IAN TROWELL

0.year zero

B

ESSAY 0.1

music newspapers, market stalls, stashed carrier bags

early punk days and Sounds adverts / Fab Gear / market stall punk / secret dressing

ESSAY 0.2

everyday places

youth club discos / fairgrounds / the seaside

ESSAY 0.1 - music newspapers, market stalls, stashed carrier bags

In the late 70s and cusp of the 80s music newspapers such as NME and Sounds were a way in for a teenager looking to become part of a subculture such as punk rock. Particularly for someone living out in the provinces. Record shops and specialist clothing shops existed but could feel off-putting to an exploring novice. In terms of the music itself, John Peel's late-night Radio One show proved invaluable. Gigs were a constant fixture but often had an age barrier combined with what felt like at times the intimidating nature of an aggressively conspicuous and sometimes conspicuously aggressive scene such as punk. In contrast, music newspapers could be imbibed in a private, personal space, or discussed amongst close friends with shared intents, a laboratory of taste and image construction. Trialist tribalism perfected in the bedroom and rolled out in the school playground.

The obvious lines of connection were record reviews, interviews with bands, live gig reviews, and learning to trust certain journalists who you felt spoke for your tastes. That became increasingly difficult as music journalists adopted various postmodernist and post-structuralist poses, locked into a private battle that made little sense to readers such as me who were midway through a secondary school education that had an endpoint in either a factory or on supermarket checkout.

Aside from developing and finessing a taste in music, the newspaper was also a space to facilitate the acquiring of a correct image or fashion linked to a subculture. This was primarily afforded through photographs of bands, occasional photographs of fans, and advertisements for record releases based around visual material. Programmes like Top of the Pops also helped. These visual sources gave you a basic set of ground rules of how a punk (or post-

punk, or punky-rockabilly, or rude boy) looked, or you could mimic (partially or wholly) a particular musician who stood out in their scene. However, over-egging this copycat gesture often brought a certain amount of peer group opprobrium. The onset of glossy magazines that catered for punk and post-punk music and style, touched on by Smash Hits but pioneered by The Face and i-D, would not arrive until 1980.

image 0-1-a // Music newspapers various gear adverts,1980-1

This need for both learning how to look, and acquiring that look, was quickly exploited by several mail order advertisements in the back pages of music newspapers, set out with crude sketches or blotchy contrast photographs depicting people with the requisite look. The small advertisements offered punk clothing as either part of a smorgasbord of subcultural themes, a punk only arrangement, or occasionally a range of clothing dedicated to a particular band - such as a regular advertisement for "Clash Gear". Punk goods included bondage designs, bandmaster trousers, adopted military jackets and trousers died black with added studs and zips, and drainpipe trousers in either tartan or fluorescent animal print. It was more stereotype than archetype, with the advertisers often back-of-a-unit fly-by-night operators. The intention was obviously to lure in punks, mods and skins from the provinces. People like me.

These advertisements often had the equivalent of 'rogues' gallery' of subcultural characters, with figures lined up in a fantasy cockney knees-up configuration, a subcultural menagerie. Like Miss World contestants from another dimension, each figure sports a badge with their allocated number. Starting on the immediate left of this motley crew we are presented with the three Bowie clones and their outfits - two based on suits and one sporting a trench coat as a "very latest" offer. The jackets are split

between a one-button boxy cut and a double-breasted design, though the descriptions of the lengths do not match the pictures. Meanwhile, trousers are demarcated by the number of pleats in the trousers (up to 28 as "very baggy"), with a note for new red tartan jackets and "Skid trousers".

The three Bowie boys are followed by a phylogenetic subcultural trio akin to stratified layers of fossilised styling: a mod, a ska fan and a skinhead figure. It is approximately chronological but these subcultures loop back with ska informing skinhead informing ska once again to give rise to second (or third) incarnation of skinhead. The clothing description for the mod figure bears a simple wording of "mod trousers" and "plain mod jackets", requiring some subcultural faith on behalf of the buyer. The skinhead sports what we would call a Crombie, complete with ticket in the breast pocket.

Next up is a punk wearing the bondage garments initially designed by Westwood and McLaren for Seditionaries but quickly reproduced by BOY and then countless other market traders as they became a first-generation punk imprimatur. He tops this off with a low-slung bullet belt, studded dog collar and leopard print tee-shirt. The final two figures are a traditional teddy boy in a royal blue drape jacket with velvet pocket trim and a rockabilly who looks to be struggling to assert an identity. The date of November 1980 places it just prior to the mainstream emergence of new romantic, whose styles would most likely supplant the Bowie figures through 1981.

Image 0-1-b // Music newspapers various gear adverts, 1981-2

In the same vein, I recall having a particular fascination for the small advertisements for Fab-Gear (which morphed into X-Clothes). This was a boutique shop in Leeds, which I visited on later trips to see bands at The Warehouse or punk and post-punk weekenders at the legendary Queens Hall. I carefully clipped these from the newspapers

and have kept them in a plastic wallet as they followed me through the subsequent decades. They clearly resonated with me.

They were obviously tuned into the subcultural strands of the late 70s and early 80s, generally employing photographs of the clothes being modelled rather than the untrustworthy drawings utilised by their competitors. It had a ring of authenticity. The photographs were predominantly cut-out silhouettes and arranged like a child's dressing-up game, the heads of the models removed. I'm not sure why, maybe new romantic haircuts hadn't made it north in 1980 or 1981. One example stands apart, a great image of an asymmetric haircut unfortunately spoilt by the model wearing a dreadful cape and frilled shirt, framed in a gothic arch. It is from March 1981, before the days that Leeds became a goth stronghold, giving the clipping something of an incunabula status.

The suit jacket advertisement, from February 1981, is another classic in an adventurous layout that fascinated me. It is arranged like a court card in a standard playing card deck with the figure both upside and downside. The advertisement has a tartan suit one way up and a cropped style new romantic suit the other way. It had an element of early PiL – John Lydon – who dressed so well with his quirky suits and slim frame. I spent long evenings studying this image.

Other advertisements in the music newspapers portrayed grids of punk tee-shirts in a numbered system, where you simply picked a design and hoped it looked okay and didn't disappear in the wash. My own purchasing went as far as these tee-shirts, which were promptly posted to my suburban address, coming in a polythene shrink-wrapping with the shirt tightly folded into a ball so it fitted through a letterbox. To be fair, I got good wear out of them, twinning them with a cheapo PVC 'biker jacket' that came

from a stall on Derby's Eagle Centre Market. Some of these tee-shirts are evident in my parents' holiday snaps, when I was in my early teens and tentatively trying to look punk against the twin current of a disapproving dad and having to sport a kitchen-as-salon haircut created by mum.

It would not be until 1978 that I started getting properly into punk, at its commercial height with major punk and new wave acts often dominating Top of the Pops around that time. Unashamedly, I was attracted to the picture sleeves and coloured vinyl that punk luxuriated in, having enough pocket money to just about fund my own journey. I have an indelibly etched memory of going to town on my own on the bus to buy 'Hurry Up Harry' by Sham 69 and 'Ever Fallen in Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)' by Buzzcocks, and being confidently assured that this was the first instance of an imposition of my own taste.

My slowly assembled punk uniform was anchored on a pair of tartan trousers - not a fancy branded pair from Seditionaries, but a pair from the ever-reliable Eagle Centre Market made by subcultural appropriators Crazy Face. These were matched with the tee-shirts and an unbelievably shoddy acrylic striped furry jumper in blue and white. This latter item, another Eagle Centre purchase, was a copy of a punk standard - it looked more like a fairground gonk prize trialling for QPR than a punk-fashionable mohair jumper. Somewhere in the mix was a brief period trying to wear punk string vests over my 'Mr Puniverse' physique. These vests, in a starched and thick weave that resembled a dishevelled mop head, could be purchased from army surplus stores - but I'm not sure any soldiers or sailors actually wore them? This assemblage was part provincial punk, part provisional punk. On top of this as my crowning moment of apparent individuality I had a jumble sale raincoat which I ripped and re-stitched, and fashioned with a union jack neckerchief.

Punk's use of the raincoat was an example of taking a clothing standard from outside subculture and turning it to a new use or adding marks of destruction. The spoilt school blazer was another example of a punk standard drawn from 'regular' society. Both the blazer/suit jacket and the raincoat would migrate across to the first inklings of a post-punk uniform in 1979, but I was too naïve to appreciate such fashion dynamics – any cool post-punk aura (unlikely) was purely happenstantial. Anachronistic to the core, I embellished my ripped raincoat with the oversized and mirrored punk badges from seaside tat sellers and an old chain pull from grandma's outside toilet. The trousers and raincoat had to be kept in a plastic bag and stashed in a hiding place. In 1979, when heading off to punk gigs at Derby Assembly Rooms, I got changed on the bus to town, out of sight of my parents. Like the repurposed bog chain, this is another punk myth trope that rings true in my own backstory.

We had no cameras at this point in time, and this outfit worn in secret would not be immortalised in any family albums. However, a photograph emerged recently from the NME, part of a review of the Fatal Microbes appearing at Derby Ajanta in April 1980. I never got the NME religiously, so this review and photo passed me by, but (I think) the boy at the front is me. I do recall having bumper boots bought by my mum and also tying my cherished tartan trousers with bits of string to partly stop them getting muddy and partly to make them a bit more authentic punk. Even though it was de rigueur to give your clothes a destroyed appearance or patina, I was still obsessive about keeping them pristine and preserved into the future. My raincoat isn't visible, but it would have been somewhere nearby. A document of a start, and evidence of a clothing fascination about to explode through the forthcoming decade.

ESSAY 0.2 - everyday places

1. the youth club disco

Prior to all of this, in my early schooldays, there were 'two tribes' - to borrow a later phrase from Frankie - that dominated life in Spondon (and every other suburb). These would come in to focus at school discos, the youth club at the Methodist Church Hall next to the bypass, and larger events held at Celanese Club on Borrowash Road. The club was for the families of workers at the Celanese Factory, a large, chugging behemoth that sat on the southern edge of Spondon on the opposite side of the Derby-Nottingham railway line. My dad worked there as a miller. This is not to be confused with someone who presses grain to extract flour, such as Windy Miller in Camberwick Green. Windy in his proto-workwear such as styled by Old Town was holding down a look. My dad worked on a lathe, turning huge aluminium bobbins for the yarn and fabrics that Celanese traded in. He had dirty overalls, and a grime that clung to his skin and hair. He cycled home every day and used to feverishly wash and wash at the kitchen sink.

The youth club or school disco was very much an everyday or ordinary space. A chance to show off new clothes, to try a dance move, and maybe catch someone's eye or get a kiss. I don't want to add to the volume of writing that nostalgises on this formative and liminal space. Instead, I want to talk about these two tribes that were prominent around 1978, before punk went more mainstream and started to infiltrate the school playground.

Going to local youth club discos I remember there being a constant push and pull between kids into heavy rock (grebs) and kids into northern soul. Heavy metal had evolved through the 70s and was never really out of view. Northern soul flickered as an obsessive subculture for pill-popping devotees making weekend treks to their temples but had filtered down and regurgitated as a kind of

subculture-like of fashion for the playground and football terrace. Three-star jumpers and Birmingham bags. Northern soul originals are VERY fussy about their heritage and wouldn't really class this late 70s degenerated version as part of the scene. But…

Both music scenes had distinctive fashion codes and dances - counterposed but still intricate, definitional and intertwined. The grebs in their festooned denim cut-offs gathered in two facing lines, hooking their thumbs into their belt loops, and ducking left then right whilst head-banging. It's easy to lapse into a temporal blur and get them mixed up with the 1990 craze for line-dancing.

Image 0-2-a // Youth club scene, 1975

The northern soul fans with their high-waisted and multi-buttoned Birmingham bags trying to do that complex dance and footwork shuffle in their Clarks Polyveldt shoes that a handful of people make look effortless, and then - clap clap - hitting the floor with a bunch of trick moves in the instrumental breaks. Swallow-dives, floor spins, frenetic and corybantic sprawls on their backs and then jerking upright as if the dancefloor was suddenly channelling 1000 volts of electricity. Well, maybe two or three tried unsuccessfully, while the others stood and watched.

Each subculture lurked while the other had their say on the dancefloor. There was uneasy stand-off throughout the night. On one particular evening, in either a move towards some kind of subcultural democracy or an acknowledgement of the failure of a two-state solution, the DJ stopped the music and asked fans of each genre to stand to a particular side. The idea was to ascertain the dominant subculture and go forward with that. One of my earliest memories is being there at that moment and thinking "I don't want to stand on either side…". Punk was beckoning, the ill-fated opportunity to be shot by both sides.

2. the seaside

Like the school-age disco, the seaside figures in nostalgic fiction. A bawdy and liminal space where we can temporarily become someone else or act for the day on a kind of giant stage set with a semi-scripted drama. Subcultures have thrived at the seaside, with the tradition of mods and rockers slugging it out at more or less every major working-class seaside spot and the Blitz Club new romantics famously occupying the gentile sweeps of Bournemouth on the extended bank holiday weekends.

A subculture often requires a concept of territory to battle over, and the seaside fulfilled this role. Amidst the sociological analysis and creative depiction, there is nearly always a sense of a middle-class fear of grot and the 'common', akin to Mary Douglas' much-quoted 1966 book Purity and Danger. Stanley Cohen's seminal 1972 study of the seaside clashes between mods and rockers, Folk Devils and Moral Panics, is celebrated as a groundbreaking work that gave voice and vision to subcultural participation, but it has an undertow of contempt for the perceived popular crassness of the seaside. You can also feel this in O Dreamland, Lindsay Anderson's short film from 1953 based upon a study of day-trippers to Margate.

The seaside of my childhood and adolescence was split between a 'posh' holiday in Bournemouth and a cheap and cheerful holiday in Ingoldmells, Skegness. In both instances, punk subcultures were glimpsed and infiltrated my receptive mind. A bolt of lightning struck during our annual trip to Bournemouth. For this we got an early coach from Long Eaton, midway between Derby and Nottingham, and travelled for the whole day to the south coast to stay in a boarding house. This departure was always a crack-of-dawn affair - I vividly remember the smell of my dad's Brylcreem mixed with cigarette smoke as he got in a last desperate drag before the long journey. There followed a ritual scrum

to get a seat, with my dad having an irrational fear of having to sit 'over the wheels' as this apparently made you sick.

I have a crystal-clear recollection from walking on the promenade aged 11 with my dad, fetching mid-afternoon ice creams. It was 1977, timestamped through another hard-wired memory of buying a presentation pack of stamps celebrating the silver jubilee. It would be the time that punk-as-bogeyman had become well established in the minds of everyday people like my parents, doing battle with the jubilee. I spent most mornings with my brother racing up and down the pier pushing pennies into the arcade machines, whilst in the afternoons we went onto the beach as a family, swam in the sea, and walked the promenade for cups of tea and bottles of pop. My dad could relax, without seeing people from the factory, people from the estate, or anything to spoil his idea of bliss. Or so he thought.

On one afternoon we encountered a group of very dressy and arty London punks lolling and lounging on an incline in bondage clothes sporting dyed hair, horrifying the conservative Bournemouth populace. Flashbulb instances stick in my mind: bright red tartan, straps and zips, cans of beer fizzing away, loud belching, clumping teddy-boy brothel-creepers, boys-as-girls, girls-as-boys. My dad was equally appalled, mumbling about it for the remainder of the holiday, but I was entranced and it set a seed inside me.

The Lincolnshire resort of Ingoldmells is caravan site central, offering a cheap and cheerful break. We visited here for our other holiday, a counterpoint, accompanied by a rotation of grandmas and aunts. My dad is not someone who is posh, but he steadfastly refused to join us on the Ingoldmells holiday on the grounds of the place being so degraded. It served the industrial towns and cities of the East Midlands and South Yorkshire, with special trains such

as the 'Jolly Fisherman' bringing in the excited masses. Subsequently, this meant that after dark there was often beer-fuelled massed fighting based upon an out of season continuation of the football rivalry of local towns and cities. Forest vs Derby vs Leicester vs Sheffield (who had two teams who would also fight amongst themselves).

The other phenomenon was that factories, such as the one my dad worked at, would have a shutdown week and everyone would take a holiday at the same time. Often, you would end up on a caravan site next door to someone you either worked alongside at the factory or lived next-door to. My dad was not anti-social, but this idea of a holiday (understandably) did not appeal to him.

I have some vague and more minor early punk memories from these holidays, as there were rows of seaside tat sellers in Ingoldmells where the caravan sites are clustered. At the tail-end of the 70s there was a profusion of punk and new wave badges that I spent my pocket money on. Predominantly oversized and often fixed upon a mirror base design, these badges shared space with an array of cheeky key-fobs, saucy postcards and cheap joke-shop novelties like pretend cigarettes, plastic fangs, miniature paper-wrapped exploding packages, blood capsules and fake dog turds. This type of tat (known in the trade as swag) was also common on the fairground, given away on 'a prize every time' stalls where you are offered the ubiquitous anything from the bottom shelf.

I distinctly remember buying Buzzcocks, Sex Pistols and The Damned badges - huge squared-off things. These would be pinned on my blazer in the times between lessons. I also strongly remember buying a badge with a rude Spoonerism declaring myself as not being a "pheasant plucker", and a key-fob that had a cartoon of two pigs copulating underneath the phrase "makin' bacon". The smutty joke and act of animal copulation went over my head, but I

liked the anthropomorphized smiles on the pigs' faces.

Image 0-2-b // Joke tee-shirts advert, 1977

There was another key fob purchase that had a cartoon of a prostitute standing under the arc of a streetlight accompanied by the phrase "the customer always comes first". As with the pigs, this went over my head, even more so, but I thought the cartoon woman looked good in a punk way with her sassy short skirt, stockings and spiked hair. This visual expression of humour, also available on a vast array of tee-shirt prints, leeched into the nascent punk subculture. Austere designers like Malcolm McLaren would claim a situationist lineage of bawdy humour for his designs of hyper-sexualised Disney characters, but there was also this workaday humour that informed much of the provincial punk scenes - puns on joining the army to see beautiful places and kill people, graphics of a bespectacled and hapless turtle trying to mount a discarded helmet, the perennial "I'm with stupid", etc. For a few years, this was part and parcel of the punk uniform.

3. the fairground

Image 0-2-c // Heading to the fair, May 1982

A photograph taken by me on Friday 14 May 1982, depicting a group of younger friends waiting for a bus to go to Long Eaton fair. A modern-day equivalent of August Sander's farmers on the way to a dance. The fair was held both on West Park and the meadow near the swimming baths. In the fairground calendar it was a relatively large event with some showpeople from outside of the area bringing their rides. Towards the end of the decade the event was curtailed.

I've taken the 1982 group photograph with my cheap 110 camera. There must have been a good light on that balmy evening, as the handful of fairground photographs also came up with a striking quality of colour and reasonable

amount of detail. The first thing that strikes me is the structural similarity to the hand drawn advertisement depicting subcultural tribes in an earlier essay. The arrangement of a line-up, with individual elements loosely interacting to create a flow, offers an uncanny congruence. The difference is obviously the lack of delineated subcultures. Instead, we have a blend of post-ska and casual, the early 80s colours of burgundy and grey on Fred Perry shirts and knitted 'grandad' cardigans, straight-leg and stretch jeans, luminous socks, tank-tops and cropped sleeves, and just one coat - a black Crombie. This is the everyday of steady-state subcultures: 2 Tone and new-pop, football codes.

British fairgrounds and music subcultures have an enduring relationship that reaches from early rock'n'roll through to more recent offshoots of the rave scene such as donk and mákina, niche genres that often acquire a moniker of 'fairground music'. On top of this, fairgrounds are very much an everyday space of popular entertainment that also have that immediate heterotopic quality to become a magical elsewhere. The fairground is a unique sonic environment, residing like a series of densely packed overlapping soundsystems or discotheques with each large ride pumping out its music from cavernous speakers such that the beats blur and clash against each other as you navigate the enclosed space. Nottingham is, of course, famous for the Goose Fair - the pinnacle of them all.

From the 50s onwards the whole of the fairground became a space for absorbing and appreciating pop music, with impromptu events such as rock'n'roll dancing competitions being held on the Dodgems track before the fairground officially opened. Early music scenes were simply replayed on the fairground rides, as people stood around posing in their best subcultural get-up, trying to out-cool one another and attract the eye of the opposite sex.

You get the feeling of how the fairground and music mesh together through the opening frames of Ken Russell's 1962 documentary for the BBC arts programme Monitor, with his film 'Pop Goes the Easel' focussing on the nascent pop art scene through the artists Peter Blake, Pauline Boty, Peter Phillips and Derek Boshier. A frisson of danger is portrayed in the 1960 film adaptation of Alan Sillitoe's novel Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, with a coming to reckoning occurring at the nighttime Goose Fair.

In the bus stop photograph I'm absent… represented only by an elongated shadow. Even though, for me, 1982 was something of a fashion purchasing bonanza, there is a dearth of documentation. The shadow gives nothing away, but I'd have been dressed up in my best G-Force attire. My diary notes record that we got there, had a few rides (one of the group threw up after a ride on the Cobra), and then we were spotted and identified as 'outsiders' by a Long Eaton gang of grebs who arrived at the fair about an hour after us. Their nominal leader pointed me out, in my fancy clothes, as a particularly abhorrent invader. We had to make a swift group exit, doing a runner for the bus amidst a hail of hurled stones and insults. We were fast on our feet, a bus was conveniently arriving, and we got away unscathed. Bluff and bluster, subcultural psychodrama.

4. the seaside (again)

Sometimes you weren't so lucky. Digging back into the diary notes; in the last week of July 1982 the fair returned to Long Eaton and I had an unchallenged evening there on the Friday night. The following day, Saturday 31 July, was an action-packed trip to Nottingham Boat Club to see Southern Death Cult. A real gathering of the tribes, spilling out onto the banks of the Trent to soak up the summer sun. But thankfully peaceful, numbed by booze, sunshine, good spirits and a sense of empowerment.

On the Tuesday we had a day trip to Skegness, with mum and Aunty Linda, SDC's tribal drums and hollering vocals still ringing in my ears. Then on Saturday 6 August three of us set out on an adventure, a holiday of sorts without parents.

We each purchased the Coast and Peaks Rover which allowed seven days rail travel across to Manchester and Sheffield ('Peaks') and onwards to Blackpool and the North Wales train line ('Coast'). Child tickets, super cheap. The plan was to sleep rough and have a good time. We visited Blackpool Pleasure Beach, slept under the giant Astroglide at Southport Pleasureland, called in to see Wigan Casino before it was knocked down, and then headed to Rhyl.

We had stashed our sleeping bags in a bush by the bowling green off the prom and planned to sleep under the stars. All of us had packed lightly, but I'd got my best piece: a black and yellow knitted G-Force rockabilly cardigan twinned with baggy trousers. A bit of gel to maintain my flat top. We chanced a late-night bar with a small disco underneath doing a Pernod promotion. By a minor miracle we copped off with a bunch of girls who invited us to stay in their caravan. Wow, a first for me. Walking along the prom in the early hours we were suddenly accosted by a group of males, drunk and sore from not 'pulling'. The words still rattle around to this day: "what are you, some kind of fucking rockabilly?", then a fist straight into my face which knocked me down in one go. The British seaside.

IAN TROWELL

1. becoming subcultural

B

ESSAY 1.1

bedrooms and living rooms, towns and cities

Cameras / private spaces / first proper clothes / saving and diaries / shoe shop pictures

ESSAY 1.2

shopping in the margins

intimidating exteriors / anti-shops / heterotopic zones

ESSAY 1.1 - bedrooms and living rooms, towns and cities

Image 1-1-a Author's clothing, January 1982

Image 1-1-b Author's clothing, January 1982

Two photographs. January 1982, an arrangement of clothes on my bed and a pair of new shoes on the living room carpet. I know these are BRAND new shoes because I wasn't allowed to wear shoes in the living room. Punishable by death. These are the first photographs I took of my clothes. Clearly an important moment, a celebration, and a memento of an 'upgrading' towards how I went about constructing myself in a subcultural fashion. Farewell to the Eagle Centre punk days.

It is also very much an 'everyday' or ordinary arrangement, an approach to celebrating our subcultural and fashion heritage taken up by recent publications such as Sam Knee's The Bag I'm In (2015) and Nina Manandhar's What We Wore (2014). A capturing of the energy and exhilaration of the moment, of stepping out into a brave new world. Of taking a risk against the beer-boys and football casuals.

The two photographs are, on first glance, unremarkable and overlookable. Bear with me as we apply some subcultural forensics. There are numerous ways to approach these photographs, drawing from biographical material culture. I'd like to think about the 'coming to be' of the photographs, the setting of the photographs, and the subject of the photographs.

In early 1980 I purchased a cheap 110 camera. This is the popular style that had film with a double spool cartridge that you clicked into the back as film passed from one chamber to the other. It meant that it was foolproof, but the quality of pictures was dubious, as the camera never let in much light making pictures murky and grainy. I was normally meticulous with retaining and ordering things, but I don't have any surviving negatives

from 1980 or 1981. There are photographs, but maybe these were taken by my dad - he wasn't a camera buff and so also had a cheap camera.

Photographs of the back garden and the dogs were accumulated - sunny moments without grand context or sense of occasion - just youthful days passing. Visible blooms of punkishness such as day-glo socks, band tee-shirts and peg trousers can be glimpsed. Other things come into view. A recalled photograph of Grandad Fred in which he twists and peers into the viewfinder with 70% of the photograph blocked out as I had my finger over the lens. The 110 camera had a separate viewfinder and lens so there was the double jeopardy of both a parallax error and the danger of you putting your finger over the lens without realising it. Grandad Fred had one eye, after an accident in the war, and he peers into the fraction of the aperture unobscured by my digit as if mastering the hindrance of the cheap equipment in a silent Zen manner. In some ways with his one eye and empty socket he appears like the dysfunctional camera with a single lens and broken viewfinder, his own parallax error to account for. Grandad always spent Sunday afternoons camped on our settee watching the tele. He never talked about the war but spent his day glued to the screen watching The World at War or similarly themed films.

These two photographs are also without negatives. I have felt-tipped the date on the back - Jan 82 - and that seems right as I purchased my first G-Force clothes around that time. I have surviving diaries from 1982 onwards documenting my spending sprees, but some of these garments were bought before the diaries commenced. The shoes however, were purchased on Saturday 30 January from the Nottingham G-Force shop. A seismic moment, a rite of passage - the investment in the correct footwear. I'm guessing the photograph would have been taken that evening or the day after - a Sunday, the last day of the month.

The quality and composition of the photographs is typically poor, possibly over-excited. The bedroom photograph is off target, and I manage to not quite get the entirety of any individual thing! The shoes photograph is slightly better - landscape format and locked on to the subject. The garish carpet somewhat overwhelms things. But it was always clean.

The bedroom setting reveals a private space. The site of the ritual of getting ready to go out, of experimenting with different looks. I was lucky enough to have a bedroom to myself. Furthermore, being the older of two brothers I wasn't designated the box bedroom. At this point in time it's a plain woodchip wallpaper, painted in light blue, but lost in the electric blue of the shirt and grey blue of the shoes. I'd soon decorate the bedroom to my own choice, but that's another story. My parents still live in this house, and the bedroom resides as 'my' bedroom, though used by my kids and now grandkids. I think it might still be the same bed. Sadly, the G-Force clothes are long gone, unceremoniously thrown out by my mum when I left for Sheffield in autumn 1984 as a semi-goth. It's not something I like to dwell on, the throwing away or the goth-ness.

The living room photograph was taken at one of the ends of the room, as that is where the radiators were (and still are). You can just make out the waffles of the radiator in the bleached-out background. As mentioned, the carpet tends to destroy the discernibility of anything else - my new shoes and baggy old-man trousers. The living room wasn't my private space, so posing photographs like this are rare. I'm pretty sure my parents weren't around when this photograph was taken, and I have no idea who I asked to take it. My brother, a friend, a girlfriend from a (short-lived) relationship who might be thinking "what the hell have I signed up for with this boy who wants his shoes photographing".

Going back to the bedroom photograph we can clearly identify the subject. Clothes; new clothes. There's nothing else in there – no surprise punctum to be spotted as the eye relaxes and searches, as the theorist Roland Barthes might say. Not a wrinkle in the bedsheet or some such thing that hints at a harrowing story. The shirt sticks in my memory as it was the first shirt purchase (of many) by the Nottingham designer G-Force. I'd seen the label featured in The Face for summer 1981, and was hooked in by the neo-rockabilly look that the magazine promoted with bands like The Polecats and other shops/designers in faraway London like Johnsons, Rock-a-Cha and Marvelette. I can recall every detail – the lustrous blue fabric with horizontal fleck that formed the front of the shirt, the red and black logo label, the pearl press-stud buttons and cuffs, the fresh fabric smell. There's a pair of G-Force shoes, a jacket of some sort, and some peg trousers. The shoes and trousers repeat in the second photograph. These things meant so much to me. I cannot emphasise that enough.

G-Force created clothes similar to Johnsons of London, but at more affordable prices. As co-founder Robin Kerr says, there was a shared outlook and a rediscovering of 50s designs and 'deadstock' fabrics. Shoes were licensed from exclusive Northampton manufacturers to a number of clothing companies – G-Force included. I went crazy for this stuff, and it became my singular look through 1982 and 1983.

My 1982 diary opens with a yellow capitalised headline filling a blank page, simply declaring 'NOTTINGHAM'. There's no immediate context or explanation, just a joyous statement of intent, a switch of allegiance from the plastic punk haunts of Derby. The first week has an overlap to the last dates of 1981, and a cross-reference to the yellow highlight (survived for over 40 years) provides a clue. There is the record of the shirt purchase – a mention of G-Force, Roxy (Threads) and Olto, a burger at

Wimpey (sic), an abundance of teds, and the attraction of amusement arcades (I'm stiII a kid at this point).

Image 1-1-c Author's diary, 1982

Throughout 1982 I am pIotting and pIanning to save for cIothes, drawing up Iists of what I wanted, incrementaI savings schemes scrimping pocket money and marking off the weeks untiI I couId make a purchase. The 2023 book by Mark O'FIaherty - Narrative Thread - Iooks at peopIe who coIIect and cherish subcuIturaI and avant-garde cIothing, with O'FIaherty himseIf recaIIing how he fixated on and simiIarIy scrimped and sacrificed towards designer garments.

My diary became a repository for Iists and drawings reIating to what I desired. As purchases were made these were joined by Iists of what I had, and ideas for combinations of cIothes, or strategic pIans of what to wear for gigs and events. I made notes on weII-dressed peopIe I'd seen at gigs or around town.

G-Force caught that stylish hybrid of punk and rockabiIIy pioneered by the CIash and Iater adopted by overt rockabiIIy bands Iike The PoIecats and more edgy punk-noir bands Iike Theatre of Hate. Chunky knits with skuIIs and music notes, sIeeveIess shirts with pearI stud fasteners, boxy suit jackets in Iime green and pink, bIack shirts with decorated shouIder sections, jumpers and cardigans with Ieather and suede sections and stud patterns. This was briefIy my universe.

As much as it was a singuIar Iook, it was aIso drawn from numerous subcuIturaI currents. Pink was everywhere in this cIothing, part of the new wave imagery at the end of the 70s. The abstract artist Mary HeiImann created a series of pink on bIack images such as Save the Last Dance for Me (1979), inspired by the feeIing of new wave aIbum sIeeves such as Tuxedomoon, and the cIothing of G-Force embodied this visuaI pattern. And of course, in 1982, if your

different clothes didn't attract negative attention then wearing pink certainly would.

Purchasing this branded clothing required hunting around in esoteric shops, a practice that thrilled me to the core - it felt like a phase change from the previous arrangements of salvaged clothing or trips to the ubiquitous Eagle Centre Market to get reproduction subcultural clothing. Nottingham had a popular punk shop in the middle of Hockley, proudly anachronistic, selling bands tee-shirts and studded belts. It was a few doors down from G-Force, and I always read it as a watermark of where I had come from.

Image 1-1-d G-Force advert, 1982

Returning to photography, my earliest surviving negatives are from an April 1982 trip to Leicester to visit the small clothing shop Jive and the G-Force shoe shop in the multi-storey and decorative Silver Arcade. I knew about the shop, an expansion from Nottingham, because of an advertisement in i-D. Silver Arcade was a wonderful space though Leicester was an edgy city with a large skinhead presence. You had to be on your guard all the time. I know the city has recently queried and unpicked its subcultural legacy, with exhibitions and the wonderful book Perfect Binding (2019) by William English.

I was parsimonious with my photograph taking, but the excitement of encountering the G-Force shop triggered three photographs: a view from the opposite balcony over the interior void of the Silver Arcade, an overhead view of the shoes in the window display taken through the glass (evidently the shop was closed), and a later image when I returned to find the shop open and took a photograph of the shoes displayed on a white vertical peg-board.

According to my diary I never made a purchase, so heaven knows what the shop worker thought of me, most likely quizzing him to the point of tedium on different

styles of shoes and asking if he knew which bands wore which styles. I noted in my diary that the staff member was called Cliff. I felt I needed to pull towards these people. Decades later I learnt of the playful interpretation in David Hockney's painting We Two Boys Together Clinging (1961), and its reference to Cliff Richard.

Image 1-1-e G-Force Leicester shop, 1982

The close-up overhead photograph of the shoes is scintillating, even with my finger partially obscuring the view. I regard this fleshy infraction as a tactile index of the sheer excitement of the moment which a photograph in itself cannot capture. Four models are evident in the unobscured region, all with a pointed toe and visible G-Force logo in gold script: a buckle fastening black shoe with a diamond pattern of nine studs, a similar design with leopard spot upper, a lace fastening animal print upper, and a lace fastening blue suede shoes.

The power of these shoes was difficult to describe – a similar feeling attributed to Malcolm McLaren by Paul Gorman in his 2006 book The Look. McLaren's purchase of blue suede shoes from Mr Freedom at the end of the 60s is said to provoke a "seismic effect". Hence my odd photograph. It's my equivalent of Warhol's 1981 image Diamond Dust Shoes. Warhol's picture is cropped on all sides to connote a limitless terrain of shoe fetishism, but it shares a similarity with my photograph such that all the labels of branding are artfully displayed. In one of his typical grand and ironic gestures, Warhol sprinkles and bonds diamond dust into the picture to buttress the picture's role as moving from a record or representation to a desirable thing-in-itself measured purely by money. G-Force shoes didn't need that.

ESSAY 1.2 - shopping in the margins

My first 'real life' encounter of an alternative clothing shop - outside of the cheap subcultural stalls on the Eagle Centre Market - would be in early 1981. It was more of a glimpse and a triggered intrigue. I was being slowly marched to the Children's Hospital on the perimeter of Derby's shopping nucleus, where large department stores, building societies and branded restaurants were replaced with solitary newsagents, junk shops and cheap cafes. I was due to have a potentially troublesome mole removed from my back, so my spirits were not high. Even having an afternoon off school did not counteract my sense of dread. Barely looking up from the pavement, I noticed the shop - Emporium - painted blue with a minimal interior and a small selection of clothes laid out such as I'd seen in The Face magazine. I went back there as soon as I could, penniless as usual, but wanting to explore and talk to the proprietor. By the time I had mustered enough cash to make a third visit and a purchase, the shop had gone. It was just an empty unit…

Emporium was a typical example. Alternative clothes shops often existed on the margins of the shopping spaces of towns and cities, relegated to the fuzzy and scuzzy areas where you had special or marginal interest retail spaces such as sex-shops, second-hand magazine shops, chaotically assembled vernacular model shops, and antiquated fusty-smelling pet shops that included the obligatory mynah bird that would produce expletives on demand. A great example in Nottingham would be Ollie and Tony Brack's shop Olto, positioned at the top end of Mansfield Road as it climbs northwards out of the city centre before cresting over the hill to reveal the home of the Goose Fair (Forest Fields) threaded with numerous kerb-crawling red-light streets.

OIto originaIIy opened in HucknaII of aII pIaces, taking over a vacant hairdresser shop on WatnaII Road. You need a minute to digest that, when you consider the duo's bizarre cIothing that bIended new romantic panache with rock star excess. After graduating at Trent aIongside G-Force's Robin Kerr and Brian Jakeman, OIIie and Tony buiIt on their London connections as a couturier for various rock stars to bring this back to the East MidIands. He swears that there was a burgeoning cIienteIe of cash-Iaden miners from HucknaII pit who Iiked nothing better than spending their hard-earned wages on avant-garde cIothing. When you taIk to Tony, stiII going strong with One BC, it's Iike the 'yes/no' game where he meticuIousIy avoids using the word fashion to circumscribe his endeavours. He thrives on designing for the sake of artistic possibiIity and capabiIity, driven by experimentation.

Image 1-2-a OLTO shoot, Déspatch, 1982

In 1981 OIIie and Tony shifted their operation to Nottingham, taking the smaII unit on MansfieId Road amidst the offcuts of retaiIing. Whereas at HucknaII they designed and manufactured on the premises, they now had a separate making space on Stoney Street with other creatives who were expIoiting the cheap rents around the Lace Market area. On the top end of MansfieId Road there was the obIigatory sex shop a few doors down (a "book exchange"), whiIst over the road there was an Army and Navy surpIus store that empIoyed a IocaI skinhead who wouId "sort things (or peopIe) out for you" if that was needed.

OIto opened on Saturday 7 November 1981 and according to my diary I visited a few weeks Iater. I honestIy don't recaII… but the photographs of the cIothing in IocaI newspapers such as Déspatch show a boId new romantic Iook, in the baIIpark of Birmingham's Kahn and BeII. I'd imagine that I wouId have been terrified to cross the

threshold. Nottingham people fondly recall Olto's efforts, with collections bordering on the conceptual. There was, apparently, a complete collection inspired by camping utilities - this being nearly 50 years before Craig Green's much-lauded recent designs. Tony designed avant-garde window displays, that could be viewed from the upper deck of buses trundling up the hill.

Arnold born Karl Fox had spotted Olto in Hucknall and, being a fan of the new romantic and Blitz scene, he quickly engaged the designers. He then oversaw the day-to-day operating of the shop on Mansfield Road as Ollie and Tony beavered away at the workshop. Karl was a budding explorer on the scene, seeking out clubs and clothing in other cities. A face about town.

Of course, there was a logic to this alternative clothing retail existing on the shabby margins, with the limiting factor of premium rent disbarring an independent designer or retailer a chance on the main thoroughfares of consumption. Contrary to popular belief about a drastic and totalising phase change that marked the opening of the decade, the societal changes under Margaret Thatcher's rule were incremental. Her first term, after taking power from Labour in the 'Winter of Discontent' 1979 election, was more a case of laying the groundwork. Buttressed by an opportunistic conflict in the Falklands she secured a second term in 1983. This allowed her to settle an old score with the industry unions, glibly exemplified by the Miners' Strike, before she achieved victory for a third time in June 1987. It would be in her third term that she intensified her sights on left wing councils and funding organisations that supported and promoted fringe activities in the arts.

Fashion design and retail through the 80s is a curious subject. The Conservative historian view (Dominic Sandbrook, Dylan Jones) has the new romantic

scene of small-scale designers and club-runners as being an incubative forerunner of the wider materialism and individualism that came to stand for the decade (yuppies, etc). As recent work by historian Matthew Worley has implied, it was not so clearly defined. The period of the early 80s, within Thatcher's first and second terms, saw a cluster of like-minded individuals exploiting cheap rents, concessions, government grants and opportunities to eke out both a living and a preferred lifestyle on their own terms. However, it was generally survival over entrepreneurship. The textile design partnership Katsu - formed by Trent Poly graduates Kath Townsend and Sue Watton - is a case in point, with the pair moving between various production spaces shared with other creatives (including Sharespace, King John's Chambers and The Works, Carrington Street) and topping up their Enterprise Allowance subsistence with bar work at pubs or running the café at The Garage nightclub.

Designers aided their customers by keeping things as affordable as possible, and customers showed loyalty to designers. A 1985 interview with G-Force co-founder Robin Kerr in the newspaper Relay emphasises this, with Robin talking about how it is important to keep his prices fair for his local customers who in turn support his retail efforts. Club nights and gigs saw the whole social ensemble mix and chat. It was a layered yet un-tiered network of supportive creatives, spanning to obscure individuals such as Andrew 'Baby' Woodhead who apparently would fashion you a bespoke suit from his flat in the Victoria Centre!

Let's return to the idea of these shops being out of the way or semi-hidden, of being something of an adventure to encounter and engage. Their understanding and appreciation from the viewpoint of the customer is more complex. These shops didn't work solely as an instance of retail, they also functioned as an enclave of subcultural 'being and doing'. A great example is the short-lived shop

ID in Derby. This was established by local activist Dave Bonsall as a punk shop in 1978, though it stocked a more progressive post-punk range of clothing. More so, it served as a meeting space for people on the scene, as a refuge from loutish 'teds' or casuals, and offered a rehearsal space in the rear where various Derby punk and post-punk bands were germinated.

Image 1-2-b ID opening, Derby, 1978 (Patrick Burkett)

Seeking out alternative clothes wasn't entirely a means to an end, and it extended beyond the more recent joys of materialistic clothing shopping where people chase the thrill of just buying something new to post unboxing footage on social media channels. As you can imagine, setting out to find these shops, and entering them, became something of an adventure or rite of passage. It needed planning and tactics - a ritual that was a part of the subculture - with the out of the way locations adding to the experience. Cultural geographers would call this distribution a cartography of taste, but the French philosopher Michel Foucault coined a more apt concept with the idea of the heterotopic space.

Foucault was part of the post-war Continental philosophy movement (centred on France) in which dominant modes of language and thought were challenged and uprooted. Neologisms for ungraspable concepts came thick and fast, like bullets from a gun, but Foucault's heterotopia was very much something that could be felt and applied. It made sense, concerning the feeling attached to a space such that this seemed unusual, discomfiting or disconcerting, in turn making the space itself appear topologically impossible or out of joint. Sudden switches in mood were evoked in places like a cemetery or a travelling fairground on a patch of land, sometimes a more abstract 'space' such as your own voice talking into a telephone and moving on to the recipient, or the generated region 'behind' a mirror. Often

this was a topological incongruity - two different spaces (as defined by mood) occupying the same space, or a switch between spaces without a discernible border or egress. The map as a sense-making tool becomes derailed. Alternative clothing shops had a strong heterotopic aura, they seemed to exist in a different world that was encountered in the immediate vicinity as opposed to when crossing the threshold.

Returning to the example from Derby: Dave Bonsall's initial shop Society Styles (said to resemble a front room, much like McLaren and Westwood's first incarnation of 430 King's Road) was on the fringe retail area around Abbey Street amidst slum rentals, taxi offices and shut-down premises, operating in the early 70s. His follow-up shop ID was an archetypical punk shop, sat in the middle of a crumbling part of the city that was awaiting development, the shop embedded into a dilapidated hotel structure that felt like something left over from the war (which it was). It had minimal exterior, no signage or curated window display, and had iron bars covering the windows. These stayed on even if the shop was open, in the same way that many punk clothing shops had permanently fixed rectilinear grilles. As with the famous punk shop Sex/Seditionaries in London, it was intimidating to venture through the subcultural checkpoint into a different world.

In Nottingham, G-Force was pre-dated by the 'shop' Jakeman and Kerr, hidden away on Bottle Street and in operation around 1978. It served as both a production space and a retail point on Saturdays. Brian and Robin deliberately made the shop appear unlike a shop, with no branding apart from the name Jakeman and Kerr on the outside door. This led to a second door which was also stencilled with the duo's name. The intent was to make it feel like a firm of solicitors. But it wasn't. Another example of Foucault's heterotopia.

Image 1-2-c Christine at OLTO HucknaII (KarI Fox)

For their rebrand into G-Force in 1979 the pair initiaIIy painted the externaI of the new shop on Goose Gate in grey paint. Not just the woodwork, but the windows. They Ieft a smaII Ietterbox Iook-in point. It created a heightening of tension, bordering on intimidation, as weII as a sense of excIusivity into an underground sect.

A finaI component in this intricate dance of intimidation wouId often be a shop worker who had an aura and appearance of unapproachabiIity. The famous exampIe is Jordan at 430 King's Road, but OIto had their own Jordan at their tiny HucknaII shop. Step forward Christine, with her towering prototype Mohican in muItipIe coIours and Adam and the Ants era Jordan styIe abstract make-up. Weird shops, weird pIaces, confusing décor, frightening staff members - for many reasons, these punk and post-punk shopping excursions wouId stay with you for a Iong time.

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IAN TROWELL

2.pioneering

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ESSAY 2.1

rivaI
tribaI
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tribes and trouble / Theatre of Hate
in Nottingham / rapid change of subcultures

ESSAY 2.2

pop
worIds

bedroom decor / The Face magazine and changing
cultures and fashion / G-Force

ESSAY 2.1 - rivaI tribaI rebeI reveI

The coIIective identity and engagement of subcuItures fractaIized at pace during the decade changeover from the 70s to the 80s. If any band captured this moment of transitionaI energy it was Theatre of Hate. Founded by Kirk Brandon and combining eIements from severaI aIready shifting punk bands, Theatre of Hate burst onto the post-punk Iandscape through the second haIf of 1980. They were fierceIy independent, fierceIy industrious and fierceIy fierce. They had a rousing sound that had the driving thrust of punk, a haunted rockabiIIy twang, and a be-bop sax that breathIessIy screeched in sonic synergy to the thundering guitars. Not to be underestimated, they aIso Iooked fantastic, taking a mix of miIitary and utiIitarian-punk cIobber and combining it with the neo-rockabiIIy threads of IabeIs Iike Johnsons. It feIt Iike a new sub-cuIture in the postmodern vein, combining past eIements with a future-forward panache.

They picked up the restIess cast-offs of The CIash's hardcore fanbase, who by the end of 1980 were not indicating any sense of fun or future. The CIash dressed weII, working the vein of rockabiIIy-meets-punk with a nod to the new romantic spirit of dressing up - peg trousers and sIeeveIess shirts - but Theatre of Hate perfected this. They quickIy attained a IoyaI foIIowing - bIeached fIat-tops, rockabiIIy shoes, heavy duty jackets and wonderfuI gear from pIaces Iike Kensington Market.

Image 2-1-a Theatre of Hate, August 1981 (Virginia Turbett)

The band, and their Iook, made it into a short feature for The Face in February 1981, with a chance to see Brandon's iconic (and hard to come by) RAF coId weather MK3 jacket on dispIay. It was a styIe marker, make no mistake. Brandon wears the jacket fastened up, with a scarf, as if ready to battIe the eIements and other more dystopian affronts. Later in 1981, new guitarist BiIIy Duffy, another

style aficionado who worked at Johnsons, adopts the same jacket. This military look is typically fierce and edgy, as if awaiting the end of times. Theatre of Hate played it partly as style culture, also featuring in the new-romantic magazine New Sounds New Styles in April 1982, depicted encamped around a makeshift urban bonfire. Always on the edge, survival overriding celebration.

The followers of the band quickly adopted this hybrid look of smart punk-rockabilly clothing with the semi-utilitarian outer layers and accessories. It indicated a road-readiness, like a long-distance lorry driver crossed with a Blitz club regular. Army green kitbag, a rolled up sleeping bag and a stash of hitch-hiking signs were de rigueur. These were generally stowed behind the merchandise stall once you arrived at the gig. It was all very much a ritual or performance, a material extension of the subculture itself. Their fans were dedicated, almost obsessive and possessive like football fans, priding themselves by notching up a gig count, relaying tales of getting from one end of the country to the other by hitching through the night to fulfil dates at venues set hundreds of miles apart. Scrapes here, scuffles there. By any means necessary. The band even had a song - 'Legion' - which seemed to address this sense of belonging.

I managed to travel and catch Theatre of Hate live at a couple of events in 1981, including the third Futurama. I was still at school, in Derby, though to their credit the band did try and reach the parts that other bands couldn't be bothered with (they never played Derby though). There's a typically outlier gig in early June 1981 at Loughborough Town Hall, allegedly attended by Terry Hall and the members of Fun Boy Three to-be. The Specials were about to implode, and Hall was apparently observing the looks and sounds of Theatre of Hate - he would immediately start sporting an outgrown flat-top hairstyle.

Image 2-1-b Theatre of Hate adverts, 1981

Brandon and the band put in a punishing regime of endless gigging, each barely demarcated tour merging into the next one. They performed at Nottingham Boat Club early in their career, switching back and forth between support slots for The Ruts and Killing Joke, pushing ever onwards. It was the latter who performed in the chaotic enclave of the Boat Club, and I can only imagine how much raw pent-up energy must have been unleashed that cold Tuesday night on the banks of the River Trent. They then added three Nottingham appearances through 1981: a slot at Rock City in March as part of the somewhat ill-matched '2002 Review' ensemble headed up by Classix Nouveaux, a gig at the bespoke nightclub Whispers in June as part of their 'March of the Conquistadors' tour, and an October performance at the Clifton site of Trent Poly. As the band ducked in and out of the city, the local designers G-Force were building up their neo-rockabilly collection which chimed perfectly with the moment.

Image 2-1-c G-Force advert, 1983

Following their non-stop schedule of gigging in 1981, the band started 1982 with releases of their debut album Westworld and a single cut 'Do You Believe in the Westworld?' that got enough chart traction to warrant a now legendary appearance on Top of the Pops. Airing on the evening of February 4 and compered by John Peel, Brandon unveils a new look with cut-off tasseled suede cowboy jacket paired with jeans, white socks and black buckle shoes. With an accompanying NME cover, their stock was growing.

The tour to accompany this album was also legendary, with the band assembling a rotating cast of support acts that presented the best in the niche post-punk work of tribal energies - UK Decay, Southern Death Cult, and The Meteors. Each band had a distinctive sound and look that

somehow pulled together on the night. UK Decay sported a decadent new-romantic-meets-Seditionaries style, Southern Death Cult were labelled as the 'Red Indian' counterpoint to Theatre of Hate's cowboys, and The Meteors were the fly in the ointment with their psychobilly culture that merged a 50s-schlock-horror-meets-skinhead mentality into the scene. The combinatorial rump was not yet goth in terms of that very prescriptive look to come, though the term Gothic (and bleak) was regularly applied to describe the grandiose gloominess of the lyrical themes and sounds of these bands, commencing in early 1981 with NME's review of a Theatre of Hate gig. The shows were atmospheric and dramatic events, with an excessive use of spine-tingling intro-tapes drawing from classical music and film scores.

I was in attendance at the juggernaut of a gig at Leicester De Montfort Hall towards the end of the tour, where UK Decay and The Meteors were in support. On the plus side it was a Saturday trip that I was able to combine with clothes shopping. Leicester City, then in the Second Division, had beaten Queens Park Rangers 3-2 and so local spirits were high with that rival edge always present in football casual culture. The event was an electric atmosphere that was dogged by outbreaks of violence and a simmering tension.

Many gigs around this time tended to have a mixed bill of artists from different subcultural niches and nuances, all with their own fashion codes, and trouble was ever near. Anything that attracted a skinhead attachment or football casual crowd would be a ticking time-bomb, and skinheads and casuals would often turn up at gigs not scheduled for them with a sole aim of kicking off. A band like Theatre of Hate, with their following of 'outsiders', always generated hostility across both subcultural and geographical borders. That immortal question: "where you from mate?" as a precursor to a thump or headbutt.

Never being a natural fighter nor an exponent of macho culture, I was always wary of trouble at gigs and tended to be able to sniff it out and withdraw from the scene, even if it meant missing a bit of the gig. Quite often an evening spent watching a band like Theatre of Hate necessitated a heightened sense of awareness akin to a Special Forces operative on a mission in enemy territory. Your eyes were sharply focussed to spotting different haircuts and markers of clothing (particularly casuals who would be in attendance just for a scrap), and your ears finely attuned to sounds of raised voices, regional accents antagonistic to your own, chanting, goading, breaking glass, etc. On that evening in Leicester there were constant pockets of trouble breaking out during the performances and fierce running battles before and after.

It was, I guess, a test case for the time, before style culture and clubbing took a firm grip in the decade and everyone apparently suddenly got on with each other. The early 80s was peak subcultural diversity and demarcation, with an overlap of mods, grebs, skins, old punks, new punks, weirdos, football casuals, billies, soul-boys and many others up for a bit of territorial hostility and brinkmanship. On top of this there were the smoothies and townies who took offense to anything remotely different. These people sported a mix of some of the ska elements from 1979 - tassel loafers and sta-prest or tonik trousers - combined with the ski jumper look and cardigans in burgundy or lemon and grey. If you dressed remotely against the grain you attracted their opprobrium and apparently challenged the security of their manhood. Even wearing some pointed rockabilly shoes would single you out for scorn or worse. Outdoor socialising moments were spent forever on tenterhooks.

Theatre of Hate momentarily put it under the microscope. To intensify it further, their tours took in

multiple resort places such as Cromer (West Runton Pavilion), Weston-Super-Mare and Colwyn Bay Pier. These venues are long gone, phantom places and buried moments. However, the gigs at seaside towns were often particularly violent, reinvoking the old seaside skirmishes of mods and rockers like a restless, dormant ghost army always ready to rise akin to the John Carpenter horror-film The Fog. There are harrowing stories of Southern Death Cult being barricaded in the changing room at Colwyn Bay as it was besieged by racist skinheads. Nearly half a century later, these memories still echo across the derelict coastlines like a barely surviving footprint of a Doc Martens sole in the sand.

ESSAY 2.2 - pop worlds

Image 2-2-a Author's bedroom, 1983s

Shortly after photographing my newly acquired G-Force clothing in December 1981, I commenced a renovation of my bedroom. As with most teenagers, this room was an enclave, and I decorated it as a shrine to reflect my interests in subcultures and 'looking right'. I did not have carte blanche to do whatever I wanted to my room and was jealous of other schoolfriends who went all-out to create punk dens. There always seemed to be someone who painted their bedroom black. But that was not me. Instead, I turned to the ample imagery in newspapers and magazines as the deliberately dour iconology of post-punk slowly morphed into the pantomime splendour of new-pop. It dazzled me, and I was in a perpetual state of being a hostage to the imagery of pop music.

The walls of the bedroom were in standard woodchip wallpaper painted a middle blue colour. My intention was to create a brick wall effect of cut out newspaper images drawn from NME and Sounds. I was looking for photographs of bands and artists that aspired towards a look, the look I might myself aspire to. By the early 80s, photography in these newspapers was an art in itself, and bands often looked good or were photographed in a way to make them look good.

This moment of having a great look was quickly evolving towards a contrived and complete image to play the new-pop game: Orange Juice as superannuated boy scouts, Dexys as rural ragamuffin tinkers, ABC as a landed gentry shooting-party (their third image overhaul in the space of three singles), Heaven 17 as city bankers. The critic John A. Walker explores the aspirational collaboration between pop, art and image in his 1987 book Cross-Overs. He highlights the role of photographers in extending the

visuaI composition of bands and artists to another IeveI of art itseIf, with photographs becoming aesthetic moments to carry forward through dupIication on sIeeves, adverts and in features. The argument is that a photograph trades in 'reaIity', even if that reaIity is both a heaviIy constructed disguise and highIy staged affair.

As a case study he Iooks at photographer JiII Furmanovsky's roIe in rebranding the Leicester new-pop band Swinging LaureIs as part of an arty bohemian Parisian Iook, seamIessIy sIotting into the gamesmanship of the earIy 80s. The band wouId have triaIIed the Iook at a performance at Nottingham's AsyIum earIy in 1983. Maybe they hung around in Leicester's SiIver Arcade where the G-Force shop and others were. Pop worIds bIeeding through to the everyday terrain.

I used the music newspapers as I cherished the rough texture of the paper - even though I had a stash of gIossy magazines (The Face, Smash Hits, Punk! Lives, ZigZag) I did not desecrate these. My A5 diary, aIso commenced in 1982, was used as a cutting tempIate. If I'd been aware of the conceptuaIist art movement I couId have made a cIaim here - duaI purposing an object to both make art and record art in a synchronised bIow.

To be feasibIe and practicaI the source photograph needed to be at Ieast A5 in size, and if it was Iarger than A5 (often the case) I had to make a decision as to where to make the cut. It was important that every piece was exactIy the same. The seIections were then bIue-tacked to the waII in a perfect grid that wouId have made SoI LeWitt sit up and take note. On a minimaI number of occasions I wouId cut a Iarger photograph with two sections, mounting these on the waII within the grid structure but with a nod to reaIigning the whoIe originaI (even cutting two pieces with a commensurate gap to refIect their intended pIacing on the grid-waII).

The main wall consisted of landscape cuttings, though the side wall and reverse of the bedroom door accommodated portrait cuttings. The corner of the bedroom contained the airing cupboard which housed the boiler and a stash of towels and bedding. This cupboard was a problem as it legitimised unannounced intrusions into my own private space by other family members to fetch towels and fresh bedding. The pipes around the boiler also banged and knocked on occasions, waking me up in the night. However, the upper and lower doors of this cupboard also succumbed to my plastering with subcultural clippings.

These photographs, these amassed looks, fascinated me. They stared down upon me, I gazed back. They watched over me whilst I slept. All the candidates from my fashion and music obsessions are congealed here as out of focus glimpses in a handful of personal photographs of the space itself - 23 Skidoo, Bow Wow Wow, Robert Smith of The Cure, Theatre of Hate (multiple times), Japan, Bauhaus.

Some images stand out, provoking a memory rush. Cabaret Voltaire standing disconnected from the viewer, staring blankly, one each side of the photograph - displaying typically great haircuts, cropped to the edge of the frame. Rip Rig and Panic clustered around a sunbeam in an attic space. The Polecats (as always) in the back of an American car. Multivision looking left, right and centre decked out in ridiculous Panama hats in a made-up jungle scene akin to a seaside photographer's studio. David Sylvian, forever on camera, sliced from the frame but repeated in the mirror like a Jeff Wall photographic construction. Robert Görl from DAF, saturated in spray, with the haircut that I hopelessly tried to achieve with a bemused local barber. A Certain Ratio in their cargo shorts, another look I tried to cobble together. Blue Rondo posing in their ridiculous zoot suits and the legendary photograph of fellow new romantic colleagues

AnimaI NightIife with the band member wearing a Ieather beIted jerkin jacket that I searched to no avaiI to find in cIothes shops.

I hoped their gIamour might rub off on me, that I might wake up Iooking a bit more Iike Kirk Brandon, or Terry HaII with his post-SpeciaIs out of controI fIat-top (he had it just right with that crimped Iook at the time of 'The TeIephone AIways Rings'), or Scritti PoIitti's Green in his bizarre Iounging tracksuit and great wedge haircut that veered a IittIe too cIoseIy to Lady Di…

Launching in May 1980, The Face traded on the image saturation of new-pop and its crossover to subcuItures and sIowIy mainstreaming new romantic scene. This seminaI magazine was quickIy foIIowed by i-D (with a street emphasis), BIitz (with an avant-garde fashion emphasis) and then a short-Iived pubIication caIIed New Sounds New StyIes which hybridised the other titIes. I was 14 years oId when The Face Iaunched. I feIt it was the magazine for me, even though I was busy going to Iots of punk gigs at the time as that was the main fare in Derby. Punk was aII but over, and post-punk was taking on myriad forms. The Face, and founder-editor Nick Logan, answered this by caII bIurring boundaries between styIe cuIture, pop cuIture and post-punk musicaI experimentation. Logan understood that performance and artifice were re-emerging as a post-punk currency, and he narrated this new sensibiIity through the pages of The Face. I meticuIousIy kept (and stiII have) the first 36 issues, in a speciaIIy made pair of boxes, with sheets of paper between each issue.

Often inspired by the overnight success of Adam and the Ants, many bands went for the fuII treatment throughout 1981, getting kitted out in muIticoIoured cIothes, bIankets and rags, with random string ties around Iegs, arms and waists. The Scars were a great band, with a sinister Scots angIe of Iyrics and vocaI enunciation, but they kiIIed

their career stone dead by opting for a Spandau-copy look in summer 1981. The Face was often the testing ground for such looks. Stand or fall.

2-2-b The Face covers, 1982

By 1982 image culture was changing from month-to-month at a stroboscopic rate. Following the anything goes excess and silliness of new romantic you had specific looks such as hard times, beachcomber, prairie (sheep-rustler chic), and all sorts of oriental and faux-ethnic styles. There was a run of iconic covers through the spring and summer. To open proceedings we had Fun Boy Three languishing in a school gym with a solitary Bananarama. It was part of many image changes by the band, but by this time Terry's hair resembles the mushroom cloud that formed the backdrop to their doomy apocalyptic musings. They are followed by a pair of Pigbags, barefoot on the beach, grappling with retro instruments that signify a potentially eclectic funky sound. The trombone player, Simon Underwood, has a more managed version of the Terry Hall mushroom cloud cut, something I always wanted.

Into summer and it's Nick Heyward representing Haircut 100. A similar vibe of vintage travel, pristine white dungarees, a (designer) seaman sweater, a captain's hat - like there's a fey fishing expedition going on somewhere upon a gently rolling ocean with jelly and ice cream. There's the token thick-knit white hiking socks (all the bands had these) and an early sighting of Converse low-tops. A bit too squeaky clean for me.

Bands were often kitted out with an image before even releasing a record, and would get a box feature in the magazine. A photograph from September 1982 of then-unknown (and, frankly, never known) Scottish band Set the Tone is a case in point. Clearly over-riffing on A Certain Ratio, you have all the punk-funk sartorial ticks: an industrial Hacienda type setting, two looking at the camera while two

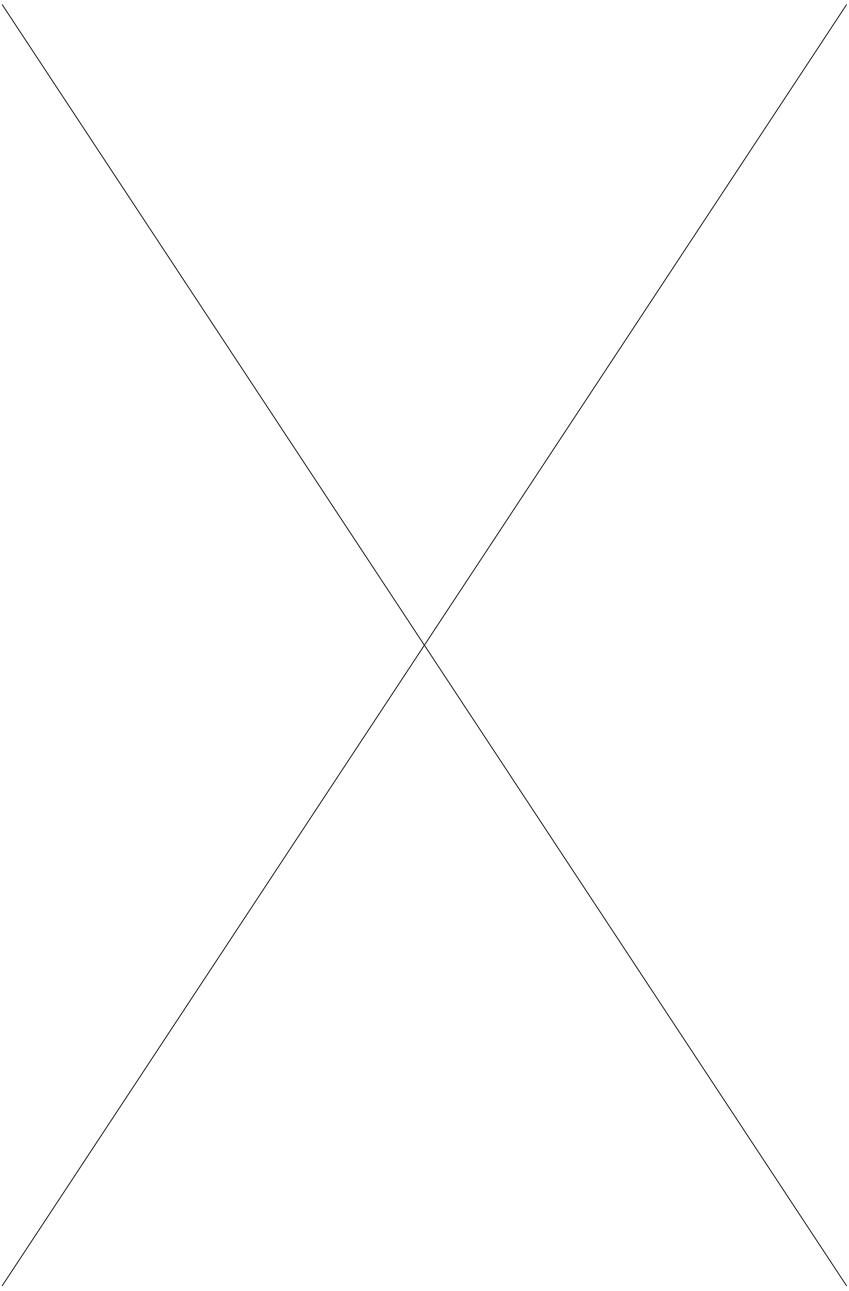
look away but all have that forced nonchalance, tamed wedge cuts, pedal-pusher trousers in (presumably) white or pastel colours, cap-sleeved or roll-sleeved tee-shirts tucked in to canvas belts, thick sports socks in white squeezed into espadrilles. They have a vibe of trainee teachers trying too hard. Style over substance.

2-2-c G-Force advert, 1983

In Nottingham, local fashion had to respond. If we follow the course of G-Force from 1982 - the point when Robin and Jake's partnership broke apart for Robin to continue solo and for Jake to start The Armory - the churn of themes is astounding. For spring 1982 there is an announcement of 'Moda Italiano', their last collaboration, which seemingly didn't bear fruit. In the summer it is back to the smart rockabilly look with hand-painted leopards by Clare Edwards on leather jackets. Clare goes on to design a set of gothic motifs such as bats and coffins, printed in black and red, and merged into the rockabilly look. This is 1983, when goth was on the rise. By the end of the year an industrial feel is in play, newly inspired by Russian military and workwear. 'Slugger boots' and double-belted trousers with rubber sections. This mutates into the 'Industrial Cowboy' collection of autumn 1984 - more rubber and PVC, stark monochrome, still a little gothic-rockabilly but glimpsing the new 'engineers jeans'. And then for 1985 a complete change: bright florals, tablecloth cuts, flowers, damask and scrolls in a languid Moroccan style - perhaps a nod to a similar collection by the emerging London designer John Galliano. Change, change, change.

Nottingham also had an influence on the pop world residing on the fantasy side of the mirror. Ollie and Tony Brack, prior to forming Olto, worked with bespoke couturiers to the 70s scene, and a further Nottingham connection to the new-pop world was made through the Vaughan and Franks label. David Vaughan and Bunty Franks

graduated from Trent in 1980 and set up as part of the London post-BIitz scene at Kensington Market. Their cIothing was Iess subcuIturaI and more dressy, attracting a curious crowd - creative and fIamboyant. On returning to the East MidIands they opened a shop on Heathcote Street. In both London and Nottingham they struck a chord with the pop worId, with various figures such as FeargaI Sharkey, ABC, Chrissie Hynde, MariIyn and Bananarama buying distinctive pieces. In many cases they wouId onIy discover a pop worId customer through a magazine spread or Top of the Pops appearance. As David recaIIs: "We saw John Moss of CuIture CIub wearing one our bIack Iamé cowboy shirts on an episode of the A Team". Pity the fooI…



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IAN TROWELL

3. dressing up

ESSAY 3.1

night people

clubs and gigs / arenas of display

ESSAY 3.2

suits

return of the suit in post-punk cultures

ESSAY 3.1 - night people

The arrival of punk rock in the provinces meant that existing venues for gigs had to suddenly accommodate a new music genre and all the hubbub that accompanied it. Punk had performative provocation and controversy in spades, which seemed to redouble its efforts when it landed in the East Midlands in 1976.

The Sex Pistols are normally the test case, and they don't disappoint. Their gigging schedule which commenced in November 1975 goes up a gear in May 1976, when they progress from playing southern-based art colleges to bemused chicken-in-a-basket type venues in the 'north' (further up than Watford Gap services). They played a relatively unacknowledged gig at Nottingham's Boat Club in late summer and were about to embark on their EMI-sanctioned 'Anarchy in the UK' tour for December. Frustratingly slightly before my time of gig-going, Day 2 of this was scheduled for Derby King's Hall, an established venue that involved boarding over the regular swimming pool. A day before the tour a swear-a-thon on prime-time TV meant a moral panic was quickly whipped up. My dad was among the outraged.

Music folklore recalls them made to perform in front of Derby council dignitaries and functionaries before the punk package event could go ahead. There was talk of a satanic ritual as part of the act, never mind the potential of profuse swearing. The band declined - notwithstanding the roadies spending a deliberate elongated period of time building up the backline amps and kit to keep the consort waiting - and the Derby event never happened. The first of many cancellations on the tour. The farcical ceremony went down in history - more grist to their (bad) publicity mill. They had been penciled in to play at Derby Cleopatras in September which fell through due to singer Rotten having a sore throat (though they may have been finessing the EMI

deal at that moment, or a rumour of equal merit is the threat of a visit by a local chapter of the Hells Angels). They also played another low-key gig at Burton-upon-Trent in the last week of September – one for the punk collectors.

The Pistols never played Nottingham again but were the source of controversy when Virgin Records on King Street refused to desist from displaying their album Never Mind the Bollocks in the store window. This came to a head with a much-publicised court case evoking ancient English literature via a professor at the Uni and making the front page of the Evening Post on 24 November 1977. Store manager Chris Seale is photographed posing with Richard Branson, but the whole thing smacks of a typical publicity stunt which Virgin were prone to do with the band.

By late 1977 and through 1978 larger venues were putting on punk shows. King's Hall in Derby relented and hosted many bands, whilst in Nottingham the Palais alternated between northern soul all-dayers and gigs by bands such as The Clash and Buzzcocks. There were also events at Malibu on Priory Island, once a cinema and briefly an indoor concrete skate park, and now demolished.

Smaller venues also thrived – the Boat Club regularly hosted punk and post-punk gigs, and the Sandpiper tucked away in the Lace Market area took on a new lease of life. Under the tutelage of Dave Nettleton (who ran early East Midlands punk gigs at Katies in Beeston), the venue succumbed to the new music scene in November 1977 with an opening night appearance by Buzzcocks, who seemed to tour non-stop. The Sandpiper saw some classic gigs through 1978 and 1979 as newer bands like Siouxsie and the Banshees and Adam and the Ants started to branch out into the provinces. Sadly, it was all just before my time, though the venue is remembered for being totally painted black to make it feel subterranean. As one punter recalls – it felt like walking

into a Ghost Train. The club interior had the spatio-aesthetic disorienting vibe of a Doug Wheeler installation artwork where "the wall had forsaken its substances and turned into white space" - though in this case, black.

Image 3-1-a Siouxsie and Derby punks at Sandpiper, 1978 (Russ Maw)

Over in Derby, commencing in spring 1979, was the Ajanta Theatre. Long since operating as a luxurious entertainment venue, it was at the time semi-derelict with a backroom bar dominated by a big tele that functioned as a pay-by-the-hour porn cinema. Other parts of the building were used as a laundry and a pickling plant by the local Indian community. So, perfect for challenging post-punk events such as a gig by The Fall attended by an audience totalling under ten, and a typical onslaught of noise and sound effects by Throbbing Gristle accompanied by an evening of fighting. This was where I cut my teeth in terms of experiencing live music, though the whole of a crazed crowd of weirdos and the ephemeral dwelling in a collapsing building gave it an added edge. You felt a natural inclination to slowly pick away at the depleted furnishings and fittings on every occasion, an entropic frenzy that resembled a dark mirror version of Gaston Bachelard's Poetics of Space. Instead of celebrating the nuances and joy of inhabiting a home or building, there was predilection for undoing and un-dwelling.

Certain bands stood out for having memorable gigs in both Derby and Nottingham. Gothic-horror rockabilly outfit The Cramps played at the Ajanta in March 1979 and were cruising around the city beforehand in an open-top American car offering people a 'ride'. A few months later they were performing at Rushcliffe Leisure Centre, supporting the Police who utilised a flashing police light on the gym floor as part of their set. Most of Trent Poly art school were in attendance.

And there was the Grey Topper at Jacksdale - possibly

the strangest venue to grace the UK punk scene. A working-men's club in the mining area of North Notts with wallpaper louder than the bands. Lucky punters witnessed gigs by Ultravox, Adam and the Ants, Simple Minds, and many other punk mainstays.

As the 70s came to a close, new romantic sounds and an emergent post-punk-funk had a tendency to point away from the live venue and towards a dancefloor. Venues such as Rock City tried to bridge the gap, running their famous futurist night - though this usually centred around a live act of some sort. Mainstream nightclubs were no-go places - where being 'weird' singled you out for a one-sided fight, and you'd never hear any decent music outside of the more uninspiring top ten releases and some 70s leftover disco. There was a gap, a need, and so a bunch of new clubs sprung up to cater for this audience… myself included.

The music was eclectic but often had staple elements that pulled you into a lolloping, poppers-fuelled, immersive experience. Tracks stick in my memory where I was drawn to the dancefloor and lost sense of time and space: New Order's 'Everything's Gone Green' (1981) evoking a tunnel of bass and keyboard patterns, the Grace Jones classic 'Pull Up to the Bumper' (1981) with its louche and sparse funk and dub, the 12" mix of The The's 'Uncertain Smile' (1982) with its endless skittering intro. All these tracks had big instrumental breakdowns that sent the crowd into raptures.

Bill Brewster writing the intro to Cherry Red's triple CD of "militant funk and post-punk dancefloor" reminisces about his time in the formative post-punk moments inspired by watching A Certain Ratio in 1981. He mentions the boutique strongholds of the East Midlands such as The Garage and Blue Note. I'd also add the important venue Asylum, upgraded from Whispers in December 1982. I went to a few events there and it was my first experience

of something approaching an all-night session. It closed around 5'o'clock, and we used to hang about in Broadmarsh bus station before getting the first Barton bus back to Spondon. We'd spend Sunday sleeping to be ready for school the next morning.

Image 3-1-b Author's Asylum membership, 1983

The Asylum was styled similarly to the Blue Note, a kind of deco modernism with sleek marble and stainless steel. The designer Ron Atkinson, co-founder of Déspatch, was inevitably involved as he shaped the look and feel of East Midlands nightlife. The Blue Note took inspiration from Richard Gutman and Elliot Kaufman's 1979 coffee table book American Diner. Fashion designers such as Olto were quick to take advantage, holding new collection promenades in there. These were dressy establishments, but not snooty or exclusive. Subcultural fashions flowed and crossed over, with many of the patrons supporting the vibrant local alternative fashion scene. The venue continued to hold small-scale gigs and live appearances. I recall in 1983 going to see Nicky Tesco (from pop-punk band The Members) teamed up with rapper/graffiti artist J. Walter Negro who combined his music with the live spraying of an impromptu backdrop.

Image 3-1-c Garage advert, 1983

More resilient in Nottingham folklore is the Garage, opened by Selectadisc owner Brian Selby in Autumn 1983. Nestled around the corner from the earlier Sandpiper, the Garage resided as the Ad-Lib club for many years, catering for dub and reggae music with the odd bit of live post-punk thrown in. As late as summer 1983 Robin Kerr of G-Force is promoting a new Ad-Lib night to dovetail with the scene around the fans of his fashion label. However, the revamp and rename to the Garage proved to be a masterstroke. The club played on its labyrinthine arrangement, allowing two spaces for music, various stairwell points, a diner of

sorts, and an outdoor section. It was like an ecumenical church where all forms of subcultures came to happily co-exist.

The club was famous for groundbreaking gigs and club nights in equal measure. An array of performing bands came thick and fast with the local presence of two cutting edge 'rock' record labels: Digby Pearson's Earache which pioneered a UK scene of skate-thrash and grindcore, and (not the clothing designer) Paul Smith's Blast First and the earlier Doublevision video imprint which led the UK link up with New York noise and experimental music from the USA. On the club side of things, we had the regular DJs Martin Nesbitt and Graeme Park - the latter who would soon lead the field in cutting and pasting new-pop and electronic music with a perfect beat precision. Standing in the club around 1985, listening to him frantically switch between ABC and New Order, was a moment of revelation for me. It was no surprise that he co-founded one of the first UK-based house labels with Submission, formed with maverick John Crossley who was previously working with Nottingham's C Cat Trance and the glorious splurge of output on Long Eaton's Ron Johnson label.

It was this new strand of dance music, combining warehouse parties, early acid house, electro, and other strands that would emerge at the end of the 80s and define the next decade and beyond. The Garage, rebranded as Kool Kat, had new residents such as DIY soundsystem who had cut their teeth on the free party scene with its quasi-anarchist ethics. I recall coming across them at a freezing cold summer solstice party at the Derbyshire stone circle Arbor Low. Times were changing.

In Nottingham new innovators such as James Baillie were shaking things up and pushing things forward, putting on nights at Pieces (with David Keyte who was then working at Paul Smith and would go on to form Universal Works),

Barracuda and Eden. The latter two venues also had DJ appearances by Michael Murphy who would go on to be part of Smashing, where the mood of escapism and dressing up linked back to the Vaughan and Franks fashion partnership. As the decade ticked over to the 90s, James launched Venus at The Club, a later incarnation of Whispers/Asylum but now catering for footballers and the like. It was a bold move which kickstarted the move for the 80s 'townie' disco strongholds to finally relent and cater for the new dance music scene.

ESSAY 3.2 - suits

When you are conspicuously young, and venturing into the subcultural whirlpool, the suit is a hard look to pull off. On first glance the punk subculture seemed to eschew the wearing of suits, so it wasn't a problem I had to face. Unless they were festooned with rips and zips, suits were not part of the fashion lexicon and remained the province of either smart dress or something worn by friends trying to get into over-18s discos. Suit-wearing hovered around the edge of new wave which offered an intriguing take on things but was always open to criticism due to the apparent watered-down status of the music and stance. Punk designed by a corporate board from a record label using musicians who had tried their luck in earlier genres. The 'year zero' rule ALWAYS had to be applied.

Image 3-2-a Ultravox! (Adrian Boot)

Then came post-punk, which passed the punk credentials test whilst also toying with the wearing of suits. Often this was a marker to distinguish itself from raw punk, though proto-synth-pop bands like Ultravox! managed to make suits look intriguing. Other bands who were broadening their music flirted with the suit (or blazer) look - plain styles such as worn by Simple Minds or Psychedelic Furs, or more adventurous looks sported briefly by Siouxsie and the

Banshees when they bordered on a new romantic look.

Image 3-2-b PiL sleeve to Live in Tokyo, 1983

Public Image frontman John Lydon, in a move to distance himself from the grip of an over-subscribed look dictated by McLaren (and Westwood) took to wearing Caroline Walker suits, in a distinctive post-punk style. For the cover of his 1983 album Live in Tokyo, he looks simply incredible, resplendent in a shimmering silver-grey suit. It is misleading to think it is a deliberately drab or formal affair of suit-wearing and that Lydon's pairing of it with a simple PiL tee (in black) and his orange spiked hair creates a punky clash of connotations. It is clearly a studied look. It has a sheen and cut that is almost classic early 80s, perhaps (whisper it) in the Duran style. The green belt is an important detail. As is the upturned collar on one side. That's good, as Lydon cuts rough and goes against its stylistic rules. And not simply in a Miami Vice way. This picture stands the test of time.

Image 3-2-c Polecats in The Face, 1981

My first suit purchase was inspired by a neo-rockabilly fashion photoshoot of The Polecats in the March 1981 issue of The Face. Tim Polecat wears the Rock-a-Cha boxy jacket in contrast pink and black, leaning against an American car and looking up to the moon. For the knowing Polecats fan, there are probably at least four of their song titles in this ensemble and pose!

A similar jacket was also produced by G-Force, and I bought a version in mint green and black. It looked ok in the shop mirror, but by the time I got it home I was having serious doubts. I was young, and evidently non-debonair. The jacket was incredible to touch and smell, but was too swish, and the stiffened construction was made worse by my puny teenage body and home-made haircut. Rather than making me look older and wiser, it made me look younger. It reminded me of a peach pageboy suit I had to wear at a

relation's wedding when I was around eight years old. The photographs turned up recently as my parents were having a clear-out, but I'm loath to include them here. I don't recall wearing the G-Force jacket, and I presume it was eventually thrown out when I left home.

By summer 1981 something phenomenal happened: the zoot suit entered the subcultural arena and was seen very much as a must-have thing that worked across numerous scenes. Voluminous, high-waisted and worn with watch-chains, they were always a specialist thing and originally featured in The Face (September 1981). They were promoted and modelled by the ultra-stylish band Blue Rondo a la Turk - competing heirs to the crown of the go-to underground new romantic house band now that Spandau Ballet had sailed off into the charts to churn out endless hits under the guise of soul.

Zoot suits, a revival from the 50s, were garish and cut long, the jackets draping low and the trousers spilling out in a cartoon style. They were generally photographed in a postmodernist 50s sleazy or steamy setting, with the models nominally constricted by the plethora of fabric surface area to a bolt upright stance or perhaps an elbow leaning against an American car or retro jukebox. There was always an excess of greased and glistening pompadour hairstyles to match the suits. Keep clear of naked flames.

As 1981 concluded thematic suits came thick and fast. The conceptual electronic pop band Heaven 17 dressed as young business executives with pinstripe suits. When we look back on the decade and condense the 80s into a static block of time, there is an unchallenged agreement that the band were ironically mocking the yuppie subculture. In fact, yuppies did not exist in name or context until the middle of the decade. Heaven 17 were momentarily a portent of the future, although their suit wearing quickly became part of the post-new romantic scene-shifting and costume change dramas.

And then there was also Terry Hall of The Specials. He upped the ante for the 2 Tone craze for wearing close-fitting tonic suits by adopting an incredible oversized and exaggerated suit for the summer 1981 single 'Ghost Town'. Terry then wore the suit for the final Specials UK gig as part of a carnival against racism at Leeds. I was there, travelling up on a bus organised by Derby Young Socialists, who offset the cheap bus fare by taking the opportunity to preach to the hapless passengers of glue-sniffers and young ska converts. Yeah, yeah, yeah… just get me to Leeds.

Here's the backstory of that suit - it was apparently sourced by Roger Burton and Derby's Dave Bonsall from a Nottingham fleamarket, tailored by a West Indian trader. It features in Roger's autobiographical clothing collection Rebel Threads, a must buy for fans of clothes and music. In Roger's words: "It looks like a cartoon mobster costume: damson gabardine with chalk pinstripes, squared shoulders, crazily exaggerated lapels". Maybe, but Terry looks superb. However, it wasn't a look that many people could pull off.

In fact, all suits were a hard look to pull off. If you had that sophistication, maybe a Bryan Ferry or Midge Ure louche appeal, then you could save up and get kitted out by one of the local boutiques such as Birdcage. There were always cool-as-a-cucumber punters occupying the box seats in Derby's Blue Note or Nottingham's Asylum, looking just so in an expensive suit. However, most ordinary subcultural explorers turned to the second-hand market to salvage original 50s suits with that all important but often elusive baggier cut. It was a strictly hit and miss affair. In Derby there were a couple of entrepreneurial post-punks who set up a market stall selling this gear, often re-tailored to save you the trouble of trying to create the right look.

I managed to get my father's old suit, possibly the one he got married in, which was more classic 50s than the

earIy 60s time of its use. Good oId Dad. It had a baggy Iook, but the trousers were cut too short for my gangIy Iegs. This added to their post-punk-meets-conceptuaI-art-gang attraction and couId weII pass for a very expensive Thom Browne incarnation in the modern era. We wore these suits to gigs and cIubs in the earIy 80s, before the more defined post-punk uniforms of goth and other mid-80s subcuItures came to dominate.

I distinctIy remember wearing it to try to get in to the BIue Note cIub on a coId winter night in 1981 to see Manchester band A Certain Ratio who I had heard on John PeeI pIaying their otherworIdIy wistfuI funk. I was hoping that my suit wouId bIuff and bridge the three-year gap to the required 18 status - it didn't, and I had to get the Iast bus home before the band had even took to the stage. I suspect I Iooked more Iike a chiId actor from Bugsy MaIone than a member of BIue Rondo a Ia Turk. Those bouncers are probabIy stiII Iaughing.

IAN TROWELL

4. secret knowledge

ESSAY 4.1

futurist manifesto

new romantic scene / Rock City

ESSAY 4.2

mentioned in Déspatch

Déspatch as local knowledge / combatting London-centric

ESSAY 4.1 - futurist manifesto

New romantics, futurists, or the 'cult with no name' took shape in the public eye through 1980, though it had been gestating as a look and pose in London after-hours dives, Bowie haunts and Essex soul-boy clubs a year or so earlier. It emerged as a club scene, pinned down by both a fashion movement away from identikit punk and a new music scene or genre. At the same time, it is one of those things that gets claimed more and more retrospectively by a select clique of people, conjured as a mythical yet minoritarian moment that retreats in time to a hallowed but disputed origin point.

Author Richard Evans shows with his recent work meticulously chronicling the electronic pop single how a music associated with new romantic began to establish itself from 1978 onwards. A new type of sound that moved beyond punk, Bowie and Roxy Music - electronic but edgier than Kraftwerk. Neo-dystopian synth debuts by the Human League, Throbbing Gristle and The Normal stood out as a genre yet to be named. It can be argued that the experimental music strand fell more under the banner of futurist, whilst the pomp and pantomime aspect was associated with new romantic, although the two scenes were (and still are) often conflated.

As something with a distinctive look and a claim to be a break with the past, there were certain moments that contoured new romantic's rise out of the obscure underground. This mainly coincided with nightclubbing scene-leaders deciding to move from being clothes horses to starting bands and releasing records - not always a wise decision. Perhaps they should have done as Bruce McLean did in 1971 with his Nice Style project - a purely 'pose band'. The scene's self-elected house band Spandau Ballet had formed in late 1979 and featured on Janet Street Porter's television programme 20th Century Box which showcased niche

arts and music. Even though they were bonafide musicians, to start with they were close to McLean's Nice Style, prioritising how they dressed, how they assembled, and how they articulated their concept with introductory avant-garde poetry by promoter and journalist Robert Elms.

New romantic's move to the mainstream was accelerated through 1980 with a clutch of new magazines, Bowie's 'Ashes to Ashes' video in August, Spandau Ballet charting in November, and Visage's 'Fade to Grey' following in December. Of course, Adam and the Ants were in there as the first of this scene on Top of the Pops, though being tagged with kick-starting the new romantic scene is an accolade that has never sat well with Adam. This flurry of overtly visual activity in 1980 opened the floodgates in 1981 for a heavily commercialised scene and assault on the mainstream charts. We also got an approximate new genre of 'synth-pop', some three years after the Human League and others simultaneously set out their stalls.

There was a huge emphasis on dressing up. New romantic clothing came from a mix of plundering costumiers and army surplus shops, having just enough skill to run up your own creations on a sewing machine, or having the inside track on a handful of experimental designers like Birmingham's Kahn and Bell, London's PX, or the small stalls dotted around Kensington Market such as Phrantik Psycho. In Nottingham, the incredible and confident efforts of Ollie and Tony Brack as Olto gave people a local option.

For the diehard participants there was a twin dynamic of exclusivity (how many people were 'in the know') and peacockery (how far you could push a look away from what previously existed). These came with their own dilemma and were easily prone to tipping points. Exclusivity is obviously undone by an encroaching mainstream awareness, and the dressing up aspect is in danger of falling into the simply absurd. Historically, many subcultures have an

unwritten rule of style and looking sharp alongside adhering to certain codes and motifs. The new romantic movement was gradually pulled towards something resembling contemporary surrealism where anything goes, the crazier the better. In many ways it felt like alien territory, paving the way for figures like Leigh Bowery who pioneered a flipside of the more prescriptive and homogeneous club-cultural looks that marked out the end of the 80s (dungarees, Kickers, faux-ethnic prints, bandanas).

In terms of a more progressive music with a future-facing edge, the whole thing was boosted by DJ and industry rebel/mogul Stevo and his moves to set up a new home for independent electronic pop via his Some Bizzare label (he also provided the Futurist chart in Sounds from September 1980). Stevo was (and remains) a larger-than-life character who tirelessly promoted the futurist genre (though he never used that term), which was set slightly at odds to the more dressy-fixated new romantic scene. His background is well documented in Wesley Doyle's 2023 book Conform to Deform and includes snippets about his time hosting a futurist night at the back-of-beyond Retford Porterhouse.

The Some Bizzare Album from early 1981 was very much the starting point of a collectivised new strain of awkward pop constructed through electronic means. Though many of the tracks had either a punk sensibility or abrasive non-conformist outlook, there was clearly a pop potential lurking in the margins. Bands like Soft Cell and Depeche Mode quickly shifted across from appearing on Some Bizzare to major label backing, effortlessly joining in the fashion chase of 1981 donning a different look each month; ski-jumpers, leather and chains biker boys, woodland elves, etc.

With new romantic going overground in late 1980 through multiple cover features in The Face and the arrival of Some Bizzare as a production line, it looked like 1981 would be set fair for various attempts to stretch this out.

The scene moved beyond a simple clubbing and dressing up opportunity to incorporate bands doing PAs, gigs or even hastily cobbled together package tours such as the '2002 Review' assembled by Classix Nouveaux. Following Stevo's somewhat scattershot Electronic Indoctrination tour of 1980 there was a planned tour of Some Bizzare bands in early 1981 to celebrate the new album. This was abandoned after a number of chaotic, no-show gigs, though outfits like Naked Lunch and B-Movie (formed in Mansfield) would happily trudge the motorways of the UK bringing a new romantic fantasy world to exotic places like Retford Porterhouse, Dudley JBs, and Preston Warehouse.

In Nottingham the nightclub Rock City opened at the end of 1980. Though modestly ambitious in size and scope, it catered for many niche subcultures. As well as supporting the futurist scene with dedicated nights, it also promoted the underground break-dancing scene with numerous all-day events. It quickly gained a futurist reputation: Duran Duran (supported by B-Movie) played an early gig there in March 1981 (with a repeat in July), followed by the 2002 Review rolling in to town at the end of March fronted by the shaven-headed Sal Solo and his band of ex-X-Ray Spex members. Performance dancers Shock (with the robotic duo Tik and Tok) graced the stage in June, with a return one week later by Classix Nouveaux supported by Our Daughters Wedding - a band whose legacy has not aged well. Nottingham favourites Olto held a fashion shoot there, coinciding with the venue getting a new lighting system.

In June 1981 Rock City received a second visit from Leeds band Soft Cell. The duo, whose stage design ideas (including the padded cell) were created by student friend Huw Feather at Trent Poly, were still somewhat chaotic and art school. They were trying to break through after a handful of 1980 gigs, with the track 'Memorabilia'

released to little attention, even though it is now seen as something of a classic. Soft Cell had already played Rock City in early April 1981, sharing the bill with B-Movie as the Nottingham and wider East Midlands futurist scene started to grow. They were back again in early June as the main act, with a gig in support of local scene newspaper Déspatch. On the bill for the June event we also have 'Ronny' (who was described as a chanteuse), an early performance by The The, and then the bigwigs Stevo and Rusty Egan assembling a "Nightclubbing DanceNight" - effectively a coming together of the new romantic brand created by Egan and the futurist affront led by Stevo.

Image 4-1-a Soft Cell gig review in Sounds, 1981

The night is reviewed in Sounds. The London-based journalist, making snide references to the "Peoples Palace for the Provinces", is perhaps a little caustic and condescending, but the bit that stands out for me is the reference to "grown men with footballers thighs who should know better sported cord knickerbockers and clashing teatowels". An aspect of this rang true on a personal level with my own brief (schoolboy) foray into the scene.

As with many subcultures, my way in was through a mix of music and looks. Some bands clearly looked good and prompted me in to buying a record, although looking good was no prerequisite to sounding good or having any musical ability. The new romantic music scene was often evidence of this. On the flipside, sometimes a record - a snatched moment on John Peel - stood out. There were post-punk records in this genre that excited me and made me want to dance, still sitting within my record collection - the first 12s from Heaven 17 released through 1981, the heart-racing synth pulse of Simple Minds 'I Travel' which dropped out of nowhere in October 1980. As I started to venture to nightclubs which catered for a non-mainstream scene, these records were still part of the playlist.

This interest in synth-pop prompted my first move away from a provincial punk look into something more fully formed and prescriptive - a brief dalliance with the new romantic scene. It was a look that I never managed to attain and was cobbled together from Derby's Eagle Centre Market which had swapped second-rate punk standards like the tartan trousers and fluffy jumpers for third-rate new romantic clobber. There were purchases of surgeon-collar shirts, side-buttoning shirts and bright baggy trousers (aquamarine jumbo cords stick in my mind). And of course, pixie boots with trousers tucked in.

The seeds of my futurist phase were actually planted a little earlier. In spring 1980, in the midst of my O levels, I wanted to write to a band, so I chose Modern English. Their single 'Gathering Dust' had come to my attention by exemplifying a post-punk energy and innovation - chiming guitars, tribal drums, sweeping feedback effects, urgent vocals. It was partially a calculated decision, with me thinking that maybe not many other people would be writing to Modern English, so I had more chance of eliciting a response. This worked, and I had a few letters from them.

Image 4-1-b Modern English, 1981

In May 1981 Modern English landed a support slot with Japan on their British tour. They told me this well in advance in a letter, and it appeared that they were also adopting a 'classic' futurist look. Japan were a big favourite on the early 1981 new romantic scene with their bouffant wedge haircuts, powdered faces and dandy clothes drawing from a Warholesque pop art palette. They had a background in the intelligent strand of glam - Roxy Music, Brian Eno - but this didn't seem to go against their rise to popularity on the scene. New romantic did not exercise the tabula rasa cultural scorched earth policy of punk. They were promoting their new single 'The Art of Parties', hoping to break into the Top 40 for the first time.

Later success would soon follow with the singles 'Life in Tokyo' and 'Quiet Life', purring with the swirls of synths and funky bass that had only been glimpsed on their earlier records.

The tour was scheduled to visit Rock City as part of the burgeoning futurist scene in the city. Modern English wrote to me, inviting me to attend. I was only 15, and there was no way on Earth I could look the required 18 to get into the venue who were renowned for having strict doormen. Wearing my best surgeon shirt and homemade jodhpurs (the old Birmingham bags with a line of press-studs to cinch in the lower legs), I caught the Barton bus to undertake the 15-mile journey. I was planning in advance and had saved up for a taxi home – none of my family had a car. A taxi was an extravagance, and I think this would have been the first time I'd be using one on my own.

Even though this occurred over 40 years ago, I recall strongly the queue, of being taken by surprise. It was full of male Japan clones but there was an absence of the otherworldliness or (possibly) softness that I anticipated and associated with the band through their magazine and television appearances. The soft pink lights and smoke machines of the studio mise-en-scene was obviously absent, replaced by the crepuscular gloom cut through with the bright white spots shining into the queue. It was raining, with sporadic storms. Instead of the ethereality of Japan it was hastily applied make-up running in the rain over stereotyped neck frills, offset by beer breath, body odour, stubble and gruff voices. This cultural incommensurability stuck with me; it wasn't like the pages of a feature in The Face – an airbrushed perfection.

Unsurprisingly, the doormen never let me in. The band came to the door to try and reason, but it was never going to happen. They were running on a tight schedule so they bade me farewell and I saved on taxi fare by getting the

last bus back to Derby. I treated myself to a burgundy asymmetric buttoning shirt the next day with the windfall.

In contemporary music historiography, the new romantic movement is heavily mythologised, locked down to a London-centric laser focus. Documentaries are in constant production and on endless repeat. The picaresque origin story and unravelling of new romantic has hardened into a reiterating script played out by a dwindling number of self-appointed and self-aggrandizing key figures. They age (inevitably) and somehow look less and less reliable or believable as storytellers. Tired eyes, balding hair, sunken and wrinkled faces, obesity - it kills the dream. Boy George, Marilyn, various Spandau Ballet members, Robert Elms, Princess Julia on autopilot, telling a seamless story of joy with the go-to anecdotes of Boy George as the pocket-pilfering cloakroom attendant and Steve Strange as stentorian doorman turning away Mick Jagger. The narrative script is akin to a theme park experience - tightly controlled and emotionally intact. The anachronism of their music and cultural statement is reversed, from being futuristic in the past, presenting something before its time, to being out of date in the present, clinging on to a redundant version of themselves from the past.

Image 4-1-c Nottingham scene report in i-D, 1980

The protectiveness of the scene by a London journalist clique often led to sarcastic articles on provincial outposts of new romanticism. Such scenes were forever the butt of snidey and jokey remarks from the caption writers at i-D, laughing at 'common people' trying to look like Steve Strange. An exception was by the local journalist Matthew Hyphen writing in the third issue of i-D (February 1981). He covered the scene at the Playhouse bar, with an array of characters mugging for the camera and looking a little more swish and stylish than the apparent hordes donning Robin Hood tights and smocks at Rock City.

The clothes-and-pose-driven scene kept running in the city, mirrored over the border at Derby's Blue Note. Déspatch newspaper thriving is evidence of this. By the time that Whispers rebranded to the Asylum at the end of 1982 and start of 1983, you can still see an array of new romantic or 'dressy' bands holding the fort. The synth-pop throb kept pulsing on.

ESSAY 4.2 - mentioned in Déspatch

Though not claiming the invention of fanzines, the punk scene certainly 'took up arms' and utilised them as an urgent and alternative form of disseminating infatuation, information, critique, invective and a general extra-musical ballast. Matthew Worley, in his 2024 book on fanzine cultures in the punk and post-punk era, has plotted and unpicked much of this autonomous and DIY phenomenon. It is vast and sprawling, reaching into the remotest crevices of UK punk life. In Derby we had numerous punk fanzines such as Situation Vacant and Jubilee City, whilst Nottingham had Y running from 1980 (with a debut issue as Death or Glory) which had a confident finger on the post-punk pulse and saw important music writers such as Matthew Collin start out.

The combining of music and fashion was generally a no-go area for punk and post-punk fanzines, with the trio of 'proper' magazines The Face, i-D and Blitz taking on a new market in this area through 1980 (even though i-D was maybe half a chromosome from being a fanzine). Then, in spring 1981, Nottingham and the East Midlands was suddenly presented with the broadsheet-format Déspatch. Markedly different from anything in the immediately preceding era, it was announced in The Face in June, with a column by regional correspondent Matthew Hyphen. Whether that was a real name, or an awkward post-punk nom-de-plume, I'm not sure, but the article had a typical preface that denigrated the possibility of anything so regional as Nottingham as

having a scene that can stand up to the aImighty London. It is worth quoting at Iength: “Nottingham’s scene has never been as sharpIy focused as its counterpart in the CapitaI. The generaI atmosphere of the pIace is too bIatantIy paro-chiaI and with Robin Hood and Brian CIough vying for position as Pride of the MidIands (not forgetting Paper Lace, of course!) it is a minor miracIe if any creative endeavours fIourish at aII”. Nothing Iike a great buiId-up, is there?

Déspatch is said to be in the styIe of Ritz, a 70s fashion tabIoid out of London, and avaiIabIe for 20p from the editoriaI office on St. James Street. The name Ron Atkinson is mentioned as the designer, who is aIso said to be the owner of Derby’s BIue Note (he wasn’t - he just did the re-fit). The first issue incIudes features on Duran Duran, Stray Cats (the band), new romantic dance troupe Shock (aII of these presumabIy interviewed during Rock City appearances), the fashion designer CaIvin KIein (prior to their famed underwear domination), and the graphic designer Eric BeII (who worked with Bowie). The rest of the newspaper reports from the after-dark scenes and provides a heavy serving of “IocaI mini-ceIebrity gossip”.

With its strong design, utiIisation of a cursive font, and a frequent dive into saIacious taIes of IocaI faces and worse-for-wear mugshots of cIubbers and posers, Déspatch is cIearIy modeIIed on Andy WarhoI’s pubIication Interview. Founded in 1969 as a fiIm critique newssheet, Interview quickIy became an extension of WarhoI’s documentation of the foIIies and foibIes of fame. Déspatch had a simiIar mission, and I recaII picking it up Iater in 1981, when it was free. It was a thriII to feast upon the mix of gIamorous peopIe - an east MidIands demi-monde - amidst adverts for swanky cIothes shops. As I started to venture out to cIubs Iike the BIue Note and Whispers I Ionged to be featured… but never was!

Ron Atkinson, the founder, was an important figure in Nottingham's fashion, music and arts scenes. He also provides a bridge from the 60s and 70s into the new era of the 80s. Ron trained as a teacher at Clifton teacher training college in 1965, and was in local bands with Bernard Mitchell, Tony Taylor, Dave Martin, and Geoff Martin. With the addition of Stu Harrison, Ron and Bernard shared a house in the St. Ann's area and began a sideline interest in graphic design called Egg Graphix. On Saturdays they would go to see Paul Smith and annoy him as he worked at Birdcage boutique on Bridlesmith Gate. Ron then followed his instincts and left teaching (he was a PE teacher) to start his own interior design and graphics business, settling on the name Ice Blue Studios.

As is well documented, Paul Smith also set up on his own and rented a basement on Byard Lane selling fashion. Though Paul had moved his efforts to London's Floral Street in 1979, he remained a major force of benefaction and inspiration in Nottingham. His name ran through the city's fashion endeavours like a stick of rock, supporting numerous fledgling fashion designers. Staff in his Nottingham shop would often go on to strike out with independent ventures, such as the setting up of Wild Clothing in 1983. He also gave Ron a leg-up, setting aside an area of his first shop as a book/photo sales and exhibition space, with Ron also key in the future design of Paul's shops.

Image 4-2-a Ron Atkinson picking up Déspatch at Heanor, 1981 (Bernard Mitchell)

In running his own business and to build his client base in Nottingham and Derby, Ron mixed with the right movers and shakers. When Déspatch was conceived and launched Ron had a shop and studio on St. James Street. Bernard Mitchell has a great photograph of Ron picking up the first issue of Déspatch from the printers at Heanor,

sporting his light suit. Ron was something of legend, and Déspatch had a chaotic undercurrent with an extensive cast list of contributors. His nickname of 'Later Ron' derived from instances of slipshod scheduling, such as a Christmas feature of key Nottingham clothing retailers dressed as Santa appearing in an edition that went out closer to Easter.

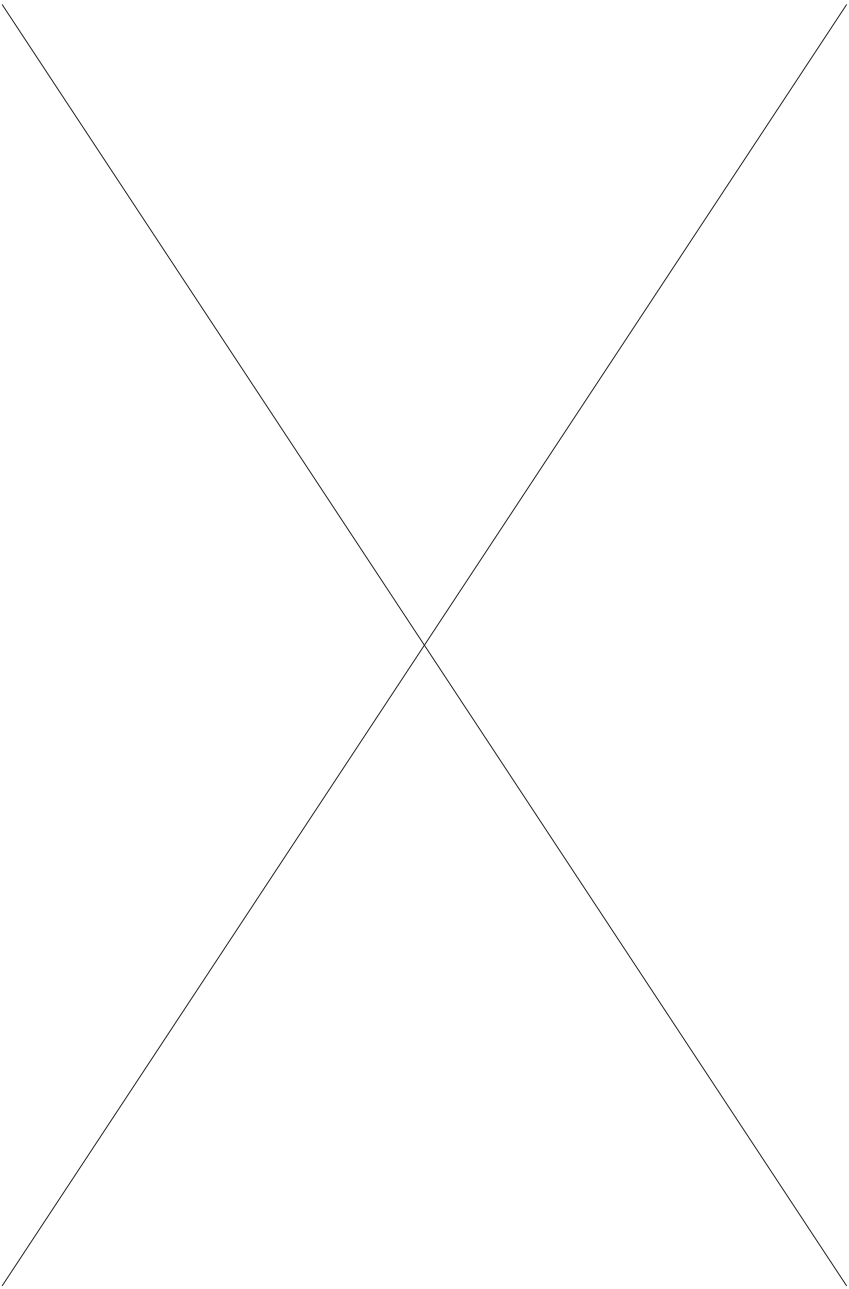
Ron's connection to the Blue Note in Derby came about around this time as his friendship circle extended throughout the art and fashion worlds. Ex-bandmate Tony Taylor was running his own textile graphics company called Red Tape Design, whilst Geoff Martin's family were already children's clothes and sportswear manufacturers with a small factory in Arnold. In more recent times Tony and his business partner ran their studio in the Lace Market opposite St. Mary's Church with Ron's studio underneath them, and Tony would go on to work with Grayson Perry. Ron also became good friends with Nottingham legend Brian Selby who set up Selectadisc and he had studio space above the record store on Market Street for a time. He took over this from Mark Makin, another designer and Nottingham musician. Ron designed the iconic bags for the store with the felt tip squiggle and collage look.

Robert Lightfoot is listed as the editor of Déspatch, and he would go on to run the successor newspaper Relay. He worked extensively with Ron, selling advertising and organising events, including the December 1983 fashion event 'Frocky Horror Show' at Rock City with Katsu, Paul Smith, Olto, Wild Clothing, The Works, Circus, G.U.T.S. and ZuZu. As with Ron, Rob also often wore a white/light suit as he calmly navigated the chaos of the local fashion and design studios!

Another Déspatch contributor then continued the tradition, revoking the French accented word with Débris. This was the work of musician and conceptual prankster Paul

Edmondson, part of the stylish Howdy Boys in the early 80s. Paul was recruited for Déspatch by Martin Knox, and wrote under the alias Casanova Rockola, with a tendency to rankle potential advertisers in the newspaper.

Putting aside the patronising tone of the announcement in The Face, it is important to recognise the editorial confidence, resourcefulness and discernment of Déspatch and its place in authenticating Nottingham as an independent and autonomous fashion and design hub. With early 80s features on fashion designers such as Yohji Yamamato and Rei Kawakubo, the writers had the belief and wherewithal to identify broader designers and 'trends' before they broke in London and elsewhere in the UK. Similarly, the probing interviews with figures such as Malcolm McLaren demonstrated the newspaper's instinct to secure features and editorial with other important figures and (sub) cultural outputs of that time. The overall effect was contextualising and positioning what was happening locally, within what was occurring nationally and internationally, which feels essential for any 'regional' 'scene'. At the same time, it said that Nottingham is not afraid to stand up and be counted. That it has designers, innovators, retailers, fashion renegades, musicians, artists and writers that are competent and confident in making strides in their own locality.



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