus on the ceremony as a site of ritual expands our understanding of the ceremony, however, it does not give much consideration to the process of awarding and the role of the awarding institution and how this might impact the ways in which the ceremony is presented.

The Grammy Awards are further explored by Anand and Watson (2006) as arbiters of commerce and canon in the popular music industry. The formation of the NARAS is very briefly touched upon to highlight that the academy was formed to award ‘based on artistic merit alone’ (Anand and Watson, 2006: 42). This brief exploration does not, however, give the necessary space to contextualise the formation for the NARAS in order to understand its motivations nor does it investigate who was involved in the process which is what this thesis does in Chapter One. Anand and Watson (2006: 45) used a similar methodology to their previous article, analysing sales data, periodicals and interviews between 1975 and 1994 to establish how two of the NARAS aims – to keep a distance from commercial aspects of the business and to dictate the legitimacy of genres within the popular music industry – have unfolded. The analysis found three ways in which Anand and Watson (2006: 46-47) believe the Grammy Awards have shaped the canon formation process in popular music: an influence on the subsequent record sales of Grammy winners, a questioning of the legitimacy of

⁴ They looked at *Billboard*, *Variety*, *Rolling Stone*, *DownBeat*, *The Many Worlds of Music*, *Journal of Country Music* and *Music Journal*.

categorical judgements and a suggestion that the award ceremony plays a critical role in constructing prestige within the field.

Though Anand and Watson's claims have been evidenced, due to the unclear definition of what is meant by popular music canon, the overall argument that the Grammy Awards have shaped the popular music canon is contestable. The canon is a fluid and complex concept that tends to favour the rock aesthetic rather than mainstream music and musicians. Chapter Two of this thesis finds that there is, in fact, a stark difference between the artists and music recognised by the Grammy Awards and the popular music canon, and argues that major awarding institutions can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon. Furthermore, the lack of contextualisation around the formation of the Grammy Awards fails to recognise the awarding institution as an industrial strategy that exists to support the major, mainstream recording industry. The lack of contextualisation within Anand and Watson's work is demonstrative of its origins outside of popular music scholarship which is why it has been so important for this thesis to utilise a broad inter-disciplinary approach to present a more comprehensive analysis of awarding institutions and their role and motivations in their field.

The Mercury Music Prize (MMP), as an arts prize, has been much more examined than other popular music awarding institutions. Major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards or the BRIT Awards are often seen as commercial entities whereas an arts prize tends to be given a higher cultural standing due to its concentration on the art text, be that album, novel or painting. The primary functional difference between an arts prize and other awarding institutions, apart from its classification as a prize rather than award, is how the prize is judged. Rather than an awarding academy or public vote, the arts prize instead has a body of jurors who decide the shortlist and final winner. Street (2005a: 217) deliberates whether the lack of awarding scholarship can be attributed to the secretive process of judging. Indeed, there is a lack of transparency around the process of awarding which is perhaps why the ceremony has been privileged within awarding's academic examination. The chair of the MMP's judging panel between its launch in 1992 and 2016 was popular music academic and music journalist Simon Frith which has facilitated a greater insight into the process and priorities than other awarding institutions. Street (2018) conducted an extensive interview with Frith about his role in the MMP which has accommodated greater understanding into how the judging process worked. Frith has spoken of the two different stages of judging and the approaches that were taken; deciding on the shortlist required jurors to make the case for why that album should be

included whereas the decision making process for the winning album required jurors to make the argument for why an album should not be included (Street, 2018: 122). This type of insight into the judging process is very unusual for an awarding institution which perhaps is why the MMP is the most investigated popular music awarding institution.

Street (2012: 127) gives an invaluable insight into the origins of the MMP and its close ties to the major recording industry which demonstrates that despite its elevated status among popular music awarding institutions, the MMP operates with similar intentions in regards to marketing certain albums and boosting sales. Frith (2016) writes that the MMP had been ‘devised and designed to sell records’ but had to be ‘presented as explicitly *not* a marketing device’. This is really interesting and has helped to facilitate a greater understanding in my own work of how non-major awarding institutions can also operate as industrial strategies. Furthermore, it gives a greater insight into how the commercial side of the awarding institution can operate alongside its artistic goals. There is an almost total absence of literature examining the BRIT Awards, but Street (2014: 186-189) briefly examines the BRITs in comparison to the MMP between 1992 and 2012. In order to ascertain the MMP’s representation of women, Street (2014: 187) first compares the MMP to the representation of women in literary awards and finds that the MMP is more representative of women than its literary counterparts. When compared to the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* category, the MMP is more representative of women particularly when it comes to nominated, or shortlisted, artists (Street, 2014: 188). The representation of genre is also examined within the MMP, the BRIT Awards and the concurrent bestselling albums of the year. While the BRIT Awards and the Top 10 bestselling albums are dominated by rock and pop – at 71% and 77% respectively – the MMP was much more representative of different musical genres with only 41% of recognised artists categorised as rock or pop (Street, 2014: 189). The complex, and at times contradictory, nature of the MMP is established within Street’s various examinations. This, along with its more transparent nature and status as an art’s prize, necessitated its inclusion to be further explored in this thesis as a non-major awarding institution.

As the public facing component of the awarding institution, the popular music awards ceremony has been the focus of some academic literature. Street (2005b: 832) writes that ‘television coverage is seen by some as the determinant of a prize’s success or failure’ and that ‘the awards ceremony should deliver stars that make it worthy of coverage’. The ceremony can, therefore, be understood as more than just the event where the awarding institution

finalises its awarding process by announcing winners and giving out trophies. The ceremony is a cultural event that has the capacity to reflect current issues and provide one-off moments borne of the unique makeup of the ceremony. Street (1997: 26) examines Jarvis Cocker's infamous stage invasion at the 1996 BRIT Awards not as part of the wider awarding process or institution but as a popular culture event that was political in its attempt to undermine the respectability of the moment. Similarly, the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards ceremony is examined as the backdrop for rapper Kanye West interrupting pop star Taylor Swift's acceptance speech for the *Best Female Video*. West thought that Swift should not have won the award and that it should have instead gone to Beyoncé. The moment caused a media fallout that lasted for weeks (Cullen, 2016: 33). Cullen (2016) examines this incident at length not as a unique production of an awards ceremony but as a cultural moment that reflected US racial relations. Cullen (2016: 36) analyses the mass reaction to the moment in terms of racial melodrama, noting how West was positioned as 'uppity black' all-round bad guy while Swift was a 'sweet, young, innocent undeserving of West's negative attention'. This helps to demonstrate the role that awarding ceremonies play within popular culture and why they have received academic attention as sites of popular culture happenstances rather than as part of a wider awarding process.

The Grammy Award ceremony has been examined as a site of cultural contention. The 1996 Grammy Award ceremony was observed as an event that demonstrated the 'rift in American society between the traditional elitist establishment that dominates the political and economic machinery of American society and the art of revolt that dominates mass popular culture' (Shamsai, 1996: 368). This observation is borne of the ceremony and the juxtaposition between the rock and rap artists performing whose music and lyrics are concerned with issues like AIDS, drug addiction, poverty, unemployment and murder (ibid.) and the elite nature of the Grammy Awards. Ripe within this observation is the tension between the major recording industry and popular music genres that have anti-establishment origins like rock and rap. In this way, we can understand awarding institutions and their ceremonies as representations of the major recording industry and the issues that it faces. The Grammy Award ceremony has also been analysed as a space where performers have conducted social change and activism. Davidson and Dobris (2015; 2017) have critically reviewed a handful of performances at the 2015 and 2016 Grammy Award ceremonies to assess values articulated through themes of social change such as Katy Perry's performance of *By the Grace of God* that expressed themes of community, agency and equality. These performances are assessed in isolation; that they

take place at the Grammy Awards is of no relevance to their analysis beyond the large audience that the ceremony provides. They do, however, demonstrate the significant popular cultural capital that major popular music awarding ceremonies possess which is essential for the continued viability of the awarding institution.

Two examinations of Canadian popular music awarding institutions demonstrate how awarding institutions share features regardless of geography. The regional MIMIs Awards is a non-major awarding institution that champions music from the Montréal music scene. It was formed in response to the perception that the Félix Awards were not representative of all Quebecois music (Lussier, 2014: 129), which has been observed across a number of cultural awarding institutions: a non-major awarding institution forms in response to a gap in the major institution. Lussier (2014: 129) claims that a key role of award ceremonies is ‘their exemplarity: they place in full view what it is to be valued in popular culture’. The MIMIs Awards were seen as a way of ‘presenting a set of forgotten music actors to the dominant music industries, the press and a potential audience’ (Lussier, 2014: 131), demonstrating a clear link between awarding and the recording industry, even at a regional level. Non-major awarding institutions are clearly an important part of both the field of awarding as well as local and national recording industries. Like Anand and Watson’s (2006: 46-47) claim that awarding institutions are arbiters of the popular music canon, Lussier (2014: 131) asserts that award ceremonies like the MIMIs contribute to canon formation in popular culture by presenting the field’s best practices. The notion of canon, however, is not defined which complicates the argument as, like expressed earlier in regards to Anand and Watson’s (2006: 46-47), the popular music canon is complicated and awarding institutions seem to operate on a different set of values more aligned to the mainstream than the popular music canon. Non-major awarding institutions, however, can operate on a different set of values in order to celebrate music that is undervalued within the mainstream, major recording industry.

The Juno Awards are a major popular music awarding institution that stand as Canada’s equivalent to the UK’s BRIT Awards or US’ Grammy Awards. Young (2004: 272) uses the Juno Awards to examine how Canada is a promotional state using historical, political and economic analysis. There are three components to the Juno Awards that link them to Canada’s promotional state: CanCon, public broadcasting and government funding (ibid.). In the 1960s, only 4-7% of music played on Canadian radio was from Canada (Young, 2004: 273). The Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC), a federal agency, introduced new Canadian

content (CanCon) regulations that required a minimum of 30% of music played on the radio to have some form of Canadian origin. The CRTC's chair Pierre Juneau worked closely with the two creators of the *RPM* Gold Leaf Awards, Grealis and Klees, on the content regulations. The *RPM* was Canada's first music trade periodical and in 1971 they held a contest to rename their awards as the Juno Awards to honour Juneau for the establishment of the CanCon regulations. At the first Juno Awards in 1971, Juneau was awarded *Canadian Music Industry Man of the Year* (ibid). The examination of the establishment and motivations behind the Juno Awards accommodates a better understanding of their role within the Canadian recording industry.

The brief history that Young provides of the establishment of the Juno Award demonstrates how the awards were established as a strategy for the promotion of Canadian music and the Canadian music industry. The Canadian music industry became further involved with the Juno Awards through the Canadian Recording Industry Association (CRIA) pressuring the awards to televise the show due to the 'promotional opportunity' it would provide (Young: 2004: 274). The Juno Awards were televised on the public broadcaster CBS in 1975. After this, the CRIA increasingly took control of the Juno Awards, eventually establishing the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences so that only CARAS member could vote rather than the subscribers of *RPM* who had previously voted for the awards (ibid.). Finally, Young (2004: 274) writes that as CBS was funded by government funding, CARAS and the Juno Awards benefitted from public funds which aided its continued operations. Young's analysis demonstrates how valuable popular music awarding institutions can be as a learning tool for better understanding the industrial context they were formed in and their purpose and motivations. In turn, this teaches us more about the nation and its recording industry. Young's (2004: 285) analysis of the Juno Awards also extends our understanding of the stakeholders involved in the televised ceremony through analysis of the benefits that the ceremony can bring to the city hosting it. Finally, the issue of corporate sponsorship is addressed (Young, 2004: 276), demonstrating the shared concerns between cultural awarding institutions.

The examination of these two Canadian awarding institutions showcases the potential for learning that these type of institutions provide. As a major awarding institution, the Juno Awards supports the interests of the major Canadian recording industry through its promotion and celebration of key Canadian artists. It also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Juno Awards with stakeholders outside of the recording industry through its links to the nation state, television and the popular music press. The MIMIs Awards demonstrates how an awarding

institution can champion music and musicians that are undervalued in the mainstream, major recording industry and awarding institution. Examined in tandem, these two Canadian awards demonstrate the importance of analysing awarding institutions beyond the single institution and as part of a wider field of awarding. Understanding that the Juno Awards are the field's major awarding institution facilitates an awareness of what it is to successfully award within the field of Canadian popular music. Analysing the MIMIs Awards showcases what is being undervalued within the major awarding institution and, by extension, the major awarding institution as well. Missing throughout these examinations, however, is that observation that these are awarding institutions. Both Young and Lussier refer to the awards as awards ceremonies, which prohibits the deeper understanding that comes from analysing the awards as a process and institution rather than centring the ceremony which understates the importance and impact of these institutions.

There is little analysis of the type of musicians who are being honoured by popular music awarding institutions. Though not a specific popular music awarding institution, in previous work I have examined the popular musicians that have been recognised by the British Honours System which is an awarding institution conceived by the British government to award significant contribution to British life (Reekie, 2019). Through a statistical analysis of the popular musicians awarded in the award's first hundred years (1917-2017), I show that 70% of the musicians awarded are men while only 30% are women (Reekie, 2019: 7). Furthermore, it is established that women are more likely to be awarded at a younger age than their male counterparts due to the diminished role that older women have to play in cultural life (Reekie, 2019: 8). The Honours System is an awarding institution that is retrospective in nature and as such, it is more likely to recognise artists that are important within the popular music canon (Reekie, 2019: 7), like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, than major awarding institutions which award on an annual basis considering the year rather than a person's contributions over their career. Consequently, the musicians recognised by the Honours System can be seen as those who are considered most valuable in British society. In order to learn more about the awarding institution, it is clear that the artists and music it is recognising should be examined to establish what the institution is valuing and championing.

There is a surprisingly scant amount of literature examining awarding within the film industry. Through the lens of analysing what is meant by cinematic greatness, Simonton (2011) has examined seven different institutions that recognise and honour films including three awarding

institutions; the Oscar Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs, as well as four critic organisations; New York Film Critics Circle, the National Board of Review, the National Society of Film Critics and the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Using a sample size of 1132 English language feature films that had been nominated between 1975 and 2002 within 17 categories by at least one of the seven organisations, Simonton (2011: 12) found that there was an ‘impressively strong’ consensus between these seven organisations in their recognition of films, particularly in the most prestigious categories, and that the Oscar Awards most often provided the single best indicator of that consensus. These findings indicate that the US film industry’s dominant, major awarding institution, the Oscar Awards, has significant influence on the values most honoured in the field. This demonstrates why it is so important to first analyse the industry’s major awarding institution as they establish the parameters for what it is to award within that field and, in turn, reflect the most valued features and attributes within the major industry. What Simonton’s assessment of the seven organisations does not do, however, is analyse the type of films being recognised and what marks them as award-worthy over other eligible films from the time. Analysing the type of film, the actors and the directors being recognised would give an invaluable insight into who is being celebrated and who is being overlooked which is important for assessing representation and bias within the field. The analysis of the BRIT Awards and the Grammy Awards in this thesis seeks to understand what music and musicians are being awarded and what that can teach us about value and representation within major awarding institutions and, by extension, the major recording industry.

In order to assess the long term effectiveness of film awards, Ginsburgh (2003: 101) compared the *Best Picture* winners from the Oscar Awards, the Golden Globes, New York Film Critics Circle and National Board of review between 1950 and 1980 with the films that features on three prominent 100 Greatest Movies of All Time lists⁵, published in the late 1990s. Ginsburgh (2003: 103) found that 65% of the Oscar award winning films appeared on one of the lists but only 26% featured on all three lists. Furthermore, it was found that in 18 out of 31 years, the Oscar Awards failed to honour the film that, with the passage of time, is considered the best (ibid.). This suggests, as do my own findings, that awarding institutions operate on an annual

⁵ The American Film Institute’s ‘Definitive Selection of the 100 Greatest Movies of All Time’ as decided by 1500 leaders from the US film community, ‘Mr Showbiz Critics Pics’ as decided by responses from critics asked to vote for their best movie opinions and ‘100 Must See Films of the 20th Century’ compiled by US movie critic Leonard Maltin.

timeframe that recognises value from within that time period and are not always capable of predicting what will go on to be the most valued. Like the Grammy Awards recognition of Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* in 1997 as *Album of the Year*, arguably not one of his best or most impactful albums, in an attempt to correct their earlier failure to award any of Dylan's albums with its most prestigious prize, the Oscar Awards have also arguably awarded later work to correct its earlier overlooks. For example, Martin Scorsese won the coveted *Best Director* prize for *The Departed* in 2006 when he was nominated but overlooked for his earlier work like *Raging Bull* and *Goodfellas* which are arguably much better and more impactful films that stand out from their time. This type of analysis, and methodology, is particularly effective for comparing value judgements and assessing the role of the awarding institution. Ginsburgh does not evaluate the type of films being honoured or link the awarding institution to the motivations of the major US film industry, but it is clear from my own research that doing so provides an even greater understanding of the role that these major awarding institutions play within their own field.

Though the current literature examining cultural awarding institutions is not expansive in volume, it is rich in content. The contemporary nature of this literature indicates the growth in academic interest around cultural awarding and makes this thesis necessary and timely for the continued development of the field. The literature examining literary awarding demonstrates the benefits of exploring a field's dominant awarding institution to assess how awarding within the field operates. It is clear that once this has been established, the examination of other awarding institutions within the field can be conducted with a higher level of understanding and appreciation. Though the work examining popular music awarding institutions is detailed and informative, its disjointed nature prohibits a deeper understanding of the institutions' role within the recording industry and their motivations. This thesis aims to provide a detailed examination of the UK and US' major awarding institutions in order to better understand the field of popular music awarding which will enrich and make space for the continued examination of these institutions which, in turn, will enhance our understanding of the recording industry and its machinations.

The aims of this thesis are to expand our understanding of how popular music awarding institutions operate and to demonstrate how these institutions are connected to the recording industry. To achieve this, the two fields of literature examined here – popular music studies and awarding literature – have been essential for building a broader, more nuanced

understanding of popular music awarding institutions which acts as the foundation of this work. This literature has facilitated a unique examination of popular music awarding institutions that has thus far been missing in any academic exploration of popular music awarding. Building upon this work with my own research and analysis accommodates a new approach to the study of awarding which will expand and deepen the current understanding of how the major recording industry and mainstream operates. Specifically, this research will provide answers to three key questions:

1. What is the purpose of the popular music awarding institution?
2. What motivates the behaviour of popular music awarding institutions?
3. What impact do popular music awarding institutions have on the recording industry?

Methodology

The primary purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the complexity of popular music awarding institutions and establish how valuable they are as a tool through which to learn more about the recording industry and its practices and preferences. In order to sufficiently answer the three key research questions, I had to understand what the institution's motivations and aims were alongside establishing how and whom the awarding was benefitting. It was essential to find out who was involved in the formation of the awarding institution and how that might have influenced the institution's motivations. I wanted to ascertain what links, if any, existed between major awarding institutions and the major recording industry, and if there were links how was that reflected in the music and musicians that were being awarded by the institutions. Finally, I wanted to know what role non-major awarding institutions played within the field of popular music awarding and how they interacted with the major awarding institution and the wider recording industry. Establishing where and how to start this research was complicated by the lack of existing research within this particular field of study. As there was no clearly defined way to study popular music awarding institutions, I reflected on my research questions and decided that a mixed methods approach would accommodate an expansive exploration of these awarding institutions and the three key research questions I had to answer.

Within each field of cultural awarding, one awarding institution stands as 'the "Nobel" of its subfield' (English, 2005: 63) meaning that there is one institution that defines what it is to award within that field. The Grammy Awards stand as the 'Nobel' of the field of popular music, in part due to its status as the first popular music awarding institution of its kind and as such,

it was the Grammy Awards that would be necessary to interrogate first due to their influence on popular music awarding since their formation in 1957. My aim in examining the formation of the Grammy Awards was to deanonymise the men involved in its foundation and establish what links they held to each other and to the industry. In order to do this, the context of the period had to be thoroughly understood so that the true motivations could be ascertained. Thus, I undertook a mixed methods approach to gather a patchwork of information that would offer an insight into who the men were and what their aims were in establishing an awarding institution in 1957 despite their decades of opportunity to establish one earlier like their counterparts in the film and television industries⁶.

It is potentially a by-product of their longevity, and the relatively new field of popular music studies, that the formation of major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards have not been extensively interrogated. The lack of readily available information about the formation of these institutions may also be a contributing factor. Establishing who was involved with the formation of the Grammy Awards required extensive investigative work using archives and obituaries to confirm which recording executives were involved with the project. Further literary based research was required to conclude why the awarding institution was established at the time which was when it became obvious how clearly linked the institution was to the needs of the recording industry from which its founders were so clearly aligned. The field of popular music studies has been predominately preoccupied with the work and lives of artists, ignoring the work and lives of the recording industry executives who make those careers possible. This thesis shows how deanonymising influential industry executives enriches our understanding of the operations of the recording industry which expands our ability to understand awarding institutions as much more than simple recognition of good music.

As the trade periodical of the US major recording industry, *Billboard* archives were an invaluable source of information for establishing who was involved in the Grammy Awards foundation and the reaction of the recording industry. I explored copies between 1957 and 1973 to ensure a wide range was covered. To find out more about the founding committee members of the Grammy Awards and its academy, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), I traced obituaries of some of the men in the *New York Times* and *The*

⁶ The US-based Oscar Awards and Emmy Awards were established in 1929 and 1949 respectively.

Independent which detailed their accomplishments. I also sourced an out-of-publication autobiography of one of the members (Dunn, 1975) which allowed an insight into the world of one of these executives and used two unofficial Grammy Award biographies to corroborate and compare my independent findings (O’Neil, 1993; Schipper, 1992). Liaison with an archivist at the Grammy Awards museum in Los Angeles revealed information about the founding committee members but ultimately only one interview from their Living Histories archive proved useful for this research. Finally, music industry scholarship (Keightley, 2001a; Keightley, 2004; Millard, 1995; Peterson and Berger, 1975; Tschmuck, 2006) was used to investigate the industrial landscape that the Grammy Awards foundation was taking place in. Within this scholarly research, I found some additional information about the recording executives who formed the Grammy Awards and their other pursuits within the recording industry, primarily their work with record formats, which further enlightened my understanding of their work and priorities. This mixed methods approach enabled a thorough exploration of the founding committee members and the early years of the Grammy Awards which has not been produced in the same capacity elsewhere. The original findings concerning the foundation of the Grammy Awards provides a strong foundation for the further investigation of popular music awarding institutions.

Throughout the research process, I have undertaken data collection to build an empirical base from which a nuanced historical picture could be built to aid the assessment of social and cultural issues pertinent to the awarding institutions. In order to assess the representation of female and BAME artists at the BRIT Awards between 1977 and 2019, I compiled a dataset of over 1200 artists who have been nominated or awarded across four categories as well as those who have performed at a BRIT Awards ceremony. The four categories were *British Album of the Year*, *British Single of the Year*, *British Group of the Year* and *Outstanding Contribution to Music*. These categories were selected because they represent the three most coveted and publicised awards at the BRITs and the award that offers a retrospective analysis of important British artists. The sample size is indicative of the large amount of artists recognised at the BRIT Awards which translates into a broad representation of artists in the UK’s major recording industry. As the thesis will argue that major awarding institutions are closely related to the major recording industry, studying the recognised artists in this data driven way accommodates a better understanding of not only the artists that the awarding institution is recognising but also the artists that are most valued by the major recording industry. The

resultant statistical analysis offers a detailed insight into the representation at the BRIT Awards which offers an original contribution to the study of popular music awarding.

In order to understand the purpose and role of popular music awarding institutions, I collected a range of data to cross reference against the winners of the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* category. For each of the 100 winning albums, I have collected its rank on both the US and UK's bestselling albums charts, its peak position on both the US *Billboard* Top 200 Album Chart and the UK Official Charts Album Chart and its place on both the *Rolling Stone* and *NME's Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. I also collected information regarding the nationality of the artists being awarded and the record label they were signed to when the album won the *Album of the Year* prize. Systematically collecting this varied range of data establishes the type of albums that are being recognised at the US and UK's major awarding institutions. It also identifies if those albums are acknowledged by other popular music institutions like the charts or the popular music press. It also establishes if the albums were signed to major record labels, thus further demonstrating a link between the major awarding institutions and major recording industry. This information establishes two things: firstly, it demonstrates how the popular music awarding institutions can be used as an alternative way to assess value compared to the popular music canon and secondly, it shows how popular music awarding institutions can confer cultural value onto the commercially successful.

To assess the role that non-major awarding institutions have played within the field of popular music studies, two non-major awarding institutions have been selected as case studies to demonstrate the role that these institutions play. Having analysed major popular music awarding institutions and gauged how they operate and what they represent, analysis of two case studies of non-major awarding institutions offers an understanding of how these institutions operate in relation with the major institutions and what they bring to the broader field of popular music awarding. Case studies are also utilised to support the argument that spectacle and controversy are necessary for the success of the awarding ceremony. These case studies provide examples of controversial moments at the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards which have been widely discussed in the popular press but not given academic scrutiny. Case studies have been used as effective ways to both build and support arguments for underexplored areas, demonstrating the ways in which they exemplify the general arguments being made.

Underpinning and aiding the answer of each research question is an original collection of literary research. Due to the largely unexplored nature of popular music awarding institutions, I have drawn from a range of literature that has not been used in this particular way before. This literature is broadly drawn from the wide, and relatively new, field of awarding studies and the field of popular music. Also used throughout is further archival work drawing from the broadsheet newspapers and the music press. The archival work supports the research when there are gaps in the scholarly literature that fail to acknowledge the awarding institutions being explored. The varied collection of information used throughout this thesis has been carefully collected to answer a wide range of research questions and demonstrate the complexity of popular music awarding institutions.

Chapter Outline

This thesis aims to provide an in-depth exploration of popular music awarding institutions, their purpose, motivations and operations which in turn will provide a solid foundation for future research. It will be established and argued throughout that popular music awarding institutions can be used as a way to better understand the recording industry from which the awards are derived. The Grammy Awards, for example, give an insight into the practices and values of the major US recording industry. This thesis is organised into five chapters, of which the first four are concerned with the exploration of the dominant, mainstream awarding institutions of the Anglo-American recording industries; The Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards. It is essential to explore these institutions first as they have established the expectations of how awarding within the field of popular music functions. Consequently, their examination occupies the majority of this thesis as it is essential to understand the motivations and operations of these mainstream institutions before there can be any comprehensive understanding of non-mainstream popular music awarding institutions.

Chapter One outlines the close relationship between the US major recording industry and the Grammy Awards through a detailed examination of the 1957 formation of the academy behind the awards, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS). Literary research is used to contextualise the technological and industrial changes taking place in the years preceding the NARAS' formation and archival research is utilised to identify the members of the academy's founding committee and their links to each other and the US major recording industry. Further archival research is employed to explore the early years of the Grammy

Awards, from 1957 to 1971, to further establish how the awards were closely linked to the recording industry. It is argued throughout the chapter that the Grammy Awards were established as an industrial strategy by the major recording industry at a time of increased competition and industrial change.

Having established how a key major awarding institution was formed with direct co-operation from the major recording industry, Chapter Two explores the role of major awarding institutions in the popular music mainstream. It argues that as industrial strategies, major popular music awarding institutions champion and promote the commercially successful values embraced by major recording industries. To demonstrate this, the chapter conducts a comparative statistical analysis between the albums awarded *Album of the Year* by the BRIT Awards and the Grammy Awards and their performance on the album charts from their respective industries for the year the album was awarded. Further comparison is made between the awarded albums and the bestselling albums of all-time charts which helps demonstrate the yearly time frame in which awarding institutions function. Finally, a comparison is made between the awarded albums and music magazines *Rolling Stone* and *NME's Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. This final comparison supports the argument that major awarding institutions can function as an alternative evaluation of value within popular music, supporting mainstream values which can differ from those celebrated within the popular music canon.

Chapter Three demonstrates how the examination of major popular music awarding institutions can be used as a powerful tool for better understanding the practices of the major recording industry. Through a statistical analysis of 862 artists who have either won or been nominated for a BRIT Award and 361 artists who have performed at a BRIT Award ceremony between 1977 and 2019, it will be argued that women and BAME artists are underrepresented at the BRIT Awards. The lack of representation can be attributed to a lack of representation of women and BAME artists within the wider UK recording industry which the BRIT Awards are inherently linked to through their association with the British Phonographic Industry which represents the UK recording industry. The chapter explores how genre has impacted the women recognised at the BRIT Awards as well as the wider role of women in the recording industry and how this has impacted their general underrepresentation. Racial bias at the BRITs will be explored in light of the 2016 'shake-up' for the BRIT Awards voting academy in relation to criticism about the BRITs' representation. Examining almost forty years of awarding at the

BRIT Awards provides an in-depth analysis of a major popular music awarding institution showing it to be an evolving, non-static, reflexive body that must adapt in order to survive.

The awarding ceremony is an integral role of the awarding institution and is examined at length in Chapter Four. As the public facing component of the awarding cycle, the ceremony is highly symbolic in nature to ensure that it is easily recognisable as an event that only occurs once a year. This chapter argues that spectacle, controversy and scandal are essential for the ceremony and in turn for the continued viability of the awarding institution itself. Two case studies will showcase how spectacle, controversy and scandal operate at award ceremonies. Firstly, the 1996 performance of *Earth Song* by Michael Jackson, which was interrupted by Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, will be examined as a truly scandalous moment that benefitted all parties involved; Jackson, Cocker and the BRIT Awards. Secondly, the political spectacle of the Grammy Awards throughout the twenty-first century will be examined with particular focus on Kendrick Lamar's 2016 performance and Kesha's 2018 performance. These case studies outline the necessity of controversy and scandal at the ceremony, considering the function of the ceremony and why there is often a disconnect between the values of the performers and performances to those of the awarding institution.

It was essential to dedicate the majority of this thesis to the examination of major popular music awarding institutions both because they have been underexplored thus far in popular music scholarship and because they have defined the parameters of what awarding looks like within popular music. The final, fifth chapter, however, begins a task that can continue beyond the borders of this thesis: the examination of the wider field of popular music awarding. The fifth chapter acknowledges the breadth of popular music awarding institutions and examines the reflexive links between major and non-major institutions through the examination of two case studies. Exploring the MOBO Awards and the Mercury Music Prize facilitates an understanding of how non-major awarding institutions form in response to gaps within their major counterparts. It further acknowledges links between awarding institutions and recording industries as well as the impact that non-major awarding institutions can have on the practices of major awarding institutions. This final chapter demonstrates the breadth of knowledge that can be gained from the examination of popular music awarding institutions and encourages their continued exploration.

Chapter One – New Beginnings: An Examination of the Formation of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, 1955-1971.

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences was formed in the US in 1957 as the academy that would launch the Grammy Awards. Despite the Grammy Awards' status as the first and most recognised popular music awarding institution in the western world, the awards and its academy have been subject to scant examination for an institution of its influence and age. Today, the Grammy Awards stand as an integral feature of the US recording industry's annual calendar, operating as a marker of acceptance and celebration by the industry for artists, musical genres and the craftsmanship of producers and technicians. To be recognised by the Grammy Awards, by either a nomination or a win, signals success and inclusion in an industry that is notoriously difficult to succeed in. The Grammy Awards are coveted for not only their symbolism but also for the tangible benefits they wield in terms of boosted sales and reputational gains. There is a distinct lack of understanding, however, of the Grammy Awards' origins and relation to the major recording industry which denies valuable insight into the awards' purposes and motivations. Examining the formation and early years of the Grammy Awards will expand our understanding of the awarding institution and its close ties to the major recording industry which will accommodate a better understanding of what is being valued by the awards and why.

This chapter will analyse the origins of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) and the first decade of the Grammy Awards to argue that the Grammy Awards were established in order to support the US major recording industry at a time of industrial change and competition. Examining the formation of the academy behind the Grammy Awards enables a greater understanding of the inextricable relationship between major popular music awarding institutions and the industry from which they are derived, which highlights the importance of studying these institutions. This examination of the NARAS and the Grammy Awards between 1955 and 1971, its genesis through to its first live televised ceremony, will offer an understanding of how the awards reflect the values and concerns of the major recording industry as a result of its inextricable links to that industry. Popular music awarding institutions

have been generally overlooked in popular music studies but the examination of the Grammy Awards in this chapter will demonstrate how awarding institutions can be used as a tool that fosters a greater understanding of the recording industry's values and priorities at certain moments in time.

To provide this analysis, this chapter will assume three sections. Firstly, the industrial landscape of the late 1940s and 1950s will be contextualised to establish the circumstances that prompted the creation of the NARAS. Using a range of literary research and historical analysis, an examination of the legal, industrial and technological changes taking place in the years preceding the NARAS' formation will demonstrate the challenges and competition the industry was facing. It will be established that the Grammy Awards were established as an industrial strategy to counter these changes. Second, piecing together information from a variety of sources, including the Grammy Awards' Living Histories archive, autobiographies and obituaries, the chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the men who formed the original founding committee of the NARAS. The founding committee have not been examined in this way before, linking their connections to the industry and each other to their creation of an awarding institution tasked with championing the industry's most valuable assets. Highlighting the men responsible for the formation of the Grammy Awards deanonymises the academy and, more importantly, gives an invaluable insight into their motivations for forming the academy whose legacy and motivations, of supporting the industry, are still apparent in the awards today.

Finally, the Grammy Awards will be examined from their inaugural ceremony in 1959 to their first live televised ceremony in 1971. The music industry trade periodical *Billboard* is used to uncover the reaction of major record label executives to the creation of the NARAS and the Grammy Awards. This demonstrates how the major recording industry anticipated the awards to function in a supportive role to their own aims which further shows the undeniable link between industry and awarding institution. An analysis of the Grammy Award winners and nominees for *Album of the Year* and *Record of the Year* between 1959 and 1968 is provided to showcase the type of music and artists being celebrated by the awards which demonstrates how the awards are reflective of the industry's priorities at that time rather than the music that is retrospectively considered the most valuable. Throughout the chapter, it is argued that major popular music awarding institutions are closely connected to the major recording industry which makes them an invaluable tool for better understanding the industry's priorities and practices at certain moments in time.

1.2 Legal, Industrial and Technological Changes Preceding the Formation of the NARAS

The formation of the NARAS took place at a time of immense change for the US recording industry and, as such, can only be truly understood and appreciated when situated within the context of change that facilitated its establishment. This section will explore legal changes within the US film and radio industries in the 1940s that impacted upon the US major recording industry and its practices due to the breakdown of oligopolistic control across the entertainment industries. It will also explore how the development of vinyl formats granted more freedom to independent record labels which allowed them to operate with less reliance on the major labels. In turn, this allowed greater autonomy within the radio industry which hugely impacted the operations of the recording industry. These changes provided the foundations for the emergence of rock'n'roll in the 1950s which further impacted the major recording industry's fortunes. This section will argue that these legal, industrial and technological changes contributed to the diminished market share of the major recording labels which led to the establishment of the NARAS as an industrial strategy to support the major recording industry and the music and artists it perceived as most valuable.

The musical landscape of the US in the 1950s was changing. By the end of the decade as the NARAS was established, the four major American record labels – RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca and Capitol – were facing unprecedented challenges against their oligopoly of the popular music market which required a rethinking of the major labels' attitudes and approach to working with and promoting popular music. The changes within the recording industry during the 1950s followed a turbulent post-war era at the end of the 1940s across the entertainment industries. The major entertainment industries – radio, film and music – were interlinked and often working to the mutual benefit of each other. It had become customary throughout the 1920s and 30s for major film studios to hire stars such as Bing Crosby who were already well known for their records and radio airtime to star in their films (Tschmuck, 2006:69). Deals such as this were often facilitated through connections made by parent companies with interests across the broad spectrum of the entertainment industries.

These connections and deals made between media companies enforced and maintained an oligopoly of power across a handful of major record labels, radio networks and film studios throughout the entertainment industries. Media conglomerates NBC and CBS were the parent companies of major record labels RCA Victor and Columbia and functioned until the late 1940s as ‘quasi-omnipotent gatekeepers of the music industry’ who ‘determined which kind of music could be heard on their radio stations, controlled the right to exploit their music through their publishing houses, and defined who was and was not allowed to have access to their distribution networks’ (Tschmuck, 2006: 70). Similarly, Decca worked with the Music Corporation of America, a music and film agency, and Capitol Records worked with major film studio Paramount Pictures (Tschmuck, 2006: 99). The four major record companies ‘used their corporate connections to promote their songs by getting them played on the radio, including them in Broadway musicals, and incorporating them into the sound tracks of Hollywood films’ (Millard, 1995: 225). The major record labels’ business dealings and close connections to the other major entertainment industries was an important part of the continued control and dominance that the major labels enjoyed in the popular music market.

The major labels’ control of the recording industry by the end of the 1940s was secured not as a result of the variety of product they were offering consumers but instead through their domination of production and distribution channels which resulted in the four major record labels controlling 81% of the total record market in 1948 (Peterson, 1990: 106). Independent labels were, for the most part, unable to distribute records on their own which left them to the whims of the major labels’ distributions networks which, consequently, were ‘able to control the product that was distributed’ (Tschmuck, 2006: 99). Peterson (1990: 104) argues that it is this combination of vertical integration, the record industry ownership of distribution channels, and horizontal integration, achieved through cooperation between the record industry, Broadway and the radio and film industries, that allowed the major labels to maintain their predominance within the recording industry until the 1955 emergence of rock’n’roll disrupted the major record labels’ previously uncontested dominance. The establishment of the NARAS, masterminded by recording industry executives, was part of a strategy employed by the major record labels to distinguish them, their music and artists in a changing musical landscape where the major record labels market share had fallen from its almost absolute dominance in 1948 to a 74% share in 1955 which fell further by 1959 to a mere 34% (Peterson, 1990: 106). To better understand the exact conditions that facilitated the need for the NARAS, this section will now

explore legal changes within the entertainment industries and technological changes within the recording industry leading up to the emergence of rock'n'roll in 1955.

In the 1940s, the oligopolistic tendencies of the major entertainment industries were challenged and eventually dismantled through regulations and court rulings designed to end the condensed power held by a handful of companies across the entertainment industries. These measures consequently increased competition and created a fairer market. These powerful companies were the aforementioned record labels; RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca and Capitol. The major US film studios, which operated in a two tier system, were colloquially referred to as the 'Big Five' – MGM, Paramount, Fox, Warner Bros., and RKO – and the 'Little Three' – Universal, Columbia and United Artists. Four networks dominated the radio industry; National Broadcasting Company (NBC), NBC Blue Network, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and Mutual Broadcasting System. These companies were not defeated; indeed many remain as powerful operators within the expanded entertainment industries of today, but their iron grip was successfully loosened.

In 1941, the radio industry was disrupted by the Federal Communications Commission issuing a set of chain broadcasting rules 'designed to curb the growing power of the networks and to eliminate specific restraints embodied in contracts between the networks and their member stations' (Yale Law Journal, 1951: 78). These rules were disputed by the networks resulting in a Supreme Court case in 1943, National Broadcasting Company, Inc vs United States, which ultimately upheld the FCC's chain broadcasting rules and ordered NBC to sell its second network, NBC Blue Network (Yale Law Journal, 1951: 86), which eventually became American Broadcasting Company (ABC). This ruling against radio networks utilising horizontal integration to further their control within the industry was similarly seen within the film industry for the studios' strategy of using vertical integration to control the industry. The Big Five Hollywood film studios were different from the Little Three due to their vertical integration strategies. The Big Five studios between them owned one sixth of America's movie theatres (De Vany, 2004: 166), in which they controlled what movies could be screened. In addition to this, the major studios engaged in block booking, a practice whereby independent theatres were forced to sign contracts with major studios obligating them to show a certain number of the studios' films so that, in order to show popular films, independent theatres would also have to take the unpopular ones (De Vany, 2004: 161).

In 1948 a landmark antitrust case that had been making its way through the US courts since 1938 was heard by the Supreme Court, *The United States vs Paramount Pictures* case, which found the five defendants – the Big Five film studios – guilty of violating the Sherman Antitrust Act (Schatz, 2008: 16). The Sherman Antitrust Act was created to promote competition and prevent monopolies, and the courts concluded that the Big Five had violated the act as a result of their ‘vertically integrated structure’, finding that ‘the complexity, scope and diversity of its practices and contractual arrangements did not fit the reigning theory of competition’ (De Vany, 2004: 143). It was also remarked in the court proceedings that, ‘it is clear so far as the five majors are concerned, that the aim of the conspiracy was exclusionary, i.e., it was designed to strengthen their hold on the exhibition field. In other words, the conspiracy had monopoly in exhibition for one of its goals’ (Hurd, 1948: 29). This landmark ruling completely altered the film industry. The courts ordered that motion picture distribution could not be integrated with theatrical exhibition, that terms could not be included in industry contracts that alluded to integrative practices and barred a number of practices including block booking (De Vany, 2004: 143).

What’s important to understand from these cases and changes within the broader entertainment industries, when thinking about industrial changes preceding the formation of the NARAS, is that there are clear strategies being actively employed by major entertainment industry companies to maintain and further their oligopolistic hold over their markets. It’s also apparent that these strategies are part of day-to-day proceedings within these industries, with integrative practices aimed at keeping a monopoly over movie exhibition or radio station coverage written into contracts to ensure control was maintained through legally binding documents. The recording industry did not face similar legal challenges at this time, but their close working relationships with these industries demonstrates that the recording industry would have been operating in a similar way in terms of practices of control. Equally, the recording industry was impacted by these court cases because of their working relationship with the film and radio industries.

Major record labels may not have been subject to legal proceedings that broke up their structure and organisation but technological and industrial changes forced the recording industry to change in as significant a way as their radio and film industry colleagues. Further regulation within the radio industry had severe and long lasting impact on the recording industry that helped pave the way for rock’n’roll to enter the markets in an impactful way, to the detriment

of the major record labels. In 1947, the FCC began approving a backlog of applications for new radio stations, that had been built up over the war years, which resulted in the number of stations doubling in four years (Peterson, 1990: 101). The licences for new stations were mainly granted to independent stations with limited capital who could not finance the expensive programming of the major radio networks, such as playing live music, and instead relied on broadcasting phonograph records (ibid.).

Independent stations operated at a local level, opposed to the national programming of the major networks, which transformed the makeup of the radio industry from a single, national market with four competing networks to more than one hundred autonomous local markets that each had multiple radio stations competing against each other (Peterson, 1990: 105). The development of the radio industry and the use of records by local stations coincided with technological advancements that were starting to release the stranglehold that the major record labels had over music production and distribution. One way in which the major record labels had held power and control was through their recording studios which had costly equipment that most independent labels could not afford on their own. The introduction of magnetic tape changed this set up and has consequently 'been hailed as the most important force of change' in all sound technologies introduced after the war (Millard, 1995: 224). Initially, the major labels refused to use magnetic tape in their recording studios as they were concerned that it would become a substitute for the record, however it was used by smaller record companies who started to record their repertoire on magnetic tape and then offer it to radio stations in this format (Tschmuck, 2006: 93). Not only did the use of magnetic tape create a direct line between radio stations and independent record labels, essentially cutting out the middle man in the form of the major record labels, but it was also much cheaper and cost effective for the independent labels (Tschmuck, 2006: 94), which enabled them to compete more effectively in the recording industry.

Peterson and Berger examined the workings of the music industry in this time period and concluded that the period between 1948 and 1955 was an era of corporate concentration. The four labels, they claim, maintained dominance by controlling the production flow, similar to the film studios tactic of buying out theatre chains, resulting in a homogeneity of product which led to 'a growing unsated demand' (1975: 163). Culture under oligopolistic control does not necessarily flourish. Rather, audiences are constricted to consume the same products produced by the same producers with little variety or choice. The introduction of smaller radio stations

playing music from independent labels gave choice to consumers at a time when demand for new music had dramatically increased, partly due to the ‘increasing affluence, education and leisure time of teenagers’ (Bakker, 2011: 311) meaning that more audiences were being recognised and catered for.

Radio became increasingly important throughout the 1950s for breaking new music. This, in part, was due to the launch of *Billboard*’s Top 40 chart in 1951 which paved the way for radio stations to play the most popular songs repeatedly and also allowed for radio DJs without ‘specialist musical knowledge’ (Halliwell, 2007: 119). Personality and likeability became increasingly important for radio DJs which led to the introduction of the celebrity DJ (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 164-5). These new radio DJs came to take the role of the gatekeeper within the wider music industry, offering an alternative to the major labels as purveyors of taste. Personalities such as Alan Freed, who was inducted into the rock’n’roll Hall of Fame in 1986 for being ‘the most effective proselytizer rock’n’roll has ever known’ (RockHall, 2021a), were among those who championed rock’n’roll through the medium of the radio and helped shape the changing record industry. In 1951, conscious of increased telephone call-in requests and sales of R&B and early rock’n’roll records in local stores, Freed was quick to respond to the growing demand and turned his show into a showcase called ‘Moondog’s Rock and Roll Party’ (Millard, 1995: 233). In 1954, Freed moved his show from Cleveland to New York to a much larger audience and as rock’n’roll became more popular, Freed’s program placed at the top of the ratings chart and he became ‘America’s most influential disc jockey’ (ibid.).

It was common practice in the 1940s for major record labels to cover songs from rival companies shortly after their original release. While this practice prevented independent records from competing effectively in the market due to independent labels’ inability to produce records at the same speed as the majors (Peterson, 1990:112), radio DJs shunned this custom and moved to the practice of playing songs from specialised genres that the major labels were ignoring. Dewey Phillips worked at the WHBQ radio station in Memphis, Tennessee where his specially constructed control room was conceived as ‘the unofficial headquarters for the record industry’s new power players’, these new power players were independent record label executives, such as Sam Phillips from Sun Records, who were going straight to radio stations to promote their artists’ music (Cantor, 2005: 122).

Disc jockeys like Freed and Phillips had huge influence over their audience, and would compete with each other to introduce new records and discover new artists (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 165) which meant that huge amounts of new music was being shared with new audiences across America. The sheer breadth of new music being introduced and consumed is reflected in market share statistics; in 1948, the four major record labels were responsible for 81% of the songs that reached the Top 10 but by 1958 this share had decreased to 36% (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 160). This steep decline in dominance of the Top 10 truly reflects a monumental shift in the major record labels' power and control of the recording industry throughout the 1950s. Though the introduction of rock'n'roll has a significant role to play in the change of the major record labels' fortunes in the 1950s, it was facilitated by industrial and technological changes.

The year 1955 has been widely accepted as a zeitgeist moment in the history of rock'n'roll with minimal consideration given to the social and cultural environments that accommodated such a movement (Peterson, 1990: 97). Keightley posits that 1955 is only labelled as momentous because value and prominence is being placed on the rebellious narrative of rock'n'roll rather than examining the complex industrial practices that informed its emergence (2004: 376). It would diminish and fail to convey the complicated range of practices and changes within the recording industry at this time to proclaim that the industry was wholly consumed by the competition that rock'n'roll posed. The success of rock'n'roll did, however, prompt the major labels to adjust their strategies and implement new ones to promote their own long-established, more conservative form of popular music. This chapter argues that the NARAS, an awarding institution developed and executed by the major recording industry, was one of these new strategies. The NARAS was designed to promote the music championed by the major recording industry and imbue it with authority and prestige through official recognition which would elevate it above rock'n'roll.

Inevitably, rock'n'roll changed the course of popular music and became the dominant genre within the field of popular music but history is written by the victors. Rock's preoccupation with authenticity has rendered it 'selectively blind to the industrial elements that contributed to the birth of rock music because the ideology of rock itself consistently disavows rock's commercial status' (Keightley, 2004: 376), and this attitude has permeated the discourse around the creation of rock'n'roll privileging the story of rock's beginning with an all-consuming Big Bang narrative that wipes out space and consideration for the technological and

industrial changes that facilitated its emergence. To be sure, the major recording industry was permanently changed by rock'n'roll, but the emergence of rock'n'roll can only be understood in its social, industrial and technological context. Similarly, understanding the development and necessity of an awarding institution such as the Grammy Awards hinges on comprehending the context in which it was formed.

This chapter has thus far analysed legal, industrial and technological changes that impacted the status quo of the recording industry in the 1950s, however, there is one final technological change to be explored that had significant impact on the major recording industry and the subsequent foundation of the NARAS: recording formats. The post-war increase in demand for popular music highlighted the need for a format that could extend the playing length of records. A solution was found by the engineers at Columbia in the form of vinyl, which allowed the LP's diameter to be expanded, its RPMs to be reduced from shellac's 78 to 33.5 and its sound quality to remain uncompromised (Tschmuck, 2006: 92). Shortly after the introduction of the new LP in 1948, engineers at RCA-Victor announced their newly developed 45 RPM record which would become the format best suited to the single. The LP was quickly established as standard by US and European major labels, however, RCA-Victor 'scored a crucial marketing coup' through its marketing of the single as better suited for 'entertainment music' which meant that the two formats dominated different areas of the market; the LP representing the classical and jazz repertoire while the single represented pop music (ibid.). The development of these formats have important consequences to consider when establishing the context for the formation of the NARAS. The transfer from shellac to vinyl was revolutionary for smaller record companies. As shellac was incredibly fragile, it required a great deal of care when being transported which allowed the major record labels control over distribution as they could shoulder the high costs involved for distribution that smaller companies could not (Tschmuck, 2006: 92). The shift to vinyl enabled small record companies to break free from the major record labels' distribution infrastructure which, alongside previously discussed industrial and technological change, gave independent record labels more autonomy which granted them greater access to, and success in, the popular music market.

Examining formats and their financial performance in the popular music market can teach us a great deal about the major record labels' priorities which informs our understanding of the context preceding the formation of the NARAS. There is a well-trodden narrative that the major record labels chose not to invest in rock'n'roll because of the type of music it was; 'the majors

did not want to be associated with a form of music that they considered common and obscene' (Tschmuck, 2006: 94). The major record labels championed traditional popular music, such as standards, jazz and swing records, which rock'n'roll was not. Indeed, rock'n'roll presented itself as the antithesis to the major labels' more conservative brand of popular music, but, as Keightley has pointed out, there is a tendency within popular music studies to privilege the ideology over the industrial practices taking place (2004: 376). The new record formats facilitated a split within the popular music market that the major record labels observed and acted on. By 1955, as rock'n'roll was truly making its debut, LP sales accounted for over 50% of sales (Chapple and Garofolo, 1977: 44). This increased by 1957 to over 65% of sales and an age breakdown of sales in 1957 shows that 25% of sales were pop singles that were bought by teenagers, 45% were pop albums bought by adults and 21% were classical albums that were also bought by adults (Keightley, 2004: 379). Taking into consideration that singles at that time cost 89 cents and albums cost between \$1.49 to \$4.98 (ibid.), it is unsurprising that the major record industry came to see the LP and its adult consumers as the portion of the market upon which they wanted to focus.

The LP quickly established itself as the bourgeoisie, high art text more similar to the novel than to the low art, commercial single aimed at teens, that was more profitable for the recording industry due to the role the LP had to play as a 'long play institution' (Keightley, 2004: 380). A long play institution can be seen as something that would provide solid support for the industry over a long period, and Keightley identifies the LP catalogue in the 1950s as a long play institution due to its status as the emergent 'backbone' or 'foundation' of the recording industry that helped to counterbalance the uncertainty of the popular music market by providing a dependable income for the major record labels (ibid.). Despite the popularity of new artists like Elvis Presley, older and more traditional artists like Frank Sinatra remained more profitable for the major labels; Presley had 15 Number One hits throughout the 1950s but did not sell as many records as Sinatra, who stuck to the LP format, and 'became the most popular recording artist of the rock'n'roll decade in terms of total dollar sales' (Millard, 1995: 234). Taking this into consideration, the establishment of an academy such as the NARAS serves two important purposes which benefit the established business model of the major recording labels. Firstly, it championed mainstream, conservative popular music as music worthy of honouring and secondly, it promoted artists and formats essential to the continued financial success of the major record labels.

This section has shown the vast industrial and technological changes facing the US major recording industry throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. As a consequence of these changes and the emergence of rock'n'roll as a youthful, highly popular musical competitor to the major industry's more traditional brand of popular music, the major record labels experienced a sharp decline in their market share. Examining these changes rather than simply relying on the common narrative that the major recording industry disliked rock'n'roll because of its aesthetics accommodates a broader and more informed comprehension of the industrial strategies that were taking place and informing the creation of the first major popular music awarding institution of its kind. The break-up of the majors' oligopolistic control of the recording industry required the introduction of industrial strategies linked to their existing practices of promoting the LP and favouring adult audiences. This supports the chapter's argument that the establishment of the NARAS was an intervention designed to help support and maintain the power of the major record labels by championing the music and artists that the major recording industry most valued. The next section will explore the men connected to the formation of the NARAS in order to clearly establish the link between the recording industry and the academy. This will further support the argument that the Grammy Awards are inextricably linked to the major recording industry and can therefore be understood as an industrial strategy designed to promote the interests of that industry.

1.3 Formation of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences

The Grammy Awards are such a well-known, integral institution within the western musical world, with a history spanning over 60 years, that their origin seems to have become somewhat obscured by their truly phenomenal success and annual flurry of scandal and intrigue. The Grammy Awards operate as a key event within the annual US music industry calendar which grants them a small window each year where the nominations, nominees, ceremony performers and winners provide fodder for the public and press alike to discuss and analyse the music and musicians deemed worthy, or indeed unworthy, of receiving such revered accolades. The Grammy Awards have grown exponentially since their beginnings from an industry orientated annual celebratory dinner to a global television event that airs in over 150 countries. As the awards have grown, the academy behind the awards has become overshadowed and underappreciated both within public discourse and academic analysis. It is essential to

understand the formation of the NARAS and its Grammy Awards in order to truly understand the awards and their purpose.

Examining the formation of the NARAS can broaden our understanding of changes within the recording industry at a tumultuous time of change and restructure in the 1950s and allow for new insights that demonstrate how popular music awarding systems can be used to learn more about the industry from which they are derived. There is a distinct lack of research and detailed information around the beginning of the NARAS and no comprehensive, official account of this history has been published by the NARAS themselves. This section will explore the circumstances that brought together the recording industry executives that formed the NARAS' founding committee. It will then provide brief biographies of the men who convened the NARAS' founding committee to demonstrate how inextricably linked they were to the recording industry and its interests and ideals. This section will support and strengthen the argument that the NARAS is an industrial strategy of the recording industry, designed to promote and champion the music and artists it deems most valuable.

To build a picture of the early days of the NARAS, I have sewn together a patchwork of information from different sites including unofficial biographies of the Grammy Awards, an autobiography of one founding committee member, trade press reports from the time, obituaries of the founding committee members and academic work that has referenced the founding committee members in different capacities. I was also given access to the Grammy Foundation's Living Histories archive which 'preserves on videotape the life stories of key recording industry professionals and visionaries' with the aim of weaving 'a picture of the recording industry from the perspective of those who played integral roles in its development' (Grammy, 2020a). Unfortunately, the Living Histories archive had only one interview with a founding committee member which further demonstrates the lack of interest and knowledge around the formation of the NARAS. This section identifies the circumstances that brought about the birth of the NARAS and examines the individuals responsible for the formation of the award which will demonstrate how entwined the NARAS was with the recording industry. This will expand our understanding of awarding within popular music and the links between major awarding institutions and the major recording industry. It will also illustrate how the examination of major popular music awarding institutions can offer an insight into the recording industry's industrial strategies, practices and preferences.

In 1955 the major record labels were presented with a unique opportunity to consider the creation of a new institution that would support their industrial strategies. The Hollywood Beautification committee had been tasked with cleaning up ‘an increasingly sleazy Hollywood boulevard’ (Schipper, 1992: 3), and approached the major entertainment industries to request recommendations for 1200 performers who would be memorialised in the form of sidewalk stars, creating the now infamous Hollywood Walk of Fame. The committee approached the film and television industries through their awarding academies; the Oscar Awards’ Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, founded in 1929, and the Emmy Awards’ Academy of Television Arts and Sciences which had been founded in 1948. As there was no one body that represented the recording industry as a whole, the Hollywood Beautification Committee contacted major record executives individually to invite them to participate. The record executives who met to discuss the Hollywood Walk of Fame were Paul Weston, representative of Columbia, Sonny Burke of Decca, Jesse Kaye of MGM, Dennis Farnon of RCA and Lloyd Dunn of Capitol (O’Neil, 1993: 11; Schipper, 1992: 3). Dunn slightly contradicts this line-up of executives, claiming that it was Bob Yorke of RCA rather than Dennis Farnon, and that Warner’s Jim Conkling was also in attendance (1975: 20). It is possible that Dunn, writing his autobiography 25 years after the Hollywood Walk of Fame meetings, has incorrectly recalled Conkling and Yorke being involved at this very early stage as they were both involved in the NARAS later on.

The assembled record executives were tasked with deciding which artists were worthy of being honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and decided that any artist who had sold either a million singles or 250,000 albums throughout their career should be honoured with a star. This criteria reflects the interests of the executives who were all representatives of the major record labels; they chose criteria that effectively ensured that only artists signed to major labels would be honoured with a star. Furthermore, the difference in requirements for singles and albums in their decision further highlights the major record labels’ privileging of the album as superior to singles. This statistic-driven criteria, however, excluded artists such as Ella Fitzgerald because of its focus on sales over art. Paul Weston said of this decision, ‘our criteria for the Hollywood Walk of Fame, we realised, was wrong... it may have been right for selecting names to put into cement, but what we really needed was a proper means for rewarding people on an artistic level’ (Schipper, 1992: 3). It is clear that the major executives wanted to avoid promoting commercialism and record sales as the only way to measure success within the

industry. In light of the increasing popularity of genres like rock'n'roll, the major recording industry wanted another way to measure success.

It is from this sentiment that the motivation behind the NARAS was established, created with the purpose of awarding music on an artistic level in order to 'maintain musical values – as understood by esteemed elders like Weston and his peers' (Schipper, 1992: 4). In his autobiography, Lloyd Dunn recalls of the Hollywood Walk of Fame meetings; 'out of our meetings emerged the plan for organizing the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. The idea popped up after a second round of drinks, and we all ran with it' (Dunn, 1975: 20). From the very genesis of the NARAS it is clear that the academy's practices were borne of informal conversations that were exclusive to those within a tight-knit group of major record label executives which gives us an insight into the aims of the academy even at this early point; it was to celebrate and promote the music of the major recording industry. The well connected and friendly group of executives clearly did not see it as their responsibility to include any counterparts from independent record labels which further demonstrates how closely aligned the concerns of the major recording industry were with the formation of the NARAS.

Bringing together a group of executives who were representative of the same industry, albeit from different record labels, ensured that the collaborative might of those powerful labels could operate together in aim of achieving the same goal: elevating the music they considered most worthy. It is useful here to consider Becker's work on art worlds which states that 'the history of art deals with innovators and innovations that won organizational victories, succeeding in creating around themselves the apparatus of an art world, mobilizing enough people to cooperate in regular ways that sustained and furthered their idea' (1982: 300). The creation of an industry academy by the major record labels can be viewed as an attempt to win an organisational victory. If the labels could create an academy deemed by others as a legitimate marker of taste and success then, as Becker suggests, they could govern what music was to be considered as the best and validate their own practices as standard placing themselves at the centre of the popular music art world.

Awarding institutions offer an opportunity for rivals within a field – for example, those who work in competing major labels – to come together in celebration of that which binds them together. To this end, it should also be recognised that the creation of an awarding academy

does more than issue awards. English tells us that awarding institutions bring together ‘an unusually wide range of cultural “players” – artists, critics, functionaries, sponsors, publicists, journalists, consumers, kibitzers – providing all of them with an occasion in which they feel they have a certain stake and have a certain obligation to assert their interests’ (2005: 51). For the major record labels, undergoing a period of intense competition and industrial restructure, establishing an awarding academy would not only give them the capacity to award and honour music and musicians that they deemed to be artistically superior to other music in the marketplace but it would also give them the opportunity to involve a number of periphery actors. By involving a wider range of actors with the awarding institution through either invitation to be part of the academy or the ceremony, the institution is encouraging the continued support, investment and interest in the major recording industry’s output which validates their existence.

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences was formed on the 28th May 1957. The academy would host an annual awards ceremony celebrating the creative forces that made up the recording industry, and the academy itself would operate as a national organisation with ‘the rule that only creative persons were allowed to become members’ in order to keep the academy academic, ‘free from commercial interests’ (O’Neil, 1993: 11) and independent from record labels (Schipper, 1992: 4). The NARAS was to be formed in the image of its film and television counterparts (Broadcasting Telecasting, 1957: 76) and envisioned itself as an academy that would extend beyond the purview of the Hollywood Walk of Fame’s criteria of recognising best sellers and instead award and honour music deemed to be the best from an artistic perspective. Positioning the academy in these terms allowed it to present itself as an organisation concerned with preserving the ideals of mainstream, conservative popular music which automatically placed it as diametrically opposed to the emerging youth genre of rock’n’roll. Although the academy asserted that it was independent from the major record labels, this statement is undermined by the details that I have pieced together about the origins of the awards and the men who were instrumental to its establishment. Through the process of examining the NARAS’ genesis from the Hollywood Walk of Fame meetings it is clear that the academy was intrinsically tied to the major recording industry from the beginning.

It is vitally important to examine those who have had significant roles in founding institutions such as the NARAS as it can both reveal the motivations behind the organisation and demonstrate the distribution and retention of power across a particular industry. Those who

work in art worlds ‘often come from a limited sector of the surrounding society, for instance the educated upper middle class...they may have attended school together or come from families connected by kinship or friendship’ (Becker, 1982: 161). Exploring the connections between those within the NARAS founding committee will further our understanding of how these men functioned at both a professional and social level which, in turn, will reveal the aims and motivations of not just the committee but the academy and its awards. This knowledge informs a deeper reading of the Grammy Awards, its academy and their links to the recording industry.

The founding committee of the NARAS was exclusively made up by officials whose day jobs were in senior positions at major record labels. James B. Conkling served as the NARAS’ first national chairman overseeing the committee’s initial steps as an academy. The rest of the committee was made up by those who had been part of the decision making process for the Hollywood Walk of Fame alongside other major record label officials; also from Columbia Records were Paul Weston and Axel Stordahl, Jesse Kaye from MGM Records, Lloyd Dunn and Richard Jones from Capitol Records, Sonny Burke and Mitt Gabler from Decca Records and Dennis Farnon from RCA Records. All four major record labels had employees represented as part of the NARAS’ founding committee with only one other label represented in the form of MGM Records which was founded by the MGM film studio in 1946 with the explicit purpose of releasing their musical film sound tracks on record which were manufactured and distributed by Columbia Records.

The lack of non-major recording industry representation on the committee reflects just how intertwined the NARAS was with the major recording industry despite claims of independence. The founding committee members may have been involved in a voluntary capacity but that does not erase their direct links to the major record labels. The founding committee also created a temporary steering board of artists to help successfully start the awards. The eight artists chosen for this board represent the type of artists and music that the NARAS were interested in promoting such as Frank Sinatra and Doris Day who were both successful, chart topping singers and film stars with broad appeal. Perry Como, Patti Page and Nat King Cole represented a broad coalition of mainstream pop genres covering standards, country and jazz and the three remaining artists, Mitch Miller, Stan Freberg and Cole Porter, covered a wider range of recording industry talent as conductor, spoken word artist and composer. All of these artists were signed to either RCA Victor, Columbia Records or Capitol Records at the time of the

NARAS foundation, apart from Patti Page who was signed to Mercury Records which was a reasonably sized and successful independent record label. No other artists from independent labels were invited to join the steering board. The selected artists, the labels they were signed to and the market share they represented give a clear insight into exactly the type of music that the NARAS wanted to promote and award.

The biographies of the committee founding members reveal how interconnected the group of men were. James B. Conkling, often referred to as Jim, met Paul Weston at Dartmouth College in the 1930s through their mutual interest in music; Conkling played jazz trumpet and Weston was a pianist. The two friends stayed in touch throughout their careers and in the early 1940s, Weston introduced Conkling to the founders of the newly established Capitol Records who hired him as assistant manager of A&R. By the end of the 1940s, Conkling was promoted to vice president and had produced high profile artists including Dean Martin, Peggy Lee and Nat King Cole (Pillet, 1998). Conkling also became the president of the Record Industry Association of America and in 1951 moved to Columbia Records to become its president. At Columbia, Conkling was 'instrumental in establishing the 12-inch LP as a medium for popular music', negotiating with publishers to temporarily reduce their royalties to initially keep the LP price under \$4 (Pareles, 1998). Promoting the LP format and the type of music it was more likely to carry were clearly high priorities for Conkling who, in 1951, said 'quick-hit records...are inimical to the best interests and long-range perspective of the business' (Keightley, 2001a: 20). Conkling's Columbia colleague George Avakian, a producer, said of Conkling's influence on the NARAS, 'without Jim, there would have been no academy' which was in part due to Conkling's determination to build the academy's membership by selling discounted albums to members (Pareles, 1998). From the artists that Conkling worked with to the format that he had championed to the record labels and associations he worked for, it is clear that Conkling was an individual truly tied to, and concerned with the outcomes of, the major recording industry.

Paul Weston was as intrinsically tied to the major recording industry as his friend Conkling. Weston was a prominent arranger, composer and conductor who had worked as a composer for Paramount Pictures, working with Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Betty Hutton, until 1942 when he became musical director and A&R consultant at Capitol Records before moving to the same role at Columbia Records in 1950. Throughout his time as musical director, Weston maintained his own orchestra which accompanied Ella Fitzgerald's 1958 *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving*

Berlin Song Book album which was nominated for *Album of the Year* and won *Best Vocal Performance of a Female* at the inaugural Grammy Awards (University of Arizona, 2018).

The music Weston composed and performed was traditional, conservative popular music and in 1949, before rock'n'roll had even emerged, he was quoted bemoaning the state of new popular music asking 'whatever became of music?', and saying 'I don't think anything has been written in the last few years that has a chance of becoming a standard, nothing that can compare with the wonderful tunes that were being turned out in the 1930s' (Keightley, 2001a: 18). If this had been Weston's opinion in 1949, then his support for the NARAS and its Grammy Awards is hardly surprising. This is a clear indicator of not only the traditional popular music that was most valued by the founding committee but also of the judgemental attitude directed at popular music's change, progression and differing appeal for younger audiences. Weston's livelihood and the music he considered artistically superior was threatened by the competition that rock'n'roll, and the independent labels that represented it, presented. Weston's participation in the NARAS represents a desire among some in the major recording industry to retain the status quo, elevate the music that had been long established as valuable and reject change.

Similar to Conkling, Axel Stordahl had also begun his career as a jazz trumpeter in the 1920s and 1930s before moving into the role of arranger for dance bands. In 1942, Stordahl worked with Frank Sinatra on his first solo record which subsequently landed Sinatra a deal with Columbia Records where he took Stordahl with him to work as his musical director. Throughout the 1940s Stordahl continued to work with Sinatra helping to catapult him to unprecedented levels of fame. Stordahl has been cited as 'an unsung hero in this achievement, thanks to his excellent sense of how to frame Sinatra's voice' (Huey, 2012). Stordahl went on to work with Doris Day, Dinah Shore, Dean Martin and others throughout the 1950s before his premature death in 1963 (ibid.). Like Weston, Stordahl worked within the major recording industry with traditional pop artists that the NARAS was keen to elevate as musicians and music worthy of honouring. The men involved in the NARAS founding committee not only worked in similar roles at similar organisations, but had also worked with similar artists throughout their careers indicating the type of music that they most valued.

The inter-connected nature of the major recording industry, with the small amount of major labels, inevitably resulted in a number of the founding committee members working with the

same artists and mixing in the same social circles. Richard Jones, who worked in the position of head of classical A&R for Capitol Records, had also worked in the capacity of producer and conductor. Jones had worked alongside Stordahl for a brief time on Sinatra's arrangements and was closely acquainted with Sinatra, having played piano at Sinatra's second wedding (Friedwald, 1995: 328). Sonny Burke was also an arranger who had spent the 1930s and 1940s working in New York with big bands, working at a number of major record labels, but especially with Decca, in the capacity of A&R man, conductor and arranger. In the 1960s, despite his role as a founding member of the NARAS, Burke won two Grammy Awards himself in the role of producer for *Album of the Year* for Frank Sinatra's 1965 album *September of My Years* and Sinatra's 1966 *A Man and His Music* (Grammy, 2018).

Sinatra was hugely important to the major recording industry, as illustrated by his sales dominance over Presley, and his close connections to several of the founding members of the NARAS demonstrates the close-knit, camaraderie of the major recording industry and its desire at this time to look after its own. In October 1957, the year the NARAS was formed, Sinatra described rock'n'roll as 'the most brutal, ugly, degenerate form of expression it has been my displeasure to hear' (Early, 2007: 23). Chapple and Garofolo 'correlate the industry's blindness to "new" pop music to its wholesale rejection, indeed their A&R managers' total hatred, of rock'n'roll' (1977: 34), demonstrating that Sinatra's attitude is reflective of the major record industry's attitude toward rock'n'roll at this time which extended from executives within the labels to the traditional pop artists as well. The NARAS provided an opportunity for all of the actors within the major recording industry to attempt to combat the unwelcome interjection of rock'n'roll into the popular music markets.

Milt Gabler is the only member of the NARAS' founding committee to have been interviewed by the Grammy Awards Living Histories archive. Gabler was a respected pioneer responsible for many innovations in music in the twentieth century and stands as the least conventional member of the NARAS founding committee. Using his father's radio store as a base, Gabler created a musical hub in New York and was one of, if not the first, to sell records by mail order and credit all the musicians on the recordings. Gabler set up the first independent jazz label, Commodore Records and in 1939, recorded Billie Holliday's *Strange Fruit*, a song about lynching, which her record label Columbia had refused to record. As a result of his success with Commodore, Gabler was recruited to work for Decca Records in 1941 where, in 1954, he signed Bill Hayley and his Comets and helped record 'Rock Around the Clock' (Voce, 2001),

marking him as the only founding member of NARAS to have interacted with rock'n'roll at its inception.

Gabler's Living Histories interview was conducted by esteemed jazz writer Dan Morgenstern in 1998 when Gabler was 87 years old, three years before his death in 2001. The interview focuses on Gabler's impressive career exploring his working relationships with renowned artists and producers like Louis Armstrong and John Hammond (Gabler, 1998). The interview mentions the Grammy Awards in the context of awards that Gabler had won through his production. *Strange Fruit*, for example, has been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, but there is no mention of Gabler's own participation in the founding of the Grammy Awards. There are multiple times throughout the interview where Gabler references his advancing age and difficulty recalling memories with precision resulting in the interview being led by Morgenstern prompting Gabler through his own knowledge of Gabler's career. The complete absence of Gabler's role in the formation of the NARAS could be as a result of Gabler's self-professed ailing memory or it could be that it was a fairly inconsequential part of Gabler's rich and varied career.

Lloyd Dunn's autobiography provides not only an insight into the beginnings of the NARAS but also an insight into the type of person a major record label executive was in the 1950s. Dunn started his career in New York at the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company before forming his own advertising company in California in the 1930s. He then moved into the recording industry in 1950 joining Columbia Records in 1950 as vice president of merchandising and sales before moving to Capitol Records in the capacity of vice president of A&R before later being promoted to president of Capitol Records (New York Times, 1991). Dunn's autobiography is filled with stories about his time as a record label executive, detailing his preference for standard songs 'it sounded good. It always does' (1975: 9), the competitive nature between the major record labels (1975: 23) and the importance of profit margins to his bosses (1975: 187). The autobiography also displays the attitudes of major record executives, recalling a speech Dunn had made to the staff at Capitol Records which relied on a homophobic joke as a punchline (1975: 24) and repeated, casual misogyny demeaning women in inferior positions (1975: 25, 44). The casual misogyny and homophobia exhibited in Dunn's autobiography demonstrates the types of attitudes accepted as normal within organisations such as the major record labels and the NARAS at this time.

It is also worth noting that all the members of the founding committee were white men which is somewhat unsurprising considering the more administrative or home-based roles women were expected to take at the time and the fact that ‘black personnel have been systematically excluded from positions of power within the industry’ (Garofalo, 1994: 275). The founding committee’s lack of diversity, though unremarkable for the time, is reflective of the industry’s preferences and prejudices. The major recording industry’s biggest stars in the 1950s were typically white artists who performed the industry’s chosen brand of traditional popular music like Frank Sinatra. As an institution so closely linked to the major recording industry, the music and artists that the NARAS favoured reflects this lack of diversity and representation. Furthermore, the attitudes and worldviews of the founding committee members will have impacted the types of values implemented in the NARAS and subsequently into its Grammy Awards. The conservative, mainstream values of the NARAS and its awards can be understood as reflective of those who established the parameters of what the NARAS was and what it wanted to recognise as valuable.

Jesse Kay had worked for MGM Records on the West Coast, the first film company subsidiary record label, since its inception in 1947, and had worked for its parent company Loew’s Inc. as a talent booking manager for all Fox Theatres in the US beforehand (Zhito, 1959: 31). Kay’s focus at MGM was promoting soundtracks, unsurprising considering the label’s explicit purpose to release the music from its musical films. One of the inaugural Grammy Award categories was *Best Sound Track Album/Dramatic Picture Score* which, coincidentally, was won by Andre Previn for the *Gigi* sound track which had been released on MGM. Film sound tracks were an important part of the major record labels’ long-term plans to prioritise the adult market and promote the album. In a 1963 study conducted by *Billboard*, it was found that an original cast sound track album spent an average of 67 weeks on the charts compared to 6.7 weeks for albums that had been ‘sired’ by hit singles (Keightley, 2004: 383). This demonstrates why the major record labels were dismissive of the singles chart and the rock’n’roll hits that dominated it; the adult market of traditional pop, sound track and classical albums were far more profitable both immediately and in the long term for the major record labels. Kay’s presence on the NARAS’ founding committee is illustrative of how the academy’s priorities align with that of the major record labels.

The final member of the founding committee, Dennis Farnon, equally fits with these ideals. Farnon was a Canadian composer and conductor who worked as head of West Coast A&R for

RCA Victor (Grien, 1977: 28), working with many musicians throughout his career including Chet Atkins and George Shearing. Farnon had also arranged the orchestral score for the Grammy winning *Gigi* sound track which he performed with his orchestra. The connections between those on the NARAS' founding committee, the major record labels and the artists and music they wished to champion are clear.

It is not unusual for awarding bodies to be constructed in this interconnected way. The British Booker Prize has similar interconnections within its judging panel which, Norris argues, are significant because 'they also indicate the existence of a common habitus, and suggest that this prize is a site of social reproduction' (2006: 149). As the biographies and connections between the founding committee members of the NARAS have been explored it has become obvious that this Booker Prize analysis can also be applied to the interconnections with the NARAS' founding committee. The NARAS was formed by a group of major record label employees to be used as a tool for reinforcing the status quo via the awarding of mainstream, conservative popular music. This academy could, therefore, be used as a way to promote the major record industry's preferred industrial strategies and music at a time of increased competition.

Norris' reference to habitus and social reproduction in relation to the Booker Prize's judging panel are taken from cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu whose work is referenced across a variety of academic work examining literature awards⁷. These concepts are useful to consider in relation to the foundation of the NARAS. Bourdieu's notion of habitus can be complex and at times contradictory (Maton, 2014: 48), but can be understood most effectively here through its relationship with the field that it inhabits. The field structures the habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) which 'produces practices that tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle' (Bourdieu, 2013: 78). In terms of the NARAS, the major recording industry can be understood as the habitus which seeks to maintain the status quo through reproducing the same types of music accepted as valuable within the field which results in social reproduction. The creation of the NARAS as an industrial strategy by the major record labels can be seen as an attempt to ensure the habitus remains undisrupted by the impact of rock'n'roll through the act of honouring conservative, traditional pop music over the incoming new music. However, habitus is not

⁷ Driscoll, 2014; English, 2002; English, 2005; Norris, 2006; Squires, 2013.

fixed (Maton, 2014: 52) which accounts for rock'n'roll's eventual acceptance into the major recording industry.

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence is also worth considering in relation to the founding committee of the NARAS. Symbolic violence can be understood as 'a generally unperceived form of violence' (Schubert, 2014: 180) that maintains social hierarchy through the dominant ruling classes – for example, powerful, well-connected, white men – letting 'the system they dominate take its own course in order to exercise their domination' (Bourdieu, 1977: 190). Norris maintains that symbolic violence is highly pertinent to the Booker Prize as the people involved within the prize, both jurors and authors, tend to be from a particular class (2006: 141). Driscoll (2014: 128) disagrees with Norris' application of symbolic violence to the Booker Prize as 'despite their similar backgrounds and attitudes towards the prize', the judges have been 'unable to present a coherent idea of literary value through consistent decisions that build a recognizable canon of winners'. As a theory not created for the explicit purpose of explaining the intricate complexities of an award's academy or judging principles, symbolic violence is not a perfect fit but it does offer an alternative sociological understanding of the role that awards play within their respective fields.

Throughout the short biographies of the NARAS' founding members it is clear that these men inhabited similar social circles and had also had similar schooling experiences, such as Conkling and Weston's experience at Dartmouth. These men shared world views and had all worked at the helm of the incredibly successful major recording industry for decades. To apply Bourdieu's logic to the creation of the NARAS, we can understand that these men – connected through their own success and social circles – witnessed the disruption of their habitus and through the use of symbolic violence they created an awarding academy designed to champion the status quo and their preferred industrial strategies. The NARAS and its Grammy Awards are best understood as an extension of the major recording industry at a particular moment in time that function as support for the industry. The awards have championed the industry's most mainstream, conservative popular music since its beginning, updating its vision of mainstream popular music as appropriate throughout its history.

This section has demonstrated the necessity of investigating the founding members of an awarding institution in order to ascertain their connections and status within the awarding institution's affiliated industry. The examination of the NARAS' founding committee has

highlighted how inextricably linked the Grammy Awards were to the US major recording industry at their inception. Understanding the link between the founding members and the major recording industry enables a more thorough comprehension of the motivations behind the formation of the awarding institution. Pairing this information with the contextual analysis of the previous section compounds our understanding of why the formation of the Grammy Awards was considered necessary in the 1950s and why it can be understood as an industrial strategy to support an industry in crisis. Exploring the foundation of the NARAS by deanonymising the men behind the academy removes the aura of glamour that has attached itself to the awards and the indifference of ubiquity and longevity, instead allowing the awarding institution to be appreciated as an institution designed to explicitly support the major recording industry.

1.4 The Early Grammy Awards and their Support of the Major Recording Industry

Examining the early years of the Grammy Awards, 1957 to 1968, further highlights how closely aligned the major recording industry and the NARAS were. This section will explore a range of major recording industry reactions to the formation of the NARAS in 1957 which gives a valuable insight into how major record executives envisioned the academy functioning to their advantage, two years before the first Grammy Awards would take. Next, coverage of the early Grammy Awards in the trade periodical *Billboard* will be analysed to demonstrate how the awards were initially received and how closely the major record labels were aligned with them. This section will also explore the Grammy Awards' relationship with television and sponsorship which will reveal the conflict between the music that the academy wanted to champion and the music that television executives wanted to feature in the ceremony to attract large audiences. Finally, an analysis of the winners and nominees for the *Album of the Year* and *Record of the Year* categories between 1959 and 1968 will be provided to demonstrate the type of music being acknowledged by the academy as worthy of winning. This section will further emphasise the already established argument that the NARAS and its Grammy Awards can be understood as intimately entwined with the major recording industry and its aims.

The Grammy Awards is an academy based mainstream awarding system, operating in a similar fashion to its entertainment industry counterparts the Oscar Awards and the Emmy Awards. The inaugural Grammy Awards had 700 members in its academy (O'Neil, 1993: 31), an

impressive number for an academy still in its infancy. The NARAS now has over 23,000 members located across 12 chapters (Grammy, 2020b: 3), demonstrating its immense growth over the last six decades. Membership of the recording academy is available to those who are active within the music industry across a number of areas including, but not limited to, performers, engineers, composers and industry personnel. Those eligible can apply for membership. Academy members vote for the nominees and winners of the Grammy Awards in a complex process that starts with the submission of eligible work for consideration which is screened before being put to members in a primary ballot. The primary ballot is independently tallied into the final nomination list which is then put to members as the final ballot which determines the winners. Members are only allowed to vote in their areas of expertise, which can include up to 20 genres, and certain specialised genres have a slightly more complex route to the final ballot (Grammy, 2020a: 12). Winners are announced for the first time at the Grammy Award ceremony.

The creation of an awarding academy gives those involved in its execution the ability to wield power and bestow legitimacy in its field. English tells us that awarding academies are ‘machines for securing and extending their own authority’, with a distinct goal in mind of controlling the ‘flow of patronage’ (2005: 38-39). An awarding academy such as the NARAS enabled those behind its creation to set the parameters for what would be valued within the field of popular music and as an institution created and backed by the major recording industry, the academy could help to secure and extend the industry’s authority by choosing the music and musicians they deemed most worthy of honouring. The industry’s support of the academy as it was establishing itself validated the academy as an institution that was supported by those in positions of authority within the field of popular music which gave the academy legitimacy that would have been hard won without those connections.

The formation of the NARAS in 1957 was well received by major record label executives who expressed their pleasure with the new academy through comments in the press. *Billboard* reported that ‘disk industry leaders loudly applauded the newly formed National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences last week, all generally agreeing the project to have been long overdue and a welcome one’ (Billboard, 1957: 29). This sentiment reflects how the academy’s formation had been facilitated by employees of the major record labels who shared the labels’ visions and aims. Goddard Lieberon, president of Columbia Records, said that he ‘heartily welcomed the news’ of the NARAS formation and that he felt ‘an academy of this type will be

of great assistance in making the public aware of the enormous creative contribution made by the record business to the entertainment industry as a whole' (ibid.), indicating that Lieberson was keen to see the recording industry honoured as equally important to the other major entertainment industries.

The notion of the NARAS bringing well deserved recognition to the major recording industry was echoed by George R. Marek, vice president and general manager of RCA Records, who said 'we long have felt that recording artists as well as others involved in the creative aspects of the business should be honored because of their tremendous contributions to the entertainment field' (Billboard, 1957: 29). These comments demonstrate the hopes that the major recording label executives placed upon the NARAS to support their industrial strategies and aims, buoyed by the knowledge that their employees had established the academy with their best interests in mind. Strong support for the academy and its awards are demonstrated from the major record labels reinforcing the argument that the academy was formed as part of the major recording industry to legitimate and promote the music that the industry recognised as most valuable to them and their long-term industrial plans.

The promotional capability that the NARAS and its Grammy Awards could provide the major recording industry was considered a boon by the industry. Glen Wallichs, the president of Capitol Records, said of the formation of the NARAS, 'the promotional fore that such an organization can create thru annual awards and other devices is immeasurable' (Billboard, 1957: 29). Despite the NARAS' assertions that their aim was to recognise the finest music regardless of commercial success, the major record labels clearly viewed the awards as a tool through which they could seek further commercial success for their records and musicians. Awards bring attention to nominees and winners and, more often than not, an award nomination or win results in increased sales of the artist. The Grammy Awards are unparalleled, with the exception of the musical theatre Tony Awards, for increasing the sales of its winners, a phenomenon that has come to be known as the 'Grammy Bump' (Molanphy, 2013). For an industry that was suffering through major upheaval and loss of market share, it is clear that for the leaders of the major recording industry, the Grammy Awards presented a way not only to legitimate certain music as more worthy of honour than other types, but to also promote their music and musicians and increase their profit margins.

The inaugural Grammy Awards took place two years after the formation of the NARAS in May 1959 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel's Grand Ballroom in Los Angeles. Rather than the televised, ostentatious ceremony that has come to be synonymous with the Grammy Awards, the first Grammy Awards took the format of a sit-down dinner gala with 500 guests who paid \$15 each for a ticket (O'Neil, 1993: 12). The dinner gala was hosted by the Los Angeles chapter of the NARAS chapter, the first of its kind to be established. Throughout the following decade, NARAS chapters were established around the country including New York later in 1959, Chicago in 1962, Nashville in 1965 and Atlanta in 1970. The Grammy Awards continued to be hosted through dinner galas or cocktail receptions, which signal glamour and exclusivity, by the various chapters throughout the first decade of the Grammy Awards as events that NARAS members and affiliated music industry personnel could buy tickets for. These events were not, however, open for the public to attend nor domestically available through television.

The Grammy Awards limited appearance on television during its early years contributed to its poor exposure to the public beyond the music industry. There was not a live telecast of the Grammy Awards until 1971 marking them as the last of the entertainment industry awards to air their ceremony live. Prior to this, a show called *Grammy Special* was broadcast after the second Grammy Awards that took place in late 1959. The show was a compilation of moments from the awards ceremony and was broadcast by NBC who declined to renew the contract after the first year. There was tension between the television networks and the NARAS as, in order to secure a high audience share, the television networks were keen for popular artists like Elvis Presley to perform rather than the traditional artists like Frank Sinatra that the NARAS favoured. Bob Yorke, a NARAS member and executive at RCA Victor, was in charge of securing a deal with a television network. Yorke said that the networks were only interested in creating a cheap special while the NARAS 'were only interested in putting on a show that represented our awards, that represented excellence, not popularity', highlighting that they 'wanted a showcase for the industry, to show that it wasn't just churning out unintelligible pop crap' (Schipper, 1992: 14). It is clear that the NARAS' original aim of celebrating the music they deemed as most valuable did not align with the television networks' notion of valuable music which prevented the NARAS from reaching a large, public audience during their early years.

The NARAS' determination to award mainstream, conservative popular music and exclude artists like Elvis Presley resulted in the Grammy Awards being less publicly known and revered

compared to its film and television counterparts, the Oscar and Emmy Awards. In 1963, the NARAS again tried to secure a deal with a television network but were met with general ignorance of the academy and the Grammy Awards. Television producer Ted Bergmann recalled pitching the Grammy ceremony to a television executive in 1963 who was not aware that the Grammy Awards existed, referring to them instead as ‘the Grandma Awards’ (Schipper, 1992: 30). This demonstrates the lack of impact created by the NARAS outside of their small industry bubble due to their determination to avoid the popular genre of rock’n’roll. Eventually, a deal was struck in 1963 with NBC to create a show called *Best on Record* that would broadcast months after the Grammy ceremony and include performances from traditional stars such as Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope (ibid.). This show would repeat until the Grammy Awards were finally aired live in 1971.

Sponsorship deals were essential for the NARAS in order to generate income. The *Grammy Special* was sponsored by Watchmakers of Switzerland which included an arrangement whereby the sponsor’s jewellery stores sold an LP comprising of a number of old hits from best-selling stars, such as Perry Como and Doris Day, for \$1. The deal saw ‘an unusual example of co-operation between record companies’ (Billboard, 1959a: 4), as all four major record labels and a handful of independent labels allowed their artists to be represented on the LP. In 1962, a similar sponsorship deal was struck with the car company Chevrolet. An album called *Go With the Greats*, featuring artists like Judy Garland, Nat King Cole and even Paul Weston, was given away for free with each car that Chevrolet sold which earned the NARAS as estimated \$100,000 (Schipper, 1992: 30). These sponsorship deals highlight that even in the pursuit of profit, the NARAS was aligned with the major recording industry by promoting its preferred format and artists.

The NARAS and its Grammy Awards were not financially successful in their early years. Despite charging entry to the ceremony dinner galas and collecting \$100 lifetime membership fees (Schipper, 1992: 14), the NARAS were barely breaking even and had to turn to the major record labels – Columbia, RCA Records and RCA Victor – to be given subsidiaries of between \$20,000 and \$25,000 each (Schipper, 1992: 30). It is apparent, once again, how closely tied the NARAS was to the major record labels which further demonstrates how the NARAS can be understood as a part of the major recording industry. The NARAS, financially beholden to the major record labels, were designed with the intention of promoting the music that their financiers were producing and marketing. That the Grammy Awards could not attract success

through a televised ceremony due to the NARAS' desire to not include successful, popular artists like Elvis Presley shows how entwined the awards were with the major recording industry; if the Grammy Awards were independent there would have been no qualms about securing their survival through the inclusion of popular recording artists.

Before voting, NARAS members were given direction in the form of a Grammy credo that was sent to members by the academy. The credo, a statement of principles meant to advise members, specified that the academy were 'to judge a record on the basis of sheer artistry, and artistry alone' and that 'sales and mass popularity are the yardsticks of the record business...they are not the yardsticks of this academy. We are concerned with the phonograph record as an art form' (Schipper, 1992: 150). From its genesis, the Grammy Awards were earmarking who was suitable for inclusion by directly appealing to their members and choosing language that clearly specified that the commercially successful music of the time, i.e. rock'n'roll, need not be included when there was more artistically superior music, such as the mainstream, traditional popular music released by the major record labels, that they could choose. This language was painstakingly chosen, Columbia's George Avakian said that 'there were more man-hours spent on the language of the credo than fighting World Wars I and II' because 'people were trying to define what the academy stood for' (Schipper, 1992: 6), indicating how important it was for the academy to have their vision adhered to by its members.

The Grammy Awards were concerned with what their legacy would be from the beginning. The final lines of the credo read 'if the record industry is to grow, not decline in stature, if it is to foster a greater striving for excellence in its own field, if it is to discourage mediocrity and encourage greatness, we, as its spokesmen, can accept no other credo' (Schipper, 1992: 150). Read in the context of the major record labels' rapidly declining market share (Peterson, 1990: 106) and the threat that rock'n'roll presented to the status quo, it is clear that the academy had high hopes for the Grammy Awards establishing a hierarchy within the popular music market. The traditional popular music produced by the major recording industry would be honoured by the NARAS to reinforce its 'greatness' which, in turn, would highlight the mediocrity of rock'n'roll. Enforcing this narrative through the allocation of awards to legitimise certain music over others is a clear industrial strategy meant to support the major recording industry in its pushback against various changes taking place throughout the 1950s.

The early years of the Grammy Awards were very much centred around the promotion of the major recording industry as it faced unprecedented change. The labels and music had been a focal point of the industry rather than the stars, with, for example, different labels putting out multiple versions of the same standard song performed by various artists. A standard can be understood as ‘a timeless, aesthetically transcendent, and culturally distinctive popular song’ that was ‘valued because of its centrality to long-term industrial strategies’ (Keightley, 2001a: 9; 23). The standard, songs such as *My Baby Just Cares for Me*, *Moon River* and *Cheek to Cheek*, represent a traditional type of artistry and craftsmanship that the major recording industry prided itself on in the first half of the twentieth century. The individualism of rock’n’roll departed from this tradition and changed how the popular music industries operated in the second half of the twentieth century.

The press coverage of the first Grammy Awards demonstrates how label orientated the recording industry was in the mid-twentieth century with a report on the first ceremony reading ‘Capitol Records ran away with 10 “Grammy” awards...RCA Victor was second with four; Decca and Liberty each had three...Verve and Roulette, two each, and one each to Challenge, Dot, MGM and London’ (Broadcasting Telecasting, 1959: 78). Despite the collaborative effort on behalf of the major record labels to get the NARAS organised and operating, each label was still competing with each other. Glen Wallichs’ comment about the ‘promotional fore’ that the Grammy Awards could bring (Billboard, 1957: 29) was fulfilled at the inaugural awards when his label, Capitol Records, won the most awards. Capitol took out a full page advertisement (see Figure 1.1) in *Billboard* to promote its winning records and artists. The advertisement has pictures of its winning stars as well as the text ‘congratulations...and appreciation...to the award-winning artists and technicians whose efforts made Capitol by far the nation’s most honored record company’, coming out of the Grammy trophy modelled on a traditional gramophone. There is also bold text along the bottom of the page declaring ‘NARAS Winners’ and the Capitol Records brand logo (Billboard, 1959b: 17). The advertisement does not mention the word ‘Grammy’, instead promoting the academy as the authority. It is also clearly using the label’s wins as a way to promote its artists and records, hoping for the ‘Grammy Bump’ that eventually becomes associated with Grammy wins. Capitol’s decision to celebrate its Grammy wins in this way clearly demonstrates how the major recording industry envisioned

using the academy and awards; as a way to legitimise and promote their music as award winning and therefore superior.

CONGRATULATIONS...and appreciation...to the award-winning artists and technicians whose efforts made Capitol by far the nation's most honored record company.

LAURENCE ALVARADO , Soloist with a Spanish Guitar "Best Engineered Record Class"	LEON PRINZIBELLI SMITH , Star Old Black Magic "Best Performance by a Vocal Group or Chorus"	FRANK SINATRA , Only the Lonely "Best Album Cover"	EMERSON THOMAS , Tom Dooley "Best Country & Western Performance"	BILLY MAE , Billy Mae's Big Fat Heart "Best Performance by an Orchestra"
FELIX SLATKIN CONDUCTOR, HOLLYWOOD SOLO, SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA , Columbia Performance "Best Classical Performance—Orchestra"	MUSIC MAN , Old Broadway Card Album "Best Original Cast Album—Broadway or Hit"	ROGER WALKER CHORALE , Symphony "Best Classical Performance—Operatic or Choral"	STAN FREEDMAN , The Best of the Stan Freberg CBS Radio Shows "Best Performance—Documentary or Spoken Word"	HOLLYWOOD STRING QUARTET , Beethoven Quartet #13 "Best Chamber Performance—Chamber Music"

Capitol RECORDS

NARAS WINNERS!
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF RECORDING ARTS AND SCIENCES

Figure 1.1 – A 1959 full page advertisement in Billboard Magazine from Capitol

The major record labels faced some surprises at the first Grammy Awards as early teething problems in the nomination and voting process took place. *Billboard* reported surprise at the share of awards amongst major and independent labels stating that ‘the indies showed surprising strength in the face of their Goliath counterparts’ (1959c: 15). Part of the reason why the independent labels fared so well against the major labels can be explained through the example of Frank Sinatra’s debut Grammy Awards. *Billboard* reported that an ‘upset in the voting was seen when Frank Sinatra left the banquet without a single performance award’

(1959c: 15), explaining that his ‘high number of nominations actually created an insurmountable handicap in winning an award’ which resulted in a split vote that essentially left Sinatra competing with himself (ibid.). Sinatra had released two albums in 1958, the qualifying year for the May 1959 Grammy Awards, *Only the Lonely* and *Come Fly With Me*, both of which had been nominated for the *Album of the Year* category. The votes for the two albums split the category resulting in Henry Mancini’s *The Music from Peter Gunn* soundtrack winning the category. The anticipation that Sinatra would win the major category at the awards illustrates how the Grammy Awards had been received by the press; these were awards closely associated with the major recording industry and as such, were expected to honour the bastions within the field.

It was also reported that ‘a considered upset in the voting was the fact that Columbia was the only major label which did not receive any award’ (Billboard, 1959c: 15) at the inaugural Grammy Awards. Columbia Records performed equally poorly at the second Grammy Awards and Columbia president Goddard Lieberson, who had been so complimentary about the awards at their genesis in 1957, wrote to Conkling after the nominations were announced to chastise the awards for their ‘shocking’ nominations, denouncing the Grammys as nothing more than ‘a popularity poll’ that was influenced by ‘electioneering and lobbying’ (Schipper, 1992: 15). Though condemning lobbying through lobbying the chairman of the NARAS, Lieberson’s comments reveal an expectation that artists on a major record label such as Columbia should be winning and nominated for Grammy Awards. This illustrates the clear link between the NARAS and the major labels, not only through social connections, but also in the perception that the awards would award particular types of artist and music.

Five years after the Grammy’s inaugural awards in 1963, a *Billboard* editorial entitled ‘Make Them Meaningful’ provided valuable insight into the functionality of the NARAS. *Billboard* laments that despite the greatest attendance NARAS had ever experienced, and a litany of musical names demonstrating ‘the high regard in which the music industry now holds the awards’, the NARAS still had ‘a long way to go’. *Billboard* was concerned that the Grammy Awards needed ‘the same type of exploitation that has been garnered by the Hollywood Oscars and the TV Emmys, so that the consumer – who, after all, buys the records – is aware of the awards and what they stand for’ (Billboard, 1963: 6). The major recording industry, and the NARAS, seemed to undervalue public opinion and co-operation as part of the Grammy Awards, considering their expertise as superior to those outside of the established industry.

This editorial illustrates how the Grammy Awards' had to adapt to the changing industry around them in order to maintain relevance and authority within the field. Changes were already taking place, the *Best Rock and Roll Recording* category was introduced to the Grammy Awards in 1962 and major labels were starting to buy out contracts of successful rock'n'roll acts alongside signing their own new talent, such as Columbia's 1962 signing of Bob Dylan, which eventually led to a period of renewed growth for the major recording industry from 1964 (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 166). The Grammy Awards had to adjust and update as the major recording industry did, again demonstrating how the awards can be conceived as reflective of the major recording industry's aims and priorities.

Despite the industry's changing make-up, the Grammy Awards were fairly consistent in the type of music it awarded throughout its first decade. The *Album of the Year* category⁸, largely considered the Grammy Awards' most important category, was fairly representative of the major recording industry's prioritisation of the LP. The first album to win the category was Henry Mancini's *The Music From Peter Gunn* which was a soundtrack album; a key component of the industry's profitable LP catalogues. Despite there being a separate category for soundtracks, a number of other soundtracks such as *Sound of Music*, *Funny Girl* and *West Side Story* were also nominated in the awards' first decade for *Album of the Year* demonstrating the value of the sound track album to the industry at that point. Two spoken word comedy albums also won *Album of the Year*; Bob Newhart's *The Button Down Mind of Bob Newhart* and Vaughn Meader's *The First Family*. Similarly to sound track albums, comedy albums were also a profitable venture for the industry and the LP market which makes their wins understandable despite the NARAS' desire to honour the most artistic music.

Unsurprisingly Frank Sinatra, who has been an unavoidable name throughout the NARAS' early history, won three *Album of the Year* awards in the academy's first decade demonstrating the industry's commitment to artists like Sinatra even when there was a plethora of younger, more dynamic artists to be recognising. Barbra Streisand's debut album won the category in 1964 illustrating that there was space for young artists to win this prominent category if they adhered to the traditional, conservative popular music ideals that the industry so cherished. The Beatles finally won the category in 1968 with *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* after receiving nominations in 1966 for *Help!* and in 1967 for *Revolver*. The Beatles world

⁸ See Appendix A for full list of the Grammy Awards' *Album of the Year* winners and nominees 1959 – 1968.

domination was more than complete by the time they were recognised by the Grammy Awards with an *Album of the Year* award, demonstrating the academy's capitulation to rock as it became unavoidable by the end of the 1960s. All of the albums that had won *Album of the Year* between 1959 and 1968 had secured a place in the Top Ten of *Billboard's* Top 200 album chart demonstrating that despite the Grammy credo's insistence that record sales would not be the yardstick of the academy, the albums all aligned with the major recording industry's artistic values while simultaneously attaining commercial success. As will be discussed further in Chapter Two, the albums awarded *Album of the Year* by the Grammy Awards demonstrate a consistent appreciation of the conservative, mainstream ideals that the major recording industry value for their artistry, craftsmanship and industrial support.

The major recording industry ideals are equally reflected in the *Record of the Year* category⁹. Compared to the album, the single was not a priority for the recording industry in terms of format as the album was more profitable and promoted long term industrial stability for record labels (Keightley, 2004: 379). The single was seen as a commodity favoured by the teenage market which is perhaps why the NARAS decided to name the category *Record of the Year* rather than use the term single. The winning singles represent the mainstream, traditional popular music that the major recording industry was so keen to promote and prioritise and reflect the industry's practices. The first *Record of the Year* winner was *Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu (Volare)* by Domenico Modugno, a single that had been recorded by multiple artists including Dean Martin. In one issue of *Billboard* in 1958, seven versions of the single had been reviewed (O'Neil, 1993: 22) demonstrating its wide appeal and the industry's practice of multiple labels releasing the same popular song recorded by different artists. The nominations for the first Grammy Awards' *Record of the Year* category are all similar in terms of genre, including Frank Sinatra's *Witchcraft* and Perry Como's *Catch a Falling Star*. Singles that were eligible for the May 1959 Grammy Awards but not included in the *Record of the Year* nominations include songs like Chuck Berry's *Johnny B. Goode* that have gone on to define not only the genre of rock'n'roll but twentieth century American popular music. The Grammy Awards eventually rectified their oversight in 1990 when *Johnny B. Goode* was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. This demonstrates, however, the functionality of an annual awarding system; the academy judges on a moment in time without the benefit of hindsight.

⁹ See Appendix B for full list of the Grammy Awards' *Record of the Year* winners and nominees 1959 – 1968.

The chart positions for the *Record of the Year* winners were more varied than the *Album of the Year* winners. While seven of the singles had reached the Top Ten in the *Billboard* Top 100 singles chart, the other three had placed at 11, 19 and 33 which suggests that they were songs that the academy deemed as artistically worthy despite their somewhat lacklustre performance on the singles chart. The nominations for *Record of the Year*, similar to the winners, are mostly records that can be defined as traditional, mainstream popular music in the form of songs like *Georgia on My Mind* and *Nice 'n' Easy*. Elvis Presley was nominated once for *A Fool Such as I* in 1960 and The Beatles were nominated in 1965 and 1966 for *I Want To Hold Your Hand* and *Yesterday*. In comparison, Frank Sinatra had six nominations, of which he won one. The global impact that both Elvis and The Beatles had during that era was somewhat undeniable at the time, but even more so with hindsight. The NARAS' failure to award such influential artists during the 1960s did not destroy the Grammy Awards' reputation or even the academy as an institution but it did leave a stain on the awards' ability to recognise talent at its genesis. Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones summarised this most clearly in 1986 when he was collecting the band's *Lifetime Achievement Award* despite the Grammy Awards having ignored the Rolling Stones during their most successful, early years. Jagger told the academy and Grammy Awards honouring the band they had so steadfastly ignored decades after their initial success, 'the joke's on you' (Hochman, 1994).

The examination of the Grammy Awards as they were establishing themselves has further demonstrated how the awards and the NARAS are closely linked to the interests of the major recording industry. The Grammy Awards sought to legitimate and promote the music and artists that the major recording industry recognised as the most valuable to them and their long term industrial plans but this was somewhat at odds with the changing musical landscape of the 1960s as traditional, mainstream popular music started to be outpaced by rock'n'roll competitors. It has been made clear that the Grammy Awards had several hurdles to overcome in their early years which could only be rectified by the recognition of new music and artists which would keep the awards relevant and financially viable. Tracing the artists awarded and nominated by the Grammy Awards during their first decade in two of the most important categories demonstrates the type of music that the academy most valued and how by the end of the 1960s, the awards were slowly starting to include artists and music that they had previously snubbed. This is a reflection of the major recording industry, their values and their slowly changing approach to rock music as it became ever more mainstream and unavoidable.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated throughout how inextricably tied the NARAS is to the US major recording industry and how, consequently, the NARAS and Grammy Awards can be understood as an industrial strategy designed to promote and champion the music and artists most valuable to the industry. It was essential to establish the context in which the NARAS was established in order to understand the pressures that the major recording industry was facing at that particular time in the mid-1950s. The first section explored the industrial and technological changes that not only the major recording industry was facing, but the interconnected broader entertainment industries as well. It is against this backdrop that it can be understood that the formation of the NARAS was part of a strategy to combat competition from independent labels and the newly emergent genre of rock'n'roll alongside promoting its preferred music, musicians and formats. Examining the NARAS' founding committee reveals that every member was not only working within the major recording industry but that they also had close, personal ties to each other. Identifying the men behind the formation of the NARAS allows for an understanding of what it was that the academy hoped to achieve and what values they were hoping to champion and maintain through the Grammy Awards. Finally, examining the industry responses to the academy's formation, the press' coverage of the inaugural awards and the music that was being awarded in the Grammy's first decade further demonstrates the close relationship between the NARAS and the major recording industry and their shared ideals. This chapter establishes a foundation for researching and understanding major popular music awarding institutions as institutions that reflect the industry from which they are derived which accommodates a better understanding of that industry's values and industrial strategies at a particular moment in time.

Chapter Two – Concentrating Value: How Major Popular Music Awarding Institutions Reinforce the Ideals of the Mainstream.

The evaluation of popular music is a highly contentious, rigorously debated and often updated practice that sets the parameters for defining what popular music is most valued. The discursive practices of the popular music press, in publications like *NME* and *Rolling Stone*, have dominated the evaluation of popular music and have privileged and promoted the aesthetic values of rock music. This has consequently impacted the construction of value within popular music, positioning rock as popular music's 'high' art. For rock to be understood as 'high', however, it must be positioned in opposition to a 'low' popular music. Mainstream, commercially successful music has been generally dismissed and underexplored due to the 'low' cultural position it has been afforded by popular music's most influential gatekeepers like the popular music press and, indeed, within popular music scholarship. This binary construction of popular music simplifies these broad areas of music so that while rock is praised for its authenticity, mainstream pop is criticised for its formulaic composition. Major popular music awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards recognise and champion a wide variety of mainstream popular music and, as such, can be used as valuable tools to widen the debate around valuable popular music.

This chapter places major awarding institutions into the broader field of popular music evaluation to better understand their role within the major recording industry and mainstream music in terms of value creation. It will be established that the examination of major awarding institutions expands our understanding of the mainstream and further supports the established argument that major awarding institutions are industrial strategies designed to support the major recording industry and their most valuable music, artists and assets. Through the statistical analysis of two broad datasets that assess the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winning albums against a number of other markers of success within popular music, two key arguments will be made. Firstly, albums awarded by major popular music awarding institutions are much more likely to be commercially successful than feature in the popular music canon. Consequently, popular music awarding institutions can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon's rock oriented assessment,

demonstrating key values and trends within the mainstream over time. Secondly, the winning *Album of the Year* artists are more than likely to be signed to a major record label which further illustrates how major awarding institutions support the interests of the major recording industry. It will be further argued that major awarding institutions prescribe cultural value onto the commercially successful which benefits the major recording industry.

To demonstrate these arguments, this chapter will be organised into two sections. Firstly, the tension between the popular music canon and the mainstream will be explored as a framework for assessing value within the wider field of popular music. In order to understand the popular music canon, it is essential to understand how its values are generated. As such, a brief examination of the popular music press is undertaken to demonstrate how influential the press has been on value formation within popular music and, consequently, within popular music scholarship as well. Once the popular music press and canon's favoured rock aesthetics have been established, it will be argued that their dominance within popular music value discourses have eclipsed the study of mainstream music which helps to explain the gap in knowledge within scholarship regarding popular music awarding institutions. Highlighting the tension between the popular music canon and the mainstream builds a strong foundation for a deeper understanding of the statistical analysis that will be presented in the following section.

The second, final section of this chapter provides a statistical analysis of the winning *Album of the Year* albums at the Grammy Awards (1959-2019) and the BRIT Awards (1977-2019) alongside their peak position on the US and UK album charts in the year the album was released, their position on the US and UK bestselling albums of all time chart and the album's position on the *Rolling Stone* and *NME's Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. The record label that the artist was signed to at the time of the album's release is also recorded as is the nationality of the artist. This unique dataset informs and supports a number of arguments. It is further argued that that popular music awarding institutions are industrial strategies designed to support the recording industry due to the overwhelming amount of winning albums that are signed to major record labels or their subsidiaries. This is also supported by the high percentages of albums that enjoyed significant commercial success in the year that they were awarded. These arguments demonstrate that the major awarding institutions operate on an annual cycle, recognising the time's most prominent and successful artists. The examination of retrospective data, however, shows that major awarding institutions do not necessarily predict long-term commercial success as the albums are unlikely to appear on the bestselling

albums of all time lists. Finally, it is shown that the *Album of the Year* winning albums rarely feature on either the *Rolling Stone* or *NME's Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists which indicates that the major awarding institutions are representative of a different value to the popular music canon. This rich data demonstrates how much there is to be learnt from the analysis of major popular music awarding institutions and how they operate as an alternative system of value within popular music that is more closely aligned with mainstream values than those of the rock aesthetic.

2.2 The Tension between the Popular Music Canon and Mainstream

Though there are many ways to investigate the numerous values inherent within popular music, this chapter is concerned with the aesthetic values constructed in accordance with the institutional structures of the popular music canon and the mainstream. The framework of competing value established by these two institutions is reflective of the 'structural duality which informs all cultural production – whether "mass", "popular" or "high" – in capitalist society' (Stratton, 1983a: 144). That's to say, these two institutions operate in an oppositional way; the popular music canon's values appear as diametrically opposed to those of the mainstream. The ways in which these values are articulated, such as through the popular music press and within popular music scholarship, heavily influence the perception of what is most valued within popular music. This section will argue that major popular music awarding institutions award the music and artists most valued within the mainstream which is why they have been so overlooked within popular music scholarship. Furthermore, this section will establish the foundations for the argument that major popular music awarding institutions can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon that reflects mainstream notions of value and success. This section will first examine the popular music canon to establish the esteemed values associated with canonical popular music as prescribed by the popular music press. The overlooked and undervalued mainstream will then be explored to establish how the values associated with the popular music canon have dominated the discourse surrounding value in popular music. Exploring the duality of value within popular music through the lens of the popular music canon and the mainstream establishes how certain aesthetic values have been privileged within scholarship at the expense of understanding and appreciating the wide range of music that enjoys commercial success within the mainstream. The study of major popular music awarding institutions will expand our understanding of the

mainstream and establish how the awards can prescribe cultural value onto the commercially successful.

The popular music canon is a retrospective collection of the artists and music considered to be the best according to particular aesthetic judgements that align with the traditions of rock. There is no one set collection of artists and music that make up the canon due to the flexible and contestable nature of such a discursive practice. There is not a single person or group of people who have the ordained authority to define the popular music canon (Jones, 2008: 15), but instead, the canon can be understood as having been built up over time based on value judgements that have been elevated and deemed authoritative. There is a general consensus that the lists and collections of the greatest artists and albums curated within the popular music press have structured and defined the popular music canon (Jones, 2008: 25; Kärjä, 2006: 4). As such, it can be understood that the popular music canon has built itself upon the discursive values attributed to rock music because the artists who have ascended to the canon are those who have been championed by the popular music press. Consequently, to better understand the popular music canon and the values it centres as superior to others, the structure and function of the popular music press that defines the canon must be explored.

The popular music press is a broad term that covers a range of publications that discuss popular music. This section, however, uses the term popular music press to refer to the music magazines that have been so influential in the critical reception of rock music and its associated values like *NME* and *Rolling Stone*, rather than the trade periodicals like *Billboard* that have been used elsewhere in this thesis for their insight into the recording industry. Since the emergence of rock in the late 1960s, the popular music press has played a formative role in shaping and defining aesthetic taste and reception within popular music. Indeed, popular music scholarship has been heavily influenced by the ‘rock discourses laid down by journalists and critics in the late 60s’ (Michelsen, 2004: 23) which demonstrates the powerful position that the popular music press has held in defining what it is to be valuable. As a result of the influence of the popular music press, academic accounts of popular music have overprivileged the examination of revered rock music and artists at the expense of examining the wider field of popular music and the industrial structures that shape and support industry practice like major awarding institutions.

To better understand the values established by the popular music press, it is important to explore the history, reputations and repertoire of the music magazines that wield so much influence within popular music. Frith (1996: 22) has argued that ‘to understand what’s at stake in arguments about musical value, we have to begin with the discourses which give the value terms their meaning’, highlighting that this is not necessarily to be found within the music itself but within our reception and expectations of the music as shaped by those who inform our value judgements. As the second half of this chapter will compare the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners to the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* as identified by *Rolling Stone* and *NME* as representative of the popular music canon to establish the role of the major awarding institutions, this section will focus on *Rolling Stone* and *NME* as paragons of the popular music canon. The *NME* and *Rolling Stone* stand as bastions in the history of the UK and US’ popular music press, establishing the ideals of what it was to be both a music journalist and a serious pop music fan.

The *NME* was established in 1952 and went on to become the UK’s most read weekly music magazine that also enjoyed significant success in the US. Within the UK, the *NME* was instrumental in shaping the recording industry as we know it today due to its establishment of the first singles chart in 1952 when the recording industry had still been measuring success through the sales of printed sheet music (Long, 2012: 24). In the advent of rock’n’roll, the *NME* was one of the first music magazines to take the genre seriously which endeared the magazine to the youth audience enamoured with the genre which included musicians who would go on to shape rock like John Lennon and Marc Bolan (Long, 2012: 32). The *NME* was central to the understanding of popular music as a serious musical form in part thanks to its serious reporting. Within the UK’s music press, the *NME* was ‘considered to be the most intellectual’ as a result of its concern with ‘making aesthetic judgements about music’ (Stratton, 1982: 268). While the fortunes of the *NME* have dimmed significantly in the digital era, with the final print edition of the magazine published on 9th March 2018, the influence of the *NME* and its history and impact on the development of popular music throughout the twenty-first century cannot be underestimated. *Rolling Stone* has been similarly impactful but was formed later than the *NME*, at the height of the rock revolution in 1967 in the US as a bi-monthly magazine that would focus on music. From the 1980s onwards, however, the purview of the magazine expanded to cover a broader range of popular culture. *Rolling Stone* has been acknowledged as ‘the popular music periodical that seeks most clearly to legitimate specific music and musicians’ (Jones and Featherly, 2002: 20) due to its concern with the extramusical.

The journalists at the *NME* and *Rolling Stone* have exerted considerable influence over value within popular music due to their shaping of the reception of popular music.

Rock's aesthetic values in terms of its authenticity, emotion and anti-establishment political nature were elevated by the journalists at *Rolling Stone* and *NME* as the extramusical elements that separated rock from the banalities of other popular music. The separation of rock from other popular music reinforces the structural duality that has informed popular music (Stratton, 1983a: 144); to understand the elements that elevate rock, one must understand that they are elevated above something else. Value within popular music, therefore, is constructed in opposition to the value of something else. Davies (2001: 301) writes that 'the type of music covered by the music press is constructed there as "serious" pop music, to differentiate it from chart music which, presumably, is not serious'. It is the extramusical that separates the serious from the not serious, though Davies (*ibid.*) notes that there is often little generic difference between serious and non-serious artists. Furthermore, there tends to be little difference between the amount of sales that serious and non-serious artists are capable of generating. It is misleading, Davies (*ibid.*) writes to label serious artists and music as alternative or independent when many of the artists described as such 'sell hundreds of thousands of records, and many are signed to major record labels'. Clearly, the extramusical is what shapes the differentiation within popular music when there is limited other comparisons.

The extramusical elements of rock that are so valued by the popular music press are used to signal insider knowledge that instils a similar duality within popular music fans. Music journalists have often relied on this additional knowledge to communicate with and distinguish their audiences. Frith (1996: 67) writes that journalists have focused on 'creating a knowing community, orchestrating a collusion between selected musicians and an equally select part of the public – select in its superiority to the ordinary, indiscriminating pop consumer'. This type of music journalism follows in the tradition of a format established between the 1950s and 1970s by now legendary journalists who wrote for *Rolling Stone* and *NME* like Lester Bangs and Ralph Gleason who focused on a set of core, extramusical issues which largely ignored the recording industry (Jones and Featherly, 2002: 20) and asserted a higher cultural understanding of popular music. Stratton (1983b: 295) considers the popular music press to be a 'feeder-institution' which, in pursuits of its own economic purposes, 'emphasises the musical, cultural, aspect of a record whilst tending to play down the economic aspect'. Indeed, in his work examining art worlds, Becker (1982: 132) writes that in highly developed art worlds, critics

can ‘create logically organized and philosophically defensible aesthetic systems’ which can become major industries in their own right. This can be observed in the popular music press’ control over value creation in popular music and its separation as an industry with its own concerns that are often at odds with the priorities of the recording industry. Despite operating around the popular music released and created through the major recording industry, the popular music press shape and inform the reception of such music through their role as gatekeepers who ‘effectively mediate between creative artists and their public’ (De Roeper, 2008: 52). As such, the popular music press’ decision to overlook the workings of the recording industry and instead apply a set of extramusical, aesthetic values to popular music has facilitated the creation of a value system that praises the romantic aesthetics of rock – that is, its ability to reflect ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’ – and conveniently ignores the mass, commoditised appeal of such music.

The valorisation of certain popular music, musicians and aesthetics by the popular music press has contributed to the creation of a popular music canon that favours rock. A consensus of who features within the canon has been established among the popular music press through the publication of ranked lists of the artists and albums that they consider to be the best. Von Appen and Doehring (2006: 22) gathered 38 *Top Albums of All Time* lists from 1985 to 2004 and compiled the data into a meta-list of the 30 greatest albums of all time. It was found that there was a strong agreement across the 38 lists of what the best albums were and that within the meta-list of the 30 greatest albums there was an identifiable ‘golden age of rock’ (ibid.). The authors also found that 40% of the 30 albums came from the period between 1965 and 1969, 30% from the 1970s and 20% from the 1990s. Across the meta-list of 30 albums, it was found that there was a number of ‘requirements of admittance’: all 30 albums contained songs in a four-four time signature, most songs had a time limit of four minutes, all albums were sung in English, played in a ‘classic’ rock-formation and all were released on a major label after 1964 (ibid.) More strikingly, 95% of the musicians were US or UK white males with Marvin Gaye and Fleetwood Mac as the only exceptions. Across the albums, it was found that there was a key set of values expressed, among which authenticity was the most important alongside innovation, expression and song writing (Von Appen and Doehring, 2006: 31). This analysis clearly demonstrates how the rock aesthetic favoured by the popular music press is parroted by the popular music canon. As the canon ‘comprises the works and artists that are generally considered to be the greatest in their field’ (Jones, 2008: 1), the total dominance of rock

suggests that it is considered not just the most valued form of popular music but the only form of popular music worth valuing.

The retrospective nature of the popular music canon has made it easier for older artists and albums to achieve greater acclaim than it has for more contemporary artists to be included. There are, however, signs that certain hip-hop artists and albums are starting to be valued by the popular music press and critics for similar aesthetic values to rock. For the analysis in the second half of this chapter, the *Rolling Stone* and *NME*'s 2009 and 2013 *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists were explored. Within both of these lists, hip-hop albums are now starting to appear. The highest ranking hip-hop album on the *NME* list was Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* which was released in 1988 and ranked at number 17. The *Rolling Stone* list also includes the same Public Enemy album at number 48. Interestingly, *Rolling Stone* updated their *Top 100 Albums of All Time* list in 2020 and the same Public Enemy album had been moved up the list to number 15. In their analysis of the 38 best album lists, Von Appen and Doehring (2006: 23) found that the significance of albums was likely to not just be maintained but to become even more evident over time which is clearly what has happened with Public Enemy and *Rolling Stone*.

The recognition of hip-hop in the popular music canon, and by extension by the critics and journalists responsible for formulating the canon, demonstrates how important extramusical, aesthetic values are within a certain evaluation of popular music. Richmond (2013: 254) has said that hip-hop has had 'the same effect on the current generation that rock music had on the generation of the 1950s', suggesting that there is a set of values within hip-hop that echo the aesthetic values of authenticity and truth that the rock tradition has elevated as the values that create superior popular music. Hip-hop is an articulation of a particular identity, politics and experience and has come to be regarded as a 'vital facet of black culture and political articulation' (Forman, 2013: 64). Furthermore, hip-hop is seen as 'black America's CNN as it communicates ideas about cities, the people within them and the issues they face' (Spence, 2011: 166). Hip-hop's political expression of identity and hardship satisfies the most valued rock aesthetic of authenticity which grants some of the genre's artists and albums a position within the category of serious popular music.

Hip-hop has also been included within other popular music institutions like the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Established in 1983 by Ahmet Ertegun, the founder and chairman of Atlantic

Records, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame annually inducts performers who, at least 25 years after their first release, have influenced the music industry. In addition to this, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame established a museum and archives in Cleveland, USA with the mission of engaging, teaching and inspiring through the power of rock'n'roll (RockHall, 2021b). Initially, those inducted were very much from the rock tradition such as Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, The Beatles and Little Richard, but over the past decade the inductees have come from a broader field of musical tradition. N.W.A. were the first hip-hop act to be inducted into the institution in 2016 and there was a certain amount of controversy about whether hip-hop artists could be inducted into a hall of fame intended for those from the rock tradition. This was addressed by the group during their induction ceremony when rapper Ice Cube said 'the question is, are we rock'n'roll? And I say you goddamn right we rock'n'roll. Rock'n'roll is not an instrument, rock'n'roll is not even a style of music. Rock'n'roll is a spirit' (Grow, 2016). Ice Cube's summarisation of the rock aesthetic as a spirit reflects the contemporary approach to the popular music canon which, despite its continued championing of classic rock, is adapting to include modern music that fits into its aesthetic requirements.

The values espoused by the popular music press, and its subsequent influence on the popular music canon and scholarship, have eclipsed the study and valorisation of the more general field of popular music. Major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards have been under-analysed due to their prominence within the mainstream and articulation of mainstream values like commercialism and easy listening. The popular music press has not engaged with the major popular music awarding institutions unless the artists they deem valuable have been either awarded or overlooked. Indeed, as part of the research conducted for Chapter One, I visited the British Library to look at copies of *NME* between 1957 and 1971 to see if the UK press reacted to the establishment of the Grammy Awards. Within that time span, the Grammy Awards were mentioned only on five occasions. Two of these mentions were to report on The Beatles winning an award and being nominated for one (*NME*, 1965: 8; *NME*, 1971: 10) and one was to report 'Elvis named for pop music Oscar' (*NME*, 1962: 7). The other two mentions acknowledged the first awards' recognition of Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Nat King Cole (*NME*, 1959: 7) and the first UK artist to win a Grammy (*NME*, 1963: 7). The Grammy Awards were clearly of little interest to the *NME* who were more focused on the artists not being awarded or acknowledged by the institution.

In 1993, the *NME* established the BRAT Awards in protest at their perception of, the rampant commercialism represented at the BRIT Awards (English, 2005: 99). The BRAT Awards' trophy was a statue of a raised middle finger¹⁰ to emphasise their anti-establishment values. Similarly, the BRAT Award *Worst Record of the Year* award typically went to an artist that had won at the BRITs like in 1997 when they awarded the Spice Girls *Worst Record of the Year* and the BRIT Awards recognised the band with a *Best Single* award (ibid.). The dismissal of the Spice Girls is reflective not only of the popular music press' disdain for commercial pop music but also of the general disdain in which women pop performers have been held by the popular music press (Davies, 2001: 302). Similarly, young girls and women are dismissed within the popular music press where they are seen as 'passive consumers who have been "duped" into buying the lightweight and worthless commodities of Adorno's culture industry' (Baker, 2013: 15). The dismissal of young girls and women as music performers and fans is indicative of a popular music press and canon that prioritises the recognition of men who create 'serious' music with intention, rather than the mainstream pop that women perform. The BRAT Awards was a sneering, belittling exercise by a music magazine that held its own values as morally superior to those of the BRIT Awards and their mainstream representation. In an indication of how quickly the mainstream eventually subsumes the subcultural, the BRAT Awards eventually had to change their name and motivation by the end of the 1990s as the music they were recognising as valuable, like Britpop, was also being recognised and celebrated at the BRIT Awards.

The major popular music awarding institutions have been similarly dismissed by *Rolling Stone* who regularly criticise the choices made by the awarding institution for failing to award those who *Rolling Stone* deem worthy. For example, at the 1992 Grammy Awards, the *Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group* award was given to the Fresh Prince and D.J. Jazzy Jeff instead of Public Enemy which *Rolling Stone* called 'seemingly drug induced' (Anand and Watson, 2006: 51). A 1976 *Rolling Stone* editorial included a very long list of all the great rock artists, including Chuck Berry, Eric Clapton, David Bowie, Bob Dylan and many more, who had not been given a Grammy Award (Anand and Watson, 2006: 52) to ridicule the choices made by the awarding institution as inferior to their own value judgements. The popular music press has demeaned and degraded major popular music awarding institutions because they are representative of the mainstream values that the popular music press find so distasteful.

¹⁰ The trophy has remained unchanged despite the BRAT Awards changing to the NME Awards in 1999.

The derogatory analysis of the major popular music awarding institutions by the popular music press is indicative of the broader treatment that mainstream music has been subjected to by a press enamoured with rock and its aesthetics. Similarly, within popular music scholarship, mainstream music and artists have been under analysed due to the preferential regard given to artists and music that fit within the rock aesthetic. The mainstream, however, is essential for understanding the elevated position of rock within popular music. The structural duality inherent within popular music (Stratton, 1983a: 144) is dependent on the positioning of one type of music against another. Bourdieu (1984: 78-81) contends that taste hierarchies are structured in terms of high and low, and that possession of cultural capital is what defines high art. As such, the binary construction of rock as popular music's 'high' art and mainstream pop as its 'low' creates a distinction in taste, situating one as good and the other as bad. The aesthetic values of authenticity and truth that are associated with rock and celebrated by the popular music press can be considered as rock's cultural capital which distinguishes it from the commercially minded pop that is considered to be devoid of these values. Frith (1996: 9), however, writes that low culture 'generates its own capital' and should not be so readily dismissed. This section will now assess how the mainstream has been undervalued as a consequence of its positioning against the values associated with the popular music canon and will argue that analysing popular music awarding institutions can serve as an alternative system of value within popular music that recognises the changing values within the mainstream overtime.

Mainstream is often undefined and positioned as 'other', with an expectation that it can be simply understood through knowledge of what it is not rather than what it is or through its own values and attributes. Certainly this is how early academic coverage of the popular music mainstream was presented in the 1970s when Hebdige's (1979) exploration of subcultural values was positioned as oppositional to the hegemonic status quo of a creatively stifling mainstream. The only value attributed to the mainstream was its ability to inspire reactionary art forms but even these would be inevitably co-opted back into the web of mainstream (Hebdige, 1979: 130), where the music would become commoditised and its value would be diluted. This attitude towards the mainstream is reminiscent of Adorno's (1991: 45) earlier criticisms of popular music as a mass, commoditised form that encouraged a passive audience to 'listen according to formula'. While the definition of what constitutes mass popular music had changed between Adorno's writing in the 1930s and Hebdige's account of subculture in

the 1970s, the notion of 'mass' draws a line between the formulaic tropes of Tin Pan Alley and contemporary, mainstream pop. This further emphasises how integral the binary construction of value within popular music has been within popular music scholarship for elevating one type of music over another.

While definitions of rock have been redefined and perfected throughout decades of investigation, the mainstream has remained as an amorphous, umbrella term that has been carelessly used in reference to a rich array of music and genres. Huber (2013: 4) writes that the mainstream 'has generally been unacknowledged', and that when it is, it is described using adjectives that are understood in relation to the value of something else; 'unsophisticated, undiscerning, uncultural, low, inauthentic, fake, commercial' (Huber, 2013: 8). Despite its dismissal, Baker (2013: 14) asserts that 'the popular music mainstream, though often derided and made "ordinary", is actually a site of diverse cultural practice', which covers a range of genres and artists. Toyne (2002: 150) offers a redefinition of the mainstream as 'a formation that brings together large numbers of people from diverse social groups and across large geographical areas in common affiliation to a musical style'. This should be understood, Toyne (ibid.) argues, as a process of 'mainstreaming' rather than a category and that there are three currents that have kept the mainstream flowing: hegemony, the urge to find an aesthetic of the centre and an economic current that supports the recording industry in its efforts to map a market onto mainstream taste. This definition moves the idea of mainstream beyond a generic description and gives it application within the field of popular music by connecting the process of mainstreaming to the practices of the major recording industry. Mainstream music can be understood as appealing to a large audience that is not necessarily connected by key characteristics like gender, age or location but by the accessibility of a broad range of genres and artists with a wide reach of appeal.

The assumption that the mainstream is a unified mass fails to understand the key functions of the mainstream. As broad as it is, the mainstream can be understood as having two functions: to operate as a primary resource for the recording industry and as a primary source of musical pleasure for multiple demographics and audiences. Its dismissal and lack of thorough and attentive examination is indicative not of the inconsequence of the mainstream but of discursive practices and values informed by the popular music press as an influential group who hold the means of distributing and assigning value in a system that operates by positioning value in binary terms. Consequently, the economic role of the mainstream has been categorised and

dismissed as the commoditisation of art rather than examined as an innovative business strategy designed to support a high-risk industry. To combat risk and ensure continued profitability and relevance, the recording industry must employ a number of varied strategies to protect its operations. As explored in Chapter One, the major recording industry focuses on key audiences and formats that are most profitable. Success within the recording industry is not merely having hit singles but instead ‘developing a career that extends over the long haul’ which will lead to ‘a continually selling back catalogue of long-play albums’ (Keightley, 2004: 375). Historically, the back catalogue has ‘provided an economic foundation that stabilizes the unpredictable nature of selling musical popularity’ (Keightley, 2004: 377). Mainstream artists and audiences are key to ensuring the continued operations of the major recording industry and, perhaps ironically, rock artists play an important role in this as artists signed to major record labels who have the ability to continue selling albums and repackaging their hits highlighting the shaky, constructed barriers separating high and low popular music.

Examining major popular music awarding institutions can help to unpack the constructed binary within popular music that limits the examination of the mainstream by showing how the mainstream is reflexive and pliable in its recognition of a variety of music and values that are absent within the narrow celebration of rock and its aesthetics. Though there are problems regarding representation and diversity within major popular music awarding institutions, which will be further explored in Chapter Three, they are certainly more diverse than the stifling domination of white men that Von Appen and Doehring (2006: 31) found within the popular music canon. The mainstream is ‘a space of cultural production and consumption with its own logics, practices and processes’ (Huber, 2013: 5), and major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards provide a valuable insight into this space across time.

Controversy within awarding can demonstrate the conflict that occurs between mainstream values and those most revered within the popular music press and canon. At the 2017 Grammy Awards, for example, the *Album of the Year* was given to UK artist Adele for her album *25*. In her acceptance speech, Adele claimed that though she was grateful and humbled by the award she could not accept it because Beyoncé, whose album *Lemonade* had been a nominee in the category, should have won the award instead. Adele spoke directly to Beyoncé, who was in the audience, saying ‘the *Lemonade* album was just so monumental...all us artists here adore you, you are our light’ (Bort, 2017). Adele ultimately accepted the award but did ask, during a backstage interview, ‘what the fuck does she [Beyoncé] have to do to win *Album of the Year*?’

(Atkinson, 2017). Before *Lemonade*, Beyoncé had been nominated for *Album of the Year* twice, for *I Am...Sasha Fierce* in 2010 and the eponymous *Beyoncé* in 2015, but had lost on both occasions to Taylor Swift's *Fearless* and Beck's *Morning Phase* respectively. Adele's question highlights Beyoncé's apparent inability to win the monumental *Album of the Year* category despite several nominations for the category. Each of Beyoncé's albums that received an *Album of the Year* nomination won in other album categories; *I am...Sasha Fierce* won *Best Contemporary R&B Album*, *Beyoncé* won *Best Surround Sound Album* and *Lemonade* won *Best Urban Contemporary Album*. This suggests that Beyoncé's albums are considered valuable enough by academy voters to win in genre specific categories but do not have the necessary components to win the main *Album of the Year* category.

The Grammy Awards' academy's decision to award Adele the most prestigious award over Beyoncé indicates that Adele is a more consummately valuable artist to the academy than Beyoncé. From an economic perspective, Adele is more successful than Beyoncé in terms of record sales. At the time of the 2017 ceremony, Adele's *25* had sold 10 million copies (RIAA, 2020a) while *Lemonade* had sold one million copies (RIAA, 2020b). As an awarding institution designed to support the major recording industry, the recognition of Adele is promoting an album that has been phenomenally successful in terms of album sales which is increasingly important for the recording industry as physical sales of albums are dwindling (Fildes, 2017). As will be further explored in the next section, the *Album of the Year* category at the Grammy Awards also awards the production team that worked on the album as well as the artist which means that it is not just Adele being recognised by the award but the team that produced the album as well. As such, the award is recognising a particular type of craftsmanship as well as artistry that is most valuable to the major recording industry.

In terms of aesthetic values, Adele is firmly within the pop tradition that has been at the centre of the recorded music industry since the early twentieth century whereas Beyoncé is a much more contemporary artist who occupies a key space within the hip-hop and RnB genres. While *Lemonade* was hugely critically successful and praised for the aesthetic values that are so lauded within the rock aesthetic like the ability to convey 'truth' (Mapes, 2016), *25* was considerably less critically acclaimed but far more commercially successful. The decision to award *Album of the Year* to Adele over Beyoncé indicates an unacknowledged tension at major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards. Adele won the award because she so clearly aligns with mainstream popular music values whereas Beyoncé is recognised by the Grammy

Awards in genre specific categories and is reflective of extramusical values more in line with those revered within the rock aesthetic. The decision caused controversy in the press (Holpuch, 2017; Monroe, 2017; Savage, 2017) because the press understand Beyoncé and Adele in line with their own values rather than those of the awarding institution whose job, ultimately, is to elevate and champion the artists most valuable to the popular music mainstream and major recording industry.

As argued throughout this thesis, major popular music awarding institutions function as an industrial strategy designed to support the major recording industry and its most valuable assets. As the mainstream is a collection of the industry's most valuable assets and artists, major awarding institutions can be understood as reflective of mainstream values over time. Consequently, the examination of major awarding institutions is essential for better understanding the mainstream alongside the major recording industry and can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon. This can broaden our understanding of the kind of music and artists that are recognised across time, indicating what mainstream trends were happening at particular moments. In light of the popular music canon's proclivity to reinforce and promote the artists and albums that have already been recognised within the canon's narrow criteria of valued aesthetics, awarding institutions can act as a record of success within the industry. More than this, however, major awarding institutions are a marker of elevated success in time that transcends recognition on the popular music charts due to the cultural prestige that accompanies an award. As awards that are voted for by the awarding institution's academy members who are all affiliated with the major recording industry, winning a Grammy Award or BRIT Award reflects peer recognition and the music and artists most valued by the industry itself. As such, major popular music awarding institutions can enhance our understanding of value within the mainstream and the major recording industry by expanding the purview of value within popular music outside of the rock aesthetic and popular music canon.

This section has established how rock's aesthetic values of authenticity, innovation, truth and expression have been elevated and celebrated by the popular music press which has consequently informed the popular music canon. The dominance of rock has also permeated the academic study of popular music which has resulted in a significant gap in knowledge regarding mainstream popular music. This is reflective of the binary construction of value within popular music which has been presented here in the framework of the popular music

canon occupying the ‘high’ art of popular music and the broad, commercial mainstream occupying the ‘low’. The under-examination of major popular music awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards can be understood in light of the under-examination of the popular music mainstream as these institutions are reflective of mainstream values and closely connected to the major recording industry. This section has established how the examination of major popular music awarding institutions will broaden our current understanding of mainstream values over time due to their ability to be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon. This section has provided an essential foundation for understanding the positioning of popular music awarding institutions within the field of popular music which underpins the statistical analysis of the next section. The analysis will further establish how popular music awarding institutions are reflective of mainstream popular music values and operate in a different way to the popular music canon.

2.3 Major Popular Music Awarding Institutions as an Alternative System of Value

This section will analyse the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners, their peak US and UK chart positions, position on the US and UK bestselling albums of all time charts and whether or not they feature on *Rolling Stone* or *NME’s Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. It will also examine what type of record label the award winning albums were signed to when they won the *Album of the Year* prize. This dataset will demonstrate how Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners are more likely to be commercially successful than recognised on the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. This analysis is essential for better understanding the role of major popular music awarding institutions as it explicitly demonstrates how awarding institutions act as industrial strategies for the major recording industry by supporting the industry’s most valuable assets. More than this, however, this analysis shows how major awarding institutions are different from other markers of commercial success within the industry, like the album charts, through their ability to prescribe prestige and cultural value onto the commercially successful. Furthermore, the data analysed shows how major popular music awarding institutions can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon that aligns more closely with mainstream notions of value and success.

The album is vitally important for the major recording industry as its most profitable format and for the popular music canon as its most prestigious text. The centrality of the album in both

of these fields is why the category has been prioritised for analysis in this section. The dataset that informs this analysis has been compiled into two tables covering each set of awards which can be found in Appendix C – the Grammy Awards, covering between 1959 and 2019 – and Appendix D – the BRIT Awards, covering between 1977 and 2019. Each table shows the year that the award was given, the winning artist and the album title. It also includes the record label the artist was signed to at the time of the winning album’s release, the genre of the album and the nationality of the artist. The winning album’s position within the *Rolling Stone’s Top 100 Albums of All Time* and *NME’s Top 500 Albums of All Time* lists has been included. The table also includes the winning album’s position on the US’ bestselling albums of all-time list, as certified by the Recording Industry Association of America in 2019, and the UK’s bestselling albums of all-time list, as certified by the Official UK Charts Company in 2019. Finally, the US and UK’s peak album chart positions for the winning album’s qualifying year for the award has been also been included, using the US Billboard 200 album chart and the UK Official Charts album chart. If there is not a number position provided within the table there will either be a dash (-) to show that the album was not included within that particular chart or list or there will be a small plus sign (+) to denote that another album by the same artist has been included in that particular chart or list.

This particular methodology has been utilised to provide a broad analysis of key markers of success within the field of popular music. While commercial success is easily measurable through official album charts and bestsellers lists, it is harder to assess the artists and albums that are most valued in the popular music canon. Von Appen and Doehring (2006: 21) write that ‘among the diverse forms of canonising pop and rock music, compiling lists like *The 100 Greatest Albums of All Time* is one of the most prominent and influential’. Similarly, Kärjä (2006: 4) writes that ‘these lists can be seen as the backbone of modern music historiography and canon formation’ and Jones (2008: 26) writes that the vast selection of such lists, featuring mostly the same set of artists and albums, across various outlets that assess popular music indicates a group of work that is generally considered to be the best within the field and, as such, constitutes a canon. Consequently, in the absence of an official, quantifiable canon, the *Top Albums of All Time* lists compiled by *Rolling Stone* and *NME*, as the two most prestigious popular music magazines in the Anglo-American popular music press, are used here to represent the popular music canon. Within the study of film awards, Ginsburgh (2003: 101) compared *Best Picture* winners from four prominent US film awarding institutions with three *100 Greatest Movies of All Time* lists. Working on the same premise that the *Greatest Movie*

lists are representative of the film canon, Ginsburgh (2003: 103) found that only 26% of the awarded movies featured on all three lists. This chapter's analysis builds and expands on this work, adding to the general field of cultural awarding as well as popular music scholarship by demonstrating the value of examining popular music awarding institutions as alternative systems of value within a field.

It is argued throughout this thesis that major popular music awarding institutions can be understood as industrial strategies designed to support the best interests of the industry from which they are derived. Analysing the record labels that winning *Album of the Year* albums were signed to at the time of their win supports and illustrates this argument further. At the Grammy Awards, 89% of the winning *Album of the Year* albums were signed to either a major record label or a major subsidiary. The remaining 11% of albums were signed to independent record labels which is a very small minority. Even the independent record labels, however, were fairly large independent labels like Big Machine which won *Album of the Year* twice through Taylor Swift in 2010 and 2016. Furthermore, Big Machine is not a subsidiary of a major label but it does distribute through a major label further demonstrating how overtly linked the major recording industry is to the Grammy Awards. As explored in Chapter One, the album is an integral part of the major recording industry as a long-play institution that offers long term profitability through its heightened symbolic capital, high profit margins, adult audience and ability to be remarketed (Keightley, 2004: 385). Major awarding institutions support the recording industry further by promoting their most valuable assets, like the album.

Beyond the cultural prestige that winning a Grammy Award brings, Grammy winning artists and producers receive what has come to be known as the 'Grammy bump' which translates into an average 55% increase in earnings (Molanphy, 2013). After winning her first *Album of the Year* Grammy Award in 2010, Taylor Swift experienced a 380% increase in earnings (O'Malley Greenburg, 2012) which would have equally benefitted Big Machine as her record label. This would have subsequently also benefitted Universal Music Group as Big Machine's distributor. More generally, however, for 89% of the last sixty years, major US record labels have benefitted from one of their artists winning the Grammy Awards' most prestigious award which brings with it a significant boost in profits. Once won, the album is forever buoyed by its Grammy win which acts as biographical and marketable information that promotes the album and artist as recognised by the US' premier popular music awarding institution. This

reinforces how awarding institutions can be considered as an industrial strategy for the major recording industry.

The argument that major popular music awarding institutions are industrial strategies designed to support the major recording industry is further emphasised through the analysis that 74% of the winning BRIT Award *Album of the Year* albums were signed to a major record label or the subsidiary of a major record label. It is clear that Anglo-American major popular music awarding institutions overwhelmingly champion and support the music and artists aligned with the major recording industry. Of the 26% of artists signed to an independent record label that won *Album of the Year* at the BRIT Awards, 13% represent Adele and the Arctic Monkeys who have won five *Album of the Year* awards between them. Despite being signed to the British independent record label XL Recordings in the UK, Adele is one of the bestselling artists of all time in the UK and the US which means that though the label is technically independent they will enjoy the economic benefit of representing such a global phenomenon. Similarly, the Arctic Monkeys are signed to Domino Records which is a large British independent label with divisions in the US, France and Germany. As such, it can be understood that the small amount of independent record labels being recognised at the major awarding institutions are independent record labels of significant means and status within the mainstream.

Examining the peak chart positions of *Album of the Year* winning albums during the year they were awarded demonstrates how major awarding institutions award and celebrate commercial, mainstream success. The BRIT Awards, in particular, overwhelmingly award the commercially successful. Of the 39 *Album of the Year* award winning albums, 87% reached the number one spot on the UK Official Charts album chart in the year they were awarded at the BRIT Awards and the remaining 13% reached the number two position. That the BRIT Awards' most prestigious category so wholly recognises commercial success demonstrates the awards' priorities and values. Analysing the BRIT Awards' *Album of the Year* winners' success on the US Billboard 200 album chart indicates that the albums received much more varied degrees of commercial success in the US. 26% of the winning albums reached the number one spot in the year they won the *Album of the Year* BRIT Award and 28% charted between the number two and ten chart position. This indicates that just over half of the BRIT Award winning albums achieved significant commercial success in the US. A further 28% charted between the 11 and 100 positions, 3% charted between 101 and 200 and a final 15% did not chart on the US album charts. Though a majority of the winning albums achieved significant success on both the US

and UK charts, the winning albums' total dominance of the UK charts demonstrates how the BRIT Awards prioritise celebrating and promoting commercially successful UK music and artists.

As a major awarding institution representative of a geographically and economically smaller¹¹ (IFPI, 2021: 11) industry than its US cousin, the BRIT Awards award in a way that explicitly promotes UK music and artists. In this way, the BRIT Awards can be understood as a protectionist strategy, designed to support a successful industry in a competitive wider market. Examining the genres of the award winning albums reflects trends within the UK mainstream, demonstrating how the awarding institution represents the interests of the UK's major recording industry and its mainstream music trends at any given time. During the 1980s, New Wave was hugely popular in the UK which was reflected in the *Album of the Year* award given to the New Wave band Adam and the Ants for the *Kings of the Wild Frontier* album. The popularity of the Britpop scene of the 1990s was recognised through the awards given for a number of Britpop albums including Oasis' (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory?* and Blur's *Parklife*. The category similarly reflected the mainstream indie rock scene that dominated the 2000s through its recognition of Arctic Monkey's *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*. The 2010s witnessed a shift from the recognition of pop artists like Ed Sheeran and Adele to grime artist Stormzy for his 2017 album *Gang Signs & Prayer*. The BRIT Awards have prioritised awarding the albums most recognised within the UK, even when that success has not translated outside of the UK. This demonstrates the hugely supportive role that the BRIT Awards plays within its national recording industry, supporting and promoting UK artists and the record labels that represent them.

In 1989, the BRIT Awards, in conjunction with the BPI who represent the UK recording industry, formed the BRIT Trust as a charitable endeavour. The BRIT Trust is funded partly by donations from the BRIT Awards' ceremonies and its aims are to 'encourage and educate young people through music' which it achieves through donations to a number of charities and the support of two main organisations, the BRIT School, based in Croydon, UK, and Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy (BRITs, 2020). The BRIT School was established in 1991 as a performing arts and technology school and has become famous for counting major UK pop artists like Adele and Amy Winehouse among its alumni. Adele has won nine BRIT Awards

¹¹ The US is the world's biggest music market where the UK is the third biggest (IFPI, 2021: 11).

and been nominated for a further six while Amy Winehouse has won one BRIT Award and been nominated for seven. Other BRIT School alumni who have gone on to receive BRIT Awards nominations and wins are Jessie J, who has been nominated six times and won once, Kate Nash, who won once and was nominated three time and Leona Lewis who received six nominations. Through its charitable investment in the BRIT School, the BRIT Awards and the UK's major recording industry are investing in the pop stars of tomorrow who will continue to fly the flag for UK music. This further emphasises how major popular music awarding institutions can be understood as industrial strategies in a more abstract way; the BRIT Awards do not just support the mainstream and the major recording industry in the moment, but they are also investing in its future.

The Grammy Awards' winning *Album of the Year* albums have enjoyed commercial chart success similar to the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners. Of the 61 artists who have won the award, 70% reached the number one position on the US Billboard 200 album chart in the year they won the award and 28% have occupied the two to ten position. The final 2% of winners have all been within the 11 and 100 range. Despite the Grammy Credo explored in Chapter One that specified how the awards should be judged on artistry rather than sales, this demonstrates that the Grammy Awards must correlate a particular type of artistry with commercial success. Certainly it is clear that the Grammy Awards are acting as an industrial strategy through their recognition of highly successful albums predominantly released by major record labels or their subsidiaries. The winners of the *Album of the Year* at the Grammy Awards achieved high levels of commercial success in the UK with 43% of the winners reaching the number one spot on the UK Official Charts album chart. An additional 30% occupied the two to ten positions and 13% charted between 11 and 100. Of the albums, 14% did not chart on the UK charts.

Whereas all bar two of the BRIT Awards *Album of the Year* winners were British¹², the nationality of the Grammy Awards winners has been more varied. A large majority, 66%, of awarded artists have been from the US and an additional 8% have been bands with at least one US member alongside other members with different nationalities. Of the remaining artists, 11% have been British and 15% have had another nationality but it is worth noting that the Grammy

¹² The two exceptions were Barbra Streisand and Michael Jackson in 1983 and 1984. It is unclear why the award went to US artists but both Streisand's *Love Stories* and Jackson's *Thriller* enjoyed significant success in the UK.

Awards have exclusively awarded music from the Western world in their *Album of the Year* category recognising artists only from the US, UK, Canada, France and Ireland. Regardless of nationality, all of the winning *Album of the Year* artists are signed to US record labels which suggests that the nationality of the artist is less important than their connection to a major US record label. Indeed, the Grammy Awards sit within a broader national field of awarding institutions than the BRIT Awards do. The Grammy Awards are undoubtedly the US' key major popular music awarding institution that has established the parameters of what it is to award popular music but there are other popular music awarding institutions within the US that enjoy a national stage.

The American Music Awards (AMAs) are a US popular music awarding institution founded in 1974 as a result of television network ABC losing the contract to air the Grammy Awards. The AMAs were formed as a way for ABC to counter losing advertising revenues and as such are less concerned with supporting the major recording industry as generating revenue for ABC. The aim of the AMAs is to 'pay tribute to today's more influential and iconic artists' and is nominated on the basis of sales data and voted for entirely by fans (AMAs, 2020). The AMAs give out awards according to genre and, though they have a general field, it does not include an award for *Album of the Year* focusing instead on artist specific awards like *Artist of the Year* and *Tour of the Year*. There is a clear difference in remit between the Grammy Awards and the AMAs. The AMAs are an awarding institution formed to support the television industry and recognise the most popular US artists as voted for by the audience at home whereas the Grammy Awards are an institution designed to specifically support the major recording industry and its notions of artistry and craft through an academy populated by industry professionals. The more varied recognition of nationality within the Grammy Awards can therefore be understood in terms of the wider field of US popular music awarding. The Grammy Awards do not need to explicitly focus on awarding US artists because this is partly what the AMAs do. Instead, the Grammy Awards are focused on awarding the music and artists most beneficial to the US' major recording industry which can be demonstrated through its higher recognition of major record labels and their subsidiaries than native US artists.

The Grammy Awards' support of the major recording industry can further be seen in its recognition of the production team as well as the artist within some of its major awarding categories. This indicates an appreciation for the music production craft that is so essential within popular music. The Grammy Award for *Album of the Year* initially only awarded the

artist but this changed in 1965 when it was extended to also award the album's producer. In 1999, the recognition was extended further to also award the recording engineer or mixer, then in 2003 the mastering engineer was added and in 2018 the songwriter was added to the award as well. The Grammy Awards also differentiate between the different types of production involved when awarding *Record of the Year* and *Single of the Year*. The *Record of the Year* award recognises the team behind a recorded song – the artist, producer, recording engineer and mixer – whereas *Song of the Year* is about the song's composition, not the recorded song, and is awarded to the songwriter. The broad recognition of the team that facilitates the production of the major recording industry's finest hits does more than just recognise these craftspeople beyond the sometimes dizzying star of the artist. The prestige that accompanies winning a Grammy Award translates into the ability to charge higher fees for the craftspeople's services. Producer David Banner has said that after winning a *Best Rap Album* Grammy Award in 2009 for his work on Lil Wayne's album *Tha Carter III*, he was able to increase his fee from \$50,000 to \$100,000 (O'Malley Greenburg, 2012). The Grammy Awards' recognition of craft and artistry beyond the artist demonstrates a commitment to the cogs of industry that are integral to its operations but often under appreciated.

As such ardent supporters of the US and UK's major recording industries, the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards prescribe prestige and cultural value onto the commercially successful music that they award. A high position on the US and UK's official charts, particularly a number one position, demarcates a significant marker of success within the field of popular music based on the amount of sales which demonstrates that the album has performed well commercially. For most consumers, charts 'directly represent the music business' (Hakanen, 1998: 97) with which the mainstream is associated. As has been established, the mainstream has been regarded negatively (Huber, 2013: 11) and dismissed as 'standardized, popular and easy to listen to' (Toynbee, 2002: 149). Consequently, chart success does not necessarily translate into cultural capital or critical acclaim. Major awarding institutions, however, function 'as a claim to authority and an assertion to that authority' while providing 'an institutional basis for exercising, or attempting to exercise, control over the cultural economy' (English, 2005: 51). As such, major awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards are capable of bestowing cultural capital onto the commercially successful music and artists they award. Such cultural capital is capable of being converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 248), which is demonstrated through the increase in sales that artists experience after they have been awarded. The cultural capital of winning a Grammy or BRIT award becomes a

marketable piece of information that differentiates the award winner from their competitors within the field of popular music. Winning such an award is a signal of success that elevates artists within the major recording industry from commercially valuable to culturally valuable.

The analysis of the Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners has shown that the awards recognise commercially successful music from the year it was released. Examining the positions of the winning albums on the US and UK's bestselling albums of all time charts and their positions on the *Rolling Stone* and *NME's Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists shows that Grammy and BRIT *Album of the Year* winning albums do not overwhelmingly translate into success over time. Consequently, major popular music awarding institutions are best understood as institutions that reflect mainstream success on an annual timeframe. Due to their annual timeframe, popular music awarding institutions can be used as an alternative system of value that aligns with mainstream notions of value and success over time. Anand and Watson (2006: 41) have argued that 'the unique ability of the Grammy Awards to mingle both peer and popular recognition makes them a significant arbiter of canon formation in the popular music industry'. The statistical analysis presented in this chapter wholly disputes this claim, arguing that the awards are in fact recognising music and artists who are not recognised by the popular music canon and instead conform to mainstream popular music values within annual cycles.

There is a small minority of *Album of the Year* winning albums that feature on the US and UK's bestselling albums of all time charts. Of the Grammy Award winning *Album of the Year* winners, only 16% feature on both the US and UK bestselling albums of all time charts. This is a significantly lower amount than the number of winning albums that feature on the album charts the year the albums are awarded. Interestingly, there is no difference between the US and UK industry's charts despite the Grammy Awards being the premier awarding institution in the US. A very small 10% of the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winning albums featured on the US bestselling albums of all times chart and a significantly larger 36% featured on the UK's bestselling albums of all time charts. The higher amount of BRIT Award winning albums on the UK's bestselling albums of all time charts further emphasises the earlier point that the BRIT Awards explicitly support the UK's major recording industry, record labels and artists. That the BRIT Awards have awarded just over a third of the UK's bestselling albums of all time demonstrates how the BRIT Awards have acted as a champion of a significant proportion

of successful UK music and artists in a way that the Grammy Awards have not for US music and artists.

The lack of long-term commercial success represented within the Grammy Award *Album of the Year* winning albums suggests there is something else being recognised by the awarding institution. As the Grammy Award *Album of the Year* category does not just recognise the artist who performs, and potentially writes, the album but also the production team that produces the album there is the suggestion that the winning *Album of the Year* is being awarded for more than aesthetic considerations. The Grammy Award *Album of the Year* is also being judged on its production qualities which would indicate that alongside aesthetics, the craftsmanship and artistry of a certain type of production is also being judged. In contrast to the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners that reflect UK mainstream trends over time, the Grammy Awards *Album of the Year* winners represent an appreciation of traditional popular music aesthetics and production qualities. This can be seen in the genres of the albums awarded which do not always reflect the current trends. In 2008, for example, Herbie Hancock won the *Album of the Year* for his jazz album *River: The Joni Letters* which is representative of a very classical type of popular music that would probably satisfy the NARAS' founding committee members who clearly valued that classic aesthetic. The bestselling US album of 2008, however, was Lil Wayne's *Tha Carter III* which is a hip-hop album, very different in style and tone to Hancock's jazz album celebrating Joni Mitchell.

The Grammy Awards has 83 categories making it a major popular music awarding institution that recognises an expansive set of music, artists and technicians each year. As a US awarding institution, the Grammy Awards recognise music from a very large geographical space that consequently has a much broader collection of genres to award that hold importance across different areas of the country. The Grammy Awards have a general field which awards *Album of the Year*, *Record of the Year*, *Song of the Year* and *Best New Artist* which are the most prestigious categories because they award without genre constraints. The rest of the awards are awarded in genre specific categories including pop, rap, dance, jazz, gospel, reggae, Latin, comedy and musical theatre. Technical categories are also awarded across various genres. The vast amount of genre specific categories results in commercially successful albums being recognised within their genre category rather than the general field such as *Tha Carter III* winning the *Best Rap Album* rather than the *Album of the Year*, which it was nominated for, despite its overwhelming commercial success that year. This suggests that the *Album of the*

Year award is reserved for albums that satisfy those traditional notions of popular music aesthetics that were most valued at the conception of the Grammy Awards and continue to enjoy a continuous, respectable degree of success, providing the major recording industry with a constant stream of revenue.

Analysing the *Album of the Year* winning albums that feature on the *Rolling Stone* and *NME*'s *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists indicates that major popular music awarding institutions perform a different function to the popular music canon. Only 15% of the Grammy Award *Album of the Year* winners and 5% of the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners feature on the *Rolling Stone*'s *Top 100 Albums of All Time* list. Similarly, only 8% of the Grammy Award *Album of the Year* winners and 10% of the BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners feature on the *NME*'s *Top 100 Albums of All Time* list. There is a clear disparity between the albums recognised by the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards and the albums recognised by the prominent popular music press as 'the best', indicating that the two institutions are making these decisions based on conflicting sets of criteria concerning different value judgements. The *Album of the Year* categories are judged on an annual timeframe by academy members incapable of predicting long term commercial or cultural success. The journalists who compile the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists, on the other hand, have the benefit of hindsight in their recognition of the albums they consider to be the best. Furthermore, the two sets of decision makers clearly have different priorities. Academy members work within the major recording industry and represent the interests of the mainstream whereas the popular music journalists who work at *Rolling Stone* and *NME* champion the ideals of the rock music aesthetic. As such, the *Album of the Year* winning albums can be considered as an alternative system of value judgement based on mainstream music values when compared to the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists which echo the value judgements of the popular music canon.

The *Album of the Year* winning albums that did feature on the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists did not appear in prominent positions. The only album to feature in the Top 10 of both *Top 100 Album of All Time* lists was The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* which was awarded by both the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards. If any album were to feature across all four awarding institutions and publications, it is unsurprising that this is the album. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* stands as 'the zenith of the Beatles' recording career' (Moore, 1997: 71) and the importance of The Beatles across popular music is undeniable. There are a number of artists who have won an *Album of the Year* award at either the Grammy Awards

or the BRIT Awards who have had a different album feature on the *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. For example, Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* was awarded the 1996 *Album of the Year* at the Grammy Awards which does not feature on either *Rolling Stone* or *NME* list. There are a number of Dylan's earlier albums¹³, however, that feature on both *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. This is reflective of the benefit of hindsight afforded within retrospective lists that assess value over decades rather than within a 12 month cycle. The greatest albums lists consider the longevity and influence of an artist's album over their career and across time according to the values most lauded by the popular music press. An *Album of the Year* category assesses success within the popular music mainstream according to the values most celebrated by the major recording industry.

Major popular music awarding institutions can be criticised for their oversight of artists who go on to be considered as culturally important but this assessment misunderstands the role of the awarding institution. Awarding institutions like the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards are industrial strategies designed to support the best interests of the major recording industry and the mainstream music it represents. The mainstream is an ever-changing and updating mass of music that is enjoying commercial success at any given moment. Genres that emerge in opposition to the current mainstream enjoy subcultural success before they are eventually subsumed into the mainstream when their success continues to grow in popularity (Hebdige, 1979: 130). As such, the annual cycle of popular music awarding institutions may miss the opportunity to award the early, influential work of artists from genres like rock and hip-hop. This demonstrates how popular music awarding institutions can be understood as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon. Instead of assessing the music that has come to be considered as culturally valuable over time, awarding institutions represent mainstream values in the moment highlighting how the mainstream evolves over time.

This analysis presented throughout this section has established how the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards celebrate commercially successful music within an annual timeframe. Through the analysis of a broad and unique dataset, it has been shown that Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners are more likely to be commercially successful than feature on canonical popular music *Top 100 Albums of All Time* lists. As such, it can be understood that major awarding institutions reflect commercial, mainstream success in real

¹³ Five Dylan albums feature on the *Rolling Stone* list and four Dylan albums feature on the *NME* list.

time terms. As is argued throughout this thesis, major popular music awarding institutions are industrial strategies that support and promote the major recording industry. The analysis in this section further supports this argument by illustrating how awarding institutions prescribe cultural value onto the commercially successful which improves the albums' reputations and further boosts their profitability. Additionally, the analysis has shown that the winning *Album of the Year* albums are most likely to be signed to a major record label or the subsidiary of a major record label which further exemplifies how major awarding institutions support the major recording industry. Ultimately, this section has shown that major popular music awarding institutions can be understood as alternative systems of value to the popular music canon that are more closely aligned with mainstream notions of value and success as they evolve over time. Consequently, this section has furthered our understanding of the role that major popular music awarding institutions play within the major recording industry while also expanding our understanding of the mainstream and its role within the field of popular music.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that major popular music awarding institutions are reflective of mainstream values and, as such, can be used as an alternative system of value to the popular music canon which expands the current understanding and appreciation of the mainstream and its vast and varied selection of artists and genres. It has been shown that the binary construction of value within popular music is reliant on elevating one type of music at the expense of another. Consequently, rock's aesthetics have been privileged within popular music's examination while the wide breadth of mainstream has been under-developed and overlooked. The rich data analysis offered in this chapter further demonstrates the unique role that major popular music awarding institutions play and how much can be learnt from them. It has been shown that Grammy Award and BRIT Award *Album of the Year* winners are more likely to be commercially successful than part of the popular music canon which indicates that there are two sets of values being recognised by the two separate institutions. That only a small percentage of winning albums go on to become some of the bestselling albums of all time is indicative of the annual cycle of awarding and the institutions' inability to predict long-term success. The high likelihood that the *Album of the Year* winners will be signed to a major record label or one of their subsidiaries further establishes the close relationship between the major recording industry and the major popular music awarding institutions. Ultimately, this chapter has further illustrated how major popular music awarding institutions are best understood as

industrial strategies that support the major recording industry. This argument has been further developed by demonstrating how the major popular music awarding institutions reflect and promote mainstream values as they evolve across time by prescribing cultural value onto the commercially successful in order to support the major recording industry's most valuable assets and artists.

Chapter Three – Reflecting the Practices of the Recording Industry: An Examination of the Representation of Gender and Race at the BRIT Awards, 1977-2019.

In the wake of calls for improved diversity and better representation of minority groups across the cultural industries over the last decade, cultural awarding institutions have been viewed as institutions that can be harnessed to hold cultural industries accountable. Consequently, cultural awarding institutions have been facing increased scrutiny from the public and press as they assess whether the awarding institution has improved their practices and recognised a more diverse and representative range of the industry's actors and products. This phenomenon started when the Oscar Awards were heavily criticised in 2015 after all 20 acting nominations were awarded to white actors (Ugwu, 2020) and when the exact same thing happened again the following year (VanDerWerff, 2016). The ensuing condemnation and fallout was fierce and eventually resulted in the Oscar Awards establishing representation and inclusion standards 'to encourage equitable representation on and off screen in order to better reflect the diversity of the movie-going audience' (Oscars, 2020). This type of criticism and response became widespread among the various cultural awarding institutions, recognising a deep-seated problem with the underrepresentation of minority groups within the cultural industries.

Through a statistical analysis of 862 artists who have either won or been nominated for a BRIT Award and the 361 artists who have performed at a BRIT Awards ceremony between 1977 and 2019, this chapter will argue that women and BAME artists have been underrepresented at the BRIT Awards. As a major popular music awarding institution, the BRIT Awards are closely connected to the UK's major recording industry and, as such, can be understood as reflective of the industry's practices and biases. Consequently, the underrepresentation of women and BAME artists at the BRIT Awards is reflective of a similar underrepresentation of women and BAME artists within the major recording industry. Subsequently, this chapter further demonstrates the importance of examining awarding institutions; their analysis indicates trends not only within the awarding institution but also across its wider cultural industry. Furthermore,

this chapter informs the wider cultural conversation around representation within cultural awarding, offering a blueprint for future cultural awarding institutions to be examined.

To provide this analysis, this chapter will be organised into four sections. Firstly, a brief examination of the BRIT Awards will be offered to provide a strong foundation for understanding how the awards are connected to the major recording industry. As demonstrated in Chapter One, establishing the origins of the awarding institution is essential for understanding the institution's aims and motivations. Next, a methodology will detail how the data that informs this chapter was collected and analysed. Thirdly, it will be argued that there is a stark gender disparity at the BRIT Awards across its four key awarding categories, *Album of the Year*, *Single of the Year*, *Group of the Year* and *Outstanding Contribution to Music*. The impact of genre on gender disparity will be explored, highlighting the dominance of men across the recording industry from performance to production. The analysis of the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award will demonstrate how women are judged differently to their male counterparts and, as a consequence, do not have the same continued influence or long, public life that male artists often enjoy. The way women are valued within popular music will also be assessed through the analysis of women performers at the BRIT Award ceremonies, showing that they are better represented as performers than they are within the awards which indicates that women are more valued as performers than they are as artists. The analysis of the underrepresentation of women at the BRIT Awards reflects how women are treated within the UK's major recording industry where women are often subjected to gendered roles and do not progress into senior management.

Finally, this chapter will offer a comparative analysis of the representation of BAME artists awarded before and after the BRIT Awards reorganised their awarding academy in the wake of the 2016 #BRITsSoWhite scandal. How the BRIT Awards responded to the scandal will be explored, establishing how the awards implemented swift and effective change that resulted in better representation of BAME artists within the four key categories at the awards. It will be argued that the improved representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards is indicative of a more diversified mainstream which reflects the waning popularity of rock and the increased representation of hip-hop, rap and its derivatives within the mainstream. As an awarding institution designed to support and promote the major recording industry and the mainstream, the BRIT Awards had to adapt and evolve its practices in order to remain relevant and continue its position of prominence within the industry. Examining the underrepresentation of women

and BAME artists at the BRIT Awards is essential for improving our understanding of how major awarding institutions operate. It also expands our perceptions of the major recording industry which indicates the value of analysing these institutions.

3.2 A Brief Examination of The BRIT Awards

In order to provide a strong foundation for the statistical analysis of the nominees, winners and performers at the BRIT Awards, this section will provide a brief examination of the BRIT Awards. Similarly to the Grammy Awards, the BRIT Awards were founded in conjunction with the UK's major recording industry which further demonstrates the close relationship enjoyed between major awarding institution and major recording industry. The BRIT Awards were formed to support and champion UK music as the British recording industry became more prominent and profitable, highlighting the capacity of an awarding institution to act as a promotional tool. This section will also explore the symbolism that has come to define the BRIT Awards and its perceived commercial nature, including its corporate sponsorship. Establishing the origin and motivations of the BRIT Awards as an awarding institution founded to support the UK's national recording industry and promote its homegrown artists will aid the chapter's argument that awarding institutions are reflective of their recording industry's practices and biases.

The British recording industry was a few decades behind its US counterpart in establishing an industry-backed popular music awarding institution. The British Phonographic Industry (BPI), which represents the UK's recorded music industry, was formed in 1973 and shortly thereafter in 1977 established the British Record Industry Britannia Awards as part of Queen Elizabeth II's silver jubilee celebrations (Street, 2014: 186). The awards were revived in 1982 as the annual British Record Industry Awards, then became known as the BPI Awards before finally settling on the now globally recognisable BRIT Awards moniker. The final name of the awarding institution removes all clear links to the major recording industry which were apparent in its first two names, allowing it to appear as a more independent organisation. The foundation of the BRIT Awards at the end of the 1970s places them at a time when more cultural award ceremonies were starting to appear as 'both a cause and effect of much broader transformations in the mode of cultural production', something that can be 'widely understood in terms of the rise of cultural capital' (English, 2005: 74). Culture was growing increasingly

important to not only fans and audiences but also to economies, particularly in Britain, as traditional industries such as steel, mining and manufacturing started to decline.

In the 1960s, 'Britain became a major exporter of culture to the world economy' (Simonelli, 2012: 10) through musical movements such as Beatlemania and the British Invasion which also encompassed British film, television and fashion. The 'music industry was buoyant' (Cloonan, 2016: 12) and the amount of recorded music produced in the UK significantly increased throughout the 1970s from c.125 million units sold in 1970 to 250 million units in 1979 which indicates that there was 'an extensive growth in the demand for popular music' (Gourvish and Tennant, 2010: 190). The formation of both the BPI and the BRIT Awards can, therefore, be viewed as a response to a growing industry and an evolving field. Indeed, 'evidence suggests that the award ceremony plays a critical role in constructing prestige within the field' (Anand and Watson, 2006: 48), so the BPI's position as representative of the British recording industry and administrator of the awards suggests that the UK recording industry was looking to further assert itself as a critical gatekeeper through an awarding institution capable of bestowing prestige on artists and music considered most valuable to the industry.

Awarding institutions can explicitly act as a promotional tool for their nation state. The Juno Awards are Canada's major popular music awarding institution and are closely linked to the Canadian recording industry (Young, 2004: 272), promoting the country's most popular and profitable artists. The foundation of the Juno Awards in 1970 has been 'tied to the emergence of a promotional state for popular music in Canada' (ibid.) at a time when the recording industry was concerned about the lack of Canadian music being played on the radio in Canada (Young, 2004: 273). The Juno Awards have successfully promoted Canadian music since its inception and enjoys a prominent role within the Canadian recording industry. The awards regularly attract a larger television audience than the Grammy Awards in Canada (Young, 2004: 272) demonstrating the prominent role that the awarding institution plays within Canada. As there is a dominance of Anglo-American music within the Western world, awarding institutions can play an important role in supporting and promoting a nation's artists and music like Canada's Juno Awards or the Aotearoa Music Awards (previously the New Zealand Music Awards). Despite the global prominence of British music and artists, the UK's recording industry is the third biggest in the world behind the US and Japan respectively (IFPI, 2021: 11). Consequently, UK music still needs to promote and distinguish itself from other music

markets which the BRIT Awards can help achieve in its role as a major awarding institution designed to promote and support the UK recording industry.

As an awarding institution representing the UK recording industry, the BRIT Awards adopted a number of symbolic features that identified it as an awarding institution capable of competing within the wider field of existing entertainment awards. In 1985, the year that the BRITs began to be televised, Maurice Oberstein, Chairman of CBS Records and the BPI, referred to the BRITs as the ‘British Grammys’ (Dann, 1985: 15), a clear attempt to equate the awards with the same authority and prestige that the Grammy Awards held in the US recording industry. The symbolic features employed by the BRITs are similar to those of the Grammys. Both the Grammys and BRITs have come to be synonymous with the trophies that award winners receive. Trophies are ‘objects capable of embodying or giving material shape to the honour bestowed’ (English, 2005: 156), and the BRITs’ trophy, Britannia, the Roman goddess depicted throughout British history as a personification of Britain and a symbol of victory, stands as an invaluable component of the awards. The Britannia trophy compounds the meaning and marketing of the awards as a symbol of the British recording industry and its success. Awards’ trophies can operate as art in their own right (English, 2005: 165), and the BRITs trophy conforms to this in its original striking design. Since 2011, the annual redesigns of Britannia by important British artists such as Vivienne Westwood, Damien Hirst and Anish Kapoor, have further imbued the trophy and its symbolic capital with increased value because of its jointly unique yet instantly recognisable position within the awarding system and broader popular culture. The annual redesigns have now become an important feature of the awards, with the design reveal drawing press attention, further allowing the BRIT Awards to stand as a celebration of British culture.

The BRIT Awards, like the Grammy Awards and most cultural awards, has had a number of corporate sponsor partnerships. For literary prizes, corporate sponsorship appeared in the 1950s in the form of sponsors linked to the literary field, such as booksellers like WH Smith, before eventually corporate businesses unrelated to literature such as William Hill started sponsoring prizes in the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt at corporate re-branding (Street, 2005b: 823). Sponsorship of the BRIT Awards has operated in a similar way, albeit in a shorter time span. Initially, the Britannia Music Club, a mail order record club, sponsored the event and announced the annual list of nominations until 1998 when the BPI sought a “trendier” company to pay a higher price’ (Boshoff, 1998: 9). The BRIT’s current main sponsor is

Mastercard, a multinational financial services company, whose logo appears tied in with the main BRITs logo. The transition from a smaller sponsor to a global enterprise like Mastercard demonstrates the growth of the BRIT Awards into an awarding institution successful enough to attract, and maintain, major corporate sponsorship for over thirty years.

The BRIT Awards are an industry backed institution that operates through an academy made up of officials from the recording industry. In the early days of the BRITs, the academy was made up of the 132 companies that were represented by the BPI. As explained by then-chairman of the BPI, Peter Jameson, 'each company gets one vote. The BPI sends them forms upon which they nominate five artists in each category. The forms are then returned and the BPI collate the top five, send nominations back and the same 132 companies put the nominations in order one to five' (Smash Hits, 1989:11). The voting system has changed somewhat since its beginning into a more official process with individual academy members granted a vote each opposed to companies. In order to qualify to be nominated for a BRIT award, a single or album must have been released during the outlined eligibility period. For example, in order to qualify for *British Group of the Year*, the group must have released either a single or an album within the specified eligibility period. The Official Charts Company compiles the lists of albums and singles that are eligible to be considered each year and submits them to the BRIT Awards team who are responsible for overseeing the voting process. The academy has grown to over 1000 members, and represents a broad range of companies associated with the recording industry including record labels, publishers, managers and agents. Voting has now been digitised and each voting member is given access to a secure online Voting Academy website where they vote for the top five choices in each category resulting in the shortlist of nominees. The entire voting process is supervised by the Electoral Reform Services (ERS) for fairness and transparency (BRIT Awards, 2019a).

The BRITs, like all cultural awards, face criticism for the artists and music they choose to award and those that they do not. In 1985, the BRITs were criticised for awarding 'not musical creativity, but number of units shifted' (Dann, 1985: 15), something that the BRITs have continued to be berated for. The commercially successful music that was perceived as being favoured by the BRIT Awards and its voting academy eventually resulted in British music magazine *NME* running a spoof awards called the BRAT Awards in 1993, which became its own awards ceremony from 1994 to 1999, awarding the music that the *NME* and its readership deemed more valuable than that which the BRITs were honouring. As a consequence of the

formation of the BRAT Awards, however, the BRIT Awards changed some of their voting procedures. As a result of the ‘critical uproar’ at the ‘predictability’ of 1993’s winners (Sullivan, 1994: 8), the BRIT Awards extended voting privileges to 375 new recording industry workers including professions like promoters as well as more diverse organisations such as the Black Music Industry Association (ibid.). The modifications to the BRIT Award academy resulted in both sets of awards recognising the same artists which eventually led to the BRAT Awards rebranding as the NME Awards¹⁴ (English, 2005: 89). As has been seen with the Grammy Awards and their reaction to rock’n’roll, popular music awarding institutions are slow to react to change despite the changing nature of popular music and the unpredictable emergence of new trends, genres and subcultures. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, through yet another academy shakeup in 2016 due to public and critical outrage, the BRIT Awards are equally slow at recognising music that has emerged from an underground scene into mainstream prominence.

Popular music awarding institutions are not at the forefront of change and innovation within the field of popular music because they are representative of the popular music recording industry and mainstream which can be equally slow at understanding the importance of new genres and artists and representing them. The recording industry has historically operated in this cyclical manner, only recognising and signing artists from new genres once the genres have gained prominence either independently or through the support of independent record labels. There is an inevitability to the mainstream eventually incorporating non-mainstream, emergent genres (Hebdige, 1979: 130) and examining major awarding institutions can help to demonstrate this cycle and how the major recording industry often has to play catch up to the innovation of new genres. The digital revolution in the early 2000s was seen by the recording industry as a temporary blip that would not change the industry (Jones, 2012) while a genre such as grime, born in inner-city London council estates, was so removed from the experiences and expectations of senior management in record labels that it was considered more of a public danger than an art form (Swain, 2018: 483). The recording industry focuses on what it perceives to be its most valuable and profitable assets in the long term; the digital revolution threatened the very business model of the recording industry so it was dismissed and grime was seen as a grassroots genre that would not sell significantly high enough volumes of records to be of

¹⁴ Rebranding the BRAT Awards as the NME Awards allowed the awards to operate in a legitimate, rather than satirical, manner and also promote the magazine and its values.

interest to the major recording industry. If the recording industry does not rapidly respond to innovation and change, then neither will the BRIT Awards due to their interrelated relationship. As such, major awarding institutions can be understood as representative of what is popular within mainstream popular music.

This section has established the important space that the BRIT Awards occupies within the UK's major recording industry. The BRIT Awards, through their association with the BPI, are directly linked to the major recording industry which informs a key argument of this chapter that awarding institutions reflect the practices and biases of the major recording industry. The BRIT Awards act as not only a promotional tool for the recording industry but also for the UK and British musicians, supporting the cultural economy and Britain's global reputation as a nation that produces remarkable music and musicians. The symbolic features of the BRIT Awards, such as the Britannia trophy, have been identified as important, identifiable components of the awarding institution which builds the BRIT Awards' brand and recognisability. The BRIT Awards' awarding academy has been briefly explored as an important component of the institution that can impact the representation of those awarded by the institution dependent on who is invited to be part of the academy, which will be further explored later in the chapter. Like the recording industry, the BRIT Awards have been slow to respond to changes in taste which can result in criticism from the public and critics alike before the awarding institution is forced to adapt in order to survive as an institution that is capable of recognising the music and artists most valuable to the UK. Understanding the function and motivations of the BRIT Awards as a major awarding institution is essential in order to fully appreciate the statistical analysis that inform the rest of the chapter. The next section will establish the methodology used for collecting the data.

3.3 Methodology

This chapter examines the BRIT Awards' 39 year history in order to establish how the BRIT Awards, as an awarding institution formed through the recording industry, is representative of that industry and its practices and prejudices. A systematic analysis of the artists awarded across four categories at the BRITs accommodates an understanding of who has been recognised as worthy of an award and reveal whether any biases towards gender or race can be concluded. To understand if greater prominence has been given to certain artists within the

televised ceremony, analysis has been undertaken to establish if there are difference between nominees and winners and those who are invited to perform at the televised ceremony. An analysis of this kind of the BRIT awards has not been conducted elsewhere in academic literature making this dataset and its consequent analysis a unique contribution to our understanding of a bedrock institution of the British recording industry.

There have been a number of different categories introduced and made defunct throughout the history of the BRIT Awards so this chapter will primarily focus on four categories which can provide the most consistent data set. Additionally, these categories are considered the most prestigious and sought after at the awards and also represent two of the most important formats within the major recording industry. The first three categories are *British Album of the Year*, *British Single* and *British Group*; each of these categories has been awarded for every year of the BRITs' history. The final category is the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award which has been awarded since 1977 but was not given in 2011, 2013, 2015 or 2018. I will refer to various other categories throughout in order to support various claims but it is the four main categories outlined here that will remain the focus of this chapter. Though not a category of awardees, I will also examine all of the artists who have performed at the BRIT Awards since 1985 when the awards were first televised.

In order to carry out the appropriate statistical analysis, I collated all the relevant data into spreadsheets. For the award categories, I compiled all of the winners and nominees for each category together and then specified the winner or nominee's gender and whether or not they are classified as BAME. Gender has been categorised as either female, male or mixed gender, with mixed gender accommodating groups with members of both sexes in¹⁵. The term BAME, which stands for Black Asian Minority Ethnic, has been problematised as unwieldy and lacking nuance (Fakim and Macauley, 2020), but its necessity has been accepted as a consequence of society's recognition that 'discrimination is a fact which the law must acknowledge and seek to redress' (Okolosie et al, 2015). The term is used within this analysis because it is the term is used by the BPI and the BRIT Awards when they address issues of diversity, so it is appropriate to replicate the use of the term here alongside an acknowledgement that it is not an ideal term

¹⁵ It should be acknowledged that BRIT Award winner and nominee Sam Smith came out as non-binary in September 2019, after this data had been collated. Smith has been categorised as male as that is how they were categorised by the industry at that time.

to engage with, if only because it has resulted in a dichotomy of white artists or BAME artists with little room for nuance.

The data collected has been analysed to show how many male, female, mixed gender, white and BAME BRIT Award winners, nominees and ceremony performers there have been. In total, there were 862 artists who had either won or been nominated for a BRIT Award and 361 artists who had performed at a BRIT Award ceremony, totalling a sample size of over 1200 artists. It should be noted that a group has been counted as one artist, therefore holding the same weight as an individual artist. This data will be used throughout the rest of the chapter to draw a number of conclusions.

3.4 Gender Disparity at the BRIT Awards

This section will analyse the representation of women in five key categories at the BRIT Awards and demonstrate that there is a stark gender disparity. As major awarding institutions are so closely linked to the mainstream, major recording industry, assessing the representation of women within the BRIT Awards can also teach us more about the role of women within the UK's major recording industry. Examining the representation of women within the *British Album of the Year*, *British Single of the Year* and *British Group of the Year* categories will establish how genre plays a significant role in the way that women are perceived within the recording industry. Furthermore, analysing the winners of the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award highlights how women are less likely to stand the test of time within the recording industry. This is indicative of how women are not allowed to age in the public eye in the same way as male musicians. Finally, the analysis of performers at the BRIT Awards showcases how women are better represented, demonstrating how women are more valued as performers than artists. The role of women within the music industries has long been studied in popular music scholarship (Carson et al, 2004; Garr, 1993; Jennings and Gardner, 2012; Leonard, 2007; Lieb, 2013; O' Brien, 2002; Whiteley, 1997), and this chapter will add to this scholarship through its consideration of the way that women are recognised and valued through awards conferred by an institution that is representative of the major recording industry. More than this, however, this chapter will contribute to a burgeoning field of scholarship around the recognition of women in cultural awards more generally (Griffith, 2015; Marsden, 2019; Reekie, 2019) which

will lead to a deeper understanding of how women are recognised in cultural life on a wider level.

The BRIT Award for *Album of the Year* is arguably the most prestigious award of the ceremony. As has been established in the previous two chapters, the album has historically been positioned as the pinnacle of the recording industry. Contracts were signed to produce the album and tours were centred around its promotion (Straw, 2001: 57), but this has been challenged since digitisation with live music becoming more profitable than recorded sales in 2009 (Michaels, 2009). Moreover, streaming overtook physical sales of CDs and vinyl in 2017 (Fildes, 2017) which further threatens the dominance of the album due to the single oriented playlists that dominate streaming sites like Spotify (Forde, 2018). Nevertheless, the album has been considered as the text for the popular music canon in the same way that the novel is considered the text in the literature canon, and as such is viewed as a piece of art in its own right that still holds a revered place within popular music and the recording industry.

The album, when properly executed, ‘is a coherent body of work as a whole (not singles with “filler”’, that possesses the canonical criteria of originality, complexity and truth and this is associated with an autonomous artist/genius’ (Jones, 2008: 42). The awarding of the album demonstrates prestige and value for the body of work that the artist has traditionally focused on the most. Chapter Two demonstrated the emphasis put on the album within the popular music canon through the popular music press’ best albums of all time lists which elevate and centre the album within popular music discourse. Another British popular music awarding institution, the Mercury Music Prize which will be explored in Chapter Five, recognises only the album as an artwork further demonstrating the album’s elevated status within popular music. The BRIT Award for *Album of the Year* has been sponsored by Mastercard since 1998 and is the only category of prize that has a corporate sponsor, which further demonstrates not just its cultural worth but its economic value too. Observing who has been nominated for and who has won the BRIT Award for *Album of the Year* can demonstrate who the awarding academy considers to have made the most significant contribution to the year’s musical landscape through the medium considered most valuable.

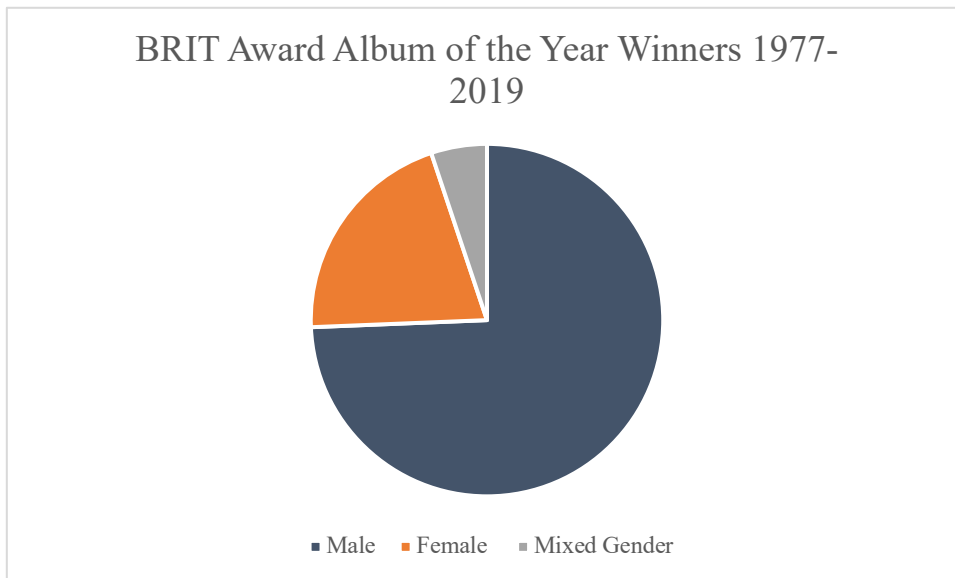


Chart 3.1 – Gender of BRIT Award Album of the Year Winners 1977-20

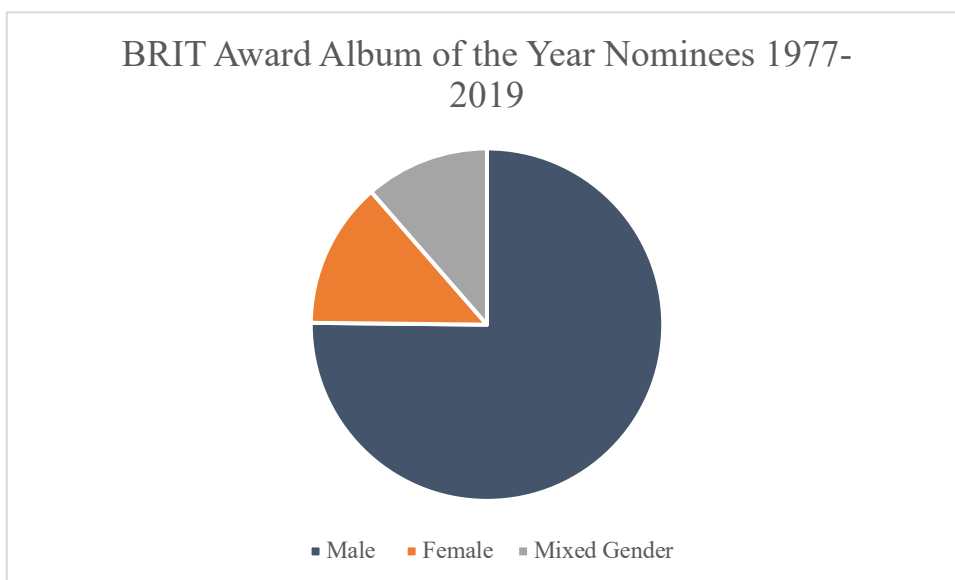


Chart 3.2 – Gender of BRIT Award Album of the Year Nominees 1977-2019

The winners and nominees for the BRIT Award for *Album of the Year* throughout its 39 year history have been predominantly male. As depicted in Chart 3.1, of the 39 winners of the *Album of the Year* prize, 29 (74%) have been male, 8 (21%) have been female and 2 (5%) have been mixed gender. There were only two consecutive years where women were awarded: Adele’s *21* in 2012 and Emeli Sandé’s *Our Version of Events* in 2013. There were two seven year periods where no women were awarded at all, between 1986 and 1992 and between 1995 and 2001. There have been 149 artists who have been nominated for the *Album of the Year* award, 20 (14%) of whom have been female, 17 (11%) mixed gender and 112 (75%) male, this can be

seen in Chart 3.2. Though the amount of men nominated is a similar percentage to men who were awarded *Album of the Year*, there are fewer women nominated and more mixed gender groups. There are 12 years in the award's history when female artists neither won nor were nominated for the award, accounting for 31% of the award's operating years. For the BRIT's most prestigious award to be awarded and nominated to men three quarters of the time is evidence of a clear gender bias in favour of men in the recording industry.

The *Producer of the Year* category at the BRIT Awards most starkly demonstrates the institution's gender disparity. The BRIT Award for *Producer of the Year* has been awarded since 1977, but wasn't awarded in 1989, 1999-2008 or 2017, and has only ever been won by men. It has had one female nominee (Kate Bush, 1990) and two mixed gender nominees (M People, 1994 and Goldfrapp, 2015) out of its total number of 100 nominees. The lack of women recognised in this category can inform us of a wider problem within the music industries. The UK Music Producers' Guild reports that only 4% of their members are female, and Susan Rogers, a studio engineer, has said that women who want to enter that particular field are faced with entering 'a boys' club or a guild mentality' (Savage, 2012). In 2016, the BRIT Awards revised their awarding academy in an attempt to ensure better representation – something that will be explored in detail later in this chapter – and the BPI's chairman Ged Doherty, who oversaw the process, noted that the producers within the academy were the category most resistant to change and the promotion of diversity (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). There are deep rooted structural inequalities within music production which, in terms of gender, range from the entry routes into the profession to the incompatibility of motherhood with the working environment of music production (Wolfe, 2020: 63-80). Major awarding institutions like the BRIT Awards can reflect structural inconsistencies within the wider recording industry which is why they are so important to study. What should be understood here is that a category of awarding does not take place in its own vacuum; it is inextricably linked to practices within the wider field that it is taking place within. The gargantuan lack of female record producers and the identified 'boys' club' that encompasses the practice will have a reverberating effect across the music industries with high-profile figures within the field of production acting as intermediaries and gatekeepers for new talent within it which has the potential to exclude those who do not look like those who are already accepted.

The BRIT Award for *Single of the Year* is not as revered as *Album of the Year* but is nonetheless a significant prize to win at the BRITs. The single, while perhaps not capable of the gravitas of the album and its elevated position within the popular music canon, is still a significant part of the recording industry’s operations. Individual songs can be seen as the ‘currency of popular music’ and their success can ‘define both contemporary musical styles and important, influential artists’ (Cooper, 2018: 576). Singles are a useful promotional tool and radio airplay and feature spots on curated playlists of singles can provide invaluable exposure for artists. In the digital age, singles have become increasingly important as more artists are putting out higher amounts of singles pre-album than ever before (Leight, 2018) due to the high demand for a steady flow of content due to the shorter attention spans of audiences. A single must have achieved a Top 40 chart position in order to be eligible for the *Single of the Year* category. Though this is a significant marker of success, singles like the 2002 Bob the Builder cover of Lou Bega’s *Mambo No. 5* have been nominated for the category indicating the somewhat less serious role that the single can play in relation to the seriousness of the album. There were 27 (69%) male artists who won the *Single of the Year* award, seven (18%) female artists and five (13%) mixed gender artists, which can be seen in Chart 3.3. The nominees hold similar percentage points, see Chart 3.4, with male artists taking 62% of the nominations and female and mixed gendered artists taking 19% each.

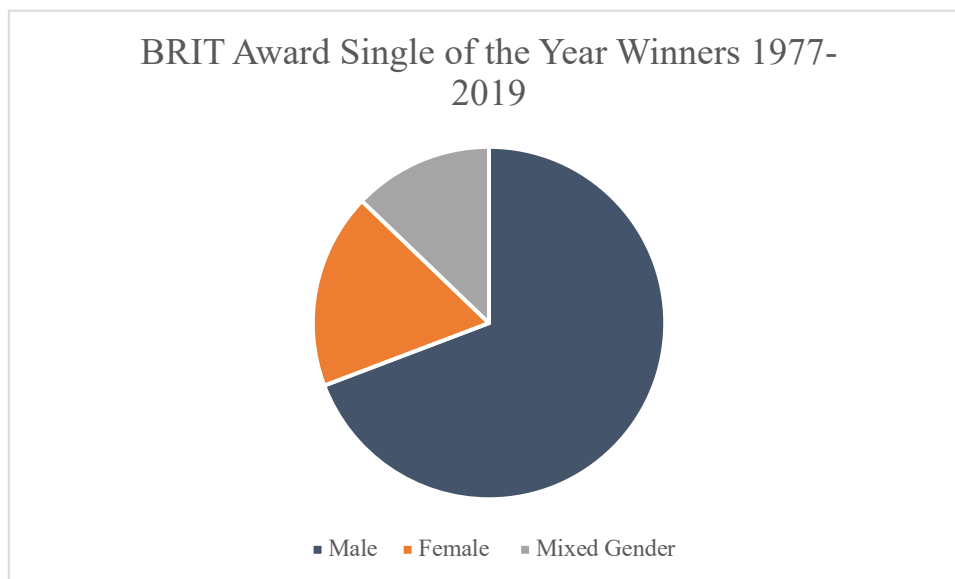


Chart 3.3 – Gender of BRIT Award Single of the Year Winners 1977-2019

Genre can offer an insight into the gender disparities within the *Album of the Year* and *Single of the Year* categories as there are two dominant genres represented at the BRIT Awards; rock

and pop. These two genres have been identified as representing 71% of the artists recognised at the BRIT Awards (Street, 2014: 189) and have historically dominated the UK’s mainstream music scenes. Men make up the large majorities of the *Album of the Year* and *Single of the Year* nominees and winners, while the female and mixed gender artists are both always in the minority of nominees and winners. Apart from the *Album of the Year* winners, there is almost an even split between female and mixed gender winners for the *Album of the Year* nominees and *Single of the Year* winners and nominees. An explanation for this may be that there are mixed gender pop groups such as Liberty X and S Club 7 receiving accolades who are absent in the *Album of the Year* winner’s list. Indeed, more pop artists seem to win the *Single of the Year* than the album counterpart. Take That won *Single of the Year* five times and Robbie Williams won the prize three years in a row yet neither ever won *Album of the Year* despite Take That and Robbie Williams receiving two nominations each for the *Album of the Year* accolade. The only artist to win the *Album of the Year* prize three times was the Arctic Monkeys who stand as more representative of the type of artist to win that particular award; that is, those who sit within the rock genre. Genre clearly has a significant role to play in the gender divide within award categories which can also be seen elsewhere.

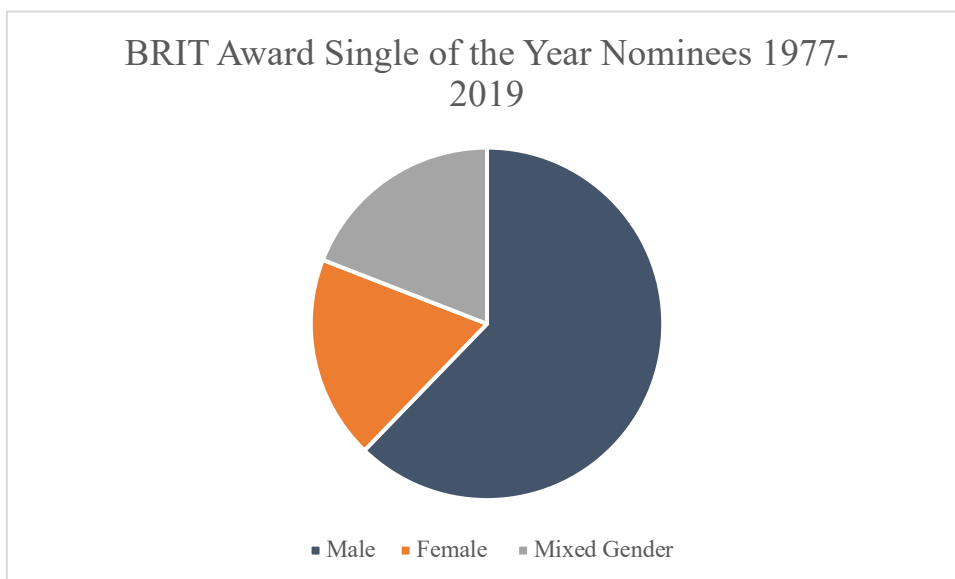


Chart 3.4 – Gender of BRIT Award Single of the Year Nominees 1977-2019

The gender divide is even starker in the *British Group of the Year* category. As depicted in Chart 3.5, no female artists have won the award at all, while 36 (92%) male artists and 3 (8%) mixed gender artists have won. It should be noted that one of the mixed gender artists is the

band Gorillaz, a virtual band created by Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, who have one female member called Noodle resulting in a third of the mixed gender nomination accounting for a female cartoon rather than a real-life woman. The nominations, seen in Chart 3.6, included 10 (7%) female artists, 20 (13%) mixed gender artists and 123 (80%) male artists. Similarly to the *Album of the Year*, the artists recognised are again predominately those who sit within the rock genre such as Arctic Monkeys, Franz Ferdinand, Oasis and Coldplay. By its very nature, *British Group of the Year* seems more likely to be awarded to those who occupy a place within the rock genre as rock is predisposed to be populated by bands. It is interesting, though, that again there is a lack of the pop groups seen in the *Single of the Year* category. Take That did win *British Group of the Year* once in 2011, but none of the other pop groups like Steps or the Spice Girls are honoured with a *British Group of the Year* accolade.

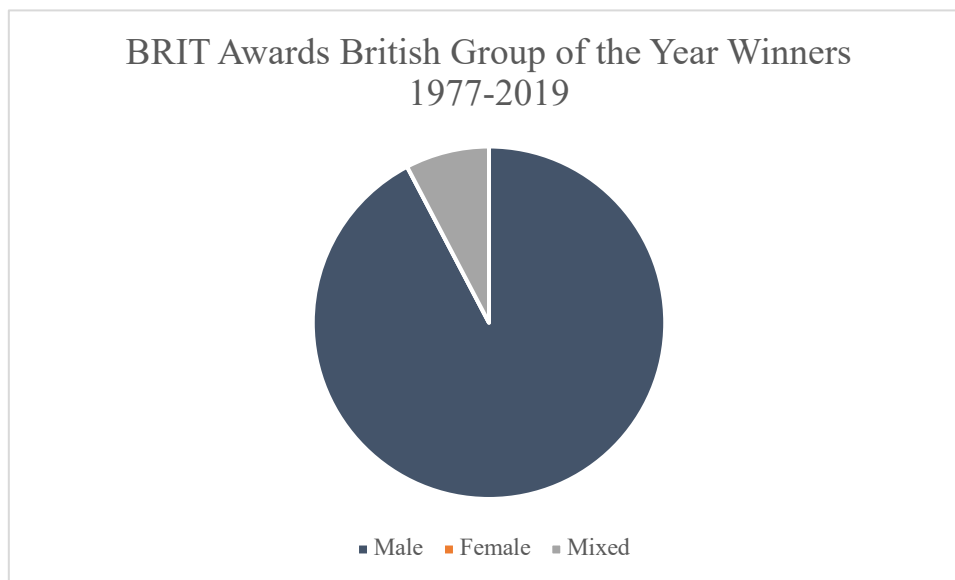


Chart 3.5 – Gender of BRIT Awards British Group of the Year Winners 1977-2019

Gender clearly has an important role to play within genre boundaries and conventions. Rock has come to be regarded as a form of high culture (Gracyk, 2000: 214) whereas pop, still subjected to criticisms about its formulaic tropes, is viewed as being devoid of any drive past its desire for profit and commercial reward (Frith, 2001: 96). Pop is a genre of music often dismissed as light-hearted commodity while perceptions of rock as a type of music that operates on a basis of authenticity and autonomy is elevated and celebrated for its artistry (Keightley, 2001b: 128). Rock’s authenticity is centred around its performers writing their own music which transforms them from performers into artists, while pop is ‘not an art but a craft’

executed by professional songwriters, co-ordinated teams of industry experts and performed by entertainers (Frith, 2001: 96). These perceptions of the rock aesthetic have had ‘an enduring significance in popular music within cultures of reception...and within the academy’ (Atton, 2019: 205) despite there often being ‘little generic difference between artists viewed as “serious” and “not serious”’ (Davies, 2001: 301). Although there are, of course, stylistic differences between the two genres, it is the ideological differences separating the two types of genre, rather than musicality, which can help explain the disparity in the recognition of men over women at the BRIT Awards.

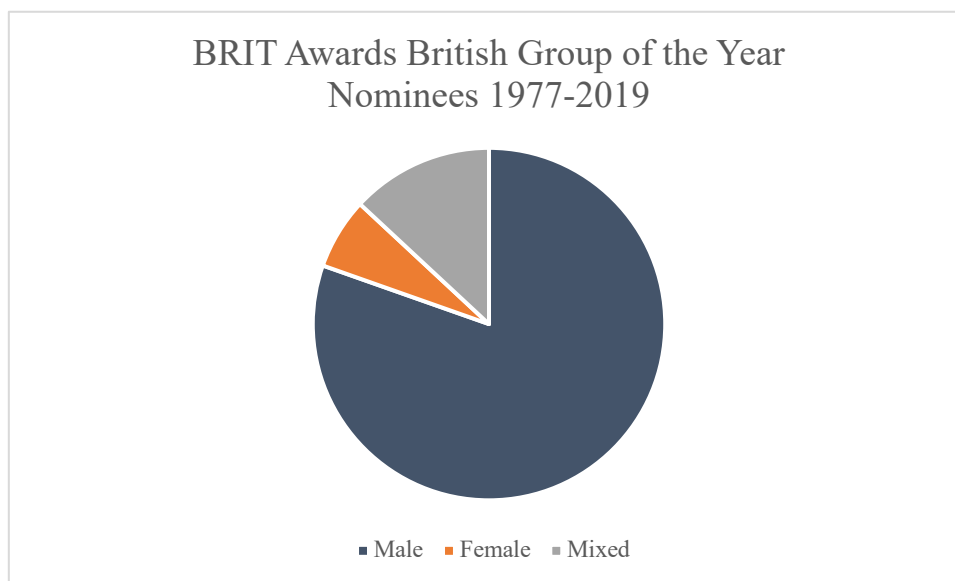


Chart 3.6 – Gender of BRIT Awards British Group of the Year Nominees 1977-2019

It has long been argued that ‘rock is a male form’ (Frith and McRobbie, 1978: 319) that has adopted gendered attitudes through its modes of production (Cohen, 1997: 17; Leonard, 2007: 25). Rock narratives have been constructed, in part, by the music press who stand as one of the genre’s key gatekeepers. The British music press consistently ignore, denigrate and stereotype women, representing them in hyperbolic states of behaviour; the female groupie as sexually deviant, the teenage fan as pathetically infatuated, the overtly sexualised female performer provocatively photographed, the serious female artist as pretentious and the angry female artist as hysterical and out of control (Davies, 2001). Female artists are treated primarily as women rather musicians as a consequence of ‘a constant stress on their appearance and sexuality’ which has resulted in largely unchallenged casual misogyny (Davies, 2001: 303). There has

long been double standards employed by the press when discussing women compared to the standards frequently set for men.

The pop genre is not esteemed by the ‘serious’ British music press¹⁶ – as a serious press it covers serious music – so has traditionally been covered by magazines such as *Smash Hits* and *Record Mirror* which have focused more on providing posters and song lyrics than providing the blistering critiques rampant in the likes of the *NME*. The female pop star is more common than the female rock star but that does not equate to female dominance in the pop genre either. For a seven year period at the BRIT Awards, between 2000 and 2006, there was an awarding category for *Best Pop Act* whose winners were 100% male. More women (45%) were nominated than men (31%) with mixed gender acts accounting for 24% of the nominees. This suggests that even when a genre is more populated with female artists they will still be overlooked in favour of their male counterparts at the BRIT Awards. During this period another category was introduced at the BRIT Awards for three years between 2004 and 2006 for *Best Rock Act* and, rather unsurprisingly, its winners and nominees were 100% male. Beyond genre conventions, 70% of the BRIT Awards’ voting academy members pre-2016 were men while only 30% were female voters (Ellis-Peterson, 2016) demonstrating a clear gender imbalance within the people making the key decisions about who wins awards at the BRITs. If the voting members of the BRIT Awards have been historically male dominated then it is somewhat unsurprising that women have been poorly represented within the awards. The BRIT Awards have committed, since 2016, to changing the academy makeup to 52% men and 48% women (ibid.) in an attempt to close the gender gap. Genre clearly has a role to play within the recognition of gender at the BRIT Awards. More than this, however, there is consistent gender disparity within the BRIT Awards regardless of the type of music being awarded due to the male dominance in popular music more generally which is further reflected within the BRIT Awards’ voting academy.

This chapter’s consideration of the women awarded by the BRIT Awards takes places within an industry, and broader field, where women are underrepresented and this has long term consequences. Since 2016, UK Music has published an annual report concerning diversity in the music industry’s workforce. The launch of the report took place at a time when diversity

¹⁶ The ‘serious’ British music press includes publications like *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *MOJO Magazine* which all prescribe to the superiority of rock aesthetics.

and representation of minority groups has become more widely discussed across a variety of industries. UK Music's 2018 report into diversity shows that the number of women working across the different music industries is now equivalent to the number of men at 49.1% each, an increase of women since the inaugural report showing that 45.3% of the music industry were women. The representation of women, however, is not equal across ages or positions. There has been a significant increase of 10.7% since 2016 in the amount of young women between the ages of 16 and 24 working in the industry, however, there are fewer women in higher age categories and a problem has been identified in the retention of women aged 35 and over (UK Music, 2018). This indicates that positive strides are being taken towards ensuring a more inclusive set of music industries, however, merely having women working in music is not enough. The lack of women over 35 across the music industries is indicative of a lack of women in senior, decision making roles. Additionally, all the women, bar one, profiled in UK Music's 2018 report are those who occupy traditionally female roles such as Director of People and Director of HR. Women working in the music industries face an environment that is highly sex segregated (Leonard, 2016: 40), making progression into senior roles in a traditionally male dominant field a harder barrier to overcome. For true diversity within the field to be achieved, women must start to occupy the same senior positions as their male peers.

The lack of women being awarded at the BRIT Awards is indicative of a lack of women in the recording industry, and the music industries more broadly. The role that female performers are expected to undertake can also be better understood here. As seen in the UK Music diversity report, the lack of female personnel increases in more senior roles and this is also true for female artists. The BRIT Award for *Outstanding Contribution to Music* is an award present throughout most cultural awards signifying the 'ultimate consecration' of an artist (English, 2005: 55). The *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award is awarded to artists who adhere to particular notions of success and value prescribed by the BRIT Awards as an institution. The category of *Outstanding Contribution* award can often be used by awarding institutions as an opportunity to correct previously snubbed awardees and to honour those artists who have died. Indeed, lifetime honours such as this 'participate, even more than other kinds of prizes, in the romantic, heroic conception of the individual artist' (English, 2005: 56), often contributing to and consigning canonic inclusion; it is the award that most clearly denotes value. The *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award has been awarded regularly since the start of the BRIT Awards and Chart 3.7 shows the gender distribution of artists throughout its history. A total number of 38 artists have been recognised with an *Outstanding Contribution to Music*

award and, of those, there have been two mixed gendered groups honoured – Fleetwood Mac and Eurythmics – and two female artists, the Spice Girls and P!nk. All of the honoured artists have been British apart from the only female solo artist recognised, P!nk, after the BRITs Committee made a decision in 2019 to open the category up to overseas acts who have ‘achieved long term success in the UK’ (BRIT Awards, 2019b).

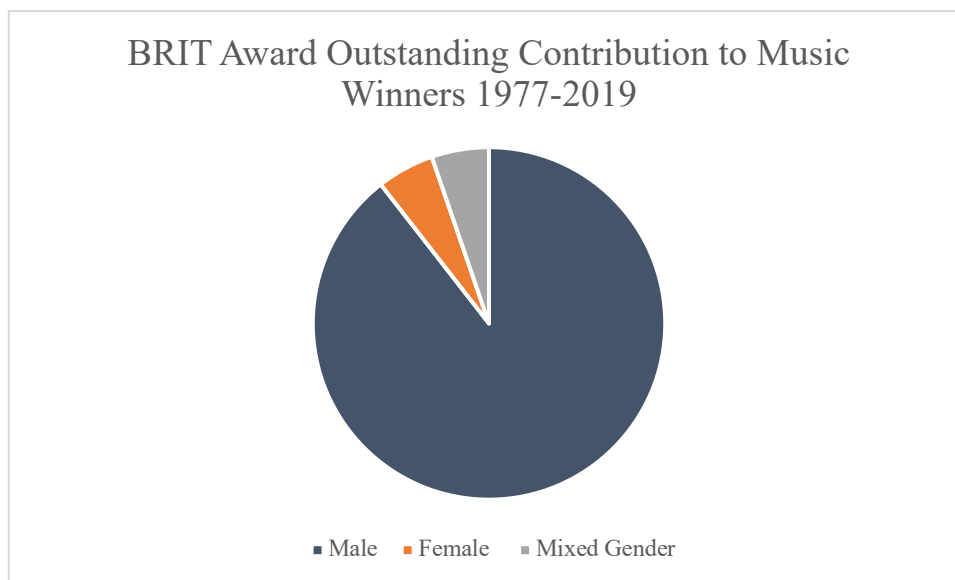


Chart 3.7 – Gender of BRIT Award for Outstanding Contribution to Music Winners 1977-2019

Over a 35 year history of awarding the category, not one British female solo artist has been deemed worthy of making an outstanding contribution to British music despite British male solo artists being awarded repeatedly within the category. The Beatles have won the award twice, Paul McCartney and John Lennon have both won the award separately, Elton John has been awarded three times and Robbie Williams has been awarded twice. There have been three occasions when both the frontman of a band and the band have won on separate occasions; Pete Townshend and The Who; Sting and the Police and Freddie Mercury and Queen. The repetitive awarding of the same men within this category and the systematic and wilful neglect of recognising women as worthy of contributing to the musical life of Britain portrays a deep seated misogyny within the recording industry that adheres to outdated notions of value and acceptable practice. Furthermore, it can inform us of the way that women are treated within the public eye as they age.

Men are more likely to have longevity and lasting relevance in their musical careers whereas women are subjected to the ‘current constellation of historical, social, cultural and biological perceptions [that] still look on women and ageing as mostly problematic, disempowering and in consequence, negatively’ (Jennings, 2012: 36). Women are not granted the luxury of aging in the same way as men, that is – naturally, because there are demands on women that men are not subjected to, i.e. women are expected to conform to certain societal notions of beauty that tend to expire at a certain age. Lieb (2013:110) suggests that female pop stars are burdened with positioning themselves in terms of their sexuality from their beginnings as a pop star, whereas men can choose from a multitude of ways to position themselves i.e. working class hero, storyteller etc. Consequently, women are subjected to a shelf life that their male peers are not.

Awarding women from a lifetime achievement perspective can, therefore, be challenging if women are excluded from careers that span a lifetime. A comparison can be made with the examination of the popular musicians recognised by the British Honours Systems, an awarding institution that recognises valuable contribution to British life, between 1917 and 2017 shows that female popular musicians are more likely to be awarded between the ages of 30 and 49 compared to men who are more likely to be awarded between the ages of 60 and 69. Additionally, of those recognised by the Honours System 67% are male and only 33% are female (Reekie, 2019: 7). The Honours System, as a retrospective award, is recognising lasting cultural impact, in a similar way to the BRITs’ *Outstanding Contribution to Music*, and the shortfall of women being recognised as culturally important for a significant period is woefully indicative of how far the recording industry have to go in order to rectify existing stereotypes about how women can function within that industry.

Comparing the gender disparity of the main categories at the BRIT Awards to the gender disparity in BRIT Awards ceremony performers shows that women are more likely to perform at the ceremony than be recognised with an award. As can be seen in Chart 3.8, there were a total number of 361 performers at the BRIT Awards since 1985, the year the show was first televised and artists started performing. Of those performers, 227 (63%) were men, 111 (31%) were women and 23 (6%) were mixed gendered groups. The number of female performers at the BRIT Awards outweighs that of any female winners of the main categories while the male performers takes a slight dip from its lowest number of 69% male winners for *Single of the Year*. This suggests that women are more valued as performers than they are as artists, but men

are still valued more than women in both areas. This further emphasises what has been established throughout this analysis into how women are treated throughout the music industries; they are underrepresented and seen as less serious than their male counterparts. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the music industries. An examination of the Scottish Saltire Society Literary Awards proves that women are less awarded than their male counterparts and establishes this trend as part of a wider problem concerning implicit stereotyping of women ‘which reflects the historical (non-)representation of Scottish women in literature more widely’ (Marsden, 2019: 62). Examining how women are recognised by important cultural awards provides an insight into how women are valued within culture more broadly. This demonstrates the value of expanding the academic exploration of awarding institutions to establish who is being valued most and, in turn, who that excludes.

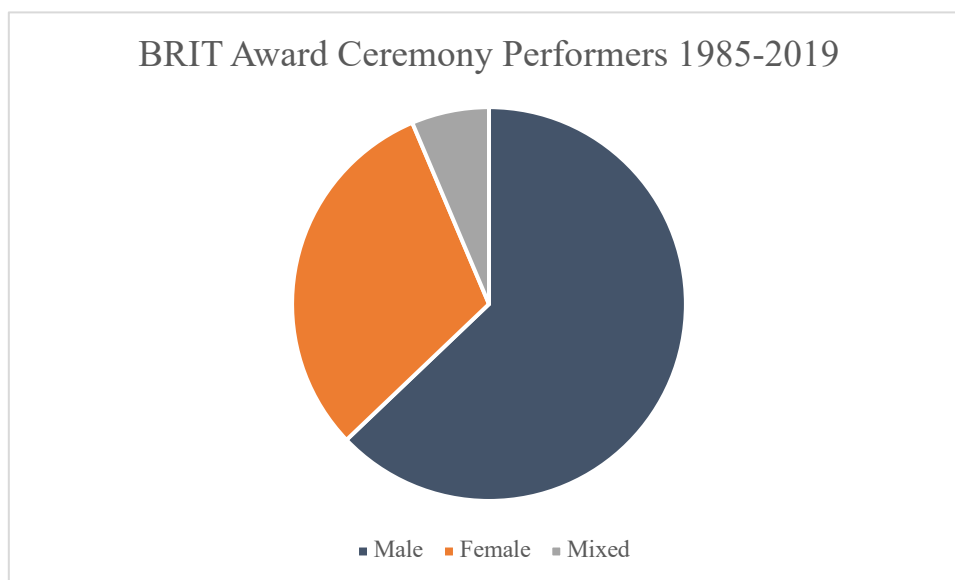


Chart 3.8 – Gender of BRIT Award Ceremony Performers 1985-2019

This section has demonstrated the vast gender disparities that exist at the BRIT Awards through the statistical analysis of five key award categories. Women are much less likely to be nominated and awarded at the BRIT Awards than men. The impact of genre on gender disparity within the awards has been explored, showcasing the dominance of men within the recording industry even in genres typically considered as more equitable to women artists like pop. The dominance of men within the recording industry was further explored through the *Producer of the Year* category which has only ever been won by men. This highlights the difficulty that women face across the spectrum of music industries and how much work there is still to be

done in order to address the gender imbalance. Examining the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award further expands our understanding of how women are treated within the recording industry, demonstrating how women are less likely than their male counterparts to be recognised for lasting impact within the recording industry. Finally, the performers at the BRIT Awards have been analysed and show that, though men still dominate, there is a significantly smaller gender disparity than in award categories which demonstrates how women are more likely to be valued as performers than artists. Ultimately, this section has demonstrated the value in analysing major popular music awarding institutions as institutions that are reflective of the practices and biases of the major recording industry they are linked to. As such, it can be understood that the gender disparity found at the BRIT Awards is also to be found within the UK's major recording industry.

3.5 #BRITsSoWhite and Racial Bias at the BRIT Awards

This section will explore the representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards in the wake of the 2016 #BRITsSoWhite scandal. In response to the 2016 BRIT Awards ceremony's lack of diversity among its nominees, winners and performers, the hashtag #BRITsSoWhite started trending across social media (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). This response took inspiration from the 2015 Oscar Awards' announcement of its nominations, which were severely lacking in diversity, that prompted the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite to trend (Wyatt, 2015) and, consequently, started a wider conversation about diversity within cultural awarding. More generally, there have been calls across the cultural industries to improve representation and diversity within cultural products from film to television to music (Bakare, 2020b; Brodeur, 2020; Martinson, 2016; Waterson, 2020). As institutions that celebrate an industry's greatest achievements, major cultural awarding institutions like the Oscar Awards, the BRIT Awards, the Emmy Awards and the BAFTA Awards have been seen as institutions that can be harnessed to hold wider cultural industries accountable. As such, the investigation of cultural awarding institutions like the BRIT Awards is more timely and relevant than ever.

In response to the 2016 #BRITsSoWhite scandal, this section will explore how the BRIT Awards responded and the changes the institution made to its awarding academy to address its representation and diversity issues. The use of genre specific categories at the BRIT Awards, like the *British Urban Act* category, will be problematised as further marginalising BAME

artists rather than diversifying the awards. Most importantly, this section offers a comparative analysis of BAME representation within four major award categories before and after the 2016 academy shakeup. Though there is only a small dataset for those awarded post-2016, there is evidence that the BRIT Awards are now more representative of BAME artists than they were before the academy was changed. The examination of the representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards furthers our understanding of representation within the UK's major recording industry. This demonstrates how the examination of major awarding institutions can deepen our understanding of representation and diversity within major recording industries.

US rapper Kanye West's 2015 BRIT Awards performance of his single *All Day* resulted in more than 150 complaints being reported to Ofcom, the British broadcasting and telecommunications regulator, as a result of West's perceived use of offensive language and the ceremony's inability to censor the language in a timely manner (Plunkett, 2015). West's performance, however, drew attention for more than its use of inappropriate language. As part of his performance, West invited a number of British grime artists to share the stage with him including Skepta, Stormzy and Krept and Konan. All the artists were wearing black, many with their hoods drawn, and all were huddled together closely giving the illusion of a collective in action; West may have been the centre of attention here but he was making a statement through his inclusion of such a high volume of black, male artists.

As Chapter Four will explore in detail, televised award ceremonies depend on a range of scandalous and controversial moments to promote the awarding institution and attract audiences. These moments can often be organic, taking place in reaction to the live event, but they can also be premeditated as artists are keenly aware of the platform the ceremony provides. In 2009, Kanye West interrupted Taylor Swift's MTV Video Music Award acceptance speech for *Best Female Video* by appearing on stage and taking Swift's trophy and the microphone from her telling the audience that Beyoncé, who had been nominated for the same award, had one of the best videos of all time, implying that Beyoncé deserved the award more than Swift. West also interrupted Beck's acceptance speech for winning *Album of the Year* in 2015 at the Grammy Awards. West explained his actions backstage afterwards saying 'Beck needs to respect artistry and he should give his award to Beyoncé' (Guardian Music, 2015). West's actions at these award ceremonies may appear erratic but they form part of West's cultural crusade to defend 'the cultural patrimony of African American performers...which he thinks has been systematically denied' (Cullen, 2016: 36). Though West's interruption of Swift was

an organic moment, his decision to invite grime artists to share his stage can be understood as an extension of West's motivations to ensure the recognition of African-Americans within awarding systems by providing a platform for black, minority artists in the UK. West is keenly aware of the platform that a major awarding institution's televised ceremony can provide in promoting artists.

West's inclusion of grime artists in his performance at the BRIT Awards was significant because it was the only representation of grime at the awards despite the increasing mainstream success of the genre. Grime artists were not nominated or invited to perform at the awards. Grime music is a type of music that originated as an underground scene in London during the early 2000s combining a mixture of jungle, garage and hip-hop. Grime is built around heavy bass production and a 'street aesthetic' borne of its roots in working class council estates (Adams, 2018: 2; Swain, 2018: 481). Its focus on MC vocalists emerging as a combination of the Jamaican tradition of toasting and American hip-hop rapping has enabled grime to establish itself as a lyrically rich genre which has allowed grime artists to 'express their innermost thoughts and insights into life in Britain's multi-cultural inner-city milieu' (Swain, 2018: 481). Grime can, therefore, be understood as a genre that is representative of a uniquely British viewpoint and lifestyle.

Grime, however, has been demonised in the British press and by politicians as a 'cynical genre that glorifies theft, drug taking, stabbings and shootings' (Swain, 2018: 482), and this stereotyping has impacted the genre's ability to enter the mainstream. In 2003, grime MC Dizzee Rascal's album *Boy in Da Corner* won the Mercury Music Prize bringing the genre national recognition and a taste of commercial success, though the album peaked at number 23 in the UK album chart selling 310,000 copies (Official Charts, 2019). Further commercial success was impeded by a hesitancy from the major labels to sign grime artists because of the genre's reputation (Ilan, 2012: 45) and by policing efforts to shut down grime gigs through the enforcement of racial profiling via Form 696 (BBC, 2017). Despite this, grime has continued to grow in popularity in the UK and now 'appears woven into the fabric of mainstream popular culture' which is demonstrated through its commercial successes. Tickets for grime events in the UK quadrupled from 2010-2017, streams of grime music rose from 89 million in 2016 to 206 million in 2017 and physical and digital album sales of the genre grew by 93% in the same year (White, 2018: 2). Grime was officially transitioning to mainstream success and increased public awareness.

Kanye West's 2015 showcase of British grime talent did not inspire the BRIT Awards to include grime artists in any aspect of its 2016 awards ceremony. The 2016 ceremony faced intense scrutiny and criticism from the public for its lack of diversity in both its winners and performers which resulted in the hashtag #BRITsSoWhite trending across social media (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). The fierce public backlash against the BRIT Awards resulted in the BRITs chairman, Ged Doherty, writing an open letter acknowledging that 'there was an elephant in the room' at the BRITs ceremony as a result of its 'lack of recognition of the emerging music that is a huge part of British youth culture' (Guardian Music, 2016). Though Doherty stated that there were valid reasons for the nominations taking the shape they did, he conceded that 'the playing field for that judgement must also be even' and pledged to update the voting academy so that 'facets of diversity such as age, ethnicity, gender and regionality' would be considered alongside the established criteria of possessing some form of musical expertise within the various music industries (ibid.). Prior to 2016, the voting academy had been predominately white with 'a bias towards older men' (Doherty, 2016) demonstrating the lack of diversity and representation at the heart of Britain's only mainstream popular music awarding institution.

The BRIT Awards publicly committed itself to diversifying its academy in order to address their lack of diversity and representation. Doherty committed to having, where possible, an equal male-female split within the academy and at least 15% BAME representation to be in line with national trends. It is not known what the BAME representation was in the awarding academy prior to 2016. A pledge of this kind by Doherty and the BRIT Awards highlights the cultural climate surrounding the 2016 BRITs and the increasing pressure on cultural institutions to be representative. Doherty was careful in his letter to highlight that the pursuit for greater diversity within the academy was already underway and that it was being taken seriously by stating that he'd already met with grime artist Stormzy, who had called the lack of diversity at the 2016 awards 'embarrassing' (Britton, 2016), to discuss Stormzy's concerns. Doherty informed Stormzy that the BRITs organisers were in the process of forming an advisory committee that would include members of the BAME music community in order to 'more effectively celebrate diverse, breaking and established talent' (Guardian Music, 2016). The BRIT Awards quick response to the criticism levelled at them is commendable alongside their commitment to advocate for tangible change.

The month before the 2016 BRIT Awards saw the Oscar awards heavily criticised again for its lack of diversity in its 2016 nominees following the 2015 #OscarsSoWhite scandal. The academy behind the Oscars had not taken immediate concrete steps to improving its diversity which resulted in a number of threatened boycotts of the ceremony from the likes of director Spike Lee and actress Jada Pinkett-Smith. The Academy Awards president, Cheryl Boone Isaacs, released a statement via Twitter expressing that she was ‘heartbroken and frustrated about the lack of inclusion’, and promised that the academy was going to take dramatic steps to change the academy’s make up (Hunt, 2016). Boone Isaacs did not, however, detail what those steps would be. It is reasonable to suggest that Doherty’s swift response to the #BRITsSoWhite criticism was part of an attempt to quell the criticism with substantive change in order to avoid a Oscars-esque second year of scandal. Doherty’s commitment to quantifiable figures in his open letter provided a benchmark to which he could be held accountable and demonstrated his genuine commitment to ensuring that some kind of positive change would take place before the next year of awarding. Doherty’s open letter also acted as a damage control solution and positive PR for the BRIT Awards and its academy during an intense spate of criticism and public indignation.

The 2017 BRIT Awards delivered on their promise of a diversified awarding academy following the 2016 #BRITsSoWhite campaign. In order to achieve this promise, the BRITs academy removed 718 members, equivalent to 57% of the academy, to accommodate a more diverse selection of members. Female academy members increased from 30% to 48%, just shy of the equal representation of gender it promised, and the number of BAME members increased to 17% (Gumble, 2016). Doherty delegated the shakeup of the academy to a panel consisting of 25 black and Asian representatives of urban and grime music that was co-chaired by Paulette Long and Kwame Kwaten, both influential figures within the music industries. Doherty also reported that he had personally made phone calls to his peers, who he categorised as ‘white, old men’, who were members of the academy and requested that they step aside to enable a new generation of members to take their place (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). The BRIT Awards’ have demonstrated a willingness to contemporise their awarding academy in a bid for better representation and diversity that is more reflective of the modern recording industry.

The announcement from the BRIT Awards about its modified awarding academy, alongside the BPI’s launch of its diversity survey, received praise from across the recording industry including from Kanya King who founded the MOBO Awards in 1996 ‘in order to raise

awareness of the imbalance within the music industry' (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). King said of the BRITs academy shakeup, 'I am delighted, congratulate and thank the BPI for responding to feedback and improving diversity on their BRIT Awards voting panel' (ibid.). The BRIT Awards' successful execution of positive change within their academy allowed the BRITs to present itself as an inclusive and progressive institution that takes action when faced with criticism. Diversity initiatives have been pursued by other major cultural awards such as the Grammy Awards 2018 creation of a task force to investigate diversity and inclusion within its academy, with particular focus on gender, (Snapes, 2018a) and the Oscar Awards' increasing diversification of its academy since 2016 included an additional 819 new academy members in 2020 of which 36% were people of colour and 45% were women (Wheeler, 2020). The BRIT Awards immediate response to criticism regarding its diversity ensure that the awarding institution situated itself as an institution reflexive to change.

Despite this commitment, Doherty was careful to stress that it was not a 'foregone conclusion' that the 2017 nominations would be more diverse (Gumble, 2016) and that artists would still need to have achieved Top 40 success to be considered for a nomination. Two interesting points have arisen out of the BRITs awarding academy shakeup; the importance of the Top 40 and its decision to not include genre categories. Doherty's initial reaction to #BRITsSoWhite acknowledged that the requirement to have achieved Top 40 success was somewhat outdated when 'there are performers, including grime artists, who may not have achieved major chart success but who have attracted large followings, including through social media' (Guardian Music, 2016). The 2017 academy shakeup, however, took care to point out that to be eligible for nomination an artist must have achieved Top 40 success, with Doherty highlighting that the BRITs remained 'a celebration of commercially successful music' (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). The BPI co-own the Official Charts with the Entertainment Retailers Association, making the decision to continue requiring Top 40 participation for BRITs eligibility more of a business decision than one about increasing participation within the BRIT Awards. The Top 40 is an integral feature of the recording industry that supports its practices and business model. Major awarding institutions should be understood as industrial strategies designed to support and promote the major recording industry. As such, the BRIT Awards must require eligibility that ensures mainstream artists and music are prioritised within the awards in order to fulfil their purpose of supporting and promoting the major recording industry.

Read cynically, it would appear that the BPI and the BRIT Awards have managed to position themselves as institutions that advocate for progression while retaining an organisational system – the charts – that is economically valuable to them even if it excludes those whom the awards are trying to ensure are better represented. Post-shakeup discussions also highlighted that the introduction of genre categories were discussed as a way to ensure that genres like grime were represented but were ultimately decided against as a result of consultations with artists, including Stormzy, who agreed that it would be a ‘tokenistic’ move (Ellis-Peterson, 2016). There was a period at the BRIT Awards, between 2003 and 2006, where there was a category for *British Urban Act*. The use of the term urban music, in contemporary Britain, usually refers to rap and R’n’B music and has been historically linked to the music of marginalised groups such as jazz and blues (Ilan, 2012: 41), and can be generally understood to act as an unnuanced term of referral for music of black origin.

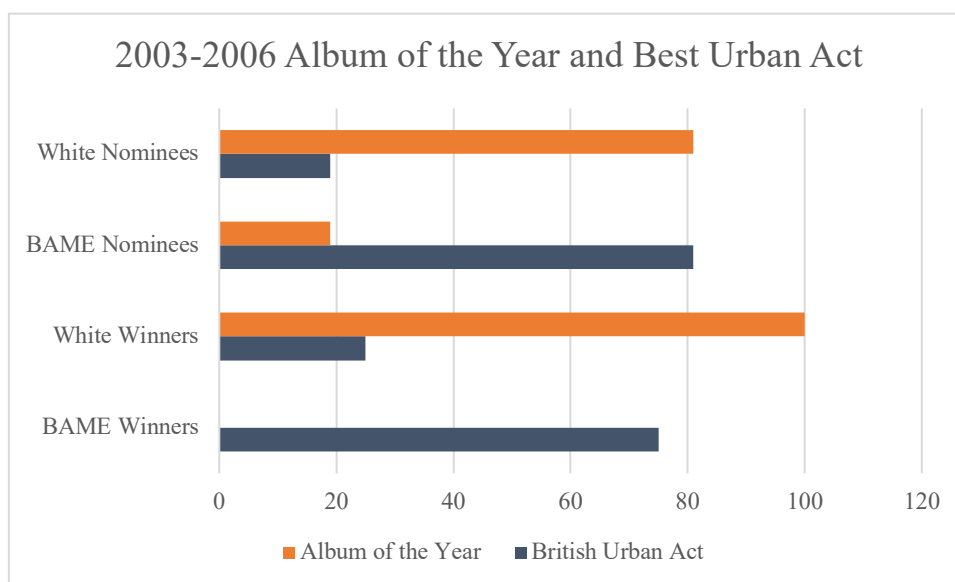


Chart 3.9 – Percentages of Winners and Nominees of Album of the Year and Best Urban Act 2003-2006

Comparing the winners and nominees of the *British Urban Act* and the *Album of the Year* categories demonstrates how a separate category for urban music results in BAME artists being overwhelmingly recognised in that category rather than in the main category. The winners of the *British Urban Act* were 75% BAME and 25% white, and the nominees were 81% BAME and 19% white. Chart 3.9 shows the percentage of BAME and white winners and nominees of the *British Urban Act* and *Album of the Year* awards in the same period. The *Album of the Year* award is only won by white artists, and the percentage of BAME and white nominees is flipped

for each category in a mirror inversion; 81% of the nominees for *Album of the Year* between 2003 and 2006 are white and 19% are BAME. There are no crossovers between the winners of the two categories, though there are two nominees who appear in both; Ms. Dynamite and The Streets. The inclusion of an award category simply for urban music encourages the artists it awards and nominates to be thought of as ‘other’. This encourages distinctions, even if subconscious, to be made between urban music and all other mainstream music which would appear to be on the basis of race, due to the connotations of the term urban, rather than musicality. The decision to avoid a return to genre categories can, therefore, be seen as a move that encourages the academy voters to not dismiss certain artists for the main category prizes because they can be awarded separately in a genre prize. The decision further enforces the mainstream nature of the BRIT Awards. While having only one award for each category ensures that artists are not side-lined to minor categories, it does mean that the only artists eligible to be included within the awards are those who have enjoyed significant mainstream success. Inevitably, only a small pool of artists will be nominated within each category so only the most successful artists from the most mainstream genres will be included. This emphasises the commercial spirit of the BRIT Awards and its focus on promoting the music most valuable to the UK’s major recording industry.

The #BRITsSoWhite scandal highlighted not only how the BRIT Awards were lacking diversity but also how disconnected the awards had become from youth culture and music. In the five years preceding the 2016 criticism, the *Album of the Year* category awarded hugely successful artists from the traditional pop and rock aesthetics: Adele (who won twice), Ed Sheeran, Emeli Sandé and the Arctic Monkeys. Despite the success of these artists, they are not wholly representative of the UK mainstream which had diversified in terms of both racial representation and genre. While rock and pop have been the dominant genres of the UK’s mainstream for many decades, the influence of hip-hop in the mainstream has grown. Between 2015 and 2019, UK rap/hip-hop artists saw their sales and streams increase from 10% to 26.9% for albums and 15.5% to 42.2% for singles (BPI, 2020). Rock has traditionally been a very white and male genre whereas hip-hop, rap and their derivatives like grime are more diverse in terms of both race and gender. In order to remain representative of the mainstream, the BRIT Awards had to refresh and update their awarding academy and practices to ensure that youthful aspects of the mainstream were represented alongside the more traditional. This has ensured that the BRIT Awards have remained relevant and can continue to promote and support the UK’s major recording industry.

Exploring the representation of BAME artists before and after the 2016 BRIT Award academy shakeup is essential for assessing two things: firstly, the representation of BAME artists before the academy was altered and secondly, the effectiveness of diversifying the membership of an awarding academy. There are only three years of awarding (2017-2019) to assess since the academy change resulting in a very small data set to gauge how the academy change has affected the awards. Nonetheless, examining the 36 year period that preceded the academy change will offer important insight into how BAME musicians have been represented throughout the BRITs' history. As the data presented in this section will be a comparison, rather than referring to the amount of artists who are winning and being nominated for awards I will reference the percentage of artists instead.

The number of BAME artists being nominated for and winning the *Album of the Year* award post-2016 significantly increased. Between 1977 and 2016, 17% of the *Album of the Year* winners were BAME artists which rose to 33% between 2017 and 2019. As there are only 3 years of post-2016 data, 33% of the vote accounts for only one artist but Stormzy's 2018 win is still significant in a category where across an 18 year period, between 1995 and 2012, not one single BAME artist won. Furthermore, Stormzy's win marks him as the first grime artist to be given the accolade. Fellow grime artist Dizzee Rascal's critically acclaimed 2003 album *Boy in Da Corner*, which won that year's Mercury Prize, was not even included in the nominations list at that year's BRIT Awards. The nominations for *Album of the Year*, which have a higher number of artists from which to draw data, show a starker change post-2016. Between 1977 and 2016, BAME artists accounted for 18% of the nominees for *Album of the Year*, whereas between 2017 and 2019 they accounted for 42%. There were only two grime artists among these nominees, Kano and Skepta, and a number of BAME artists from other genres. Michael Kiwankuka, an indie/folk singer-songwriter received a nomination, rapper J Hus was recognised as was R'n'B singer Jorja Smith. The diversity of BAME artists being recognised here is important; though the success of grime and its consequent disregard by the BRITs was the catalyst for the BRIT Awards academy overhaul, the diversifying of the academy has facilitated artists from a broader range of genres to be recognised at the awards.

There were a number of artists who released music in 2018 who would have traditionally been recognised at the awards but were overlooked in the 2019 nominations such as Rod Stewart, Take That and Michael Buble. It has been suggested that this is a consequence of 'a less

conservative, more diverse BRITs Voting Academy’ (Paine, 2019), but can also be seen as an attempt to break the repetitive cycle of repeatedly recognising the same established figures. The recognition of younger and more diverse artists in the main categories of the BRIT Awards is arguably a good thing for the recording industry as awards have the power to ‘direct money, attention and prestige’ towards those who win them (English, 2005: 73) meaning that a new generation of fresh British artists who are representative of contemporary Britain and its diversified music mainstream will continue to be celebrated and invested in. This further demonstrates the promotional capacity of awarding institutions and the support they can offer to the major recording industry through the endorsement of certain artists and musical genres.

The representation of BAME artists in the *Single of the Year* and *Group of the Year* categories are somewhat similar to how female and mixed artists were represented in the same categories. There were more BAME artists recognised as both winners and nominees in the *Single of the Year* category pre-2016 compared to its *Album of the Year* counterpart; 31% of the winners and 29% of the nominees were BAME. Interestingly, this is the first time that a minority group has had less nominees than winners. As previously discussed, the *Single of the Year* category holds less prestige than its album counterpart because of the position that the album occupies within the recording industry. The single is less concerned with the genre constructs that surround the album¹⁷ which is why it is an award category that boasts more representation. Post-2016, the BAME winners of *Single of the Year* did not significantly change, rising slightly to 33%, meaning that one of the three winners was BAME. The BAME *Single of the Year* winner was girl band Little Mix, whose members Leigh-Ann Pinnock and Jade Thirwall have mixed heritage backgrounds. The number of nominees for *Single of the Year*, however, rose significantly to 44% accounting for almost half of the nominations. This is reflective of the contemporary British recording industry; it is diverse.

The *Single of the Year* category is reflective of an increasingly common trend in the recording industry of artists featuring on other artist’s single which has accommodated a greater degree of diversity. For example, Calvin Harris was nominated for *Single of the Year* every year between 2017 and 2019 with each nomination being for a collaboration with different artists. His 2017 single was with Rihanna and 2018 collaboration was with Pharrell Williams, Katy Perry and Big Sean which resulted in those nominations counting as BAME, whereas his 2019

¹⁷ The album is a key part of the rock aesthetic.

single with Dua Lipa, which won the category, is not classed as BAME because both artists are white. This also happened with Clean Bandit who were also nominated for their collaborations every year post-2016, however, only one of their three nominations, with Sean Paul and Anne-Marie, was considered BAME. This new trend in the industry can account for the *Single of the Year* category having more BAME nominations and is also demonstrative of the normalisation of an industry practice that was once much rarer; between 1977 and 2009 there were only 9 singles that featured another artist, whereas post-2010 there have been 33 singles that have featured another artist.

The *Group of the Year* category, has been dominated by white males due partly to its predisposition to award bands that sit within the rock genre. Indeed, in 1987 when pop band Five Star won the award a British newspaper headline read, 'Black Family Voted Top Group' (The Telegraph, 1987: 14). Though the novelty of a family winning may have had a part to play in the headline, it is the band's race that is the feature that is primarily pointed out here alluding to the rarity of black artists winning that particular prize. Between 1977 and 2016, 89% of the winners of *Group of the Year* were white artists while only 11% were BAME. Similarly, there were 81% white nominees and 19% BAME nominees. There is not a significant improvement post-2016. Of the nominees, only 25% are classified as BAME while 75% are white. Of the three winners, a white band, The 1975, wins twice. Little Mix lost out on winning *Group of the Year* to The 1975, an all-male and white pop-rock band, on both occasions. During the eligibility period of the 2017 awards, Little Mix had a number one album that charted in that position for five weeks and a number one single whereas The 1975 had a number one album for only one week and didn't have a single that charted in the Top 10. There are clear expectations about the types of groups and bands that can win *Group of the Year*. The other winner of *Group of the Year* during the 2017-2019 period was the Gorillaz, an animated band who I have categorised as BAME because one of their (cartoon) members, Russell Hobbs, is depicted as black and voiced by Remi Kabaka Jr. who is also black. As previously mentioned, however, the Gorillaz were created by Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, neither of whom can be categorised as BAME.

An examination of the main categories at the BRIT Awards shows that BAME representation pre-2016, apart from *Group of the Year*, significantly increased. Though only a small data set, post-2016 representation of BAME artists has, for the most part, significantly improved as a result of the diversification of the BRITs awarding academy. Despite this, there is a severe lack

of BAME representation in the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* category. There have been four occasions when BAME artists have been recognised over its 35 year history. Half of those occasions are recognising the same person; Freddie Mercury and Queen. The other two occasions are for artists in predominately white pop bands; Melanie Brown of the Spice Girls and Simon Webbe from Blue. Similar to the women recognised in the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* category, it is clear that long-term value is currently held in those who possess traditional traits, that is, those white, male and part of the rock canon. The current state of the recording industry, however, gives hope that space has been created to accommodate a more representative and diverse set of musicians as worthy of lifetime achievement awards for their significant contributions to music.

The shakeup of the BRIT Awards' awarding academy signalled the beginning of genuine change and commitment to diversification within both the awards and the wider recording industry. Examining the BRIT Awards post-2016 has shown that the pledged commitment to diversification, in terms of BAME representation, has been materialised. There have been significant increases in the amount of BAME musicians both as nominees and winners of the major award categories. There are still improvements, however, to be made within the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* category. This type of category is often used by awarding institutions to atone for overlooked artists who have made a significant cultural impact. Most often, this is used when a non-mainstream genre eventually becomes important within the mainstream like the Grammy Awards' reluctance to award rock'n'roll which led to many rock'n'roll artists, like Chuck Berry, B.B. King and Jerry Lee Lewis, being retrospectively recognised with a *Lifetime Achievement* award. As a retrospective award, the BRIT *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award will not be used to acknowledge the current batch of young artists within the mainstream. The BRIT Awards could, however, use it to recognise significant UK BAME artists who have been overlooked by the awards in the past in order to address its earlier oversights to further demonstrate its commitment to recognising a diverse UK music industry.

Reflecting on the #BRITsSoWhite scandal and the subsequent changes implemented by the awards indicates that the BRIT Awards occupy a powerful position within the UK's major recording industry. While it has been acknowledged that major awarding institutions are reflective of the major recording industry's practices, the BRIT Awards demonstrate that the awarding institution can also be seen as representative of the industry. Before 2016 the BRITs'

awarding academy reflected the makeup of the music industry's personnel. Traditionally, the recording industry's workforce have been dominated by 'white males from the "college-rock" tradition' (Negus, 1992: 57) which has hugely influenced the representation of the recording industry. More than this, however, Negus (1992: 60) writes that 'it is not simply that there have been hardly any women or black people in key decision-making positions; it is that there have been few people from a popular music tradition other than rock'. For a more diverse group of music to be promoted and endorsed within the major recording industry, a more diverse workforce needed to be working behind the scenes in the industry.

There have been positive steps made towards greater diversity within the UK's major recording industry. In 2015, UK Music announced that they were forming the UK Music Diversity Taskforce to improve equality and diversity across the music industries with particular focus on gender and race and in 2016, the taskforce undertook an industry wide diversity survey which is now annually repeated (UK Music, 2021). The representation of BAME music industry personnel has risen alongside the representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards. In UK Music's inaugural diversity report in 2016, BAME personnel made up 15.6% of the industry workforce and by 2018 this had risen to 17.8% (UK Music, 2018). Significant progress has also been made among senior management with BAME personnel rising from a low 11.4% in 2016 to 18.8% in 2018 (ibid.). Clearly, the UK music industry has been keen to address its diversity issues and as an institution so closely connected to the major industry, the BRIT Awards have very visibly led by example by diversifying their awarding academy and, subsequently, the artists and music it awards.

Exploring the BRIT Awards' reaction to the 2016 #BRITsSoWhite criticism has been essential for demonstrating how impactful institutional change can be to address and improve issues of diversity within popular music awarding institutions. This section has demonstrated how the BRIT Awards responded quickly and effectively to criticism regarding the representation of race within the awards by improving representation within its awarding academy. Through a comparative analysis of artists awarded before and after the academy's 2016 shakeup, this section has shown that the BRIT Awards are more representative of BAME artists in the wake of the adjustments to its members. There are some exceptions to this finding, as the representation of BAME artists did not improve in the BRIT Awards' *Outstanding Contribution to Music* category and there was minimal improvement in the *Group of the Year* category. The *Group of the Year* category is typically dominated by bands who conform to the

rock aesthetic which can go some way to explaining why its representation has not improved as rock bands are predominantly white males. Chapter Five will further examine the representation of genre at the BRIT Awards, giving further insight into this issue. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that improvements have been made to BAME representation within the BRIT Awards.

As a major awarding institution linked to the UK's major recording industry, the BRIT Awards are reflective of the institution's practices and biases. It is clear that as the BRIT Awards were diversifying their academy, so too was the major recording industry diversifying its personnel. This demonstrates how major popular music awarding institutions can be utilised to better understand the major recording industry. Though there has been significant improvements made in representation at the BRIT Awards in terms of BAME artists, there is still improvements to be made in terms of gender as the academy's overhaul did not have the same impact on improving the representation of women within the same categories. Between 2017 and 2019, there were no female winners of either the *Album of the Year* or *Group of the Year* categories. Women also only made up 25%, 19% and 17% of the *Album of the Year*, *Single of the Year* and *Group of the Year* category nominations indicating that there have not been increases in the representation of women artists along the same lines of female academy members. This will of course impact on the intersection of female BAME artists as well. Though this section offers hope for better representation at the BRIT Awards and across the major recording industry, there is still progress to be made which must be monitored to ensure that these few years of analysis are not an anomaly.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the BRIT Awards have a significant gender disparity among their winners and nominees and that BAME artists have been under-represented. Exploring the history of the BRIT Awards has shown how the BRIT Awards were established by the BPI which is representative of the UK's major recording industry. Consequently, similarly to the exploration of the Grammy Awards in Chapter One, the BRIT Awards can be understood as an industrial strategy conceived to support and promote the major recording industry's best interests. As such, exploring the representation of artists and music at the BRIT Awards can also be understood as a reflection of the representation of artists and music within the UK's

major recording industry. It can therefore be understood that the significant gender disparity and underrepresentation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards is symptomatic of similar issues within the major recording industry. This indicates the value in examining major popular music awarding institutions; the results reveal trends within the awarding institution and its connected recording industry, doubling the impact of the research.

The statistical analysis in this chapter shows that women are much less likely than their male counterparts to be nominated and win across four major categories at the BRIT Awards. The results of this analysis informed a discussion around the role of gender in genre, demonstrating the dominance of men within both pop and rock. Genre differences were particularly prominent in the *Group of the Year* category which is more likely to be won by a rock band. As rock is dominated by white, male artists it was unsurprising that the category overwhelmingly overlooked women. Additionally, the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* category has almost exclusively been given to male artists, which shows that women are even less likely to be awarded for lasting impact than the annual awards. Examination of the *Producer of the Year* category showed that no women had ever been awarded within the category which is similarly reflective of the male dominated field of sound production, again demonstrating how the awards are reflective of major recording industry practice. Furthermore, analysing the genders of BRIT Award ceremony performers demonstrated that women are more likely to perform than be nominated or win an award which indicates that women are more valued as performers than artists. The general gender disparity at the BRIT Awards is equally reflected within the major recording industry which is a traditionally male dominated field indicating that there is much work to be done to level the playing field.

Finally, the #BRITsSoWhite scandal was examined in order to better understand racial representation at the BRIT Awards. A comparative analysis of the awards before and after the scandal shows that the BRIT Awards' response to criticism regarding representation and diversity has improved the representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards but that there is still work to be done regarding the representation of female artists. The lack of BAME artists within the BRIT Awards is reflective of the lack of BAME artists and personnel within the major recording industry. The BRIT Awards' timely and effective response to diversify the makeup of their awarding academy mirrors the changes being made by the wider recording industry to improve the diversification of personnel. This is indicative of the increasing diversity within mainstream music which is moving away from the dominance of rock and pop

and broadening to include more genres derived from hip-hop and rap. This demonstrates how major popular music awarding institutions, and the major recording industry, must adapt and evolve in order to survive and retain their position of dominance. Moreover, these findings further highlight the value in examining popular music awarding institutions due to the rich data that can be extracted and analysed which better informs our understanding of the operations of the major recording industry.

Chapter Four – Elevating Scandal: The Politics of the Awards Ceremony as Integral to the Awarding Process.

As the public face of the awarding institution, the award ceremony is responsible for generating intrigue and attracting an audience through the production of spectacle, controversy and scandal. As a televised event that acts as the culmination of the annual awarding process, the ceremony ensures that the awarding institution continues to remain relevant and appealing to its audience. It achieves this by demonstrating its authority to judge and evaluate music through its capacity to stage a highly entertaining show that brings together the best in music. The entertainment at the ceremony often relies on the unpredictable nature of live television and the production of controversy and scandal. Cultural award ceremonies are highly symbolic events that have established conventions and codes of behaviour that guests are expected to adhere to and that, when broken, create scandal. At the 1974 Grammy Awards, Cher broke the conventional black tie dress code by wearing what was essentially a bikini to the ceremony which caused scandal in subsequent press coverage. The winners and losers of awards are expected to act with grace so when, at the 1998 Grammy Awards, Wu Tang Clan lost *Rap Album of the Year* to Puff Daddy and crashed Shawn Colvin's acceptance speech for *Song of the Year* in protest, the expected conventions were broken and thus, scandal ensued. Unlike other cultural award ceremonies that award cultural products that are difficult to recreate in a live capacity, like literature or television programmes, the popular music award ceremony is staged around live popular music performances which are capable of generating a range of spectacle, controversy and scandal. The 2003 MTV Video Music Awards ceremony, for example, has lived on in infamy for providing the platform during a medley performance of *Like a Virgin*, *Hollywood* and *Work It* for Britney Spears and Madonna to kiss which caused spectacle and scandal which dominated press coverage of the awards.

This chapter establishes the importance of the televised award ceremony to the awarding institution and its role in ensuring the institution remains relevant and continues operating. This thesis has thus far explored major popular music awarding institutions in terms of their history and motivations, connections to the major recording industry and the artists and music they

recognise. This chapter will further expand our understanding of these institutions by demonstrating the essential role the ceremony plays as a promotional tool for the institution. It will be argued that spectacle, controversy and scandal are essential currency for the award ceremony and that the ceremony acts as a promotional platform not just for itself but for the artists that perform. Through the analysis of case studies from the BRIT Awards and Grammy Awards, it will be established that spectacle, controversy and scandal operate in different ways at the award ceremony to different effects. These case studies will offer an understanding of how scandal can occur organically and how controversy can be courted by the ceremony for its promotional capabilities. It will be argued that the ceremony must engage with topical interests and popular culture trends which has resulted in the Grammy Awards becoming increasingly politicised throughout the twenty-first century. It will be further argued that the political views expressed at the ceremony do not represent the views of the awarding institution but are encouraged for the coverage they generate.

These arguments will be presented across three sections. Firstly, a short history of the contemporary cultural award ceremony will be provided to establish how the ceremony has evolved and what its role is within the awarding institution. The importance of the television and the symbolism of the ceremony will be established as integral to the ceremony's identity and position within popular culture. This section will also demonstrate how scandal and controversy have been harnessed by the awarding institution and stars alike since the early days of the televised award ceremony. The next section will explore the 1996 BRIT Awards as an organically scandalous ceremony due to Jarvis Cocker's interruption of Michael Jackson's performance of *Earth Song*. The reaction to the scandal in the press will be explored, examining how Cocker and Jackson were positioned against each other to further the controversy and scandal of the event. Analysis of the event will demonstrate how beneficial scandal was to both the BRIT Awards and the artists involved in terms of reputational gains and increased record sales. The final section will explore the increasingly politicised nature of the Grammy Awards throughout the twenty-first century, with particular attention on Kendrick Lamar's 2016 performance and Kesha's 2018 performance. A comparative analysis between these two political artists and their representation within the awards will demonstrate that though the performances reflect current trends and concerns within popular culture, the awarding institution does not necessarily reflect or represent these values within their awarding. Ultimately, it will be argued throughout that as the public facing component of the awarding

process, the award ceremony is responsible for promoting and protecting the awarding institution's continued appeal and viability.

4.2 A Short History of the Contemporary Cultural Award Ceremony

Cultural award ceremonies, such as the Oscar Awards and the Grammy Awards, have become a highly anticipated event within the annual cycle of entertainment industry production. The awards ceremony is a symbolic event that acts as the focal point of the awards cycle; it is the culmination of the awarding process, the nominations and the selection, and lends voice and tangibility to an otherwise elusive practice that largely takes place away from the public. This section establishes the history of the cultural award ceremony and its role within the awarding institution. Despite the ceremony being the component of awarding most examined by scholarly literature, it will be established that there is often a conflation between the ceremony and the awarding institution. The ceremony should be acknowledged as the public facing component of the awarding institution that is responsible for the promotion of the awards and consequently, the continuation of the institution's operations. It will be argued that controversy, spectacle and scandal are integral to the success of the ceremony which will be demonstrated through the important role that television has played in the establishment of the ceremony as an important cultural event. The symbolic nature of the ceremony situates the event as extraordinary within the recording industry's annual calendar which sets up a ready backdrop for spectacle and controversy to occur. As there are expected behavioural conventions at award ceremonies, for example, a smart dress code and best behaviour, it will be established that breaches within these conventions cause controversy and scandal. This analysis demonstrates the essential role that the awarding institution has to play in the awarding process which will form the foundation for the two case studies used in the second half of the chapter to demonstrate the necessity of spectacle, controversy and scandal to the awarding ceremony.

The scant amount of scholarship on the popular music awarding ceremony has been acknowledged by a handful of scholars (English, 2002: 109; Lussier, 2014: 129; Street, 2005b: 820; Street, 2014: 182; Young, 2004: 271). English (2002: 109) suggests that the overwhelming ubiquity and volume of awards within popular culture has prevented their extensive examination while Street (2014: 182) suggests that there is a scepticism around awards which leads to their perception as 'either a charade or a stitch-up'. The current literature tends to conflate the ceremony with the entire awarding process which is perhaps due to the visibility

of the ceremony and the media focus on the ceremony rather than the institution that backs it. As established throughout this thesis so far, there are several ways in which the awarding institution operates outside of the ceremony. Indeed, the ceremony is the final step in the annual process of awarding; it is the public facing component of the awarding institution designed to draw attention to the awards and, in doing so, protects their continued operation through maintaining public interest and attracting sponsors.

The popular music awards ceremony has predominately been examined from a popular music or popular culture viewpoint. It has also been examined using perspectives from ritual theory to demonstrate that ‘award ceremonies are important institutional mechanisms for shaping organizational fields’ (Anand and Watson, 2004: 59). Anand and Watson (2004: 60) identify tournament rituals as ‘taking the form of a public spectacle’ by having a distinct and recognisable symbolic structure that sets them apart from other events and activity within the field. They assert that the award ceremony and its rituals help to influence the evolution of fields through four processes, (1) they distribute prestige in situated performances, (2) by hosting a ‘highly charged ceremonial form’ – the ceremony – the collective attention of a field can be captured, (3) they respond to and resolve conflict concerning the legitimacy of actors within the field and (4) they tighten horizontal linkages within the field by creating links between various actors within the recording industry (Anand and Watson, 2004: 59). Anand and Watson’s work is important for understanding the mechanisms of the award ceremony when situated within its own field and industry. They recognise the spectacle of the ceremony but connect it to the awarding institution’s values. The case studies presented later in this chapter will show that this is not always the case and that there are times when the controversy or spectacle that appears at an awards ceremony is at odds with the awarding institution’s values.

A history of the development and purpose of the cultural award ceremony is essential for understanding how the ceremony operates as part of the awarding institution and its processes. The social and political changes of the latter half of the twentieth century had a direct impact on the construction and influence of cultural award ceremonies. These ceremonies rose to prominence in the early 1970s as ‘both a cause and an effect of much broader transformations in the mode of cultural production’ and as a direct consequence of ‘the rise of cultural capital’ (English, 2005: 74). Within the field of cultural production, Bourdieu (1993: 75) asserts that symbolic goods are objects that only have value that they have been prescribed. For fields that

deal within the currency of symbolic goods, such as the recording industry, it is essential to have ways to amplify the importance of the objects that the field has deemed valuable. As cultural production and products were becoming increasingly important throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the cultural award ceremony was one such way to amplify what was deemed valuable within a cultural field and draw further attention, prestige and authority in doing so.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, popular culture had become increasingly commercialised, available and important to the everyday lives of Anglo-American citizens as society changed from 'producing to consuming' (Henderson, 1992: 50). From the middle of the century onwards, the economic market for symbolic goods expanded (English, 2005: 77) accommodating an environment ripe for the cultural awards ceremony to thrive. Alongside symbolic goods, celebrity culture had become increasingly important both culturally (Gamson, 1994: 43) and economically (Dyer, 1979: 10). Celebrities were becoming firm household fixtures, appearing not only through the audio-visual mediums of the record, radio, film and television but also in print through new, specialised magazines that focused on celebrity personalities such as *People Magazine* which was founded in 1974 (Gamson, 1994: 43). As celebrities became more familiar through not just their professional work but also through their personal appearances on chat shows and in magazines and newspaper gossip columns, people became more invested in the lives of celebrities which strongly contributed to the context in which cultural award ceremonies could become successful.

Cultural awarding academies established throughout the first half of the twentieth century took precedence over their ceremonies; as demonstrated in Chapter One, the NARAS, for example, was more prominent than the Grammy Award ceremony. From the 1970s onwards, however, this changed as the ceremony overtook the visibility of the academies as live award ceremonies became common place. Not only had celebrity culture taken root in audiences but television ownership had also hugely increased. In 1960, 67.48% of UK households had a television which significantly increased to 91.85% in 1970 (Closer, 2019). In the USA, 87.1% of households had a television in 1960 rising to 95.2% in 1970 (American Century, 2014). There is a direct correlation to be made between the success of cultural awarding ceremonies and the increasing prominence of television as award ceremonies gained wider audiences, cultural relevance and importance through television's ability to transmit the show to millions of people. The success of the cultural awarding ceremony and its envelopment into the increasing

demand for celebrity culture that accompanied the rise of television rendered the cultural awarding academy as a less visible, yet no less important, element of the awarding process. The public were interested in the glitz and glamour of the ceremony which replicated aspects of Hollywood glamour that they were already familiar with, not the administrative actions of its associated academy.

Television has long been tied to music and recognised as a valuable promotional tool for music and musicians. Indeed, as television became domesticated in the 1940s and early 1950s there was a keen awareness among musicians and their management ‘that television heralded exciting new possibilities for displaying their talents and reaching the public’ (Foreman, 2002: 250). Television familiarised audiences with their favoured pop stars and presented opportunities for singles and albums to be promoted through music television such as American Bandstand, formed in 1952, which promoted Top 40 records. Frith (2002: 279-280) argues that there are limitations to television’s role as a music medium but that ‘the musical moments that we remember are the ones that disrupt the flow, that become newsworthy’. The televised popular music award ceremony arguably constitutes a television event that disrupts the flow and becomes newsworthy due to the very nature of the award ceremony which is expected to operate through intrigue, spectacle and scandal.

Television is the vital component of the awarding institution that brings the awards to the attention of the masses and thus secures the awards’ continued operation. Television has been identified as ‘the most crucial element in the constitution of the prize’ as it makes the ceremony ‘worthy of coverage’ due to the components included in the broadcast such as certain celebrities (Street, 2005b: 832). Despite being televised since 1953, the 1970 Oscar Awards are cited as a pivotal moment in the importance of cultural awards due to its audience share of 43% of all households with televisions in America (English, 2005: 80). This constitutes almost half of the American population tuning in to watch the Oscar Awards which demonstrates the mass appeal of the cultural award ceremony. The Oscars broadcast cemented the cultural awards ceremony as the public facing component of the awarding cycle, responsible for the promotion of the awards and their continued operation.

Film was not the only cultural industry whose award ceremonies were attracting large audience shares at this time as the 1973 Grammy Awards boasted a 53% audience share in the US (English, 2005: 82). The early 1970s signalled increased competition by the major American

television networks in securing the contracts to air increasingly popular cultural award ceremonies. For the networks, award ceremonies were a relatively cheap expenditure that generated large amounts of profits through advertising which led to increased competition between the networks to host the most popular ceremonies (ibid.). In 1972 ABC, the original network home of the Grammys, declined to renew its contract to air the ceremony due to an argument about its venue, resulting in rival network CBS taking on the contract and airing the 1973 show instead. The veritable success of the 1973 Grammy Awards was a disappointment for ABC who had lost the contract to air the Oscar Awards that year as well (ibid.). Television networks were recognising the benefits of airing hugely popular award ceremonies and audiences were increasingly tuning in to watch the consecration of the music, film, television and artists of the day.

The Grammy Awards' status as the only major popular music awarding institution was usurped not by a musical competitor but by a television network. As briefly explored in Chapter Two, in response to the loss of revenue created by losing the contract to air the Grammy Awards, ABC decided to create their own award show: the American Music Awards [AMAs]. The AMAs, which are still functioning today, were launched in 1974 and marketed as an awarding institution that operated very differently to the Grammy Awards. Rather than an academy of recording industry experts voting, the AMAs relied on the audience to vote for their favourite artists of the year, employed popular entertainers to host the show and promised to include the most popular pop stars in its line-up (English, 2005: 82). The AMAs demonstrate how valuable the awards ceremony was to the television networks as a way of generating revenue as throughout the 1970s to the 1990s, the AMAs regularly attracted 30-40% of the audience share. The AMAs, as an awarding institution designed to attract high audience share, establish what audiences valued about the televised cultural award ceremony; the stars and spectacle.

To achieve success, an award ceremony must include popular artists and stars in the ceremony to either perform, be seen or given the opportunity to be valued through the consecration of a prize. A successful award ceremony, then, is capable of generating spectacle, bestowing prestige and offering the possibility of scandal. The ceremony allows attendees to be seen, gain publicity and accumulate cultural capital through their participation in such an esteemed event in the industry. Two of Anand and Watson's four processes concerning the ceremony contend that the ceremony distributes prestige and attracts the attention of a field, or industry (2004: 59), which gives an incentive to artists to attend because they stand to gain something from the

ceremony even if it is only being photographed or acknowledged as being there. Award ceremonies constitute an important event within the annual calendar of the recording industry and participating in them demonstrates that the artist is active within the industry and important enough to be included. The potential to gain from the ceremony increases the more involved the star is; more attention is given to those who present awards, those who win them and those who perform. Even more attention is given to those who generate spectacle and scandal.

The award ceremony is the final component of the awarding cycle where the nominees all come together to find out who the winners will be, but the award ceremony must do much more than this in order to operate successfully. ‘The symbolic aspect of the awards night ceremony is essential to validate the prestige and peer approval that is bestowed upon the winners’ (Anand and Watson, 2006: 55), and without such symbolism the event would be indiscernible from the many others that take place across the entertainment industries. The award ceremony is highly recognisable as there are several symbolic components that serve as the foundation for the construction of a ceremony and regardless of the industry or the size of the awarding institution, each awarding ceremony has recognisable components to its counterparts. Anand and Watson (2004: 67) contend that various symbolic elements make the ceremony into a ritual including the venue, the artefacts and the adherence to a set of routines. Certainly, there is a ritualistic element to the ceremony with expectations from critics and the public alike about how the ceremony will operate.

The highly symbolic nature of the award ceremony establishes both the prestige and the spectacle required for a successful ceremony. Venues for ceremonies will often change each year but there are elements that will remain such as the venue’s reputation within the field. For example, the Grammy Awards is often held at the Staples Centre in Los Angeles which is a significant arena where multiple high-profile artists including Taylor Swift and Bruce Springsteen have performed and cultural events have been held such as Michael Jackson’s memorial service in 2009. The ceremony’s venue signifies the calibre of the ceremony and establishes the level of award and type of ceremony that can be expected. The BRIT Awards are often hosted at London arenas such as The O2 or Wembley Arena whereas the Mercury Music Prize has been hosted at smaller venues such as London’s Roundhouse which is a smaller venue but one nevertheless well respected as a significant, independent venue where artists such as Bob Dylan have performed.

Award ceremonies of differing social status across industries and within the same fields will still have significant symbolic components in common. The trophy is the object most associated with awards and is ‘the most concrete and material representation of a prize’s symbolic value’ (English, 2005: 156). The trophy is the coveted item with which the winner will pose on the equally symbolic red carpet to signify their success and recognition by the awarding institution. More often than not, the trophy will become synonymous with the award such as the Gramophone trophy that gives the Grammy Awards its name. There is a continuity to the trophy that binds the annual awards together, providing a show that audiences watch but once a year with an instantly recognisable symbol to remind them of the awards and what they can expect. Changes to the trophy design are rare with exceptions made only for significant moments such as the Oscar Awards’ honorary recognition of Walt Disney with an Oscar Award trophy and seven miniatures in 1939 for the ‘significant screen innovation’ of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (Oscars, 2021). The trophy is an inherent feature of the awards ceremony that symbolises not only the event but the value bestowed by the awarding institution to the year’s winners.

Other highly symbolic emblems of the award ceremony that induce spectacle and prestige include the red carpet, the dress code and certain practices such as the opening of the envelope containing the winner’s name. These features add expectation and gravitas to the ceremony while also creating a sense of familiarity for the audience. The audience knows what to look for when they are watching; they know when the camera pans to the expectant nominee waiting for the winner of their category to be announced that the category losers should still conduct themselves with good grace when the winner is announced. To not adhere to these practices results can result in scandal. At the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, rapper Kanye West interrupted Taylor Swift’s acceptance of the award for *Best Female Video* to tell the audience that another nominee in the category, Beyoncé, should have won instead. The incident caused such scandal at the time that even the American president, Barack Obama, commented on the affair calling West a ‘jackass’ for his conduct (Cullen, 2016: 33). This demonstrates not only the cultural significance of the popular music award ceremony but also the importance of the etiquette that accompanies it. The ceremony operates as an event that has accepted customs which, when compromised, updated or changed, causes scandal.

Scandal is an integral component of the continuing success of cultural award ceremonies. There are many ways in which scandal can be defined but Adut (2008: 13), writing about moral

disturbances in society, politics and art, contends that scandals can be short-lived or long lasting. A long lasting scandal is when a serious transgression has been committed, such as the Nixon Watergate scandal of the 1970s, whereas a short-lived scandal can be something much less serious in tone which therefore shortens its shelf life. Award ceremonies are the perfect breeding ground for a short-lived scandal as there is so much potential for mishaps, outrage and hurt feelings at such highly charged events. Scandal is integral to the operations of an award ceremony, indeed, English (2002: 113) writes that ‘scandal, or the threat and promise of scandal, is constitutive of prizes as we know them’. The spectacle and prestige of awards forms the foundation of the ceremony but it is the potential for scandal that continues to entice viewers to watch award ceremonies for multiple cultural industries each year. There is now an expectation of scandal at award ceremonies (English, 2002: 117), whether it is a scandal as insignificant as a risqué outfit or as bombastic as a stage invasion; scandal is now part of the currency of the award ceremony.

Scandal and controversy is not a new phenomenon at the cultural award ceremony. Controversies are inherent within the process of awarding due to notions of value that have been explored thus far in this thesis. The awarding process will often ignore those who are deemed worthy of recognition and award those who later fade into oblivion. These scandals will often play out at the award ceremony and in the press commentary surrounding the event. Indeed, Street (2005: 831) has asserted that it is the awards’ coverage in the press that helps to build the profile of the awarding ceremony and ‘articulate the cultural value that the prize represents’. The press coverage of the cultural awarding ceremony certainly builds the awards’ reputation but the ceremony is not always representative of the awarding institution’s values due to the necessary spectacle required to attract audiences to the ceremony. Award ceremonies can invite stars and artists to attend or perform at the ceremony who will not be recognised with an award, but who will inevitably attract an audience. The ceremony is essential for the awarding institution as it provides ‘successful strategies of press handling and audience attraction’ (English, 2005: 73) which ensures the continued operations of the institution. Though there is scandal tied up in the very act of awarding, scandal also presents itself through the actions of those attending the ceremony which cannot always be anticipated or expected.

The most enduring award ceremony scandals are often those created by stars. Stars soon realised that by attending award ceremonies they could initiate scandals and harness the ceremony for their own purposes. The rise of the televised cultural award ceremony happened

alongside the development of several political movements throughout the 1960s and 70s, such as the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the anti-war protests and the gay liberation movement. These movements permeated popular culture, particularly popular music, so their inclusion into cultural award ceremonies was inevitable. An early example of scandal at a cultural award ceremony was the 1973 Oscar Awards where Marlon Brando rejected the *Best Actor* Oscar awarded to him by sending Native American actress Sacheen Littlefeather in his place to highlight the poor treatment that Native Americans experienced in Hollywood. The refusal of an award is in itself scandalous as it interrupts the ritual and regularity of the ceremony (English, 2002: 119). Littlefeather's appearance alone caused outrage, with actor John Wayne having to be physically restrained from taking to the stage to remove Littlefeather (Gilio-Whitaker, 2012). Brando's refusal of his award was not just a refusal of the awarding institution's offer of prestige but a wider refusal of the film industry and its practices which not only caused scandal but also provided a blueprint for how ceremonies could be utilised for highlighting social or political wrongdoings. This episode demonstrates the scandal that can be evoked through a deviation from what is expected at the ceremony.

Spectacle, controversy and scandal have become conventions within the award ceremony that are key to its success. Award ceremonies must deliver entertainment through the guise of spectacle and scandal alongside the bestowment of prestige through award giving in order to continue appealing to the public which consequently allows the awards to continue operating year after year. Driscoll (2014: 140) correctly asserts that 'scandal builds a prize's visibility, and thus contributes to its success as a media event'. Considering the award ceremony as a media event (Street, 2005: 820) can help to broaden our understanding of the award ceremony and also help to explain why spectacle and scandal are so important to the ceremony's operations. If the award ceremony operates as the public facing component of the awarding process then it is vital for the ceremony to demonstrate the awards' continued relevance and ability to draw an audience. More than this the ceremony operates as a media event in its own right that has several invested stakeholders.

The ceremony exists not just to fulfil the final stage of the awarding process but to promote the awards and its associated partners such as the event's sponsors. Corporate sponsorship of award ceremonies is common, as explored in Chapter Three the BRIT Awards have a long-standing sponsorship with Mastercard, and there is an expectation that the sponsorship is mutually beneficial for the sponsor and awarding institution. Equally, the television network hosting the

ceremony has expectations that the ceremony will prove profitable for them and their advertisers. Just as nominees and winners of awards often experience an increase in sales, those involved in an awards ceremony also expect returns. There is an ‘economy of spectacle’ tied up in awarding (English, 2005: 34), which is facilitated by the journalistic commentary that promotes and dissects the awarding process. As the culmination of the awarding process, the ceremony is the subject of anticipatory press coverage before the event, which will promote who is nominated for awards, who will be performing and who will be attending. The coverage will often speculate about any potential scandal that could occur at the ceremony, such as a controversial artist performing, and will confirm what spectacle can be expected, both of which helps to promote the awards and encourage people to watch the ceremony. The awarding institution will not necessarily share the values espoused at the ceremony but they will equally welcome the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to host artists who are culturally relevant which illustrates the institution’s unique position to judge popular culture. The awarding institution is dependent on the awarding ceremony’s continued cultural relevance and success; without the ceremony the institution is left adrift and incapable of signifying its own ability to bestow judgement and prestige.

4.3 The Scandalous 1996 BRIT Awards Ceremony

The 1996 BRIT Awards ceremony is arguably the most memorable and iconic ceremony in the awards’ long history. This section will explore the scandalous nature of the 1996 ceremony focusing primarily on Michael Jackson’s performance of *Earth Song* and its interruption by Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker. This case study will exemplify the spectacle of award ceremonies and the increased opportunity for spectacle when scandal is involved, highlighting how these elements are essential to the ceremony’s success. It will also highlight the rarity of a true scandal at an awards ceremony. Press coverage of the ceremony will be utilised to demonstrate how scandal is reported and perpetuated and the benefits this brings to both the ceremony and the artists involved. The nationality of the artists and their reputations prior to the ceremony will be examined in relation to the reception of the ceremony and the unfolding of the scandal. It will be argued that the scandal furthered the visibility of the BRIT Awards and that the awards’ profile was subsequently elevated.

As briefly explored in Chapter Three, the BRIT Awards updated and expanded their awarding academy after criticism following the 1993 awards and the consequent formation of the *NME*’s

BRAT Awards which resulted in the BRIT Awards widening the scope of the artists they recognised and honoured. After 1993, the BRIT Awards became more representative of music dominating the pop music charts, such as Britpop, with BRIT Awards being given to artists previously recognised by the BRAT Awards. As a consequence, the BRIT Awards' image evolved from a purely commercialised, pop awards to an awarding institution that could convincingly claim to be 'street credible' (De Lisle, 1996: 17). These changes expanded the viability of the BRIT Awards and facilitated the growth of their audience to also include those who had previously sneered at the awards as too commercial. The artists nominated and awarded at the 1996 BRIT Awards reflected these changes to better reflect music that was both popular and commercial. For example, Alanis Morissette 'whose lyrics give listeners something to think about as well as something to sing along to' won *Best International Newcomer* over pop boyband Boyzone (De Lisle, 1996: 17). Morissette was not a typical female pop star for the time, she was a singer-songwriter multi-instrumentalist whose work could be categorised in the genres of rock or alternative. Despite this, Morissette's album *Jagged Little Pill* achieved both critical acclaim and global commercial success, topping album charts in 13 countries. Morissette's recognition at the BRIT Awards, which included a performance from Morissette, demonstrates the expansion of the types of artists being recognised since the changes implemented at the awards post-1993. Though Morissette is not a typical pop star, she is still hugely commercially successful which cinches her inclusion at the awards.

The *International Female Solo Artist* category included a wide variety of successful, non-British female artists. Morissette was nominated alongside fellow Canadian singer-songwriter k.d. lang and pop divas Mariah Carey and Celine Dion but Björk won the category. It was lamented that the recognition of these varied and impressive artists should have been the moments that the 1996 BRIT Awards were remembered for (in light of the fierce criticism of the 1993 awards) but instead the scandal at the ceremony overshadowed the event (De Lisle, 1996: 17). There is a delicate balancing act, which is rarely achieved, that the awarding institution must carry out between the act of awarding and the theatrics of the ceremony. For the awards to remain viable they must continue to generate money through deals with television networks, advertisers and sponsors who expect a ceremony worthy of column inches and audience share. That type of ceremony is not always conducive to the artistic aims of the awarding institution so instead a balance must be achieved where the awarding institution can achieve its aims through the process of awarding but retain its viability and sponsors through

the inclusion of artists and antics at the ceremony that attract the attention necessary to continue operating.

The major award categories at the 1996 BRIT Awards, *British Album of the Year*, *British Group* and *British Single of the Year*, were dominated by Britpop artists for the second year. The inclusion of Britpop at the awards addressed the criticism levelled at the awards and increased the BRIT Awards' credibility. In 1995, Britpop rival bands Oasis and Blur were nominated for *Album of the Year* with Blur's *Parklife* winning the award over Oasis' *Definitely Maybe*. Much had been made of the band's rivalries in the press with comparisons between the band centred around their class identities and musical styles. In itself, the rivalry between the bands created a spectacle at the awards in both 1995 and 1996 and scandal arose from Oasis' perceived rock'n'roll behaviour. At the 1996 awards, for example, as Oasis were accepting the award for *Album of the Year*, guitarist Noel Gallagher made an off-hand comment about INXS' frontman Michael Hutchence who presented the award to the band. Gallagher said of Hutchence, on stage, 'has-beens shouldn't present fucking awards to gonna-bes' (De Lisle, 1996: 17). This use of insulting and foul language to a colleague created a degree of scandal, though would be largely overshadowed by the Jackson and Cocker debacle, due to Gallagher's deviation of expected decorum at the awards.

Award ceremonies, as formal events, operate on a set of acceptable and expected conventions such as formal dress and polite socialisation. The gruff language and unkempt appearances of Oasis aided the creation of this minor scandal by deviating from the expected conventions, even in the face of their rock personas. Scandals of this kind, however, have become expected at award ceremonies with more journalists adopting a 'playful or reflexive prize commentary in which "scandal" seems to circulate in scare quotes with winks and nudges' passed between journalists and the audience (English, 2002: 117). The audience has come to expect scandal in this format at awards; the anti-establishment rocker turning up to the ceremony dressed no different than any other day and indulging themselves of the free alcohol which invariably leads to some form of gaffe. Scandals of this type are indulged by journalists and audiences alike as what is to be expected of artistic individuals who live outside the realm of everyday normality. In a way, they serve as an entertaining side show to the main event of bestowing prestige onto certain artists and music. Indeed, their absence would make the event less appealing for audiences who enjoy the authenticity that comes with the event's liveness.

Similarly, unexpected guests at an awards ceremony can also generate this type of smaller scale scandal. At the 1996 BRIT Awards, for example, Tony Blair and John Prescott, then-leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party, attended the ceremony to promote the Rock the Vote initiative to encourage young people to vote in the coming election (Moore, 1996: 5). Blair also presented the *Outstanding Contribution to Music* award to David Bowie, using the opportunity to appeal to potential voters at home by demonstrating his cultural capital and everyman credentials. The awards' host, radio DJ and television presenter Chris Evans, introduced Blair to the stage as 'the foot-tapping, pop loving, he's got nice hair, Tony Blair!', demonstrating a sense of familiarity between Blair and the world of pop culture. Despite this familiarity, the juxtaposition of politicians amongst the top artists of the day was enough to draw some press attention and would have perhaps been the leading news story of the evening if a truly scandalous moment had not occurred.

Rarely, are there moments at award ceremonies that sit outside of the unspoken agreement that ceremonies should perform spectacles and have at least some degree of small scale scandal. The 1996 BRIT Awards unwittingly hosted one such truly scandalous moment. Michael Jackson, the self-proclaimed King of Pop, had been secured to perform at the ceremony in the wake of a few years of personal and legal challenges. In 1993, Jackson was accused of child sexual abuse, a criminal case was brought against him by the Los Angeles police department and a subsequent lawsuit was filed by the child's parents. The media fallout from the allegations were substantial, with headlines about the alleged abuse appearing all over the world. Jackson denied the allegations, the criminal case was dropped and Jackson settled the lawsuit out of court paying an estimated \$20 million to the child's family (Steinhaus, 2004). The ensuing scandal around the allegations, however, had a huge impact on Jackson's career and personal life including the cancellation of tours, loss of a nine year, multi-million dollar advertising deal with Pepsi and an addiction to painkillers (Robinson, 1993). Jackson's performance at the 1996 BRIT Awards was part of an extensive public rehabilitation of the artist's reputation which included the release of a new album *HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book I*.

Michael Jackson was awarded the *Artist of a Generation* award at the 1996 BRITs; an award that had never been awarded before and has never been awarded since. An early trick deployed by the Grammy Awards to ensure nominated stars would come to the ceremony to perform was to secretly reveal to them that they had won their category (Schipper, 1992: 15), and it

would appear that the BRIT Awards did something similar here. Michael Jackson's appearance at the BRIT Awards was a coup for the awards in term of marketing. A combination of Jackson's status in the pop music world, his reputation for putting on a spectacular show and the recent scandal he had been embroiled in, would help to guarantee an impressive audience keen to tune in and watch the King of Pop's comeback. Through securing Jackson to perform at the awards with the promise of honouring a figure who had been recently accused of a very serious crime, the BRIT Awards were engaging with an already scandalous artist banking on that pre-existing scandal to ensure viewership and engagement with the awards.

As Michael Jackson performed a rather self-indulgent *Earth Song*, complete with religious overtones casting Jackson as the redeeming messiah, Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker, who was in the BRIT Awards audience, took to the stage to interrupt what he perceived as a 'distasteful' performance (Wroe, 1996a: 13). Jackson's performance was every bit the spectacle expected at an awards ceremony. Bob Geldof introduced Jackson to the stage saying, 'when Michael sings we hear angels, and when he moves his feet, God dances' (De Lisle, 1996: 17), displaying a sycophantic reverence suitable for such a shamelessly over-the-top performance. Jackson started the performance solo on stage before being joined by children and adults dressed in rags, reminiscent of a 'scene from *Les Misérables*' (Street, 1997: 24), who sing the chorus response, asking 'what about us?'. As Jackson climbed onto an elevated platform to sing his sermon from up high, unbeknownst to him at the time, Jarvis Cocker climbed onto the stage among the peasant chorus and looked out into the crowd striking a number of poses before running from security personnel disguised as chorus members. As he runs, Cocker stopped to lift his top to the camera and then again to bend over and shake his bum at the crowd in a silly gesture. As quickly as it started, Cocker left the stage and Jackson finished the performance.

Cocker's stage invasion was a harmless prank pulled in the heat of the moment with no real malice intended yet Cocker spent most of the night being interviewed by police at London's Kensington police station after being 'arrested at the instigation of the Jackson camp' (Wroe, 1996a: 13). Cocker was not charged but by the time he was released the incident had become an internationally reported scandal. At this point, the BRIT Awards had not yet been televised, as they were not broadcast live, but instead edited into a slick production of the ceremony that would be televised the night after the ceremony. As the show was being edited for release, Jackson's team insisted that Cocker's stunt be excluded from Jackson's performance (ibid.)

which the BRIT Awards complied with¹⁸. As a result of this, only those who had been at the award ceremony witnessed Cocker's prank and, due to its brevity, many of those in attendance had missed it before they'd realised anything was amiss. As a consequence of this, the press coverage of the event was based on allegations of an event that the public had not been privy to see and on photos of Cocker leaving Kensington police station after being questioned. The unknown nature of Cocker's misdeeds, immediately following the ceremony, and the seemingly extreme event of Cocker's arrest fed the rumours that Cocker had assaulted children during his stage invasion which only added further ammunition to the developing scandal.

The success of an award ceremony is tied up in its impact as a television event and as such, scandal and controversy heightens the event's impact. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the 1996 BRIT Awards have continued to live on in infamy. In the days following the ceremony, the Jackson/Cocker scandal was reported on by all UK newspapers, excluding the Financial Times, and picked up and reported on by US TV news and entertainment shows (Richardson, 1996: 2). Among some of the headlines, the *New York Post* ran 'Rocker Beats Up Jacko's Kiddie Choir' (ibid.) demonstrating how quickly the event had been exaggerated by the press in the absence of the original television footage. The day after the ceremony, Jackson's record label, Epic, put out a statement saying that Jackson was 'sickened, saddened, shocked, upset, cheated and angry' at the disruption (Johnson, 1996: 5) which is a very effusive set of adjectives for someone who did not realise the prank was happening at the time. Such an emphatic statement gave credence to the reports that the prank was more sinister than it truly was, especially when parents of the choir children started to tell the tabloid press of their children's experiences. One parent claimed that Cocker had stood on her daughter's toe and that some children 'came off in tears and were cuddling each other' (ibid.). Other reports claimed that the children were 'screaming' and 'bleeding' (Richardson, 1996: 2). The invocation of hurt children furthered the coverage of the scandal and the interest in the incident.

In the UK, the press split into two camps: the tabloids were mostly on Jackson's side and the broadsheets were for Cocker (Street, 1997: 25.), as were the music press, and other music personalities like DJ John Peel. In itself, this public split of opinions further facilitated the scandal through making the spectacle something upon which people needed to take sides. The

¹⁸ Five weeks after the ceremony, and after the police investigation had concluded, ITV aired a special called *The BRITs Uncut* that showed the original footage (The Guardian, 1996c: 8).

Guardian organised a letters page of support for Cocker including letters from those who were at the event. Suede's Bernard Butler, who was sat at the same table as Cocker at the ceremony, wrote that Cocker's decision wasn't premeditated and that 'you could see him getting pissed off – we were all getting pissed off' (The Guardian, 1996a: 18). Pop duo Everything But the Girl wrote that 'those who have colluded in this heavy-handed, mob-like response to a prank should be ashamed of themselves' and that Jackson's performance had 'quasi-religious pretensions' (ibid.). Members of the public also wrote in support of Cocker, with one saying 'thank heavens for Jarvis Cocker! Jackson's deification of himself was the most lunatic display of posturing vanity' and another wrote that 'surely it's time for Mr Cocker to be knighted' (ibid.). At this point, those who had not seen the Cocker incident in person only had the Jackson performance sans prank upon which to make a judgement. Jackson's already scandalous character and the recent accusations against him would have also impacted the public's early understanding of the event and informed their judgement.

Two clear lines of support emerged for Cocker in the letters pages, broadsheets, music press and among some of the public; first, that Jackson's performance was in bad taste and second, that the BRITs had sacrificed Cocker in pursuit of keeping Jackson and his team happy. Butler wrote 'the BRITs are intended to celebrate British music artistically and commercially. But the BRIT organisers at Sony obviously set their sights on making it Michael Jackson's comeback' (The Guardian, 1996a: 18). The BRIT Awards had released a statement after the ceremony that condemned Cocker's actions as 'dangerous and irresponsible' (Johnson, 1996: 5) which the *NME* took as endorsement of the Jackson version of events (Richardson, 1996: 2). There came to be a perception that the organisers of the BRIT Awards had scored such a coup in securing Jackson to perform at the ceremony that they were content to allow Jackson's 'ego to run...free' (Leonard, 1996: 8). Jackson's performance was seen as an ostentatious production that positioned him as a saviour. After the ceremony and his release from police questioning, Cocker said 'I sat there watching it and feeling a bit ill because he was doing his Jesus act' (Wroe, 1996a: 13). The religious overtones of the performance, particularly a moment where Jackson stands with his arms in a 'Christ-like pose' with children and adults embracing him, prompted audience complaints to the Independent Television Commission, though these were later dismissed (The Guardian, 1996b: 8). There is a certain irony here that despite Cocker's arrests and the condemnation Cocker received, that Jackson's performance received official complaints that Cocker's did not.

The media positioned Jackson and Cocker in opposition to each other due to their nationalities, commercial success and differing musical styles that perpetuated and drove the scandal. Jackson's long-standing status within the music industry had been somewhat diminished by the allegations levelled against him and his grandstanding performances appeared detached from reality. Cocker, on the other hand, was relatively unknown, even in the UK, as a member of a Britpop band. The nationality of the two artists was key to the comparisons between them. As already discussed, some of the press' outrage lay in the perceived preferential treatment given to Jackson as a global superstar considered a boon to be able to book onto the ceremony. As an awarding institution designed to celebrate British music, the abandonment of Cocker by the BRIT Award organisers was considered a poor show of support to a homegrown artist. What's more, Jackson's music was not the music most popular or successful at that time in Britain. For the first time in decades, there was a truly British popular music movement yet American megastar Michael Jackson was given the prime spot of the premier British popular music award ceremony.

Cocker's self-deprecating style and distinctly British quirkiness set him as an unexpected yet capable adversary to Jackson. Jackson's performance was supposed to be a powerful take on the world's biggest problems but the act of centring himself as a Christ-like redeemer diminished the message even before Cocker stormed the stage. Described as 'very English' to Jackson's 'very American' (Leonard, 1996: 8), Cocker's silly prank and conduct underscored Jackson's dramatically serious attempt at auteurship. In addition to this, the success of Britpop in the UK in the years preceding Jackson's performance at the BRIT Awards had an impact on the perception of what pop stars should look like and how they should act. The opulent extravagance of 1980s pop music, the era that defined Jackson, was deemed out of date by the gloom and minimalism of early 90s grunge in the US and the quirky, straight-talking Britpop in the UK. Jackson and Cocker came from very different worlds which exacerbated the spectacle of the performance and the nature of its interruption. The ensuing scandal focused on the seeming dichotomy between Jackson and Cocker and its success hinged on the fact that the scandal could be cut both ways. Cocker's interruption was portrayed as a reckoning of the adulation laid at Jackson's feet which had been unchallenged due to his status, fame and wealth. On the other hand, Cocker's behaviour could be seen as childish (Street, 1997: 25) and disruptive of the ceremony's expected rituals and norms. Regardless of the audience's preferred narrative of the incident, the ensuing scandal is demonstrative of the important role that scandal plays in the award ceremony. It does not strictly matter what the scandal meant to

whom, what matters is that the scandal was disruptive enough to received continued coverage which in turn brought attention to the BRIT Awards.

The Jackson/Cocker incident was such a successful scandal in part because of its continuation past the original event. The subsequent hearing for Cocker's arrest resulted in both artists' fans gathering outside the police station where the hearing was taking place. Cocker was cleared of all charges and in response, Jackson's gathered fans threw eggs and flour at the station (Utley, 1996: 2). The event was widely covered in the press and Cocker's clearance of all charges allowed ITV to air another version of the ceremony with footage of the incident. Five weeks after the ceremony, The BRITs' Uncut gave audiences who had followed the scandal the opportunity to see the original footage and elongate the scandal even further (The Guardian, 1996c: 8). Indeed, details about the ceremony have continued to emerge in the years since the ceremony with Cocker revealing in an interview in 2020 that it was footage of the incident taken by David Bowie's team, who were filming for his *Lifetime Achievement* award, that led to the charges against Cocker being dismissed (Tannenbaum, 2020). The longevity of the incident confirms it as not just a small-scale scandal but one that can be considered as a truly scandalous moment that has cemented the BRIT Awards into popular culture's history.

Ultimately, the 1996 BRIT Awards scandal spectacularly fulfilled its role to promote the award ceremony and artists involved. If an awarding institution is reliant on its ceremony to promote the awards through the spectacle of ceremony then the 1996 BRIT Awards ceremony can be considered a truly spectacular success. More than this, however, both Jackson and Cocker benefitted from the incident through the publicity that the ceremony generated. For Cocker, and his band Pulp, in particular the coverage was far beyond what their record label would have been able to spend on them if they had been promoting an album. CIA Media Network, the media buying agency for EMI Records, estimated the various media coverage in just the week following the ceremony as worth £775,000 which was the equivalent of what an artist like Queen or the Beatles would spend on an album release pre-Christmas across three months (Armstrong, 1996: 8). Despite the organic nature of the spectacle, this type of exposure was beyond the realms of what a band such as Pulp would have received from their record label.

The ceremony's exposure translated into increased sales for Jackson and Cocker. Pulp's album *Different Class* sold an extra 50,000 copies in the UK alone in the three weeks following the ceremony which pushed the album from number 8 on the UK album charts to number 5

(Armstrong, 1996: 8). Pulp, who had not been able to break into the US market, had their single *Common People* played by a number of college radio stations as a result of the prank (ibid.) which brought them much needed exposure in the world's biggest music market. Similarly, Jackson saw an increase in his UK chart positions with *Earth Song* increasing from number 38 to 16 on the singles chart and his album moving from number 17 to number 10 (ibid.). The tangible increase in sales demonstrates how impactful the attention from a scandal at an award ceremony can be; the spectacle and scandal turns into press coverage and attention for the artists and awarding institution which ultimately results in increased sales and profits for the artists involved and increased attention for the awarding institution.

The 1996 BRIT Awards were spectacular and scandalous for many reasons and constitute a strong example of how award ceremonies operate as the public facing component of the awarding institution. Following the shakeup of the BRIT Awards' academy in the face of criticism from the BRAT Awards and media, the 1996 awards ceremony experienced an organic moment of scandal and intrigue that dominated newspaper, radio and television headlines around the world that has lived on in infamy within popular culture. The moment provided a blueprint for how the ceremony could best attract coverage and ratings, highlighting the importance of out of the ordinary moments and bringing together unexpected guests. Furthermore, the BRIT Awards' reputation was bolstered by the Jackson versus Cocker moment and given an edge that had been previously denied to the awarding institution as a result of its 'banal' recognition of commercial pop. This edgier reputation has been traded on by the awards ever since who have continued to promote the possibility of scandal and spectacle to attract coverage and attention. Through the case study of the 1996 BRIT Awards, this section has argued that spectacle, controversy and scandal are essential for the continued appeal and viability of the awarding institution. Furthermore, it has been asserted that the controversy created through the ceremony is beneficial for the artists involved securing increased visibility and record sales. As major popular music awarding institutions are industrial strategies that support the major recording industry, the promotional possibilities of the awarding ceremony further support the major recording industry and its most valued music and artists.

4.4 The Political Spectacle of the Grammy Awards in the Twenty-First Century

This section will explore the increasingly politicised Grammy Award ceremonies of the twenty-first century. In a similar way to the increased demands for diversity within cultural awarding, as explored in Chapter Three, the award ceremony has also had to update itself and reflect contemporary sentiment and trends in order to continue appealing to audiences. Though there have always been political moments at the Grammy Awards, such as Helen Reddy's reference to a female God when she collected her Grammy Award for *I am Woman* in 1973, there has been an acceleration in the amount of political moments and performances throughout the first decades of the new millennium as politics and popular culture have become more entwined. This section will explore political moments and performances at the Grammy Awards throughout the 2000s with particular attention placed on the 2016 and 2018 Grammy Awards. Through a comparative analysis of the political ideologies displayed within Grammy Award ceremony performances and the awards given at the same ceremonies, this section will argue that the values displayed at the award ceremony do not reflect the values of the awarding institution. As such, it can be understood that the award ceremony is primarily concerned with its status as a television event designed to attract viewers, remain relevant and promote the awards, while the awarding institution will continue awarding in line with its own values and priorities.

Throughout the twenty-first century in the US, politics has become increasingly embedded in popular culture as the political environment has become ever more partisan. Corner and Pels (2003:2) assert that the restyling of politics has happened, in part, as a consequence of 'blurring the boundaries and levelling the hierarchy between "high" political representation and "low" popular entertainment' which stemmed from unhappy citizens exasperated with 'the arrogance of distanced, self-absorbed political professionals'. Electorates are now more concerned with voting for 'persons and their ideas rather than political parties and their programmes' and have new forms of visual and emotional literacy which has resulted in citizens judging politicians and their claims to authenticity and competence in a more educated and competent manner (Corner and Pels, 2003: 7). In order to judge politicians based on their authenticity, the electorate have borrowed from their tools of assessment used for connecting and disagreeing with celebrities. This has been facilitated by celebrities who act in political ways, something that is not of course confined to the twenty-first century, but there has certainly been an increase in the amount of celebrities who have taken on the mantra of representing causes.

As popular culture and politics have continued to interlink, increasing amounts of politicians, like Barack Obama, have demonstrated their understanding of popular culture in order to appeal to the electorate. Increasing amounts of celebrities have also demonstrated political interests either through their support of movements like Black Lives Matter or through using their platform to urge people to exercise their democratic right to vote. Street offers a theoretical framework in which to further question the links between popular culture, politics and celebrity. Street (2004: 437-438) identifies two types of celebrity politicians, the first type (CP1) is an elected politician whose background is in the entertainment industry, i.e. Ronald Reagan, or an elected politician or candidate who uses the tropes of the celebrity to further their image and better communicate their message to particular groups, such as Tony Blair's appeal to youth through his connection to Britpop. The second type of celebrity politician that Street identifies (CP2) is not an elected official but instead an entertainer who engages with politics and uses their platform to represent people and causes. Lady Gaga, for example, could be identified as a CP2 for her activism for the LGBTQ community.

Street's identification of the CP2 is vital for understanding the appeal of political performances at award ceremonies. As politics has become further embedded within popular culture, many mainstream musicians have started to include political topics in their songs that resonate with their own identities and histories. Street (2004: 447) claims that it is conceivable that 'unelected persons may legitimately represent politically the views and values of others' and that the conditions surrounding the CP2's claim is essential to how legitimate the representation is. The musicians who have performed politically at award ceremonies tend to be those who have a history of authentically engaging with politics. Street (2004: 441) offers a convincing defence of celebrity politics arguing that 'celebrity politics, and the cult of the personality that it embodies, can be seen as a product of the transformation of political communication', and I would argue that this has only been exacerbated as social media and digitisation have continued to grow in efficiency, popularity and centrality to everyday life since Street's work in the early 2000s.

Though there have been political moments at the Grammy Awards, and popular music award ceremonies in general, for decades, there has been an acceleration in the volume and range of political sentiments throughout the twenty-first century. This is, in part, due to the increasingly polarised and divisive politics that have pervaded the US. In the wake of the September 11th

2001 terrorist attacks, the Grammy Awards recognised artists who had responded to the tragedy through their music. Bruce Springsteen, for example, was nominated at the 2003 awards for *Album of the Year* and *Song of the Year* for his album *The Rising*, and single of the same name, which were written in the days after the attacks. However, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, in response to the attacks, was a politically divisive action that has only become more so in the light of misinformation about the presence of weapons of mass destruction, which had been the driving factor and reason for invasion. In 2006, Bruce Springsteen performed the Iraq War protest song *Devils and Dust* at the Grammy Awards and ended his performance by shouting 'bring 'em home', both a reference to his objection to the prolonging of the Iraq War and the Pete Seeger song of the same name which was a Vietnam War protest song. Springsteen's two Grammy Awards engagements are reflective of the public mood at the time, showing a sense of togetherness in response to the tragedy that turned to protest at its handling. Springsteen's long career engaging authentically with political topics (McGinnis and Glibowski, 2019: 423) allows him to represent the political causes of others which Street (2004: 438) identified as the role of the CP2. The Grammy Awards are engaging with important, topical subjects through artists that can authentically represent socio-political commentary that the public are invested in without having to specify their own values or position on the topic. By booking political artists to perform at the ceremony, the Grammy Awards create space on their platform for political sentiment without having to directly express or take responsibility for political opinions of the awarding institution. As the public facing component of the awarding institution, the ceremony engages with current trends in popular culture to ensure that the show, and therefore the awards, remain relevant but do not commit themselves as an institution to any overt political views.

The 2008 election of Barack Obama, the first African-American president, signified a political disruption of accepted norms. President Obama was engaged with popular culture, and popular music specifically, and was keenly aware of its power. In 2015, Obama appeared at the Grammy Awards ceremony via satellite video to promote a campaign raising awareness and trying to combat violence against women and girls called It's On Us, demonstrating another way that an award ceremony has been used for political gain. Acting in the capacity of a CP1, Obama's short video message at the Grammys highlighted statistics about the violence women face and urged people to sign up to the campaign, directly addressing the audience at the ceremony saying 'and to the artists at the Grammys tonight, I ask you to ask your fans to do it too'. Obama also asserted that 'artists have a unique power to change minds and attitudes and

get us thinking about what matters' (It's On Us, 2015), utilising a non-traditional platform and audience to spread a political message. Obama did not appear at any of the other major entertainment award ceremonies in this capacity, but his relationship with music and musicians has been well documented (Neilson, 2009; Forman, 2010; Schoening and Kasper, 2012; Gosa and Neilson, 2015) and his support and reception within that community, though sometimes wavering, was for the most part consistently positive. Obama's address at the Grammy Awards ceremony demonstrates the awarding institution's willingness, and the ceremony's capacity, to be used as a political platform.

Significant social change was achieved in the US with the legalisation of gay marriage in 2015. At the 2014 Grammy Award ceremony, Macklemore and Ryan Lewis performed *Same Love* as the backdrop for 34 couples of mixed races, ages and genders to get married in support of legalising gay marriage in all US states. The song, *Same Love*, was the first song to explicitly support gay marriage and make it to the Top 40 (McKinley Jr., 2013). At the ceremony, Macklemore and Lewis were joined on stage by Queen Latifah, who officiated the wedding, and Madonna who performed a slow version of the song *Open Your Heart*. The couples were married in the aisles rather than on the stage so that the moment would not appear 'exploitative' (Sisario, 2014). The performance was celebrated by many at the ceremony, indeed Katy Perry caught one of the bouquets, but it was also protested by Christian gospel singer Natalie Grant who left the ceremony early in protest at the marriages. The performance was labelled by some religious groups as a 'political stunt' (Jones, 2014) but Neil Portnow, president of the NARAS, denied this saying 'we don't need to stoop to the level of trying to find gimmicks and sensationalistic approaches to what we do' (Sisario, 2014). The Grammy Awards' show producer Ken Ehrlich, who has a gay daughter, spoke of how the performance reflected his own views but also added 'I would not want to make a broad statement that it represents the views of the academy or the CBS television network' (ibid.). The Grammy Awards ceremony hosts performances that could be perceived as overtly political and, therefore, scandalous, as is the case here, but absolve themselves of responsibility for the topic by claiming that the awarding institution and television network do not necessarily endorse those views. As the major awarding institution of the US, the decision to remain politically neutral is a savvy one that appeases the broad viewership around the US by not committing to any outright political statement that has the potential to alienate viewers. The ceremony and its hosts invite the gains of such a performance, the appearance of celebrating the progression of civil rights for all, but do not claim the responsibility for any negative interpretation of the ceremony.

The election of right-wing populist Donald Trump to the US presidency in 2016 furthered the already politically divisive landscape of the US. Trump won the electoral college but lost the popular vote by over 3 million votes to his competitor Hillary Clinton, the first ever woman to become the presidential candidate for one of the two major parties. Many references have been made to Trump at the Grammy Awards throughout his controversial first, and only, term as president. A Tribe Called Quest, in collaboration with Anderson Pak, Consequence and Busta Rhymes, performed at the Grammy Awards weeks after Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017. Their performance was explicit in their condemnation of Trump's violent anti-immigration rhetoric which was enforced by an executive order that came to be known as the 'Muslim ban' and Trump's campaign promise to build a wall between the US and Mexican borders. The stage performance enacted breaking through a wall and were joined by a woman in a hijab who stood behind the performers with her hands on her hips in a powerful statement of defiance. At the end of the performance, A Tribe Called Quest frontman Q-Tip repeatedly chanted 'resist' while the other performers raised their hands to the black power salute, a powerful symbol of resistance that has been associated with the civil rights movement since the 1960s. The Grammy Awards' allowed the 2017 ceremony to be littered with political moments like this, demonstrating that it was reflective of current events. Trump's tenure as president was unexpected, there were few who thought he could beat Hillary Clinton, and his rush of early, divisive and spiteful executive orders, like the Muslim ban, caused outrage and concern among a shocked and divided country. The decision of the Grammy Awards' to let these sentiments be reflected in the ceremony gave the ceremony relevance, spectacle and scandal that would have been difficult to achieve if it had stayed neutral in the face of such socio-political change.

The increasingly partisan environment of the twenty-first century has permeated most facets of popular culture. Television programmes on major networks like *Brooklyn 99* and *Black-ish*, on Fox and ABC respectively, have diverse casts and tackle difficult cultural topics like racial profiling, homophobia and mental health which would not have previously been deemed as acceptable topics in mainstream television programming. Since 2016, sport has been politicised through the NFL protests started by quarterback Colin Kaepernick taking a knee during the national anthem to protest racial inequality in the US. President Trump referred to Kaepernick, and other players who joined his protests in solidarity, as 'sons of bitches' (Graham, 2017) which amplified the divisive politics around the gesture. Advertising has even become political, with adverts at the Super Bowl, which retail at \$5.1 million for 30 seconds, covering political

issues such as the 2017 Budweiser advert that promoted the benefits of immigration (Wootson Jr., 2017). Politics is now playing a role in people's lives not just as citizens but also as consumers as companies have been 'more aggressively and publicly linking their brands with political positions' as 'the political environment has become more partisan' (Matos et al, 2017: 125) which has further aided an undeniable and inextricable tangling of politics and popular culture.

There is an increased awareness of social issues due to the rising use of social media which has resulted in social change and activism. Though of course the civil rights movement has been present in a number of forms for decades, it has gained power and platform in the age of digital media where videos and news can be distributed globally in live time. In the USA, for example, police brutality, particularly against black people, has long been a problem but greater awareness has been brought to the issue by social media (Campbell and Valera, 2020: 656). Social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., are places where stories can be shared, experiences can be learned about and activism can be organised which put the power of reporting into the hands of citizens raising awareness about systemic issues. This has resulted in a general public who are increasingly more well versed in socio-political conversations and events. Consequently, Grammy Award ceremonies now are more likely to directly address social and political movements through performances and stunts than in earlier decades.

Whereas previous political moments may have been considered as organic, such as Reddy's award speech, political performances have now become commonplace at the Grammy Awards. Indeed, the spectacle of a political performance can now be used to try to hype up the ceremony and entice an audience to watch the show. Prior to the 2016 Grammy Awards, the ceremony's host LL Cool J gave several interviews discussing who would be performing at the ceremony and hinting at what the audience could expect from those performances. Rapper Kendrick Lamar had been confirmed to play at the awards and in a pre-ceremony interview, LL Cool J said that Lamar's performance was going to be 'very controversial' (Access, 2016). In further pre-ceremony interviews, Ken Ehrlich and Neil Portnow were asked about LL Cool J's claims. Portnow said that though he was not sure if the performance was controversial he would call it 'powerful' (Aswad, 2016). Ehrlich's response was that the performance would be 'provocative' and that the show encourages 'artistic freedom and artistic licence' (ibid.). Similarly to 2014's ceremony, Ehrlich is endorsing the autonomy of artists to express

themselves and their political opinion, which courts controversy, but maintaining a distance between the awarding institution's values and the values of the artists they invite to perform.

Kendrick Lamar's 2016 performance at the Grammy Awards was a powerful and honest representation of the realities of life as an African-American in America. The performance was split into three songs, *The Blacker the Berry*, *Alright* and *Untitled*, set against three separate backdrops that represent different African-American experiences. Lamar leads a chained gang of African-American men onto a stage set as a prison for *The Blacker the Berry*, highlighting the disproportionately high volume of incarcerated African-Americans in America (NAACP, 2018). Lamar and the inmates transition to the second stage which holds a bonfire for the second song, *Alright*, around which female tribe members are dancing. The female dancers seem to stand as a metaphor for Africa, waiting to welcome Lamar as a community. Lamar transitions to an empty stage under a spotlight for *Untitled* and delivers a distressed, rapidly rapped monologue that centres on Lamar's personal demons. Most striking in the song is the line 'on February twenty sixth I lost my life too', which is the day in 2012 that unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin was shot by a man later acquitted for his death which led to the formation of the political movement Black Lives Matter (Capehart, 2015). Lamar's final line in the performance is 'conversation for the entire nation, this is bigger than us' and it is clear that the take home message for the entire performance has been explicitly created to generate conversation. As the performance ended the spotlight on Lamar was taken away from him and behind him appeared an outline of Africa with the word 'Compton', Lamar's hometown, written across it with Lamar's figure highlighted against it, uniting the three separate performances together.

Lamar's performance was inherently political and situated itself within a wider national conversation happening in the US about the continued injustices towards African-Americans. Lamar's own experiences, his history and artistry grant him the ability to shoulder the responsibility of representation and highlight such important issues on a global stage. The overarching themes of heritage and identity within the performance are not only educational for those who do not have lived experience but also give a voice to an underrepresented demographic within American society. Between the American congress' inaugural convention in 1789 and 2019, there has been 12,343 elected officials and of these there have only been 162 African-Americans among them, with 57 of that number serving in 2019 (US House of Representatives, 2019). The performance is, therefore, an uncommon opportunity for such a

public expression of the African-American experience to be performed on a national and global stage. Lamar's performance was largely celebrated by audiences and critics alike with a general consensus that the performance was a significant moment in popular culture that transcended the awards ceremony (Thompson, 2016). The act of hosting such a significant event justifies the existence of the NARAS as an awarding institution whose ceremony understands popular culture and exhibits the best of it.

The Grammy Awards ceremony allows itself to be used as a platform by Lamar, and other political musicians, because it is then associated with significant popular culture moments. This does not mean, however, that the awarding institution will similarly recognise those artists with awards. Lamar was nominated for eleven awards at the 2016 Grammy Awards but only won five. Lamar's album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, which included *The Blacker the Berry* and *Alright*, was nominated for *Album of the Year* and *Rap Album of the Year* but only won the latter. *To Pimp a Butterfly* was not just hugely commercially successful but was also celebrated by critics as 'fearless in its scope' (Empire, 2015) and a return to 'old-fashioned' albums in its demand for engagement throughout (Ex, 2015) rather than a collection of singles. Lamar's album, despite its artistry, political themes, social importance and commercial success, was yet another hip-hop album deemed not good enough to win the coveted *Album of the Year* which instead was won by pop artist Taylor Swift's *1989*. A hip-hop album had not won *Album of the Year* since 2004, demonstrating the NARAS' reluctance to award the genre outside of its genre specific categories. Lamar and his music, however, is valuable and popular enough for the spectacle of the ceremony.

Although the awarding institution may not share the same views of the artists they invite to perform, they may wish to display those values in order to be aligned with current and popular trends. When questioned about whether Lamar's performance would be offensive, Ehrlich replied that he suspected a portion of the audience would 'certainly be provoked by it' (Aswad, 2016), and drew attention to the wider conversation happening around award ceremonies at that time about their lack of representation and diversity, in the wake of the 2015 #OscarsSoWhite controversy which had protested the fact that all twenty actors nominated for the *Best Actor*, *Best Actress*, *Best Supporting Actor* and *Best Supporting Actress* were white (ibid.). Ehrlich stated that 'popular and contemporary music is rooted in African-American culture as much as anything. So when we do a music show we by definition reflect multiculturalism maybe more than a film award show' but also reiterated that 'it's not

necessarily that we endorse what's being said, but we believe that it's our right and responsibility to allow artists to express their visions' (ibid.). The show producer tried to ensure that the ceremony would not be criticised for a lack of representation while also clarifying that any controversy would belong to the artist and their reputation, not the awards.

Kendrick Lamar's 2016 performance at the Grammy Awards demonstrates the spectacle that a political performance can offer an awarding ceremony. Lamar's performance is political in a way that engages in a wider, national conversation about serious socio-political issues that impact the lives of millions of people, which demonstrates how award ceremonies can be understood as playing 'an important part in contemporary culture' (Street, 2005b: 819). Artistically, Lamar's performance is powerful and clever and operates at multiple levels from the costuming to the juxtaposition between the mostly white, smartly dressed audience and the damning social inequalities being displayed on stage. The Grammy Awards are connected to the significance of Lamar's performance as its host which gives the awarding institution cultural capital upon which it can justify its continued existence. Despite this, the NARAS do not reflect Lamar's value in its awarding which demonstrates how the ceremony should be viewed as a component of the awarding process whose aim is to ensure that the institution has credibility to continue rather than only reflect those awarded.

In January 2018, 300 prominent actresses, agents, producers, entertainment executives, writers and directors founded the Time's Up movement in order to fight the systemic sexual harassment in Hollywood which had come to light in the wake of a number of allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein (Buckley, 2018). As a social movement supporting women's rights, Time's Up quickly gained support across the entertainment industries where similar stories of harassment were shared online which drew public attention, sparking debate about the treatment of women more broadly across society. Award ceremonies across the cultural industries, which all tend to take place in late January and February, facilitated entertainment industry figures publicly demonstrating their support. Attendees of film and television's biggest award ceremonies, the US' Oscar Awards and Golden Globes and the UK's BAFTA Awards, all wore black with many also wearing Time's Up pin badges. The BRIT Award and Grammy Awards attendees wore white rose pin badges or carried real white roses to show their support for the movement.

Though there were a number of ways in which Time's Up was supported by artists at the Grammy Awards, pop star Kesha's performance of *Praying* is arguably the most impactful. Since 2014, Kesha had been in a legal battle with Dr Luke, her producer and owner of the record label to which she was signed, over alleged verbal, physical and sexual abuse over a ten year period (Johnston, 2016). Kesha was contractually tied to Dr Luke and his label Kemorabe Records, a subsidiary of Sony Music, to record another six albums (McCarthy, 2016). Kesha had received widespread support from her fans through the #FreeKesha campaign online and additional support from others in the music industry including Taylor Swift who donated \$250,000 to Kesha's legal fees (Savage, 2018). Lady Gaga also publicly supported Kesha and Adele stated her support at the 2016 BRIT Awards (ibid.). Kesha's performance at the Grammy Awards was seen as a 'comeback', following the release of *Praying* in 2017 after a five-year hiatus and dropping the legal cases against Dr Luke (Hearfield, 2021). In light of the Time's Up movement, Kesha's performance was all the more meaningful. She was supported by a number of other artists in her performance, including Cyndi Lauper and Camila Cabello, all of whom wore white in solidarity. Janelle Monáe introduced the performance, defending women in the music industry and saying, 'to those who would dare try and silence us, we offer you two words: Time's Up' (Alexis-Fisher, 2018). Monáe's speech and Kesha's performance were widely praised as 'powerful' (Weaver, 2018), but others saw the performance as exploitative of Kesha's trauma (Eckardt, 2018; Framke, 2018; Snapes, 2018b). The recording industry were celebrating Kesha's performance but offering no structural change to actually support women. Certainly, the NARAS could not claim to be valuing the contribution of women through the evening's awards.

The 2018 Grammy Awards were not representative of women within the music industry; of the 86 categories awarded, only 17 were won by women none of which were the big categories of *Album of the Year*, *Record of the Year* or *Song of the Year*. All of the *Album of the Year* category nominees were invited to perform at the ceremony except the one female nominee: Lorde. Only one of the female Grammy Award winners, Alessia Cara who won *Best New Artist*, performed at the ceremony and that was in collaboration with two male artists. The Grammy Awards' president Neil Portnow, when questioned about the lack of female representation at the awards, said that women 'who want to be musicians, who want to be engineers, producers, and want to be part of the industry on the executive level...need to step up' (Amabile-Angermiller, 2018). Portnow failed to recognise how women have been structurally denied opportunities to progress within the recording industry and the damage that

harmful stereotypes have played in relation to women's role within the music industries. Moreover, Portnow's comments demonstrate how the NARAS' values do not necessarily align with those displayed at the awarding ceremony. The role of the award ceremony is to secure audience viewership to promote the ceremony, satisfy its stakeholders and continue the institution's operations; it is not necessarily representative of the awarding institution's values. The Time's Up movement was represented at the Grammy Awards ceremony by artists but it was not specifically endorsed by the awarding institution behind the Grammy Awards. The Grammy Awards ceremony's willingness to allow artists to perform topical political performances speaks not to the values of the Grammy Awards but their desire to prove their relevance and secure increased viewership. Including topical, timely subjects and famous artists who champion those issues contributes to the necessary spectacle that the awards need to attract audiences. As politics has become increasingly relevant to the everyday lives of the general public, including it in a media event such as an award ceremony demonstrates the ceremony's understanding of what is important to popular culture which in turn allows the ceremony itself to become an important part of popular culture.

The spectacle provided by political performances and moments at the Grammy Awards throughout the twenty-first century demonstrate that the award ceremony strives to be topical and relevant but that the political values espoused by artists do not necessarily align with those of the awarding institution. Indeed, examinations of the performances of Kendrick Lamar in 2016 and Kesha in 2018 have demonstrated that the performances at the award ceremony are not reflective of the awarding institution's practices. The increasing political environment of the twenty-first century and its entwinement with popular culture has resulted in the Grammy Award ceremonies including politics because it is relevant and popular not because the awards are particularly political. Politics is included in the same way that any other current trend would be. This section has argued that the inclusion of political spectacle through performances demonstrates that the ceremony, which is one component of the awarding process, has the purpose of attracting attention, gaining cultural capital and ensuring that the awarding institution has relevance so that it can continue to operate.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter expands our understanding of major popular music awarding institutions beyond their procedural practices concerning who is being awarded and for what reasons. By

examining the award ceremony as the public facing component of the awarding process, this chapter has argued that the ceremony is responsible for promoting the awarding institution and ensuring its continued viability. The analysis of two case studies has established how scandal, spectacle and controversy are essential for the ceremony. First, the 1996 BRIT Awards ceremony and the conflict between Michael Jackson and Jarvis Cocker was explored as a moment of organic scandal that demonstrated how the ceremony is a volatile environment that can cause unexpected events which is partly why audiences continue to tune into ceremonies across the entertainment industries. It further demonstrated how the ceremony and artists all benefitted from the scandal; the BRIT Awards bolstered their own reputation as a ceremony capable of delivering a show worthy of international headlines and both Jackson and Cocker experienced increased sales as a result of the ceremony. Secondly, the political spectacle of the Grammy Awards throughout the twenty-first century has demonstrated how ceremonies must be responsive to current trends in order to reflect their understanding of popular culture and continued relevance. Analysing the comments of the NARAS' president and Grammy Awards show producer alongside a comparative analysis of artists who engaged in political performance with their representation within the actual awards supports the argument that the values displayed at award ceremonies do not necessarily reflect the values of the awarding institution demonstrating how ceremonies court controversy. Major popular music awarding institutions are supportive of the major recording industry and their ceremonies are a vitally important component of the awarding process. The analysis of the award ceremonies presented in this chapter demonstrate that the ceremony is best understood as a promotional tool for the awarding institution that promotes and protects its continued operations.

Chapter Five – Understanding the Cultural Game: How Major Awarding Institutions Function in Tandem to Non-Major Popular Music Awarding Institutions.

The Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards have been explored throughout this thesis as the dominant, major awarding institutions of the US and UK recording industries. These institutions have set the parameters for what it is to award popular music within those industries which is why it has been essential to firstly examine their formation, aims and goals, functions and focus. While the Grammy Awards and BRIT Awards are the most high profile awarding institutions, they are situated within a wider field of popular music awarding: there are about 50 US popular music awarding institutions at a national and state level and 15 UK institutions awarding popular music at a national level. The dominant, major awarding institutions have shaped the field of popular music awarding which is why this thesis has concerned itself with their examination. This chapter will examine this wider field to analyse the function that non-major awarding institutions serve and the impact that they have on their major counterparts. Exploring the interaction between major and non-major awarding institutions further contributes to the novel examination of popular music awarding this thesis has provided, expanding our understanding of how popular music awarding functions, evolves and adapts over time in response to competition and change.

This chapter will examine the UK Music Of Black Origin (MOBO) Awards and Mercury Music Prize (MMP) as examples of non-major popular music awarding institutions. By examining these case studies, it will be established that these awarding institutions recognise music and musicians that are mostly unacknowledged by the major awarding institutions. This thesis not only contributes an examination of popular music awarding institutions to popular music scholarship, which has been mostly absent and under-developed, but also provides a new way of analysing the recording industry through the knowledge that popular music awarding institutions act as industrial strategies designed to support and promote the industry's most valuable music and artists. This chapter especially demonstrates how major and non-major awards operate as part of a wider field which is reflective of practices within the wider recording industry. Highlighting how non-major awards function within the recording industry,

through the analysis of two case studies that operate in support of different aims, further demonstrates how awarding institutions can be used as a tool for understanding what music and artists the recording industry most values.

This chapter will be organised into four sections. First, it is necessary to establish how non-major popular music awarding institutions fit into the popular music awarding landscape. There are several types of pop music award that have different functions within the awarding landscape which operates as a type of ‘cultural game’ (English, 2002: 119); often one awarding institution will emerge in response to an element that has been missed from another. This section will argue that examining the broader field of popular music awarding deepens our understanding of how awarding works and what its role within the recording industry is. Second, the MOBO Awards will be presented as a case study that demonstrates how an awarding institution can be formed in order to address under-representation within a major awarding institution. The MOBO Awards were formed to celebrate music and artists of black origin that were not being recognised within the recording industry and, by extension, the BRIT Awards. Examining the MOBO Awards demonstrates how awards work in a reactive way, addressing gaps within the field which can result in changes in the major awarding institution too. Thirdly, the MMP will be investigated as a popular music awarding institution that functions in a similar way to high art prizes like the Turner Prize and Booker Prize. The MMP, as a non-major awarding institution, operates in opposition to the BRIT Awards as the major awarding institution of its recording industry, establishing itself as a prize primarily concerned not with commerciality but with artistry. This is complicated, however, by the prize’s industrial links. Examining the MMP demonstrates how the field of popular music awarding institutions operates in conjunction with each other in order to define their roles within the field.

Finally, it will be argued that non-major awards are essential for the continuation of major awards. By examining two non-major awards as case studies, the broader field of popular music awarding is assessed and found to be dependent on the interaction of major and non-major awarding institutions. The chapter’s two case studies establish how non-major awarding institutions operate in two broad ways; firstly, they provide a significant platform for artists underrepresented in the mainstream and secondly, they act as competitors within the broader field of popular music awarding. New popular music awards emerge to address gaps within the broader awarding field which, in turn (dependent on the new award’s success) reshape and update the practices of major awarding institutions. Ultimately, this chapter further

demonstrates how closely related awarding institutions are to the recording industry and how they can be used as a way of better understanding industry practices of protecting and promoting certain artists and music.

5.2 Widening the Field

Popular music awarding institutions do not exist independently of each other; rather, major popular music awarding institutions operate tangentially to non-major awards with all involved implicitly aware that there are unspoken cultural practices in play that govern not only the field of popular music, but also cultural awards more generally. Popular music awarding institutions are part of a wider field of interrelated popular music awarding institutions that can be understood as a cultural game. The Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards have been examined as the dominant, major awarding institutions of the US and the UK which has been an essential starting point for understanding the wider field of popular music awards. These two institutions were the first major awarding institutions within their respective recording industries and as such, have set the terms for what awarding institutions within the field of popular music look like, consolidating the parameters for what is considered valuable and worthy by the recording industry by bestowing honour and prestige onto the popular music most valued by the industry. The Grammy Awards, as the first and most visibly successful popular music awarding institution, is what English (2005: 63) would refer to as ‘the “Nobel” of its subfield’. The Nobel Prize stands as the pinnacle of cultural awards due to its position as an early prize that set the parameters for what a modern cultural award is considered to be. Referring to a prize as ‘the “Nobel” of its subfield’ (ibid.) denotes that an award is the most successful of its field and that other awards have formed in its image. Though the BRIT Awards is the dominant awarding institution within the UK, it was formed twenty years after the Grammy Awards, and has been referred to as the British equivalent of the Grammys by executives involved in its formation since its early days (Dann, 1985: 15) and by academics analysing prizes (English, 2002: 123), demonstrating that the BRITs were consciously formed to emulate the Grammy Awards and their vast success. The relationship between the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards shows that there are already subtle, tacit rules at play between these two major awarding institutions; the BRITs were conscious that if they wanted to become the dominant awarding institution of the UK, then they would have to observe and replicate, at least in some ways, the parameters that the Grammy Awards had established as the premier awarding institution of the world’s biggest music market (IFPI, 2019).

When new awarding institutions enter the field, they are not attempting to replace the original awarding institution but instead attempting to fill a gap that has been overlooked. Certainly, 'it is nearly impossible for a newer prize to supersede an older one' (English, 2005: 63) so instead the new prize must address something that the older prize is either failing to do or doing inadequately. Examining awards that have entered the field after the establishment of the field's most dominant, major awarding institution can teach us about how awards interact with each other and how this, in turn, contributes to value creation within popular music. Awarding institutions establish their set of values through the positioning of themselves as different to other awards. Claiming to award something overlooked by a major awarding institution, for example, allows a new, non-major awarding institution to justify their existence and set themselves apart. The comparison between awarding institutions, particularly between new and old, can itself be controversial as the new award is a critique on those in existence. As argued in Chapter Four, spectacle, controversy and scandal are essential for the promotion of an award so for a new awarding institution to gain prominence and attention, the controversy of positioning themselves in opposition to existing awards aids their efforts to establish themselves in an already densely occupied field.

Awarding institutions can be viewed as taking part in a cultural game which results in competitors being granted positions within a popular music awarding institution hierarchy. The notion of treating awarding institutions as a cultural game is advocated by English (2002: 110) as a result of the diverse agents, at both institutional and individual levels, involved with the complex strategies at play in the proliferation of prizes. This is not always necessarily a linear trajectory of hierarchy, placing from top to bottom, but instead a complicated system that operates at multiple levels among competing value systems. In the UK, for example, the BRIT Awards occupy the top tier of the popular music awards hierarchy in terms of visibility on a global stage and success over time, but it has a variety of competitors such as the Mercury Music Prize which, despite operating on a smaller scale, commands a loftier position in the art world than its major competitor. Awarding institutions are complex entities that operate as part of the recording industry but also within their own field of awarding bodies.

The field of Anglo-American popular music awarding institutions is vast, with about 50 US awards functioning at a national and state level and 15 UK awards at a national level. The leaders of the field, the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards, are the majors awards that set

the parameters of what it is to award popular music in the field. Others in the field can be considered non-major due to their positioning against the dominant, major awards. There are a wide variety of non-major awarding institutions within the field of popular music that perform different functions. Having multiple awards in the field amplifies the amount of prestige that can be bestowed upon artists and music aiding an hierarchy of awarding institutions that inevitably results in certain awards carrying more value than others. The dominant, major awarding institution will often be of most value to those who are players, or who wish to be players, within the mainstream recording industry. For example, receiving a nomination for a Grammy Award will signify a new artist's success and entry into the mainstream pop market. However, it can also be the case that an artist or band that sits outside of the major recording industry may be more satisfied with the award and recognition of an institution that is more closely related to their genre or which may bring more credibility for their audience. A country artist, for example, may be happier receiving a nomination from the Country Music Association Awards than a nomination at the Grammy Awards due to the reputation of the awarding institution within that field.

Non-major awarding institutions can be formed to celebrate music and performers that are underrepresented within major awarding institutions. Genre specific awards such as the Country Music Association Awards and the Electronic Music Awards are important not only for celebrating artists particular to a genre but also for providing the recognition that can help propel those artists and the genre itself into the mainstream. For example, prior to 2019 country artist Kacey Musgraves had been nominated by the Country Music Association Awards 14 times, winning three awards, and nominated 10 times by the Academy of Country Music Awards, winning one award. These nominations and awards significantly raised Musgraves' profile which in turn resulted in her nomination for *Album of the Year* for her album *Golden Hour* at the 2019 Grammy Awards. Musgraves consequently won the *Album of the Year* award which was a rare win for a country artist who are normally side lined to genre specific categories. Indeed, Musgraves had won *Best Country Album* in 2018 at the Grammy Awards for *Golden Hour*. Musgraves' recognition at genre specific awarding institutions helped to raise her profile within the mainstream, demonstrating the promotional role that non-major awarding institutions can perform.

Some non-major awarding institutions have alternatively formed in response to geographical underrepresentation. The London centric recording industry of the UK has prompted music

awards to form in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: the Scottish Album of the Year, the Welsh Music Prize and the Northern Ireland Music Prize. In these situations, the awarding institution can work to promote native artists who are often left out of the English dominated BRIT Awards. Scotland's recording industry, for example, is significantly smaller in economic terms than London's (Behr and Brennan, 2014: 172) so the Scottish Album of the Year award provides a platform for Scottish artists to be promoted at a national level with the aim to increase their opportunities outside of Scotland. Similarly, there are state or city specific awarding institutions in the US, such as the San Diego Music Awards and the Detroit Music Awards, which elevate local artists who sit outside of the US' mainstream recording industry. These types of awarding institutions are important within their local scenes as both a celebration of local talent and a promotional tool for that talent. As will be explored in the MOBO Awards case study, the non-major awards that address underrepresented identities can also result in changes within major awarding institutions.

Non-major awarding institutions can also form to award music that is deemed as less commercially minded than the music favoured by major music awarding institutions. At times, these awards can function in a similar way to arts funding or patronage because of the financial rewards that accompany the awards. The MMP, for example, gives a financial prize of £25,000 to its winner which is intended to support the artist to continue making music. There are artistic prizes that do not include direct financial returns but nonetheless raise an artist's profile through its recognition. The US Pulitzer Prize for Music has been traditionally given to classical or jazz artists but in 2018 awarded rapper Kendrick Lamar for his album *DAMN*. Despite some shock from the classical music world, the prize's administrator, Dana Canedy, said that the awarding board's decision to award Lamar was unanimous and that Lamar's win was 'a big moment for hip-hop and a big moment for the Pulitzers' (Coscarelli, 2018). The Pulitzer Prize's recognition of Lamar elevated the status of hip-hop as a serious art form which had been somewhat missed by the Grammy Awards. As explored in Chapter Four, Lamar had been overlooked in 2016 which was repeated in 2018 with Lamar's *DAMN* receiving a nomination for *Album of the Year* award but losing to pop artist Bruno Mars. Non-major awards can perform separate functions to major awards, contributing to discourses around popular music's value by recognising artists overlooked within major awarding institutions.

There has been a continued expansion of cultural awards since the Nobel Prize for Literature emerged as the first contemporary cultural award in 1901. Despite the saturation of the popular

music award market, and the cultural award market in general, English (2005: 67) argues that 'each new prize fills a gap or void in the system of awards' which will 'justify and indeed produce another prize'. New awarding institutions are well suited to respond to changes in culture that the dominant awards miss, or take a while to catch up to, particularly when the annual timeframe of an award is taken into account. There is clearly a huge field of popular music awards which reflects the diversity that is present within popular music. This is not, however, exclusive to the Anglo-American music award scene. New Zealand, for example, has the New Zealand Music Awards as its major awarding institution and the Māori Music Awards as a non-major awarding institution to recognise and celebrate the contributions of Māori artists to New Zealand's music scene which has been under-represented at the New Zealand Music Awards. Similarly, Canada's Juno Awards are the country's major awarding institution but there are a number of non-major awards such as the Polaris Prize which operates in a similar way to the MMP, that reflects the breadth of music scenes and artists that contribute to Canadian music. Despite this thesis' remit of exploring Anglo-American music awarding institutions, it is intended that the findings can assist with understanding the wider, international field of major and non-major popular music awards. By establishing the functions and purposes of musical awarding institutions, this work can be used as a foundation that can then be applied to the recording industries of other countries to better understand their industry's practices and preferences.

In many ways, the field of popular music awarding institutions can be considered as operating in a similar way to Peterson and Berger's theory of the concentration-competition cycle. Peterson and Berger (1975: 160-164) postulate that the major record labels held an oligopolistic control over the music industry between 1948 and 1955, and that as a result of the homogeneity of the market an unsated demand was created that was satisfied by the competition brought around by the independent labels that promoted rock'n'roll. Essentially, competition made the landscape of popular music more interesting because it challenged the accepted status quo and brought more diversity to a homogeneity of products. This theory can be applied to the field of popular music awarding institutions. The dominant, major awards represent the concentration era of Peterson and Berger's theory which, when considering the deep ties between the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards and their respective recording industries, draws a straight parallel. These awarding institutions, as argued throughout the thesis, are extensions of their recording industries and as such are representative of mainstream music and the major record labels' best interests. Competition for these awards came in the form of various non-

major awarding institutions formed to celebrate and promote a variety of music and musicians. Competition in awards results in a more rigorous and conscious system of awarding. The competition of non-major awards reinforces how integrated into the major recording industry the major awarding institutions are; we once again see that the major awarding institutions act as an extension of the recording industry and replicate the values of the industry that it represents. Non-major awarding institutions expand the field of music receiving recognition, demonstrating the diverse and varied array of popular music within the broader recording industry. Through their innovation, non-major awarding institutions can challenge and improve their major counterparts.

This section has established how awarding institutions do not exist independently, but rather as part of a wider field. The dominant, major awarding institution establishes the parameters for awarding within the field which then allows other, non-major awarding institutions to form in order to address gaps within the major institution's remit of awarding. Non-major awarding institutions take a number of forms to recognise music and musicians from a variety of different geographical locations, musical genres, personal identities and value systems. Consequently, an awarding hierarchy is created into which the awarding institutions will be situated dependent on tacit rules. To understand popular music awarding, we must examine it as part of the wider recording industry and within the wider field of popular music awarding. Furthermore, non-major awards can be used to better understand what music and musicians are under-represented and under-valued within the major awarding institution which, due to the close relationship between major awarding institution and major recording industry, can also reveal what music and musicians are overlooked by the major recording industry.

5.3 The MOBO Awards

The MOBO Awards are a UK based awarding institution founded 'to represent music (of black origin) and urban culture' (MOBO, 2020). The awards' formation in 1996 was celebrated at the time as an opportunity to award music and artists who were being overlooked and left out at the BRIT Awards (The Guardian, 1996d: 8; Wroe, 1996b: 6). The UK mainstream music scene of the mid-1990s was overwhelmingly white, in part due to the huge success and popularity of the Britpop scene, so the arrival of the MOBO Awards as a non-major awarding institution sought to address this imbalance and celebrate diverse forms of music. Despite some controversies over the years, in its over two decades of operation, the MOBO Awards have

challenged the BRIT Awards, as the dominant awarding system in their field, to assess their own practices and have, more broadly, changed the parameters of what successful British popular music is considered to be. This section will explore the foundation of the MOBO Awards as a non-major awarding institution and how it addressed a gap within the UK field of popular music which in turn created more space for urban music. It will argue that the MOBO Awards have been so successful because they function as an implied critique of the mainstream which facilitated change in the recognition of urban artists within the recording industry and at the BRIT Awards. An analysis of the ten years (1986-1995) preceding the formation of the MOBO Awards at the BRIT Awards will show that, while BAME artists were being recognised by the major awarding institution, music of black origin was overlooked. Finally, this section will establish that the MOBO Awards have been increasingly criticised for awarding outside of their original remit and ignoring important genres of black origin.

In many ways, the MOBO Awards are similar to other popular music awarding institutions in their promotional capacity. The awards have an annual ceremony that takes place in the autumn which has been televised since its first production in 1996 starting on ITV, then moving over the years to Channel 4, BBC One and Channel 5. The awards took place in London until 2008 and have since been held in different UK cities including Liverpool and Glasgow but have been on hiatus since 2018 in order to expand their remit and returned in late 2020. The MOBO Awards recognise UK and international artists, and have played a particularly important role within UK popular music by bringing attention to a plethora of young artists from a range of local scenes in the UK, including Dizzee Rascal and Ms Dynamite. The MOBO Awards have been credited with carving a place in the UK's musical landscape for more media platforms and outlets for urban music (MOBOs, 2020). In the wake of the awards' foundation, in July 1999 the urban music channel MTV Base was formed, in August 2002 BBC Radio1Xtra debuted as a black music radio station and in February 2003, Channel U was formed as a television channel to celebrate grime and urban music. The MOBO Awards facilitated the exposure of urban music into more mainstream platforms which demonstrates the impact of the MOBO Awards as a non-major awarding institution.

The founding principles of the MOBO Awards are more overtly political than their counterparts. Deciding to celebrate a particular type of music is immediately controversial due to the complexity of defining musical genres, particularly when race plays a defining role. The MOBO Awards' decision to use the term 'urban' is somewhat contentious, however, as it tends

to stand as a catch-all phrase for music created by black people which is often accompanied by a range of unfair racial stereotypes. As urban is the term that the MOBOs have decided to use, I shall refer to it when appropriate here but its problematic nature should be acknowledged. Wheatley (2010: 67) has argued that the term urban is 'a way of segregating black and Asian musicians from the mainstream'. As the MOBO Awards operate to bring attention to a variety of genres with black origin, their use of the term urban is indicative of the non-mainstream nature of the music that they recognise and the lack of terminology to describe it within a mainstream that sees the variety of genres as a homogenous block to be lumped together.

The MOBO Awards' founder, Kanya King, establishes the awarding institution as very different to its awarding counterparts. Unlike the major recording industry backing of the BRIT Awards and the Grammy Awards, the MOBO Awards were founded on the vision of King, a young, black, single mum from London who, by her own admission, 'went into the music industry with no contacts or experience' (Dingwall, 2011). King's struggling musician friends could not get a record deal or a platform as a result of the music they performed so she started putting on local R&B showcases that received good feedback and popularity via word of mouth. She says that the feedback and the passion she received inspired her to 'try something a bit bigger, or a bit more daring' (King, 2000). Despite the recording industry's focus on artists in the mid-1990s who were 'overwhelmingly white, male and working in the rock/pop idiom' (Cloonan, 1997: 47), King 'recognised that there was a huge gap in the marketplace, there was an audience that wasn't being catered for' (King, 2013). King had been told by those whom she approached within the industry that 'there wasn't an audience out there' for the music that she wanted to honour (King, 2016), but King forged ahead regardless, re-mortgaging her house to finance the project and working from her bedroom (King, 2013). The contrast between King's approach to forming an awarding institution and that of a major awarding institution signifies the vast gulf between the types of awarding that exist within the field of popular music. King's approach is the more unlikely; the MOBO Awards started as an individual's endeavour with a lack of funding and contacts with no guarantee of success in a high risk industry compared to the risk taken on behalf of the recording industry by major awarding institutions.

The MOBO Awards addressed a gap within the field of popular music awarding. Long term success for emergent awarding institutions is not guaranteed due to the prominent position that the dominant, major awards occupy within, and the over-saturation of, the awarding field. The MOBO Awards entered a field that already had a number of established awarding institutions

including the major BRIT Awards, the Ivor Novello Awards for song writing and composition, the NME Awards and the Q Awards which were both attached to music magazines that covered rock and the MMP which awarded the best album. The MOBO Awards' remit to recognise music of black origin was not being catered for by any of the other awards within the field which is partly why it has achieved such success and continued operations. Despite the assertions made to King that there was not an audience for the music she wanted to honour, King clearly found an uncatered for niche within the awarding field that has had an impact on the UK music scene and its major awarding institution.

The positioning of the MOBO Awards as an awarding institution designed to recognise music of black origin that had been overlooked by the recording industry and other awarding institutions highlighted a lack of racial representation within the artists awarded by awarding institutions like the BRIT Awards. Certainly, press reports at the time claimed that 'the British music industry – particularly the prestigious BRIT Awards – is biased against black artists and fails to grant them proper recognition' and that the launch of the MOBO Awards was in retaliation to this oversight (Wroe, 1996b: 6). Examining the ten years preceding the formation of the MOBO Awards (1986-1995) at the BRIT Awards shows that BAME artists were not completely excluded from nominations nor wins. Two BAME artists, Seal and Fine Young Cannibals, won the lauded *Album of the Year* award with an additional eight of the 42 nominees for the category identified as BAME. The *Single of the Year* category was won once by a BAME artist and there were five BAME nominees out of 49. Three BAME artists won the *Group of the Year* category with an additional 8 BAME artists nominated out of 42 nominees. Two BAME artists won the *British Breakthrough Act* category with an additional 10 out of 28 nominees identified as BAME. Though not an overwhelming amount, there was some representation of BAME artists at the BRIT Awards in the ten years preceding the establishment of the MOBO Awards. The recognised BAME artists, however, mostly fell into the genres of rock or pop, which dominated the BRIT Awards, with only a few exceptions like Soul II Soul who were nominated in all four categories but won none of them. The lack of representation at the BRIT Awards, then, was not wholly about the artists being recognised but the lack of genres associated with black artists being recognised.

The MOBO Awards have a diverse range of awarding categories that sets them apart from other awarding institutions. At the inaugural MOBO Awards there were 18 categories that covered a vast selection of musical genres including *Best Jungle*, *Best DJ*, *Best Dance*, *Best*

Reggae and *Best Jazz* alongside major categories of *Best Album*, *Best Single*, *Best Newcomer* and *Best Video*, as well as awards aimed at honouring the heritage of black music such as *Outstanding Contribution* and *Lifetime Achievement*. This approach is significantly different to that of the BRIT Awards which predominantly has only broad categories awarded for *Best Album*, *Best Single*, *Best Group* and so on which reinforces the BRIT Awards' major status. The narrow scope of the BRIT Awards' major categories ensures that the award will be given to a popular artist who has achieved significant chart success within whatever genre is enjoying mainstream success at that moment. The MOBO Awards' approach to awarding was established in a much more inclusive way. King has said that she envisioned the MOBO Awards as 'an event that's about celebration that's inclusive, not exclusive' (King, 2000), which can be seen through the variety of music that is recognised at the MOBO Awards through genre specific award categories that facilitate a wider range of music being honoured.

Spectacle and scandal, as explored in Chapter Four, are essential for an awarding institution to gain prominence and attention and the MOBO Awards are no different in their actions to achieve this. The MOBO Awards benefitted from the comparison between them and the BRIT Awards as it simultaneously established why the awards were different and promoted them to a range of audiences. The cultural game of awarding is dependent on the media engaging with awards. Journalists provide the commentary around awards and perpetuate, and even create, the conflict and scandal needed to ensure an award's continued relevance alongside interest from the public. For the MOBO Awards, the focus on the type of music that the awards would be honouring established the award's identity which helped people to understand the aim of the awards. English tells us that awards are 'a nodal point for communitarian identification and pride, a means of positing an "us" and an "our" around which to rally some group of individuals, as well as a means of raising the status of that self-avowed community' (2005: 51). The MOBO Awards, as an awarding institution formed with the aim of honouring overlooked and under-represented music within the major recording industry and awarding institutions, advocates for a community of music that has been inspired by music of black origin which people can clearly identify with. Part of the appeal of the MOBO Awards is their claim to recognise that which has been underappreciated, which people can rally around.

The early MOBO Awards ceremonies were designed to maximise attention and achieved this through the recognition of high profile US and UK artists who also attended the ceremony. The inaugural awards ceremony in 1996, for example, awarded a *Lifetime Achievement* award to

US artist Lionel Richie. At the 1998 awards, Puff Daddy was at the ceremony to collect two awards; *Outstanding Achievement* and *Best International Act*. Tina Turner won the *Lifetime Achievement* award at the 1999 awards which was presented by Lionel Richie. Not only were these artists hugely important for raising the profile of the MOBO Awards, the MOBO Awards were breaking ground by recognising them as artists deserving of the highest level of honour. Upon collecting her *Lifetime Achievement* award, Turner said 'this is a special honour for me because I've been in the business since 1960 and I've never had such an honour'. Similarly, Richie was at an advanced stage in his career and had also not received any such lifetime honour from other awarding institutions. For Puff Daddy, who had achieved vast commercial success in the 1990s, his work had only been recognised by the Grammy Awards within genre specific categories, not in the prestigious main categories, and the BRIT Awards have never awarded or nominated him. Read cynically, it could appear that the MOBO Awards were recognising big name artists to attract attention to their new ceremony but the awards were also formally recognising artists who had significant achievements in both the UK and the US recording industries but had not been recognised within their major awarding institution. The MOBO Awards have provided a platform for commercially successful and culturally impactful artists overlooked within major awarding institutions to be appropriately recognised while also promoting upcoming and emerging artists.

The MOBO Awards, as a non-major awarding institution, have provided a platform for certain artists and moments in music to push themselves further towards the mainstream. The year 2000, for example, was a momentous year for British R&B and UK garage which the MOBO Awards not only recognised but celebrated as a boon for the UK music scene. Craig David was a nineteen year old R&B singer-songwriter from Southampton who had his first successful excursion into the UK charts with the garage duo Artful Dodger in 1999, providing vocals for their single *Re-Rewind (the Crowd say Bo-Selecta)* which debuted at number 2 in the UK charts. After signing to *Wildstar Records*, David released his first solo single *Fill Me In* in April 2000 which placed at number 1 in the singles charts, which was followed by the second single *7 Days* which also charted at number 1. These singles featured on David's debut album *Born To Do It* which was released in August 2000 and debuted at number 1 before spending 71 weeks on the album chart. David released a further two singles from the album which both charted in the top ten, each spending 17 weeks on the singles chart. This was a phenomenal success for such a young, black, British artist which also translated into international success

with *Born To Do It* featuring in album charts around the world, including a position on the US album chart at number 11. The singles from the album enjoyed equal international success.

The MOBO Awards were quick to recognise David's success at their ceremony in 2000 by asking him to perform. David was also nominated for five awards and won three; *Best UK Newcomer*, *Best R&B Act* and *Best UK Single* for *Fill Me In*. David's win of *Best R&B Act* was especially monumental at the MOBOs because he was up against four established US acts in the category, including Destiny's Child and Sisqo, which helped to further prove the success that young, black, British artists were starting to enjoy on a national and international stage. R&B and hip-hop were generally associated with US artists so David's success signalled the beginning of British R&B and UK garage starting to experience success and representation outside of their local scenes. David was invited to perform at the 2001 BRIT Awards and achieved nominations in six award categories. David lost all six categories including *British Breakthrough Act* which went to long-forgotten boyband A1, *British Single of the Year* which went to Robbie Williams for the third successive year in a row and *British Album of the Year* which was awarded to Coldplay's *Parachutes*. The inclusion of Craig David at the BRIT Awards ceremony signalled an understanding of current successful popular culture but it did not translate into David's honouring within the awarding institution. This further highlights Chapter Four's findings that what is celebrated at the award ceremony is not necessarily celebrated and recognised by the awards. Between the years of 2001 and 2019, Craig David has been nominated for a total of 14 BRIT awards but has never won an accolade from them while, in comparison, he has won half of the 10 nominations given to him at the MOBO Awards. Prominent DJ and radio presenter Trevor Nelson said that David's success at the 2000 MOBO Awards 'was the most important night because it told everybody out there who's a singer-songwriter from the UK who likes garage, R&B, whatever, that you can do it' (MOBO: *Paving the Way*, 2015). As evidenced by David, the MOBO Awards' power as a non-major awarding institution is in its ability to showcase emerging young talent that might otherwise be overlooked.

The representation of artists from a variety of British scenes at the MOBO Awards ceremony was game changing for those artists as it gave them a national platform on a primetime television awards ceremony. The MOBO Awards were initially aired on ITV for its first two years of production before moving to Channel 4 in 1998 where it stayed until 2003. From 2004, the ceremony was aired on BBC until budget cuts and the BBC's launch of their own music

awards in 2013 led the BBC to end its contract with the MOBO Awards. The awards moved back to ITV in 2014 until 2016 when the awards moved again to Channel 5 for the 2017 ceremony. These channels are terrestrial channels available for anyone to watch. Tula Contostavlos, known professionally as Tulisa, was in the British hip-hop group N Dubz who formed in 2000 and eventually won the *Best British Newcomer* award at the MOBOS in 2007. Contostavlos said of the awards, ‘it was the only time you could turn on your tv without having cable...and get to see urban acts and hear urban music and watch people win awards’ (MOBO: Paving the Way, 2015). In providing a platform for artists and music of black origin on a national platform, the MOBO Awards were not only showcasing current talent but also inspiring the next generation to listen to this music and assuring them that there was a place within the recording industry for artists from non-mainstream genres. In this way, the MOBO Awards have played an important role in facilitating the growth of a number of genres and artists associated with music of black origin. Amy Winehouse, for example, was invited to perform early in her career, as a jazz and R&B singer, at a MOBO Awards nominations launch party (MOBO: Paving the Way, 2015), demonstrating the MOBO Awards’ commitment to providing a platform for young artists in non-mainstream genres.

In many ways, the MOBO Awards have been so successful because they have functioned as an implied critique of major recording industry practices, highlighting artists and genres that have been under appreciated within mainstream music institutions. In particular, the MOBO Awards have provided space for British artists within genres of black origin to perform and be celebrated on a national stage. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw an increasing amount of British artists performing and winning at the MOBO Awards which translated into mainstream success as more British R&B, hip-hop, garage and other urban genres gained prominence in the UK album and singles charts. The popularity of these artists eventually resulted in the BRIT Awards introducing a *British Urban Act* category in 2003, demonstrating how impactful a successful non-major award can be on the practices of the field’s major awarding institution. Though pop was still the dominant genre of the early 2000s, urban music was popular enough that if the BRIT Awards did not include it they would be revealing an ignorance of current trends.

The success of the MOBO Awards impacted the practice of the BRIT Awards, demonstrating how non-major awarding institutions can influence the behaviour of major awarding institutions. Artists that the MOBO Awards had been awarding also started being recognised

by the BRIT Awards. In 2003, the BRIT Awards nominated 10 artists for the *British Urban Act* award but ultimately gave the award to Ms Dynamite. Ms Dynamite had been nominated by the MOBO Awards in 2002 for *Best Single*, *UK Act of the Year* and *Best Newcomer* and won all three awards alongside her debut album also winning the prestigious Mercury Music Prize. Ms Dynamite was also nominated at the BRIT Awards for *British Female Solo Artist*, which she won, as well as *British Breakthrough Act* and *British Album of the Year* which she lost to Will Young and Coldplay respectively. The success of Ms Dynamite, and the wider field of British urban music, could not be ignored by the BRIT Awards if they were to demonstrate their understanding of British popular music. The *British Urban Act* category at the BRIT Awards, however, was discontinued in 2006 as that particular brand of urban music became less popular and British indie music started to emerge as a new genre gaining mainstream attention. This is demonstrative of how the BRIT Awards, as a major awarding institution, are concerned with music and artists that are enjoying mainstream chart success while a non-major awarding institution such as the MOBO Awards can focus on the genres it is keen to uplift and represent.

As the MOBO Awards have grown in popularity and become an accepted part of the music industry, they have been increasingly scrutinised and criticised by the press. One of the most persistent criticisms has been the growing ratio of awards given to white artists. As an awarding institution formed to honour music of black origin, King has always emphasised that the awards are inclusive and can be given to any person of any race (The Guardian, 1996d). When the awards are perceived to be awarding white artists at the expense of black artists the institution's functionality can be called into question. At the 2011 MOBO Awards, for example, white artist Jessie J won the four major categories: *Best Album*, *Best Song*, *Best UK act* and *Best Newcomer*. There were criticisms that 'mainly white female artists were being used to promote MOBO when it should do more to support up-and-coming black female artists who have traditionally sold fewer records in Britain' (Zuberi, 2014: 187). The role of the MOBO Awards has clearly been interpreted as promoting music and musicians who are traditionally left out of the mainstream, acting in the role of champion and promoter. When the MOBO Awards veer from doing this, they are criticised as being 'too mainstream, neglecting the artists the ceremony was supposed to celebrate' (Bakare, 2012). The MOBO Awards are bound not only to their principles but also to the demands of hosting an award ceremony that has practical considerations to make such as audience share. This demonstrates how there are shared concerns between major and non-major awarding institutions, but that these decisions are more

of a double edged sword for an awarding institution such as the MOBO Awards who have committed to honouring a certain type of music.

These criticisms raise the question of whether the MOBO Awards are obliged to honour certain music and musicians. Critics and artists have claimed that the MOBO Awards have ignored innovative black genres. Jazz musician Shabaka Hutchings won the MOBO Award for *Best Jazz Act* as part of the band Sons of Kemet in 2013 and has spoken of the impact of the award on their career. For Sons of Kemet, the MOBO Award marked a ‘turning point’ for the band, expanding their fanbase outside of London which facilitated touring outside of the local area (Hutchings, 2016). However, Hutchings has criticised the awards for failing to recognise innovation within the UK jazz scene, instead choosing to nominate American artists who do not need the exposure and upon whom ‘a win, or indeed simply the nomination itself, will have very little impact’ (ibid.). This criticism raises questions about the function of the MOBO Awards and whether or not they are obliged to promote and champion UK talent or if it is their prerogative to expand the nominations, particularly if the effect might be to bring a wider audience and greater attention to the awards. Similarly, the MOBO Awards were criticised for not truly promoting the grime music scene until 2015, the year when grime was visible at the BRIT Awards with US rapper Kanye West including 25 UK grime artists in his performance. Despite the MOBO Awards introducing a *Best Grime* category in 2014, it was not until 2015 that a significant number of grime artists were nominated for MOBO Awards (Ellis-Peterson, 2015). Grime has been a significant genre within urban music since the early 2000s so whilst this late recognition could be expected from the BRIT Awards, the oversight was not expected from an institution founded to honour music of black origin.

The MOBO Awards illustrate the challenges faced by a non-major awarding institution. They are subject to similar expectations of their major counterparts, in terms of gaining an audience for a televised ceremony at least, but are held to a stricter set of principles and standards due to their early commitment to addressing a gap within the popular music awarding field. The MOBO Awards are a complex and imperfect awarding institution that has fulfilled the task of challenging the mainstream recording industry to recognise the importance of music of black origin as capable of mainstream success. The MOBO Awards have humble beginnings and succeeded through risk taken by their founder, Kanya King, who defied all stereotypes for success within the UK music industry. The MOBO Awards operate as a non-major awarding institution due to their independence from the major recording industry and their framework

for recognising particular musics. As the awards have grown in size and scale, they have become slightly untethered from their original direction as they have navigated balancing the demands of hosting a televised ceremony with remaining committed to uplifting music and artists of black origin. The MOBO Awards were last staged in 2017 before the awards announced they were to go on a hiatus to reassess the awards in the hope of returning with ‘an expanded remit to support emerging musicians, film and television actors, entrepreneurs and other artistic newcomers’ (Snapes, 2018c). This seems to suggest that the MOBO Awards have outgrown their current remit and wish to broaden their awarding capabilities beyond the recording industry, perhaps demonstrating the constraints of the popular music non-major awarding institution once it has grown beyond its original remit.

This section has demonstrated how the MOBO Awards function as a non-major awarding institution. It has argued that the MOBO Awards have been so successful due to their functioning as a critique of the mainstream and their positioning against the major BRIT Awards. While the BRIT Awards have a broad remit within their award categories, the MOBO Awards are more focused on specific genres that represent music of black origin. An analysis of the ten years (1986-1996) preceding the formation of the MOBO Awards at the BRIT Awards shows that while BAME artists are being recognised, genres of black origin were not which demonstrates how the MOBO Awards have addressed a gap within the field of popular music awarding. The MOBO Awards’ ceremony has been explored as essential for promoting the awards and recognising not just emerging UK talent but also overlooked black artists who have achieved mainstream success. The success of the MOBO Awards in providing a platform for urban music expanded the space for urban music within the UK popular music scene through the BRIT Awards and media platforms for urban music and artists. Finally, criticism of the MOBO Awards have been explored to assess how the awards have ignored important black genres in favour for mainstream artists who can bring attention to the awards and ceremony. Overall, it has been established that the MOBO Awards have played a vitally important role as an non-major awarding institution in its mission to provide space and promotion for music and artists of black origin that had previously been overlooked within UK popular music.

5.4 The Mercury Music Prize

The Mercury Music Prize (MMP) was established in 1992 in the image of the literary Booker Prize for Fiction. From its foundation, this defined the MMP as an artistic prize within the field of popular music awarding institutions. The prize was formed to celebrate the best British or Irish album of the year, regardless of genre, and is judged by a jury of experts from across the music industries, including music journalists, music industry executives, musicians and producers. All albums released between a set time period are eligible to submit their album for consideration, with a fee of £150 +VAT payable for administration costs. The MMP receive about 220 eligible albums each year from which a shortlist of 12 albums is published. The 12 shortlisted artists are invited to perform at the televised ceremony and each receive an *Album of the Year* trophy. The overall winner is announced at the ceremony with the winner receiving a separate trophy and a £25,000 cash prize. The following analysis examines the MMP as a non-major awarding institution concerned with aesthetic ideals yet still inextricably bound up with the recording industry. It will explore how the MMP's identification as a prize rather than an award signifies its artistic intent which qualifies the MMP with a higher status within popular music's awarding hierarchy than its major awarding institution counterpart, the BRIT Awards. Despite the MMP's promotion as a prize concerned with honouring artistic merits, which it fulfils, it will be established that the MMP can also be considered an industrial strategy of the recording industry. Additionally, the prize's corporate sponsorship will be examined, highlighting the necessity of commercial partners for the arts prize. It will be established that the MMP acknowledges music and artists left out at the BRIT Awards and that the MMP benefits from its positioning against the BRIT Awards. By examining the MMP's operations, from its judging process to its function as a promotional tool, it will be argued that while non-major awarding institutions have distinct defining features that separate them from their major awarding counterparts there are still several shared features between them.

Within the wider field of popular music awarding institutions, the MMP occupies an elevated position due to its position as an award that presents itself as placing aesthetic considerations over commercial success. While other popular music awarding institutions have moulded themselves on the image of the Grammy Awards, as the field's dominant institution, the MMP took a different path by forming in the image of prizes from the fields of art and literature like the Booker Prize for Fiction, established in 1969, and the Turner Prize for art, established in 1984. Even the MMP's moniker sets it apart in the field; it is not an award but instead a prize

which has more connections to the art world than the awarding institutions of the commerce-centred entertainment industry. Indeed, the arts prize has a more singular focus than its entertainment industry counterparts. There are not multiple categories but instead a shortlisted selection of competitors and an overall winner that demonstrates an ideal within the field's preferred medium i.e. the book, painting or album. It should not, however, be assumed that the arts prize is above the need for competition, controversy or scandal. In fact, Driscoll (2014: 122) tells us that within the field of literature prizes 'the competition between prizes is relentless' and that scandal is essential for building the prize's visibility (Driscoll, 204:140). The MMP's decision to define itself as an arts prize does not separate it from the field of popular music awarding institutions but instead demonstrates knowing engagement with the cultural game of awarding.

Despite being a prize focused ostensibly on the judgements of artistic merit, the origin and function of the MMP is bound up with the commercial exploitation of music and is as linked to the recording industry as the BRIT Awards are. It should be made clear that I am not questioning the decisions made by the MMP's jury as they are wholly independent, nor am I claiming that there is a collusion between the MMP and the recording industry. Rather, looking at the MMP's formation demonstrates that the MMP was conceived of in a similar way as the Grammy Awards were, as detailed in Chapter One. The MMP was considered an industrial strategy for the recording industry in its aims to encourage the sales of albums among a particular demographic. The concept of the prize was envisioned by Jon Webster, managing director of Virgin, and the marketing director of HMV, David Terrill who was also responsible for involving the BPI and the British Association of Record Dealers (BARD) in the prize's formation (Street, 2012: 127). The executives from the recording industry involved in the prize's establishment understood the prize as an industrial strategy 'designed to attract the attention of what the industry identified as "lapsed" customers', those who used to buy music but were no longer buying new music (ibid.). For the recording industry, the MMP was clearly seen as a mechanism through which sales could be generated in a similar way to how the Booker Prize has boosted sales of its winning novel within the literary field (Street, 2005b: 834). This demonstrates how, major or non-major, awarding institutions are a promotional tool that can be used to further sales and promote the object they are awarding. Furthermore, the MMP should be specifically understood as an industrial strategy conceived to boost sales in an underperforming pre-identified target market for the recording industry.

The MMP was positioned against the BRIT Awards in order to solidify its identity and appeal to a different audience. The aim of the prize was not to merely award the commercially successful but to recognise artistry and promote great British and Irish music regardless of genre. However, this is something of a moot point as there has been criticism that while jazz, folk and classical albums are normally included within the shortlist, they invariably never go on to win the prize (Sullivan, 1995: 15; Sullivan, 1998: 12; Petridis, 2002: 8; Chrisafis, 2003: 7). From the outset, ‘it was important to the strategy for the prize that it had credibility and authority’ (Street, 2012: 127) which was how the prize could be positioned against its major competitor. In order for the MMP to gain credibility and authority, the prize ‘had to be seen to be independent of the industry and to operate non-market criteria – to choose the best not the most popular’ (ibid.). Early press coverage of the MMP emphasised this by referring to the prize as a ‘BPI Awards with brains’ (Savage, 1994: 11)¹⁹. Despite the comparisons, the chairman of the MMP has described it as ‘something devised and designed to sell records’ while being ‘presented as explicitly *not* a marketing device’ (Frith, 2016). The MMP was performing the same basic function as the BRIT Awards by conferring value and promoting music and artists through the act of awarding, but the MMP’s awarding criteria was focused on aesthetic value judgements rather than the BRIT Awards focus on the popular and commercially successful. Further authority and independence were achieved by the MMP through its corporate sponsorship and judging process.

Corporate sponsorship has been an invaluable component in keeping the MMP functioning as an independent prize. To ensure that the prize was understood as independent from the recording industry, the prize could not be funded by record labels. Consequently, the BPI appointed an independent company to run the prize and organise its corporate sponsorship resulting in the MMP functioning independently from the BPI ‘in the sense that the BPI had no financial responsibility for it’ (Street, 2018: 119). In a similar way to the MOBO Awards’ conflict between choosing to nominate and award artists that will bring attention to the ceremony or choosing to include artists in niche, local scenes who would benefit from the exposure, there is also conflict between art and commerce at the heart of the MMP which further supports the notion that commercialism versus independence is rife within the awards scene (English, 2005: 90). The corporate sponsor is a common feature of art prizes such as the MMP and the Booker Prize as it facilitates the creation and continued existence of those prizes

¹⁹ As mentioned in Chapter Three, the BRIT Awards were known as the BPI Awards until the mid-90s.

that would be financially incapable of funding the cost of the awards and its administration without corporate sponsored support.

The MMP has had a number of corporate sponsors since its formation in 1992. It is common for art and literary prizes to take their name from their sponsor; the MMP's first sponsor was Mercury Communications (Street, 2014: 186) hence its title. Corporate sponsors will often change but the prize's name will remain the same as its recognition ensures 'a continuity of prestige' for the prize which facilitates the 'rapid accrual of symbolic capital for the new sponsorship' (Driscoll, 2014: 134). For the corporate sponsor, association with an awarding institution can raise their public profile and 'enhance their brand' (Street, 2012: 128). Driscoll (2014: 131) argues that there are two forms of symbolic capital sought by corporate sponsors of art prizes; first, the goodwill generated from the reputation associated with supporting the arts and second, the prestige generated through association with elite cultural producers. Corporate sponsorship functions as a reciprocal exchange of financial capital and symbolic capital between the prize and the sponsor, demonstrating the necessity of commercial partnership for the arts prize to function independently of the field or industry it represents. The award is dependent on the sponsor for funds to operate and the corporate sponsor seeks not to influence the judging process but instead to build its brand through association with the award.

The dependence of the art prize on a corporate sponsor can be interpreted as a conflict between art and commerce. In his work on the *Rules of Art*, Bourdieu (1996: 344) expressed disdain for corporate sponsorship as he perceives the 'increasingly greater interpenetration between the world of art and the world of money' to be a threat to artistic autonomy. A simplistic application of Bourdieu's model would result in reading that corporate sponsored prizes have reduced symbolic capital due to the trade-off of commerce over art, yet Driscoll (2014: 132) argues that having a corporate sponsor can instead drive the need for the prize to prove its value and legitimacy; 'the presence of commercial agents in a literary institution can drive the need for that institution to embody specifically literary values'. There is a tacit understanding that the art prize must operate within the confines of commerciality through its corporate sponsor to retain financial independence from its related field or industry. The presence of a corporate sponsor itself does not necessarily condemn an art prize as an entity beholden to the values and concerns of pure commerce. Rather, the corporate sponsor can grant independence from commercial ties to the art prize's related industry which allows the prize to retain autonomy,

gain financial independence and assert its values and legitimacy. Despite its corporate sponsor, the MMP is judged as an independent arts prize due to its perceived distance from the commerce oriented major recording industry which is demonstrated through the artists and albums it awards.

The MMP's autonomy and perception as a prize concerned with aesthetic value judgements, as opposed to commercial judgements, is furthered through its jurors and judging process. Indeed, the MMP's judging process is part of what sets the prize apart from other awarding institutions within the field of popular music. Popular music awarding institutions tend to judge through either an awarding academy that tends to have hundreds of members or a public vote. In contrast, the MMP, in line with many arts prizes appoints a jury of experts to decide a prize winner. The appointment of academic Simon Frith to chair the panel aided the prize's strategy of demonstrating independence from the recording industry (Street, 2012: 127) due to Frith's respected senior position within popular music academia and his tenure as a music journalist writing for a range of publications including a number of years as a columnist at the *Village Voice*. Frith was sufficiently knowledgeable about popular music, authoritative through his academic positions and journalistic background but equally disconnected from the recording industry to serve as a credible figurehead for the prize. Frith chaired the judging panel from 1992-2015²⁰ and provided a sense of continuity for the MMP, guiding the jurors through the process and providing a clear example of acceptable conduct within the jury (Street, 2014: 191). Frith's presence as the chair of the jury brought credibility to the MMP and distinguished it from other competitors through its thoughtful, considered and transparent judging process. Additionally, Frith's status as an academic has resulted in the MMP's general operations and processes being documented in a thoughtful and considered way which most other awarding institutions are missing.

The MMP has a guarded judging process to ensure that jurors can feel comfortable airing their opinions without public repercussions but the process is transparent in a way that other awarding institutions' judging processes are not. MMP jurors are announced each year along with their identifying credentials, in the form of their job title, and come from a range of areas in the music industry including radio DJs, musicians, industry executives and music critics. Juries are common within art prizes and Norris (2006: 141) argues that Bourdieu's theory of

²⁰ Jeff Smith, Head of Music at BBC Radio 2 and 6 Music, replaced Frith as chair from 2016.

symbolic violence can be prescribed to juries. Symbolic violence can be understood as the use of culture to further reinforce existing social hierarchies that are enjoyed by the dominant classes within their everyday lives when 'adhering to the rules of the system that provides them with their positions of privilege' (Schubert, 2014: 180). Norris (2006: 146) argues that we can understand juries as a form of symbolic violence because the judges tend to have very similar backgrounds such as an Oxbridge education which can restrict and inform the choices the jury makes. The MMP defies this logic, however, because of the varied backgrounds of its judges and the everyday nature of popular music compared to literature or art which tend to have sets of more traditionally institutionalised gatekeepers, such as university scholars, than popular music. It seems difficult to make the argument that the MMP is complicit in furthering symbolic violence when it has nominated artists like 19 year old grime artist Dizzee Rascal, who won the 2002 prize, and pop band the Spice Girls who were nominated in 1997. The judges for the prize are also from a broad range of backgrounds and though some are Oxbridge educated, most do not conform to the Oxbridge ideal Norris envisions as so destructive to literary prizes like the Booker Prize.

The voting process for the MMP would more accurately be termed the judging process, as Frith says that he was convinced from a very early stage of the prize that 'judging meetings should involve discussion, not voting' (Street, 2018: 121). There are two stages to the judging process of the MMP; condensing the submissions down to a shortlist and then choosing a final winner. The two stages of judging operate differently, 'the shortlist meeting was about people making a case as to why a record should be on the shortlist, while the final meeting also involved people making a case as to why something should come off the list' (Street, 2018: 122). Frith details how some of the judging panel were uncomfortable with discussion as it sat outside of the normal purview of their work. Music journalists would fall into this category, Frith says, because they are used to writing about music rather than discussing it, whereas those who worked in radio were more comfortable with voicing their opinions (ibid.). Frith's role as chairman was to facilitate these discussions and ensure that the jury members were comfortable discussing their opinions. Prize juries envision themselves as part of a 'democratic deliberation and democratic procedure' (Street, 2005a: 229) which ensures that the jurors see themselves as part of an equitable process that should not be swayed by underhanded tactics or outside allegiances to the recording industry. It is clear that the judging process of the MMP is a considered and careful process that requires active jurors invested in the UK and Ireland's music scenes.

The communal, discussion based nature of the MMP's judging process requires not only independent thought but the acknowledgement of why others might find an album so powerful when it perhaps does nothing for another. An album that wins the MMP should provoke a passionate response in a person; the music needs to be more than just a good album, it has to represent a moment in time. Frith has said that he views the MMP judging process in a similar way to Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year Award, saying 'we have a season to survey; we decide which albums best encapsulate it...we try to take account of the range of pleasures on offer; to honour the player who did something memorably unexpected as well as the taken-for-granted veteran who suddenly reminds us how valuable he is' (1995: 12). Removing the requirement to consider an album's popularity or commercial success allows jurors to more freely extend the purview of the winning album, considering a range of timely and current criteria that reflects the year's musical achievements within its context.

The wording of criteria can cause friction within juries as interpretations can vary. The Nobel Prize for Literature, arguably the first contemporary cultural awarding institution founded in 1901, had its criteria specified in Alfred Nobel's will detailing that the winning author should have created 'the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency' (Espmark, 1986: 1). The wording has long been a point of contention within the prize and its jury, but has also provided enough breadth of interpretation for the continued applicability of the criteria over a century of awarding. The vague criteria allowed distinct periods of the prize to emerge, reflecting the politics and social conventions of the time (Espmark, 1986: 4). For example, the jury saw fit in 1910 to exclude Thomas Hardy from the prize due to his 'strange aversion to God' (Espmark, 1986: 42) demonstrating how the social and religious ideals of the time were reflected onto the candidates considered worthy of the prize. The Nobel Prize for Literature's 2016 decision to award folk musician Bob Dylan was deemed the prize's 'most radical choice' in its long history (Sisario et al, 2016) further highlighting how the prize's broad criteria has given it space to continue awarding within current cultural and contextual trends. An art prize's criteria are essential for establishing the parameters of the prize but also for ensuring that the prize is not unduly constrained and therefore unable to continue awarding as society adapts and evolves over time.

There are three broad criteria that the winning MMP album must satisfy. Firstly, it must be British or Irish 'in its sensibility' as the prize is a celebration of British and Irish music,

secondly, the album must be reflective of its time and thirdly, the album must ‘have some quality that made it stand out from everything else’ (Street, 2018: 123). This criteria is very broad which accommodates a wide range of albums qualifying for the prize across a number of genres. The notion that the albums should be British or Irish in their sensibility reads in a similar way to the Nobel Prize for Literature’s hope for the winning author to have the best work of an idealistic tendency. Both criteria are open for interpretation which creates space for the prize to adapt over time. The MMP seeks to award music that is representative not only of a nation but also of a time, which stands apart in its execution from other albums. The breadth of this criteria allows the award to recognise albums from across the spectrum of musical genres as well as mainstream and non-mainstream artists. Street (2014: 189) identified that between 1992 and 2009, the MMP’s shortlist included over 14 genres, more than was recognised by the BRIT Awards and in the Top 10 album charts, and that 67% of the shortlisted albums were debut albums, demonstrating the role MMP has in introducing new music on a national stage. This is indicative of how the MMP’s criteria ensures that a wide net is cast across eligible albums, fulfilling the MMP’s foundational premise of introducing new music to a target audience who are out of the habit of buying new music.

While the criteria of the prize directs jurors away from awarding commercial success, it is clear that even being shortlisted for the prize brings a substantial commercial advantage. Shortlisted artists will usually experience increased interest due to the publicity that the prize generates, with retailers announcing a combined 300% increase in the sale of shortlisted albums (Simpson, 2000: 8). In the digital age, streaming has been similarly affected by the MMP shortlist such as in 2014 when Scottish experimental hip-hop group Young Fathers experienced a 1040% increase in their streams after appearing in the shortlist (Ellis-Peterson, 2014). The increase in an artist’s public profile as a consequence of featuring in the MMP’s shortlist demonstrates both the prize’s ability to garner media attention and boost sales as well the prize’s reputation as an awarding institution that people trust to recognise, uplift and recommend music. Albums that have won the MMP experience tremendous boosts in their sales which demonstrates how awarding institutions are ultimately tools through which to further promote certain artists and music. There are as many winning debut albums, 67%, as there are shortlisted debut albums (Street, 2014: 189) which demonstrates how the prize champions new, innovative music from Britain and Ireland. Street (2014: 189) identifies that almost all artists recognised at the BRIT Awards for *Best Album* appear on the MMP shortlist but the only artist to win both the BRIT Award and the MMP is the Arctic Monkeys. As an

instrument designed to boost the buying habits of music fans less likely to buy new music, the MMP should not be parroting the output of the BRIT Awards. Instead, the prize acts as a conferral of value onto often unknown acts such as electronic artist Talvin Singh who won the prize in 1999 for his debut album *OK*. Singh was up against established mainstream artists like Blur, Stereophonics and the Manic Street Preachers and was given a 10-1 chance of winning by the bookmakers (BBC, 1999). As a result of the win, Singh's album moved in the UK Album Chart from number 97 to number 41, demonstrating the spotlight that the prize can provide to non-mainstream artists. As a result of its status within the field of popular music awarding institutions, the MMP can recognise innovation rather than chart success which, ironically, transfers into chart success for the winning artist.

As a popular music awarding institution with the reputation of awarding beyond the mainstream, controversy arises when artists deemed to be outside the purview of the prize are included in the shortlist. The 1997 decision to include the Spice Girls' album *Spice* on the MMP shortlist was ridiculed in the UK press (Glaister, 1997: 5) due to the perception of the Spice Girls as an unserious, mainstream pop girl band. This is reflective of the privileging of rock aesthetics over mainstream pop which was explored in Chapter Two. Certainly, the MMP's target audience were not the same demographic as the Spice Girls predominantly young, female audience but as their fans accounted for 50% of the record buying public (Baker, 2013: 15) they were by no means an audience to be ignored when considering albums who had demonstrated cultural impact. The Spice Girls were an undisputed phenomenon in the mid-1990s in the UK, with their first two albums and eight out of nine of their singles reaching number one. Five of those singles were consecutive number ones, something unprecedented in the UK charts, and the success of their debut single in the US surpassed the Beatles but despite this, 'the group exhibited few of the external traits which had come to symbolise authenticity in popular music' (Leach, 2001: 148). The Spice Girls were a manufactured pop band, created by recording industry executives but their success and cultural impact was unprecedented.

The perceived inauthenticity of the Spice Girls informed the objection to their inclusion in the MMP shortlist but the MMP jury defended their decision, arguing that *Spice* satisfied the criteria for the prize as they represented 'a tradition of British crafty pop...that has always been undervalued' (Glaister, 1997: 5). The recognition of the Spice Girls demonstrates the MMP's commitment to recognising albums that are representative of a particular moment in time, regardless of genre. The widespread success that the Spice Girls achieved did not lead to the

recognition of their albums, via nomination or win, at the BRIT Awards. Instead, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the BRIT Awards *Album of the Year* award in the mid to late 1990s were won by male rock bands like The Verve and Manic Street Preachers. The MMP's recognition of the Spice Girls demonstrates the prize's ability to recognise culturally important music beyond the realms of genres considered the most aesthetically valuable. Furthermore, in terms of gender the MMP is much more representative of female artists than the BRIT Awards (Street, 2014: 187). The MMP, as an awarding institution, is capable of working to their broad criteria and including a representative range of artists, irrespective of genre or gender, rather than the most aesthetically valued genres and artists at particular times.

This section has highlighted how the MMP functions in a similar way to art prizes rather than its popular music awarding counterparts and that, as a result, the MMP occupies a unique place within the field of popular music awarding. The MMP is a popular music awarding institution undeniably linked to the recording industry yet independent in its execution due to its corporate sponsorship and judging process. The transparency of the MMP's judging process sets it apart within the field and has been facilitated by the need to prove its credibility and independence from the recording industry. Simon Frith's presence as an academic chair of the jury, independent of the recording industry, further aids the MMP's image as an independent, self-determining prize. Despite the perception of independence from the recording industry, similarly to its major counterparts, the MMP can be considered an industrial strategy due to its construction as a prize aimed at advertising albums to a demographic no longer buying records. This demonstrates the importance of examining popular music awarding institutions, both major and non-major, as they can further our understanding of the recording industry and its operations.

5.5 Non-Major Awarding Institutions as Essential for Major Awards

Examining these two case studies has demonstrated that within the field of popular music awarding institutions, awards all have a similar main function – promoting and honouring specific artists and music – but operate with different remits, recognising artists from across the wide spectrum of the recording industry. The exploration of two non-major awarding institutions has established how new awarding institutions emerge to address gaps within the remits of major awarding institutions. This can consequently challenge and improve the representation within major awards, as demonstrated by the MOBO Awards, and further

establish how closely linked the recording industry is to awarding institutions, as seen in the exploration of the MMP. To understand how popular music awarding institutions operate, they must be examined within their field as well as in relation to their function within the recording industry. This chapter has established how interrelated popular music awarding institutions are and how major and non-major awards compete with each other in order to distinguish themselves from others in the field and demonstrate their ability to recognise valuable music. The following discussion will argue that non-major awarding institutions are essential for their major counterparts, establishing how popular music awarding institutions function within the wider recording industry.

Cultural awarding institutions have become ubiquitous in society due to their mass proliferation throughout the twentieth century (English, 2005: 17) and can be viewed as devices through which a set of values are underscored and celebrated. Moreover, the development of music awarding institutions can be understood as industrial strategies supporting the values, interests and economics of the recording industry from which they are derived. As I have argued, this function can be seen in major awarding institutions but is also perceptible in non-major awarding institutions. The MMP, for instance, functions to support an industrial strategy of increasing sales to a particular demographic. For awarding institutions like the MOBO Awards, there is a clear strategy for the awards to assist artists' careers and promote music which is underrepresented in other awards. To function as successful strategies, awarding institutions must also operate as brands targeted at different audience segments. Due to the variety of awarding institutions within the field of popular music awarding institutions, and the similar ways in which awards function, each institution must be able to distinguish itself from other institutions. The dominant, major popular music awarding institutions within the US and UK recording industries have such universal brand recognition that new, emerging awarding institutions generate interest through marking themselves as different. This, in turn, contributes to the hierarchical nature of awards and helps build the reputation and brand of the new awarding institutions. As this chapter has discussed, the MOBO Awards and the MMP positioned in contrast to the BRIT Awards, through their aims, the development of their brand and to appeal to a different audience base.

The branding of a non-major awarding institution is often achieved through controversy. Scandal, spectacle and controversy, often facilitated by the press, have been identified in Chapter Four as essential for attracting attention to awarding institutions. The very existence

of non-major awarding institutions generate spectacle and controversy due to the space they occupy in the field of awarding institutions. The emergence of a new awarding institution is indicative of a gap within the existing set of awarding institutions and is, in particular, a commentary on the major awarding institution of the field failing to properly recognise a type of music or set of musicians deemed worthy of recognition by others. The gap that a new awarding institution aims to fill is monopolised by the institution as a way to distinguish themselves within the field of awarding. It is also utilised as a way to generate spectacle within the press by positioning themselves against the major awarding institution which helps to build their brand and communicate to audiences what the new awarding institution stands for. The MMP, for instance, knew that it ‘had to be seen as clearly *not* the BRITs’ (Frith, 2016). Early press coverage of the MMP keenly positioned it as the antithesis of the BRITs’ commercialism by highlighting the MMP’s ‘shift of emphasis from quantity to quality’ in comparison to the BRITs (Sinclair, 1992: 3). The marked comparison between the two awarding institutions by the press, in itself a spectacle, allowed the MMP to communicate itself to its audience by identifying that it was for those who were not fans of the BRIT Awards. This clearly demonstrates firstly, how spectacle can generate interest in new non-major awarding institutions and secondly, how awarding institutions compete within their own field.

The evaluation of the MOBO Awards and the MMP as non-major awarding institutions has demonstrated how competition is essential within the wider field of awarding. The competition that non-major awards present to their major counterparts pushes the major awarding institutions to update and refresh their awarding practices. The continued success of the MOBO Awards in the late 90s and early 2000s, for example, resulted in the creation of the *Best Urban* category at the BRIT Awards. This change of practice resulted in a number of artists previously recognised by the MOBOs to be recognised at the BRIT Awards too which improved the credibility and relevance of the BRIT Awards. The *Best Urban* category existed for four years between 2003 and 2006, nominating 25 artists and awarding three; Ms Dynamite, Lemar (who won the award twice) and Joss Stone. Of the winners, Ms Dynamite is the only artist who had been awarded by the MOBO Awards and, incidentally, the MMP, before her BRITs recognition while Lemar and Joss Stone were awarded and nominated, respectively, by the MOBO Awards the same year as their BRIT Award wins.

Exploring the nominees of the *Best Urban* category further reveals the impact that a non-major awarding institution can have on its major counterpart. Of the remaining 21 nominees, some

of whom had been nominated multiple times but whose nominations are counted individually here; eight had been awarded by the MOBO Awards before their recognition by the BRITs, five had been nominated for a MOBO Award before the BRITs did the same, two were recognised by the MOBO Awards and the BRITs on the same year, two had won a MOBO the same year as their BRIT nomination, and two, Romeo and Kano, had not been recognised by the MOBOs before their BRIT nomination. It should be noted, however, that Romeo is most famous for his involvement with So Solid Crew who had been nominated for a MOBO Award before their BRIT nomination. The *Best Urban* category at the BRIT Awards is demonstrative of how a non-major awarding institution can impact on the practice of a major awarding institution. The success of the MOBO Awards, and more importantly, the success of the artists it recognised could not be ignored by the BRIT Awards without the BRITs appearing out of touch with popular trends. It is difficult to measure the impact that the MOBO Awards had on catapulting these artists into the mainstream but it is fair to say that the MOBO Awards shone a spotlight on urban music and the young British artists producing it. The early 2000s witnessed a successive emergence of these artists that correlates with the MOBO Awards championing this music on a national level through the televised ceremony that took place on major television channels.

Non-major awarding institutions like the MOBO Awards can give artists a platform which helps them push through to the mainstream which demonstrates not only the impact that non-major awards can have on major awarding institutions but also the impact they can have on the popularity of particular genres. The competition provided by non-major awarding institutions unsettles the major awards but ultimately enables them to reassess what is current and popular which allows them to expand their own repertoire and retain relevance. The reactive relationship between major and non-major awards is reflective of the practices of the major and independent recording industries. While the major offers the status quo, the non-major unsettles this with new artists and ideas which, if it receives continued success, the mainstream eventually must adopt too (Peterson and Berger, 1975: 160). Consequently, the examination of popular music awarding institutions can act as a valuable tool for better understanding the mechanisms of the recording industry and its practices.

This section has summarised how major and non-major awarding institutions are essential for the functioning of the field of popular music awarding. It has demonstrated that popular music awarding institutions, regardless of major or non-major status, have a number of shared

characteristics that stem from the field's dominant, major awarding institution setting the parameters for how awarding operates within the field. At their core, awarding institutions operate as industrial strategies that support the recording industry from which they have emerged. In order to function as successful strategies that promote certain artists and musics, awarding institutions must also function as a brand with recognisable appeal and a clear set of criteria to judge music and set themselves apart from existing awarding institutions. To set themselves apart within a crowded field, major and non-major awards generate controversy through the press by differentiating themselves which aids in the construction of the awarding institution's brand. Though all popular music awarding institutions hold similarities, their differences are reflective of recording industry practices which is what makes the study of awarding institutions so valuable. There is a reactive relationship between major and non-major awards; emergent non-major awards highlight music and musicians that sit outside of the purview of the major awarding institution but their success can result in the major awarding institution adopting its practices to include the previously unacknowledged music. Broadening out the examination of popular music awarding institutions to explore non-major awarding institutions has allowed a more comprehensive understanding of the field of popular music awarding which facilitates a better understanding of how awarding institutions operate and their purpose. Primarily focusing on the examination of major awarding institutions for the first four chapters of this thesis has been essential because they dictate the creation of the field and how consequent awarding institutions will shape themselves.

5.6 Conclusion

Popular music awarding institutions are complex bodies deserving of academic examination and scrutiny due to their unique positioning as institutions that contribute to the practices of the recording industry and the evaluation of music in everyday life. This chapter has explored the wider field of popular music awarding institutions, expanding beyond the study of the dominant, major awards that this thesis has so far examined. Though the major awarding institution sets the parameters of what it is to award popular music, non-major awards challenge and change the major awards to identify current trends and remain contemporary. More than this, non-major awarding institutions operate in their own right; recognising and championing music and musicians that have been overlooked within the mainstream which, in turn, promotes diversity within the awarding institutions and the recording industry. The two case studies explored in this chapter are examples of high-profile, non-major awarding institutions that

demonstrate their two broad functions: firstly, providing a platform for under-represented artists in the mainstream and secondly, acting as competitors within the broader field of popular music awarding. By providing an insight into how non-major awarding institutions interact with their major counterparts, this chapter expands the purview of this thesis and demonstrates how valuable these institutions are to examine. Popular music awarding institutions are industrial strategies but can also be seen as reflective of interactions within the wider recording industry. They represent the inherent competition that drives the recording industry, highlighting how the major recording industry is not always responsible for innovations in popular music but must adapt its practices in order to remain relevant. Examining major and non-major popular music awarding institutions, and showing how much there is to learn from them, showcases how this thesis has started this undertaking but by no means has finished it.

Conclusion

From a local Battle of the Bands to Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize for Literature, awarding is used as a system through which to judge, categorise and celebrate popular music. Awarding offers a tool of assessment and a way to elevate certain music and musicians over others based on a variable set of value judgements. Winning an award provides a tangible marker of success in an industry that is high risk, often low reward, over saturated and incredibly competitive. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the act of awarding is also a contentious and contested practice that evokes more criticism than praise. Nevertheless, popular music awarding competitions are widespread from local to national, genre specific to general music contests, with events ranging from the satirical to serious. As a practice that promotes and celebrates carefully selected music and artists, impacts industrial practice and informs consumer decision making, it is surprising that it has been afforded little attention in popular music scholarship. This thesis is the first in-depth scholarly examination of popular music awarding and its application across the recording industries. To start this analysis, it was necessary to examine the awarding institutions that have defined awarding within the US and UK's major recording industries in order to understand how the practice of popular music awarding emerged and the role that awarding institutions play within the broader field of popular music. To this end, this thesis has concerned itself with the study of the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards as the major popular music awarding institutions of the US and UK. It has also started the work of examining non-major awarding institutions to assess their role within the field of popular music awarding and how they interact with the major popular music awarding institutions. A number of conclusions have been made through this analysis that expands and enriches existing work on popular music awarding and its role and impact within the major recording industries.

Understanding the aims and intentions of the major popular music awarding institutions was a primary concern of this thesis. To achieve this, it investigated the agents involved in the formation of the primary awarding institutions in the US and UK and how they influenced the motivations and priorities in the establishment of awarding contests. Despite their position as institutions that have spent decades awarding popular music, the mechanisms of the Grammy Awards and BRIT Awards have not been the subject of academic scrutiny. The anonymity of

industry personnel involved and the lack of transparency regarding the formation and processes of the awarding institutions present barriers to analysis. Through analysing the agents involved in the creation of the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards and their connections with the US and UK major recording industries, it has been established that major popular music awarding institutions are inextricably linked to their major recording industry due to the overlap of personnel and the awarding institution's prioritisation of awarding music most valuable to industry. Consequently, this thesis has argued that major popular music awarding institutions are best understood as industrial strategies designed and executed by the major recording industry to bestow cultural value onto its economically valuable music and artists in order to further promote and support them.

In light of this conclusion, it was important to further assess how the major popular music awarding institutions were supporting the major recording industry. Having established the participation of recording industry executives and personnel in the establishment and operations of the awarding institutions, this thesis went on to analyse what music and artists were being celebrated by the awards and their links to the industry. To establish the best awarding categories to analyse, it was essential to understand the industry's most important markets and formats. The album format has been vitally important to the fortunes of the recording industry (Keightley, 2004: 379) so the *Album of the Year* category was selected for analysis to assess the type of music considered most valuable to the industry in both cultural and economic terms. The research that informed this thesis revealed significant differences between the albums honoured at the Grammy Awards and BRIT Awards compared to those celebrated within the popular music canon. While popular music scholarship has often attended to issues related to the rock canon (Appen and Doehring, 2006; Jones, 2008; Kärjä, 2006); awarding institutions show a different value system than that of the rock aesthetic which has informed the popular music canon and the general perception of what musical attributes can be considered as 'high' popular music. Consequently, the examination of major popular music awarding institutions provides a different articulation of value within popular music that centres on mainstream aesthetics and notions of value. The artists and albums recognised by the Grammy Awards and the BRIT Awards can be used as an index to an alternative system of value to the popular music canon which prizes the broad range of artists that achieve mainstream success.

Significantly, in light of their close connections to the major recording industry, this research has determined that the BRIT Awards are reflective of practices, representation and bias also present within the major recording industry. As popular music awarding institutions operate on an annual cycle, they can be used to examine shifting perceptions and values within the mainstream recording industry over time. Analysis of the BRIT Awards' nominated and winning artists indicate key findings about gender and racial bias within the performers awarded by the institution and, by extension, the major recording industry. Focusing on particular years or periods within the institution's awarding has revealed how representative the industry was at a certain time or can also be used to assess if representation and diversity is improving within the industry. This signifies how valuable popular music awarding institutions are as a tool that can be used to learn more about the major recording industry and its practices and biases regarding representation in the industry. This research has not been restricted to the examination of the nominees selected by the awarding institution but has also considered their voting academies, as analysis of gender and racial representation within the academy gives insights into issues of diversity in relation to those who work in the industry. This twofold analysis illustrates the gender and racial representation of the two sides of the industry, the performers and the industry workers, and concludes that a lack of representation within the industry workforce translates into a lack of representation and diversity in the artists and performers the industry represents.

Beyond the practices and processes of the major popular music awarding institutions, this thesis assessed the role of the awarding institution's public face, the award ceremony, and concluded that the ceremony is responsible for promoting and protecting the institution's continued operations. The televised ceremony has different priorities to the process of awarding as it is focused on generating cultural capital on a national stage. This grants the awarding institution the authority to continue operating and judging popular music. Like other cultural award ceremonies (English, 2002), the popular music award ceremony trades through controversy, spectacle and scandal to continue attracting audiences. This is demonstrative of how awarding plays a role within its specific industry but also forms part of a wider field of cultural awarding which has shared characteristics and features (English, 2002: 110). The controversy, spectacle and scandal generated through the ceremony is responsible for boosting reputations and increasing sales for the awarding institution and the artists involved. The ceremony forms an important part of the promotional reach of the awarding institution, increasing its visibility and

providing a mutually beneficial platform for the awards and the attending artists and performers.

While the majority of this thesis has been dedicated to the examination of the major popular music awarding institutions, it has also given attention to the role that non-major awarding institutions have played within the field of popular music awarding. Non-major awarding institutions address gaps within the remit of major awarding institutions and their success has the capacity to challenge and change the practices of major awarding institutions and the music and artists they celebrate. Analysing non-major awarding institutions has led to two broad conclusions; firstly, non-major awards provide a platform for artists underrepresented in the mainstream and secondly, non-major awards act as competitors within the field of popular music awarding which ensures that awarding remains current. Non-major popular music awarding institutions further signify the reflexive relationship between popular music awards and the recording industries. The field of popular music awarding mimics the cyclical nature of the major recording industry and the competition it faces from independent labels and emergent genres. Consequently, the examination of the music awarded by non-major awarding institutions and its eventual inclusion at major awarding institutions demonstrates when non-mainstream music and genres become part of mainstream practice.

The methodological approach used in this thesis reflects the inter-disciplinary and original nature of this research. Through a mixed methods approach of combining statistical analysis and case studies with archival and literary research, this thesis has provided a historical account of the major popular music awarding institutions alongside a reflective analysis of the institutions' awarding practices and motivations over time. Furthermore, this thesis has positioned the study of awarding within an industrial framework which has deepened an understanding of awarding within major recording industries. This thesis is the first to apply this approach to a study of popular music awarding and the broad range of rich data examining representation, awarding's connection to the major industry and the difference between awards and the canon has qualified its use. This study has contributed to and expanded a range of key areas within the study of popular music and cultural awarding studies. Most significantly, this thesis has highlighted the importance of studying popular music awarding institutions as industrial strategies of the recording industry which has contributed and expanded the current understanding of how the recording industry operates and prioritises the promotion of music, artists and formats most valuable to their economic functionality. Moreover, the study of major

popular music awarding institutions has provided an alternative way to analyse success and value in line with mainstream values rather than the values associated with the rock aesthetic. In turn, this expands the current understanding of mainstream values which has been underdeveloped within popular music scholarship. For the growing field of cultural awarding studies, this thesis has provided a blueprint for the analysis of major entertainment awarding institutions that prioritises their study alongside an analysis of their connected industry. Studying major awarding institutions in this way will develop and deepen the understanding of the institution's motivations and purpose.

To return to the *Billboard* (1963: 6) editorial quoted at the beginning of this thesis, requesting that the Grammy Awards should be 'made meaningful' this research has sought to give meaning to the field of popular music awarding that has been missing from existing scholarly research. This thesis provides the first in-depth study of major and non-major popular music awarding institutions and their relationship with their recording industries and each other. As the field of popular music awarding studies is very much in its infancy, there is space for the continued development and analysis of popular music awarding now that the field's dominant, major awarding institutions have been explored. Using popular music awarding institutions as a tool for assessing representation and diversity within an industry should continue and be regularly updated to assess if practices are improving. Further research into non-major popular music awarding institutions at local, regional and national levels still need to be conducted. This has the potential to teach us more about local industries and identities, the tension between regional awards and the national, dominant awarding institutions and much more. On an international level, there is much to be learnt about the major popular music awarding institutions outside of the US and UK. There is potential to learn about their relationship with the US and UK awards and recording industries, as well as their relationship within their own national industries and with the non-major awarding institutions of their awarding field. The research presented throughout this thesis is intended to be a spring board for the continued study of popular music awarding as it is clear that there is much more to be learnt. As this thesis has shown, popular music awarding institutions are enriched with social, economic and aesthetic meaning, which, unfortunately, disproves Eddie Vedder's 1996 Grammy Award acceptance speech (Shamsai, 1996: 367).

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Appendix A

Grammy Award *Album of the Year* Winners and Nominees 1959 – 1968

Year	Artist	Album	Record Label	Billboard Top 200 Chart Position	Nominees
1959	Henry Mancini	The Music from Peter Gunn	RCA Victor	1	Frank Sinatra – Come Fly With Me Ella Fitzgerald – Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving Berlin Songbook Frank Sinatra – Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely Van Cliburn – Tchaikovsky: Concerto No. 1, in B-Flat Minor, Op. 23
1960	Frank Sinatra	Come Dance with Me!	Capitol Records	2	Harry Belafonte – Belafonte at Carnegie Hall Henry Mancini – More Music from Peter Gunn Van Cliburn – Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 Robert Russell Bennett – Victory at Sea, Vol. 1
1961	Bob Newhart	The Button-Down Mind of Bob Newhart	Warner Bros. Records	1	Harry Belafonte – Belafonte Returns to Carnegie Hall Sviatoslav Richter – Brahms: Concerto Frank Sinatra – Nice ‘n’ Easy Erich Leinsdorf – Puccini: Turandot Nat King Cole – Wild is Love
1962	Judy Garland	Judy at Carnegie Hall	Capitol Records	1	Henry Mancini – Breakfast at Tiffany’s Ray Charles – Genius + Soul = Jazz

					Si Zentner and Johnny Mann Singers – Great Band with Great Voices Nat King Cole – The Nat King Cole Story John Green – West Side Story (Motion Picture Soundtrack)
1963	Vaughn Meader	The First Family	Cadence Records	1	Tony Bennett – I Left My Heart in San Francisco Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd – Jazz Samba Ray Charles – Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music Allan Sherman – My Son, the Folk Singer
1964	Barbra Streisand	The Barbra Streisand Album	Columbia Records	9	Ward Swingle and the Swingle Singers – Bach’s Greatest Hits Andy Williams – Days of Wine and Roses and Other TV Requests Al Hirt – Honey in the Horn Soeur Sourire – The Singing Nun
1965	Stan Getz and João Gilberto	Getz/Gilberto	Verve	2	Al Hirt – Cotton Candy Various Artists – Funny Girl Barbra Streisand – People Henry Mancini – The Pink Panther
1966	Frank Sinatra	September of My Years	Reprise Records	5	The Beatles – Help! Barbra Streisand – My Name is Barbra Eddy Arnold – My World Various Artists – The Sound of Music
1967	Frank Sinatra	A Man and His Music	Reprise Records	9	Barbra Streisand – Color Me Barbra Maurice Jarre – Dr. Zhivago The Beatles – Revolver Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass – What Now My Love
1968	The Beatles	Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band	Parlophone	1	Frank Sinatra and Antônio Carlos Jobim – Francis Albert Sinatra & Antônio Carlos Jobim

					Vikki Carr – It Must Be Him Ed Ames – My Cup Runneth Over Bobbie Gentry – Ode to Billie Joe
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Appendix B

Grammy Award *Record of the Year* Winners and Nominees 1959 – 1968

Year	Artist	Record	Record Label	Billboard Top 100 Chart Position	Nominees
1959	Domenico Modugno	Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu (Volare)	Decca	1	Perry Como – Catch a Falling Star David Seville – The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't be Late) Peggy Lee – Fever Frank Sinatra – Witchcraft
1960	Bobby Darin	Mack the Knife	Atco Records	1	Elvis Presley – A Fool Such as I Frank Sinatra – High Hopes André Previn – Like Young The Browns – The Three Bells
1961	Percy Faith	Theme From a Summer Place	Columbia Records	1	Elvis Presley – Are You Lonesome Tonight Ray Charles – Georgia on my Mind Ella Fitzgerald – Mack the Knife Frank Sinatra – Nice 'N' Easy
1962	Henry Mancini	Moon River	RCA Victor	11	Jimmy Dean – Big Bad John Frank Sinatra – The Second Time Round The Dave Brubeck Quartet – Take Five Si Zentner – (Up a) Lazy River
1963	Tony Bennett	I Left My Heart in San Francisco	Columbia Records	19	Stan Getz & Charlie Byrd – Desafinado Joe Harnell and his Orchestra – Fly Me to the Moon Bossa Nova Ray Charles – I Can't Stop Loving You Sammy Davis Jr – What Kind of Fool Am I?

1964	Henry Mancini	Days of Wine and Roses	Columbia Records	33	The Singing Nun – Dominique Barbra Streisand – Happy Days Are Here Again Tony Bennett – I Wanna Be Around Jack Jones – Wives and Lovers
1965	Stan Getz & Astrud Gilberto	The Girl from Ipanema	Verve Records	5	Petula Clark – Downtown Louis Armstrong – Hello, Dolly! The Beatles – I Want to Hold Your Hand Barbra Streisand – People
1966	Herp Alpert & the Tijuana Brass	A Taste of Honey	A&M Records	7	The Beatles – Yesterday Ramsey Lewis Trio – The ‘In’ Crowd Roger Miller – King of the Road Tony Bennett – The Shadow of Your Smile (Love Theme From “The Sandpiper”)
1967	Frank Sinatra	Strangers in the Night	Reprise Records	1	David Houston – Almost Persuaded The Mamas and the Papas – Monday, Monday Herp Alpert & the Tijuana Brass – What Now My Love The New Vaudeville Band – Winchester Cathedral
1968	The 5 th Dimension	Up, Up and Away	Soul City	7	Glen Campbell – By the Time I Get to Phoenix Ed Ames – My Cup Runneth Over Bobbie Gentry – Ode to Billie Joe Frank Sinatra and Nancy Sinatra – Somethin’ Stupid

Appendix C

Grammy Award Album of the Year, Best Selling Album, Top 100 Albums of All Time Position and Peak Chart Position

<i>Year</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Album</i>	<i>Record Label</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Best Selling Album (US) Position</i>	<i>Best Selling Album (UK) position</i>	<i>Rolling Stone Top 100 Albums of All Time Position</i>	<i>NME 100 Albums of All Time Position</i>	<i>Billboard 200 Peak Position</i>	<i>UK Official Charts Peak Position</i>
1959	Henry Mancini	The Music from Peter Gunn	RCA Victor	Jazz	American	-	-	-	-	1	-
1960	Frank Sinatra	Come Dance with Me!	Capitol	Traditional Pop	American	-	-	-	-	2	2
1961	Bob Newhart	The Button-Down Mind of Bob Newhart	Warner Bros	Comedy	American	-	-	-	-	1	2
1962	Judy Garland	Judy at Carnegie Hall	Capitol	Vocal jazz	American	-	-	-	-	1	13
1963	Vaughn Meader	The First Family	Cadence Records	Comedy	American	-	-	-	-	1	12
1964	Barbra Streisand	The Barbra Streisand Album	Columbia	Traditional Pop	American	-	-	-	-	9	-
1965	Stan Getz and João Gilberto	Getz/Gilberto	Verve	Jazz	American/Brazilian	-	-	-	-	2	-
1966	Frank Sinatra	September of My Years	Reprise	Traditional Pop	American	-	-	-	-	5	-

1967	Frank Sinatra	A Man and His Music	Reprise	Traditional Pop	American	-	-	-	-	9	9
1968	The Beatles	Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band	Parlophone	Rock	British	+	3	1	14	1	1
1969	Glen Campbell	By the Time I Get to Phoenix	Capitol	Country	American	-	-	-	-	15	1
1970	Blood, Sweat & Tears	Blood, Sweat & Tears	Columbia	Jazz-Rock	Canadian-American	-	-	-	-	1	15
1971	Simon & Garfunkel	Bridge Over Troubled Water	Columbia	Folk-Rock	American	+	21	51	-	1	1
1972	Carole King	Tapestry	Ode Records	Soft Rock	American	-	-	36	19	1	4
1973	George Harrison & Friends	The Concert for Bangladesh	Apple	Rock	Various	-	-	-	-	2	1
1974	Stevie Wonder	Innervisions	Motown Records	Soul, Funk	American	-	-	24	59	1	8
1975	Stevie Wonder	Fulfillingness' First Finale	Motown Records	Soul, Funk	American	-	-	-	+	1	5
1976	Paul Simon	Still Crazy After All These Years	Columbia	Folk-Rock	American	-	+	+	-	1	6
1977	Stevie Wonder	Songs in the Key of Life	Motown Records	Soul, Funk	American	-	-	57	+	1	2
1978	Fleetwood Mac	Rumours	Warner Bros	Pop-Rock	British-American	10	11	26	50	1	1
1979	Various Artists	Saturday Night Fever	Reprise	Soundtrack	Various	20	-	-	-	1	1
1980	Billy Joel	52 nd Street	Columbia	Jazz-Rock	American	+	-	+	-	1	10

198 1	Christopher Cross	Christopher Cross	Warner Bros	Pop-Rock	American	-	-	-	-	6	14
198 2	John Lennon & Yoko Ono	Double Fantasy	Geffen	Rock	British/Japanese	-	-	-	-	1	1
198 3	Toto	Toto IV	Columbia	Rock	American	-	-	-	-	4	4
198 4	Michael Jackson	Thriller	Epic	Pop	American	2	6	20	-	1	1
198 5	Lionel Richie	Can't Slow Down	Motown Records	Pop, R&B	American	-	-	-	-	1	1
198 6	Phil Collins	No Jacket Required	Atlantic	Pop-Rock	British	50	+	-	-	1	1
198 7	Paul Simon	Graceland	Warner Bros	Pop-Rock	American	-	51	71	-	3	1
198 8	U2	The Joshua Tree	Island Records	Rock	Irish	-	36	27	-	1	1
198 9	George Michael	Faith	Columbia	Pop	British	-	+	-	-	1	1
199 0	Bonnie Raitt	Nick of Time	Capitol	American	American	-	-	-	-	1	-
199 1	Quincy Jones & Various Artists	Back on the Block	Qwest Records	Jazz, R&B	American	-	-	-	-	9	26
199 2	Natalie Cole	Unforgettable... With Love	Elektra	Jazz	American	-	-	-	-	1	11
199 3	Eric Clapton	Unplugged	Reprise	Acoustic Rock	British	-	-	-	-	1	2
199 4	Whitney Houston	The Bodyguard	Arista Records, Inc	Pop	American	14	-	-	-	1	1

1995	Tony Bennett	MTV Unplugged	Columbia	Jazz	American	-	-	-	-	1	-
1996	Alanis Morissette	Jagged Little Pill	Maverick	Pop-Rock	American-Canadian	19	41	-	-	1	1
1997	Celine Dion	Falling Into You	Columbia	Pop	Canadian	59	-	-	-	1	1
1998	Bob Dylan	Time Out of Mind	Columbia	Folk, Blues	American	-	-	+	+	10	10
1999	Lauryn Hill	The Miseducation of Miss Lauryn Hill	Columbia	R&B, Hip-Hop	American	-	-	-	12	1	1
2000	Santana	Supernatural	Arista	Latin Rock	American	27	-	-	-	1	1
2001	Steely Dan	Two Against Nature	Giant	Jazz Rock	American	-	-	-	-	6	11
2002	Various Artists	O Brother, Where Art Thou?	Mercury Records	Soundtrack	Various	-	-	-	-	1	-
2003	Norah Jones	Come Away With Me	Blue Note	Pop, Jazz, Blues	American	-	50	-	-	1	1
2004	Outkast	Speakerboxxx/The Love Below	LaFace Records	Hip-Hop	American	-	-	-	-	1	1
2005	Ray Charles	Genius Loves Company	Concord Records	R&B, Blues, Jazz	American	-	-	-	-	1	18
2006	U2	How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb	Island Records	Rock	Irish	-	+	+	-	1	1
2007	Dixie Chicks	Taking the Long Way	Columbia Nashville	Country	American	+	-	+	-	1	10
2008	Herbie Hancock	River: The Joni Letters	Verve	Jazz	American	-	-	-	-	5	-
2009	Robert Plant &	Raising Sand	Rounder Records	Country, American	British/American	-	-	-	-	2	2

	Alison Krauss										
2010	Taylor Swift	Fearless	Big Machine	Country, Pop	American	-	-	-	-	1	5
2011	Arcade Fire	The Suburbs	Merge Records	Indie Rock	Canadian	-	-	-	+	1	1
2012	Adele	21	Columbia	Pop	British	29	4	-	-	1	1
2013	Mumford & Sons	Babel	Island	Folk-Rock	British	-	-	-	-	1	1
2014	Daft Punk	Random Access Memories	Columbia	Disco, Funk	French	-	-	-	+	1	1
2015	Beck	Morning Phase	Capitol	Folk Rock	American	-	-	-	-	4	4
2016	Taylor Swift	1989	Big Machine	Pop	American	-	-	-	-	1	1
2017	Adele	25	Columbia	Pop	British	57	27	-	-	1	1
2018	Bruno Mars	24K Magic	Atlantic	R&B, Funk	American	-	-	-	-	2	3
2019	Kacey Musgraves	Golden Hour	MCA Nashville	Country-Pop	American	-	-	-	-	4	1

Appendix D

BRIT Award British Album of the Year, Best Selling Album, Top 100 Albums of All Time Position and Peak Chart Position

<i>Year</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Album</i>	<i>Record Label</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Best Selling Album (US) Position</i>	<i>Best Selling Album (UK) Position</i>	<i>Rolling Stone Top 100 Albums of All Time Position</i>	<i>NME 100 Albums of All Time Position</i>	<i>Billboard 200 Peak Position</i>	<i>UK Official Charts Peak Position</i>
1977	The Beatles	Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band	Parlophone	Rock	British	+	3	1	14	1	1
1982	Adam and the Ants	Kings of the Wild Frontier	CBS	New Wave	British	-	-	-	-	44	1
1983	Barbra Streisand	Love Songs	Columbia	Pop	American	-	-	-	-	10	1
1984	Michael Jackson	Thriller	Epic Records	Pop	American	2	6	20	-	1	1
1985	Sade	Diamond Life	Epic Records	Soul	British-Nigerian	-	-	-	-	5	2
1986	Phil Collins	No Jacket Required	Virgin	Pop Rock	British	50	+	-	-	1	1
1987	Dire Straits	Brothers in Arms	Vertigo	Rock	British	-	8	-	-	1	1

1988	Sting	Nothing Like the Sun	A&M	Pop, Soft Rock	British	-	-	-	-	9	1
1989	Fairground Attraction	The First of a Million Kisses	RCA	Skiffle	British	-	-	-	-	-	2
1990	Fine Young Cannibals	The Raw and the Cooked	IRS Records	Alternative Rock, New Wave	British	-	-	-	-	1	1
1991	George Michael	Listen Without Prejudice Vol. 1	Columbia	Pop, R&B	British	-	+	-	-	41	1
1992	Seal	Seal	ZTT Records	R&B, Soul	British	-	-	-	-	27	1
1993	Annie Lennox	Diva	RCA	Pop	British	-	-	-	-	23	1
1994	Stereo MCs	Connected	Island Records	Alternative Hip-Hop	British	-	-	-	-	-	2
1995	Blur	Parklife	Food	Britpop	British	-	-	-	79	-	1
1996	Oasis	(What's the Story) Morning Glory?	Creation Records	Rock, Britpop	British	-	5	-	34	4	1
1997	Manic Street Preachers	Everything Must Go	Epic Records	Rock	British	-	-	-	+	-	2
1998	The Verve	Urban Hymns	Hut	Britpop	British	-	18	-	-	23	1
1999	Manic Street Preachers	This is my Truth Tell me Yours	Epic Records	Rock	British	-	-	-	+	-	1

2000	Travis	The Man Who	Independent e	Rock	British	-	43	-	-	135	1
2001	Coldplay	Parachutes	Parlophone	Rock	British	-	45	-	-	51	1
2002	Dido	No Angel	Arista Records	Pop, Folktronica	British	-	25	-	-	4	1
2003	Coldplay	A Rush of Blood to the Head	Parlophone	Rock	British	-	31	-	-	5	1
2004	The Darkness	Permission to Land	Atlantic	Glam Rock	British	-	-	-	-	36	1
2005	Keane	Hopes and Fears	Island	Rock	British	-	35	-	-	45	1
2006	Coldplay	X&Y	Parlophone	Rock	British	-	40	-	-	1	1
2007	Arctic Monkeys	Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm not	Domino Records	Indie Rock	British	-	-	-	82	24	1
2008	Arctic Monkeys	Favourite Worst Nightmare	Domino Records	Indie Rock	British	-	-	-	+	7	1
2009	Duffy	Rockferry	A&M	Pop, Soul	British	-	-	-	-	4	1
2010	Florence and the Machine	Lungs	Island	Indie Pop	British	-	-	-	-	14	1
2011	Mumford & Sons	Sigh No More	Island	Folk Rock	British	-	-	-	-	2	2
2012	Adele	21	XL Recordings	Pop	British	29	4	-	-	1	1

2013	Emile Sandé	Our Version of Events	Virgin	R&B, Soul	British	-	-	-	-	28	1
2014	Arctic Monkeys	AM	Domino Records	Indie Rock	British	-	-	-	-	6	1
2015	Ed Sheeran	X	Atlantic	Pop	British	-	49	-	-	1	1
2016	Adele	25	XL Recordings	Pop	British	57	27	-	-	1	1
2017	David Bowie	Blackstar	ISO, RCA, Columbia, Sony	Experimental Rock	British	-	-	+	+	1	1
2018	Stormzy	Gang Signs & Prayer	#Merky Records	Grime	British	-	-	-	-	-	1
2019	The 1975	A Brief inquiry into Online Relationships	Dirty Hit and Polydor	Pop, Rock	British	-	-	-	-	4	1