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**FROM ROCK 'N 'ROLL TO HARD CORE PUNK:  
AN INTRODUCTION TO ROCK MUSIC IN  
DURBAN 1963 - 1985**

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in fulfilment of the degree of  
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Thanks to all interviewees for their time and assistance. Special thanks to Rubin Rose and David Marks for making their musical and scrapbook collections available. Thanks also to Ernesto Marques for making many of the South African punk recordings available to me.

## **DECLARATION**

This study represents original work of the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another University. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Lindy van der Meulen  
December 1995.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis introduces the reader to rock music in Durban from 1963 to 1985, tracing the development of rock in Durban from rock'n'roll to hard core punk. Although the thesis is historically orientated, it also endeavours to show the relationship of rock music in Durban to three central themes, viz: the relationship of rock in Durban to the socio-political realities of apartheid in South Africa; the role of women in local rock, and the identity crisis experienced by white, English-speaking South Africans. Each of these themes is explored in a separate chapter, with Chapter Two providing the bulk of historical data on which the remaining chapters are based.

Besides the important goal of documenting a forgotten and ignored rock history, one central concern pervades this work. In every chapter, the conclusions reached all point to the identity crisis experienced both by South African rock audiences and the rock musicians themselves. The constant hankering after international (and specifically British) rock music trends both by audiences and fans is symptomatic of a culture in crisis, and it is the search for the reasons for this identity crisis that dominate this work. The global/local debate and its relationship to rock in South Africa has been a useful theoretical tool in the unravelling of the identity crisis mentioned above.

Chapter Four focusses on the role of women in the Durban rock scene and documents the difficulties experienced by women who were rock musicians in Durban. This is a small contribution to the increasing field of womens' studies, and I have attempted to relate the role of women in rock in Durban to other studies in this field.

The thesis is accompanied by a cassette featuring Durban bands in order of their discussion in the text.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Reasons for Research Topic

This thesis explores the history of rock in Durban from 1963 to 1985. I have been concerned that the many important and talented rock bands and musicians which have contributed to the rock scene during the years of South African isolation had never been given serious academic attention. As the country re-enters the international arena, there is a danger that local musicians will be buried under the influx of international stars who are streaming into the country. Thus, the simple documentation of the who, the what and the where of the local rock scene is one aim of this research.

As to why I chose to concentrate on Durban, the reasons are twofold. Firstly, Durban is my hometown; thus I have a personal interest in the history of popular music in the city. Because I have been involved in playing in a rock band based in Durban, I am familiar with the venues and the group of people who support and play rock music in the city. Thus it was not difficult for me to make contact with potential interviewees, as those involved in the rock scene now invariably had contacts with the older rock musicians. Secondly, Durban has been the centre of rock music in South Africa at various stages in the time period under discussion. Many famous rock bands and musicians emerged from Durban especially in the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Conversely, Durban has also experienced severe 'dry patches' in its history of rock; to discover the reasons for this was another aim of this project.

### Time Period Researched

The time period which I have chosen to consider is another issue which is necessary to discuss. My starting point, 1963, was the year in which important early Durban rock bands began to come to prominence - bands like **The Flames**, **The Gonks**, **The Third Eye**, and **The Mods**. Most of these bands formed in the early and mid-1960s and were well-known on the local scene.

Thus, musically speaking, it makes sense to start at this point in history. My ending point, 1985, marks the end of the new wave and hard core punk era in Durban and is the approximate beginning of the heavy metal scene. The heavy metal scene which has diversified into many forms of metal, grunge being the latest, is still very much in existence in Durban in 1995. I felt that not having the advantage of retrospect, I could not include the metal bands in my research project.

This twenty-year period begins at a time when the notorious apartheid system was fully entrenched and operational in South Africa, and was beginning to affect all South Africans to a suffocating extent. In fact, as early as 1950, the main pillars of apartheid law had been established. These included the Population Registration Act of 1950, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, the 1950 Immorality Act, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the 1954 Natives Resettlement Act.<sup>1</sup> The end of my period comes at the height of organised opposition to the system, as well as its final attempts to retain its position of power. By the mid-1980s, the liberation movement had spread to all parts of the country, and the international community was

<sup>1</sup> The Population Registration Act (1950) required that every South African be classified into one of four racial groups, viz; 'Native' (later changed to 'Bantu'), 'European' (later 'White'), 'Coloured', or 'Indian' (later 'Asian'). The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) prohibited mixed marriages between whites and members of other groups. The 1950 Immorality Act forbade all extra-marital sexual contact between whites and blacks, and contravention of this act was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment. The Group Areas Act (1950) designated specific urban areas for occupation by particular race groups. This forced hundreds of thousands of people to move against their will.

pressurising the South African government to end its undemocratic rule.

The segregation of the South African population imposed by Apartheid made conditions unbearable for musicians used to working in multi-racial bands. Clubs which permitted inter-racial mingling were closed down, and people were forcibly removed to different locations. This broke up existing music communities and removed their source of income, and inevitably led to many of South Africa's best musicians going into exile. In Johannesburg and Cape Town, the famous Sophiatown and District Six were evacuated, destroying the vibrant cultural life that had once existed in these areas:

Evacuated and partially razed between 1966 and 1984, District Six remained, for the most part, a wasteland where a few remaining churches and mosques bore witness to a lively past. As for musicians in Sophiatown, District Six, and elsewhere, their possibilities for work were substantially diminished. The clubs which welcomed bands and mixed audiences in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and other cities were increasingly subjected to police or Special Branch raids. It became more and more difficult for the most creative groups - especially when they were racially mixed - to meet and work together. Under these circumstances, many of the most talented South African musicians chose exile. Political repression and a will to systematically separate South Africans had tragic consequences for the development of music. As a result, it has taken approximately 20 years (from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s) for South African music as a whole to come back into its own ... For those who remained, the extension of apartheid to radio and the recording industry, combined with the banning of non-segregated concert halls, made artistic life nightmarish. Discrimination and racial separation effectively meant discrimination and musical separation...<sup>2</sup>

Apartheid within the country and isolation from the world provide the framework within which cultural life in South Africa took place. These factors affected the day-to-day lives of rock bands and rock culture in the city of Durban.

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<sup>2</sup> D. Martin, 'Music Beyond Apartheid?' (transl. V. Morrison) in Rockin' the Boat, Mass Music and Mass Movements, ed. R. Garofalo, Boston: South End Press, 1992, p. 198.

Thus, my twenty year period spans an era of oppression and resistance. It begins in a time of entrenched apartheid and ends with the rumblings of its dissolution, and therefore it spans a significant period in the history of South Africa. Furthermore, this twenty year period was a difficult one for local music: sanctions imposed on South Africa were wide-ranging, and embraced the music industry, preventing the usual exchange of music and bands to a large extent. Thus South African musicians were isolated from the world stage and prevented from the opportunities of experiencing first-hand the rock revolution as it developed.

### Methodology

Since no substantial research has previously been done on the specific topic at hand, it was necessary to obtain most of the data through primary source material such as interviews and recordings. I also made extensive use of newspaper reports from local papers and magazines from 1963-1985<sup>3</sup>, both on microfilm and those available from the scrapbooks of interviewees. Books, and journal articles which deal with rock music in general were also invaluable in this research project.<sup>4</sup>

Except for those who had moved abroad, most rock musicians were fairly easy to trace. In fact, each person I interviewed was most helpful in supplying names and in most cases telephone numbers of further helpful contacts. Thus, my list of possible research contacts expanded with each interview. Furthermore, interviewees proved most enthusiastic and cooperative once I had explained my reasons for, and the scope of my research. Most felt flattered that I was taking their music seriously and were very open to discussion. I found it most helpful to record interviews, as

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<sup>3</sup> See Sources Consulted for a comprehensive list of newspapers and magazines consulted. The Daily News carried a weekly supplement entitled Trend from 1970 to 1972 which focused on local and international rock bands. This supplement was invaluable in ascertaining the nature of the early Durban rock scene.

<sup>4</sup> See comprehensive list in Sources Consulted.

discussion could freely take place without my interruptions to write important points down. Later, I was able to transcribe interviews at my leisure, and therefore gained as much as possible from them.

In some instances, interviewees were somewhat nervous about having the tape recorder running, but all overcame this as the interview progressed. I always asked permission to use the tape recorder at the start of an interview.

I always had particular questions and issues in mind when conducting an interview, but found it fruitful to allow the interviewee to guide the discussion, since it meant that my informants were more relaxed and open, and that they sometimes told me things that I perhaps did not plan on asking. In all cases, I found it invaluable to show my genuine interest in the interviewee's musical history. This always helped to commence the interview in a relaxed and informative manner.

One problem I have encountered is that of terminology. To decipher what each informant understood by the term 'rock' has been problematic. I have found it necessary to use the term broadly rather than specifically since my time period spans two decades, and the styles of rock which have been prevalent in Durban during that time have ranged from rock'n'roll, to progressive rock, to folk-rock, to punk rock and new wave.<sup>5</sup>

Deciding which bands to include has also proved to be an issue of great concern. As with all local rock scenes, Durban bands tend to form and disband in a matter of months, sometimes weeks. Those bands which stay together for longer than a year are more the exception than the rule. This in itself says much concerning the instability and the poor financial and moral support experienced by bands in Durban, but these aspects are not the focus of this research project. I am also aware that those

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<sup>5</sup> My working definition of 'rock' appears in the following discussion of theoretical perspectives.

temporary and fluctuating 'grassroots' bands which never 'make it' even on a provincial level play an important part in the life of their communities. The experience of belonging to a band in itself is a valuable one, and this too should not be overlooked. But, unfortunately, it would be impossible for this thesis to discuss every band that has ever existed in Durban, since there are hundreds.

It has, therefore, been necessary to create certain constraints within which to work. These constraints have guided me in the process of including or excluding bands. The bands which are discussed comply with most, if not all of these constraints, and without exception they comply to constraint number one.

#### **Constraints:**

I have discussed only those bands which made recordings that were accessible to me. Since the music itself forms an important element of this thesis, I could not consider including bands who did not make recordings or whose recordings were inaccessible to me. The recordings that I have made use of are both private and commercial.

I have chosen to focus on those bands which were representative of a particular style or trend in the Durban rock scene.

The bands that I have chosen to discuss are also bands that made some sort of impact locally, and in some cases, nationally. By this, I denote bands who were popular in that they received media coverage or because they were unusual in some way.

I have placed particular emphasis on those bands which wrote and performed original compositions, since I felt that music written by Durban musicians is perhaps

more representative of rock music specific to Durban.

### Research Problems

An issue which I have found problematic is whether to make a point of researching rock music as it was played and experienced by the different race groups that live in and around Durban. Rock music, without doubt, is predominantly the music of white youth in South Africa. But what about members of other race groups who also found rock a viable means of expression? **The Flames** (an extremely successful coloured band from Durban led by the Fataar brothers), for example, was certainly one band I could include. At the same time, however, it was virtually impossible to find sufficient information on black bands, since newspapers provided scant coverage of their activities. Furthermore, there was a problem in obtaining recordings since very few black bands had access to recording facilities, nor the money to make them. An interview with Steve Fataar revealed that a vibrant rock'n'roll scene (separate from the mainstream white rock scene) existed in the coloured communities of Wentworth and Sydenham in the 1960s and 1970s. I also discovered that the Asian communities of Chatsworth and Phoenix accommodated a number of rock bands. However, very few, if any of the bands made recordings, or survived long enough to make an impact. I was aware throughout my research period that this question was particularly poignant for South Africa, bearing in mind its notorious historical background. However, since accessibility of recordings was a non-negotiable constraint for the purposes of this research, many black bands could not be included.

Therefore, although I could not ignore the racial segregation issue so prevalent in my time period, I did not make it a focus of this research to discuss the differences between the white and black rock scenes. Rather, I chose to focus simply on rock bands, of whatever race, that conformed to my list of constraints. I am aware that this decision could be conceived as controversial since it appears to favour the white rock scene, but this thesis

does not pretend to be a comprehensive study of rock music in Durban. It is merely a start.

### Musical Analysis

Finally, it is necessary to discuss how I went about examining the music of the period and how I attributed meanings to it. It has been one of my aims to look deeper than the lyrics of the songs for meaning, and to discover how meaning is encoded in the music itself. Walser<sup>6</sup> has created a useful method for this purpose, and it is his method which I have found most helpful in my research. In short, he isolates various parameters of the music (e.g. timbre; volume; rhythm; melody; harmony; key changes; instrumental solos; and special effects) and then looks at their importance and effects in selected songs. This has resulted in valuable insights into the nature of the music, and its relationship to other issues such as gender, dominance and empowerment.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have also selected specific songs for examination, as it would be literally impossible (and unnecessary) to examine every rock song over my twenty year period. The songs I have chosen to discuss were chosen as they are important for some reason e.g. because of their being typical of the band they are sung by, or representative of a particular rock style, or because of their having a pertinent social, political or cultural message. Accompanying this thesis is a cassette containing the songs in order in which they are first mentioned in the thesis.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Walser, Runnin' With the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music, London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993, Chapter 2.

## Theoretical Perspectives

### Broad Theoretical Framework

This study is broadly situated within an historical framework. From the outset, however, I have endeavoured to look further than the purely musical aspects of the topic and to attempt to contextualise the music within a broader socio-political framework. Therefore, this thesis examines rock music in Durban within its social, political and cultural context. It also attempts to provide reasons for the changes evident by considering the historical setting which provided the backdrop for life, as well as rock music, in and around the city.

Issues such as the effect of apartheid on the local rock scene, the militarisation of South African society (the conscription of white males in particular), as well as the transfer of popular subcultures (such as the hippy and punk subcultures) to Durban are specific examples. The musical encoding of these concerns as they are represented in the rock music of the period was also one of the aims of my research.

### Other Important Concerns

#### Local Identity

The concept of local identity is one which has become very important during the course of my research. It seems that South Africans suffer from an identity crisis. In fact, to be more specific, white, English-speaking South Africans seem to be especially affected by this identity crisis. This is also the population group which, in Durban, was mostly involved in rock music - either as musicians or fans. Thus, the issue of identity in the context of this particular study becomes even more relevant.

This identity crisis is illustrated by the fact that English-

speaking white South Africans tend to look to international (and specifically British) models with which to identify rather than creating their own ones.<sup>7</sup> The process of British colonisation experienced by South Africa and many other African countries certainly has had a significant impact on the concept of identity of South Africans. The importation of British culture has left an indelible imprint on the art and culture of this country. The fact that white, English-speaking South Africans were originally of British descent is an important factor to consider here. In the case of rock music, imported musical products have dominated the local scene to such an extent that local musicians (especially in the 1960s and 1970s) felt it necessary to learn and play mostly 'cover versions'<sup>8</sup> of international chart rock songs rather than their own original music in order to survive as musicians.

Perhaps the fact that South Africans looked elsewhere for an identity is symptomatic of the global rejection of South Africa as it entered the mature era of apartheid. Perhaps South Africans felt more comfortable identifying with a foreign (non-South African) culture which was not constitutionally entrenched in a racist system. It is almost certain that South Africans have suffered from an extremely poor self-image, and therefore, looked elsewhere for social and cultural meaning. These are some of the questions asked during the course of this research project.

An interview with David Kramer, (a South African singer and songwriter) conducted by Arthur Goldstuck in 1982, confirms this opinion:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this situation will change in the 'New South Africa' when people will begin to discover their true identities.

<sup>8</sup> The word 'cover' is used internationally by rock musicians for describing the popular process of playing songs written by other bands or musicians. The playing of 'cover versions' is the bread and butter of many bands around the world, and South African rock bands are no exception.

<sup>9</sup> Music Scene, April 1982.

Goldstuck Q: Do you think South Africans have an inferiority complex about their culture?

Kramer: A: English-speaking South Africans definitely do, ... A lot of us are trying to escape being identified with South Africa because South Africa has all sorts of connotations -- negative connotations -- which have been brought about by certain pressures within and without. What I am trying to say is that I'm very much aware of these pressures, but trying to adopt someone else's identity ... is not the solution to the problem.

### Global and Local

It is at this point that I would like to introduce another concern which has informed my research process viz. the current international debate surrounding the 'global and the local'. More specifically, the relationship between the global and the local, and its effects on the local environment has been a focus of research. This debate concerns itself with the problem of power and domination experienced by a smaller, local environment when a more powerful global element enters that environment. This problem has become more and more prevalent as technology has advanced. Small, less technologically advanced countries have been invaded by global corporations and local companies have lost their market to the bigger, omnipotent market forces.<sup>10</sup>

In the South African rock music industry, this has always been the case. The market is constantly flooded with international products, and the local music industry is primarily geared to market these products. Thus, original local music and musicians have suffered greatly under this system, and still do so today.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See R. Garafalo, 'Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity and Cultural Imperialism', in The World of Music 35/2, 1993, pp. 16-32; J Guilbault, 'On Redefining the "Local" Through World Music', in The World of Music 35/2, 1993, pp. 33-46 and V. Erlmann, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Transnational Musics', in The World of Music 35/2, 1993, pp.3-15.

<sup>11</sup> As more international artists flood into the country in the post-apartheid era, this is becoming more of a problem.

I believe that the global invasion of the South African music scene, and the identity problem (discussed above) are linked. One of the main concerns of my research was to discover where South African popular (and specifically rock) music gained its identity. Was there a definitive Durban rock sound, or did bands only emulate and conform to international rock trends? The overwhelming conclusion is that international rock trends have dictated local (Durban) ones - to the extent that very few rock bands played only original music. There are, of course, exceptions to this generalisation, and it is to these exceptions that I will give a fair amount of attention. The reasons for the majority of bands playing only 'commercial' music (which in the vocabulary of Durban rock musicians meant 'cover versions') are both economically and socially founded, and these reasons will be discussed in the body of the work.

#### Women in rock

Another concern of this work was to assess the role of women in rock music of the period. This concern arose, firstly out of the awareness that the study of gender roles, and specifically the role of women in music, has been neglected in the past, and has only more recently become an important emphasis of music studies.<sup>12</sup> I therefore, wanted to make a contribution (however small) to this field.

Secondly, I have a personal interest in the topic, since I was the only woman in a rock band (*The Remnant*) for a four year period (1989-1992). This experience was invaluable insofar as the study of gender in Durban rock bands is concerned. I discovered that it was, and still is, extremely difficult for women to be accepted into the Durban rock scene or to be taken seriously as

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, J. Bowers & J. Tick (eds), Women Making Music (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd), 1986; K. Pendle (ed), Women and Music, A History (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 1991 ; E. Koskoff (ed), Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspectives (London: Greenwood Press), 1987; S. McLary, Feminine Endings. Music, Gender and Sexuality (Oxford: University of Minnesota Press), 1991.

rock musicians. Although I never personally experienced exclusion on sexist grounds, and was included in every aspect of 'band life' as far as my band was concerned, I was aware that I, as a woman in the rock scene, was an exception to the rule. In fact, in all four years of gigging in and around Durban, I never came across another woman who was playing in a rock band. Women were either girlfriends of band members or avid fans who followed the band to each gig, and this was the limit of their involvement with rock music.

It is widely noted that throughout its history, rock music, to a large extent has been a male domain. Women have been marginalised and even 'exscripted' from rock during the course of its history (especially from those rock forms which are considered progressive or 'heavy') <sup>13</sup>. Therefore, another concern of this thesis is to explore the reasons why so few women were (are) involved in the Durban rock scene.

It must be pointed out, however, that the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a dramatic increase of women musicians in rock bands. In fact, a number of women-only and women-dominated rock bands sprung up in Durban over this period (e.g. *The Nubiles*, *Peach* and *Leopard*). This has proved to be a particularly interesting era of study in part because it incorporates the advent and development of punk rock in Durban. The punk ethic certainly had an impact on the local rock scene and brought with it a whole new set of rules, one of which was the opening up of rock performance to a wider range of people. It seems that women took the chance to be part of the movement, and that their entry into the previously male dominated scene did not go unnoticed. This period was short lived, however, and at present there are very few women involved in rock bands.

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<sup>13</sup> See Walser's chapter on Gender in his recent book on heavy metal, entitled Runnin' With the Devil.

### Working Definition of Rock

There are probably as many definitions of rock music as there are styles. Most problematic to the definition of rock is its inherent adaptation to change, and its rapid mutations from one style to the next. Wicke has summed it up succinctly:

Just as the music itself is constantly changing, so is its terminology. The term 'rock music' means many different things and its meaning has changed at practically every stage in its development. The boundaries between it and other classes of popular music are fluid and are constantly changing. A few years ago the description 'beat music' was understood and widespread in German-speaking countries, but has since become a technical term which can now only be applied to the British rock development of the early sixties and to those groups directly influenced by it. The shortform 'rock', derived from the American term 'rock'n'roll', only came into general use in the mid-sixties losing in the process the specific meaning that it had previously had as a description of those musical styles directly derived from rock'n'roll.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Hamm has also grappled with the problem of defining rock music, and has come to the following conclusion.

Rock (as opposed to rock and roll), which dominated popular music over most of the world for almost a decade from the early 1960s, cannot be defined in terms of a single musical style. It was rather a conglomeration of styles unified by a common spirit, a common environment and a common objective. Clearly it is impossible to define in purely musical terms a style encompassing, for example, the Rolling Stones, Country Joe and the Fish, Joni Mitchell, Sly and the Family Stone, Jefferson Airplane, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Donovan, the Who, Jimi Hendrix, Paul Simon and Cream. The music of these and many others, however, came to be understood by its listeners as a single body.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> P. Wicke, Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology (transl Rachel Fogg), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, Preface, xi.

<sup>15</sup> C. Hamm, 'Popular Music', The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 15, pp. 115-116.

For the purposes of this study, I will be using the term 'rock' to refer to that style of popular music which developed out of the rock'n'roll era, and which embodies the tradition of that style. I am not referring to musical specifics, but rather to a general field of music which was spawned by the rock'n'roll era. This includes 1960s rock, as well as its later developments into punk rock and metal. It does not include disco, which developed out of the soul tradition. As far as the Durban rock scene is concerned, it also includes the experimental ethnic-rock music which became popular in the 1970s. Furthermore, I use the term 'rock' to describe music which, by its nature, is electronically mediated. I would, therefore, agree with Wim van der Plas's working definition. He referred to rock as being:

...the music that carries the tradition of rock'n'roll of the 1950s and of so-called 'underground' music of the 60s, and in which electronics, either for amplification or otherwise, play a significant part.<sup>16</sup>

If I am taking rock'n'roll as the point at which the rock tradition as we know it began, it is also necessary to discuss what is meant by 'rock'n'roll'. Lawrence Grossberg supplies a useful definition, which also implies that rock'n'roll developed into a wider field of music, which went further than its own specific musical boundaries.

I am using 'rock and roll' broadly to refer to post-war electronically mediated, technologically based youth music. While the genre is an historically locatable event, with a beginning and possibly an end, it is also the term fans use to describe their continued commitment to a particular body of music...<sup>17</sup>

Besides the obvious musical differences of rock'n'roll from any

<sup>16</sup> W. van der Plas, 'Can Rock Be Art?', International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 2, p. 397.

<sup>17</sup> L. Grossberg, 'If Rock and Roll Communicates, Then Why Is It So Noisy? Pleasure and the Popular', International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 2, p. 451.

other popular style that existed, there were also a whole new set of meanings associated with the genre which were equally important. In the 1950s, rock'n'roll embodied a whole new way of looking at the world. Rock'n'roll developed along with the technology of audio-visual mass communication as well as a new set of social changes. Its musical merging of white (Country and Western) and black (rhythm and blues) elements was in itself revolutionary. The sexual innuendos contained within rock'n'roll enraged conservative American adult society, and for the first time, popular musical tastes between young and old were sharply divided. Rock and roll spread to Europe, England and South Africa and soon became the umbrella culture for youth all over the world. Later (1960s), the rise of rock accompanied the struggle by minority groups for freedom from domination by larger and stronger nations, and rock fans worldwide adopted this struggle as their own. This socio-political aspect cannot be separated from the nature of rock itself. Hamm has summed it up well:

The rise of rock in the 1960s cannot be seen apart from socio-political events of the time. This was the period when many small countries were trying to gain freedom from domination by larger and stronger nations; when various racial and ethnic groups were fighting to overcome historical patterns of repression and persecution; and when individuals in many parts of the world began seeing the possibility of attaining personal liberation from social, cultural, political and sexual patterns that inhibited their free development...A loosely organised, worldwide community of minority ethnic groups, politically repressed minorities, entire small countries and individuals set out in the 1960s to do what they could, by any means, to change patterns at all levels that they viewed as repressive and restrictive. Almost without exception, rock musicians belonged, in convictions and action, to this strange coalition. Their music became an inseparable part of many of the public and private acts of defiance and rebellion that characterised the era [my emphasis].<sup>18</sup>

The fact that rock has been linked to protest and defiance throughout its history is important. This feature of rock cannot

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<sup>18</sup> C. Hamm, 'Popular Music', The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 15, p. 116.

be excluded from its definition. It is an issue which becomes especially important when considering the role of rock in such a politicised environment as South Africa. It was one of the aims of this study to discover whether Durban rock musicians chose to, or were allowed to, tap into this 'image' of defiance that rock conveniently provided, or whether rock in South Africa (and particularly Durban) was forced to become a watered-down version of the real thing during the era of apartheid. This issue will be discussed in detail as the need arises throughout this thesis. Thus, the definition of rock that I have used for the purposes of this thesis is a broad one. It allows for particularly 'South African' elements, as well as 'global' elements to be included. It allows for the inclusion of the various styles of rock which developed throughout a relatively long time-span, and does not ignore the social and political awareness so integral to rock. Finally, this definition, although complex, does conform to a general understanding of rock as defined by the popular-music academics quoted.<sup>19</sup>

### **Further Considerations**

I would like to make it clear that my work makes no claim to be a comprehensive study of the topic. Furthermore, I am aware that although I endeavoured to be as objective and reflexive as possible throughout the course of my research, my assumptions and concerns are shaped by my own experiences and socio-economic position, which as a white English-speaking South African has been a privileged one. I am also aware that many of my sources (such as newspaper articles and reviews) are themselves interpretations of reality, and are the result of subjective experience.

Thus, this thesis embodies a history rather than the history of rock music in Durban. Although I was advantaged in researching

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<sup>19</sup> For further reading on this topic, see A. Moore's discussion on the problems of defining rock in his recent book, Rock: The Primary Text, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993, Introduction, pp. 3-4.

a culture not different from my own (i.e. a white English-speaking South African one), and therefore did not experience difficulty in relating to or understanding the subject matter, I am aware that this could also be problematic. It meant that I had to do a lot of probing within myself, and 'unpack' many of my own assumptions which coloured my understanding of issues. Some of these issues included opinions regarding the South African music industry; Durban audiences; local identity; and women's role in rock music. Most of these opinions were formed during my experience as a keyboardist, flautist, composer and singer in a local rock band. Although these experiences were valuable for this study, they also created a discernible bias on the issues stated above. I, therefore, had to endeavour to distance myself from my preconceived opinions and look at both sides of an issue before passing judgement. I hope this attempt has been sufficiently successful. Being objective about a subject close to the heart is often more difficult than approaching a subject one has not already formulated ideas about.

This problem was also experienced by Ruth Finnegan in her recent study of music making in Milton Keynes.<sup>20</sup> She points out that being too much of an insider (and thereby ceasing to be a detached observer) is a danger. Doing fieldwork in a locality where one already has established roles is pointed out as being problematic since people relate to one in a certain way, and one tends to be biased in certain directions without being aware of it. In my experience, this was also advantageous since people already had a certain amount of trust in me, and identified with me as a 'local'. They felt that I understood their lives, their music and their predicaments better than an outsider would, and therefore, they were willing to be interviewed, and lend me recordings or scrapbooks.

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<sup>20</sup> R. Finnegan. Music Making: The Hidden Musicians, Music Making in an English Town, New York: Cambridge, 1989. See her Appendix for a very helpful note on Methods and Presentation.

### **Chapter Summary: Chapters 2-5**

I would like to conclude this introduction by describing the following chapters. I chose to focus on the central concerns outlined earlier in the introduction in the form of chapters. In each chapter, musical excerpts are discussed in the context of the chapter focus (i.e. apartheid, gender, or identity), and the cassette accompanying this project should be listened to in conjunction with these musical discussions.

#### **Chapter 2**

The chapter documents a factual history of rock music in Durban from 1963-1985. It presents the facts concerning bands, venues, musicians and recordings and shows the evolution of rock music in Durban from rock and roll to punk and heavy metal. This chapter provides the foundation for the chapters that follow.

#### **Chapter 3**

Chapter Three focuses on the relationship of apartheid to Durban rock musicians and their music. It includes a socio-political history of South Africa from 1965-1985 and attempts to demonstrate the relationship of rock music in Durban to these events.

#### **Chapter 4**

Chapter Four takes women in rock as its focus, and discusses the problems faced by women who wanted to play rock music as well as the status of women in connection to rock music. I have also made a point of discussing prominent women rock musicians in Durban in an attempt to address the traditional imbalance of musicological documentation in favour of men.

## Chapter 5

Chapter Five addresses the crucial identity issue already mentioned in the introduction. The status of local (Durban) musicians and the support given to them by the South African recording industry, as well as the effect of global musical forces on local rock music are the central issues discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO ROCK MUSIC IN DURBAN 1963-1985.

#### Introduction

It is generally agreed that Durban was the birthplace of rock'n'roll in South Africa<sup>1</sup>. South Africa's earliest known exponent of rock'n'roll was Durban-born Dickie Loader, whose band, **The Blue Jeans**, was first formed in 1957. Dickie Loader, described as 'South Africa's original rocker'<sup>2</sup>, was born in 1945; he has had an illustrious musical career which began with **The Blue Jeans** and which still continues in the country music field.

**The Blue Jeans** was the first significant rock'n'roll band in South Africa, and their repertoire consisted mainly of 'covers' of hit parade songs of the time, as well as originals mostly composed by Dickie Loader himself. **The Blue Jeans'** original line-up consisted of Dickie Loader (guitar and vocals), Ian Wells (piano), Ray Boonzaier (bass guitar), Des Ray (saxophone) and Noel Glover on drums. The band was popular both locally and nationally, and between 1962 and 1968, recorded nineteen singles and ten albums. Most exceptional was the fact that all the band members were still of school-going age when the band was formed.

**The Blue Jeans'** style was typical 'fifties rock'n'roll, and their realistic imitations of hit parade material earned them a favoured place at the school dances and parties of the time. (Refer to cassette, Ex. 1)

<sup>1</sup> South Africa's first rock'n'roll band, **The Blue Jeans**, was a Durban band, as is acknowledged by Chilvers and Jasiukowicz in their recent reference book entitled History of Contemporary Music of South Africa (Braamfontein: Toga Publishing), p. 74, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> G. Chilvers and T. Jasiukowicz, History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, p. 74.

The line-up of the band went through several mutations between 1963 and 1968, and included Graeme Beggs (bass guitar), Dave Pollecut (guitar), Don Christie (bass guitar), Adrian Agrella (bass guitar after Christie was killed in a car accident), Mike Slavin (guitar), Neil Herbert (guitar) and Howie Jones (drums). **The Blue Jeans** broke up in 1968 when Dickie Loader was involved in a serious car accident, and was not able to continue giving live performances. Nevertheless, Dickie continued to record both solo and with his wife, Coleen.

In 1963, another important exponent of early South African rock'n'roll, Gene Rockwell, formed **The Falcons** (a renamed version of his teenage rock'n'roll band, **The Blue Angels**), which played Rockwell's 'gritty-blues-style songs'<sup>3</sup>. **The Falcons** were a Durban-based band, and spent much of the 1960s playing in popular Durban venues. The 1963 **Falcons'** line-up consisted of Gene Rockwell (guitar and vocals), George Usher (guitar), Clive Schweggman (guitar), George Heyns (bass) and Fred Rickson (drums). By 1964, the line-up had changed to Gene Rockwell (guitar and vocals), Andy van der Merwe (guitar), Eddie Burns (bass) and George Hill (drums).

Besides recording a number of albums with **The Falcons**, Gene Rockwell also recorded numerous singles with various orchestras and backing groups, his most famous to date being Heart (recorded in 1965 and backed by the Dan Hill orchestra). Heart has proved to be the highest selling single (over two and a half million copies) for a white singer in the history of the South African rock industry<sup>4</sup>.

Gene Rockwell was, therefore, an important figure in the South African rock scene in the mid-1960s, and his success as a

<sup>3</sup> G Chilvers and T. Jasiukowicz, History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> G. Chilvers & T. Jasiukowicz, History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, p. 111.

young composer and performer was undoubtedly inspirational to numerous other young aspiring rock musicians.

### Proliferation of rock bands in Durban 1963-1973

#### Durban: The Centre of South African Rock

With **The Blue Jeans** having opened up the possibilities of live rock'n'roll in the city, it was not long before a plethora of rock'n'roll bands began forming and playing at venues in and around Durban. The mid-1960s was an exciting time for young musicians who, inspired by the influx of American and British rock'n'roll recordings, began experimenting with the genre themselves.

According to Steve Fataar, Durban experienced a 'boom' in the numbers of rock bands that were formed between 1963 and 1973. It has been confirmed by many, if not all, of my informants from this time period, that Durban was the epicentre of the rock revolution in South Africa, and that bands in other centres modelled themselves on Durban bands. Fataar went as far as to say that 'in the 1960s, Durban's rock'n'roll bands invaded Cape Town' and that 'there were more good rock bands in Durban in the 1960s than anywhere else. The Johannesburg bands copied Durban bands...'<sup>5</sup>

The reasons for this rock music 'boom' in Durban and not, for argument's sake, Johannesburg (the economic centre of South Africa), are not easily deciphered, although various suggestions seem logical and were widely supported by interviewees and by statements found in newspaper articles.

Firstly, Natal, and therefore Durban was (and is) more a remnant of colonialism than other commercial centres in South

<sup>5</sup> An Interview conducted on the 19th of May, 1994 at the University of Natal with Steve Fataar provides some of the information presented in this section. The rest of the information has been gleaned from newspaper articles and Chilvers' and Jasiukowicz's History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, pp. 38-39.

Africa. Although South Africa (originally known as the Union of South Africa) consisted of four provinces and elected its own government, up until 1961 it essentially remained a colony of Britain and regarded Britain as its mother country. From 1910 - 1960, Afrikaner Nationalists fought for independence from Britain which they eventually gained in May 1961 when South Africa became a republic.

The majority of Natalians (many of them British descendants) resisted this move to the last moment, and this resistance has earned Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) the appellation 'The Last Outpost of the British Empire'. As far back as 1927, Natal demonstrated its loyalty to Britain with attempts to resist the process of republicanisation. One of the most controversial issues raised in the 1920s was that of the Flag Bill (introduced in 1926 and passed in 1927):

In 1926-7 ... , the idea of replacing [the Union Jack] by a 'clean' flag as the Nationalists, perhaps not very tactfully, described a flag having no features of the Union Jack or the old Republican flags caused a tremendous uproar in the province. Such a flag ... was totally rejected by Natal and parts of the Eastern Province...<sup>6</sup>

The heated debate surrounding the flag issue in Natal demonstrates the loyalty felt by Natalians to Britain, and their renunciation of republican ideals.

Up until 1958, the National Party (NP) had not won an election by a big enough majority to hold a national referendum on the question of republicanisation. When the NP won a 65% majority in the 1958 election, however, Dr Verwoerd, the new president, immediately gave the vote to 18-year olds. This was significant since republicanism was popular amongst Afrikaner youths and Afrikaans 18 - 21 year olds outnumbered English by 65% to 35%. This new group of votes made a great difference when a republican referendum was held on the 5th of October, 1960. Although white

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<sup>6</sup> E. Brookes and C. Webb, A History of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1965, p. 271.

voters voted by 52% to 48% to become a republic, in Natal 76% of the 177 897 white voters opposed a republic. This overwhelming majority once again indicates the strength of Natalians' wish to retain their ties with Britain rather than to find a new identity in the Republic of South Africa.<sup>7</sup>

Presumably, this psychological pull towards Britain as the favoured authority would have manifested itself in a desire to regard British culture as their own and at the time this would have included the popular British rock movement. This is one explanation for the enthusiastic and successful appropriation of the rock movement in Durban.

Secondly, Durban is South Africa's biggest port, and this gives the city a cosmopolitan flavour. In a sense, Durban embraces foreign cultures and people on a daily basis, especially considering that in the 1960s, passenger liners were still a popular means of transport between continents. This physical vulnerability to the continual influx of new commodities and foreigners could also be seen as being mirrored by a socio-cultural openness to foreign ideas and cultures. Sara Cohen explores this topic in her recent study of rock music in Liverpool (also a port city which spawned an abundance of rock bands in the 1960s - The Beatles being one such band)<sup>8</sup>.

Thirdly, Durban is geographically situated far from the seat of government. This meant that in the 1960s, it was not nearly as susceptible to the ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism as other major cities such as Cape Town and Pretoria (which both house parliament for six months of the year). Thus, it was considered a fairly liberal city which, without the influence of national

<sup>7</sup> This wish was officially demonstrated in anti-republican rallies held in Durban (with an attendance of 40 000) and Pietermaritzburg (with an attendance of 25 000). These rallies were held by the opposition party, the United Party.

<sup>8</sup> S. Cohen, Rock Music in Liverpool, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. See her introduction for conclusions regarding reasons for success of rock in Liverpool.

television, still remained relatively unpolluted by a widespread acceptance of apartheid policies. It could therefore be proposed that since white Durbanites still looked to Britain for their identity and way of life, and were relatively far from the epicentre of Afrikaner nationalism, they were more open to outside, and particularly British, influences than their counterparts in other South African cities. Furthermore, the conservatism prevalent in Afrikanerism, as well as wide-scale enthusiasm for republican ideals within Afrikaner youth can be seen as another obstacle to the influx of rock'n'roll culture to Afrikaans-dominated centres.

One specific incident which occurred in 1970 points to this conclusion. A 24-hour beat (rock) festival which was held in the Witwatersrand met with outspoken resistance from over a thousand Pretoria University students. The following quote from a local newspaper communicates their loyalty to the Republic and vehement condemnation of rock music since as being contrary to their conception of South African morality :

Organisers have promised fans that they will all be full of 'happiness and love' after having their ears assaulted by 24 hours of rock, soul folk and jazz music - but there are at least 1355 people who are not similarly enthused. They are a group of Pretoria University students who were so incensed at the festival 'undermining the morality of the republic' that they sent a petition to the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Marais Viljoen, asking him to take action against all pop and hippy festivals which may be held in the future. The students felt that the festivals were 'clearly alien to the South African way of life'.<sup>9</sup>

Thus it can be concluded that Durban was an 'easy target' for the rock'n'roll invasion, and although parents and school teachers were appalled by its crudity and hedonism, the youth of Durban

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<sup>9</sup> Reporter unknown, 'Just Popping off to Jo'Burg', Newspaper unknown, October 1970, page unknown. (From Dawn Selby's scrapbook).

embraced it as their own.<sup>10</sup>

The transfer of the Hippy subculture to South Africa was also most enthusiastically embraced by the youth of Durban. This again points to the overwhelming influence of 'overseas' movements/subcultures on South African youngsters, and their desire to be identified with the youth in Britain. The perusal of newspaper articles revealed that the effect of Woodstock (post-1969) on Durban youngsters was also profound. Its message of peace, love and human rights were especially pertinent to a militarised, segregated and undemocratic South African society, and the event itself inspired local music organisers to set up similar events. The illegal drug scene which accompanied the movement was a concern for the authorities, who regularly raided rock venues. The dress-code and political standpoint engendered by the hippy culture was certainly opposed to all norms of a South African society entrenched in apartheid and Afrikaner Nationalism. For example, the police generally assumed that men with long hair were drug addicts, and therefore most Hippies became targets for police interference and intimidation<sup>11</sup>. That the authorities did not approve of the Hippy subculture, is no secret. The fact that rock music was intricately connected to the Hippy movement also made rock a target for moral outrage.

The Hippy scene in Durban occurred on a fairly large scale. One of my informants can remember the existence of a shop which sold Hippy memorabilia, and which was the central meeting point for the 'flower children', who lined the passage from wall to wall in various degrees of drug-induced states.<sup>12</sup> Certain live music

<sup>10</sup> According to C. Hamm, Afro-American Music, South Africa and Apartheid, New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1988, p. 19, rock'n'roll was popularised in South Africa By Elvis Presley films such as Love Me Tender, and Jailhouse Rock. Hamm also states that 'rock'n'roll and its audiences were condemned from the pulpit and lecture podium and by the State-controlled SABC...' p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> This information was provided by Karen Lange (punk musician and Durban music fan), in my interview with her on the 18th of July 1994.

<sup>12</sup> According to Syd Kitchen (my informant), the shop was located in Murchies Passage, an arcade in the centre of Durban.

venues opened up in Durban which allowed the buying, selling and taking of drugs. An example of such a venue was "Mumbles". Many band members can recall taking drugs at one stage or another, but admit that it was more to create a certain image than anything else.<sup>13</sup> This driving desire to present an image which coincided with the 'overseas' scene is another example of how important it was to Durban youngsters to look and feel part of a worldwide movement, even when South Africa had been isolated from the world. It is painfully obvious that the youth of Durban (at this stage) did not want to find their own identity or create their own 'scene'. They wanted to be accepted by the world and appropriating the Hippy movement was one way of showing solidarity with youth all over the world, and particularly, with British youth.

### The Durban Rock Scene

Perhaps one of the biggest indications of the growth of rock music in the city was the mushrooming of new venues to cater for the bands and audiences which played and supported rock music. Venues such as Journey's End (in Durban North), The Tiles, and Scene 70 opened up, and 'sessions'<sup>14</sup> held at these venues are fondly remembered by fans and band members alike as the highlight of their youth. There were, in fact, more clubs flourishing in Durban from 1965 to 1972 than there are at present. Furthermore, live (as opposed to recorded) music was the order of the day<sup>15</sup>. It has been reported that it was not unusual for as many as a thousand young Durbanites to pack into a venue for a 'session' which would feature only local bands. Even the Durban City Hall

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with Craig Ross, Mervyn Gershanov, Syd Kitchen, Kenny Henson, and Steve Fataar revealed that while not all musicians and fans took drugs, a good proportion did, some purely to enhance their image and others because they seriously wanted to experience the affects of the drugs.

<sup>14</sup> This word was used internationally to refer to an evening (or afternoon) in which a number of bands would play, and audience members would dance and socialise. A more recent South African equivalent would be a 'jorl'.

<sup>15</sup> More recent trends favour recorded music at entertainment venues.

(which holds 1800 people) was a popular sell-out venue for band competitions.

A further indication of the fact that the Durban youth looked to London for their identity was the way in which they seemed intent on modelling themselves on the teenagers in London. This can be found in the way they dressed, socialised and consciously modelled their 'sessions' on those experienced by London teenagers. Syd Kitchen, a prominent Durban songwriter and guitarist who was a teenager in Durban in the 1960s, believes that the Durban music scene was very much based on the London one because it was the British rock bands that were catching the imagination of youngsters in Durban. Bands like The Kinks, The Beatles, The Dave Clark Five, The Rolling Stones, Herman's Hermits and The Hollies were very popular with Durban youngsters, and thus the surrounding music culture of the British rock scene was adopted as their own. In 1964, a British rock'n'roll group, Bill Kimber and the Couriers, came out to South Africa, and although they were unknown anywhere else, they proved very popular. I venture to suggest they made an impact on local musicians and fans specifically since they belonged to the revered British rock'n'roll scene.

The conscious attempt to identify with Britain and the British rock scene can be exemplified by Syd Kitchen who vividly recalls owning a shirt made out of a union jack which he used to wear to concerts and 'sessions'<sup>16</sup>. Syd Kitchen had the following to say about the 'sessions':

There were sessions - jorls where a number of bands would play ... and the guys would dance with the women, and the women would dance with the guys. The bands played the current music of the time ... The jorls were held in halls (church and community halls) hired by bands or the odd fly-by-night promoter for the night. Jorls were also held in clubs - like Scene 70 and Tiles Club ... Tiles was an amazing club - it

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<sup>16</sup> This in itself showed a blatant rejection of the newly established South African Republic which boasted its own flag and anthem (rather than the previously used Union Jack and 'God Save The Queen').

had strobe lights, psychedelia ... the closest we could say, to swinging London ... There was another important club called the Arena Club ... that was the best jorl in town, although Tiles was the hippest jorl in town!<sup>17</sup>

An extremely well-developed rock infrastructure seemed to develop in Durban during the late-1960s. This can be seen when studying the gig calenders found on flyers and magazine supplements (such as Teenage Personality in Personality magazine). Bands moved from venue to venue with amazing organisation and regularity, and thus became household names in every area of Durban. It must be noted that 'sessions' were also held in suburban community and church halls, as well as central city venues. Bands would organise 'sessions' between themselves, and a particular 'session' would move from venue to venue (sometimes up to three venues per weekend). Young people would therefore be able to follow the 'sessions' from venue to venue, or attend the 'session' closest to home.

The phenomenon of bands playing in the suburbs every weekend was unique to the late 1960s and early 1970s, and also important for the developing rock culture in that it made the rock culture accessible to young people. In a sense, live bands were performing in one's back yard in an informal and regular way, which, according to Syd Kitchen, was 'very special'. As can be expected, this system resulted in a closely-knit group of fans and much musical and social interaction between bands and fans alike.

Together with two other bands, **The Gonks** created a syndicate which organised 'sessions' at popular venues throughout Durban. The syndicate was known as GAS which was an acrostic for the three bands that formed it, viz. **Gonks**, **Allouettes**, and (It's a) **Secret**. The 'GAS Club Socials' were held every fortnight, and sometimes once a week at the height of their popularity. The GAS organisers often organised other groups to play at the

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted from my interview with Syd Kitchen on the 5th of April 1994.

'sessions', and therefore were instrumental in promoting many local Durban bands. This kind of voluntary support system characterised the early Durban rock scene and made it possible for many bands, who did not have the equipment or the necessary contacts, to be heard outside their practice rooms.

Perhaps much of the support of local bands by Durban audiences in the late 1960s and early 1970s can be attributed to the conspicuous absence of national television. The SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) television network only started broadcasting in the mid-1970s which meant that youngsters in the time period under discussion had to go out to be entertained. And going out generally meant going dancing in a club or 'session' venue. Thus, large numbers of young people attended any event which was advertised, and local bands formed and flourished in many parts of the city.

An interesting consequence of the popularity of local bands was the large amount of media attention given to the bands. In fact, in 1970, The Daily News began producing a weekly supplement (named Trend) which catered specifically for young readers. Trend (which was produced from 27 January 1970 to 27 June 1972) provided feature articles on local (Durban) bands, record reviews (of recordings by local and popular British bands), hit parade charts, local gig reviews, and a section on fashion and cosmetics (which always centred around fashion in 'swinging London').

The Trend reporters reported not only on the well-known local bands, but also on those which had recently formed, or who were about to play their first gig, for example. Thus rock music in the city had an organised, free advertisement service which informed fans and sustained the endless cycle of gigs and 'sessions' throughout the city.

An important event which attracted fans and bands alike was the annual Durban Go! Show, held every July from 1969-1972. This, in essence, was a rock band competition, which offered prizes such

as recording contracts, music equipment and cash prizes. Each year, the build up to the competitions was enormous, with much publicity given by radio stations and the press. After the Go! Show, each moment would be re-lived by detailed articles in the press, and interviews with bands which were successful.

In keeping with the large rock festivals held in venues overseas, Durban promoters strove to reproduce such events locally. The affect of Woodstock on the Durban rock psyche was vast and many local musicians and fans alluded to the event in letters to the press, wishing for similar events to take place in Durban. Each year, numerous open air rock festivals would be promised the public, with very few of them ever materialising due to problems in obtaining permission from the relevant authorities or because of the guest British bands being banned from coming to South Africa.

A 24-hour beat festival was held at Milner Park, Johannesburg in October 1970. A local newspaper article reported the following:

There were pop fans with long hair, pop fans with short hair, there were girl pop fans and boy pop fans, and they all make up the kaleidoscope of colour which boarded a luxury bus in Durban last night bound for Johannesburg's first 24-hour beat festival. The beat cult was strangely subdued when they climbed into the bus but they were obviously saving up their enthusiasm for the thundering music which assaulted their ear-drums when they arrived at Milner Park - scene of Johannesburg's 'Woodstock'.<sup>18</sup>

The fad for rock festivals (especially the open-air variety) continued into the mid 'seventies, and seemed to die with the death of the hippy dream in Durban in about 1974.

It should be noted that, due to the entrenchment of apartheid policies, rock bands of different races did not play on the same

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<sup>18</sup> Reporter unknown, 'Just Popping Off to Jo'Burg', Newspaper unknown, October 1970, page unknown. (From Dawn Selby's scrapbook).

bills. The separation of population groups under the Group Areas Act resulted in a very segregated residential pattern. Thus, interaction on a cultural basis between population groups was a logistical problem: availability of transport to the city centre at night was difficult unless one owned a private vehicle. Only the whites, who had their own transport, could effectively traverse to areas outside their own communities. Besides this problem were the laws which forbade bands to play to racially mixed audiences, and forbade dancing in a racially mixed group. Such laws were forcibly enforced when necessary, and often this was effected by a large police presence at concerts.

Despite the stifling conditions, Steve Fataar reports (as mentioned in the introduction) that a vibrant rock scene flourished in the hotels and clubs of the "coloured" and Indian residential areas of Wentworth, Sydenham, Red Hill, Chatsworth and Phoenix. Although these bands rarely mixed with white bands in public, musicians from these race groups certainly gathered to 'jam' and exchange ideas.

Another important issue for discussion is that of the concept of 'commercial' versus 'progressive' rock music. These terms are still used today to some extent, but in the early days of rock in Durban, the discussion surrounding this topic seemed inexhaustible. When referring to 'commercial' rock, one refers to mainstream rock made popular by the mass media and generally to those songs which appear on the hit parade. Commercial rock is generally thought to be fairly shallow, to have very memorable or catchy melodies, and to be easy to dance to. 'Progressive' rock, on the other hand, refers to a more serious form of rock - i.e. rock with a message. 'Progressive' rock is generally thought to be more obscure in meaning, and is usually characterised by a 'heavier', more experimental sound. 'Progressive' rock bands play their own music rather than covers, and if they do play covers, they play songs by other

'progressive' bands<sup>16</sup>.

In Durban, a very definite division between 'commercial' and 'progressive' rock bands existed. Those bands which played principally to entertain would obviously draw from the hit parade repertoire, and would therefore be labelled 'commercial'. On the other hand, those bands which played a more experimental brand of rock and/or made some social comment would be regarded as 'progressive'. In many instances, bands who wished to be experimental and play their own material, or obscure (unknown) cover versions would eventually succumb to the pressure to learn hit parade material if they wished to acquire a gig. It is unfortunate, that even today, rock bands in Durban battle to gain credibility or financial rewards for playing their own material from the people who hire them. Thus many such bands either succumb to club owners' demands that they play hit parade material, or else they break up.

Ironically, it was the 'progressive' bands who were most admired by music enthusiasts for their 'authenticity'. Many an article in Trend or The Sunday Tribune from the period under discussion pointed to this discrepancy. The unfortunate circumstance, however, was that the music enthusiasts who had a genuine interest in fostering local talent, were generally not the people who were hiring the bands to play in venues. Hit parade material drew the crowds, and that is primarily what the club owners wanted. Thus the commercial potential of a band was seen as being more important than the musical one. This is a debate which did not end in the 1970s. It still continues today, unresolved.

Oftentimes, Durban audiences were blamed for their conservative reception of original music, and mindless dedication to anything from 'overseas'. This boils down to the problem of identity cited in the introduction, and has much to do with the South African

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<sup>16</sup> These distinctions between 'progressive' and 'commercial' rock are a combination of ideas both from interviewees and myself.

inferiority complex when it comes to anything locally produced.

The result of the above, was that very few 'progressive' bands stayed together for any length of time. Some (*The Third Eye* is an example) managed to find a balance between 'art' and commerciality and thus survived, while others (such as **Abstract Truth** and **Freedom's Children** who refused to compromise their 'progressive' stance in any way) were not as fortunate.

### **The Music Industry**

While bands who played solely their own material battled to keep their heads above water, they still received a fair amount of interest from the recording industry. In fact, their 'progressive' standpoint was used as a selling point for their albums, and at least some record of their efforts now exists on vinyl. 'Commercial' bands also received much interest from the music industry due to their overwhelming popularity, and thus many were given the chance to cut a single.

Besides the fact that the bands were popular, another important reason exists as to why local rock bands became popular. Many key personnel within the South African music industry (such as Graeme Beggs, Brian Pretorius and Billy Forrest) took a particular interest in local music and musicians and strove to support them as much as possible. Durbanite Brian Pretorius formed his own label, 'Uptight', on which he promoted new local talent.

Newspaper articles from the time period often make mention of talent scouts who attended 'sessions', and signed up bands who were promising. Although almost inconceivable today, early rock bands sometimes landed contracts with recording companies within a couple of months of their formation.<sup>17</sup> In retrospect, this was

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<sup>17</sup> The Gonks landed a three year contract with Gallo Records within two months of forming. The Mods, Third Eye, Abstract Truth, The Flames, and Freedom's Children were other Durban bands who also landed recording contracts from record companies fairly early on in their careers.

a 'golden decade' of opportunities for local musicians - never since have local musicians ever had such easy access to, or support from the music industry.<sup>18</sup>

Lorenco Marques Radio, and Springbok Radio were the two popular music stations of the time, and both stations gave local music a fair amount of airplay. Disc Jockey John Berks was influential in his support for Durban bands and was often involved in compering band competitions.

### Durban Bands 1963 to 1973

Before introducing the principal bands of this era, it is necessary to point out that the Durban rock music community was fairly closely knit. This is most clearly demonstrated in the continual formation and breaking up of bands, with the same core of musicians moving from band to band, and even playing in more than one band at a time. Bands shared equipment and practice venues as well as personnel when it was necessary, and thus sorting out the line-ups of bands at any given time becomes difficult and, at times, confusing.

The reasons for the continual fluctuation of band members and bands are varied, and range from personality clashes to the interruption of military service, as well as popularity stakes and financial considerations. I have cited such reasons when necessary in my treatment of each band discussed.

#### The Flames

One of the most influential bands to form in Durban was **The Flames**, a 'coloured' band based in Sydenham (a 'coloured' community close to the city centre). **The Flames**, formed in 1963,

<sup>18</sup> Conversely, in the later years of the history covered by this study (from 1977), independent musical production became a popular means of recording. This bypassing of the major industries gave musicians the power to produce their music and circulate it in their communities. This point is elaborated in Chapter Five.

had as its core, the Fataar brothers (Steve, Brother and Ricky) on guitar (and vocals), bass (and vocals) and drums respectively. Other band members included Eugene Champion (guitar and vocals) and Blondie Chaplin (guitar and vocals). Eugene Champion was later replaced by Edries Fredericks, with Fredericks being replaced by Baby Duval when he left the band in 1966.

The **Flames** recorded their first single in 1964 ('Nobody Tells Me [What To Do]'), and another twelve by 1969. They also recorded three albums, and appeared on two other compilation albums during this time. Initially **The Flames** only played rock'n'roll covers of such songs as those by **The Hollies**, **The Beatles**, and **Elvis Presley** (refer to cassette, Ex. 2).

In 1968, **The Flames** were so popular that they went to England where they appeared on television shows (e.g. **The Donovan Show**) and live shows in London's Blaises and Revelation rock clubs. Carl Wilson (of the **Beach Boys**) saw the band at one of these shows, and was so impressed that he invited them to Los Angeles to record at their studio. **The Flames** spent two and a half years under his wing, and produced the album Flame in 1971 on **The Beach Boys'** record label, Brother Records. The album was produced by Carl Wilson, and 'See the Light' (a song from the album), reached the American charts. A **Flames** fan in England gave **The Flames** full credit as a professional band after seeing them in a concert in England. He had the following to add:

... the full, well-balanced sound that they produced was as good as any top group I have seen since coming to England. It was at this moment that I began to realise why Mick Jagger was raving about them, and Paul McCartney has been quoted more than once as saying that they were one of his favourite groups. After a delightful mixture of rock, blues and good old-fashioned pop, **The Flames** closed their act with their first British single, 'I See the Light' which has been released only in the last few days yet is already getting the rave write-ups it so richly deserves. With just enough plays on the radio it could easily become a hit and just imagine the boost that it

would give to South African pop music.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1970 and 1971, The Flames, now known as Flame, did a concert tour of South Africa, and then toured The United States as a support act for the Beach Boys. It was during their concert tour of South Africa, that Flame received a high profile in the South African press, and their Durban concerts at Westridge stadium were sell-outs, albeit marred by a high police presence during their performances:

... [Flame] have something which is absent in many local groups. They get through to their audiences. Their communication is incredible. Seldom have I seen a pop group get the audience to their feet and dancing. Flame did -- twice ... The only blemish on the evening was the unfortunate fact that in terms of the government permit to play before White audiences, as a Non-White group, they had to appear on stage first and then leave immediately after playing.<sup>20</sup>

In 1972, Flame broke up and Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar were invited to join The Beach Boys. The two did so, and remained members until 1973 (as bassist and drummer respectively) when they left to pursue successful individual careers as session musicians in the United States.

Of all the members of Flame, it is perhaps Steve Fataar that has the most prominent place in Durban rock. When Flame dissolved in 1972, he returned to Durban where he has played with various combinations of local musicians such as Kenny Henson, Roger Lucey and Richard Ellis. In 1978, he formed his own group with his younger brother Issy Fataar, and they later formed the group Smack.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted from Stephen Close (of Cheshire, England), letter to the editor Trend, 24th of December, 1970.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from Carl Coleman, Trend, 14th of January, 1971.

The Gonks (see Figure 2, p. 82)

Another band which is fondly remembered by all who were teenagers in Durban in the late 1960s and early 1970s was The Gonks. The band was formed in July of 1965, and stayed together in various combinations for a period of ten years. The band was named after an ornamental doll, known as a 'gonk' which was popular in Britain. This again demonstrates the conscious attempt on the part of Durban youngsters to identify with the British youth culture, rather than forge their own.

The Gonks were probably one of the most popular bands, and within two months of forming, landed a three year contract with Gallo Records. The following quotes demonstrate the popularity of the band, albeit from a biased perspective, as well as the infectious enthusiasm which pervaded the early Durban rock scene:

I can remember playing in the city hall. We played four numbers. It was frightening ... there were two thousand people stamping like that in the city hall shouting 'Gonks! Gonks!' They didn't want any other bands.

But it was a different vibe man, not like today ... the whole thing was like it was busy with bands, it was exciting... Every weekend there was a session, sometimes a Friday and a Saturday, and Tiles was open on a Sunday. Even as an amateur I can remember that at Tiles we used to rush down to the car and turn on to the airplay to see if we had got onto the hit parade. And the night we got on at [L.M Radio] number 20 we rushed upstairs and announced it.<sup>21</sup>

The line-up of The Gonks which recorded their first single ('You Can't Stop Me Loving You' and on the flipside, 'Crying My Heart Out') in early 1967 was as follows: Craig Ross (lead vocals); Barry Cline (bass guitar); Peter Gilder (drums); Howard Schachat (rhythm guitar); and Mervyn Gershanov (lead guitar). This single

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Craig Ross (lead singer of The Gonks) in my interview with him on the 29th of March, 1994.

reached Number 1 on the local record charts (L.M. Radio) and Number one on the then Rhodesian charts. It also reached number three on the South African national charts. 'You Can't Stop Me Loving You' was followed by the recording of another single in May of 1967, ('Nobody But Me' and on the flipside 'Woman Yeah') (refer to cassette, Ex. 3) recorded with the same line-up. Still later in 1967, The Gonks released another single ('Aint I Met You'), and in 1968, Graeme Beggs produced their last single 'Hard Lovin''.

The Gonks, like most of the popular local bands, played mainly cover versions of chart material. In fact, as far as their singles are concerned, only the flipside numbers were original songs, the A-Sides being reworked covers of songs by other bands. Craig Ross (lead vocalist) was responsible for the writing of their original material during the height of the band's popularity from 1965-1967. In August of 1967, The Gonks were featured in Teenage Personality<sup>22</sup> with a glowing article:

So far, helped by a legion of loyal supporters, the Gonks have been placed high on the South African Group Hit Parade on L.M. Radio and have now reached the L.M. Top 20 Hit Parade ... To hear the Gonks in action is to be hit by a youthquake. Lights play on the boys, glittering on the solid row of four mikes and the tall, serious line-up of Gonks. They don't seem to kid around much and they don't go for freak-outs or distortion stuff. For them it's music that counts, beat that matters, and the presentation must be right if the kids are to have fun. They have big ideas. They won't remain stock-still letting the world swirl by them. They want to swim upstream to the big fish in the pool of pop and we think they're going to make quite a splash.<sup>23</sup>

Unique to The Gonks was the formation of a fan club which was run by Helen Trombas and June Elgin, two girls who were fans of the

<sup>22</sup> Teenage Personality was a weekly supplement produced by Personality Magazine.

<sup>23</sup> Teenage Personality, 31st of August, 1967, p. 6.

band. The annual fee for joining the fan club was a mere 20 cents and members of the fan club were issued with 'GONKY membership cards', a photograph of the band, and a special autograph card. They were sent monthly newsletters and were allocated cheaper rates for concerts and band get-togethers. Lorenc Marques Radio personality, Gerry Wilmot was the honourary president of **The Gonks' Fan Club**, which boasted over a thousand members - a remarkable number of fans for a local band.

Lead singer, Craig Ross left **The Gonks** in 1967 to join another well-known Durban band, **Freedom's Children**, which was playing at the 505 Club in Johannesburg at the time. **Freedom's Children** was a professional band, and the prospect of earning a living by singing in a band was the main drawcard for Craig. His stay with **Freedom's Children**, however, was short lived, and within eight months, Craig was back in Durban as a member of **The Gonks**, which, during his time away had made some changes in personnel. **The Gonks** now consisted of Rob Clancy (drums), Roger Johnson (bass guitar), Rodney Aichetson (bass guitar), Howard Schachat (rhythm guitar and band leader), and Craig Ross (lead vocals).

#### **The Mods (see Figure 3, p. 83)**

A band which proved very popular, and in fact became **The Gonks'** main rival was **The Mods**. Again, the name of this band is significant since it shows a direct identification with the 'mod' subculture which was prevalent in Britain in the mid-1960s. **The Mods** also formed in 1965, but due to interruption by military training for some of the members, only became prominent in 1967.<sup>24</sup>

In 1967 the line up of the band stood as follows: Charlie Price (vocals), Alan Reid (vocals and rhythm guitar), Mervyn Gershonov (lead guitar), Hugh Mackrell (rhythm guitar), Trevor Turner

<sup>24</sup> The compulsory military conscription for white males in South Africa resulted in many a band's progress being interrupted or halted altogether. The theme of militarisation will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

(bass) and Robert Pavid (drums). The **Mods** were mainly a cover band, who played songs by bands like **The Hollies** and **The Harmonies**. In 1967, after having been off the scene for 15 months, The **Mods** won the Natal section of the L.M. Radio National Beat Contest as well as the South African National Beat Contest. The **Mods** also recorded their one and only single, 'After the Fox' in 1967 (refer to cassette, Ex. 4), a song sung by **The Hollies** in the film of the same name. The **Mods** was the first band in South Africa to record the song, and the single proved popular, although it never reaped great financial rewards.

According to Craig Ross (lead singer for **The Gonks**), the competition between The **Mods** and **The Gonks** was very fierce. It was so fierce, in fact, that the bands held a popularity contest in the City Hall where audience members were asked to vote for the best band out of the two.<sup>25</sup>

**It's A Secret/The Third Eye** (see Figure 4, p. 84, Figure 5, p. 85, and Figure 6, p. 86)

**It's A Secret** was another popular Durban band in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The band formed in July 1966, and comprised brother and sister Ron and Dawn Selby (rhythm guitarist and organist respectively), Graham Walker (drums), Dennis Robertson (lead singer) and Mike Sauer (bass guitar). In 1967 the band won the Natal section of the South African National Beat Contest and recorded their first single 'I Know a Man' (a Manfred Mann number). An interview held with the talented Dawn Selby (at the time only twelve years of age) ascertained what kind of music they played:

The group's music ... is somewhere between rhythm and blues and hit parade material ... 'We use songs from bands like Manfred Mann or Spencer-Davis - never tunes

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<sup>25</sup> Craig Ross of **The Gonks** informed me that 'naturally **The Gonks** won', although Mervyn Gershonov of **The Mods** cannot remember the outcome! Perhaps the rivalry still lives today!

that come from the hit parade material'.<sup>26</sup>

The initial choice to play more obscure material rather than hit parade songs proved quite unpopular with the audience, and so, as many local bands have done, **It's A Secret** had to include some hit parade songs for the sake of audience attendance and support:

'We started by playing mainly rhythm and blues material but this did not meet with the response we expected. It didn't take us long to realise that Durban crowds prefer the more commercial type of music and we had to make liberal use of numbers featured on the hit parades ... Then engagements started to flow in. We do a lot of the Peter and Gordon harmony type of song and we have been making use of the Sonny and Cher style as well. Dennis has much in common with English singer John Mayal as far as voice and style are concerned and he has been one of our big assets ...' **It's a Secret** have become firmly established and are now considered to be one of the 'name' bands.<sup>27</sup>

When Graham Walker left **It's A Secret** to form his own group (**The Village Green**), Robbie Pavid (of **The Mods**) took his place as drummer, and Maurice Saul (formerly of the Zimbabwean band **The Etonians**) joined the band as lead singer when Dennis Robinson left for Johannesburg in April 1968. It was this new line-up that really became popular - especially as Maurice Saul began to compose specifically for the band. An interview with Robert Pavid revealed that the British band, **Procol Harem**, was a big influence on the music and style of **The Third Eye**.

Under the supervision of Billy Forrest (of **Dream Merchants** fame), **It's A Secret** recorded another single, this time the song 'Fire!' by Brown and Crane, in 1969 (refer to cassette, Ex.5). On the flipside of the single they recorded a song written by Maurice Saul, 'With The Sun Shining Bright'. It was during the recording of this single that the band decided to adopt the name **The Third**

<sup>26</sup> 'Dawn's A Rising Pop Star - and She's Only 12', Sunday Tribune, 18th of June, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> F. Force, 'It's A Secret' Teenage Personality, June, 1967. Quote from Graham Walker of **Its A Secret**.

**Eye**, and it was as **The Third Eye** that the group grew in popularity and gained respect as an 'original' group. **The Third Eye** recorded two more singles in 1969, viz. 'Valley of Sadness' (with 'Snow Child' by Saul on the flipside), and 'Brother'.

Besides three singles, **The Third Eye** also recorded three long-playing records: Third Eye - Awakening (1969), Searching (1970) and Brother (1970). All tracks on Searching were written and composed by Maurice Saul, while the other two albums used both original and known material (refer to cassette, Ex. 6).

In May 1970, Trend featured **The Third Eye** in a flattering article which declared them the most stable and progressive band in Durban:

With the news of pop groups splitting up, not only in South Africa, but overseas too, Durban's most advanced group, **The Third Eye** emerge as one of the most stable groups on the local scene. **The Third Eye** are constantly progressing, changing their musical ideas, and with the release of each new disc they improve. They are probably the only South African group to use their own material, composed and arranged by themselves and for this, they must rank a notch above other such top groups as the Otis Waygood Blues Band, The Bats, and The Staccatoes...<sup>28</sup>

A letter from a **Third Eye** fan also demonstrates the respect that the band commanded:

The **Third Eye** are the only Durban (if not South African) group that are showing the people that we have a group with enough guts to write their own material and play it. ... Their new LP is completely original - written and arranged by the group.<sup>29</sup>

Trend followed the musical development of **The Third Eye**, and on the 21st of January, 1971 criticised the band for beginning to sound stale. The band members agreed with the criticism, and pointed out that their political and social emphasis was becoming depressing, and that they wanted to make 'happier' music:

<sup>28</sup> Carl Coleman, The Daily News, Trend, 7th of May 1970, np.

<sup>29</sup> P. Adler, (letter to the editor) Trend, 14th of May, 1970.

Our music must change. We can't go on with the same sort of music anymore. We must change from songs about war, destruction and death, to happier songs. This has got to be a world of changes. We're all lost, the world is upside down ...<sup>30</sup>

We have not progressed in our music lately. In fact it has been depressing me ... We want to do a lot more acoustic guitar work, and we want Dawn to do more vocals. Our music is going to be a lot quieter with emphasis on percussion, something like Santana and a lot happier.<sup>31</sup>

In July 1971, it was announced that Maurice Saul was leaving The Third Eye. In terms of The Third Eye's reputation as a 'stable' and 'original' group, this was a blow. Saul had proved himself as a talented songwriter and composer, and was the main focus of the group for this reason. He left the group for both musical and personal reasons. Saul was replaced by Richard (Dick) Wright (a former member of Leeman Ltd, one of the first heavy blues groups in Durban), and the band played their first concert with Wright as lead singer at the Durban Folk and Rock Show in the same month.

At this show, it was also pointed out that The Third Eye had a 'softer, gentler sound away from the rock-busting days of "Fire!"'<sup>32</sup> One of the reasons for this change was that the band were playing some of Dawn Selby's compositions which are noticeably gentler than Saul's.

In 1973, the Third Eye played in the popular pop opera, Smike,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Robert Pavid, Third Eye drummer, Trend, 21st of January, 1971.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from Maurice Saul in Trend, 21st of January, 1971.

<sup>32</sup> Carl Coleman, Trend, 14th of July, 1971, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Smike is a pop opera based on Charles Dickens' novel, Nicholas Nickleby. The South African version was presented in Pinetown, with music by The Third Eye and singing, dancing and acting by 70 cast members who were past and present pupils of Pinetown Junior School. It was the first performance of Smike in South Africa, and it received superb reviews in all the local papers.

while later in the year, went to Johannesburg to record another single for release on the Epidemic label. This time, the single comprised songs written by Ron and Dawn: 'Caterpillar' (Ron Selby) on the A-side, and 'What's Going On' (Dawn Selby) on the flipside. In 1976, **The Third Eye** provided the musical backing for another rock opera, this time a locally written and produced one, Brother Brother. 'Brother Brother' was originally the title for the song written by Raymond Ellis for **The Third Eye** five years previously. Dawn Selby was the musical director of the rock opera, which ran for two weeks in Durban from 1 April 1976. In the middle to late 1970's, **The Third Eye** went through numerous personnel changes, although always retaining the brother-and-sister partnership of Dawn and Ron Selby.

It must be noted that from the mid-1970s, Durban's position as the centre of rock music in South Africa had begun to slip, and it was already being regarded as a cultural backwater. The opening of Brother Brother ignited the hope that all was not lost as far as originality went in Durban:

Brother Brother will open to Durban audiences for a 2 week run on April 1st at the St. John's Theatre. It promises to be a production worth seeing and I personally find excitement in the fact that the seed and germination of this production lies in the cultural backwater of Durban - If Brother Brother makes it here - it will make it anywhere. We are witnessing the cultural birth of Durban???<sup>34</sup>

The show, with a humanitarian theme, received an enthusiastic response from all sectors of the community, critics included. **The Third Eye's** performance was also rated as superb, while the talent of Ellis who at the time was 22 years old was highly acclaimed.

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted from Dome (Natal University student paper), 1st of April, 1976.

**Abstract Truth (see Figure 7, p. 87)**

**Abstract Truth** formed as an experiment for a popular venue known as **Totum**. **Totum** needed a live band to play during cocktail hour, and asked Kenny Henson to put a group together. Within a couple of weeks, the band realised that their experimental brand of rock music was not only 'fun', but was forging a new sound (known as 'head music') on the Durban rock scene. The term 'head music' refers to progressive music 'with a message', rather than commercial music which was performed mainly for its entertainment value. 'Head Music' was valued for its musical experimentation, and for its originality. The line-up of **Abstract Truth** reveals some Durban rock stalwarts, men whose contribution to the Durban (and South African) rock scene is widely acknowledged today. The band also made use of unconventional instrumentation (such as sitar, tabla and flute) which seemed to work well within their newly discovered sound.

The line-up was as follows: Kenny Henson (sitar), Sean Bergin (flute and saxophone), Robert Pavid (drums) and Brian Gibson (vocals and guitar).

**Abstract Truth** recorded three albums, Abstract Truth (1970), Totum (1971) and Silver Trees (1970), and one single (1970), 'Jersey Thursday' and 'Scarborough Fair' on the flipside. Although Totum consisted of songs made popular by artists such as Donovan, Tucker, Dylan, Gershwin, Brown and Adderly, the album shows great originality in arrangement and instrumentation (refer to cassette, Ex. 7). Their second album, however, proved particularly impressive since all but one song were written by the group.

Shortly after recording their second album, the band moved to Cape Town where they felt their brand of rock would be better received. They also toured to Johannesburg in an attempt to find work in a club. By the 3rd of December 1970, however, **Abstract Truth** had broken up. This shock announcement came as a result of

financial problems. Trend reported the break-up:

The group, one of the most original South Africa has produced, find that they just can't make a living with their kind of music. 'It all boils down to finance - if we'd carried on any longer we would have starved to death', said Kenny explaining the group's decision to disband ... 'We couldn't get any club jobs because most of the clubs in Johannesburg have been turned into discotheques...' <sup>35</sup>

Thus within the short space of a year, one of the most promising rock bands in South Africa had come and gone. Although this is not an unusual scenario, it was particularly sad in this case, since theirs was the beginning of a new cross-cultural style of rock which may have developed into a truly unique South African rock sound (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of **Abstract Truth's** cross-cultural sound):

During their time, Abstract Truth produced 'head-music' (i.e. inventive, mind-stimulating music), and were one of the most progressive groups in South Africa. Unfortunately, not too many heads were into their music and so, a group which could have gone onto better things broke up...<sup>36</sup>

#### **The Demise of Rock Bands in Durban and the Era of Hotel Rock (1973-1979)**

##### **Introduction**

After almost a decade of unprecedeted popularity, rock bands in Durban experienced a lapse in popularity and support, while rock bands in Johannesburg (such as the highly-successful **Rabbitt** whose climb to fame occurred in 1976-1977) took the limelight for a while. There are a number of interrelated factors that seem to

<sup>35</sup> Carl Coleman, 'Abstract Truth Break Up', Trend, 3rd of December, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> G. Chilvers and T. Jasiukowicz, History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, p. 1.

have caused Durban rock bands to experience difficulties in the mid-1970s, including a trend towards acoustic music, the opening of discotheques in the city, the introduction of national television and a shift in the principal venue for rock music.

### 'Acoustic' Rock

In the early 1970's, a trend towards acoustic music was beginning to be felt in South Africa. This had much to do with the impact of Woodstock where **The Byrds**, John Sebastian and **The Rolling Stones** wowed audiences with acoustic renditions of songs.

The growing popularity of 'unplugged' rock music, the evolution of the acoustic guitar, the folk-rock movement, and the popularity of the protest song (as epitomised by Bob Dylan) encouraged more solo artists to come to the fore. Thus the line-up of four to five musicians of a typical rock band was no longer imperative for the performance of rock music. In Durban, Kenny Henson and Brian Finch were the first in South Africa to establish the acoustic duo as a popular performance medium. Another important Durban band in the 'acoustic' medium was **The Kitchen Brothers**, headed by Syd Kitchen. **The Kitchen Brothers** was a particularly popular and successful band, and one of the few bands who continued to play their own material from the early to late 1970s.

### The Establishment of Discotheques in Durban

Besides the influence of the 'acoustic rock' trend, another important event contributed towards the demise in popularity of local rock bands, this being the opening of discotheque venues. Venues for live music (and bands) emptied as youngsters frequented the discotheques which began opening in and around Durban.

This mirrored the trend worldwide as Durban youngsters tired of 'sessions' and supported the 'disco' craze which had gained

popularity in 'swinging London'. The impact of John Travolta films such as Saturday Night Fever (an American product) was also an important factor in the shaping of the 'disco' trend in South Africa. Thus the popularity of live rock music waned, and musicians could fight back only by disbanding and forming smaller ensembles which could play in the smaller venues now catering for live music.

### National Television

The impact of national television on the entertainment habits of young people in Durban was vast. The excitement created by the new entertainment medium has also been cited as a reason for the waning popularity of rock bands in Durban in the mid-1970s<sup>37</sup>. Young people no longer needed to go out at night to be entertained. Their options for entertainment had grown, with television providing national and international sport on Saturday afternoons as well as the usual movies and music shows throughout the week. A greater choice of entertainment resulted in a greater diversity of activities for young people, and a dilution of the numbers who attended performances of local rock bands.

### Hotels and Pubs as New Venues

The trend towards smaller performance groups for rock music meant that rock music could be played in smaller, more intimate venues, such as hotel bars and private pubs. Furthermore, pub and hotel owners preferred smaller groups for financial reasons as well as for those to do with space. A full band, for example, would take up too much space in an eating and/or bar venue. Another important factor to consider is the age-group of the rock supporters. By 1973, many of the musicians and fans had outgrown 'sessions' and had reached the legal drinking age; they therefore wanted to frequent licensed venues. 'Sessions' were no longer

<sup>37</sup> Nearly every informant mentioned the impact of television on the Durban rock scene, when asked about the lack of support for local bands in the mid-1970s.

'hip' abroad, and therefore, their popularity with Durban youngsters faded.

### The South African Music Industry

Due to the fact that Johannesburg was the economic centre of South Africa, the South African recording industry had established itself there. It has been pointed out that while Durban musicians generally seemed quicker to pick up musical trends, Durbanites seemed very slow and inefficient when it came to an administrative and business sense<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, musicians who wished to further their careers, at some stage usually had to go to Johannesburg for recording and promotion purposes. Thus, we find that more and more Durban musicians began to go to Johannesburg for extended periods of time. While bands were in the process of recording, they also performed in and around Johannesburg to promote their product and gain exposure. It seems that this centralisation of Johannesburg as the 'mecca' of rock bands who wanted to be recognised, was another reason for Durban becoming less of a rock centre than it had been. **Third Eye**, for example, performed in Johannesburg for the best part of the 1970s, while Durban-born musicians such as Richard Ellis felt it necessary to form a band in Johannesburg (**Theta**) which comprised a mixture of Durban and Johannesburg musicians.

All the above factors contributed towards the move of rock to smaller hotel and pub venues in Durban. Unfortunately, this move effectively diminished the number of rock bands that could survive in the city, as well as the number of musicians that could play in a band. With the advance of technology, drum machines and electronic keyboards could effectively be used to replace musicians, and provide as full a sound as necessary without increasing the cost of hiring a band: the age of one-and-two-man acts dawned in the licensed venues of Durban.

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Ellis, interview conducted by myself on the 6th of October 1994.

During this period, the scope for performing original music was also drastically limited. Musicians were reduced to providing background music as hotel and pub owners demanded that musicians and bands played hit parade material for the patrons. Instead of being the focus of attention, musicians became part of the furniture, like human jukeboxes in inconspicuous corners.

#### **Pub and Hotel Acts**

Fortunately, the dismal picture painted above was not always the case. There were musicians who became masters of the smaller ensemble, managed to play their own music, and find favour with their employers simultaneously. Such an outfit, was the Brian Finch and Kenny Henson duo, who forged an exciting and popular programme of folk-rock music from 1977 onwards. This was a tremendously successful venture, both financially and musically, and the duo was recognised as one of South Africa's best folk-rock exponents. (Refer to cassette, Ex. 8).

In this instance, Brian Finch was the composer of most of their music, and it is Finch's ability to write about 'local things which appealed to people', his 'earthy, gutsy quality' and his 'catchy songs' that, according to Kenny Henson, was the root of their popularity. Finch also had the ability to win people over:

Brian had this amazing ability to go into a room which was completely hostile and within the space of two numbers, would have them in the palm of his hand ... have them rocking.<sup>39</sup>

The duo have five singles and four albums to their credit, all of which proved very popular with both English and Afrikaans-speaking audiences. The fact that they succeeded by playing their own material was a feat in itself, but Henson informed me that although people initially thought they would not be successful doing so, they decided to go ahead anyway. By the time they had

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<sup>39</sup> Quoted from Kenny Henson from an interview I conducted on the 7th of October 1994.

been playing for a couple of months, audience members began asking for originals rather than covers. This indicates that given the right feel for a sector of the market, South African musicians can successfully perform their own material and earn a living from doing so.

#### The Punk Revolution 1977 - 1982

##### Durban as the Centre of the Punk Revolution

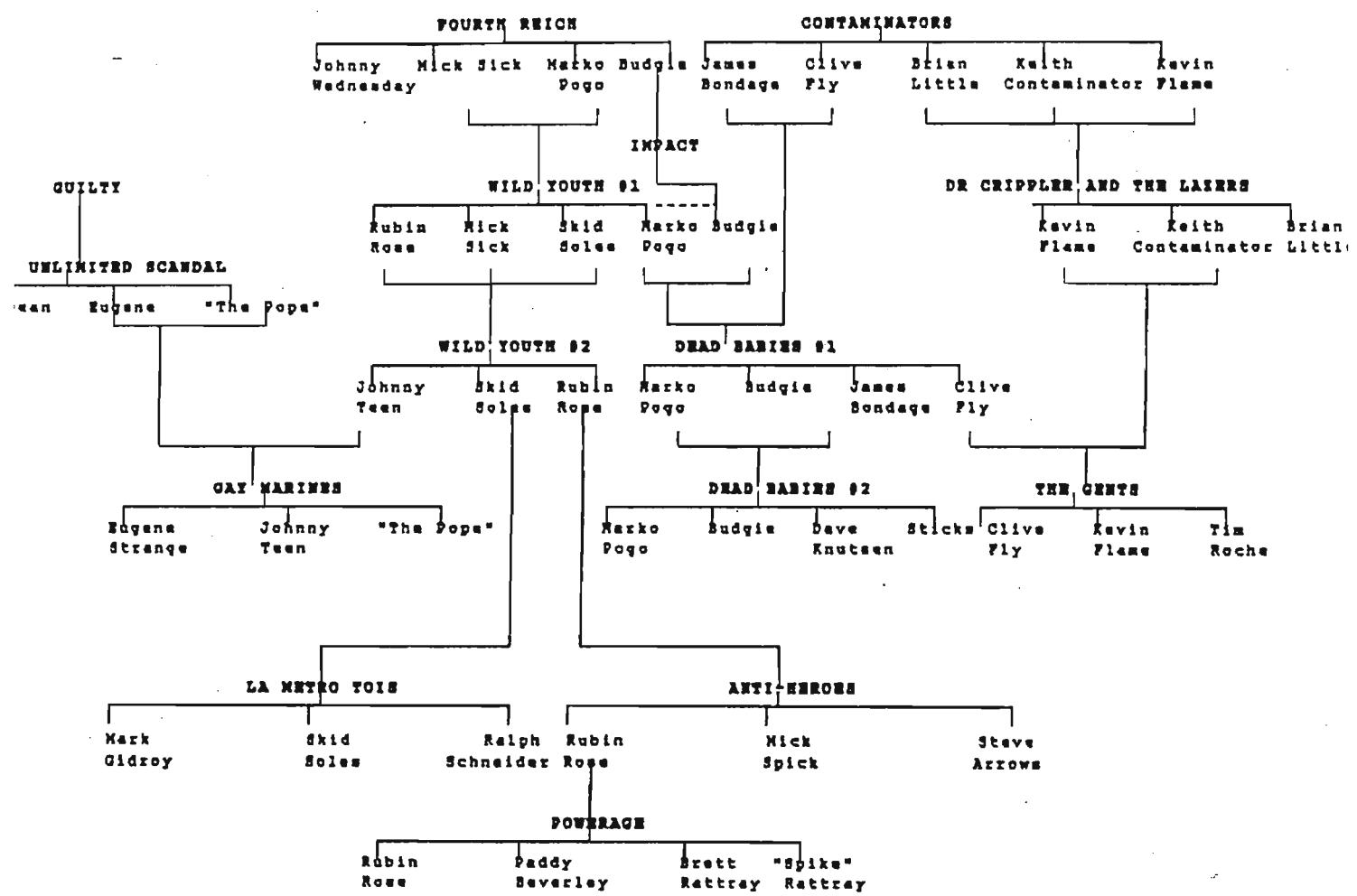
Whilst the trend towards smaller acts playing in licensed venues continued, a new, younger rock revolution was being fostered at the University of Natal, Durban in 1977. The exponents were teenagers (perhaps as young as those teenagers who were responsible for the rock'n'roll revolution in Durban) of school-leaving age, who, under the influence of the British punk movement, formed the first South African punk rock band, The Fourth Reich (see Figure 1).

A network of punk musicians and fans (although small in comparison to the earlier rock'n'roll scene) also built up in and around Durban. A family tree demonstrating the complex derivation of punk rock bands is probably the best way to demonstrate this network.<sup>40</sup> The stage names of the punk musicians are used.

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<sup>40</sup> This 'family tree' was drawn up by Rubin Rose and another Durban punk musician, and was kindly lent to me along with Rubin's 24 scrapbooks.

Figure 1. Family Tree of Punk Bands in Durban 1978-1982



Once again, Durban became the centre of the South African rock scene for a few brief years, and once again, Durban's live rock scene boasted a vibrancy and excitement which outshadowed that of other South African cities. It was not long, however, before Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and even Johannesburg boasted their own punk rock scenes, and bands from these cities embarked on tours around the country.

Perhaps most notable about the transfer of the punk rock movement from Britain to South Africa was that it began with middle-class whites in a tertiary education institution. As is well documented, the punk rock rebellion began in England amongst working class youngsters, who, frustrated by unemployment and lack of entertainment, attacked the societal structures which had put them there. Why then did the South African punk movement start where it did?

Firstly, the transfer of the punk rock movement to South Africa occurred at a vital moment in the political history of South Africa. The political upheavals surrounding the Soweto uprisings and police violence in 1976 carried on through the late 1970s into the 1980s. The universities, although being partially State subsidised, have always been run independently of the State, and the University of Natal, has had the logo 'an equal opportunities, affirmative action' institution since the late 1970s. The University of Natal fostered free thinking and questioned state tactics through the many liberal organisations which functioned on the campus. This, I am sure, was a contributing factor towards the development of punk rock music (which blatantly attacked and criticised the Apartheid state) at the university.

#### The Durban Punk Scene (see Figure 8, p. 88 and p. 88a)

In May 1978, Durban's premier punk rock band, Wild Youth [#1] was formed. The band was formed largely as a result of the impression made on Mike Fleck (Johnny Teen/Mick Sick) by the punk

movement in England during a visit overseas. Thus, again, it would be true to state that South Africa's rock scene was very much dependant on popular music trends in the United Kingdom. The members of this band were Rubin Rose (drums), Johnny Teen (Mike Fleck/Mick Sick) (guitar), Andrew Peinkie (or Skid Soles) (bass) with Marko Pogo (vocals) and Budgie (guitar) appearing with **Wild Youth** for one concert only. Mike Fleck, Mark Dyson and Andrew Peinkie were all university students at the time, while Rubin Rose<sup>41</sup> worked for Portnet as a clerk. **Wild Youth** soon developed a cult following and performed in venues around Durban, in Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

For a while, the punk rock movement (as embodied by **Wild Youth**) in Durban started off by imitating the British scene, but soon adapted to the South African environment and became relevant to it. Asked whether **Wild Youth** identified with British punkdom, Johnny Teen replied:

Music-wise, sure, but not with their lyrics. Obviously we can't identify with the dole queue. We'd be hypocrites if we did identify with them, because we aren't poor. But we can identify with boredom and the sort of things that get on your nerves that the punks sing about - police getting you down and this sort of thing...<sup>42</sup>

Asked how punk music abroad influenced South African punk, two members of **Wild Youth** had the following to say:

We are influenced by the punk bands but we don't set out to copy them as we did in the beginning. When we started we obviously didn't know what we were doing

<sup>41</sup> Rubin Rose (also nicknamed 'The Wildman') has long been the nurturer and propagator of punk and hard core punk in Durban. His innovative and driving style of drumming has earned him much respect from non-punk and punk musicians alike, and he in fact still holds the African record for continuous drumming which he set in the early 1980s. He has been at the core of many key punk and post-punk Durban bands, and has had an important influence on the development of punk and metal music in the city. Furthermore, his accurate and copious records in the form of scrapbooks and photographs make him one of the most valuable sources of information on punk and post-punk music in the city.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted from Johnny Teen (Mike Fleck) by a local newspaper (publication unknown), in 1978. The newspaper cutting was found in one of many scrapbooks lent to me by veteran punk rocker, Rubin Rose.

...<sup>43</sup>

If you make a jigsaw puzzle, you've got to put in the outside pieces first. As soon as you've got the outside you can build. We've always had our own style. No one has ever said we sound like other punk groups.<sup>44</sup>

As in Britain the Durban punk bands were often condemned by the press, and other conservative members of the public. One of the main criticisms of the punk musicians was that their punk stance was hypocritical since their social circumstances differed greatly from the British punks. The fact that two members of **Wild Youth**, (Johnny Teen and Skid Soles) were university students added further fuel to the criticisms levelled at these punks. Punk musicians expressed anger at these sorts of accusations:

We've been ripped apart by people who've never even spoken to us. They see us play and they go back to their typewriters and try to make up an imaginary story about how we claim to be what we aren't. But we don't claim street credibility and they'd like to think that we do.<sup>45</sup>

In the light of the assertion by Skid Soles that **Wild Youth** had 'always had [their] own style' (see previous page), the following quote from Durban's correspondent for the Rand Daily Mail regarding the transfer of punk and punk culture to Durban is problematic:

This is not average apathetic Durban. **Wild Youth** do the whole British slob with a bad temper bit and the kids are pogoing away at the front like crazy. Nobody here is bothered about just how unlikely this style of music is in the context of white S A society. This is just another fashion idea to them, and the lithe girls

<sup>43</sup> Johnny Teen, 1978, newspaper unknown.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted from Skid Soles in a local newspaper (publication unknown) in 1978. Cutting obtained from a scrapbook lent to me by Rubin Rose.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted from Johnny Teen in a local newspaper (publication unknown) in 1978. Cutting obtained from a scrapbook lent to me by Rubin Rose.

doing the most energetic pogoing are all wearing punk-inspired outfits: brand new immaculately fitting fishnet stockings, shimmering leotards, colour-matched accessories ... The paraphernalia of the disgruntled Brit working-class adapted to the sunshine life of Durbs-by-the-Sea. Bizarre.<sup>46</sup>

Punk musicians also felt enraged at being labelled hypocrites since they never made any money from playing, and spoke very tenaciously about the injustices of South African society. In some cases, the topics attacked by Durban punk bands were the same as those attacked by British punk bands, such as the record industry and frustration with authority. These were legitimate concerns for South African punks and not merely imitated from British punk bands.

Particularly interesting was the material performed by the punk rock bands in Durban. Most of them played only their own compositions, or at most two to three cover versions of popular punk rock bands in Britain (such as The Sex Pistols). This was in keeping with the general punk ethic viz. 'do it yourself'. The punk movement gave ordinary people the mandate to play and write songs that were relevant to their experience of life:

Their equipment is crude - homemade amps are the order of the day, but as Budgie stated, you don't need much more. They organise the gigs themselves, make posters, book the venues with a spirit which speaks loudly of their love for music, and their laudable desire to make the music scene in Durban a lot more vital...  
<sup>47</sup>

Another important feature of the punk movement in South Africa was that it bypassed the mainstream music industry (as it did in Britain), and most punk bands made their own 'demos'<sup>48</sup> and

<sup>46</sup> P. Lee, Rand Daily Mail, 25th of July, 1979.

<sup>47</sup> 'Sick Mick and the Varsity Crowd', Music Maker, 19th of January 1979, p 35.

<sup>48</sup> A 'Demo' refers to a rough, yet listenable 'demonstration' made for the purposes of attracting the attention of record producers. Usually bands send 'demos' to a record company in the hope of securing their interest and consequently, a record contract.

singles and distributed them themselves at concerts. The punk rock movement also formed as an alternative to the disco scene which had become so popular in Durban:

The main reason behind the formation of the band [Wild Youth] would appear to be their violently anti-disco stance. They find the disco scene plastic and boring, and believe that they are offering a very real alternative - an atmosphere in which people can really relax, wear what they want and generally have a good time without the artificial contrivances of a discotheque.<sup>49</sup>

The venues for live punk music were not as plentiful as those for the rock music of the 1960s and early 1970s had been. Caxton Hall, Sherwood Hall, The Plaza Hotel, the university's Student Union and The Rainbow at the Wagonwheels Hotel were the main venues for punk in Durban. It must be pointed out that punk bands were not welcome in most central hotel venues due to the fact that they were supported by teenage punks, who were thought to be an unsavoury and aggressive group of people. Bands that played 'commercial' music, however, were easily accommodated in licensed venues in and around the city. The Rainbow (although situated in a hotel) is widely thought to have been the most popular venue for punk. The following quote verifies this opinion:

... As I suggested some weeks back, [The Rainbow] has become the venue in Durban - there hasn't been anything like it since the long-gone days of Tiles and Scene 70 - and I don't think you'll find many venues in this country at which you get a resident band plus five guest acts, all in one night.<sup>50</sup>

Another important venue for punk, and especially for the later hard core punk style was the Community Arts Workshop which opened in 1984. The Community Arts Centre provided practice rooms for bands, was very centrally situated, and was specifically opened to cater for local, original bands. Furthermore, entrance fees were low which encouraged a large attendance. A worldwide network

<sup>49</sup> 'Mick Sick and the Varsity Crowd' Music Maker, 19th of January, 1979, p. 35.

<sup>50</sup> D. Gibbon, reviewer for Music Maker, 7th of December, 1979.

of fans of South African punk was built up, as Rubin Rose began writing to other punk bands, and sending them copies of recordings. This way, South African punk rock bands were almost better known outside South Africa than within, and Powerage (a later Durban hard punk band) even appeared on alternative charts in Sweden and America.

### Durban Punk Rock Bands

As can be seen from Figure 1, a fairly large number of punk bands existed in Durban. This discussion, however, will deal with only those bands which comply with my original list of constraints<sup>51</sup>, and therefore some of the bands appearing on the chart (such as The Contaminators and Dr Crippler and the Lazers) will not be discussed. Furthermore, this chart also includes some of the important new wave bands (such as The Impact and The Gents) since many of the punk and new wave bands performed on the same bills and even shared musicians from time to time.

It must also be pointed out that the terms 'punk' and 'new wave' were often synonymously used by newspaper reporters, even although musicians differentiate between the two genres. This is important for the reader since many of the quotes cited in this discussion would seem confusing if one was not aware of this usage. New Wave is considered by punk musicians to be a 'softer' more listenable version of punk, and is not synonymous with punk.

### The Fourth Reich

The Fourth Reich was the first punk rock group in South Africa. The line-up of the band consisted of Johnny Wednesday, (guitar and vocals) Mike Fleck (or Mick Sick) (guitar and vocals), Mark Dyson (or Marko Pogo)<sup>52</sup> (drums) and Peter Kunst (or Budgie) (bass

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 6-7.

<sup>52</sup> Note: The pogo is the frenzied dance which accompanied the punk movement, and which fans indulged in.

and vocals). The name of the band is undoubtedly a reference to the apartheid government who the group considered had earned the title through its tyrannical and racist style of government reminiscent of Hitler's Third Reich. The band never recorded anything, and lasted only a few months before breaking up.<sup>53</sup> (Refer to cassette, Ex. 9).

**Wild Youth (see Figure 9, p. 89 and Figure 10, p. 90)**

Wild Youth's first concert was held on the 17th of July 1978 at the Sherwood Hall. Also on the bill was a new wave band called The Impact. Advertising for the concert was done by means of rough, homemade posters which were plastered on every available free space in the area. The next concert (28th July 1978) was given attention in The Daily News and The Natal Mercury, since the surfacing of punk rock in Durban was an important (perhaps dreaded) event:

Although punk rock is dying overseas, it is still alive and well in Durban and two punk rock groups will be giving a concert in Durban tomorrow night. They are Wild Youth and The Impact, both of which play their own compositions being opposed to playing hit parade songs and disco music. The contempt for the South African recording industry is expressed in such songs as 'Record Companies' by Wild Youth ...<sup>54</sup>

Punk rock will explode in Durban tonight when two local groups perform in the Caxton Hall, Beach Grove, from 8pm. Comprising mainly university students, the groups are Wild Youth and The Impact, which specialises in new wave punk - the elite of the trend  
...<sup>55</sup>

In early 1979, Marco Pogo left the band to form another punk band, The Dead Babies, which left Wild Youth with only three

<sup>53</sup> A rare recording of this band live in concert, however, has kindly been made available to me by South African punk rock specialist, Ernesto Marques.

<sup>54</sup> Tonight Reporter, The Daily News, 26th of July 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Natal Mercury reporter, 28th of July 1978.

members. This did not seem to affect their functioning in any way, and it was in fact, **Wild Youth #2** (see Figure 1) which went on to gain a reputation as the premier punk band in the country.

**Wild Youth's** impact can hardly be overestimated. Their raucous, insulting stage act often invoked anger from members of the public and the press, while at the same time it engendered respect for their unflinching commitment and zeal. The same cannot always be said for their musicality. Some critics found their performance to be all hype and no music, while others managed to salvage some semblance of musicality - even enthusing at times about their originality and driving sound. What was common, however, was that **Wild Youth** were never ignored, and this was much to their liking. Their stage performance was best described by a Sunday Tribune Reporter in those early days of punk:

They play like they're possessed. I later find out they are. Relentless drumming, pumping bass, guitar sandpapering your spinal cord, defiant vocals ripping at your brain. My eardrums felt like they were being attacked by a crazy nest of hornets ... It's a blitzkrieg of energy never seen in this country. The energy output is amazing - and infectious... **Wild Youth** are visually mesmerising, and with better equipment would be musically exciting ... Ringing ears drive me out, and home, my head spinning with the images of youth on the move, breakers of the established orders and as always fired with the energy of change. ... 'We're the beginning of rock'n'roll in South Africa' says Johnny Teen. 'We want to destroy music as it exists today ... I know I'm not normal, I'm an evil genius. A product of the nuclear age ... We play only for youth. Everyone else has been messed up by the system. We're more than just punk.'<sup>56</sup>

**Wild Youth** and a well-known Johannesburg band, **The Radio Rats** played at a concert in Durban in April 1979. While **Radio Rats** received a positive critique, **Wild Youth** were not as fortunate:

It's hard to get excited about a band whose sound is

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<sup>56</sup> Sunday Tribune reporter, 25th of February 1979.

so distorted that only the drummer and bass player make any impression ... **Wild Youth** write their own material which could have been in Serbo-Croatian or an ancient Ongolese. Whatever gems of contemporary commentary they might have made were lost forever.<sup>57</sup>

The same performance, however, received a totally different critique by another reporter:

As their demo disc shows, **Wild Youth** are competent at plain, hard rock and have the ability to string together a strong lyric with an original South African spine - qualities that were lost in the music melee of a disco.<sup>58</sup>

It would be unnecessary to detail every performance **Wild Youth** made, although not impossible - thanks to the meticulous manner in which punk fans and musicians in Durban have compiled their records. The year 1979 was a busy year for the band, and some of the highlights include an appearance at the Wits University's Free Peoples' Concert on February 18 1979, a concert with **The Radio Rats** in April 1979, an appearance at the Johannesburg Music Festival (July 1979) and the 'Wot About Me' Tour undertaken in December 1979. The tour was organised by the group themselves, and included concerts in Durban, Margate, Port St.Johns, East London and Cape Town. **Wild Youth** also recorded two tracks on a South African punk compilation album (entitled Six of the Best)<sup>59</sup> in 1979, as well as recording their own debut single ('Wot 'Bout Me' and, on the flipside, 'Radio Youth'). (Refer to cassette, Ex. 10). All the songs recorded were penned by Johnny Teen, the group's lead vocalist and guitarist.

In 1980, **Wild Youth** gave a performance at Trax disco in Durban, along with new wave band **The Gents** and rock band **Smack** (led by Issie Fataar). The band (now two years old) was still as popular as ever, and showed no sign of breaking up despite the fact that

<sup>57</sup> O. Coetzer, The Daily News, Tonight, 17th of April, 1979.

<sup>58</sup> G. Horning, The Natal Mercury, April 1979.

<sup>59</sup> Six of the Best was recorded at C & G Studios in Westville (a suburb of Durban). The two tracks by **Wild Youth** which appeared on the album were 'Record Companies' and 'All Messed Up'.

punk was coming to a fast and furious end in Britain:

Topping the bill, **Wild Youth** lived up to their reputation by whipping up the crowd into a frenzy of teenage adulation, spitting and otherwise ga-ga behaviour... Between the stage-frolics, **Wild Youth** dished out some fast, highly energetic and largely atonal music. It seems that their music is suffering at the expense of the 'Sex Pistols of Africa' image surrounding the band.<sup>60</sup>

**Wild Youth** also made an appearance at the 1980 Free People's Concert at Wits University in February, along with a host of other acts, which included **Juluka**, **Finch & Henson**, **Roger Lucey**, and **Edi Niederlander** among others. **Wild Youth** were extremely well-received, and admired by the Johannesburg crowd. An extract from a fan letter which appeared in a local newspaper points to their popularity and criticises the South African music industry for apathy regarding the promotion of South African punk bands:

Hell, if **Wild Youth** does not get somewhere now, then there is something wrong with this country. Tell **Wild Youth** they have our heartiest congratulations. Their music is new, it's original and music lovers are starved of it ... Disco and decor are dead, punk and new wave are in. Sous [South] Freka [Africa] cannot help being fifty years behind the times when we have utter blundering blithering \*\* fools dictating our music to us... Rubin drummed tonight like I have never heard him drum before. On stage the quiet Rubin turned into a demon. That thunderous beat held the people in a trance...<sup>61</sup>

By May of 1980, **Wild Youth**'s main audience support base seemed to be in Johannesburg. This can be attributed to the fact that **Wild Youth** had given a number of performances in Johannesburg in late 1979 and early 1980, and also that venues in Johannesburg were opening up for the punk and new wave trend which had spread to all major cities by 1979. This acceptance and support of punk

<sup>60</sup> Natal Witness reporter, 2nd of February, 1980.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted from a fan letter which appeared in the Natal Witness, 23rd of February 1980. Name of author unknown.

and new wave music in Johannesburg seems strange when considering the conservatism and Afrikaner Nationalism so prevalent in the city in the 1960s. It must be remembered, however, that the young people of 1980 were a new and different generation who were less conservative than teenagers in the 1960s. Furthermore, the audience for punk in Johannesburg was larger than in Durban, and Wits University students were enthusiastic towards **Wild Youth's** brand of punk. In fact, in May of 1980, **Wild Youth** performed to a crowd of over one thousand students at that institution and were very well received:

**Wild Youth'**s ... hour-long, beer-drenched set at Wits last Saturday night was a triumphant assertion of the raw power of rock'n'roll ... **Wild Youth** epitomise the term punk - even if they don't quite attain the psychotic intensity of the Sex Pistols ... We're talking here about the best group in the country, and for the most part they are either ignored or treated with half-amused condescension ...<sup>62</sup>

Much to the disappointment of fans and band members alike, **Wild Youth** disbanded in mid-1980. According to information gathered from interviews and readings, they disbanded out of frustration and disillusionment over the local music industry, which had never paid any attention to the band. This reason seems fairly ironic for a punk band, whose very existence opposed the mainstream music industry, and whose songs blatantly attacked it.

When **Wild Youth #2** disbanded, the musicians went on to form other punk bands. As can be seen from Figure 1, Johnny Teen joined up with Eugene Strange and 'The Pope' to form the **Gay Marines**, (mid-1981) while Skid Soles formed **Le Metro Tois** with Mark Gidroy and Ralph Schneider. Rubin Rose, however, went on to form the **Anti-Heroes** (March 1981) with Mick Spick and Steve Arrows. Thus, the three members of **Wild Youth #2** were important in the dissemination of punk music throughout the city. The **Dead Babies #1** (named after an Alice Cooper song) was another important punk rock band which was formed while **Wild Youth #2** was still

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<sup>62</sup> A. Jackson, 'Wild Youth Epitomise the Raw Power of Punk', The Star, 17th of May 1980.

performing. All of these bands played an originals-only repertoire, in keeping with the punk ethic.

Besides **Wild Youth**, none of the punk bands mentioned above made any formal recordings of any sort. Live recordings of their concerts, however, were made and these were kindly made available to me by Ernesto Marques. They are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

#### All-Women Punk Bands in Durban

An important development during the punk era in Durban was the formation of three all-women punk bands. This is particularly interesting when it is considered that women had not featured in Durban (or South African) rock bands up until the punk rock movement in the late 1970s. The reasons for the sudden participation of women on the rock music scene are not easily discernible, but can be suggested with a certain degree of conviction.

Until the late 1970s, Dawn Selby was the only woman who had made any substantial impact on the Durban rock scene. She did this in her key role as keyboardist, vocalist and composer for **The Third Eye**. Women were, however, plentiful on the folk scene since its acoustic character somehow made it more of an acceptable 'feminine' art form.<sup>63</sup> Whether women were consciously excluded by men from the Durban rock scene is debatable; the men musicians I interviewed felt that women were discouraged by societal norms rather than the men themselves. The women I interviewed felt excluded from the rock scene by their lack of confidence and by the scantiness of their knowledge pertaining to electronically-mediated sound, as well as by the societal norms which taught that it was acceptable for women to be involved in classical or folk musics, but not rock music which had immoral and/or sexual connotations.

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<sup>63</sup> Edi Niederlander was one such women making waves on the folk music scene in the time period under discussion.

Thus, for women to become involved in the punk rock scene, was highly significant. At the same time, the punk ethic encouraged individual expression and did not demand a high level of musical technique. This, perhaps, was the break that women had waited for, and they enthusiastically picked up instruments and learnt the few chords and drum patterns necessary to play a punk song. Interestingly enough, the women involved in the punk bands were invariably the sisters and friends of the male punk musicians. They therefore had access to the equipment and the know-how necessary to start a band. All-women punk bands seemed to be dependent on the male punk bands to get started, and to get onto the bill at concerts. Once established, however, the bands became recognised in their own right, and some even recorded their own songs and were highly acclaimed by critics from time to time.

#### Peach (see Figure 11, p. 91)

Although **Peach** included one male member, and was not strictly a punk band, they were probably the inspiration for the formation of all-women bands in Durban. **Peach** was formed in 1978, with the help of Allen Rosenburg and Neil Cloud (of **Rabbitt**), and although they spent much time in Johannesburg, Durban was their hometown.

The band originally comprised Angie Hazimarcu, Tini Borsis, Penny Borsis, Carol Wood-Greene, Mo Eigermann and Allen Rosenburg. When Mo Eigermann left the band in July 1979, she was replaced by Val Kemm who left soon afterwards. The band was enormously successful, and were so popular in Durban that they were engaged as support act to the **Bay City Rollers** who undertook a tour of South Africa in December 1979 - January 1980. In 1980, they were signed up by EMI, and recorded their debut single 'A Lot of Things'. The single reached the top of the local charts, and led to the recording of another single ('Nightmare'), and an album (On Loan For Evolution) in 1981. Angie Hazimarcu (then known as Angie Peach) became one of South Africa's top female vocalists,

while Allen Rosenberg wrote most of the songs Peach performed.<sup>64</sup>

**Leopard** (see Figure 12, p. 92)

**Leopard** can be described as South Africa's first all female punk band. Formed in June 1979, **Leopard** comprised Marion (Moron) Kunst (vocals), Linda (Leopard) McGregor (guitar and vocals), Suzanne (Suzie Sucker) Rosser (vocals), Blanch O'Reilly (rhythm guitar), Sharlene (Sick) Whitely (bass) and Debbie (Dangerous) Bell (drums). The women were young (late teens and early twenties) when they formed the band, and their reasons for forming it were explained by Suzie Sucker:

We've been into punk since it first turned up in Durban ... Then about six weeks ago we thought, why leave it to the guys? After all Linda's -- I mean Leopard's -- from a musical family and she's been playing guitar for ages ... And Debbie's been drumming for nearly 10 years ... and Sharlene -- well she's been playing for only 8 hours, but she's been into keyboards for 12 years ... As for Moron and me, well we just sing, so that's nothing hard...<sup>65</sup>

A review of their first performance revealed some of the details of their early style:

The music made by Durban's and probably South Africa's, first all-female punk group, is very loud. It's very distorted. And it's very exciting in an irritating kind of way. **Leopard**'s audience -- they take their name from their lead player -- responds accordingly, leaping about in what could be pain, but is a pogo...<sup>66</sup>

By August of 1979, **Leopard**'s act had improved considerably, and they had written three songs ('Boys and Bitches',

<sup>64</sup> G. Chilvers & T. Jasiukowicz, History of Contemporary Music of South Africa, 1994, p. 98.

<sup>65</sup> 'Women's Weekly', The Natal Mercury, 14th of June 1979.

<sup>66</sup> 'Women's Weekly', The Natal Mercury, 14th of June 1979.

'Underestimator', and 'Can't Go On') which they regularly performed. 'Underestimator' and 'Boys and Bitches' were in fact included on the punk compilation album, Six of the Best recorded in 1979 (refer to cassette, Ex. 11). In January of 1980, Leopard seemed to lose their momentum, and disbanded after existing a mere six months. In the short time that they were together, Leopard made a significant impact on the Durban punk scene in that they were the inspiration for the next all-female band to form in Durban, The Nubiles.

### The Nubiles

**The Nubiles** formed in November 1981 and comprised Sandra Wheatley (vocals), Sharon Kelly (guitar), Karen Lange (Midge) (bass) and Michelle Wheatley (drums). Early on in the band's development, Karen Lange left the band, and was replaced by Kerry Marshall (bass). The girls were all ex-Danville Girls' High pupils.

Although **The Nubiles** did not make any formal recordings, I chose to include a brief history of their development since it is extremely pertinent to gender issues with regard to rock music in Durban. I found many newspaper articles documenting their progress which threw light onto the ways in which women are regarded in rock and its performance. I therefore felt I could not ignore this information.

According to their publicity statement, **The Nubiles** were 'just good, clean, sweet little girls'<sup>67</sup>, and their choice of name was tongue-in-cheek rather than a serious sexual statement. Nevertheless, the name and line-up of the band created a 'hype' which newspaper reporters could not ignore, and **The Nubiles** soon found themselves the focus of much attention.

The group made some initial observations about the demeanour expected of women rock musicians during their first press

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<sup>67</sup> B. Suter, 'Town and Around', The Natal Mercury, 13th of November 1981.

interview:

We have to be careful - we can't swear for example. If guys swear then it is punk bravado. If we swear, we're branded as cheap. This is a weird contradiction.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, it appears that even in the supposedly liberated punk scene, women punk musicians were subjected to different criteria from the men. The fact that their popularity derived as much from their looks as from their music (if not more) also says much about the way in which audiences and the press engage with female performers. It seems that their sexuality could never be divorced from their music or their performance, and that they were still judged by the same conservative standards, even though they had broken out of their restrictive moulds:

They're young, pretty and nubile - and destined to rock their way into the hearts of thousands. Well with a name like **The Nubiles**, an all-girl band with some of the prettiest ladies in town are sure to be a hit one way or another. The latest in the line of girl groups - most of which surprisingly enough to have come from Durban - **The Nubiles** made their debut last weekend at a steamy music concert at the Durban MOTH hall. And came away happy and chuffed with the positive audience response. The fact that it was a first public performance for three of the four girls made it even more heartwarming for them. (How much of it was due to the very attractive visual factor and how much was due to appreciation of the musical capabilities remains to be seen -but they did have the boys whistling and calling for an encore as they stepped off the stage.) They spoke - shyly at first - of their ambition to 'prove women can do things as well as men.' 'We know that we are going to make it further because of our looks because we are girls, but we will have to prove it is the music as much as the image...'<sup>69</sup>

**The Nubiles** performed mostly their own compositions, and were still on the punk scene in 1983 when they were warmly received at an open air concert in Durban. They also performed at the

<sup>68</sup> B. Suter, 'Town and Around', The Natal Mercury, 13th of November 1981.

<sup>69</sup> Sunday Tribune reporter, 29th of November, 1981, p. 49.

Durban Rag concert in early 1984 but disbanded soon thereafter, bringing to an end the era of all-female rock bands in Durban.

### Hard Core Punk 1983-1987

The natural musical progression from punk was to hard core punk, (a faster, more aggressive version of punk) and this shift happened very clearly in Durban from late 1983 onwards. Rubin Rose was the man largely responsible for the development of hard core punk in Durban. His band, **Powerage** was the most influential hard core punk band in Durban, and the band stayed together for a period of seven years, albeit with fluctuating personnel. Hard core punk sped up the elements of punk even more,<sup>70</sup> and the lyrics of hard core punk songs tended to attack the South African government in a more blatant way than those of punk songs. This was probably due to the fact that blatant resistance to Apartheid had intensified through the early 1980s, and was firmly entrenched in the minds of the radical hard core punk performers. Furthermore, punk in South Africa had over the previous four years begun to settle into a distinguishably South African sound, and musicians seemed to feel more confident in the genre. Punk musicians no longer looked to overseas trends for topics for their songs as they had in the early days of punk in South Africa, but rather formalised their experiences under the apartheid system into songs which were relevant to the South African situation. Thus a far more mature style of punk emerged, which decried the immature posturing and blatant imitation of the early punk days.

#### **Powerage (see Figure 13, p. 93)**

As has been mentioned, Rubin Rose and Powerage were important for the development of a hard core punk sound in Durban. After **Wild Youth** disbanded, Rose formed **Anti-Heroes** (as discussed above), but soon felt frustrated with the 'mellow' sound of the band. He

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<sup>70</sup> The elements I refer to here are rhythm, melody, harmony and lyrics.

therefore formed another more aggressive punk band, called **Warspike**. From there, he was asked to join the Rattray brothers (Brett and Lance) in **Powerage** (1982), which he did. **Powerage** was the premier hard core punk band in South Africa , although South African audiences and record companies never seemed to appreciate this fact <sup>71</sup>. When the band released their debut single in May 1983 ('World War Three' and 'Vengeance of Youth'), they did so on a shoestring budget, having chosen to record, market and distribute the product on their own. Only one hundred copies were pressed, and a large percentage of these copies were sent abroad to Britain, The United States of America and Europe.

The success of this single was such that the two songs on it were included on a punk compilation tape produced by an independent British record company, entitled Grievous Musical Harm.<sup>72</sup> **Powerage** was the only South African band featured on the compilation.

In 1985, **Powerage** released another self-produced recording entitled Who Are You. Who Are You featured live as well as studio recordings, and amounts to an extensive record of their early performances and original material. Other recordings released by **Powerage** included 'Stop Apartheid' (1985), 'The Last Dove' (1987) and 'World Today' (1987) (cassette, Ex. 12). Other recordings of the band's live performances in Durban in 1987 were also kindly made available to me by Ernesto Marques.

The band's image of violence (communicated through their aggressive performance style, and their angry, cynical lyrics) was intentional, although they did not support a violent overthrowing of the apartheid state. Rather, this image of

<sup>71</sup> This has been stated by various newspaper articles and interviewees throughout the process of my research. Furthermore, **Powerage** had a large following in Europe and the college circuits in the United States. The band also made numerous recordings. Thus, I have ventured to suggest that they were the premier hard-core punk band in South Africa.

<sup>72</sup> **Powerage**, 'Vengeance of Youth' Grievous Musical Harm, Xcentric Noise n.d.

violence was designed as a shock tactic to make audiences aware of the inherent violence of South African society in the 1980s, and to protest against this violence:

Our music is violent and aimed at a violent society. We perform songs with a message of reality. We are hardcore punks and tell it like it is. The media wants us crushed, because they don't want to hear our message and believe in it.<sup>73</sup>

That the members of the band were dedicated to the struggle against apartheid is undebatable. With this dedication, however, came the inevitable security force intervention in the lives of the band members, to the point that the police regularly went through Brett Rattray's mail and searched his flat. Surprisingly enough, none of their material was banned, although the realisation that they were being watched was disconcerting.<sup>74</sup> So disconcerting, in fact that Rose (who worked as a clerk at Portnet - a government institution) left the band in the mid-1980s for fear of losing his job.

Thanks to Rose's diligence in mailing demos and corresponding with punk enthusiasts abroad, as well as their anti-apartheid stance, Powerage had developed a large following in European countries such as Denmark, France and Sweden. The band was also popular on college radio channels in America. Unfortunately, Powerage never managed to find the money to tour to these countries, and the band disbanded in 1987 after an argument relating to the possibility of such a tour.

The band members went their own way; Lance Rattray formed Tribes of the Second Son, while Brett Rattray formed Separate Eye but left for Australia soon afterwards. Since the demise of Powerage,

<sup>73</sup> Powerage band member, as quoted by B. Suter, The Natal Mercury, May 1983.

<sup>74</sup> This information stems from an interview held with Lance Rattray on the 23rd of June, 1994. His brother, Brett became so disillusioned with the increasing oppression of South African life in the late 1980s, that he emigrated to Australia.

Rubin Rose has played in a local death metal band, **No Mercy**, the first death metal band in South Africa. Thus Rubin Rose has been a pivotal protagonist in new rock trends in this country, and still takes great interest in the development of local punk and metal music.

### **Stiff Fix**

Another important hard core punk band was **Stiff Fix**. **Stiff Fix** comprised Brian Baney (bass and vocals), Mark Ferris (guitar and vocals) and Borris Skin (drums). The band recorded a cassette in May 1985, which comprised both live and studio recordings. In keeping with their hard core punk image, **Stiff Fix** also addressed the weaknesses in South African society, with songs like 'I'm Not Taking This' and 'Hospital Case' (cassette, Ex. 13). **Stiff Fix** played mainly to local Durban audiences and appeared on the same bills as **Powerage**, as well as other lesser known hard core punk bands (e.g. **Mi5**, **The Resistance**, **Lester's Feeling Billious**, and **Squadron**). All these bands wrote and performed their own material rather than play cover versions.

### **Mainstream Durban Rock Bands 1979-1985**

While punk rock and hard core punk rock bands flourished in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of fairly influential 'mainstream rock' bands were formed in Durban. These bands enjoyed great popularity and received a great deal of attention from the local press. The following discussion traces the history of these bands and their core members.

#### **The Usuals (see Figure 14, p. 94)**

The Ellis brothers constituted the core of **The Usuals**, a Durban band formed in December, 1980. According to Richard Ellis<sup>75</sup>, **The**

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<sup>75</sup> Interview conducted with Richard Ellis on the 6th of October, 1994.

**The Usuals** played mainly reggae and ska music from the beginning, and their recordings certainly reflect this interest. Their interest in percussion and exploration of rhythm is also evident, with band members playing a variety of percussion instruments including timbales, congas, cowbells, woodblocks, shakers and triangles. The band originally comprised Richard Ellis (lead guitar), Graham Ellis (guitar), Paul Ellis (drums), Joe Bozza (bass) and Jimmy Cordier (percussion). In the early stages of their career, Joe Bozza was replaced by Keith Harwood on bass guitar, while Richard Pullon (keyboards), Debbie Bell (ex-Leopard, drums), Owen Taverner-Smith (bass), Mike Ellis (guitar) and Robin Mathieu (drums) were guest artists on their album. **The Usuals** recorded both a single ('Rules and Regulations' with 'Cuts and Bruises' on the flipside) and an album entitled Law of the Jungle in 1982 <sup>76</sup>. These recordings reflect a wide variety of popular music styles:

We have a wide taste in music, drawing influences from Jamaica, the Caribbean, Latin America, England, African township music and American jazz. We do a lot of reggae, ska, rock - even funk ... we believe that reggae should be played sincerely, not just ripped off because it's gaining popularity. We hate commercial, watered down tourist 'pap' that gets passed off as reggae.<sup>77</sup> (Refer to cassette, Ex. 14).

**The Usuals** were tremendously successful in Durban, and also undertook tours to Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg. The band received airplay on local radio stations, such as Radio 5, Capital Radio, Swazi Radio and Radio Port Natal. The **Usuals** were also popular abroad, and were played on the college circuit in America, Italy, Canada and New Zealand. Unfortunately, however, the band members never saw any financial benefits from their efforts, and like many local South African bands, soon became disillusioned.

During the two years that **The Usuals** were together, however, they

<sup>76</sup> Both recordings were made on the Southern Front label.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted by B.Suter, The Natal Mercury, February 1981.

achieved much in the way of local success and received considerable attention from the press and the public. In 1981, they won the Durban Battle of the Bands<sup>78</sup> competition, which had included a number of elimination rounds before the final competition.

Although, I have included **The Usuals** as a 'mainstream rock' band, this does not mean that they were commercial to the extent that they only played cover versions in popular venues, nor does it imply that they were not experimental (in fact, they were very experimental). To the contrary, **The Usuals** performed many of their own songs, and preferred to organise their own concerts and events much like the punk bands. The label, 'mainstream' is simply used to differentiate between punk bands and those which appealed to a less aggressive taste in rock music. At times, **The Usuals** even shared the bill with new wave and punk bands, and although the punk audiences did not relate to their brand of reggae-rock, they still enjoyed success at these concerts:

[**The Usuals**] provide a sharp contrast to the rantings of **Powerage** and their ilk earlier on. They calm the dancing down as their smart fans replace the hordes that makes the dance floor a total no-go zone. By the fifth or sixth song, the hall is full of clean-cut **Usuals**. The skinheads move out of the Club, and **The Usuals** play on...<sup>79</sup>

**The Usuals** also attempted to address the unjust socio-political circumstances in South Africa at the time. They experienced rejection from record companies when they refused to alter lyrics which could indict them as liberals or political activists, and, according to Richard Ellis, regularly 'jammed' with non-white musicians during practice sessions. Their multi-cultural approach

<sup>78</sup> The Durban Battle of the Bands competition was held annually, and comprised a competition between local bands. Rounds were held over a number of months during which less-successful bands were eliminated. The final always took place in the City Hall, and the winning band usually received a substantial reward in the form of money or recording contract(s).

<sup>79</sup> S. Davis; review of a concert at the Durban Jewish Club held on October 3rd, 1981, Newspaper unknown. Article obtained from Richard Ellis' Scrapbook. Other bands who played at this gig included **Mi5**, **The Resistance**, **Powerage**, and **Gay Marines**.

to music was highly unusual in the culturally separatist apartheid South Africa in the early 1980s. In fact, their approach to music was exactly what apartheid policy had hoped to discourage. As has been mentioned, their compositions drew from a wide variety of musical cultures different from their own, and combined them into a unique, yet accessible style of rock. Thus the band appealed to a cross-section of people, and tended to attract audiences of all races.

This challenged apartheid ideology which promoted separate development and separate cultural spheres by providing a musical space in which different cultures could mingle and create something new. Richard Ellis had the following to say about their role and their music:

'We hope to get a cross-section of the people -- our music has a cross-over potential. It's different, unique. ... It's our interpretation of reggae rhythm using an African influence ... It is a white kind of reggae with a black township feeling.' After all, as Richard maintains, it is impossible as a South African 'not to become subconsciously influenced by the black man with his portable radio, dancing and singing.' ... As writer of all the material on the about-to-be-born album and their single, Richard admits as well to a Latin American and Third World influence.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, The Usuals managed to create a musically exciting and politically challenging brand of rock, which nevertheless remained popular throughout their existence as a band.

### **The Streetrockers**

This popular Durban band was formed in 1983 by the Meiring brothers, and comprised Gavin Meiring (now a well-known radio announcer for East Coast Radio) on vocals, Errol Hickman (guitar and keyboards), Mike Meiring (guitar), Robert Meiring (bass) and Tobi Kardordo (drums).

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<sup>80</sup> S. Robertson, Sunday Tribune, 8th of November, 1981.

The Streetrockers played a commercial and accessible (otherwise known as 'Middle-of-the Road') brand of rock, and were firm favourites with Durban audiences. Their climb to relative local success was spurred by their exposure as support act for British pop star, David Essex at his concert in Durban. They also won two Battle of the Bands competitions in Durban in the early 1980s, and recorded their single 'Going to War' in March 1985.

#### The Platform for Rock Music in the 1980s: Concerts and Music Festivals.

In the early 1980s a move towards a 'mass' concept for concerts may be discerned. This trend differed greatly from the small and intimate, self-organised concerts of the punk era, and signified a mobilisation of Durban musicians into some form of organised protest which went beyond an individual one.

The Durban campus of the University of Natal was usually the centre for such events, although at the University of the Witwatersrand similar events were organised to which Durban bands and musicians were invited. This era of musical mobilisation had a distinct political motivation and mirrored the growing mass protests against the apartheid state which occurred from the early 1980s onwards.

These concerts also differed from those of the past in that a greater spectrum of South African musicians were invited to take part, including bands which played ethnic-rock, jazz-rock and folk-rock. Thus, the era of music festivals brought musicians of all interests together with a common cause, a development which was interpreted as a threat by the authorities.

In May 1983, an open air Academic Freedom concert was held on the Durban campus of the Natal University to protest against the government's university quota bill which forced university authorities to base student admissions on a racial instead of

academic foundation. The concert was stopped halfway through the programme when about forty policemen ordered the crowd to disperse, because the gathering was illegal in terms of the Internal Security Act. In fact, the concert organisers had applied for a permit, which was refused by the Durban chief magistrate. The refusal had arrived too late for the event to be cancelled, and the organisers had gone ahead in the hopes that the authorities would turn a blind eye.

A second Academic Freedom Concert was scheduled for June, and the necessary permit was obtained. Unfortunately, the concert was rained out, and the organisers could not afford to hold another such event since their finances were depleted.

A more successful music festival was held at Fun Valley (Transvaal) in September 1984, where about six thousand fans supported the concert which was geared to raise funds for an orphanage. The bands appearing at this festival included Juluka, Hotline, Isitimela, George Mathiba, Mike Makhalemela, Craze, Hot Soul Singers and Sophia Foster. Photographs of the festival reveal a racially mixed audience and mixed bands which, in terms of the apartheid laws, were highly illegal, since mixed audiences were not permitted to dance together<sup>81</sup>. Nor were mixed race groups allowed to perform on the stage together. The United Democratic Front also held a music festival at this venue in March 1984:

It may have been one of the greatest outdoor musical happenings to be staged at Fun Valley Pleasure Resort in a long time. But last Sunday's United Democratic Front People's Festival was also one of the best-organised political rallies ever - using some of the greatest musicians in the country to the UDF's message across to the masses. And with more than 50 000 fun-starved fans massed at the venue, UDF's message sure caught a lot of wandering souls flush in the face. And almost everybody went home regarding the UDF as God's

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<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, none of the photographs available were of a good quality, and therefore it has been impossible to reproduce them for illustration here.

greatest gift to song - the organisation that swept their differences into the spruit that flows south of Fun Valley.<sup>82</sup>

Punk and hard core punk bands continued to organise concerts, but did so on a larger scale. In some instances punk bands from Johannesburg would join with Durban bands for concerts. One such concert was held at the Natal University Student Union Hall in July 1984. Five Johannesburg bands and two relatively newly-formed local bands (Special Branch and Sanity Inspectors) performed.

Another series of defiance concerts, entitled Free People's Concerts took place in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town from 1971 -1987, with the exception of 1976 and 1977 when they were banned. These concerts were initiated by a dedicated Durbanite, David Marks, whose record and Publishing company, Third Ear, is well known for putting local artists on the map.

### Conclusion

Durban has been an important centre for the development of rock in South Africa. It was the birthplace of rock'n'roll, spawned some important progressive rock bands, and became the centre of the punk movement in South Africa. Durban also has the distinction of spawning the first all-women punk rock band in South Africa, as well as an important number of bands which drew on multi-cultural influences.

The reasons suggested for Durban's centrality in the development of rock are rooted in the strong influence of colonisation over Natal. Even once South Africa had been declared a republic, the majority of white Natalians still regarded England as their cultural and social base. Thus, the enthusiastic appropriation of rock in Durban and relentless imitation of British bands by local ones has been interpreted as a means of identifying with

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<sup>82</sup> S. Jacobs, City Press, 11th of March 1984.

Britain as a cultural source on the part of young English-speaking Natalians.

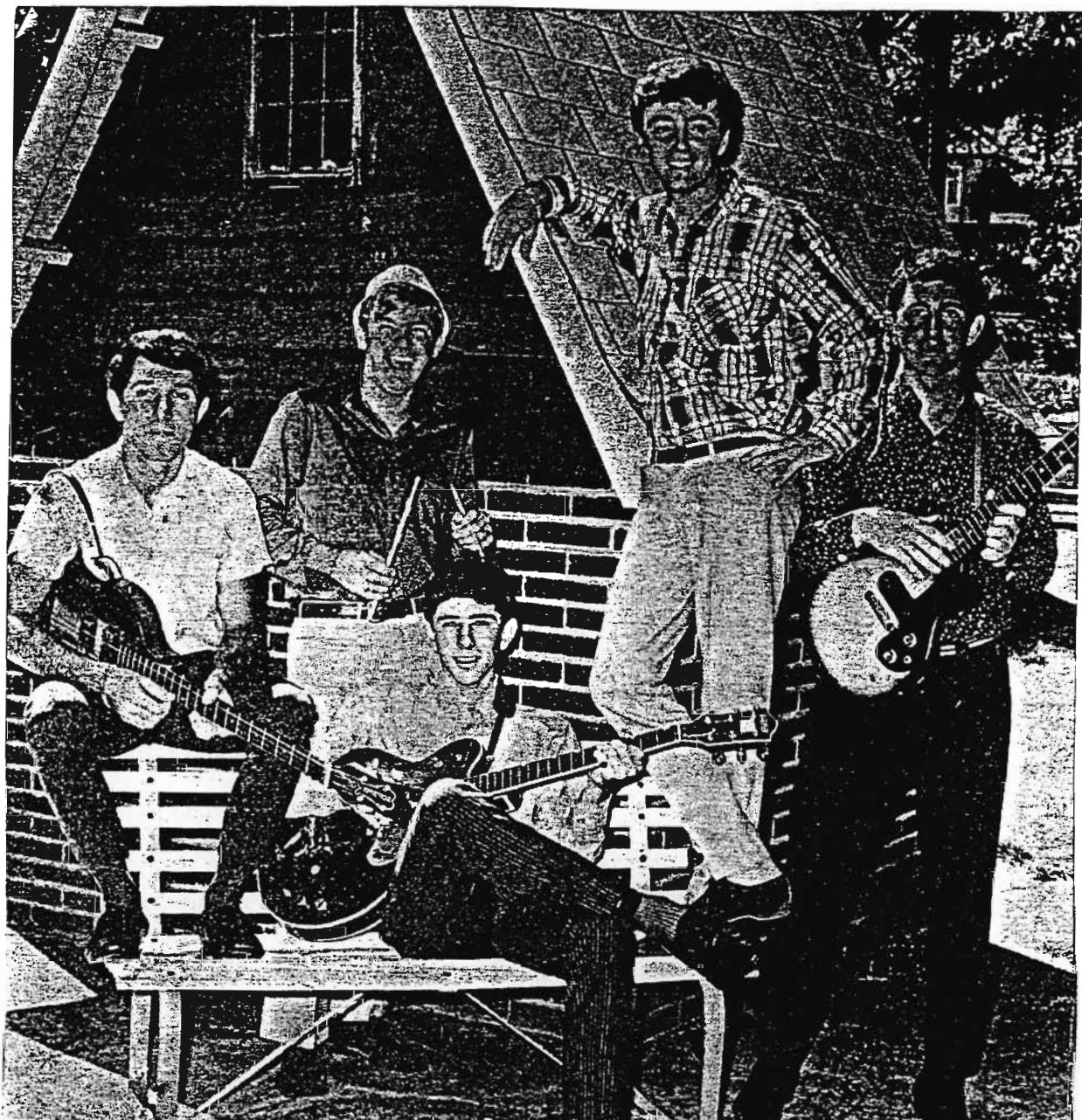
Durban's geographical location has also been cited as a possible reason for the flourishing rock scene in the city. Its function as a port has made it more susceptible to the influx of foreigners and their cultures, which in the 1950s and 1960s was fairly sizeable considering the fact that passenger liners were still a popular means of transport between continents. The fact that Durban is also situated far from the seat of conservative national government, and therefore has been perceived as a 'liberal' city has also been highlighted. This is not to say that liberalism necessarily gives birth to radical music, and it is true that conservative environments have been known to spawn protest music.<sup>83</sup> In this case, however, I believe that rock movements and subcultures (such as the hippy and punk subcultures) have taken root more easily in the city because of the reasons mentioned above.

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<sup>83</sup> For example, the city of Springs became the centre of Afrikaans Alternative music in the mid-1980s.

Figure 2.

### The Gonks



*From left to right:* Barrie Cline; Peter Gilder; Mervin Gershmanov;  
Craig Ross; Howard Schachat.

Figure 3.

### The Mods



*From left to right:* Robert Pavid; Trevor Turner, Hughie Mackrell; Mervin Gershanov; Alan Reid.

Figure 4.

### It's A Secret



*From left to right:* Dennis Robertson; Ron Selby; Dawn Selby;  
Graham Walker; Mike Sauer.

Figure 5.

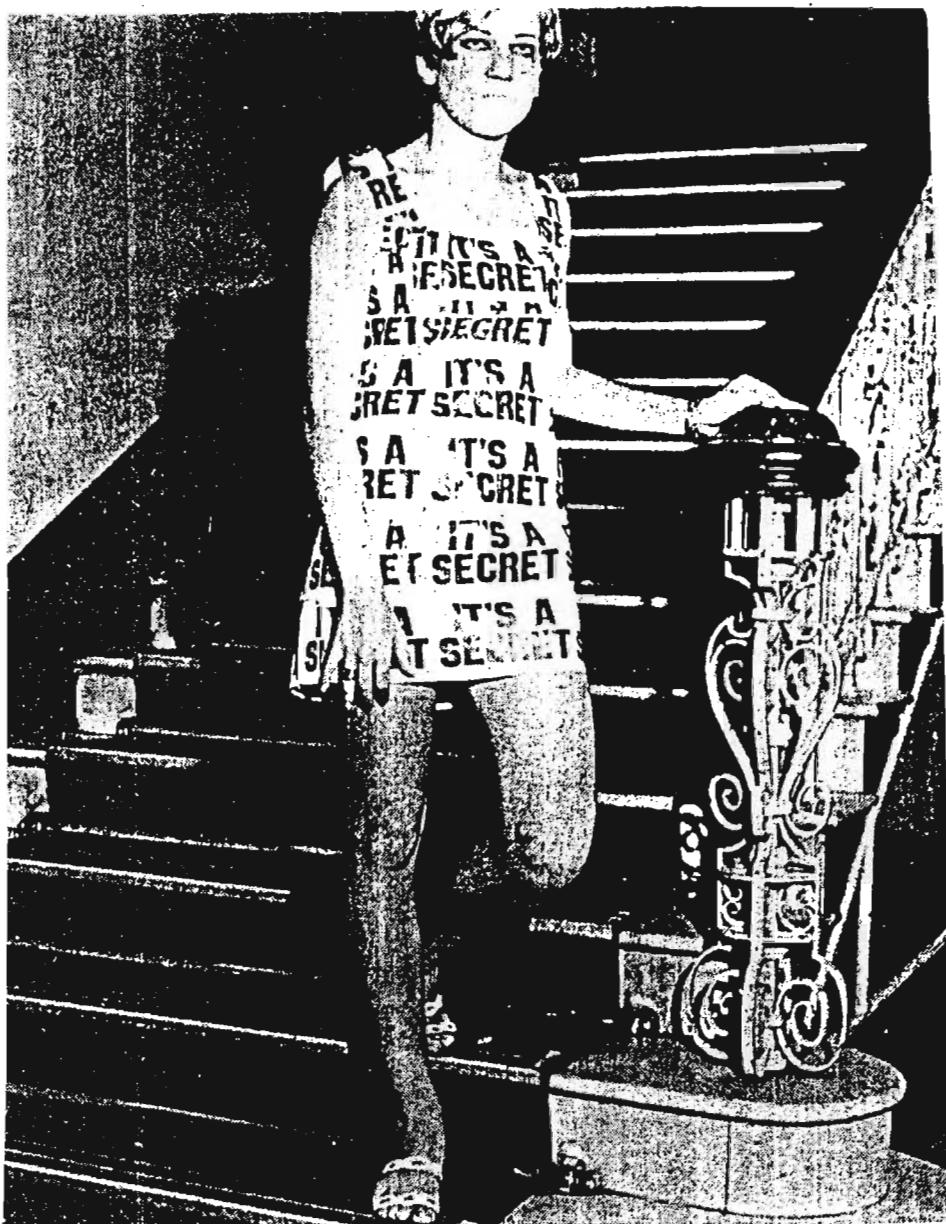
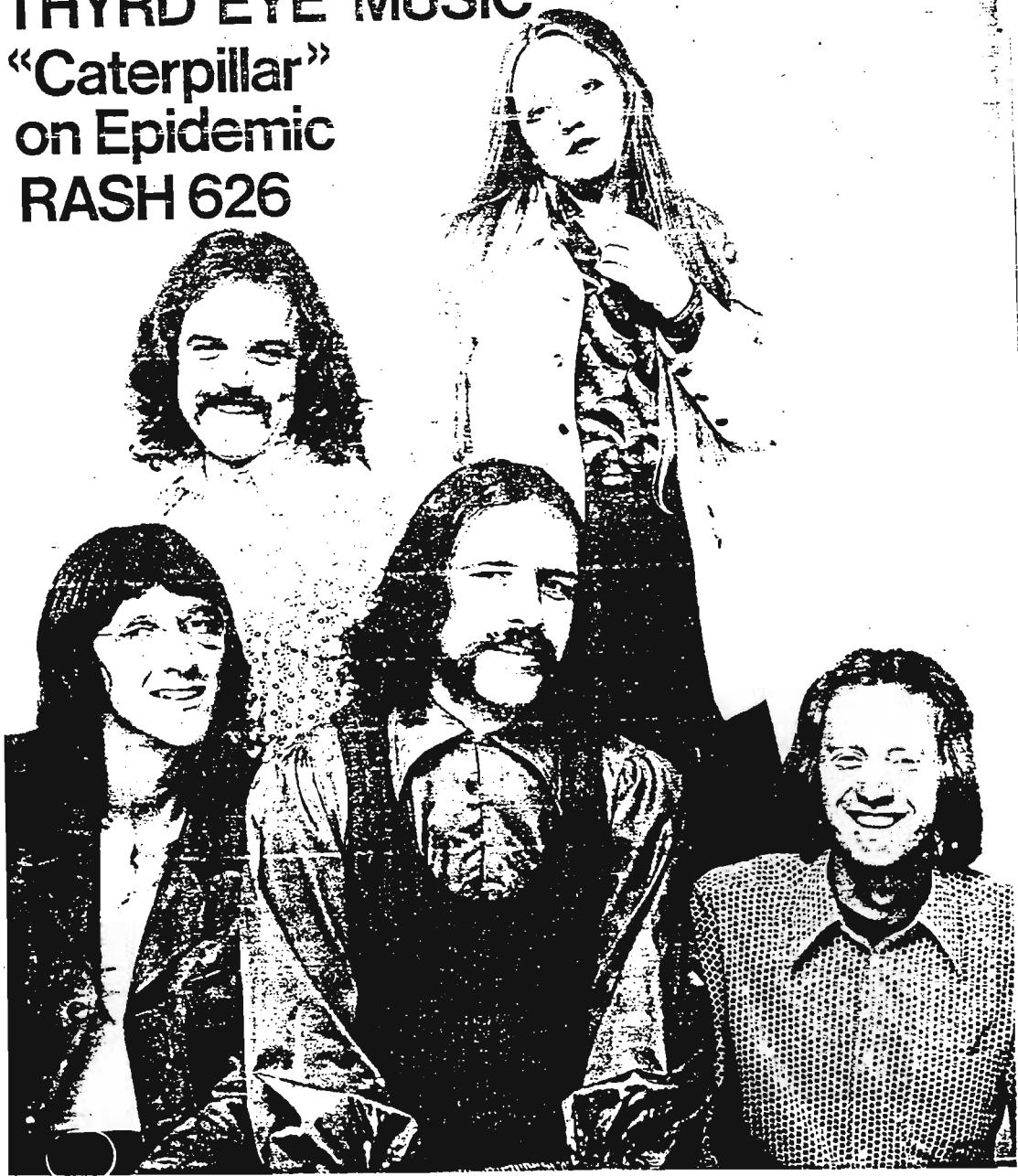
**Young Fan in a Paper Frock at a Pietermaritzburg Concert**

Figure 6.

The Third Eye

**THYRD EYE MUSIC**  
**“Caterpillar”**  
on Epidemic  
**RASH 626**



*From left to right: Maurice Saul; Robert Pavid; Mervin Gershmanov; Dawn Selby; Ron Selby.*

Figure 7.

### Abstract Truth



*From left to right:* Kenny Henson; Sean Bergin; Robert Pavid;  
Brian Gibson.

Figure 8 (please turn over).

**Crowd at Punk Concert in the University of Natal's Students Union Hall**

*Note:* One fan (possibly Syd Kitchen) has a Union Jack on the back of his jacket. This points to the loyalty felt by Durban crowds towards Britain



Figure 9.

### Wild Youth



*From left to right:* Johnny Teen (Mike Fleck); Rubin Rose; Skid Soles (Andrew Peinkie).

Figure 10.

### Wild Youth and Fans in Action



Figure 11.

Peach



*From left to right:* Angie Peach (Angie Hazimarcu); Tini Tims (Tini Borsis); Allen Rosenburg; Pennie Power (Penny Borsis); Carol Wood-Greene.

Figure 12.

Leopard

# Grrr! It's punk Leopard

**MEET**

**Sucker**      **Dangerous**      **Leopard**      **Sick**      **Moron**

**LEOPARD** leap onto the local punk scene for the first time tonight in concert with Wild Youth, Dead Babies and the Lasers. Venue is the Caxton Hall, Beach Grove; starting time, 8 p.m. The fearsome felines are, from left: Sucker (Suzanne Rosser), Dangerous (Debbie Bell), Leopard (Linda MacGregor), Sick (Sharlene Whiteley) and Moron (Marion Kunst).

*From left to right: Sucker (Suzanne Rosser); Dangerous (Debbie Bell); Leopard (Linda McGregor); Sick (Sharlene Whiteley) and Moron (Marion Kunst).*

Figure 13.

### Powerage



*From left to right:* Rubin Rose; Brett Rattray; Spike (Lance Rattray).

Figure 14.

### The Usuals



*From left to right:* Richard Pullon; Graham Ellis; Richard Ellis; Jimmy Cordier; Robin Mathieu; Keith Harwood.

## CHAPTER 3

### ROCK MUSIC IN DURBAN IN RELATION TO APARTHEID

#### Introduction

The entrenchment of apartheid in South African society had a profound effect on all aspects of life in South Africa. Together with the obvious physical and geographical separation of people, came an ideological and cultural separation. This separation affected the 'normal' development of rock music and produced a highly segmented rock music scene in Durban. By this I mean that rock music in Durban did not develop a particularly local sound, partly because rock musicians of different cultures could not easily come together to share ideas. Presumably, this would have happened on a larger scale if apartheid had not intervened so drastically in the lives of the musicians. The Separate Amenities Act made it particularly difficult for musicians of inter-racial bands. According to the Act, they could not eat in the same restaurants, they could not perform together, nor could they stay in the same hotels or play at the same functions.

It is also quite possible that had apartheid not interfered so drastically in the lives of people, black musicians would not have been avid rock supporters in the first instance. Other factors such as access to rock as a medium (such as through black radio stations), and preference of blacks for other musical styles (such as jazz) should also be considered. However, as verified by Steve Fataar, musicians from the coloured and Asian communities did show an interest in rock, and the segregation imposed by apartheid would certainly have been a stumbling block to playing in inter-racial bands. This is perhaps one reason for the lack of development of a truly local rock sound, and besides a few exceptions which are to be discussed, rock in Durban tended to imitate international trends.

By 1963, apartheid ideology had taken root and had become intrinsic to the South African existence<sup>1</sup>. While the State (largely comprised of the National Party under the leadership of Verwoerd) closed its grip on the country in an ever more suffocating manner, the effect of the resistance movement was beginning to be felt in every province.

Related to the enforcement of apartheid ideology was the militarisation of South African society. On a general scale, a growing degree of militarisation was experienced by South Africans from 1960-1990, with an escalation in the 1980s. The militarisation of white society manifested itself through the process of white male conscription. Conscription periods increased dramatically from three months in the 1960s to a compulsory service period of two years by the mid-1980s as the apartheid system fought to maintain its hold over the increasingly militant and incensed 'masses'. At the same time, black communities also experienced a greater degree of militarisation and violence as they armed themselves in a fierce and violent resistance movement especially in the latter years of apartheid. Thus, throughout the period under discussion, South African society became an increasingly violent one, with inter-racial and so-called 'black on black' violence being the focus of many encounters.

As early as 1960, the apartheid forces engaged in violent tactics most formidably demonstrated by the Sharpeville massacre. This sent shock waves throughout the country, and the ANC (in response to the violent tactics of the State) resolved to begin an organised defiance campaign involving mass boycotts and strikes on the eve of the proclamation of the Republic. This was met by large scale arrests of leaders and organisers, and the banning of the ANC and the Communist Party among others.

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<sup>1</sup> The historical information presented here was largely selected from Pamapallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1991, pp. 214-229.

The uncompromising degree of force applied against people during this peaceful protest provoked the ANC to consider alternative forms of protest. This led to their decision to take up the armed struggle in 1961. Once begun, this effort to counter State violence and sabotage apartheid structures, grew in strength and effectiveness. While the main vehicle for the armed struggle was Umkhonto we Sizwe<sup>2</sup>, the ANC also formed ties with other liberation movements such as FRELIMO of Mozambique, the MPLA of Angola and PAIGC of Guinea-Bissau. At a conference of ANC leaders held in Lobatse, Botswana in October 1962, the resolve to combine political mass action (in the form of protests and boycotts) with military action was officially agreed upon, and for the first time, the ANC publically linked itself with Umkhonto We Sizwe. Other liberation groups (such as Pogo and the PAC) were also involved in the armed struggle, while the South African Communist Party also played an important part in the resistance movement.

The growth of the resistance movements, their loud protests and the necessity for resistance leaders to go into exile, resulted in a widespread anti-apartheid consciousness worldwide. This boosted the international campaign against South African policies, and in Britain, the first of many Anti-Apartheid movements was established. In 1962, the United Nations General Assembly recommended economic and diplomatic sanctions against South Africa, and while most of South Africa's trading partners ignored this request, most newly independent countries refused to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa. Furthermore, economic relations with the rest of Africa remained much more limited than they would have been had it not been for the international campaign against South Africa. In December 1963, the United Nations General Assembly established the UN Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid to review the South African situation on a continual basis.

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<sup>2</sup> Umkhonto we Sizwe was the official resistance army formed to fight for liberation in South Africa. Recruits were trained outside the country in central and Southern African states, in Cuba and even in Russia, and then brought into South Africa to perform missions of sabotage against the apartheid State.

Thus, the South African regime came under tremendous pressure, on both the local and international fronts, and it was hoped that such pressure would force the State to capitulate and grant equal rights to all South Africans.

Unfortunately, this was not the case, and the regime fought back even harder by passing the General Laws Amendment Act on May 1st 1963. This law, otherwise known as the '90 Day Act' empowered the police to detain anybody without trial for a period of 90 days, and to renew the period at the end of those 90 days. Thus, in effect, the law provided for indefinite detention without trial. Hundreds of detentions followed, with detainees often being held in solitary confinement, tortured and interrogated with no legal counsel present. Many died in detention, while others mysteriously disappeared, never to return to their families.

This was one of many unfortunate blows for the liberation movement, and before long most of its leaders were in prison or under house arrest in a very effective effort to stamp out any form of resistance to the institutionalisation of apartheid.

Ironically, the serious setbacks inflicted on the resistance movement boosted the South African economy since foreign investors no longer feared an impending revolution. Big American companies (such as the mining company, Engelhard Corporation) invested large amounts of capital in South Africa, and thereby encouraged other investors to do the same. By 1965, foreign capital was once again flowing into South Africa where cheap black labour assured it of huge profits. Furthermore, during the post-Sharpeville crisis, Afrikaner monopoly capital grew. When foreign capital withdrew from South Africa immediately following Sharpeville, Afrikaner companies took advantage of the opportunity to buy cheaply and on a large scale in industries which were originally dominated by foreign or English-speaking South African investors (such as Gencor<sup>3</sup>). Thus the ties between

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<sup>3</sup> Gencor (General Mining Corporation) was sold cheaply by Anglo American Corporation after the Sharpeville massacre.

government and big business were firmly and conveniently cemented to create an Afrikaner economic and political monopoly in South Africa.

#### **Apartheid and Identity in Relation to White Rock Musicians**

White South Africans, both English and Afrikaans, found themselves in a privileged position. White teenagers in the 1960s grew up in a protected, conservative environment in which the separation of race groups was an accepted norm. In many cases, white teenagers who played in rock bands came from middle and upper-class homes<sup>4</sup> and never came into contact with teenagers of other races, since schools were also segregated. Thus, it is not surprising that they did not write songs which expressed socio-political opinions. A distinct depoliticisation in terms of what apartheid actually meant for all people in South Africa was the general experience of the white youth of Durban.

Although most white South Africans were oblivious of the atrocities occurring in black townships throughout the country at the hands of the South African Police and South African Defence Force, they were well-versed in the 'swart gevaar' (black danger) ideology. This ideology promoted by the government in the cause of racial prejudice and fear. This policy bred an inherent mistrust and fear of blacks in the minds of white South Africans, and went a long way in dividing South Africa along the lines that apartheid had construed. Another ideology distinctive to the Nationalists was the 'rooi gevaar' (the red/Communist danger), which fuelled fear of socialism and victimisation of organisations which favoured its principles.

Interviews conducted with white musicians who were performing in Durban's first rock bands revealed that many if not all of them were blissfully unaware of the violent political conflict taking

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<sup>4</sup> Rock musicians from this era grew up in the typical, privileged 'white' suburbs of Durban. e.g. Durban North; Westville; Hillcrest; Morningside; Pinetown.

place in townships surrounding the city.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, many of the early rock bands were playing covers rather than writing their own material, and therefore, little politically-conscious music was written. Instead, bands based their repertoire on the British charts and sought to emulate the British rock scene in every way possible.

Why was this the case? Why did the majority of rock bands in Durban ignore the political climate in which they found themselves? In some part, this was due to the successful censorship of the press and the physical separation of race groups (which prevented interaction).

Very few of the early white rock bands made little if any conscious attempt to address or confront the apartheid system through their music. (There are, of course, exceptions to this trend. Bands which did confront apartheid will be discussed later in the chapter). When asked whether this was a conscious decision, the general consensus of those interviewed was that their music was more a hobby at that stage.

Another possible explanation for the obsession with British trends by Durban youth has to do with a poor self-image. The emulation of the British scene could be an indication of the extent to which the white youth of Durban looked elsewhere for models with which to identify, rather than forging their own in the light of their existence in a newly formed Republic based on principles very different from Britain.

It could be ventured that the lack of a distinctive local identity was a consequence of the isolation young people in Durban felt. It should be remembered that Natalians voted against the republicanisation of South Africa in the 1960 referendum. Thus, with South Africa having recently become independent of

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<sup>5</sup> Craig Ross (**The Gonks**), Mervyn Gershonov (**The Mods**), Robbie Pavid (**The Mods**), Dawn Selby (**The Third Eye**) were some of the musicians who indicated that they had little or no knowledge of the violent and inhumane manner in which the apartheid State carried out their policies.

Britain, Durban youngsters strove even harder to maintain links with Britain, and what better way than identifying with a youth culture which emanated from Britain? Perhaps white musicians felt that looking too deeply into the South African political situation would have isolated them more, and would have emphasised the worldwide rejection of South Africa which was beginning to be felt in the mid-1960s, and brought to fruition by the United Nations cultural boycott in 1983. The quote from Kramer in Chapter One bears witness to the negativity and shame associated with being South African during the apartheid era, and supports my assertion that identifying with British (and at times American) models was perhaps a way of rejecting the stigma of being South African:

... A lot of us are trying to escape being identified with South Africa because South Africa has all sorts of connotations -- negative connotations -- ...<sup>6</sup>

This issue of identity is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.

#### **Discrimination Experienced by Musicians**

Although white rock musicians in Durban were not at the mercy of the discriminatory laws, they certainly were restricted to a large extent from exploring cross-cultural styles since creative interaction between race groups was neither encouraged nor made easy. Black rock musicians in Durban, however, were directly subject to discriminatory legislation, and found themselves in an increasingly restrictive environment. Non-white bands were not allowed to compete for popular music awards (e.g. The Sarie Awards), and their generally greater degree of impoverishment meant that it was even harder to make a living out of music than their white counterparts. Furthermore, most of the non-white bands did not have any access to recording facilities, which means that today, their forays into rock music are difficult to

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<sup>6</sup> Music Scene, April 1982.

assess.

As has been mentioned, Flame was one non-white South African rock band that became internationally successful. It was only when the band went to the United Kingdom, however, that it became recognised. This is a severe indictment on the South African music industry as well as the political regime, which through consistent repression made it necessary for creative talents to leave the country in order to make a living.

#### **Rock Music in Durban and its Relation to Socio-Political Events: 1964 – 1972**

In the early years of rock in Durban rock musicians considered their image as rock musicians and, in fact, their socio-political stance to be linked to their perception of themselves as either 'commercial' or 'progressive'.

Typically, a commercial rock band (white or black) made little or no conscious effort to address socio-political issues, since its main emphasis was on playing hit-parade material, and providing entertainment for the ever-growing crowd of local teenagers who supported rock music. Many of these commercial bands were extremely popular, and some even received support from the local music industry. It has been mentioned that most of the musicians I interviewed who belonged to bands which considered themselves 'commercial' admitted that they had been vaguely aware of the extent to which apartheid violated human rights, but that they chose not to engage in a discourse of confrontation with the system.

The reasons for this choice have not been clearly articulated by any of my interviewees. However, a number of possibilities can be derived from statements made by interviewees when asked about their socio-political stance and its link to their music.

The most common response to a question regarding the socio-

political context of a musician's brand of music was that of the importance of pleasure. By this I mean that many musicians felt that their task as a musician was to provide good quality entertainment rather than prick the conscience of their listeners. The hedonistic approach to music making provides many of the clues to understanding local rock music in the period 1964 - 1972 as well as the popularity of the commercial bands of this era.

Attending 'sessions' was a new and exciting trend for Durban teenagers in the 1960s and was an integral part of the Durban rock experience in the 1960s and early 1970s. Although going out to enjoy oneself is not foreign today by any means, I propose that the newness of the rock'n'roll event and the accompanying excitement of local youngsters made it all the more imperative that bands played to entertain.

Although 1964 - 1972 was a period of sustained economic growth for South Africa, it was also one of extreme political oppression, with three million black South Africans being forcibly removed from their residences, and placed in bantustans.<sup>7</sup> These removals were carried out inhumanely and with no thought for the health, education and recreation needs of the people in the bantustans. Coloureds and Indians were a little better off, and were 'represented' by the Coloured Persons' Representative Council (CRC) and the South African Indian Council. In actual fact, neither of these bodies had much authority, and they were still at the mercy of government decisions. The resistance movement was largely on the defensive since most of its leaders were imprisoned, banned or had gone into exile, and the responsibility of leading the movement now fell on leaders on the outside.

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<sup>7</sup> The historical information presented here was selected from Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, pp. 231-287. Bantustans were self-governing homelands allocated to Blacks as part of the apartheid scheme of separating racial groups.

The South African government increased the number of days for detention without trial to 180 days which could then be renewed, and the 1967 Terrorism Act provided for detention of people who committed the rather broad range of activities the State defined as terrorism. This ranged from participating in the armed struggle, to embarrassing the State! The maximum penalty for terrorism was death. The Bureau of State Security (BOSS), an intelligence agency accountable only to the Prime Minister, was also formed. BOSS became a powerful structure which gathered information and infiltrated organisations opposed to the regime. South African military spending increased considerably, and compulsory conscription for military service was introduced for all young white males<sup>8</sup>.

Perhaps the rock'n'roll event swept aside the grim realities of the South African political situation for a few years, as youngsters indulged themselves in a musical and social culture which had room for little other than pleasure. On the other hand, as suggested, the rock'n'roll event provided the perfect opportunity for South African youngsters to identify with a culture other than their own, an 'overseas' phenomenon which by their participation in it, allowed them to shrug off their shameful South African identity in exchange for an internationally acceptable one. It could also be ventured that young rock musicians in South Africa felt that they had little ability to affect change when facing the enormity of the apartheid structure.

The formation by The Gonks of their own fan club bore testimony to their overwhelming popularity, yet also indicates a conscious effort to imitate the international rock trend which saw popular bands forming fan clubs. This trend is indicative of the hype and commerciality which surrounded the popular international bands, and it is interesting that a local band went as far as this in

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<sup>8</sup> Before 1967 white males had been summoned for military service through a ballot system, but the new system was very strict in enforcing compulsory service.

seeking to identify with a translocal culture. Furthermore, the fact that the fan club had a membership of over 1500 Durban youngsters indicates the extent to which local youngsters felt it necessary to become part of an international youth culture rather than find a locally specific identity.

### Progressive Durban Bands

Exceptions to this rather general trend of imitating the international scene and of failing to make socio-political commentary did exist on the Durban rock scene. These occurred in the form of bands who were viewed as 'progressive' in the late 1960s. At least two progressive rock bands began to gain popularity in Durban. These were **The Third Eye** (initially **It's A Secret**) and **Abstract Truth**. Johannesburg's **Freedom's Children** often played in Durban, and also boasted a dedicated Durban following. These bands placed much importance on playing original music and were making a conscious effort to create an original sound. They were also interested in more than entertainment, and were the first South African rock bands to write songs with socio-political lyrics. All of the progressive bands mentioned above also showed a greater amount of musical experimentation than those bands which were labelled as commercial. The music itself began to be seen as more important than the social occasion which sustained the music. Another label associated with these bands was that of 'Head Music' which, simply translated, referred to music with a message.

### Abstract Truth

A newspaper interview with Kenny Henson of **Abstract Truth** reveals that the formation of the progressive bands was seen as an important step forward for South African rock music:

Well I believe that music in South Africa is progressing ... People are taking more notice of the music itself. Before it was a case of having a good time, meeting girls and dancing. If the crowd couldn't dance then the group was no good. But now this is

changing. We were lucky. We came in at the right time.<sup>9</sup>

**Abstract Truth's** first album, Totum received a glowing review, and it was congratulated for lifting 'South African pop from the syrupy blare of bubblegum music to new heights of progressive pop'.<sup>10</sup> What is interesting is that neither **The Third Eye**, nor **Abstract Truth** made an attempt to comment specifically on the South African political situation through their lyrics. Instead, their music deals with broader human rights issues which apply to all nations in general. If one looks deeper, however, it is possible to find an ideological battle against apartheid being declared through the musical vocabulary employed.

#### **Abstract Truth's** album, Totum

Totum was recorded in 1970 and was named after the club in which **Abstract Truth** first played. The album only contains one original song ('Total Totum Acid Raga'), the rest being creatively-interpreted cover versions of songs which were popular for their acoustic, folksy properties (e.g. 'Scarborough Fair', and Dylan's 'Oxford Town'). As discussed above, this trend towards acoustic rock reached South Africa in the early 1970s; it was largely influenced by the growing popularity of acoustic-medium rock bands and duos like Simon and Garfunkel. Another influence very prominent on Totum is that of jazz and blues, and the performance of songs such as 'Coming Home' (by Tucker) and 'Take 5' (popularised by Dave Brubeck) are very much jazz inspired.

The perception that the use of Bongo drums evokes an African influence may be stereotypical, but **Abstract Truth** employed the formula on the album in an effort to realise what they considered a cross-cultural sound. On their original number they also experiment with Indian scales and sounds through the introduction of the sitar into the texture. Thus, **Abstract Truth** adopted a

<sup>9</sup> Article by C. Coleman Trend, 1970, exact date unknown.

<sup>10</sup> Trend review, 1970, exact date unknown.

multi-cultural approach to music making, an approach very foreign to the segregated South African audiences of the time. The large Indian population in Natal, with their own distinctive classical music genre was undoubtedly an inspiration for their adoption of the sitar. It could also be proposed that the introduction of the sitar was inspired by The Beatles whose later albums explored sounds outside the Western rock paradigm, including that of the sitar.

As has been mentioned, a progressive band in the late 1960s and 1970s performed music primarily for listening, and for communicating a message, rather than for dancing. Totum is very much a listening (as opposed to dancing) album in that although cover versions comprise the majority of the album, they are mostly folk-rock ballads which are experimentally performed. The large amount of instrumental music on the album also encourages careful listening. **Abstract Truth** recreate songs, they place their own stamp on them, and in so doing they make the songs their own. An example is a performance of Gershwin, du Bose and Heyward's 'Summertime', in which the flute is featured. Although the famous melody line is clearly articulated in the beginning, the band soon move into a rendition of the piece, in which the bongo drums create a quasi-Afro-Latin-American feel.

'Total Totum Acid Raga' (excerpt on cassette, Ex. 15), the only original piece on the album, is greatly influenced by the sounds of Indian classical music. 'Acid Raga' is a purely instrumental piece featuring Henson on the sitar in a long exploratory improvisation, with Pavid sustaining momentum on bongo drums throughout. Interesting interplay between flute and sitar is another feature of the piece which resembles a combination of Indian, rock and jazz ideas. The allusion to 'acid' in the title is also indicative of the trend towards producing music under the influence of drugs, a trend popularised by the renowned Woodstock event in 1969.

The multiculturalism portrayed by **Abstract Truth** is important

when one considers the extent to which the apartheid government tried to keep South Africans apart. In creating an alternative reality through their music, **Abstract Truth** did not need to be lyrically explicit to get their message across. It could be argued that this rather implicit protest against apartheid is more effective than an explicit approach which arrests attention so easily. Instead, a musically implicit protest tends to creep past the censors and is therefore more powerful and successful in its attempts to reach a wider audience. This is one way in which **Abstract Truth's** music could be construed as protesting against a particularly South African ideological construct.

### The Third Eye

Maurice Saul, of the **Third Eye**, was responsible for composing the tracks on the band's first album, Third Eye-Awakening (1969), as well as many of the tracks on the other two albums (Searching (1970) and Brother (1970)), and his original approach to composition, together with his attention to socio-political issues earned the band the reputation as the most 'progressive' band in Durban at the time. Saul's angry, impassioned style of music certainly challenged the status quo, and encouraged a more serious listenership than the dance-orientated commercial rock bands in Durban had done. The **Third Eye** is an important example of a local band that played original and thought-provoking songs and remained popular. Even when Saul left the band in 1971, and the band began playing some of Dawn Selby's compositions The **Third Eye** maintained its position as Durban's premier original 'progressive' band.

As an example of Saul's attention to socio-political issues, I would like to discuss the song 'Awakening' from **Third Eye's** second album, entitled Searching (refer to cassette Ex. 16). As a whole, the album is intensely pessimistic and cynical, even apocalyptic in nature. Saul explores issues such as war, human error, destruction and fear. 'Awakening' is essentially an epic poem which deals with the futility of war. It tells the story of

a soldier far from home who fantasises about returning to his wife and unborn child. The shift between the moods experienced by the narrator (soldier) is graphically portrayed through musical contrasts. A nostalgic, evocative atmosphere pervades the sections in which the soldier contemplates going home, while anguished, uncontrolled singing and playing portrays the sections about war and the futility thereof. The beginning of the song presents an anguished indictment of human nature. Thus, in some ways the song is highly stylised, even predictable, yet one cannot deny the powerful effect it has on the listener. Here are the lyrics of the song:

#### **Awakening:**

The mind of man is always suspicious  
 Someone is going to do him wrong  
 Someone is about to do him harm  
 It's because he is harmful, it is because he is not right  
 If you don't trust your fellow man it means you can never be trusted  
 If you do not believe in him, it means you cannot believe in yourself, no no no

For everything that is wrong with you, you will find in him  
 You will blame him for the things you said; you will blame him for your sinful ways  
 Blame yourself, man  
 Judge yourself before you judge others  
 You have no backbone, you have no scruples, and you have no morals and no dignity  
 Where is your mind, who do you wan' to be, what do you want to achieve out of life  
 For aren't you living, just barely existing?  
 Man has anybody told you what to do? If not, then I will  
 Quit criticising, get out in the open, open your eyes, take in life, take in love's conversation  
 You must AWAKEN  
 Life is awakening all around you  
 Only now life is awakening to its full

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At home, my love is waiting, waiting for me  
 I love to see her  
 I love to kiss her on the cheek  
 And say, "hello my love  
 How's it been with you  
 Baby it won't be long now  
 Just a day or two

Nothing really changed  
 I'm glad everything's just the same  
 We better start thinking, thinking of baby's name  
 Nothing's really changed much and everything's just the same"

But that's not so, you see, I'm, fighting a war  
 My baby's born, cannot see him  
 I want to see him, I want to hold him, I want to love him, I want  
 to feel him, I want to know him,  
 I want to hold him, I want to see him, I cannot see him  
 I want to see him...  
 I cannot see him

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Silent is my lamb (3)  
 Shh keep your voices down, she's awakening  
 Awakening

\*\*\*\*\*

The war is cold, and very bitter, I don't know what I'm doing  
 And I don't know what I'm saying  
 Oh ....

Hey you! Pick up that gun, kill that man  
 Tell me why? There is no answer  
 Tell me why? There is no answer  
 Tell me why? there is no answer

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I'm going home at last, at last  
 Nothing's going to stop me  
 At last, at last  
 I'll see my love and my baby boy  
 The tears will roll down my face, I'll be overwhelmed with joy  
 I'll see my love and my baby boy  
 OH..  
 Where is my house, cannot see it,  
 Where is my love, cannot see her  
 Where is my boy, cannot see him  
 Hello my love, hello my boy  
 Come to me  
 Let me feel you, you see I've gone blind, I cannot see you  
 Why don't you answer me (repeat)  
 Come to me (repeat)

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Silent is my lamb (3)  
 Shh keep your voices down  
 She's awakening, awakening.

In the light of the controversial Vietnam war of the late 1960s

and 1970s, The Third Eye's protest links in with world outrage and protest. When one considers the wars occurring on South African borders at the time, this song is also highly pertinent to a specifically South African situation. Thus, although apartheid is never actually mentioned in the song, the fact that it protests against the futility of war and fantasises about another preferred reality (peace, contented family life) registers a displeasure with all forms of oppression and senseless killing. The words:

The war is cold, and very bitter, I don't know what  
 I'm doing, and I don't know what I'm saying  
 .... Hey you! Pick up that gun, kill that man  
 Tell me why? There is no answer  
 Tell me why? There is no answer  
 Tell me why? There is no answer

speak of there being no real reason for war, and gives one the sense that the soldier is just as much a victim as the enemy who is killed. The implication is that the soldier is merely a puppet who follows orders, an unfortunate soul who cannot fathom the basis for violence.

The repeated reference to the lamb awakening is more difficult to decode. One interpretation is that the lamb represents his child. Another is that it refers to Jesus Christ, the lamb of God. It could also be an oblique reference to the scripture which refers to a time of peace when the wolf and the lamb shall coexist without enmity.<sup>11</sup> The reference to the lamb awakening in the song could refer to a time in which the desired peacefulness is ushered in. The solemn, religious tones of the

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 11 verse 6, New American Standard edition of the bible:  
 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
 And the leopard will lie down with the kid,  
 And the calf and the young lion and the fatling  
 together;  
 And a little boy will lead them

Isaiah 65 verse 35, New American Standard edition of the bible:  
 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the  
 lion shall eat straw like an ox; and the dust shall  
 be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm  
 in all my Holy mountain," says the Lord.

organ used to introduce the 'silent is my lamb' section each time it is played, supports the religious interpretation of these lyrics. The fact that the lamb is seen to be awakening is indicative of the impatience of the narrator to see an end of all war.

Both sections in which the soldier visualises himself going home are accompanied by unfettered crashing piano chords and a greater degree of melodic writing, which could be one way of dramatising the happiness and carefree atmosphere which he is imagining. Conversely, each time he realises that his fantasies are not to be, and that war has stolen these from him, the music and vocal performance gains intensity to the point of heartbreak.

'Awakening' is an experiment in emotional dramatisation, one which succeeds to a certain extent in communicating states of sorrow and bliss. More importantly, however, it is a condemnation of war, a condemnation that goes beyond physical violence and attacks violation of the soul. The soldier's declaration that he cannot see near the end of the song refers to a physical blindness. However, it could also be seen to refer to a spiritual blindness, one which blinds people from seeing the worth in each other because of the ideological constructs which separate them.

#### **Conclusions: 1964 - 1972**

The existence of the 'progressive' rock bands in South Africa were, again, linked to the popularity of the more 'progressive' British and American rock bands which had begun to take centre stage in the early 1970s. At the same time, however, these 'progressive' South African rock bands were unique within the apartheid context. By this I mean that their musical experimentation often crossed boundaries that apartheid had tried so hard to maintain. **Abstract Truth**, for example, made use of a cross-cultural sound through the introduction of the sitar into their mix. This experimentation represented a musical defiance of an enforced political reality and defined a new reality in

which cross-cultural interaction was not only accepted, but promoted. In the light of an apartheid-ridden South Africa, these musical forays demonstrated a longing for a different reality, and the creation of this different reality in which different cultures coexist in a meaningful and exciting way.

**The Third Eye** dealt with socio-political issues in a more blatant manner. Instead of creating an alternative social reality through their music, **The Third Eye** angrily attacked injustice through cynical lyrics and violently-articulated music, especially in their second and third albums. It is this early music that best represents **The Third Eye's** 'progressive' stance.

#### Rock Music in Durban and its Relation to Socio-Political Events: 1973 – 1977

The period 1973 – 1977 was a quiet one for rock in Durban, and the reasons for this have already been suggested in Chapter Two.<sup>12</sup> The four year period was characterised by the revival of the mass resistance movement, and climaxed with the country-wide uprisings against the Bantu education system.

The announcement that black scholars were to be forced to learn Afrikaans (while white students did not have to learn an African language) in 1975 was the catalyst for the mass action which occurred in 1976. Many scholars refused to attend classes altogether in protest against the use of Afrikaans. The South African Students' Movement called for the complete boycott of the 1976 June examinations and made plans for a mass demonstration against the use of Afrikaans on June 16. The events of that day are well known, with the police opening fire on a group of scholars, killing at least four children, and an uprising which lasted through to the end of 1977 was birthed. The uprising, which began in Soweto and spread to other parts of South Africa, led to the loss of over a thousand lives, mostly as a result of

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Two, pp. 48-52.

police action:

The uprising was clearly aimed at much more than correcting the wrongs caused by the use of Afrikaans in schools. It very soon became an outlet for the African people's resentment against the whole system of apartheid and national oppression. When, in mid-July 1976, the government backed down on the Afrikaans language issue, it had no effect in dampening the students' militancy. Students, supported by the black community in general, demanded the release of detainees, the total abolition of Bantu Education and an end to all apartheid laws and practices...<sup>13</sup>

The state acted with increasing brutality as the mass action continued. Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko, was murdered in detention in September 1977, and this sparked more anger and led to the intensification of the uprising. In some places boycotts of schools were almost a hundred per cent effective, and in others, hundreds of school teachers resigned. Workers embarked on strikes in sympathy with students which put further pressure on the already faltering economy. The brutal manner in which the state attempted to quell the uprising did little for international opinion of the South African government, and the anti-apartheid movement abroad grew in numbers and influence.

The seemingly impenetrable apartheid structures began to lose their hold as more and more South Africans joined the call to resist. Other factors also played an important role in the beginning of the downfall of the apartheid State:

The mid-1970s brought to an end the 'golden age of apartheid' (1964-1972), when the liberation movement had been on the defensive and the economy booming as never before. Now economic growth slowed as the whole capitalist world went into recession. The Portuguese empire collapsed, bringing independence to Mozambique and Angola, and removing the 'buffer zone' of colonial states which had shielded South Africa from independent Africa...<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, p. 258.

<sup>14</sup> Pamapallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, p. 246.

The Workers' resistance movement was fuelled into action by an outbreak of strikes in the Durban area, and the relatively successful outcome (i.e. wage increases) encouraged workers countrywide to embark on strikes.

The independence gained by Mozambique and Angola (who were now committed to building socialism) gave further encouragement and to black South Africans, and boosted confidence that freedom could be attained in South Africa. Furthermore, these newly independent states gave much support to the South African liberation movement.

It was during 1977, that punk rock first made an impact on South Africa, starting as has been previously stated, on the University of Natal's Durban campus. What is important in the political context, is that the advent of punk rock (an anti-establishment, loud and violently-articulated form of rock music) coincided with the violent and organised uprisings of the mid-late 1970s discussed above. This, I believe was more than a mere coincidence, but at the same time it could not truthfully be said to be prompted solely by local (South African) events. It must be remembered that the punk rock movement in South Africa was actually strongly rooted in the British rock scene, and in fact early punk rock bands in South Africa were a pure imitation of British punkdom, even down to the content of the songs. This changed, however, as South African punk bands (such as **Wild Youth** and later, **Powerage**) began to consciously model their compositions to the South African experience, which included voicing protest at injustice and racial violence. South African punk musicians saw themselves as part of a global punk movement which rebelled against oppression, and which had specific issues \*

to address in South Africa.<sup>15</sup> It should also be noted that as early as the mid-1960s, the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was formed, and that it remained the only

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<sup>15</sup> This was explicitly stated by Lance Rattray (vocalist for **Powerage**) at an interview I conducted on the 23rd of June 1994.

radical opposition to apartheid that remained legal. NUSAS was dominated by white students at the English-language universities (the University of Natal, Durban being one), although some black students on these 'white' campuses (and at the University of Natal Medical School) did participate in its activities.<sup>16</sup> The existence of NUSAS at the University of Natal, was important for the dissemination of anti-apartheid material and informed students, including those belonging to punk rock bands on the campus.

Specific issues addressed by punk bands ranged from the inferior Bantu education system and unjust apartheid laws to the more universal anti-disco and anti-record industry themes. Punk bands such as **Wild Youth** and **Dead Babies** wrote songs specifically aimed at the South African record industry (refer to cassette, Ex. 17), while more than a decade later, South African band **No Friends of Harry** were so named in protest against a record executive named Harry<sup>17</sup>. Thus the antagonism felt by local musicians towards the local music industry runs deep and first became fluently articulated in the punk genre.

#### **Rock Music in Durban and its Relation to Socio-Political Events: 1978 – 1985**

In the early 1980s, the greater extent of militarisation and also of public outrage was linked to a style of rock music in Durban which was far more explicitly critical than it had been in earlier years. i.e. to hard core punk rock. The trend towards multiculturalism begun by **Abstract Truth** also resurfaced as reggae and ska became popular in South Africa.

The years 1978 – 1986 were good ones for the resistance movement as far as pressuring the regime was concerned. The Soweto

<sup>16</sup> After 1959, government permission had to be obtained for black students to attend 'white' universities.

<sup>17</sup> This information was given to me by Chris Smith, a friend and fellow-musician of punk bass guitarist, Karen Lange.

uprising was a decisive turning point for the resistance movement, and from that time resistance spread to all parts of South Africa and became better organised as time passed. The United Democratic Front emerged as the leader of the struggle for freedom, and a non-racial ideology based on the principles of the Freedom Charter became dominant. From 1977 Umkhonto we Sizwe increased the scope and effectiveness of its activities. Operations included attacks on two SASOL oil-from-coal plants in 1980, on the uncompleted Koeberg nuclear power station in 1982 and on Air Force Headquarters in Pretoria in 1983. Many other acts of sabotage were also undertaken by Umkhonto units, and 'all these operations had an important impact on the consciousness of the oppressed, inspiring large numbers to join the struggle against apartheid.' <sup>18</sup> It is also possible to distinguish a greater resistance by white youths in Durban to the political regime, and specifically to military conscription, as the End Conscription Campaign gained momentum on the University of Natal campuses in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

The political crisis which faced the regime as a result of the growth of the liberation movement was compounded by an economic crisis. The value of the Rand fell, inflation rose to 15% per annum, and foreign investment decreased while unemployment rates increased. Furthermore, labour unions grew in power and numbers, and their demands for workers' rights became ever stronger. Thus, the South African government was under immense pressure, and was forced to the defensive position as the political and economic situation worsened.

In 1980 the South African government lost its last major ally in the region when Robert Mugabe won the Zimbabwean election and his party (Zimbabwe African National Union) took power. The new Zimbabwean government joined the rest of Africa in condemning apartheid, and called for international isolation of South Africa. The demand for economic sanctions against South Africa

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<sup>18</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, p. 265.

grew ever stronger, and the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela caught the imagination of thousands worldwide.

P.W. Botha replaced B.J. Vorster as Prime Minister, and implemented his 'Total Strategy':

According to Botha, 'free enterprise' in South Africa was facing a 'total onslaught' from a 'Marxist threat'. In order to defend itself, the state had to put into effect a strategy to deal with the crisis on all fronts: ideological, political, economic and military. The Total Strategy had various dimensions, both internal and regional'.<sup>19</sup>

The 'Total Strategy' called for an adjustment in ideology to make it more acceptable to the international community and more conducive to winning allies among the black population. The white population were informed that in order for their way of life to survive, that they needed to 'adapt or die'<sup>20</sup>, and that traditional apartheid should therefore be modified. Thus, Botha advocated some form of power sharing amongst population groups, and even labelled the traditional apartheid system 'out-dated'.

On the economic front, nine Southern African states joined together to form the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) whose aim it was to promote development in the region and to break the economic dependence of these states on South Africa. This was a blow for the Botha regime, which had hoped to win the confidence of neighbouring states by creating an alliance to stem the 'Marxist threat'.

As the resistance movement in South Africa grew in strength, the government exerted further methods of brute force by declaring States of Emergency in many areas of the country. This gave police and defence force members considerably more power and was

<sup>19</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, p. 279.  
The 'Marxist Threat' referred to here is the 'Rooi Gevaar' mentioned in Chapter One.

<sup>20</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, p. 279.

a final attempt to regain control over the militant masses which was not successful. In fact, resistance increased, and by early 1986, the States of Emergency were lifted in all places except for the violence-torn province of Natal.<sup>21</sup>

Thus by the end of my period of discussion, the socio-political situation in South Africa was reaching an anguished peak, with both resistance and counter-resistance movements employing violent methods of action. It is at this point that the hard core punk musicians were coming to the fore in Durban and creating somewhat of a furore on the local music scene. **Powerage** is perhaps the best example of a hard-core punk band which had a well-articulated anti-apartheid stance.

#### **Powerage: An Anti-Apartheid Band**

The lifespan of **Powerage** goes beyond the time period of this thesis, but much of their anti-apartheid music was written before or during 1985. It must be remembered that punk bands did all their recording, promotion and distribution on their own, without the assistance (or interference and domination) of a record company. This anti-establishment stance was well embedded in the minds of punk musicians and their fans even before they began to take an anti-apartheid stance. Thus, their platform for rebellion against domination and interference was well established, and it was no surprise that the hard-core punk bands of the mid-1980s took up the cause against repression in South Africa. **Powerage** recorded their first single in 1983 ('World War 3' and 'Vengeance of Youth') and their second single in 1985 ('Stop Apartheid' 'Death Dance', 'Adapt or Die' and 'Freedom'). Another two singles were recorded in 1987, both of which had anti-apartheid messages. **Powerage** also recorded a cassette which consisted of both studio and live recordings in 1985.

In every case, the band sought to communicate their message via

<sup>21</sup> N. Mandela, Long Walk To Freedom, Randburg: MacDonald Purnell, 1994, p. 570.

angry, repetitive lyrics and sounds. Being a typical hard core punk band, Powerage intensified the elements of punk even more than usual by speeding up rhythms, using highly-distorted guitar sounds and a harsher vocal style than the punk bands had used. They seemed furiously intent on upsetting pro-apartheid powers through their choice of scathing lyrics. Their cry not to yield to an inhumane system is articulated in 'Adapt or Die' (the slogan used by P.W. Botha mentioned above). Powerage turned the slogan around to their advantage. Here are the lyrics to the song. (Refer to cassette, Ex. 18):

Adapt or Die!

Rubin Rose

Crying out for love  
 The system don't hear  
 Turn around  
 They'll stab you in the back

Somebody's crying  
 But nobody cares  
 Contemplate love  
 But it's blood they want

Survival in the system  
 Adapt or die  
 People don't care  
 For that human cry

Adapt or die  
 Adapt or die  
 Adapt or die  
 DON'T ADAPT YOU'LL DIE

These rather blatant lyrics are accompanied by a violently-articulated performance. The song itself has no hidden agendas or implicit connotations. It clearly and forcefully expresses contempt for the political system, and warns listeners not to adapt to the system for the consequence would be to die. In the experience of blacks, physical death under apartheid was a very real possibility, and furthermore, many whites feared for their lives. However, in my opinion, the death spoken of here could also be interpreted as a spiritual one. Becoming numb and simply adapting to an unjust system was very much the plight of many oppressed South Africans in order to survive.

Another song entitled 'System' is just as strong in condemning the corrupt and unfeeling apartheid establishment (refer to cassette, Ex. 19):

System

Rubin Rose

Does the system care for us  
 No they don't  
 Does the system feel for us  
 No they don't  
 Does the system think of us  
 No they don't

No they don't  
 No they don't  
 No they don't

All they ever think about is money  
 All they ever think about is wars  
 All they ever think about is power

### Multiculturalism in the 1980s: The Usuals

Despite the ever-increasing drive by government to keep South Africans apart, Durban musicians of different races found a way to interact and to defy apartheid structures. A band which gained popularity in the early 1980s, was **The Usuals**, led by Richard Ellis. It has been mentioned that **The Usuals** were instrumental in creating a sound which (much like **Abstract Truth** had done in earlier years) crossed racial boundaries. The result was a distinctly unique sound, a synthesis of both South African and international musics, with reggae and ska as a basis.

Latin American rhythms also had a strong influence on the sound of **The Usuals**, and many of the songs on Law of the Jungle bear testimony to this fact. The album was hailed as a synthesis of musical styles and influences, and can be seen as a rare example of cross-cultural experimentation at the height of apartheid repression:

'Natural as possible' was **The Usuals'** simple intention when they went into the studio last year to record their debut album. The long-awaited result is Law of

the Jungle, a fresh and unpretentious brace of their reggae, rock and urban Africa tunes that urged many an avid Durban follower to emulate the message of their discarded takkies logo and dance. ... Generally, the album has a jaunty indigenous feel ... Certainly their pioneer spirit towards original music deserves a fair hearing ... <sup>22</sup>

Also important to mention is that **The Usuals** played only original compositions, a unique characteristic for a Durban rock band. This in itself was a statement against conformity and demonstrated a pride in their own identity. Their reliance to some extent on international styles does not necessarily contradict this statement since **The Usuals** created a unique sound which successfully transcended the boundaries between race and nationality which apartheid laws had imposed.

To a large extent, the wide array of percussion instruments utilised by the band gave it its unique sound. This was unusual for a rock band in the early 1980s. It proved successful in providing a cosmopolitan flavour through the incorporation of Caribbean and Latin American rhythms. An interesting comment made by an Argus supplement reporter pointed out that to a South African ear, The Law of the Jungle would be in 'the pop-reggae mainstream ... but overseas listeners would be very aware of the strong African feel'<sup>23</sup>. This indicates either that South African listeners as a whole were so accustomed to African sounds that these sounds would not stand out when listening to the album, or else that South Africans chose not to hear African influences in their attempt to shrug off their 'inferior' South African identity. The first explanation is probably the most likely.

As much as their sounds differed, **The Usuals** were curiously linked to the punk bands of the early 1980s. Perhaps the fact that both the punk bands and **The Usuals** played only original compositions, and that both genres were seeking alternative forms

<sup>22</sup> Sunday Tribune reporter, 21st of March, 1982. 'Takkies' is the local equivalent of a pair of running shoes or sneakers.

<sup>23</sup> Argus Supplement reporter, 15th of July 1982.

for expression were reason enough to share the bill at numerous concerts throughout the Durban area. Also an important factor in common was their mutual dislike of the mainstream music industry, which sprung from efforts by the music industry to dictate rather than facilitate. The Usuals, in particular were out of favour with the music industry when they refused to change controversial lyrics during the recording of their album. According to Richard Ellis, the atmosphere of the early 1980s was so politically charged that anything could be construed as undermining apartheid, even when it was not intended as such.<sup>24</sup>

Record companies, therefore, were particularly sensitive to such implications, and encouraged bands to remove any potentially problematic lyrics from their songs if they wanted their music to receive airplay. It should be noted that music industry pressure to change lyrics was in line with state censorship laws, and disregard for these laws would have affected profitability. 'Rules and Regulations' (refer to cassette, Ex. 13) from the Law of the Jungle album was one such song. The record company asked the band to change the line which referred to a policeman coming to the door and threatening to close the band down if they did not stop playing after curfew hours. This The Usuals refused to do. The controversial lyrics read as follows:

#### **Rules and Regulations**

Our neighbours can't stand music  
 Say we play too loud  
 They say that electronics  
 That is blasted out  
 Should be banned without a  
 Should be banned without a doubt

Who's there?  
 Policeman at the door  
 He swears if we don't stop that tonight  
 We won't be a band no  
 We won't be a band no more

Rules and regulations (repeat)

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<sup>24</sup> I conducted an interview with Richard Ellis on 6th of October 1994.

Police interference in both punk concerts and those at which **The Usuals** played most certainly occurred, and was usually in the cause of curfew regulations. The manner in which curfews were enforced, however, brings into question the real motive behind police presence at concerts. Richard Ellis remembers an incident when the band played three minutes over their midnight curfew on a religious holiday, and were subjected to a number of police entering the venue and kicking over drums and equipment in the effort to enforce the curfew! This kind of abuse could only stem from a deeper ideological conflict which, in a politically-charged atmosphere, came to the surface. The fact that **The Usuals'** music defied apartheid divisions, and spoke out blatantly against the system was surely a better cause for police interference than the petty violation of a curfew. Although such a statement cannot be proven, it certainly has some merit.

The fact that reggae rhythms formed much of the basis for **The Usuals'** sound, was not incidental. It is true that reggae was enjoying worldwide popularity in the early 1980s, and therefore it was not an entirely new sound in South Africa. The fact that **The Usuals** were an all-white band, however, made their use of reggae fairly unconventional, since most white bands at the time were either punk, new wave or mainstream rock. Reggae was very much a politicised music, one which represented a struggle for freedom and a confirmation of black identity. Thus its use in a apartheid-ridden South Africa by an all-white band could be viewed as potentially explosive, and should be treated with particular interest.

As has been mentioned, **The Usuals** superimposed many musical layers on top of its reggae foundation, and thus created an Afro-rock-reggae sound which was quite unique. An example is 'No Great Shakes' off their Law of the Jungle album. 'No Great Shakes' has an Afro-reggae feel with which one cannot help but link with the urban black musician. His presence is communicated through the

use of a maskanda-like guitar riff<sup>25</sup>, and an organ sound reminiscent of the soul tradition, and perhaps the reference to not reading music 'note for note'.<sup>26</sup> The lyrics deal with contentment, and being secure in one's own identity. They also advocate the performance of original material as opposed to cover versions. The song is sung in an African accent, which also alludes to an urban black musician, who is content and secure in his identity (cassette, Ex. 20).

No Great Shakes:

Richard Ellis

I don't care if I'm not a go getter  
 'cos most the time there is nothing to get  
 If I don't set trends like stylish jetsetters  
 What's the use to get highly upset

If you suppose that I'm unaware  
 With my clothes and with my hair  
 It's what I chose to be happy with  
 It is a personal affair

Nobody's so sure after all  
 What's gonna be acceptable  
 It could be usual or unusual

No great shakes way  
 I dance and behaving  
 Only rhythm is what I like most  
 No great shakes when I'm singing and playing  
 When you got rhythm you don't have to boast

Cover versions I hate to quote  
 I don't read music note for note  
 If no one likes the song I wrote  
 I cannot force it down their throat

Nobody's so sure after all  
 What's gonna be fashionable  
 It could be usual or unusual

You shouldn't worry anyhow  
 You either smoke or do not smoke  
 And if you can't quote Monty Python jokes

<sup>25</sup> Maskanda is a guitar-based black South African popular music genre.

<sup>26</sup> Not reading music 'note for note' could also be attributed to the influence of punk.

There's no need to feel out

Pointing fingers folk  
 Silent looks that spoke  
 Whether you quiet, whether you shout

I don't care if I'm not a go getter  
 'cos most the time there is nothing to get  
 If I don't set trends like stylish jetsetters  
 What's the use to get highly upset

If you suppose that I'm unaware  
 With my clothes and with my hair  
 It's what I chose to be happy with  
 It is a personal affair

Nobody should feel so afraid  
 Of impressions they think they have made  
 The top grade don't make no great shakes

### **Militarisation and its Affects on Durban Bands**

In an effort to combat the uprisings of the black working class, the government relied on a greater mobilisation of defence force troops (most of whom were young white men, forcibly conscripted for military service). It was not only the years of conscription that interrupted many young men's lives, but also the subsequent military camps that required those men who had already completed their national service to perform military duties for one to three months of each year. This compulsory military service prompted many young white South African men to leave South Africa as an avoidance measure. This dealt a hard blow to many a South African band, and the South African rock music scene was harshly affected by the exodus. Dave Gardner, a prominent Pietermaritzburg musician who was emigrating to the United Kingdom was interviewed by The Natal Witness in 1984. When asked what the main reason behind the exodus of local musicians to Europe, this was his response:

The main reason, inevitably, is the army. Many musicians feel it is unjust to support the present government. I feel it is even more important that one can't try to be a musician and at the same time go off to camps once a year. If there is a four-piece band and each person is called up for three different

months, theoretically the band can't function for a year.<sup>27</sup>

Karen Lange had the following to say about the effect of compulsory conscription:

A lot of guys went overseas to avoid doing army service. The call up did push a lot of potentially good bands out...<sup>28</sup>

The issue of militarisation became increasingly relevant as the apartheid years progressed. As early as 1965, however, one reads of bands breaking up as members were conscripted for their national service. An interview with Robbie Pavid (of **The Mods** and later, **The Third Eye**) revealed that 'the group first got together in 1965, but army training interrupted, so [we] reformed in about May 1967'<sup>29</sup>. An interview with Lance Rattray of **Powerage** revealed that he was called up for a three-month army camp in 1980, which at that stage was most detrimental for the development of a young band<sup>30</sup>. A snippet from a local newspaper verifies this occurrence.

**Powerage** have been reduced to a two-piece: drums and guitar/vocal while their third member attends the army! With the powerful Rubin 'Wildman' Rose still behind the drumkit though, **Powerage** remains.<sup>31</sup>

It must be pointed out that call ups to military camps were enforced by law, with many a 'rebel' soldier being apprehended by military police after not arriving for a camp. To demonstrate the control that military service had over musicians, I will cite the cases of **eVoid** and **The Rotors**. Although the former was not a Durban band, their experience with the military regime was a

<sup>27</sup> Natal Witness, Dave Credit, 27th of February 1984, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Quote from Karen Lange interview, 18th of July 1994.

<sup>29</sup> The interview was held in August 1993.

<sup>30</sup> This interview was held on the 23rd of June 1994.

<sup>31</sup> This snippet was found in a scrapbook lent me by Karen Lange. It was not labelled or dated.

typical one. The Sunday Times of the 4th of March 1984 reported the following:

Drummer Wayne Harker of the pop group eVoid is being held by Miliary Police for being absent without leave ... a spokesman for the South African Defence Force said: 'He is being held in detention by the Military Police in Grahamstown.'<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps what is most interesting about this case was that band members tried to conceal the fact that Harker was being held by the Military Police, and stated that 'Wayne was replaced because he had to go to Grahamstown for a routine military camp.'<sup>33</sup> This demonstrates the sense of shame and perhaps even anxiousness felt on the part of the rest of the band in being associated with someone who had gone against the law. The fear of being labelled as anti-apartheid and its inherent consequences would have been disastrous for band members and their families, and this could have been a reason for their statement.

The Rotors was a Durban surf-punk band <sup>34</sup> which was very active in the early-mid 1980s. At the height of its burgeoning career, the band broke up when members were conscripted for national service:

The breakneck speed at which the Durban group delivered their set of power-pop ditties will be remembered for a long time to come. *Stiff Little Fingers*, *The Cure*, *The Boys* ... their influences were widespread, but the blond Rotors added their unique touch to the songs. The South African Beach Boys of the post punk era had a following drawn mainly from the sands of Durban. National Service ended The Rotors as such. [my emphasis] <sup>35</sup>

Thus, although band members (such as Lance Rattray) were

<sup>32</sup> The Sunday Times, 4th of March 1984, p.3.

<sup>33</sup> Sunday Times, 4th of March, 1984, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Surf-punk was essentially no different from punk, except that its performers were surfers, and their songs were influenced by the sport.

<sup>35</sup> The Natal witness, 14th of January 1984, p.9.

vehemently opposed to apartheid, they found themselves being forced to become part of a military system which backed apartheid policy. The option to solve this problem by leaving South Africa became ever more viable, and young white male musicians did so frequently. One such example is Brett Rattray of **Powerage**, whose decision to emigrate was directly linked to the existence of apartheid in South Africa<sup>36</sup>.

### Conclusion

It is clear that the socio-political context in which South African rock musicians found themselves throughout the period under discussion was an influence in the rock music that was composed and performed. The importance of how musicians chose to react to these contexts has been addressed in this chapter, with emphasis being placed on multiculturalism, direct confrontation and the decision to ignore these issues in favour of finding a new identity that was explicitly un-South African. The 'commercial' versus 'progressive' stances employed by bands are also directly linked to the three options stated above.

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<sup>36</sup> This was confirmed by Lance Rattray (Brett's brother) in my interview with him on the 23rd of June 1994.

## CHAPTER 4

### WOMEN AND ROCK IN DURBAN

#### Introduction: Rock as a 'Male' Musical Discourse

This chapter will deal with the role of women in rock in Durban from 1965 to 1985, as well as men's perceptions of this role. During the course of my research into rock music in Durban it became clear that women have generally played the traditionally 'passive' roles of fans and girlfriends of male rock musicians. Certain exceptions were encountered, but these were few and far between.

Pertaining to the role of women in rock in Durban, I would have to concur with Mavis Bayton who has pointed out that 'women have been largely excluded from popular music-making, and relegated to the role of fan'<sup>1</sup>. Frith<sup>2</sup> attributed the role of fan a status of passivity, with women being viewed as the passive element of the musical experience and men as the active, virile participants.

This observation is linked to the traditional view that rock is a 'male' musical form, and an 'unfeminine' form of music:

Although there are some notable exceptions, women have traditionally been barred from participating in Western music. The barriers that have prevented them from participation have occasionally been formal: in the seventeenth century there were even papal edicts proscribing women's musical education. More often, however, women are discouraged through more subtle means from considering themselves as potential

<sup>1</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', in T. Bennet (et al.), Rock and Popular Music: Politics Policies Institutions, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> S. Frith & A. McRobbie, 'Rock and Sexuality', Screen Education, 1978 in S. Frith, 'Confessions of a Rock Critic', Music For Pleasure, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, p. 164.

musicians. As macho star David Lee Roth (rarely accused of being an ardent feminist) observes: 'What if a little girl picked up a guitar and said "I wanna be a rock star". Nine out of ten her parents would never allow her to do it. We don't have so many lead guitar women, not because women don't have the ability to play the instrument, but because they're kept locked up, taught to be something else ...'<sup>3</sup>

McClary's article on Madonna as an exception to the rule outlines the problems encountered by a woman rock musician:

To create music within a male-defined domain is a treacherous task. As some women composers of so-called serious or experimental music are discovering, many of the forms and conventional procedures of presumably value-free music are saturated with hidden patriarchal narratives, images, agendas. The options available to a woman musician in rock are especially constrictive, for this musical discourse is typically characterised by its phallic backbeat.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of electrification of music seemed in many cases to be the dividing line between what was considered to be strictly 'male' and acceptable as a 'female' experimental zone. In other words, amplified music was considered 'male' because of its loud and often aggressive sound, while acoustic music was considered a more 'feminine' arena.

It is true that heavy metal, of all forms of rock music, has 'been viewed as the epitome of maleness'<sup>5</sup>. Walser's recent study, Running With the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music, contains perhaps the most insightful study of gender in relation to rock music, and deals with the issue of the 'male' domination of the genre (heavy metal) as well as the

<sup>3</sup> S. McClary, 'Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly', in Feminine Endings: Music Gender and Sexuality, Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, pp. 150-151.

<sup>4</sup> McClary, 'Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly', p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 185.

relationship of women to the genre, both as fans and musicians. Three categories of gender relations explored in the genre: viz. exscription of women; misogyny; and romance.

Insofar as this study is concerned, the most pertinent category of these three is that of the exscription of women, and thus it is only this category that will be discussed here. Walser argues that men are intrinsically threatened by the power of women to seduce, and therefore control them. The power of mutual sexual pleasure as a means of weakening male independence and freedom is consciously exscripted, along with women, from the image of heavy metal music and music videos. Instead, male bonding and a goal-centred instead of a relationship-centred dependency is promoted.

Walser goes so far as to argue that heavy metal music relies on the exscription of women for its appeal:

Even in many nonperformance metal videos, where narratives and images are placed not on a stage but elsewhere, the point is the same: to represent and reproduce spectacles that depend for their appeal on the exscription of women... In Judas Priest's 'Heading Out to the Highway', a song from 1981 ... performance is not literally represented. The band's two guitar players drag race on an empty highway in the middle of nowhere, flagged on by the singer, whose macho stances, gestures, and singing are the only elements of the real performance retained in the fantastic setting. The song and images are about freedom and adventure, and we don't even need the initial 'Hit 'em boys' to know that we're talking about a specifically male kind of freedom. There are no women to be seen in this video, and what there is to be seen - the cars, the road, the leather, the poses - have long been coded as symbols of male freedom, linked as signs of aggressiveness and refusal to be bound by limits ... Not only [Rob Halford's] voice but the singer's writhing and posing provide a spectacle of male potency for a male audience, including both the band on-screen and the presumed male viewer of the video.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> R. Walser Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music, p. 115.

### Problems Preventing Women's Full Participation in Rock Bands

A recent thesis by Karen McGough entitled Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women<sup>7</sup> examines women in the marketplace in South Africa and the problems faced by women who seek promotion. Many of the problems pointed out by Ms McGough apply most aptly to women's advancement in the rock music world as well. McGough points out the 'Fear of Success' theory advocated by K. Haynes in 1989 could well be a factor in the lack of advancement of women to managerial positions. I feel that this theory could as easily be applied to the role of women in rock music in Durban:

The fear of success theory states that 'women actually avoid success because they are afraid it will make them less feminine, or make others perceive them as less feminine'.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore,

In terms of socialisation, Fenn (1978) states that there are psychological barriers to women's advancement such as a lack of self-confidence or a negative self-image which are a reflection of their socialisation to be nurturant, passive, dependent, other-directed and sacrificing. Thus women are taught to value themselves in terms of others and not by an inner standard.<sup>9</sup>

It also is pointed out by McGough that most men experienced women in the roles of homemaker, sexual being and rival and 'tend to rely on these role categories in their relationship to women

<sup>7</sup> K. McGough, Thesis written in partial fulfillment of Masters degree in Industrial Psychology, for the University of Natal, Durban, June 1995.

<sup>8</sup> K. Haynes, Women Managers in Human Services: New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc, 1989 quoted in K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> M. Fenn, Making it in Management. A Behavioural Approach for Women Executives, USA: Prentice-Hall International, Inc, 1978 quoted in K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, p. 22.

in the workplace [or band].'<sup>10</sup> Because women are associated with family life, they are often treated in a paternalistic manner by men in the workplace, sometimes in an attempt to 'protect' them. The role of homemaker often manifests itself in women as being the coffee-maker and note-taker in the business place. This is paralleled in the rock music scene where women's involvement with band members is often on the level of fan, admirer and/or girlfriend who meets the practical needs of band members by making of beverages during practices and attending to administrative details<sup>11</sup>.

The sexual role of women (as perceived by men) has resulted in the degradation of women and a lack of respect in the workplace. This is true, too of women in rock bands in Durban, particularly the all-women punk bands of the early 1980s who (as it will be seen) received publicity on the basis of their sexual appeal and hardly ever received a word of either criticism or praise about their music itself.

The fact that a woman has entered the 'man's world' of business, means she is also regarded by men as having abandoned her traditional role as wife/mother, and is therefore often regarded as a rival or intruder. In the rock music world, this is also true. Heavy-metal music, in particular, has made it difficult for women to 'intrude', with the result that very few women enter this musical realm.

According to McGough, women find it increasingly difficult to progress along their desired path of promotion, because they are expected to either adopt mens' roles (in attitude, behaviour and career expectations) or adopt stereotypical female roles. The first option allows a woman to gain the status of 'honourary man', while the second leaves women feeling like 'devalued human

<sup>10</sup> K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, pp. 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> S. Cohen makes frequent reference to this in her recent study of rock music in Liverpool: Rock Culture in Liverpool, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

beings'.<sup>12</sup> Again, this could easily be transferred to the experience of women in rock bands who constantly face one of the two options. This is where the third option of creating an entirely new musical space becomes so inviting for feminist musicians, despite the criticisms of other feminists who feel the penetration of male-dominated space is a necessity. The move towards creating an alternative reality is further substantiated as being in women's best interests by Clutterbuck et al (as stated by McGough<sup>13</sup>):

Clutterbuck et al (1987) claim that women who mute their femaleness and conform to male stereotypes can fail to develop significant aspects of their identity and therefore creativity. Often these women become isolated both from male and female colleagues and appear 'hard and lonely'...<sup>14</sup>

This results in what Clutterbuck et al term a 'double-bind situation', in which women become trapped.

Another issue which should be addressed is that of the issue of marriage as a threat to women's involvement in a band. In the workplace, it has been found that because women have been socialised to believe they should get married and have a family, they (women) tend to view work as temporary. This is also a factor to recognise when studying the status of women in rock music. In many cases, the life of a rock musician is not conducive to family life. Gigs usually occur late at night, and often continue into the early hours of the morning. In order for bands to gain even a small measure of success, it is necessary for them to tour, resulting in the separation of band members from their families. Because local bands are poorly paid in South Africa, most band members have some sort of day job and

<sup>12</sup> K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, as quoted from Clutterbuck et al, Businesswomen: Present and Future, London: MacMillan Press, 1987, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, p. 27.

therefore, have to rehearse in the evenings and over weekends. All these factors combine to create both financial and interpersonal stress within families. It therefore becomes almost impossible for women to devote themselves to both family and band commitments, just as women in the marketplace find it difficult to juggle the domestic and professional roles. It is therefore very rare to find a South African woman past the age of thirty still active in the rock scene. Younger women, who do not yet have the pressure of a family and husband to care for are more often active in the rock scene, albeit even this is not common. McGough summarises this predicament well:

For men, occupational growth is a developmental process ... to achieve their life dream and they regard work as 'a life-time occupation and the potential start of realising personal ambitions - achieving in the eyes of family, peers and society' (Van Rooyen, 1993, p.5). For women, however, the career development process is not as clear cut. While men tend to dream about work and careers, women tend to have two dreams -- marriage and work (Van Rooyen, 1983).<sup>15</sup>

At this point it would be helpful to mention, however, that women rock musicians in the United Kingdom have found ways of coping with this dilemma<sup>16</sup>. Again, these were the feminists who attempted to create an alternative, women-centred rock culture. These women performed in woman-only bands, often for women-only audiences. Here, the emphasis was on the event rather than the music itself, and often the gig was used as a social event at the end of a feminist demonstration of some sort. These bands also sought to break down the barriers between private and professional life, where the professionalism of the male rock culture was rejected in favour of a less rigid separation of

<sup>15</sup> K. McGough, Values and Achievement Motivation as Barriers to Upward Mobility of Women, p. 30. paraphrasing J. Van Rooyen, Employed Women: Issues and Areas of Concern for Individuals and the Organisation, University of South Africa, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> The information provided in this paragraph is drawn from M. Bayton's article, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', pp. 179-192.

family and band life. In practice, this meant that children were brought to rehearsals and gigs, and time was allowed after rehearsals for women to interact on a personal level. This was unheard of in the professional male approach to band dynamics. Thus, to a certain extent, women successfully created an alternative space in which to further both family and musical interests.

Women all over the world have had to work harder to achieve recognition as rock musicians than their male counterparts, and women rock musicians in Durban are no exception. It has been the general experience of women in rock bands that they usually find themselves being ascribed the role of backing vocalists, or that of leading vocalist but with a role more as a sex object which will create greater commercial appeal. It is commonly agreed that:

[a] range of material and ideological forces have kept women in this circumscribed place. Those few women who have become musicians have somehow managed to find a way through these constraints.<sup>17</sup>

McClary points out that women who wish to have a career in music are more at risk than those wanting a career in other fields such as literature and art because of their visibility as performers. She asserts that 'the composer-performer often relies heavily on manipulating audience response through his enactments of sexual power and desire'<sup>18</sup>, but that throughout Western history it has become clear that this process has been different for women than men:

... throughout Western history, women musicians have usually been assumed to be publically available, have had to fight hard against pressures to yield, or have accepted the granting of sexual favours as one of the

<sup>17</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> S. McClary, 'Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly', p. 151.

prices of having a career ...<sup>19</sup>

In a later article, Frith criticised his own earlier statements concerning the perception of women as 'passive' fans. He points out in 'Confessions of a Rock Critic'<sup>20</sup> that 'consumption is as important to the sexual significance of pop as production'<sup>21</sup>. The girls who buy records and posters of their pop stars are as much part of the music culture as the musicians themselves, and Fred and Judy Vermorel<sup>22</sup> point out that it is this very possession of pop trivia that gives fans a feeling of power over or possession of their rock/pop idols. The Vermorels go further to state that fan fantasies are a form of vengeance; in fans' dreams they control the stars just as the stars control the fans in real life:

The Vermorels show how much resentment there is in fans' feelings for their idols. Pop stars demand our attention and use their power (the weight of their public presence) to keep it. And the more their songs mean to us as private messages the more we can be unsettled by their public display. The voyeurism involved in pop concerts works both ways; it's not just the stars' emotions on show. The power struggle between stars and fans is what gives concerts their sexual charge.<sup>23</sup>

Walser has also come to the conclusion that women fans of metal bands actually view the purchasing of posters and rock magazines as a way of owning the rock stars and of enacting their own desires and fantasies<sup>24</sup>. In the light of the above quote, one

<sup>19</sup> S. McClary, 'Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly', p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> S. Frith 'Confessions of a Rock Critic', Music for Pleasure, pp. 163-168.

<sup>21</sup> S. Frith, 'Confessions of a Rock Critic', p. 167.

<sup>22</sup> Fred and Judy Vermorel, Starlust, no publisher, no date, as cited by Frith's article 'Confessions of a Rock Critic', Music for Pleasure, p. 166.

<sup>23</sup> S. Frith, Music for Pleasure, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup> R. Walser, Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music, p. 132.

can look at female fans in a more active light, as equals in the process of rock stardom.

### Punk Rock in Durban and the 'Male Gaze'

Pegley and Caputo's insightful article entitled 'Growing up Female(s). Retrospective Thoughts on Musical Preferences and Meanings' points out another key to the understanding of gender studies in popular music<sup>25</sup>. This is what has commonly become known as the 'male gaze'; i.e. women performers are viewed as objects (objectified) and are perceived as 'other' in the male gaze. Berger's Ways of Seeing<sup>26</sup> provides a conception of the 'male gaze' by examining the nude oil paintings of Western civilisation. The history of women being painted nude for the pleasure of a presumably male spectator is highlighted:

In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger - with his clothes still on.<sup>27</sup>

In a musical contextualisation, (especially in a popular music context), women who perform are still considered objects by males for their pleasure. As McClary points out, 'Women on the stage are viewed as sexual commodities regardless of their appearance or seriousness'.<sup>28</sup> The sexual commodification of women rock musicians was very much a reality in Durban when the first all-female punk bands took to the stage in the early 1980s. Newspaper

<sup>25</sup>K. Pegley & V. Caputo, Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology (ed. Brett et al) pp. 297-313.

<sup>26</sup>J. Berger et al, Ways of Seeing, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972.

<sup>27</sup>J. Berger et al, Ways of Seeing, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup>S. McClary, 'Living To Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly', p. 151.

reports (written by men) reveal a conventional 'male gaze' which did not evaluate the bands by their music as much as their looks. For example, **The Nubiles** received a large amount of publicity on account of the sexual associations their name evoked, and they were related to as sex objects rather than as musicians. Yet, by the same token, the women selected this name to represent themselves. One could say that they put themselves into the male gaze firing line, and that this was a deliberate choice. Thus to label them 'victims of the male gaze' becomes problematic. At the same time, however, many newspaper articles documenting their progress as a band threw light onto the ways in which women are regarded in rock and its performance:

They're young, pretty and nubile - and destined to rock their way into the hearts of thousands. Well with a name like **The Nubiles**, an all-girl band with some of the prettiest ladies in town are sure to be a hit one way or another. The latest in the line of girl groups - most of which surprisingly enough to have come from Durban - **The Nubiles** made their debut last weekend at a steamy music concert at the Durban MOTH hall. And came away happy and chuffed with the positive audience response. The fact that it was a first public performance for three of the four girls made it even more heartwarming for them. (How much of it was due to the very attractive visual factor and how much was due to appreciation of the musical capabilities remains to be seen -but they did have the boys whistling and calling for an encore as they stepped off the stage.) They spoke - shyly at first - of their ambition to 'prove women can do things as well as men.' 'We know that we are going to make it further because of our looks because we are girls, but we will have to prove it is the music as much as the image...'<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it appears that even in the supposedly liberated punk scene, women punk musicians were subjected to different criteria from the men. The fact that their popularity derived as much from their looks as from their music (if not more) also says much about the way in which audiences and the press engage with female performers. It seems that their sexuality could never be divorced from their music or their performance, and that they

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<sup>29</sup> Sunday Tribune reporter, 29th of November, 1981, p. 49.

were still judged by the same conservative standards, even though they had broken out of their restrictive moulds.

At the same time, however, one cannot disregard the importance of the visual aspect of performance in punk. As with metal, the body images are as important to a performance as the music is. It is the sexuality of these body images that could, in fact, empower the women who perform.

#### **The Status of Women Rock Musicians and the New Feminist Counter Culture**

Simon Frith has examined the viability of whether female rock musicians need to create an entirely new genre<sup>30</sup> and one solution for woman in rock has been to use feminism as a route into music making. Bayton argues that feminism has provided the opportunity, resources and motivation for women to participate in rock music. Some women espoused the tenets of feminism more readily than others, and used it as a path into rock music for explicit political reasons, i.e. to communicate a feminist worldview as well as a support network which made the transition from fan to performer an easier one.<sup>31</sup>

According to Baynton's research<sup>32</sup>, the 1970s saw feminists in the United Kingdom creating an alternative musical world of their own through the formation of all-women bands:

This world offered the chance to rewrite the rules: of lyrics, of band membership and organisation, of the stage, and even of the music itself. Feminists enthusiastically and optimistically promoted alternative values: collectivism and co-operation instead of competitive individualism; participative

<sup>30</sup> S. Frith, 'The Voices of Women', in Music for Pleasure, p. 155.

<sup>31</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 168.

<sup>32</sup> Bayton's doctoral research investigated the careers of women musicians and all-women bands.

democracy and equality instead of heirarchy.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, women bands sought to break down the professional barriers of a typical male band between band and personal life. Women bands sought to cater for personal needs (such as socialising and flexibility regarding practice hours so as to suit family life) as well as professional ones. This 'politics of the personal' was also reflected in the need to write alternative lyrics<sup>34</sup>, and most women preferred to write their own songs rather than sing cover versions, which had mostly been written by males.

Other deviations from the 'norm' of band life as developed by male rock bands, such as the elimination of competitiveness between all-female bands and a reluctance to 'show off,' were also noted by Bayton<sup>35</sup>. These characteristics were linked to a concern for inter-personal relationships between women musicians and a drive to create a feeling of sisterhood between listeners and band members. Thus, feminist ideology became a means of creating an alternative discourse in which the traditional roles as typified by male bands were challenged and consciously resisted.

Bayton has also pointed out that punk has conveniently found a certain amount of common ground with feminism. Therefore, it has been mutually beneficial to combine the two discourses, although punk is usually regarded as a very aggressive, and therefore a male, discourse. Bayton also states that 'the moment of punk motivated some women to play an instrument, and made it easier

<sup>33</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practices: Problems and Contradictions' p. 179.

<sup>34</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions.' p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', pp. 179-180.

for women who had already played to get heard'.<sup>36</sup> According to Bayton punk promoted ugliness (while the hippies had valued naturalness) and 'attacked conventional notions of sexuality, allowing a wider variety of female bodies onto the stage'.<sup>37</sup>

Bayton also studies the question of whether music is gendered or not, and whether a 'female music' exists.<sup>38</sup> In the late 1970s, as feminism became a stronger force worldwide, women looked at creating a separatist culture rather than trying to infiltrate the well-established male rock culture. Furthermore, certain styles of music were condemned as 'intrinsically male, and thus inappropriate terrain for feminist musicians'.<sup>39</sup> Another consideration also became important:

Some feminists considered all electric music to be 'male', because of its loudness and the way in which the panoply of amplification devices distances the performers from the audience.<sup>40</sup>

Yet trying to define a 'female music' proved extremely difficult, since women have more than one way of hearing and experiencing music. Some found it easier to define what 'female music' was not: viz. 'loud, noisy, driving "cock rock"'<sup>41</sup>. Some women musicians interviewed by Bayton provided some interesting, if not helpful characteristics of 'female music':

<sup>36</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', endnote 3, p. 192.

<sup>37</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 183.

<sup>38</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 184.

<sup>39</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 185.

<sup>40</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 185.

It's less heavy, less throbbing ... there's a concern for lyrics to be heard and not just a technological slur ...

and

Female music's a bit warmer. It tends to be less rock'n'roll. Women play less aggressively, generally. They caress it more, and men rock it and slap it. Women tend to like off-beat rhythms. That's why it's rare to find a women's rock'n'roll band.<sup>42</sup>

In 1995, these views seem rather problematic and stereotyped, yet in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the creation of alternative (feminist) musical discourses necessitated the creation of boundaries within which to work. Bayton has also pointed out that feminists faced the problem of the prescribed 'maleness' of so much rock music, and that because of this, some feminists considered folk music to be more 'ideologically safe'<sup>43</sup>.

Feminists who believed that women should create a musical culture that was different, and which expressed their 'femaleness' would have had a problem with other feminists who wanted to do what men did. Women who played so-called 'male' music such as heavy metal or punk music, on the other hand, resisted the notion that women should play 'quieter, gentler music'. They felt that this was based on a sexist stereotype of what women were conventionally expected to conform to. Bayton has put it best:

For such women, it is bad enough male musicians and male audiences telling them that they should not (or cannot) play heavy rock, without feminists reiterating the message. If all existing ways of playing and being on stage were rejected as being 'male', then there would be very little space for women to manoeuvre ... Musical essentialism lives on in some quarters, but it is no longer an orthodoxy, having been strongly challenged by women who wanted to make loud, powerful

<sup>42</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p.185. Interviewees Sarah (vocalist and percussionist) and Kate (guitarist/keyboardist/keyboardist) quoted by Bayton.

<sup>43</sup> M. Bayton 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 185.

music and bitterly resented the expectation that, as feminists, they should restrict themselves to being 'spiritual.'<sup>44</sup>

The debate presented in the above quote applies most pertinently to the women punk musicians who made their mark in Durban in the early 1980s. On the whole, these women felt that 'if men could do it, then so could they', and they therefore fitted very snugly into the feminist camp which desired to penetrate the 'male dominated' realms of rock music rather than create their own space.

Thus, women punk musicians in Durban did not ever attempt to create their own gigs with all-female audiences (as bands in the U.K. did). They played on the same bill as the male punk and rock bands and managed to attract a great deal of publicity this way. It is questionable, however, how much of the support they received was based on their musical talent rather than on sex appeal and novelty value.

#### **A Discussion of Women Rock Musicians in Durban and Their Music**

The general observations above help to explain why female rock musicians have been few and far between in Durban. Probably exacerbating the situation were the highly paternalistic values of South African society, in which male supremacy was deeply entrenched and women were expected to conform to the roles of housewife and mother.

#### **Dawn Selby (Third Eye)**

Dawn Selby was the most prominent women musician to surface in Durban in the late 1960s. Dawn, a highly talented musician, has become an important figure in popular music in Durban through the

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<sup>44</sup> M. Bayton, 'Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions', p. 186.

years. She is still very much involved in music-making, both as a composer and performer.

It is significant that Dawn's entry into the rock music world was to a large extent made possible by the fact that her brother, Ron was the founder of **It's A Secret** (later **The Third Eye**). It is arguable that she may have not entered the rock music world had her brother not been a rock musician. This I venture to state because Dawn is also a talented classical musician, and as a woman (young girl) in Durban in 1966, the sphere of classical music would have been perceived by most as a far more acceptable route into music making. This assumption is further validated by the fact that there were no other women musicians playing rock music in the late 1960s and early 1970s: women were not entering the rock music scene on their own initiative.

This is not to say that Dawn's entry into the Durban rock music scene had nothing to do with her own skills or initiative. An interview with Dawn revealed not only that she possesses perfect pitch, but also that she began classical piano lessons at the age of fourteen, and after three months, passed her Grade eight exam with distinction. At age 12, she had already became the core of **The Third Eye**, and the male members of the band readily acknowledged her role as such:

**It's a Secret's** singer, Dennis Robertson, said: 'Dawn is our star member. Without her the whole group would fall apart. We are hoping to cut a disc soon - with Dawn at the organ, of course'.<sup>45</sup>

Another important support mechanism in Dawn's life was that of her parents, who supported Ron and Dawn both financially and emotionally in their endeavours as rock musicians. This, Dawn acknowledges, was extremely important to her development as a rock musician, which might not have been otherwise encouraged by society at large. As a young girl, Dawn was treated as a 'little

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<sup>45</sup> T. Scott, Sunday Tribune Comics, 18th of June, 1967.

sister' by the male members of the band, and for the large part experienced a protected relationship with other band members. As the only woman on the rock music scene, she admits to having felt left out at social events she attended with the band. This is understandable considering that the other band members were ten years older than Dawn, and also that school friends of her age did not attend rock music gigs or the accompanying social events.

It is my opinion that Dawn Selby entered the Durban rock scene because her circumstances were such that she had connections and support within this male-dominated network. Her remarkable talents as a musician meant that once she had entered this world, she stayed very much part of it, so much so that she presently is a partner in a recording studio.

An informant <sup>46</sup> revealed a perhaps typical 'male' attitude towards the scarcity of women in rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s. When asked why this was the case, my informant's response was:

There were no women around to play. They just didn't turn up ... Women were considered as girlfriends, as someone to go out with. One would never have asked a woman to 'jam' with you ... The women were there in their place and the men were here in their place...

Another interesting observation made by the informant concerned Dawn Selby's entrance into the rock scene:

But she was Ronny's sister -- that's how she got in the band.

The fact that this informant expected women to simply 'turn up' at practices reveals a failure on the part of men to actively include women in the performance of rock music. The status quo (i.e. women as girlfriends, fans and companion) was therefore perpetuated, and it was not made any easier for women to

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<sup>46</sup> I would like to maintain the anonymity of this informant for obvious reasons.

participate more actively in rock music as the years progressed.

As has been mentioned, however, Dawn Selby is an exception to the rule. Her participation in **The Third Eye** became integral to the band's sound, as was acknowledged in the quote above. In the early years, her role as organist was most significant, but she also proved to be a talented songwriter and composer as she grew older. What is very interesting when considering Selby's contribution on organ, was the experimental nature of her playing, which at times created effects important to the meaning of a song. Such an example is to be found on '**Stagemakers**', a track from **The Third Eye**'s album, Searching (refer to cassette, Ex. 21). Here are the lyrics to the song:

### **Stagemakers**

There is no time to plan a book a day  
 Just mail it up and hope it stays that way  
 the things we do are the things that hold me down  
 Just come in tonight  
 And I'll swear you'll see no-one  
 And the world keeps falling down on me (repeat)

Just move it across, just move it over here  
 If you come in tonight there'll be nothing over there  
 Just take it down  
 Please cut along this line  
 Put it back up, and lets hope it will look fine  
 And the world keeps falling down on me (repeat)

### Instrumental climax (siren effect)

I'm going now, I'll leave you to your toil  
 Hanging around will only make it spoil  
 Why should I stay I'm here just to look  
 I think I'll go home, I think I'll write a book  
 And the world keeps falling down on me (repeat)

The song begins with a simple introduction by the organ, which plays chords on beats four and one of each bar. As it gets to the end of the second verse, with the reiteration of 'the world keeps falling down on me', the organ introduces a simple four-note descending motif. The motif gradually speeds up until it is barely recognisable, and a siren effect is created. The climax that is developed through this inventive effect is powerful, and

in keeping with the cataclysmic nature of the lyrics. The proficiency of technique demanded in creating such an effect is worthy of attention, especially when one keeps in mind that Selby was only in her early teens at the time of recording.

Selby's classical background also played an important role in her contributions on keyboard as a band member. The track entitled 'Awakening' on the same album (Ex. 16) contains portions of piano playing that is reminiscent of late romantic piano writing. This song has been discussed in the previous chapter, and reference has been made to the 'unfettered crashing piano chords' which occur in the sections in which the soldier is imagining his homecoming. The piano begins softly with deep bass notes on beat one of each bar, followed by major chords played progressively higher on beats two, three and four of each bar. Each beat is articulated as a semiquaver and a dotted quaver, giving a carefree, happy feel which contrasts strongly with the previous section. This style of piano playing is classically influenced, and demonstrates Selby's flexibility as a performer in the utilisation of a variety of musical genres. In addition to the piano playing discussed, the track also features Selby in an extended organ solo at the end of the first section. This solo is in a blues-influenced style, and is reminiscent of the organ style popularised by *The Mamas and the Papas*. Thus at an early age, Selby drew from an extensive repertoire of styles with innovation and skill.

#### All-Women Punk Bands

Although women musicians did not feature greatly in the first decade of rock in Durban I would like to argue that it was the advent of punk that gave women the chance to enter the realm of performance and composition. As I have stated in my introduction, punk's anti-establishment, 'do-it-yourself' stance made women's entry into the genre far easier than into the mainstream 'rock' world. Punk seemed to reinvent the parameters of popular music, in that musical standards became less important than the message

itself. Punk musicians needed only to know a few chords and a basic speeded-up rock rhythm and be able to string together a couple of sentences to compose a punk song. This is not to say that punk musicians were necessarily 'bad' musicians. Rather, the genre encouraged a raw, uncluttered style to communicate its message.

I propose that this was all the encouragement women in Durban needed to take to the stage themselves. The male domination of rock music in Durban up until the late 1970s and their unfamiliarity with the increasing complexity of electronic music equipment had put them at a distinct musical disadvantage. Because punk went back to the musical roots of rock (i.e. rock'n'roll)<sup>47</sup>, it was almost as if women were given a second chance to enter the rock world, and develop their musical skills from the beginning.

It has been mentioned that formation of the three all-women punk bands (*Leopard*, *Peach*, *The Nubiles*) which became prominent in Durban was dependant on male punk musicians, since the women who became punk musicians were invariably the sisters and sisters' friends of male punk musicians. They therefore had easy access to instruments and amplification equipment, and the men taught them the basic musical skills necessary to perform punk rock. Thus, in this respect, their position was similiar to Dawn Selby's. In this case, however, it was easier for more women to enter the punk scene, because of the points discussed above.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that *Peach* were not strictly an all-woman band. Rock musician, Allan Rosenberg, orchestrated the formation of the band, wrote the songs for the band and taught the women to play their instruments.

Women in the punk scene played all the instruments traditionally

<sup>47</sup> Rock'n'roll's basic chord sequences (I;IV;V) and the 4/4 rhythm with stresses on beats 2 and 4 were also the basis of punk. The difference was that punk speeded up all these parameters to a great extent.

played by men (bass, electric guitar and drums), and this in itself redefined the traditional role of women in rock bands. Significantly, the music played by the all-women punk bands was usually written by the band members, and thus a closer examination of the music provides an interesting study. Unfortunately, recordings by these bands are not easily available. Peach was the only band to record an album, while **Leopard** are featured on the punk compilation Six of the Best. The **Nubiles** did not make any formal recordings, and the only recording that is known to exist is a live recording of a performance in 1982.

The two songs recorded by **Leopard** on the Six of the Best album, in 1979 were entitled 'Underestimator' (cassette, Ex. 11) and 'Boys and Bitches' (cassette Ex. 22). Here are the lyrics of the two songs.

#### **Underestimator**

Are you ashamed to introduce me to your friends?  
 Are you afraid I might disgrace you if you do?  
 Maybe I just can't meet the standards you require  
 Could be it's just the other me you desire?

You're an underestimator, and a little later you'll  
 regret that you do  
 Baby when I start underestimating you.

Seems like I'm just another toy to put away  
 You take me out when everyone has gone away  
 Maybe I just don't meet the standards you require  
 Could be it's just the other me that you desire

You're an underestimator ...

#### **Boys and Bitches**

He was a beaut, but he got on my nerves  
 Took me to his bedroom, said he liked my purse  
 He pushed my ego, he had that charm  
 But what he tried next could do me some harm  
 He was a loverboy, he was a loverboy

He got the shits, then walked out of the room  
 Said he'd get a better response with a broom  
 But his friends were told a different story,  
 Those bitches were looking at me  
 He was a loverboy, he was a loverboy.

They think they're clever  
 They're convinced they're smart  
 They won't face the fact, they're the same at heart  
 He pushed my ego, he had that charm  
 But what he tried next, could do me some harm  
 He was a loverboy, he was a loverboy, he was a  
 loverboy

That's boys and bitches

Perhaps what is most important about these songs is the extreme directness of their lyrics. In both cases, they concern the status of women in relation to men, and in both cases, scathing criticism is dealt out. 'Underestimator' addresses a presumed male listener, and condemns the trivialisation of the performer as a 'toy', as a convenient companion whenever the listener chooses. Furthermore, the performer asserts herself and threatens the listener that he can expect the same treatment in future. On a musical level, the song is sustained by a chord sequence played on the electric guitar (enhanced by a 'reverb' pedal), with all the voices forcefully singing the repetitive melody line. The tone is sarcastic and biting, with the words being clearly articulated, even spat out.

'Boys and Bitches' is communicated in much the same way as 'Underestimator'. It is a sneering indictment on the dating expectations of men on women and on the way in which women judge other women on moral issues. Both these songs reveal an animosity towards the objectification of women and as such are an important contribution to the early stages of the feminist movement in South Africa. Punk provided a convenient outlet for the anger women felt towards the patriarchal, conservative South African society which was obviously present, yet unexpressed in music until the late 1970's. Punk's leaning towards simplicity, directness and forceful articulation was the perfect medium for the expression of these issues.

### Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theories informing gender studies in relation to rock, and has also discussed the contribution made by women to the Durban rock scene. Rock has generally been perceived as a male discourse, an 'unfeminine' space, and women who have participated in rock in Durban have been subjects of the 'male gaze'. My own experience as the only women in a rock band, as well as that of the women Durban rock musicians reveals that women are still not as prominent in the Durban rock scene as men; family responsibilities coupled with the demanding work hours of a rock musician; male domination and lack of encouragement towards women becoming involved, are the main reasons for this.

I feel that it is also vital that attitudes towards women in rock (in South Africa) change from that of sex object (and window dressing) to that of artist, both on the part of male musicians, audiences and the press. In addition, women need to become more proactive in creating an environment which allows their status as rock musicians to improve. The feminist counter-culture described by Bayton has still to become a reality in South African rock circles.

## CHAPTER 5

### ROCK MUSIC IN DURBAN AND THE GLOBAL/LOCAL DEBATE

#### Introduction

In popular music circles today, the global/local debate centres around the effects of global technological advances on industrially developing nations and their cultures. Global culture is thought to be the result of two factors: first, the drive on the part of capitalist enterprises (e.g. transnational record companies) to expand into new markets, and second, the impact of technology which has resulted in the worldwide flow of information and ideas on an instant and large scale basis<sup>1</sup>.

Thus:

... the transnational flow of music is often envisioned as a vertical flow from more powerful nations to less powerful ones, or as a centre-periphery model with music moving from dominant cultures to marginal cultures, from developed countries - particularly the United States - to the rest of the world, with accompanying images of overpowering, displacing, and/or destroying local cultures...<sup>2</sup>

'World Music' is the term used by ethnomusicologists to describe the result of the appropriation of non-Anglo-American musics by dominant musical corporates. It is a controversial term, which is used as an umbrella to describe music which is not British or American and has come to be viewed as an attempt by dominant cultures to retain control over world markets and resources. The definition of the 'local' has become a pressing issue in the

<sup>1</sup> See R. Garofalo, 'Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity and Cultural Imperialism', The World of Music, 35 (2), 1993, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> R. Garofalo, 'Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism', p. 17.

1990s, because technology has not only advanced dominant cultures, but has also given voice to traditionally dominated cultures. Guilbault has pointed out that the prospect of local production and control of musical products has 'imparted fear' to 'dominant cultures', and that the

... current preoccupation in the traditionally dominant cultures with defining the local can therefore be interpreted as a manifestation of the crisis occasioned by the repositioning of dominant cultures among themselves as well as with the 'others'.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in the 1990s, the equation of dominant cultures with global culture, is no longer an unquestioned reality. As Guilbault has stated: 'Global culture is now thought of as contested terrain where there are only locals engaged in a battle over transnational markets'.<sup>4</sup>

This was not always the case, however. The colonising effect of Western nations on Third World countries prompted much discussion of the concept of cultural imperialism. According to Dave Laing, the concept of cultural imperialism depends 'on an analogy between the historical colonizing role of Western nations in politically subjugating the third world and the current role of transnational media and electronics corporations'.<sup>5</sup> Wallis and Malm have pointed out that the concept of cultural imperialism has both cultural and economic dimensions, and that it exists when:

... a culture, usually that of a powerful society or group in a society, is imposed on another in a more or

<sup>3</sup> J. Guilbault, 'On Redefining the "local" Through World Music', The World of Music, 35 (2), 1993, pp. 33-46.

<sup>4</sup> J. Guilbault, 'On Redefining the "Local" Through World Music', p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> D. Laing, 'The Music Industry and the "Cultural Imperialism" Thesis'. Media, Culture and Society 8, 1986, 331-41 as quoted in R. Garofalo, 'Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism', The World of Music, 35/2, 1993, p. 18.

less formally organized fashion...

and when

... the cultural dominance is augmented by the transfer of money and/or resources from dominated to dominating culture group.<sup>6</sup>

This is specifically relevant to South Africa where the import of Anglo-American rock music was far more profitable for the South African music industry than promoting local rock music.

### **South African Rock and the Identity Crisis**

The need to retain ties with Britain, by Natalians in particular, has already been discussed. The residue of loyalty felt by English-speaking Natalians towards England has been a focus of this discussion and has been ventured as a possible reason for the almost blind imitation of English trends by young people in Durban. Albie Sachs put it succinctly:

It is crucial that we in South Africa now set about disestablishing our culture and breaking away from the conceptual and structural strangulations of the past. Long after our country was declared a republic, we remain mentally colonised...<sup>7</sup>

This 'mental colonisation' is a key to understanding the problem of local identity in English-speaking South Africans. The Goldstuck/Kramer interview reveals another important key to understanding the identity problem experienced by English-speaking South Africans<sup>8</sup>. Kramer asserts that English-speaking South Africans have an inferiority complex which is directly linked to the negative connotations evoked by South Africa's apartheid legacy. This inferiority complex may not be as strong

<sup>6</sup> R. Wallis and K. Malm, Big Sounds from Small People: The Music Industry in Small Countries, London: Constable, 1994. pp. 298-299.

<sup>7</sup> A. Sachs, 'Black is Beautiful, Brown is Beautiful, White is Beautiful: Towards a Rainbow Culture in a United South Africa', Further Thoughts on Culture, Cape Town: SA Constitution Studies Centre, March 1992, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 1.

today as it was in 1982 (at the time of the interview), but it certainly is relevant to this discussion, which spans the greater segment of the apartheid era.

In a recent paper <sup>9</sup>, Carol Muller has also examined identity issues in relation to white, English-speaking South Africans. Muller suggests that this population group within South Africa considered themselves part of an imagined community, one sustained by imported recordings, sheet music and journalism which focused on international musical trends and events (such as Bandstand Magazine). Muller cites her trigger point as Benedict Anderson's book, Imagined Communities <sup>10</sup>, and extends Anderson's concern with the way in which print medium sustains a sense of community within nation states to a concern for dispersed communities, such as the English-speaking white South Africans who are of British extraction:

I suggest that white English speaking identity in South Africa is a complex one, one that is constructed out of a tension between the local and international or transnational domains. It's a post-colonial identity of the colonist, the identity of the English-speaking person who emigrated to the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.<sup>11</sup>

The transfer of the concept of an 'imagined community' to English-speaking white South Africans is a useful one. It not only helps one understand the intense loyalty felt by the English-speaking South African towards Britain; it also demonstrates how the musical product (written or recorded) was the way in which the English-speaking South African maintained

<sup>9</sup> C. Muller, a working paper entitled 'White Pop and an Imagined English-Speaking Community in South Africa 1950-1990,' presented at the South African Ethnomusicology Symposium in September 1995 and its inclusion is forthcoming in Papers Presented at the Thirteenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology, A. Tracey (ed.) September 1995, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London: Verso, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> C. Muller, 'White Pop and an Imagined English-Speaking Community in South Africa', p.5.

links with Britain. Thus, it becomes clearer as to why so many English-speaking South African musicians played cover versions of British chart-toppers. Playing cover versions was a way in which they could enter their imagined 'overseas' community, and assert their links with their home environment. In the above quote Muller also hints that the imagined community of English-speaking white South Africans extends to all British colonists worldwide. White English-speaking South Africans therefore belong to a global community of colonists which communicate their identity through the consumption and reproduction of British musical products.

It should be remembered that rock musicians use covers to hone their skills, and that imitation of successful rock bands is an important step in the musical learning process. Playing covers in itself, therefore, cannot be equated to a lack of identity. In fact, in Durban there was little opportunity for rock musicians to become proficient since there were almost no exposure to rock music in schools. Thus the playing of covers provided an opportunity for musicians to learn how rock music worked.

However, the pervasiveness of this trend in early Durban rock bands suggests that an identity problem could be distinguished. Early Durban rock bands wrote little of their own material, and preferred to play British chart-toppers instead. This is indicative of the degree to which the youth of Durban looked elsewhere for models to imitate, rather than building their own distinctive sound and culture. It has been suggested in Chapter Three that by looking elsewhere for meaning, English-speaking white youth also avoided the shame of being labelled as South African. In the light of the fact that Natalians voted against the republicanisation of South Africa in 1961, this subconscious loyalty to Britain as a source of identity is understandable.

In addition, the Woodstock event in 1969, captured the imagination of music promoters, musicians and fans in Durban (and

South Africa). Durban record company owner, Dave Marks attended Woodstock, and this proved inspirational in his subsequent organisation of music festivals in South Africa. The numerous festivals and large music events of the late 1960s and early 1970s in South Africa, as well as the Academic Freedom and Free Peoples Concerts in the late 1970s and early 1980s although an imitation of international trends, were important for the development of a definitive rock 'scene' in Durban and elsewhere in South Africa. Competitions such as the annual Durban Go! Show in the late 1960s and early 1970s attracted large crowds, and created a space for musicians to perform and be rewarded. A pride in local bands is definitely distinguishable in the early years of rock music in Durban, with the Daily News creating a specifically youth-centred weekly supplement entitled 'Trend' in the early 1970s. 'Trend' sustained interest in local music through weekly interviews with new bands, record reviews of local music, and feature articles on local bands. Paradoxically, it also carried a column featuring a London correspondent who kept Durban youth updated on the latest British trends in music, fashion and events. Muller also cites the importance of Bandstand Magazine as an example of 'English-speakers' construction of self and place through musical production and consumption':

In a single plane, of the single page, you have discussion of musical performances in England -- writing about theatres and places in a way that assumes everyone can immediately visualize the music theatres and performers as if they were there in person; the discussion of jazz and the latest film releases shifts to the USA; and then local musical performances and performance issues are discussed. This is a very real manifestation of the White English Global Identity. The links between Britain and South Africa are reinforced through tables that compare British hit parade with South African. What is remarkable about the magazine is the way in which music industry products and the media are presented as an integral part of the imagined global community of English-speaking colonists.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> C. Muller, 'White Pop and an Imagined English-Speaking Community in South Africa 1950-1990, p.5.

It has been mentioned previously that Durban was the centre of the rock 'n' roll event in South Africa and that it spawned a number of key rock bands in the late 1960s. It has also been mentioned that a bustling and colourful live rock music scene flourished in Durban at the same time. It would, therefore, hopefully be assumed that a local rock sound would have emerged from Durban as a result of this local musical activity. Unfortunately, the factors of poor self-image and a fixation with British and American rock were too dominant for this to happen in a general overwhelming sense. The progressive bands such as *The Third Eye* and *Abstract Truth* have been discussed as exceptions to the commerciality of other popular Durban bands. Thus, it could be concluded that the global invasion by Anglo-American rock of the South African music scene was successful in establishing itself as the dominant culture of English-speaking South Africans. This entrenchment of global culture was further aided by the poor self-image already present in English-speaking South Africans.

#### **The South African Music Industry and its Contribution to the Identity Crisis.**

It should be remembered that Durban has never been the centre of the South African recording industry, and therefore this discussion cannot focus solely on record companies based in Durban. It is necessary to discuss the South African music industry as a whole in order to understand the kind of opposition it presented to Durban musicians. Oftentimes Durban musicians went to Johannesburg to record albums and singles, because the recording industry was (and still is) based there. The problems discussed were not unique to Durban, but were experienced by all South African rock musicians.

The South African music industry, like most music industries worldwide, is controlled by dominant conglomerates. In this case, three main international record companies. i.e. Gallo, WEA (part

of Warner Brothers) and EMI. These record companies are the major record distributors to every retail outlet in the country, and are primarily geared to promoting and distributing 'overseas' products. Muller points out that Gallo recorded most indigenous forms of music in South Africa to cater for population groups not otherwise represented on the global music market, but that 'it was easy enough to import musical product from Britain and the USA for the English speaking communities in South Africa'.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the inferior status afforded local rock, musicians also had to contend with an apathetic music industry which was far better equipped to promote the global rock culture than a local one. The bad marketing skills of South African recording companies and their poor management of musical products were complaints of interviewees of all genres of rock during the course of research. Steve Fataar recalled The Flames's first album Um Um Oh Yea (1965) being recorded on the Rave label, but never being properly marketed by the recording company, with the result that less than twenty albums were sold. Another example of the apathy of the South African record industry towards local rock musicians in Durban was provided by Syd Kitchen who financed the first Utensils album, and then approached record companies to market it:

... but the doors remained closed, because essentially the music industry here is very geared to the overseas product ... they're not here for the local musicians ... it took me a long time to come to terms with it, I've knocked on the door many times.<sup>14</sup>

An interview with Don Clark of C&G Studios (a privately-owned studio and record company in Durban which opened in 1979), revealed some of the problems facing record companies in relation to the promotion and recording of local rock music. The main

<sup>13</sup> C. Muller, 'White Pop and an Imagined English-Speaking Community in South Africa 1950-1990.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted from my interview with Syd Kitchen held on the 5th April, 1994.

factors for consideration it seems, are financial and qualitative, since according to Clark:

...the population for and demand of rock music in South Africa is small. There are only five million whites, of whom only half enjoy rock music. This results in a small amount of competition and thus lower standards among rock musicians.<sup>15</sup>

This view is regarded as typical of record executives in South Africa by rock musicians.<sup>16</sup> Yet, one does have to concur that the demand for local rock as opposed to local traditional or African musics is lower in South Africa simply because of the population numbers. This, however, should not be used as an excuse to ignore local rock musicians. The question of lower standards is a very contentious one, and is at the heart of the identity issue at stake. The assumption that South African rock is inferior to international rock is one which has pervaded our consciousness over the decades, and has largely been perpetuated by the South African music industry. The recent re-issue by Gallo of four compact discs containing white pop songs from 1960-1990 demonstrates that those local artists who did record, recorded mostly trite versions of already-popular songs. As Muller points out, it is clear when judging from this collection, that 'English-speaking whites were never able to look locally, they were never encouraged to look inside themselves for musical and cultural resources'.<sup>17</sup> The saying 'Local is Lekker' was created in an attempt to discourage such thinking patterns, albeit not only in musical circles.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from Don Clark from my interview with him on the 21 April 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Syd Kitchen, for example, strongly opposed this statement and felt it was typical of the music industry in South Africa in side-stepping its responsibility to support local music.

<sup>17</sup> C. Muller, 'White Pop and an Imagined English-Speaking Community in South Africa 1950-1990', p.6.

## Independent Record Companies and Promotions Organisations.

### Natal

The alternative small record labels owned by music lovers who were concerned about the establishment of local music provided some support for musicians in Durban. David Marks, himself a rock musician, opened his record company entitled Third Ear in the late 1960s, and built up an astounding collection of local rock, jazz, folk and African music. In short, if it were not for his dedication to local music, many local bands and musicians would not have any form of recording in their name. Marks made a point of attending and recording concerts in and around Durban and was largely responsible for the Free Peoples concerts in Johannesburg in the late-1970s and early-1980s. It was Marks who first realised the potential in Johnny Clegg and Sipho Mncunu, who went on to a successful musical career as Juluka.

Don Clark's studio (C&G) has been mentioned above. This studio, based in Westville (a suburb of Durban), has played an important role in the recording of local rock as well as jazz and vocal music. Ron Selby of The Third Eye, opened his own recording studio, also based in Westville <sup>18</sup>, while his sister Dawn owns shares in another independent studio, Strawberry Fields Studios, which has been operating for seven years.

Yet another independent music promotions company was started in April 1984, this time in Pietermaritzburg, capital of Natal. The organisers of the promotions company, named Stun Promotions were Matthew Temple and Peter Stuart:

This charismatic pair formed their organisation in order to promote local music which in Pietermaritzburg

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<sup>18</sup>Selby's Production Studios began operating as a commercial studio in 1984. It was originally based in Ron Selby's house in Hillcrest and later moved to his home in Westville.

suffers from acute venue problems.<sup>19</sup>

### Johannesburg

An important independent record company which came into being in Johannesburg during the mid-1980s was Shifty Studios, owned by Lloyd Ross. The original premises used by Ross was a fully-equipped mobile caravan which enabled him to move around the country and record. Shifty Records, which is still a popular choice for local artists, has been instrumental in supporting local rock musicians from all over South Africa.<sup>20</sup> Although independents offered more to local artists in the way of moral support and encouragement, they did not have the distribution networks that the major companies had access to, nor the support of record outlets:

There are so many areas where we come up against a dead end. A major hassle is the distribution of our music -- record shops are not willing to take independently recorded albums, and several refuse point blank to sell singles. <sup>21</sup>

An independent music promotions syndicate, named Urban Noizz was also set up in Johannesburg in April 1984. The person behind the project which organised a national tour of university campuses by four Johannesburg bands <sup>22</sup> was Cas Rasch. The reason for the organisation of such a tour relates directly to poor support of local music by record companies, and the equally poor support given local bands by audiences because of the perception that

<sup>19</sup> D. Credit, 'If You Want To Be Stunned', The Natal Witness, 7 April, 1984, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Some artists recorded on the Shifty label include the Kalahari Surfers (Cape Town rock band), the Lesotho band, Sakomota, The Banned, the Happy Ships and the Softies (all of Springs), Cape Town's Roger Lucey, and even Bernoldus Niemand (James Phillips). Shifty Records' latest recording is of Durban's Urban Creep, their compact disc, Sea Level.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from an interview conducted by Craig Tyson with Lloyd Ross and his partner, Fair Lady, April 18, 1984.

<sup>22</sup> The four bands were ska-influenced Dynamics, reggae-based Dread Warriors, Cas Rasch's own band, No Exit, and punk-influenced Dog Detachment.

local rock was inferior. According to Tyson, a journalist with Fair Lady:

National tours may be one way of getting around the apathetic attitude to local music. In Johannesburg, as in other centres, the non-commercial or 'alternative' bands have had to play to the same old faithful audiences week after week. Record companies and radio stations won't touch them, so much of South Africa's best music hardly gets heard ... On the subject of the local music industry, Cas is enthusiastically critical. Voicing the feeling of many fellow musicians, he says: 'Their attitude stinks'. There follows a string of examples about studio bosses losing recording contracts, engineers making badly mixed recordings, and hollow promises of fame and fortune. 'They make their money from the bands and the public, but won't put anything back.' With a history of such actions, individuals and groups throughout the country have started setting up their own studios, to bypass the forces of control. 'If we don't get around the situation, things will be stuck for years. It's no use looking to the industry - we have to do things ourselves...'<sup>23</sup>

#### **South African Personalities and Local Rock.**

Various rock personalities have also become important in furthering the cause of local music in South Africa. Johannesburg resident, Chris Prior is probably the most famous of these. An interview held with Prior in June 1984 revealed some of the problems experienced by South African rock musicians in relation to the South African recording industry and support structures (such as club owners, managers and audiences) at the time:

There are no parameters in South African music ...It's up to the clubs and the public to come up with the goods, and there are good local bands. But the venues don't give their fair share; managers say bands should be thankful for the exposure and not ask for money. It's such a rip-off. Bands are negative and depressed. It isn't at all encouraging when the clubs prefer bands to play the Top Twenty and stay clear of

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<sup>23</sup>Quoted from an interview conducted by Craig Tyson and published by Fair Lady, on April 4, 1984, p. 131.

innovation. Our musicians are willing to take chances; they're just not given the chance. They can't risk alienating the public, and the record companies won't allow them to really try their new material. They follow overseas trends and go for the common denominator ... And the independent producers have a nice idea, selling cassettes at gigs. I hear talk about a possible independent cartel which could bypass the major companies' strangle-hold on record pressing and marketing. Most of our record companies are playing it too safe, only signing bands like **The Soft Shoes** who they can take to shopping centres... It also bugs me that although some bands are doing their own material, it's all based on the British scene, especially seven-year-old punk ... And there's a general lack of journalistic support. Apart from Radio 5 nobody's doing much at all ... But success in South Africa isn't sufficient, you have to crack it overseas to make a living. It's the public's fault: they don't buy local stuff because of its image. But this traditional inferiority complex is changing: the attitude of 'patronising them because they are local' is out...<sup>24</sup>

Another interview published in Fair Lady's 'Fast Forward' column in May 1984, featured David Gresham, a Springbok Radio disc jockey, and the head of an independent record label. Gresham represented a far more conservative viewpoint, one probably more typical of the South African record industry as a whole:

He says South African musicians have life too easy; 'they're not hungry enough'. That's why our local music can't cut it internationally. Clout fell to pieces because of 'inevitable local thinking'. Also we don't have the songwriters to make great songs. Our recording techniques are backward. There aren't enough venues, and those we do have demand hit parade music, not original stuff... 'As far as innovation goes, we just follow trends, we won't impose anything'. If we spend R100 000 and five months in the studio on a group then maybe they'll be good enough - international standard. But we can't recoup our money in this country; it's a minor market. Every international hit form here has been a fluke ... But we're just as much at fault: perhaps the industry is too complacent, we rely too heavily on international

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted from an interview conducted by Jeremy Thomas, and published in Fair Lady's 'Fast Forward' column, June 13, 1984, p. 136.

products. And our record pressings could improve...'<sup>25</sup>

Radio 702's Neil Johnson was another avid supporter of local rock music, and in 1983, was initially given a mid-evening Monday slot to showcase South African rock. Programme Director Gary Edwards later changed the time to a 'less risky, commercial-free Midnight Special slot' because 'the whole thing was becoming "unfamiliar"' <sup>26</sup>. This is typical of the kind of attitude displayed by music industry executives towards local rock throughout the history of South African rock: i.e. it is a risk factor. Furthermore, the practice of giving local music its own slot is also problematic. It smacks of patronisation, and gives the impression that local rock would not be able to stand on its own merits should it be slotted in with international rock.

Thus the inferiority complex regarding local rock has pervaded every aspect of the South African consciousness. Record producers and radio programmers have been afraid to support it, and audiences have been given little opportunity to hear it. Independent promoters and record companies have been important in the support of local rock and continue to do so at present.

### **Rock Subcultures**

Subcultures such as the Hippie, Punk and Rastafarian movements represented an anti-establishment ethic worldwide. Paradoxically, they also did not remain locally specific, and became a transnational anti-establishment expression which had an impact on Durban and South Africa. The appropriation of these movements can be viewed as both symptomatic of the youth of Durban's desperate attempt to identify with anything other than South Africa, as well as a political move to voice protest against an unjust socio-political regime. A subculture paradigm

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from an interview conducted by Jeremy Thomas, 'Fast Forward' *Fair Lady*, May 16, 1984, p. 154.

<sup>26</sup> G. Silber, 'Music Mix', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 4 September 1983, p. 30.

emerged from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Culture in the mid-1970s and was influential in mapping the conflict between dominant and subordinate groups<sup>27</sup>. Erlmann summarises the core issues of Hebdige's book, Subculture. The Meaning of Style, as such:

... Dick Hebdige argued that the conflict between the dominant order and subdominant groups is found figuratively reflected in subcultural styles, such as reggae or punk. By refusing to cohere around a set of dominant values and symbols and by decomposing the straight orderliness of the ruling system of consensus into an unruly collage, a bricolage of emblems of difference, these styles subvert the hegemonic.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Punk in Durban: A South African example of a Subculture which 'Subvert[ed] the Hegemonic'.**

On a practical level, the punk rock movement totally bypassed the mainstream music industry in South Africa, as it did worldwide. Punk bands, such as Durban's Wild Youth and Powerage, recorded their own albums, designed their own posters and cassette covers, and distributed their music at concerts and to punk enthusiasts worldwide. This is not only indicative of their anti-establishment stance, but also is important because it encouraged South African musicians to create their own songs relevant to their own experiences.

The punk subculture was not dependent on the approval of the music industry, and therefore, was able to (as Dick Hebdige put it) 'subvert the hegemonic' global forces of music mass production and distribution. The punk subculture was a personal, intimate one. Cassette distribution was based on friendships and personal contact. Gig organisation and advertisement was done by members of the band and their friends. A tremendous amount of support from a close-knit group of fans was the experience of

<sup>27</sup> The most influential work to emerge was Dick Hebdige's Subculture. The Meaning of Style. London: Routledge, 1979.

<sup>28</sup> V. Erlmann, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Transnational Musics', The World of Music 35 (2), 1993, p. 10.

punk bands in Durban. In short, punk in Durban did not get caught up in a mass production campaign. It did not seem beset with an inferiority complex, but rather made a point of verbalising difference, of self-affirmation. Perhaps the best example of this is Wild Youth's first single, 'Wot 'Bout Me?' (cassette, Ex. 23) released in 1978. The lyrics of the song are as follows:

I don't wanna talk about Johnny Rotten  
 I don't wanna talk about Sid Vicious  
 I don't wanna talk about Joe Strummer  
 I just wanna talk about, about me  
 Wot about me? Wot about me? Wot about me?

I don't wanna talk about Elvis the Pelvis  
 I don't wanna talk about Buddy Cochran  
 I don't wanna talk about David Bowie  
 I just wanna talk about, about me  
 Wot about me? Wot about me? Wot about me?

I don't wanna talk about Jimi Hendricks  
 I don't wanna talk about Eric Clapton  
 I don't wanna talk about Jimmy Page  
 I just wanna talk about, about me  
 Wot about me? wot about me? wot about me?

me and you and me and you ....

The lyrics of the song epitomise the self-affirmation of the punk movement in Durban. The juxtaposition of 'me' against the list of famous international rock musicians creates the desired effect. i.e. pride in local and personal identity as rock musicians. It places South Africans (in fact anyone who sings along) on the same level as the rock stars. It breaks down the barrier between 'them and us', 'the international rock stars and local musicians', and disintegrates the inferiority complex which seems to pervade both audiences and musicians in South Africa.

The melody of the song is simple and repetitive, and is sung in a sneering, even taunting manner. A basic 4/4 rock rhythm (with emphasis on beats 2 and 4) is used. The bass line and chord sequence is also strikingly simple, and the only instrument which stands out is the electric guitar, which plays short solo motifs during the third verse. Altogether, the music itself does not

strike one as particularly enterprising. The lyrics are, in fact the main carrier of the message, which together with a simply constructed melody and a sneering vocal style, make the point of self-affirmation very clear. The accent used is a rough, cockney accent, which could be construed as mock imitation of punk and punk musicians in Britain (such as Johnny Rotten and Joe Strummer who are mentioned in the song).

**Wild Youth** were interviewed live on radio when they released this single. Even in 1978, they acknowledged the identity crisis experienced by rock musicians and fans in South Africa, and indicated that 'Wot 'Bout Me?' was about this identity crisis. The interview also confirms their 'do-it-yourself' ethic, which assured them of complete artistic control. Here is a transcription of relevant parts of this interview:

**Interviewer:** Wild Youth are with me in our Johannesburg studios. They were here to appear at a concert which was very successful. ... and the interesting thing about this group from Durban consisting of Rubin Rose, Skid Soles and Johnny Teen is that they play their unique brand of music, certainly is unique in South Africa, and they've just made a record - not released through any of the major record companies - in fact they financed, produced, recorded and are distributing the record themselves. I asked Johnny Teen to tell us about it.

**Teen:** Basically the material is original of course. We compose all our own material. The only cover versions we do are of the groups we love overseas, which you can't hear over here... The single ... we're always reading about the groups overseas, and hearing them on the radio. But we feel that we would like to be like them. We want to be in the same position. We're tired of just being, you know, the average teenager, puppets. And I think you know, that's why it's going down well... when a person in the audience hears that song, they all say 'what about me?'. Everyone wants to be something... they can identify with it... it's about *identity crises*...everyone wants to be someone...and that's what the song's about...

**Interviewer:** Do you feel a record company would not be able to improve your success?

**Teen:** If they gave us a contract on our own terms...

**Interviewer:** What are your terms?

**Teen:** Our terms are that we have complete artistic say over everything... they will just distribute the <sup>29</sup> single ... they will get their money's worth.

### Conclusion

The lack of a distinct local identity amongst English-speaking white South Africans is the result of issues ranging from Sachs' 'mental colonisation' to an apathetic music industry. Guilbault has hinted that rock music as a whole has been viewed as a dominant music by non-Western nations <sup>30</sup>. One might even extend this generalisation allow for the possibility that a form of rock specific to a nation or locality could be undermined by the global rock invasion. The success of a local brand of rock might in this circumstance be largely due to the intervention of government in legislating support in the form of specified percentages of airtime for original local music. Australia, for example has spawned a specifically Australian-sounding brand of rock as a result of such a government intervention. Thankfully this is soon to become a reality in South Africa, which will mean that the public will be better exposed to what South African rock musicians are writing, and then be able to support the musicians in buying recordings and attending concerts.

It appears that other forms of South African popular music such as jazz and boeremusiek have acquired a unique South African flavour, an identity one could say. This goes hand in hand with the fact that these musics have received greater support from the music industry in South Africa because the commercial rewards were seen to be better than that of local rock. Local rock has been at the receiving end of an identity crisis which only now appears to be abating. With better support from government and the music industry, South African rock, like Australian rock,

<sup>29</sup> Transcription of the radio interview from a recording by a fan.

<sup>30</sup> J. Guilbault, 'On Redefining the "Local" Through World Music', The World of Music, 35 (2), 1993, p. 34.

could be making its mark on the global rock culture in the near future.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored rock music in Durban over two decades, and focused on the history of rock in Durban, with reference to socio-political, gender and identity issues. My research shows that the issue of identity, in particular the identity crisis experienced by white South Africans, has been a central one. An awareness of this crisis has permeated socio-political, historical and gender discussions, with a number of explanations as to the reasons for this crisis being offered.

The identity crisis has manifested itself in the fact that Durban rock bands have tended to play cover versions of songs made popular by British and American rock bands. This, however, has not always been the preferred choice. Audiences and the music industry have provided little support to local musicians with the result being that bands have been forced to perform cover versions in order to survive. This shunning of local original music is in itself a reflection of the identity crisis within rock audiences, and it has been compounded by a recording industry which finds importing and marketing international rock music more profitable than supporting local rock music. It is here that the tensions inherent in the global/local debate have become illuminated. The South African rock scene has been inundated with outside recordings, and has done very little exporting of its own rock products.

Why this inferiority complex exists has also been a focus of this research. The residue of colonialism has been suggested as a possible contributing factor, and it has been pointed out that white English-speaking Natalians in particular felt a great amount of allegiance towards Britain. Thus, the imitation of British bands by South African white rock bands could be

understood in this light.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the impact of apartheid, and the accompanying shame brought upon South Africans has been suggested as a reason for the outward-looking nature of South African rock bands and musicians in Durban. By listening to and playing globally-popular rock songs, Durbanites identified with a global rather than a South African culture. It is also here that the local/global debate and its relevance to the South African rock scene has been an important factor.

South Africa has become dominated by the global rock industry, with very few of its local musicians gaining recognition. At the same time, independent record companies and 'grassroots' efforts have been important for the survival of local rock music. The punk rock movement has been cited as an example of a subculture which not only survived, but also subverted the dominant global culture by sending recordings to the outside world and by not relying on the dominant recording companies for support. Punk enthusiasts such as Rubin Rose, Karen Lange and Ernest Marques have played an important role in the documentation and distribution of local punk music.

Throughout my research, it has become apparent that Durban has been an important city for the development of rock in South Africa, and reasons for this centrality as a source of new rock trends have been offered in Chapters One and Two. Not only is Durban the birthplace of rock'n'roll in South Africa; it has also spawned other important trends in the South African rock scene, such as the 'progressive' rock bands in the middle and late 1960s, the acoustic folk rock scene in the mid-1970s, the punk rock movement in the late-1970s and the hard core punk rock scene in the early-1980s.

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<sup>1</sup>The identification with an originally white, foreign culture by black bands, such as *The Flames*, perhaps reveals a deeper identity crisis. The complexities of their appropriation of the rock genre, and what it suggests about their conceptions of identity have not been dealt with in this thesis.

At the same time, a curious contradiction became apparent. Although Durban has spawned some of the most original local rock bands, it has also gained a reputation as the city for the least audience and record industry support for local original rock music<sup>2</sup>. A recent article reveals that, in retrospect, it has perhaps been to the advantage of Durban musicians and rock bands that so little attention has been paid to Durban bands over the years<sup>3</sup>:

Durban has been paradoxically blessed in the long run by the absence of hype and a music industry sausage-machine. This has created a climate of freedom and room to be yourself.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting that in the same article, Sudheim cites Durban as the centre for a new rock development in South Africa.

The notion that Durban is the epicentre of South Africa's exciting new original music is already something of a cliche. In bars and nightclubs across the country you're bound to discover some pop sociologist comparing Durban to Seattle, making the point that a host of epochal rock outfits suddenly emerged from a town relatively ignored by the mainstream media and music industry to create a definitive 'sound', as in the Seattle Sound created by Nirvana, Mud Honey, Pearl Jam et al...<sup>5</sup>

It is possible that the lack of support experienced by Durban bands has actually spawned a spirit of originality and determination in Durban throughout the years. It certainly is a factor for consideration when remembering that Durban has been the centre of many new rock developments since the late 1950s.

<sup>2</sup> Both Rubin Rose and Steve Fataar explicitly mentioned this contradiction during interviews.

<sup>3</sup> The remarkable amount of attention given to Durban bands of the middle and late 1960s should be regarded as an exception. Reasons for the subsequent lack of attention have been suggested in Chapter Two.

<sup>4</sup> A. Sudheim, 'Rocking at Sea Level'.

<sup>5</sup> A Sudheim, 'Rocking at Sea Level'.

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## APPENDIX

### LIST OF SONGS FEATURED ON CASSETTE

#### CHAPTER 2:

The songs chosen to correlate with Chapter Two are included merely for the reader's interest. They represent a selection of Durban bands and simply allow the reader to hear what the bands sounded like. The songs are recorded in the order in which the bands are discussed in the text.

1. Dickie Loader and The Blue Jeans, 'Do You Wanna Know A Secret?' (Paul McCartney and John Lennon), On The Town, 1963.
2. The Flames, '8 Days a Week' (Paul McCartney and John Lennon), Burning Soul, 1968.
3. The Gonks, 'Nobody But Me', (single), 1967.
4. The Mods, 'After the Fox', (single), 1967.
5. The Third Eye, 'Fire' (single), 1969.
6. The Third Eye, 'Retain Your Half Ticket', Searching, 1970.
7. Abstract Truth, 'Oxford Town' (Bob Dylan), Totum, 1971.
8. Finch and Henson, 'Oh Brother' Finch and Henson: Greatest Hits, 1982.
9. The Fourth Reich, ' Anywhere Anyhow', Recording of a live performance in Durban made available by Ernesto Marques, 1977.
10. Wild Youth, 'Radio Youth', (self-produced single), 1978.

11. Leopard, 'Underestimator', from punk compilation album Six of the Best, 1979.
12. Powerage, 'Stop Apartheid', (self-produced single), 1985.
13. A Stiff Fix, 'I'm Not Taking This', (self-produced cassette), 1985.
14. The Usuals, 'Usual Rumours', Law of The Jungle, 1982.

#### CHAPTER 3:

The songs recorded here correlate with the order of those discussed in the text.

15. Abstract Truth, excerpt from 'Total Totum Acid Raga', Totum, 1971
16. The Third Eye, 'Awakening', The Third Eye: Searching, 1970.
17. Wild Youth, 'Record Companies', from punk compilation album Six of the Best, 1979.
18. Powerage, 'Adapt or Die', (Stop Apartheid single), 1985.
19. Powerage, 'System', Recording of a live performance in Durban. Recording made available by Ernesto Marques, 29th of July 1988.
20. The Usuals, 'No Great Shakes', Law of the Jungle, 1982.

CHAPTER 4:

The songs recorded here correlate with those discussed in the text in the same order of appearance.

21. The Third Eye, 'Stagemakers', The Third Eye: Searching, 1970.

22. Leopard, 'Boys and Bitches', off punk compilation album Six of the Best, 1979.

CHAPTER 5:

23. Wild Youth, 'Wot 'Bout Me?', (single), 1978