"THAMES VALLEY COTTON PICKERS": RACE AND YOUTH IN LONDON BLUES CULTURE

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Abstract

This study addresses the reception of African American blues music and the ensuing production of English blues in London from 1955 to 1966. It concentrates on London adolescents' unexpected fascination with a musical style that they virtually had no contact with prior to 1955, while analyzing how this immersion in African American culture shaped their cultural identity. Analysis of the influence of African American blues music in London during this period highlights the BBC's weakened influence as a producer of culture for youth, the subsequent increased popularity of American-sponsored radio, and the eventual romanticization of the blues amongst teens. Examination of album covers, radio programs, and liner notes tracks how this mythology developed amongst English youth while asking why the English understanding of the blues persona was infused into the youth culture of London and enacted in a venue that defined new urban space for youth.

Key Terms

1960s English Youth Culture, African American Blues Music, British Blues Music

To my parents, Philip and Marie, for their heartfelt support and Samara for her inspiration

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Table of Contents

Prologue

In a rather odd sales pitch for a new Rolex timepiece, the watchmakers placed an advertisement in the March 2005 issue of *In Style* magazine which pictured English blues guitarist Eric Clapton above the slogan: "who would ever have thought Ripley, Surrey would become the other home of Mississippi Delta blues?"[1] While this might seem a strange marketing pitch, it inadvertently addresses a central concern of this study. What is significant about this advertisement is that when one considers the popularity of English blues artists (as is evident from Clapton's appearance in a watch ad), and their influence in shaping English culture, interest in how the blues came to dominate English culture in the 1960s has largely escaped academic study and has remained in the domain of popular culture. I believe that most fruitful academic studies develop from a merger of personal interests and professional aspirations. Having spent years sifting through dusty records bins and combing through tattered music newspapers as an avid music enthusiast, it is my intention to reconcile my long-time fascination with blues music with my pursuits as a cultural historian. For in every vinyl record sleeve, piece of cover art, or cover-song there lays a wealth of information about the development and presentation of youth culture in England that has not been sufficiently studied. Far removed from the Mississippi

[1] Rolex Jewellers, Advertisement for Oyster Perpetual Day-Date Watch, "Who Would Ever Have Thought Ripley, Surrey Would Become the Other Home of Mississippi Delta Blues?" *In Style*, (March 2005), 167.

Delta or the Southside of Chicago, young English teens came into contact with this unfamiliar music, and in order to address the consequences and significance of this relationship between English youth and African American blues, I have undertaken an investigation detailing the emergence of London's blues music scene at the beginning of the 1960s.

London adolescents' fascination with African American culture marks a turning point in English culture after the Second World War—a determination by teenagers to pursue and emulate new musical forms that were foreign to the national radio and popular music charts that reflected the cultural interests of their parents' generation. Interest in foreign music was fuelled by a steady decline in support for English music after the Second World War. BBC Radio, the most significant cultural producer in the country, did little to champion new domestic talent, choosing to support established acts while instigating a steady decline in new British music on the radio during the '40s and early '50s. Moreover, the lack of support for new English music coincided with the increased prominence of American-sponsored radio stations in continental Europe. With negligible American music being played in England, and few new English artists creating music for adolescents, these stations inadvertently gained the attention of teens because they provided African American music that contrasted from the white adult-orientated music broadcast on the BBC. English teens were drawn to the blues because they believed, unlike the popular white singers their parents listened to on the radio in the 1950s (Perry Como, Frank Sinatra or Cliff Richard), African American blues music cast aside wishful romanticism to connect music

with everyday experiences. Moreover, the commercialism of rock 'n' roll singers like Elvis Presley weakened US rock's revolt against "Perry-Como-ism," just as the commercial failure of most blues musicians maintained the rebellion and defiance in their music.

Searching for a music that addressed modern life with outspoken realism, and fuelled with an utter contempt for English popular music and pop culture lacking these "authentic" qualities, English adolescents cast aside the culture of the previous generation while at the same time soaking up a form of music that was very much in the past in terms of its status in America. Creating a new youth culture while exploring the margins of America's musical past, London teens' interest in the blues was an impetus for change in terms of youth culture in the capital as much as it was a mirror of past developments in African American culture.[2] The blues evoked anger towards "white" culture that simmered through decades of hardship, and this key characteristic of the music allowed London teens that played and listened to the blues to distinguish their "modern" culture from the interests of previous generations. When London teens packed Soho nightclubs to hear Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones sing "Doncha Bother Me," they "cut the boards out from under the British establishment...[and] drove out old speech with new noise."[3]

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[2] Paul Fryer, "'It Hurts Me Too': *This is the Blues* and the Late 1960s British Blues Boom," *Popular Music and Society* 9, no. 2 (1983), 45.
[3] Greil Marcus, *In the Fascist Bedroom: Punk in Pop Music* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 11.

Chapter 1:
Broadcasting the Blues:
The Rise of American-Sponsored Radio and the Decline of the BBC (1955-1960)

Attempting to characterize a typical London blues enthusiast, an article in *Disc Weekly* in the summer of 1965 detailed the common features representative of many young music lovers roaming the streets of the English capital:

> **Pop Likes:** Specially interested in the blues.
>
> **Discs:** Buys an average of two singles a week (6*s.* 8*d.* each) and about one LP per month (32*s* each). Large collection of blues albums.
>
> **Radio:** Likes Radio Luxembourg at night.
>
> **Outings:** Visits London clubs regularly each week, mostly to hear groups. Marquee (admission 7*s.* 6*d.*), Flamingo (10*s.* for all-nighter).
>
> **Autographs / Pin-Ups:** Doesn't bother now except to gather as much information about blues and photos of blues stars as he can.[4]

From the details of this piece it is clear that African American blues music was a significant cultural influence in the lives of English adolescents during the first half of the 1960s. It is one of the major oddities of England's ascent out of post-war austerity that while Prime Minister Harold MacMillan declared that "most people never had it so good," English teens were enthusiastically listening to, and eventually playing, African American blues songs about poverty and

[4] "Is This You?" *Disc Weekly* (August 7, 1965), 8.

destitution. Starting in the mid-fifties, African American blues became a major cultural influence in the lives of London teens, overtaking any style of English music to become a major force on the radio and in the clubs of London. Between 1955 and 1965, English youth embraced and adapted African American blues, flaunting it at their elders in order to challenge traditional English culture while using music to define new urban space for youth.

Historical studies analyzing the English youth fascination with American culture during this period are not new. Yet while the Teddy Boys, Rockers, and Mods have been given attention by authors like Dick Hebdige and Stanley Cohen, blues enthusiasts have largely been overlooked. This is unusual when one considers that out of all these sub-cultural groups, blues music gained an enormous audience and sold tens of thousands of albums by acts like the Rolling Stones, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and the Yardbirds. Moreover, because the popularity and keen interest in African American music by youth during this period is undeniable and yet largely passed over, it is essential to study why this sub-cultural group flourished if a clear picture of 1960s youth culture is to be understood. Additionally, when blues has been discussed in relation to English youth culture, it has often been incorrectly coupled with the music associated with Mods.[5] While there are indeed commonalities, there are also distinctions between the two groups that make a focused historical study of English blues

[5] Both Hebdige, in *Subcultures*: *The Meaning of Style* (New York, Routledge, 2002), and Stanley Cohen in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002) discuss clashes between "mods" and "rockers" in England, while referencing rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, and ska music. However, neither author makes a direct reference to blues music; nor does either author suggest that a blues subculture existed alongside, or prior to, the growth of mod culture.

informative and necessary. Of particular import is the fact that interest in blues music, and the growth of a blues youth culture in London, developed prior to mod culture's popularity in the middle of the '60s. Furthermore, while mods, and the music popular to the group, drew upon calypso, Jamaican ska, and bluebeat to form their music, blues enthusiasts were completely focused on African American blues music. Moreover, when "mod" music began to eclipse English blues music in popularity by the end of 1965, several mod musicians and enthusiasts went to great lengths to distance themselves from blues music and the African American artists associated with the music.

By comparing a composition sung by Muddy Waters or Elmore James to versions of the same songs performed by the Bluesbreakers or Rolling Stones it is possible to identify the cultural differences between the works and the cultural significance of these differences. Going beyond a comparative analysis of performance styles to investigate how these songs and performers made their way over to London, this historical study considers the enthusiasm and motivation young Britons had for blues songs, while addressing why English teens in groups like the Bluesbreakers and Rolling Stones chose these songs over other music genres, and why music buyers bought these records over other recordings.

While the blues grew in popularity in England, many African American blues musicians had retired or moved on to other work, "with Lonnie Johnson sweeping floors in the South, [and] Jimmy Rogers working at a slaughterhouse in

Chicago." [6] Blues musicians like Muddy Waters, Elmore James, and Sonny Boy Williamson, who were playing to packed houses throughout the northeast of the U.S. only a few years previously, were now struggling to make ends meet while, unknowingly to them, young Londoners across the Atlantic were scrambling to buy their records and play guitar in the Chicago blues style. It is therefore not possible to draw a simple connection between the rising interest of the blues in England to an Atlantic crossover of contemporary popular songs and performers on the American music charts. Some blues artists, like Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, had successfully shifted their sound to rhythm and blues, finding commercial success, but many of the key blues artists that British artists would cite as significant influences, had largely fallen off the charts and into obscurity in the United States by the latter half of the fifties, just as a ground swell of interest in the blues was occurring across the Atlantic. Thus, other factors must be uncovered to fully understand the circumstances that led to such a strong interest in African American culture.

This study offers an explanation of how blues music reached the ears of English teens in order to understand why these adolescents fervidly adopted a predominantly African American cultural form as their music of choice to play, purchase, and listen to. By tracing the decline in prominence of the BBC in shaping the cultural interests of English youth during the 1950s, just as American-sponsored radio stations and recordings became more influential, the initial chapter of this study addresses why the characterization of African

[6] Rich Cohen, *Machers and Rockers: Chess Records and the Business of Rock and Roll* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 168.

American blues as an "authentic" and "natural" music by American broadcasters, program producers, and musicians gave English youth a musical form that they believed was intense, truthful, and empowering.

The infiltration and acceptance of American blues by the post-war youth of England drastically changed how youth used music to articulate their experiences. The blues appealed to feelings of alienation, disaffection, and estrangement experienced by African Americans enduring terrible working conditions in the Southern United States or in the urban centres of the North like Chicago and Detroit. Yet for African American blues singers, these feelings came out of the immediate hardship endured in Jim Crow America -- experiences very distant and foreign to white teens in England. The racial antagonisms of America were far removed, and this relative distance allowed English teens to selectively choose what they identified with when playing or listening to the blues. Cultural devotion to the language and style of the blues was flexible. This flexibility allowed English youth to forge a hybrid culture that challenged the authority of the elder generation while giving youth a sense of entitlement and belonging during a time when they believed that English cultural institutions were ignoring their interests. It is therefore important to identify the ideas and feelings in the blues that English youth related to in order to fully explain why they believed this cultural form resonated so deeply with their situation in urban England.

In the late 1950s, most adolescents in the English capital believed that racial divisions were not a problem that warranted much attention. According to Simon Napier-Bell, divisions between black and white were not a central

concern, as divisions between young and old took priority. Looking back on his youth, Napier-Bell states that "for Britons at the end of a long war, being black or white wasn't the problem; the big divide was between young and old. Adults told their children 'we fought the war for you' and kids were sick to death of hearing about it. They searched for a new identity and found it in a new word: 'teenager.'"[7] However, while identifying oneself as a teenager was obviously a major concern for youths like Napier-Bell by the late fifties, understandings of what it meant to be black or white were still significant because race was directly linked to the cultural interests of the 'teenager'. Race cannot be disassociated with the youth of England because, by the end of the 1950s, African American music was the most popular music for young white Englanders. Moreover, while early rock and roll was played by both white and black musicians like Elvis Presley and Little Richard, English teens were becoming increasingly interested in a style of music that was almost exclusively written and performed by African Americans: the blues.

While racial antagonisms may not have been front and centre for English teens like they were for blues musicians in the racially charged urban centres of the United States, ideas about race and being black were primary to shaping youth identity in relation to the older generation. Norman Mailer gestured towards white attempts to emulate African Americans in his 1957 essay in *Dissent* entitled "The White Negro." Mailer's essay romanticizes the black experience of poverty and destitution by turning African American music into a

[7] Simon Napier-Bell, *Black Vinyl, White Powder*, (London: Ebury, 2001), 10.

symbol of vitality found in downward mobility. As both Dick Hebdige and Rich Cohen emphasize, Mailer's essay was the clearest example of a popular trend in the mid-1950s of a white liberal observer mythologizing the experience of African Americans and "turning real people into a symbol."[8] In connecting this trend to the interpretations of African American culture made by white Londoners at the start of the 1960s, it is clear that young white teens in London constructed a mythologized conception of the African American bluesman, focusing on particular characteristics while ignoring or avoiding more troublesome features. Indeed, Mick Jagger, lead singer of the Rolling Stones, states that he and his band mates wanted to "live the life of Sonny Boy Williamson or Little Walter, but it was only because we did not really have to, because if you knew the actual details of that life, it was not very nice."[9] Adolescent idolization of cultural figures is not something particular to teens of this period and the phenomenon is quite predominant throughout English culture. However, it is the Anglo interpretations of African American culture, and English ideas of race during this period of serious racial antagonism and political struggle for blacks in America that is of particular interest because these understandings of African American culture had such a strong influence in shaping English youth culture. In a city with little or no direct contact with African American culture and the particular styles and traditions of American blues music prior to the late 1950s, it is important to identify why African American bluesmen in particular became the heroes of

[8] "['The White Negro'] was bullshit, of course, a projection onto a black community that, God knows had enough to carry. It turned real people into a symbol: the Authentic Negro, the Soul Man." Cohen, *Machers and Rockers*, (New York, W.W.Norton, 2004), 61. See also Dick Hebdige, *Subculture : The Meaning of Style* (New York, Routledge, 2002), 47.
[9] Quote from Mick Jagger taken from Cohen, *Machers and Rockers*, 61.

young Londoners, and what the consequences of this encounter were to English youth.

Writer Paolo Hewitt, [10] who wrote extensively on London youth in the 1960s, adeptly summarizes why teens were attracted to African American blues music:

> In the late-'50s....[youth] creatively used the power of fashion and music to build themselves a secret world. That world demanded a secret music and this translated itself into a huge love affair with contemporary black American music, be it blues...or rhythm and blues. Apart from the power of these art forms...was its exclusivity, that it was so hard to come by. The lines of communication that we take for granted today – club, radio, live appearances – were extremely limited in the late-'50s and not tailored to providing obscure rhythm and blues singles from America.[11]

While with blues music in American falling into complete obscurity, London became the de facto home of the blues by 1962.

* * * * *

It is necessary to explore radio because this medium contributed significantly to bridging American and English culture, and more specifically, black American and white English culture in the 1950s. Following the Second World War, the scarcity of resources and economic devastation left many producers of English culture handicapped in their ability to promote English music. In an attempt to signal that English cultural producers had overcome the hardships of the post World War Two period, Lord Windlesham declared that the BBC had resumed its

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[10] While Hewitt wrote primarily on mod culture in London, and did not focus on the influence of blues music on the city's youth, his writing on the youth and music of the late '50s is insightful in regards to understanding how exposure to Africa American culture developed at the end of the decade.

[11] Paolo Hewitt, "Maximum Mod," *NME Originals: Mod* 2, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 36.

position as "the vehicle for the expression of national values and interests." [12] Yet in the post-war years, the BBC largely ignored youth culture, focusing instead upon material for older listeners. Ewan MacColl, who would eventually work with folklorist Alan Lomax on BBC radio programs, called attention to the BBC's lack of commitment to the youth market. The 1950s generation encountered a media that

> force-fed them on "Down Mexico Way," "Roll Out the Barrel" and the half-dozen depressingly similar tunes churned out by the BBC's musical conveyor belt. Now [youth] were rejecting that fodder – at least temporarily – and discovering songs which dealt with the kind of reality they could comprehend. Their heroes, too, had changed. Not for them the smooth-voiced crooners of their parents; for their models they had chosen two of respectable society's misfits: an Oklahoma dustbowl refugee called Woody Guthrie and Huddie Ledbetter [Leadbelly], a paroled convict from Louisiana.[13]

Bluesmen like Leadbelly were the musical heroes English youth looked to, and yet the BBC continued to play "crooners" the rare times they even played contemporary musical forms. Discussing what many teens referred to as the 'Perry-Comoism' of popular radio, Bill Wyman, the bassist of the Rolling Stones, states that "you used to listen to those sort of smarmy pop songs about 'Lipstick On Your Collar' and 'Moon in June' from Perry Como and all that, it was just laughable."[14] Of the three radio channels operated by the BBC, one catered to 'light entertainment', the second to high cultural material, and the third to regional interests. The BBC allocated very little time to recorded music, whether it was

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[12] Lord Windlesham quoted in John Hind and Stephen Mosco, *Rebel Radio: The Full Story of British Pirate Radio*, (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 11.
[13] Ewan MacColl, *Journeyman: An Autobiography*, (London: Sidgwick &Jackson, 1990), 274.
[14] Bill Wyman interviewed for Robert Santelli, WGBH (Radio station: Chicago, IL) and Public Radio International (U.S.), "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues.* (60 min.), Vancouver: CBC Radio, 2003.

British or American, after striking a deal with the British Musicians' Union. The BMU had a labyrinth of restrictive measures intended to protect the jobs of English musicians from foreign performers. Beginning in the 1930s, the BMU and the BBC agreed to place strict restrictions on "needle time" for commercially produced records, as the BBC believed this would protect profits from the threat of record sales, while the BMU believed recorded music cheapened live performance. Most airtime was devoted to radio dramas, comedy shows, opinion panels, and live music shows which consisted mainly of cinema organ sections, vocal ensembles, and classical groups -- musical styles which were not of interest to teenage listeners. Moreover, the restrictions on 'needle time' for recorded music was also instituted due to an official antipathy toward the "Americanizing" influences of the contemporary music enjoyed by adolescents. [15] Teens may have wanted to hear new musical styles like rock, be-bop, or rhythm and blues, but these styles did not emit from the airways of the government-funded broadcaster wishing to rekindle its position as the voice of the nation and to generally ignore shifts in popular music and youth culture.

A second important issue is that while the BBC ignored the cultural interests of youth, they also failed to develop English talent as a means of cultivating interest by a new generation of radio listeners. By 1948, only 19 per cent of the music on the British Broadcasting System's airways was British. By 1958, that number had fallen even further to only 14.8 per cent.[16] Moreover, the negligible amount of English talent that did perform on the BBC consisted largely

[15] Bill Ogersby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (London: Malden Press, 1998), n 7 48-49.
[16] Roger and Krister Malm Wallis, *Big Sounds from Small Peoples: The Music Industry in Small Countries* (London: Constable, 1984), 261.

of English musicians attempting to copy American acts. Simon Napier-Bell, reflecting upon the radio of his youth, states:

> Home-grown talent was something of a joke [on the BBC]. Dickie Valentine, one of Britain's biggest artists, had an act that consisted of impressions of American stars. David Whitfield sang songs like 'The Book' and 'I Believe' and claimed to communicate directly with God as he did so. Frankie Vaughn performed wearing a top hat and looked like Victor Mature imitating Al Jolson. Ronnie Carroll looked liked Victor Mature imitating Judy Garland.[17]

American culture was clearly popular and provided material to address the cultural depression of English musical talent. Yet it is evident from Napier-Bell's comments that much of the American-inspired material was scripted and imitative to the point of comedy, not addressing the wishes of young listeners to hear original American music. Moreover, the distaste for African American culture by mainstream cultural producers and broadcasters in England made black performances an extremely rare occurrence. For anyone interested in hearing African American music on commercial radio in London it was extremely difficult because "the majority of white pop singers had no commercial reason to turn to black musical styles for their material or inspiration...[and] it made rather good sense not to...chart success tended to be proportional banality and innocuous romanticism."[18] Thus, in a cultural atmosphere that shunned anything but bland white singers with 'boy-next-door' good looks, it was impossible to find other styles of music on domestic media outlets.

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[17] Napier-Bell, *Black Vinyl, White Powder*, 7.
[18] David Hatch and Stephen Millward, *From Blues to Rock: An Analytical History of Pop Music* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987), 87.

With little or no exposure for African American artists and most of the American music available in London considered to be contrived English imitation by teens, several U.S. sponsored broadcasters filled the void and quickly won over English enthusiasts of African American music. Both Radio Luxembourg and American Forces Network in Frankfurt broadcast African American music throughout Europe. Founded in 1933, Radio Luxembourg had a powerful long-wave frequency and declared itself, to the anger of the BBC (which tried relentlessly to limit Luxembourg's broadcast range), the "Most Powerful Broadcasting Station in Europe."[19] The programming format at Luxembourg was so popular among listeners that the BBC was forced eventually to emulate the programming and hire some of the Luxembourg DJs like Mike Read. With English teens increasingly being able to purchase their own radios, they picked up the 9kHz bandwidth of Radio Luxembourg. British blues guitarist Jeff Beck recalls:

> Radio Luxembourg was on of those stations that you could just tune into, as if it was coming from the far-flung regions of Africa or something, but it was only in Luxembourg. And it was all muffled and indistinct, and you had to strain your ears so much to hear the guitar.[20]

For blues devotees like Beck, the remoteness of the radio station contributed to the atmosphere of African American music as unique and exotic music compared to anything coming from English airwaves. Roger Glover, another avid blues listener, echoes Beck's statement, stating that "Luxembourg was a saviour,

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[19] Hind and Mosco, *Rebel Radio,* 10.
[20] Mo Foster, *Play Like Elvis: How British Musicians Bought the American Dream*, (London: Sanctuary Publishing, 2000), 152.

beaming in through the static and transporting me away, never to be returned. I was turned on to Barrett Strong, Bobby 'Blue' Bland...."[21] Teens in England believed Luxembourg was a "saviour" because they were essentially forced to set their dial offshore due to the lack of black music on the BBC. Promoter and producer for the Rolling Stones, Andrew Loog Oldham, states that "black records weren't played on the BBC, I can assure you of that....you'd hear something on Radio Luxembourg.... [and] I don't think people in England realise just how much poaching of American music this country did."[22] English music fans were desperate for a media outlet to absorb American culture, and with the BBC ignoring African American music, radio listeners tuned their radios down the dial to off-shore broadcasters to meet their needs.

Both AFN in Frankfurt and Radio Luxembourg had extremely powerful broadcast ranges, and were readily available for adolescents in England to pick up on their radio dial, even if the signal was not clear at all times. Voice of America, another US run network with the AFN, signified that the blues and jazz music being sent out across the airwaves was the true "voice" of the United States. The government sponsored Voice of America and the AFN played a lot of blues and jazz music because officials recognized how persuasive African American music could be in fostering a strong devotion to U.S. culture in Western Europe. American government officials increasingly viewed blues and jazz artists as 'cultural ambassadors' for promoting American culture in Europe. While this policy was laced with contradictions due to the lack of improvement in civil rights

[21] Foster, Play Like Elvis, 152.
[22] Andrew Loog-Oldham, *Stoned: A Memoir of London in the 60s*, (New York: St. Martin's P, 2000), 52.

in the United States, artists like Louis Armstrong were taken to be central figures for winning over the minds of adolescents in Europe. African American artists could be representatives of American culture as long as white industry executives reaped the economic rewards of their popularity in Western Europe. An article in the *New York Times* in the fall of 1955 declared that "America's secret weapon is a blue note in a minor key," as Europeans listened to African American music in order "to speculate on the qualities that differentiate it from the folk music of any other country."[23] Voice of America did not initially focus on African American music, but audience demands for the music, allowed disc jockey Willis Conover's program to become extremely popular. The American station hired expert commentators on the music, while also re-broadcasting programs from the US, providing knowledgeable explanations of the music that most Eastern Europeans could not understand, but which English teens listened to attentively.[24] These commentaries added clarity to English listeners' understanding of African American culture because, as blues enthusiast Peter Jenner recalls, "there wasn't easy communication with America. People didn't flip from one [culture] to the other in the way they do now. There was an awareness of what was happening in America, but enormous ignorance about it", and VOA's programs provided a direct link to American culture that was otherwise unavailable.[25] Accordingly, Conover's program *Music U.S.A* was VOA's most

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[23] Felix Belair Jr., "United States Has Secret Sonic Weapon - Jazz," *New York Times*, November 6 1955, 1.
[24] Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, (Louisville: UP of Kentucky, 2000), 136.
[25] Jonathan Green, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961-1971*, (London: Heiemann, 1988), 61,

popular program, and had an estimated audience of 30 million across Europe. For the American government, Conover's program clearly succeeded as a tool for US propaganda. A European musician reportedly told Conover that "uncommitted people may very well indeed be attracted to the American position" in the Cold War "by your broadcasts of American music." As Conover responded that "our music helps maintain contact with people already inclined to sympathize with the United States...."[26] But for teens who lacked the availability to buy African American records, these young listeners depended on the US-sponsored program for their 'daily fix' of African American music – "cultural exports that, more than any others, made the United States seem unique and appealing."[27]

It is clear from interviews with various musicians, who eventually formed their own English blues bands that English adolescents were captivated by the unique and appealing aspects of African American music promoted by the U.S.-sponsored radio DJs. Peter Holland, a childhood friend of Mick Jagger, recalls that Jagger came over to his house and listened to music that Holland was not familiar with, stating that Jagger "always tuned into American Forces Network and knew all the latest hits from Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley. He loved all that stuff."[28] Geoff Bradford, an early member of the Rolling Stones, had a similar experience as Jagger, recollecting "my love of blues came from listening to American Armed Forces Radio from Europe. I heard Bo Diddley and I thought, 'I

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[26] Quotations are found in Pauline Rivelli's, "the Voice of Jazz: Willis Conover", *Jazz* (September 1965), pg. 14 taken from Frank Kofsky's *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, (Montreal: Pathfinder, 1998),189-190.
[27] Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 85-86.
[28] Alan Lysaght, *The Rolling Stones: An Oral History* (Toronto: McArthur &Co., 2003), 6.

must have some of this.' I got into it from there.... And after getting into the blues I wanted to have a band."[29] Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman also recalls that while serving in the RAF as a teen, he and his fellow servicemen had little interest in English radio, recalling that his group "started listening to the BFN (British Forces Network). They played English Top 10; it was very dull. We then changed over to the American Forces Network...it was wonderful."[30] Georgie Fame echoes these memories, stating that "another great source [for blues music] was American Forces' Radio. Again, every house had a pretty good radio and you could tune into AFN, which was beamed from Frankfurt. 'this is Willis [*sic*] from Washington DC,' and for us, Washington DC was another planet."[31] Guitarist Lonnie Donegan, recalling his experience with African American music to filmmaker Mike Figgis, stated that he "used to hear the AFN, they had their own radio program. So I got, all day, this great import of American music."[32] Clearly, when giving consideration to the large number of future blues musicians citing the influence of U.S. sponsored radio in their childhood, American sponsored mass media significantly infused African American music into English teens' cultural upbringing.

Aside from the AFN's ability to transmit out-of-the-ordinary music originating from strange locations like Washington, the radio had a powerful ability to motivate English adolescents to form their own blues bands. Bob Hall

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[29] Lysaght, *The Rolling Stones: An Oral History*, 26.
[30] Bill Wyman, *Rolling With the Stones* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002), 20.
[31] Georgie Fame interviewed for Mike Figgis, KCTS (TV Station: Seattle, WA) and Public Broadcasting System (U.S.), *Red, White and Blues*, 1 DVD (120 min.). Seattle, WA: Vulcan Productions, 2003.
[32] Lonnie Donegan interviewed for Figgis, *Red, White and Blues*, (2003).

emphasizes that his desire to form the Brunning Hall Blues Band came directly from hearing Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker records as well as blues programs on Voice of America.[33] A lot of this enthusiasm for forming English blues bands arose from a belief that the rhythm and tempo of the jazz and blues beaming across to England challenged traditional European forms of folk music, highlighting African American music as a 'racially' distinctive music that was different from the songs heard on the other European stations. While American government officials wanted to use this music to symbolize the independent spirit of the West for people living in the Soviet Union, an unintended consequence of this cultural imperialist project was that English youth saw African American music as a subversive cultural form signified by race. As both Guthrie Ramsey and Barbara D. Savage have adeptly pointed out, the mass-media that flourished after the Second World War was a primary building site in constructing understandings of race and defining African American culture. For English teens inexperienced with black culture, the distinction between white English music on domestic radio and black American music on continental European radio could not be made clearer. On the BBC, white artists performed sedate and romantic interpretations of American "Top 40" songs, while on U.S.-sponsored stations in Europe, mysterious African American musicians sang of hardship and adversity that cast romanticism aside. Furthermore, this growing presence of African American music on American-sponsored European radio broadcasts appealed to adolescents because it threatened the cultural establishment of England, putting

[33] Summer McStravick and John Roos, eds., *Blues Rock Explosion.* (Mission Viego: Old Goat Publishing, 2001), 47.

forth the notion that Afro-American artists could produce a music that rivalled European music in its complexity and in the demands it placed upon the listener's intellect.[34] What's more, AFN was largely intended for American troops stationed in Europe and for the government sponsored distribution of Western culture to the Soviet Union, which made it even more exotic and enticing to English youths because they could pick up radio signals on their dial that were not intended for their ears.

As English musical content faced a sharp decline in production, promotion, and interest, the BBC struggled in reacting when American music expanded in popularity among youth and they faced stronger competition from continental stations. BBC executives largely ignored American popular records and when they finally gave a few hours of broadcast time to recorded American music, the programmes were produced in the same fashion as a news or drama program. DJs did not pick their own records and everything was scripted.[35] Meanwhile, English-language radio stations on the mainland of Europe broadcast programs where DJs had free-reign to play the American albums they wanted and without having to worry about how they presented it.

Initially, the BBC feared the growing influence of American culture would have a negative effect on the youth of England. This fear of American culture by such an elitist institution as the BBC was an initial factor in the portrayal of American culture as subversive. By 1956, according to Dick Hebdige, BBC

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[34] *Frank Kofsky, John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s: Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (Montreal: Pathfinder, 1998), 199.
[35] Napier-Bell, *Black Vinyl, White Powder*, 54.

personnel were "aware of the 'damaging' indeed potentially subversive impact which American cultural artefacts (particularly popular music)...could have on public 'morale,'" fearing that English youth would be drawn to the images of disaffected youth, urban crisis, and spiritual drift.[36] Beyond American music being considered seditious as a whole, the white establishment of radio equated African American music even more with spiritual decay, comparing African American rhythm and blues with the music of the devil. American music may have been a problem, but Black music was seen as a threat, obstacle, and nuisance by the controllers of English radio policy.[37] This fear of American culture as a whole, and African American blues in particular, bringing moral and spiritual decay to England was defined by elitist understandings of what epitomized 'authentic' European culture, providing a key example of the wartime generation of England interpreting American culture as unruly and seditious in the face of growing interest by youth. By defining African American blues as a cultural form that went against the traditions and values of the cultural establishment of Europe, radio programmers made the music even more appealing to a youth market looking for a music that challenged English cultural heritage. Ewan MacColl noted this challenge to European heritage, stating that the BBC and English songwriters, who believed that "they were the experts of public taste, [and] knew what the public wanted," suddenly discovered that the public,

[36] *Dick Hebdige, Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 55-57.
[37] Hind and Mosco, *Rebel Radio*, 19.

embracing a rebellious spirit they found in African American music, amounted to "giving them the finger."[38]

The actions of three unofficial cultural ambassadors of African American culture within England are of particular interest when analyzing why English youths took a great interest in the blues: musicologist Alan Lomax, record label owner Leonard Chess, and blues singer and promoter Willie Dixon. Each had unique interests in promoting African American blues in England, yet all three were successful in promoting and distributing the blues to a young English audience, with significant effects on the cultural landscape of England.

In 1950, to counteract interest in American popular culture and to offset a lack of knowledge about English cultural traditions, officials at the BBC asked American folklorist and musicologist Alan Lomax to uncover the 'traditional' music of the British Isles for broadcast on the radio. Lomax's impact on British music was significant and far-reaching after his arrival, and did as much to promote forms of American culture as it did to reinvigorate awareness of traditional English songs. Lomax had arrived to work for the BBC in the early fifties to avoid being drawn into the scandal surrounding the McCarthy trials in America, and while he was supposed to promote British folk songs, he was also given the opportunity to produce programs with American songs. One such program, developed with English producer Charles Parker, was titled *Radio Ballads*, and was successful in promoting English folk songs. Yet another program, developed with Ewan MacColl, was called *Ballad and Blues*, and

[38] MacColl, *Journeyman*, 274.

compared English folk songs with American blues. Lomax would even bring in African American folk-blues guitarist Big Bill Broonzy to play sessions for the show, providing a real blues singer for listeners.[39] MacColl stated the objective of the radio series:

> To demonstrate that Britain possessed a body of songs that were just as vigorous, as tough and as down-to-earth as anything that could be found in the United States, against American songs like 'Frankie and Johnny' and chain-gang chants like 'Another Man Gone' we juxtaposed traditional murder ballads and treadmill songs.[40]

It is evident from MacColl's claims that he believed programs like *Ballad and Blues* were necessary to make the English audience aware of their own traditional songs steeped in 'toughness' while there was no need to remind the audience of the 'authentic' realism of African American blues. By using the blues as a comparative tool to awaken English radio listeners' understanding of the importance of English folk songs, and by bringing a bona fide African American blues singer like Broonzy into the studio, both MacColl and Lomax highlighted the themes in blues songs as the criterion for the supposed authentic, matter-of-fact, style of song. Thus, for listeners of the program, the source for evoking 'true-to-life' themes in song lay in the blues of America. Moreover, with an American musicologist like Lomax outlining the characteristics of the blues and African American culture, the programmes were infused with a sense of

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[39] Broozny's appearances were particularly unusual, as he was virtually the only African American bluesman in England. Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry made tour appearances in England in the 1950s, but Broonzy lived in London and provided English blues enthusiasts their only opportunity to see a blues performer in person.

[40] Ewan MacColl in Tony Bacon, *London Live*, (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1999), 38.

intellectual authority and accuracy to substantiate all the claims espoused by the commentators.

For his radio programs discussing American song styles, Lomax stressed the importance of Leadbelly, a folk-blues guitarist who had served a long period in a prison in the South. The significance of Leadbelly for the musicologist was due to Lomax's belief that Leadbelly's songs represented a form of music that was unique to the United States, drawing further on the radio series theme that the blues represented the touchstone of authentic song to be compared to other national songs. For Lomax, the songs of Leadbelly evoked the "authentic" experience of being an African American in the United States, emphasizing issues of discrimination and poverty that were exclusive to the region and the people. Moreover, as Benjamin Filene suggests in his work on public memory and American folk music, Lomax believed it was his mission to preserve the songs of artists like Leadbelly as the "last vestiges of 'traditional' African American music . . . and set out to preserve [the blues] before it slipped away."[41] When this preservation mission stalled in the United States due to left-wing folk musicians being labelled communists, Lomax expanded his preservationist mission to a trans-national level, not only trying to promote and conserve the blues for Americans, but advertise the importance of the blues to a global audience. Branded a communist in his home country, Lomax was suddenly an avid promoter and dispenser of American culture in Western Europe with his radio programs. Beyond the broadcasting power of Radio Luxembourg and the

[41] Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*, (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000), 113.

AFN beaming programs to the radio of English adolescents from Western Europe, which was out of the control of British broadcasting regulators, Lomax's programs on the BBC established an American cultural influence domestically.

Although blues groups in London were extremely rare in the mid-1950s, and the real proliferation was still to come, young English bands that did exist wished to emulate the sounds they heard on Lomax's programs; indeed they even sought the musicologist's approval of their work. Ken Colyer, an early enthusiast of Lomax's recordings, played Leadbelly during his weekly programs. Brian Nicholls, after hearing the folk-blues song "John Henry" performed by Colyer's skiffle group at the London Jazz Club in June of 1953, stated that "any time now the Library of Congress will be coming across from Grosvenor Square to take the whole thing down on tape for Alan Lomax."[42] While Colyer's group was not a strict blues ensemble, Nicholls evidently believed that the skiffle group's versions of the folk-blues songs were close to versions heard on Lomax's radio series. The ability of Lomax's BBC shows to advance interest in the blues was expanded to even more listeners with the inclusion of his shows on the Voice of American radio broadcasts, as musicians like Danny Thompson recall the VOA shows being the inspiration for the formation of early English folk-blues bands like the Railroaders and the Bluetones.[43] Furthermore, the power of the radio shows to promote the songs of blues artists like Leadbelly was clear when British banjo player Lonnie Donegan had a number one hit in England with Leadbelly's "Rock Island Line" in 1956. There was suddenly no longer an

[42] Brian Nicholls, "Ken Colyer Skiffle Group at London Jazz Club," *Jazz Journal*, (July, 1953) in Bacon, *London Live*, 24.
[43] *Mo Foster, Play Like This!: How British Musicians Bought the American Dream*, 34.

immediate need to preserve African American blues, as Donegan's reworking of Leadbelly took folk-blues to the top of the charts and an initial awakening of interest in "authentic" African American music in England that would grow in strength at the start of the 1960s.

One of Lomax's most popular programs on the radio was the three part series *The Art of the Negro*, a documentary program detailing African-American culture. Instead of discussing and playing the folk songs of English working class miners or sailors, Lomax utilized his on-air work at the BBC to play "blues singers, preachers, mule skinners, railroad workers, convicts ... all singers, all artists, who have sat for hours and poured out in unforgettable language their story of the Southern United States."[44] This program was well received by English listeners, as many were attracted to an unfamiliar musical form that told provocative stories of hardship in a unique musical style. Accordingly, the English audience listening to the BBC program were introduced to the language and narrative style of African American culture, listening to how blues artists like Big Bill Broonzy expressed fears and concerns through music, while largely ignoring how English musical forms dealt with similar worries. By entitling the program *The Art of the Negro*, Lomax emphasized the racial aspect of the music being broadcasted, highlighting the style and sound of the artists by race more than any other mark of distinction. Moreover, with American music already being portrayed as subversive to established European culture by BBC officials, the added distinction of the blues being part of African American culture further

[44] E. David Gregory, "Lomax in London: Alan Lomax, the BBC and the Folk Song Revival of England," *Folk Music Journal* 8, no. 2 (2002): 140.

contributed to the music being understood as all the more different from anything put forward by the established culture of England.

To further capitalize on the exposure for African American blues that his radio programs created, Lomax distributed his interviews with blues musicians and his field recordings through British record labels. Pye Records, which would eventually become the leading English distributor of blues records in England, released Lomax's *Blues in the Mississippi Night* and *Murders' Home* (a collection of African American prison work songs) as part of the Nixa Jazz Today Series in 1957. In 1957, domestically released African American blues records were nearly impossible to find in England, as American labels like Chess had yet to recognize the benefits of signing distribution deals for blues artists outside America. Thus, Lomax's releases on Pye represented the initial production and distribution of the blues in album format, offering pictures of blues singers on the front and back cover, along with a supplemental booklet of written material on the blues. These albums added further to Lomax's promotion of the blues on English radio, as the records provided a few visual images of what a blues musician looked like, in company with a booklet that detailed biographical details about the musicians' hard lives in America. Emphasizing the blues as a musical form that evoked the harsh life of African Americans in the South, Lomax used the liner notes to imagine the blues as representative of America as a whole, while being clear to

invoke ideas of the authenticity and realism by connecting the blues to the labour and land of America.[45] Lomax wrote on the backside of the album cover:

> In language, in content and function, these songs are as American as the Mississippi River. They were born out of the rock and earth of this county, as black hands broke the soil, moved it, reformed it, and rivers of stinging sweat poured upon the land under the blazing heat of Southern skies.... In these songs one feels the incredible vitality of the slave turned John Henry; one tastes the bitter anger which has driven him to so many acts of violence and filled his heart with fantasies of aggression....Here is the dark, fertile soil which gave rise to the blues.[46]

For English listeners of *Murders' Home*, the liner notes put the blues on the vinyl record in the context of a supposed genuine portrayal of life in America, full of pent up anger and aggression that could be exuded through song. These textual representations of African American culture and the outlining of characteristics of blues music, notably added to London teens' understandings of the music that developed through the radio.

Lomax's albums released on Pye were highly sought after by young Englishmen desperate for blues recordings. John Baldry, who would go on to be the lead singer for the Blues Incorporated, enthusiastically searched for albums produced by Lomax on Pye. Baldry especially liked the work songs and field-hollers found on Lomax's *Murders' Home*, because it gave him a resource to be able to play songs with "a breathtaking authenticity."[47] When English editions of the albums could not be found, teens would search out the American versions

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[45] Lomax's notes on these records were early examples of representations of African American culture and blues music in particular, Pye International would reference on compilation album covers. See the discussion of Pye International liner notes in Chapter 2.
[46] Alan Lomax, *Murders' Home* 1 vinyl LP, (London: Nixa-Pye, 1957), back cover.
[47] Colin Harper, *Dazzling Stranger: Bert Jansch and the British Folk and Blues Revival,* (London: Collin Harper, 2000), 37.

recorded by Lomax on Folkways. Lonnie Donegan and Wally Whyton sought these records out at the US Information Service Library in the American Embassy at Grosvenor Square, playing Lomax's early recordings of Muddy Waters, songs of which Donegan stated you "could learn in ten minutes and they'd last you a lifetime."[48]

When Lomax returned to America in the summer of 1958, Max Jones stated in the weekly music paper *Melody Maker* that "he has collected songs in Scotland, Ireland, England and on the Continent, has written books, worked for the BBC, made records, and done everything in his power to further Europe's interest in its own folk music."[49] Yet while Lomax may have gone to great lengths to revive interest in English folk songs, it is clear that the radio programs and albums that focused on African American blues had an immense effect in instigating widespread fascination with the blues by the youth of London.

While Lomax had returned to America, another U.S. government-sponsored figure soon stepped in to create programming for the BBC that was focused on the blues. In July 1960, Paul Oliver, a researcher and author from Britain, along with his wife Valerie, were given a grant by the US State Department to research African American blues. Specifically, Oliver received support from the Foreign Specialists Programme of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States State Department, along with Bertha E. Von Allmen, Cultural Affairs Officer at the American Embassy in London. Over the summer of 1960, Oliver interviewed over sixty-five blues singers, including

[48] Tony Bacon, *London Live*, 23.
[49] Max Jones, "The World of Jazz," *Melody Maker* (28 June, 1958).

Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, Little Walter, and Roosevelt Sykes, mainly in Chicago, and used these interviews as the basis for lectures he gave on the blues around England, including the US Embassy in London.[50] These interviews were also incorporated into a BBC radio series called "Conversation with the Blues," which was published as a book in 1965. With Oliver's program on the BBC, the U.S. government was inadvertently sponsoring research for radio content on the British run BBC, helping get American culture to be distributed through English media, while again positioning blues music as one of the most significant aspects of American cultural heritage. Furthermore, Oliver's project in Chicago was one of a series of blues research projects that occurred during this period.[51] Most studies conducted on the blues during the 1950s were penned by jazz writers who believed blues to generally be an antiquated form of music compared to jazz. However, by the end of the decade, work by Oliver, Sam Charters, and the eventual publication of Simon Napier-Bell and Mike Leadbitter's journal *Blues Unlimited* sought to establish an awareness of the importance of the blues in African American culture, while emphasizing that the music had a distinct authentic style that should be approached on its own terms. Often accompanied by a record of artists that had never been distributed in England such as Blind Willie McTell and Memphis Minnie, these studies, along with Lomax's radio documentaries on the blues, provided important examples for

[50] Tony Glover, Scott Dirk and Ward Gaines, *Blues With a Feeling: The Little Walter Story*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 212. See also Paul Oliver, *Conversation with the Blues*, (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 1997) xi.
[51] Sam Charters *The Country Blues* (Rhinehart, 1959) and Paul Oliver *Blues Fell This Morning* (MacMillan,1960) were the most popular examples of the blues projects published in Britain during this time.

newly-emerging blues enthusiasts concerning what made the blues a unique form of music compared to jazz or European classical music. Muddy Waters and B.B. King also argue that these studies were important early influences in encouraging interest in their music in England.[52]

Requests from England for Chicago blues recordings on Chess Records and stories of blues concerts in London made blues musician and promoter Willie Dixon curious about taking blues performers across the Atlantic for shows in Europe. English blues musician Alexis Korner, who founded the first British blues band, the Blues Incorporated, recalls how the Roadhouse Club in Soho, which began as more of a jazz club, gained a reputation with Chicago musicians like Dixon:

> The Roadhouse was better known in Chicago than it was in London because of all the blues players that came through. In the fifties a lot of blues players came through England . . . and they would go and play there, so we got the chance to play with every single important blues player that came through the country between 1956 and 1961.[53]

While interest in African American blues had not developed into a huge phenomenon in England at this point, Dixon realized from reports by Chicago musicians who played in London, that he could mount a tour of blues musicians in England. Moreover, Dixon was encouraged by the fact that the head of Chess Records, Marshall Chess, was constantly responding to mail orders for blues albums from English enthusiasts.[54] Surprised by a situation where most Chicago

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[52] Waters and King cited in David Hatch and Stephen Millward, *From the Blues to Rock: An Analytical History of Pop Music*, 136.
[53] Lysaght, *Rolling Stones: An Oral History*, 18.
[54] Glover, Dirks and Gaines, *Blues With a Feeling: The Little Walter Story*, 226.

musicians could not successfully sell records domestically, but were in demand in Europe, Dixon began to organize tours for fellow Chess musicians such as Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, and Otis Spann, while hiring a booking agent and arranging a record distribution with Pye Records to gain exposure for Chicago bluesmen.

While English teens had listened attentively to blues music from the AFN, Radio Luxembourg and BBC broadcasts by Alan Lomax, the arrival of Dixon, and the subsequent organization of a series of live performances by 'authentic' blues artists in London, gave English teens their first live exposure to performances by African American blues musicians. Moreover, while listening to the radio was a passive, secluded activity taking place in teens' bedrooms and family dens, the live performances that grew out of Dixon's initiatives brought the blues, and English blues devotees, into the public arena. Philip Rault states that the performances by blues artists like Howlin' Wolf and Sonny Boy Williamson at the start of the 1960s, and especially the American Folk and Blues Festival, which was partially spearheaded by Dixon, "put the fuse in the dynamite, kicking off the blues boom" in England.[55]

While a youth culture characterized by the blues was slowly fermenting before this, journalist Peter Evans underlines that London in the 1950s was "a grown-up town. It was an old man's town...there was nothing for young people

[55] Willie Dixon and Don Snowden, *The Willie Dixon Story: I am the Blues* (New York: Da Capo Press), 130.

and no place to go and no sort of excitement."[56] As live blues performances began to dominate the clubs and coffee bars in Soho, London teens began to challenge the "grown-up town" image of London by leaving their private radios, and taking over the public space of London's entertainment district.

[56] Shawn Levy, *Ready, Steady, Go!: Swinging London and the Invention of Cool* (London: Fourth Estate), 5.

Chapter 2: Analyzing The English Understanding of the Bluesman

Drawing attention to English teens' aversion to popular songs on the radio and trying to explain why teens were drawn to the blues at the start of the 1960s, Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman states that he heard 'crooner' songs on the radio and "it was laughable and I couldn't relate to that. When someone sang about working on the railroad for a dollar a day, you know, you could appreciate it.... it wasn't much fun but it was true to life."[57] Blues fans like Wyman had little or no understanding of African American life, but they romanticized African American's use of culture to address severe realities because it was the antithesis of the issues and topics addressed in mainstream English culture. With little or no understanding of the social hierarchy of 1960s America or the racism experienced by African Americans, aspiring English blues artists developed a musical style and vocabulary largely based on a romanticized view of what it meant to be a black bluesman in the ghetto. It is necessary to understand how this romantic view of the bluesman, his worldview, style, and performance technique, was realized by London teens in order to recognize how it shaped their construction of an urban youth culture characterized by the blues. At the start of the 1960s, young urban blacks in America were looking to move out of the ghetto through political activism and social movements, just as white, mostly

[57] Bill Wyman interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.

middle-class, London teens were yearning to assume the persona of an African American living in the ghetto.

Without a clear understanding of what this way of life entailed on an everyday scale, English teens preferred to focus on how African American music was as an instrument to counteract oppression and hardship. As Roland Radano argues in *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music*, "the sounds captured in the 'blues' – expressed a noble force of decidedly masculine will, figured as a form antagonistic to European musical sensibilities."[58] This antagonism towards European traditions within the sound of the blues was ideal for the emerging youth culture of London. Over a decade's worth of rationing and the stagnation of English cultural creativity among media producers, who were content to imitate popular songs and performers, left teens in a stifling world of austerity and reserve. Tony Russell stresses the feeling of austerity surrounding London during this period:

> It was an age of austerity in the `50s and early `60s. Things were in short supply and you still had to have rationing coupons in order to buy sugar. Britain was a kind of "excuse me if you don't mind my mentioning it" kind of music, whereas the American music came in and said, "Hey, move out of the way! We're here!"[59]

Seeking a tool to voice opposition to these feelings of reserve that surrounded London (which was also referred to as a city that was materially and psychologically a "Dunkirk of the spirits" by critic Kenneth Tynan at the start of the '60s), blues musicians appointed themselves cultural ambassadors for the

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[58] Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003), 56.
[59] Tony Russell interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.

youth of London, with the aim of producing African American blues music for an English audience. [60]

As outlined in the previous chapter, understanding and appreciation of the blues developed from a distance, with little or no direct contact with black people in England. This is not to suggest that a black population was nonexistent in England during this period. While the black population of Britain was as little as ten to thirty thousand after the Second World War, with a large majority working in northern industrial towns, immigration from the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados throughout the second half of the 1950s increased the black population of England to over 180,000 by 1958.[61] Yet there was little or no contact with blacks in social settings for young white teenagers in London, because immigrants had strong social and cultural ties with people of similar backgrounds and lived in predominately immigrant neighbourhoods. Moreover, while there were immigrants from the West Indies living in London, there were virtually no African Americans and therefore no African American musicians. Peter Jenner highlights the total ignorance of many English would-be blues musicians, stating that "Eric Clapton would never have seen Muddy Waters playing live; the Stones would never have heard Bo Diddley live. You'd have heard a couple of records and just tried to get the spirit. In fact they'd have been rather brought down if they'd seen them. I saw Muddy Waters live in America in

[60] Kenneth Tynan cited in Shawn Levy, *Ready Steady Go!: Swinging London and the Invention of Cool*, 4.
[61] Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in Post-war Britain* (Ithaca, 1997), 112 & 149.

1960 and he played sitting down. That would have really upset the Stones."[62] Mick Jagger acknowledges his lack of direct contact with blues musicians, as he recalls that when he first saw John Lee Hooker perform he was surprised the singer was still alive, as he "thought he was fantastically old. I mean I couldn't believe he could still play...he was very good...for us it was very seminal because we'd never actually seen any blues players live."[63] Thus, London blues fans' conception of the bluesman was developed at a distance, largely constructed from secondary sources such as Lomax's radio documentaries or album covers, without personal contact with any African American artists.[64]

Without direct encounters with bluesmen, understandings of what typified blues music, and the worldview of the bluesman, formed considerably from the import blues recordings purchased by aspiring teen musicians. With the transition from the delicate and fragile 78 rpm record to the lightweight and inexpensive 45 rpm vinyl format in 1955, the importation of American cultural products became much more feasible and widespread. U.S. soldiers stationed in Europe brought African American jazz and blues records from the United States to trade with English adolescents or to sell to import shop owners in Soho. Import albums from the Vee Jay and Chess labels in the US, along with UK domestic reissues

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[62] Jonathan Green, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961-1971* (London, 1988), 41.
[63] Mick Jagger interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.
[64] As stated in the previous chapter, Big Bill Broonzy did live in London for much of the 1950s, but most English fans and future musicians were not able to see him perform in the adult bars of Soho during his residency. Virtually all the major blues artists did not think Europe was a significant blues market in the 1950s, and did not tour outside the U.S.

of African American music on the Pye International label in London, offered insight into what characterized African American blues music.

Much of this increased commercial activity by English teenagers seeking out blues albums was due to their increased purchasing power. In a report penned in the mid-1960s by Derek Hawes, for a conference of National Youth Organisations, the author highlighted the spending freedom of English teens, stating that an English teen between fourteen and twenty-five was "second only to the housewife in potential spending powers."[65] However, the consumption practices of English teens were far different than those of their parents' generation. While the housewife's consumption was based around the home, the English teen's spending was focused in the public realm. This increased public exposure of young Londoners raised concerns that teens were running rampant and overtaking venues that were traditionally frequented by adults. Several concert halls, clubs, and theatres traditionally designated for adult patrons and suffering from a lack of attendance by the mid-1950s, received an economic boost from teens. Teens particularly enjoyed being seen in public spaces once attended by adults in the centre of the city because these areas exuded a cosmopolitan aura that was once unavailable to them.[66] For London teens interested in American culture, and particularly the blues, public consumption took place in Soho; in the coffee bars, night clubs, import clothing shops and record stores of the district. In particular, expenditures on music-related products by teens were enormous, as the youth market for music grew immensely by the

[65] Derek Hawes, "Report for the Standing Conference of National Youth Organisations," (1966) in Bill Ogersby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, 38.
[66] Ogersby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, 41.

early 1960s. By 1963 there were 800,000 more teenagers in the population than there had been a decade before. In 1956, 13 million teens were spending $7 billion, a 26% increase on 1953 figures. The average teenager's weekly disposable income of $10.55 was almost equal to that of an entire family in 1941. In 1960 British teens spent 850 million pounds on themselves, as teens were responsible for buying 40% of all record players.[67] The 45 r.p.m record had a light and flexible design, making it easier for transport to parties and friends' houses. It was also quite inexpensive compared to the traditional 78 r.p.m, or even the newer 33 1/3 rpm record, and thus the 45 dominated sales charts. By 1963, 45s accounted for 80 per cent of record sales as most teens in London had the spending power to purchase the latest singles from Bo Diddley after reading the singles chart in the *New Musical Express* or *Melody Maker*.[68] Charles Shaar Murray, in his biography of John Lee Hooker, underscores the desperate measures English blues enthusiasts would go to in order to purchase or look at African American blues albums. Shaar Murray states that Brian Jones came to blows with another customer, Roy Carr, at an import store over the last copy of a Howlin' Wolf album, while Tom McGuiness, guitarist of Manfred Mann, allegedly walked three miles just to look at the cover of a John Lee Hooker album.[69] While these recollections may have elements of exaggeration, they still underline the obsession of many listeners with hearing or, in McGuiness' case, simply viewing a blues album.

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[67] Jonathan Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counter-Culture* (London: Jonathan Cape), 3.
[68] Bill Ogersby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, 38.
[69] Charles Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man: The Adventure of John Lee Hooker in the American Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 266.

The purchase of a record might be considered an example of private rather than public consumption because it conjures up the image of a teen listening to music alone in a bedroom. However, most teens bought records during this period with the express purpose of taking them to record listening parties, as the 45 was designed for portability and communal use. John Mayall, who would go on to found the Bluesbreakers, met most blues musicians through listening parties he organized, as he had amassed a huge blues collection and wished to discuss and share these albums with other teens.[70] Blues records brought teens together in large groups rather than sequestering them in the privacy of their homes. Moreover, the record store became a place where blues fans could congregate. Blues historian Tony Russell underscores the youth comradeship that developed in Dobell's Record Shop at 77 Charing Cross Road:

> In the Blues basement underneath the jazz store was another one of these Blues paradises. It was nothing but mostly second-hand, used records, all Blues nearly and it was the port of call for anybody with a serious interest in acquiring Blues records. And it wasn't just the buying, it was this kind of strange comradery [*sic*] of other collectors dropping in and hanging around, of you listening into other peoples discussions to see if they knew stuff that you didn't or had heard records that you hadn't. So there was a kind of community spirit about the place.[71]

As Russell points out, comradeship was not only forged on material consumption but on the ardent debates and discussions of the intricacies of blues music by a community of like-minded teens. Venues such as Doebell's Record Shop took

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[70] John Mayall interviewed for Figgis, *Red, White and Blues*, (2003).
[71] Tony Russell interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.

teens away from their radios and bedrooms and encouraged the formation of music groups

Additionally, sites like Doebell's Record Shop were noteworthy because they contained hard-to-find blues albums, which gave Londoners important models for forming their own groups. Album covers provided colour photographs of the artists decked out in the clothing of the bluesman, along with short critiques on blues music penned on the back cover. Through these albums, which were primarily released between 1959 and 1963, English teens interpreted the blues as an "authentic" music that concentrated on the "realities" of life without the romanticism or idealism of folk song. Beyond the music, English teens understood the bluesman to be a figure that personified aggression and candour to counteract the difficulties and struggles of poor urban living. Vee Jay, producers for John Lee Hooker, emphasized the theme of a tough singer emerging out of squalor to voice the reality of his situation. The description on Hooker's back cover for "On Campus" stated "the truth of the matter is that the authentic blues of John Lee Hooker type was spawned and nurtured in the misery and destitution of the Negro in a particular American society."[72] Domestic releases on the Pye International label, which had signed a licensing arrangement with the Chess, Cadet, Checker, and Argo labels to release their blues artists in England through a "Rhythm and Blues" series in 1960, evoked similar themes with the writing on their LP covers. The liner notes penned on the back of the cover of the two volume compilation entitled "The Blues" is a clear

[72] John Lee Hooker, "On Campus," (Vee Jay, LP 1066) as quoted in Charles Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man: The Adventure of John Lee Hooker in the American Twentieth Century*, 266.

example of how liner notes contributed to demarcating African American music from popular folk music. Distributed in 1960, the liner notes attempted to explain why African American blues was more genuine than any white form of American music, while also legitimizing the blues as the only 'authentic' contemporary music available. According to liner notes author Esmond Edwards, while white American music was "generally based on make-believe and wishful thinking . . . the blues . . . is a music of truth and reality; written and performed by people who had to learn to live with the facts and not the fictions of life in order to survive."[73] Fundamentally, for Edwards, African American music was ideal because of its capacity to accurately address the hardships of life, debunking any wishful idealism associated with white music.

Placed in the context of other musical styles, namely folk, that were popular in both American and Britain at this time, the distinction made by Edwards is significant in underscoring why Londoners came to see the blues as a unique music. While folk singers like Pete Seeger were singing idealistic songs like "We Shall Overcome" or Bob Dylan was playing "The Times They are a Changin,'" bluesmen sang about the harsh conditions they struggled to overcome with songs like "Worried Life Blues" and wondering whether any change was ever going to come about. It is evident from Edwards' representation that English enthusiasts of the blues saw the white cowboy or politically active folk singer as addressing poverty and suffering by romanticizing the past or forecasting an idyllic future, while the African American blues singer addressed social situations

[73] Esmond Edwards, "The Blues Volume 2," 1 audio LP (London: Pye International, 1960), back cover.

directly. Thus, English youth were drawn to the blues because they interpreted being black as possessing an identity that allowed one to understand truths that were unattainable or unrecognizable to others. Furthermore, aspiring blues musicians developed an understanding of the blues rhetoric that could be employed in the liner notes, interviews, and promotional material. A unique rhetorical style described the music and characters of the blues, and if would-be English bluesmen wanted to emulate their African American heroes from Chicago, they would have to invoke this language in order to gain credibility.

Another compilation album released by Pye International in the following year addressed similar themes. Entitled "Walking By Myself" (the title alone emphasizing the independent spirit of the bluesman), the compilation's liner notes stated that "the blues must certainly be regarded as one of the most intensely personal means of expression known to man. And the person who first said, 'The blues ain't nothing but a good man feeling bad,' had his finger on a pretty basic philosophic pulse."[74] Analysis of the writing on these album covers reveals that the authors sought to promote the blues as a philosophy, a worldview that shaped how one interpreted their surroundings. According to the message on albums available to teenagers in the shops of London, the blues was not simply music for entertainment and distraction; it was a cultural form that was empowering because it allowed teens to view the world in a new and unique way.

[74] Anonymous, "Walking By Myself" 1 audio LP (London: Pye International, 1961), back cover.

Experiencing the difficult transition from the agrarian surroundings of Mississippi to the highly segregated urban neighbourhoods of Chicago and Detroit, the blues musician narrated the experience of living among crowded streets and overcrowded apartment buildings by creating a cultural self that utilized music to express disaffection and hostility with new metropolitan surroundings.[75] For British blues guitarist Eric Clapton, the bluesman symbolized the appropriate figure to emulate, because he was both alienated in the modern world, due to his lower-class status, and yet artistically inspired by this estrangement. Looking back to the blues scene of London, Clapton states:

> I was English, I was white, and I was dedicated to and playing the blues, or what I thought was the blues, and I deliberately was trying what I assume would be a bluesman's lifestyle, you know, bumming around with a guitar on my shoulder... It was incredibly romantic. I kind of dreamt of myself being this uh, this lonesome blues singer, you know... I could identify in some of the aspects in that I came from a very poor country background.[76]

The image of the African American blues singer was attractive to young white males in London because the mythology of the bluesman epitomized themes of race, sex, and rebellion that offered attributes to clearly delineate the generation of post-war England from its predecessors. As sociologist Dick Hebdige argues in his discussion of the "Negro image," white understandings of black culture saw the African American male as immaculate in poverty, able to overcome the restrictions surrounding his situation. Hebdige states that white Britons saw the Negro as "blowing free, untouched by the dreary conventions which tyrannized

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[75]Introduction by Stuart Hall in Claire E. Alexander, *The Art of Being Black: The Creation of Black British Youth Identities* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), v.
[76] ""Blues Power": The British Blues," in *The Blues* (Boston: EMP Radio, 2003).

more fortunate members of society and, although trapped in a cruel environment of mean streets and tenements, by a curious inversion he also emerged the ultimate victor."[77] This image served as a model for the white youth of cities like London by providing the ability to find freedom in bondage. Ignoring the actuality that this bondage was created due to the harsh racism in American society, London teens believed the oppression they experienced came from the citizens and institutions of an older generation of London that failed to recognize their cultural interests or provide outlets within the city where youths could creatively express themselves. Teens were force-fed cultural images on the BBC and other mainstream media that did match their own cultural interests, and thus they sought a way to counteract this phenomenon.

Eric Clapton states that Robert Johnson provided an image of darkness and risk that countered the polished image of white British musicians like Gene Vincent. Clapton states that when he looked at Johnson "it [made] me think about parallels to my own life . . . on a much *deeper* level, I was responding to the way he dealt with fear and loneliness and sadness, and how he expressed those things."[78] For Clapton, the image of the bluesman was clearly the most attractive outward appearance for addressing serious internal alienation experienced from living in the urban world. In the words of Paul Jones, who would eventually form the blues group Manfred Mann:

> It was a symptom of teenage rebellion, really. When you were young in those days you tried to identify with anybody who was

[77] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 47.
[78] Interview with Eric Clapton for Barry Cleveland, *"The Clapton Conundrum," Guitar Player* 38, no. 4 (2004), 51.

> oppressed and marginalized, or – perhaps more relevantly – was someone different for your parents. I liked Howlin' Wolf, who was about as diametrically opposed to my father as possible![79]

Wolf and other Chicago bluesmen were the new cultural personalities English youth were interested in. Moreover, beyond emulating the image of the blues singer to illustrate their dislike for the culture of the elder generation, the endorsement of the blues personality was central to these urban teens because it redefined the homogenous 'English' identity held up by the wartime generation. In the 1950s, the wartime generation listened to Johnny Mathis sing optimistically about the "Best of Everything" and Don Robertson played "The Merry Men," as puerile and trivial lyrical content dominated the airways. Yet young blues fans like Paul Jones clearly flaunted their rejection of these cultural icons by listening to Wolf's dark and aggressive songs such as "Evil" and "Smokestack Lightin," rejecting the constraint and austerity that was supposed to embody a generation that 'toughed-out' the Blitz and years of poverty.

While liner notes and the songs on the albums aided in London teens' adoption of the African American blues identity, the portrayal of blues fashion on vinyl record covers was another significant feature in shaping young Londoners' interpretation of being a bluesman. The construction of the image of the blues was primary to constructing an urban personality that was culturally specific to the blues. Andrew Loog Oldham, who worked in London's fashion district and discovered the Rolling Stones, sought out American import clothing to fashion the image of the African American musician. Working on New Oxford Street,

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[79] Andy Neil, "'Hoochie Coochie Men': The British R&B Explosion 1962-1966," *Record Collector*, no. 294 (2004), 77.

Oldham states in his autobiography that he and his associate Peter Meaden would look at the back of American jazz and blues album covers then search out American clothes emporiums in the West End and Soho in search of "reversible hound's-tooth and herringbone, staggered vent jackets, pin through and tab-collared shirts."[80] It is evident from Oldham's remarks that the style and image presented on the covers of albums from the United States had a major influence over how young Londoners developed their style and appearance. As Paul Fryer suggests in his essay on the British blues, "knowledge of the black blues tradition came through the white musicians from their records and sleeve notes."[81] Eric Clapton bought certain styles of dark shaded suits in an attempt to fashion himself after Robert Johnson, while he changed his guitar from a Fender to a Les Paul after seeing a Freddie King album cover.[82] Mark Knopfler and Steven Phillips of the Doulian String Pickers took to wearing "gangster-style" hats to emulate illustrations they had seen on the blues albums of African American bluesman Bo Diddley.[83] John Mayall also dressed with a "gangster" hat on the cover of his album *Looking Back*. Clothed in the attire of an African American blues singer on the album cover, Mayall is seen boarding a train like a share cropper hopping a rail car to the urban centres of the North -- a rural outsider moving to an alien urban environment. These hats furthered the impression of the bluesman being the renegade outlaw of urban society, not conforming to the

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[80] Andrew Loog Oldham, *Stoned: A Memoir of London in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 76-77.
[81] Paul Fryer, "'It Hurts Me Too': This Is Blues and the Late 1960s British Blues Boom," *Popular Music and Society* 9, no. 2 (1983): 47.
[82] Greg Kot, "Cream of the Crop," *Guitar World* 18, no. 5 (1998): 54.
[83] Mo Foster, *Play Like This!: How British Musicians Bought the American Dream*, 66.

rules or regulations of traditional 'English' cultural practices. In his autobiography, Ewan MacColl described teens emulating the gangster style of the bluesman: "with the guitar went the frayed and faded blue-jeans with the washed-out horizontal stripes which proclaimed you a fugitive from a chain-gang. The more extreme cultivators of the American image sent to the US for those little sacks of Bull Durham tobacco and learned to roll their own with one hand . . . [while] in every dialect ...you heard the 'Rock Island Line.'"[84] By wearing clothes taken from images on record covers that invoked a working-class style, London youth revered the outlaw machismo of the urban black man, the "stagger lee/gangsta/ outlaw figure . . . the strong self that has rhythm but can also fight to protect his rights."[85] Thus, a style clearly associated with the cultural practice of the blues provided distinct images for the formation of an identity in the urban context that challenged what it meant to be a young white male in England. The fashions on display in the shopping displays of Oxford Street no longer held sway on the style of urban adolescents, as the cultural products of African American blues, namely album covers, became the major authority in influencing authentic urban style, sending young men down to Soho in search of import clothes shops. Nevertheless, by constructing an English blues persona based on representations of African American culture found on album covers and information gathered from radio programs, most teens adopted their blues style without ever meeting an African American bluesman.

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[84] MacColl, *Journeyman: An Autobiography*, 273.
[85] Nabeel Zuberi, *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 54.

The establishment of the American Folk and Blues Festival in 1962 (a collaboration between Georgio Geomelsky, manager of the Yardbirds, and Willie Dixon), gave many English blues enthusiasts and musicians their first face-to-face encounter with American blues musicians. Large crowds at the American Folk and Blues Festival in 1963, which was headlined by Muddy Waters, highlighted the growing popularity of blues and an increased understanding of what made the blues unique from jazz. While 'trad' jazz, a revival of New Orleans jazz music from Jelly Roll Morton and early Louis Armstrong was popular amongst some musicians a few years previous, the popularity of the AFBF showed that most teenagers were interested in the blues as they came in droves to the festival performances. While Waters' first performance in London in 1958 was met with apprehension due to the audiences' lack of preparedness for electric blues guitar, with the 1963 American Folk and Blues Festival "there was now an awareness of blues as a music quite separate from jazz, and... young musicians were beginning to turn to urban blues for their inspiration."[86] John Martin also emphasized the growing interest in blues in an interview with *Melody Maker*, stating that "trad got so polished and professional, and this new, raw music is like starting all over again...[Blues] has got what trad has in the beginning: roughness and excitement."[87] The festival was made up almost entirely of post-war electric blues musicians from Chicago, with artists like Otis Spann, John Lee Hooker, and Sonny Boy Williamson playing a style of African

[86] David Hatch and Stephen Millward, *From Blues to Rock: An Analytical History of Pop Music*, 103.
[87] John Martin quote taken from unknown interviewer, "R&B at Jazzshows Jazzclub," *Melody Maker* (October 26, 1963).

American music identified by the wailing of electric guitar and lyrics full of double-meanings and innuendo when addressing sex, poverty and racism. Moreover, with the size and large attendance at the festival, blues was moving towards widespread popularity amongst youth in England.

The long term impact of the festival, aside from English blues devotees' first-hand encounter with American blues artists, was that blues enthusiasts gained a greater understanding of the history of the songs and the performers that went beyond radio documentaries by Alan Lomax, distant broadcasts from Radio Luxembourg, or the mystique cultivated by liner notes on record albums. In an interview for a radio program on blues in England, Robert Plant states that as a young blues fan he:

> Went to one of the Blues festivals that was traveling through Europe and they were very well organized and they were very, um... There was kind of a whole vibe about 'em as it being some kind of mass, some hallowed experience with these geezers from Mississippi or Chicago coming to England... I learned a lot from that.[88]

With English audience members holding the performances of African American bluesmen in the highest regard, English performers wishing to perform similar music needed to take steps to recreate this 'hallowed experience' produced by African American blues performers in order to attract fans to their own live shows. The need to recreate the 'authentic' production and presentation of blues music was far more immediate for English musicians because their audience had a clearer understanding of the original performers and their songs from the

[88] Robert Plant interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.

AFBF. In the shadow of lauded performances by Waters and Hooker at the AFB festival, English musicians needed to appear as credible blues musicians if they were to be taken with any sort of seriousness by promoters, radio DJs, and record buyers.

Before the blues youth culture emerged as a visible group, the dominant image of the teenager in mainstream British media extended from quiescent and apolitical alienation through to passive acceptance of societal norms and conformity.[89] Yet on a front-page headline for the *Daily Mirror* in 1964, Marjorie Proops declared that the youth of London was a "strange new younger generation with new ideas about life and living...They are prototypes of a whole new race...[they are] non-conformist, bright, intelligent, and resourceful."[90] The press declared a generational watershed between young and old Londoners, promoting an idea that the contemporary youth of London were 'different' from previous generations. Clearly, the cultural interests of London teens cultivated this belief. In particular, and of import when considering the influence of African American culture on youth identity in London during this period, the cultural idols for many teens in London were elderly African American bluesmen. The image and musical style teens wanted to emulate was the hard-hitting style of the bluesman, not the clean-cut, handsome, and white cultural icons of the previous decade like Frank Sinatra. Additionally, a key division that characterized the new blues culture was that it was distinctively and exclusively the property of youth themselves. Radio programs, albums, and festivals created a perception of

[89]Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 181.
[90] Marjorie Proops, "It's All Happening," *Daily Mirror* (5 March, 1964), 1.

African American blues music and blues performers that emphasized authenticity, realism, aggression, and non-conformity that appealed to teens. Moreover, the characteristics teens were captivated by were subsequently channelled into the production of English music and the promotion of an English blues persona. In spreading a musical sound and a youth culture that challenged accepted cultural norms through blues music, blues enthusiasts and musicians needed to invoke the rhetoric and ideas that they encountered on their favourite recordings, albums covers, and radio programs in order to promote and legitimize their production of the blues.

Chapter 3:
The Production of English Blues (1963-1966)

By reading liner notes that amplified the 'authentic' antagonism of the bluesman, fashioning a blues style from photographs on album covers, and witnessing the energetic stage performances of African American artists, English teens constructed a mythical conception of what the African American bluesman embodied. Yet teens' love of the blues did not remain passive hero worship, as young Londoners began forming blues groups and producing music. Having spent countless hours listening to radio programs that played blues songs and recounted the difficult lives of musicians living in the urban black neighbourhoods of Chicago and Detroit, many English teens were inspired enough to venture to their local hockshop in search of an inexpensive guitar and amplifier to start a blues group. Blues historian Tony Russell states:

> The instruments you needed to do that with, guitar and harmonica, they were instruments you could sort of learn on your own. You didn't have to do that apprenticeship that saxophone players and trumpet players had to do, had to become jazz musicians [*sic*]. You could make a sort of tolerable fist [*sic*] of a Blues song after not having played any kind of music at all for very long. In the early days it was enthusiasm as much as skill that took them where they were going. The skill came later.[91]

With a greater disposable income than the previous generation of teenagers who grew up amongst the rubble and rationing of the Second World War, London

[91] Tony Russell interviewed for Robert Santelli, "'Blues Power': The British Blues," *In The Blues*, CBC Radio, 2003.

teens began to play the blues, modelling their performance style and musical production on depictions of the bluesmen they heard on the radio programs of Alan Lomax and the disc jockeys on the AFN.

The irony of a cultural hybrid like the English blues is that teens' production of a music that allowed for the discussion of feelings, ideas, and events with a supposed realism unheard of in English folk song or in the music aired by the BBC, is that it glamorized the whole idea of being a 'down-and-out' bluesmen without ever having to be 'down and out.' Moreover, while young blues fans like Eric Clapton romanticized the macho-vagabond lifestyle of American bluesmen like Robert Johnson at the start of the '60s, by 1962 the mythology of the bluesman became associated with English blues artists, with the English singers like Long John Baldry being described by his contemporaries as "magical and mystical" because he travelled alone with his guitar "completely free."[92] What's more, while Pye International's album covers depicting Chicago African American artists created trend markers for the style of the bluesman at the start of the decade, by the end of 1962, London bluesmen were portraying themselves in a similar manner. The Rolling Stones' eponymous first LP (released in the early spring of 1964) presented the five members with threatening glares in front of a pitch-black background. The album cover exemplified the defiant spirit of the blues ethos, a rough and ready or 'take me as I am' approach, that contrasted with the smiling 'I want to hold your hand' attitude of the Beatles or any other pop

[92] Eric Clapton quoted in *Mojo* and reprinted in Brad Wheeler, "Long John Baldry," *Globe & Mail* (July 26, 2005), S6.

group for that matter.[93] Other groups presented similar images. On their "Five Live" album cover (released in 1964 on Columbia), the five 'Yardbirds' (slang for wandering vagabonds) were also depicted with defiant stares in a dingy alley, behind the bars of a locked gate. The cover for the John Mayall's Bluesbreakers eponymous first record presented the group in a graffiti-speckled dirty alley, five bluesmen living in the squalor and nastiness of the city. The Rolling Stones, Yardbirds, Mayall's Bluesbreakers and Baldry's band, the Hoochie Coochie Men (named after the Muddy Waters song), were a few of the numerous London blues groups playing at the clubs and cafes in Soho. Between 1962 and the spring of 1965, a large number of London teens made the transition from blues enthusiasts to blues artists. During this period, they emerged from being simple consumers of African American cultural products to create an environment in London where they could produce culture modelled on their understandings of this culture.

It is essential to understand the significance of the proliferation of blues groups in London because it underscores how a cultural practice like playing the blues contributed to the development of a youth identity in London. By identifying how English blues was characterized by the performers, press, and promoters, while acknowledging how the metropolitan context of London in particular contributed to the formation of this unique cultural practice, an understanding of what motivated London teens to play the blues will be established in this chapter. The previous chapter addressed English reception and interpretation of African

[93] Charles Gillet, *The Sound of the City* (Souvenir Press: London, 1983), 267.

American culture and the mythmaking of the bluesman that was nurtured with vinyl albums, radio programs and live performances, this chapter concentrates on how the mythical image of the African American blues singer was infused into the cultural production of youth during the mushrooming music scene of Soho. Motivated by notions of authenticity and a defiant spirit in blues music, London teens' production of blues music, starting predominantly in 1963, established a new youth cultural creativity and expression in London that challenged absolutist conceptions of English culture while celebrating conceptions of 'authentic' and 'genuine' African American culture. By analyzing initiatives of young artists, club owners, promoters and fans to generate an appreciation for blues music in the shops, pubs, and coffee house of Soho, an understanding of the consequences of this new youth culture can be established.

It is necessary to begin with a discussion of some of the popular music groups that performed and recorded blues music in London in 1962 and 1963. As discussed in the previous chapter, London teens developed an understanding of the African American bluesman's style, philosophy, and performance style from Pye record covers, record liner notes and performances at the newly founded American Folk and Blues Festival (AFBF); however in making the transition from knowledgeable and passive observers to active performers with a reputation as genuine blues performers, young London musicians had to relay similar themes to the fans and media.

One of the first major London groups to emerge around the time of the first AFBF tour was the Rolling Stones. Guitarists Brian Jones and Keith Richards

shared a love of Muddy Waters, and formed a group named after a line from one of Waters' songs. The group released its first single in early 1963, a cover version of Slim Harpo's "I'm A King Bee" that was extremely different from most songs heard on the radio or printed on the Top 40 list of *Melody Maker*, but which owed a lot to the songs played at the AFBF by Chicago bluesmen. Unlike songs by Elvis Presley or the Everly Brothers that dominated the charts in 1961 and 1962, "I'm a King Bee" evoked an aggressive vitality, with blues vocalist Mick Jagger telling the listener to beware because he was "buzzin' around." Reviews of their early live performances contributed to a perception of the blues being distinctive. Detailing a show at the Station Hotel in April of 1963, just as early singles like "I'm a King Bee" were gaining notice, the *Record Mirror* extolled the distinctive sound and performance of the Rolling Stones show:

> As the trad [jazz] scene subsides, promoters of all kinds of teen-beat entertainments heave a long sigh of relief that they have found something to take its place. It's rhythm n' blues . . . [and] the hip kids throw themselves around to the new 'jungle music' like they never did in the more restrained days of trad.
>
> And the combo they writhe and twist to is called the Rolling Stones. Maybe you've never heard of them . . . but by gad you will! The Stones are destined to be the biggest group in the R&B scene – if that scene continues to flourish. Three months ago only fifty people turned up to see the group. Now promoter Gomelsky has to close the doors at an early hour – with over 400 fans crowding the hall...
>
> Unlike all the other R&B groups worthy of the name, the Rolling Stones have a definite visual appeal. They aren't like the jazzmen who were doing trad a few months ago and converted their act to keep up with the times. They are genuine R&B fanatics themselves and they sing and play in a way that one would have expected more from a colour U.S. group than a bunch of wild, exciting white boys who have their fans screaming...

> The boys do not use original material – only the American stuff. "After all," they say, " can you imagine a British-composed R&B number – it just wouldn't make it.[94]

With reviews such as this *Record Mirror* article promoting the Rolling Stones' performances as untamed and analogous to performances by African American artists, English artists had media assistance in aligning their music, live performances and style with US blues artists, garnering credibility amongst fans wishing to hear the 'authentic' sound or attend a 'real' blues concert. Concert reviews promoting English musicians' allegiance to African American blues further legitimized the undertaking of these teens, yet by setting boundaries, like advising against the writing of English rhythm and blues songs, the press had particular expectations on the English production of the blues.

Furthermore, the Rolling Stones were quick to use the English music newspapers to align their forceful musical style with 'authentic' African American blues and contrast it with Top 40 songs they believed lacked the vitality and realism of the blues. In particular, Brian Jones used the music press to write commentaries on what he believed characterized the blues, fostering the idea that English musicians could not only play the blues but also had a thorough understanding of its defining qualities. To emphasize the Rolling Stones' adoration of blues music, Jones wrote in *Jazz News*:

> It appears there exists in this country a growing confusion as to exactly what form of music the term 'Rhythm & Blues' applies to.

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[94] "Rolling Stones – Genuine R and B," *Record Mirror* (April, 1963) reprinted in Nicholas Schaffner, *The British Invasion* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Books, 1983), 59.

> There further appears to be a movement here to promote what would be better termed 'Soul Jazz' as Rhythm & Blues.
>
> Surely we must accept that R&B is the American city Negro's "pop" music.... [R&B] can hardly be considered a form of jazz. It is not based on improvisation as is the latter. The impact is, and can only be, emotional.[95]

The categorization of the blues was a very serious enterprise for musicians like Jones because they wanted to clearly link their group with an emotionally charged, non-intellectual, music that was far different from the scholarly approach to dissecting European classical music or what Jones considered to be the upper-class snobbery of jazz music. As many young Londoners came from upper-middle class families and academic backgrounds (Mick Jagger's attendance at the London School of Economics being one of several examples), musicians like Jones could use the press to draw attention away from the background of his groups' members, while highlighting their allegiance to a physical and authentic Black American music that was the antithesis of a refined white English upbringing. Several of the youth cultures that arose during the early 1960s, namely blues enthusiasts and mods, exemplify the blurring of class affiliations during this time of improved living standards, and music clearly contributed to this process. Compensating for the fact that they had far more employment opportunities and consumer power than the generation that grew up around war and economic stagnation, middle-class teens used African American culture to emulate the working-class values of the African American bluesman;

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[95] Brian Jones, *Jazz News* (31 October, 1962) as reprinted in Wyman, *Rolling with the Stones*, 39.

distancing themselves from their recognized class affiliation by practising and listening to the art of the down-and-out singer.[96]

Aside from the Rolling Stones, other musicians in London evoked similar themes in promoting their records and performances, receiving considerable reinforcement from the local music media, which sought to establish the credibility of blues youth culture in the city. An example of this promotional collaboration between media and artist is underscored with the promotion of Cyril Davis and his R&B All-Stars' single "Country Line Special"-- a single that merged the lyrics of folk-blues singer Leadbelly with the upbeat tempo of post-war Chicago blues. Emphasizing how he was a real bluesman, due to his lifestyle and supposed blues purist style, Davis told Bob Dawbarn of the *Melody Maker* "I'm a purist. I don't like to see the music messed about. I like it straight" with Dawbarn adding that "Davis believed that in order to sound like the bluesman, you had to have the attitude of the bluesman, and you have to live like he does. Emulating his idol, Leadbelly, Davis looked to Leadbelly's tendencies for being a drinker, fighter, and womanizer."[97] To bolster Davis' claim of being a musician who played and lived like a real bluesman, reviews of "Country Line Special" added to the mystique. A review in *Disc Weekly* commented that Davis' vocals on the single sound "as if he'd been born and raised in the rhythm 'n' blues country instead of Denham, England. There's a lonely, haunting quality about this

[96] This idea in connection to mods in London is discussed in Mike Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Subcultures and Subcultures*, (Boston: Routledge, 1980), 74.
[97] Bob Dawbarn. "Cyril Was the Man on the Harmonica," *Melody Maker*, (January 18, 1964), 12.

side which could make it a very big seller indeed."[98] Discussing and reviewing the restyling of African American blues by white Londoners, teen magazines and newspapers like *Disc Weekly*, *Record Mirror*, *Melody Maker*, and the *NME* validated the allegiance of London youth to the blues character (the aggressive lonesome fighter) and 'authentic' blues music. *NME* declared, in a review of Blues Incorporated's 'I Need Your Lovin'" that the blues musicians in the London group were "as authentic as you can get in this country,"[99] while Eric Clapton told the *Melody Maker* that his attitude and musical style was completely aligned with the blues, as he plays "anything but like a white man."[100] Steve Winwood of the Spencer Davis Group would echo these sentiments when he declared in an interview that playing in the blues style provided an excitement not found in white music, avowing that " We [the Spencer Davis Group] don't play any white stuff."[101] Thus, in publicizing the new cultural producers of London, newspaper outlets like the *NME* and *Melody Maker* served to characterize these English blues personalities as dissenting against the image and style of typical English cultural producers.

It would be easy to see the Spencer Davis Group or the Rolling Stones recording of a blues song by a Chicago bluesman as similar to the practice of white American artists recording African American songs to sell albums to the white music market in the severely racially-segregated music market of 1950s

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[98] Excerpt from *Disc Weekly* (December, 1963) reprinted in McStravick, Summer and John Roos, eds. *Blues Rock Explosion*, 99.
[99] Review of 'I Need Your Lovin' *New Music Express* (November, 1964) reprinted in McStravick and Loos, *Blues-Rock Explosion*, 157.
[100] Eric Clapton quoted in *Melody Maker* (15 October 1966) as reprinted in John Pidgeon's *Eric Clapton*, (Panther: London, 1976), 65.
[101] Steve Winwood interviewed for Chris Welch, *Melody Maker* (June 12, 1965), 8.

America. Yet as Michael Coyle suggests in his essay on the relationship between race and the marketing of cover songs after the Second World War, Elvis Presley's recording of "That's All Right", a song which was originally a hit on the African American music charts, we have the first significant example of a white singer who went out of his way to make sure he was recognized as a white singer playing black music. This is in contrast to earlier white singers who, when singing their versions of black songs, tried to disassociate themselves from the music's black origins. Moreover, this tradition, popularized by Presley, of being identified as a white artist playing African American music in a "miscegenated style" as Coyle puts it, is central to the musical production and performance of many of the English blues musicians. For an artist like Presley to adopt African American music is not surprising because he grew up in the southern United States where there was a strong tradition of African American music. Yet the rebelliousness and defiance of cultural norms by young English teens playing the blues was far more apparent than Presley playing African American songs because English musicians emerged from a musical tradition that had no connection to the musical heritage Presley was drawing on. Furthermore, unlike Presley's subversion of traditional American culture, the rupture made from traditional English culture by London blues musicians had two essential characteristics, as artists like Clapton, Jagger, and Winwood could use both the *Americaness* of the blues in concert with the music's *African* American heritage to draw a distinction from the English music played on the BBC. [102]

[102] Michael Coyle, "Hijacked Hits and Antic Authenticity: Cover Songs, Race and Post-war

There is a severe contradiction in this cultural development. The music of artists like Presley and the Rolling Stones, as Coyle stresses, "testifies against essentialist identity of any kind, and its enduring popularity derives precisely from its hybridity."[103] However, while the music of these artists might challenge expectations of what is 'acceptable' for listeners, the essentialist characteristics put forth in mainstream culture which separated black and white music, or English and American music, were still needed by Mick Jagger or Elvis Presley in order to allow for a subversion and rebellion against these social norms. While English artists desperately sought out African American blues because they considered it to be 'authentic', they subsequently played the blues as a means of transgressing what was considered 'traditional' and 'authentic' English music.

The attitude that American culture was considered dangerous and subversive was not a new phenomenon, as performances by rock 'n' roll groups like Bill Haley and the Comets had started a 'moral panic' in London in the mid-fifties.[104] Yet with English blues, the English cultural elite was presented with the dual 'menace' of a music that was linked to black and American culture. Dick Hebdige's remarks on the 'negro image', along with Coyle's discussion of the significance of 'miscegenated style' in English blues, are both valuable to understand the impact of the blues in England and to recognize why race was used by London youth to signify non-conformity. The appropriation of African American music offered English youth an 'outside' cultural form with the ability to

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Marketing," in R. Beeb, D. Fulbrook, and B. Saunders, eds., *Rock Over the Edge: Transformations in Popular Music Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), 147.

[103] Coyle, "Hijacked Hits and Antic Authenticity," in Beeb, Fulbrook, and Saunders, eds., *Rock Over the Edge*, 145.

[104] The reaction of the BBC to American culture is also detailed in chapter 1.

fulfil an oppositional role. Simon Jones notes that the blues was customized and made indigenous by English youth to "not only provide new cultural maps in the face of the decline and break-up of older, working-class music and cultural traditions, but . . . [also to offer] vehicles by which bourgeois cultural hegemony ... [could be] undercut in post-war British society."[105] The songs performed by artists like Eric Clapton and Cyril Davis emerged out of a dialectic between white appropriation and black artistic inspiration, supplying a musical form that English artists believed epitomized their experiences. Simon Jones addresses the dialectic inherent in this urban cultural product, arguing that the relationship between black music and white musicians "turned on the contradictions of using forms inherently opposed to white hegemony, and forged out of the experience of racial oppression, as sources of meaning and pleasure."[106] The young performers playing in the blues clubs of Soho clearly saw rhythm and blues as the most appropriate form of expression for articulating their concerns with their social surroundings. By taking the creatively inspiring guise of the black blues musician, they could draw a stark distinction from any social control by white elites. The African American music utilized by early 1960s English youth carried an aura of a realistic and authentic explanation for experiencing life in an urban centre. This focus on the 'authentic' suggests that the youth of this subculture believed the traditions of the older generation lacked legitimacy, thereby challenging pre-1960 cultural producers' interpretations of social situations in 1960s London.

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[105] Simon Jones, *Black Culture, White Youth: The Reggae Tradition from JA to UK* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1988), xxiii.
[106] Jones, *Black Culture, White Youth*, xxiii.

By 1963, London was the focal point of interaction between African American culture and English youth because of the intensely pluralized nature of urban culture in England. As Les Back observes, "urban cultures, in particular, are highly promiscuous in their endeavour to constantly re-make and invent traditions in the present."[107] Hence, with the increasing influence and distribution of African American culture in Europe being avidly absorbed by urban adolescents in particular, the multiple cultural influences predominantly flourished in the metropolitan context of places like London. As John Connell and Chris Gibson underscore in their study of the relationship between music, identity, and geography *Soundtracks*, the musical space of an urban subculture is defined as authentic or 'underground' in contrast to the commodified or 'simulated' products of the mainstream when the 'oppositional' or 'sub-cultural' style of a particular musical genre is emphasized by its producers. Moreover, particular sites become linked to particular sounds due to a concentration of infrastructure for music production and for musical cultures, which often results in a place being mythologized because local social experiences are captured in the music.[108] The proliferation of English blues in London was particularly advanced by the growth of an urban neighbourhood defined by music and the youth-developed outlets for entertainment. The neighbourhood developed an aura of authenticity, to go along with the notions of authenticity linked to blues music, as it was branded a place

[107] Les Back, *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture* (London: University College London Press, 1996), 8.
[108] John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-15.

full of 'spontaneity,' that was 'alive' and 'of the people' because of the music performed and sold there.[109]

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The key venues where young Londoners congregated to listen and perform the English blues were located in the working-class district of Soho. A square mile that Henry Mayhew and Charles Dickens likened to an uncharted jungle in the nineteenth century was by the late 1950s a playground for urban youth in desperate need of a place to interact with like-minded juvenile city dwellers. The meeting areas of Soho were central in moulding the blues subculture, as the pubs, coffee houses, and clubs of Soho were the only places where the youth of London could assemble socially among those interested in similar cultural practices. The Soho coffee bars, which were all-ages, offered teenagers a warm and welcoming place to meet in the centre of the city without parents. The coffee bars were, as musician Wally Whyton recalls,

> the first places where you could hang out at eleven, nobody bothered you nobody said you have to have a second cup of coffee It meant that you met strangers and socialised with them "What do you do?" "Oh, I'm in advertising, I play guitar" "Oh really? I play as well. What about bringing it down next week?"[110]

Peter Cadle points out that in most Soho coffee bars in the early 60s "there was nearly always three or four guitarists sitting around learning blues guitar riffs."[111] Invoking a common language of the blues and dressing in the attire of the

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[109] This idea of authenticity places is discussed in detail in Connell and Gibson, *Soundtracks*, 28.
[110] Wally Whyton from BBC Radio 2 "A Viper's Tale" (1995) as quoted in Bacon, *London Live*, 25.
[111] Peter Cadle from *Nights in the Cellar: Bunjies Coffee House* (Bunjies 1995) as quoted in Bacon, *London Live*, 26.

American blues musicians, teenage Londoners utilized this form of cultural expression to forge communal space for those who shared a quest for identity.

It is important to consider why Soho became the geographic centre for post-war British musicians. This square mile in the heart of London's West End was traditionally an area where immigrants brought some of their local culture to the urban centre of England. John Platt, who has traced some of the literary and musical heritage of the Soho district of London, argues that "Soho was the oddity-- a village in the city, where you could feel part of genuinely urban life but live on an essentially human scale . . . [as] after the war a new bohemian type was emerging . . . a new generation that opted for a good deal less conformity."[112] Fashion designer and Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham echoes these sentiments in his recollection of early 1960s Soho, stating:

> Soho was like coming into an Italian-cum-French-cum-English small village, where there were watch repairers, greengrocers, delicatessens and the odd small coffee bar . . . and all of a sudden a music came on the scene where, if you were game enough to learn two or three chords on a guitar . . . you could stand up on the stage and earn a lot of money.[113]

Thus, a new generation of young Londoners who did not wish to conform to any conventionality or orthodoxy in urban London and had adopted the image of the bluesman, could venture into Soho -- the village-city as Platt and Oldham describe it -- to interact with others who held familiar tenets and beliefs on a much more localized scale, away from the conventional social clubs and church community halls. Moreover, Soho was the perfect area of the London for blues

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[112] John Platt in Colin Harper, *Dazzling Stranger: Bert Jansch and the British Folk and Blues Revival* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 23.
[113] Oldham, *Stoned: A Memoir of London in the 1960s,* 106.

music to flourish because it was characterized with similar traits as African American blues music. As the rough and gritty music penned by poor African American bluesmen was beginning to be performed by English teens, the "risqué music began to fit with ease alongside Soho's prostitutes, restaurants and strip-tease joints."[114] Constructing an urban youth identity defined by the tough realism found in African American music in an urban environment associated with similar qualities, English blues enthusiasts believed they could strengthen the validity and authenticity of their musical expression.

Additionally, as the communal geographic character of Soho attracted young music devotees to the cultural meeting places of the district, the clubs and halls for London youth lying outside this area contributed to urban teens seeking out more attractive locations to interact with other like-minded teens. The traditional dance halls and youth clubs outside of Soho provided venues for entertainment that were largely dominated by the strict rhythm of ballroom dance or closely supervised adolescent clubs run by religious groups.[115] A newspaper of one of these Catholic Youth Centres warned youth to be cautious in what they listened to at social events not sanctioned by the Church, warning that young music enthusiasts interested in the blues to "check beforehand the records, which will be played at a house party or at a school record dance . . . [and] smash the records you possess which present a pagan culture and a pagan concept of life."[116] Church and youth clubs no longer provided creative outlets or

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[114] Bacon, *London Live*, 13.
[115] Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City* (Bristol: Souvenir Press, 1987), 255.
[116] From the Catholic Youth Centre's newsletter *Contacts* reprinted in Bill Wyman, *Rolling with the Stones* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002), 27.

any sense of purpose to London youth, who had interests that were no longer in tune with societal norms. Writer Chris Rowley recalls that the cultural outlets at his grammar school were "religion-orientated and I wasn't...we'd go off to London and turn up to the Flamingo Club [in Soho], an all nighter."[117] The Bishop of Southwell identified a generational disconnection when he asked young Londoners to "'forgive the older generation that has too often failed to engage your energies.'"[118] Many young Londoners grew restless and bored with the traditional forms of entertainment in the urban metropolis. Moreover, Church and youth clubs only advocated 'white' and 'English' forms of culture, usually conventional Anglo dance and song. These cultural forms did not resonate with London youth who wished to break out of an urban lifestyle dominated by austerity due to the post-war economic hardships that racked the country. Avid fans of the blues were forced to move out of the sedate and regulated arrangement of these established clubs, gravitating towards the musty basement clubs and coffee houses of Soho where their 'pagan' culture was tolerated. Sparking fears of spiritual drift and urban crisis, the disaffected youth interested in African American culture wanted the leaders of Church and youth halls to recognize that the values and attitudes of urban youth were no longer in tune with the elder generation. Accordingly, Soho became the urban space for young Londoners to foster their cultural creativity and expressiveness, a space where societal barriers, whether they were based on culture or race, were not as strictly regulated. Moreover, the rules of cultural production and circulation in Soho were

[117] Green, *Days in the Life*, 42.
[118] Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 48.

created and enforced by the youth of the neighbourhood, giving teens more power to decide what music they could listen to or play.

Due to the close proximity of so many basement clubs and cafes, Soho fostered a sense of belonging amongst blues enthusiasts because it was clearly defined and characterized as the centre of London youth culture. A subculture of rhythm and blues enthusiasts, made of largely young white males, utilized the venues of the district to foster common artistic interests. By the beginning of 1965, the Flamingo, which was owned by Rik and John Gunnell and played host to blues artists like John Mayall and John Lee Hooker, boasted a membership of over 600,000.[119] According to a *Melody Maker* article in the spring of 1965, there were over 140 blues groups playing in Soho. In the same article, Bill Carey, music promoter and manager of The Band and General Agency, claimed that:

> In the 40 mile radius of central London some 300,000 people pay to hear rhythm and blues every week.... Rhythm and blues is a southern scene...any club presenting rhythm and blues that doesn't pull in 500 people can consider it is doing poor business. At 100 Oxford Street, rhythm and blues is pulling in between double and treble the number of customers who come for trad [jazz].[120]

Aside from boasting huge audience numbers of young blues enthusiasts, the clubs and coffee bars of Soho also attracted musicians. Rolling Stone guitarist Keith Richards states that by 1962, "we'd all meet in this blues club, Alexis Korner's place . . . all of these guys were gathering together in just a few spots in London," playing the records of African American bluesmen and learning to play

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[119] According to an article in *Disc Weekly* the anonymous writer claimed, "membership is well over 600,000 and is 10s a year." Quote taken from *Disc Weekly* (March 27, 1965), 9.
[120] Bob Dawbarn, "Massive Swing to Rhythm and Blues," *Melody Maker* (April 18 1965), 9.

along with the songs.[121] Young blues music consumers and producers converged and mingled in the streets of this central working-class neighbourhood, swelling the teen population in the area.

Both Dick Hebdige and Sara Cohen, in their studies of music subcultures, discuss how the communal nature of music allows for not only the use of both musical style and sound to construct identity, but also creates the opportunity for specific geographic areas to be identified by the sound emitting from that particular space.[122] An article in *The People*, near the beginning of the British interest in African American music, highlighted the transformation of Soho from a community of immigrants into a bastion for young white musicians, stating that "Soho is no longer London's naughty square mile . . . now you meet bearded young men in duffle coats carrying double basses and washboards . . . bands have taken over and the youngsters are jiving.[123] Indeed, it is most evident how these bluesmen attempted to demarcate the urban space of youth in Soho when one considers that the most popular graffiti slogans on the walls of the neighbourhood read "Clapton is God," in obvious reference to the blues guitarist of the Yardbirds. [124] This textual marker extolled the bluesman as one of the central figures to personify urban experience in the bowery for post-war youth, symbolically defining the facades of the buildings of Soho as the rightful space of

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[121] Jas Obrecht, ed., *Rollin' and Tumblin': The Post-War Blues Guitarists* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 2000), 12.
[122] Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 189.
[123] *The People* (June 10, 1957), reprinted in Harper, *Dazzling Stranger: Bert Jansch and the British Folk and Blues Revival*, 24.
[124] "People were starting to write, '*CLAPTON* IS GOD,' all over the place" Eric Clapton in James and Jann S. Wenner Henke, "Eric Clapton: In His Own Words," *Rolling Stone*, no. 655 (1993), 38.

post-war teens. The English bluesmen, who developed a blues persona through their performances, albums, and media coverage, now had an urban base to promote their alternative cultural voices.

The musicians and music enthusiasts wandering the streets of Soho were not the only group who saw the neighbourhood as the space for artistically inspiring their thoughts and ideas, as the club and café owners of the district tailored the appearance of their establishments to cultivate and encourage Soho as the neighbourhood of the bluesman. Alexis Korner, the founder of the band Blues Incorporated, likely the first popular British blues band, founded the Ealing Jazz Club in Soho in response to support from the growing audience at his shows. While it was technically called a 'jazz' club, rhythm and blues was the music of choice posted on the sandwich board on the street outside.[125] Along with the Ealing, the Marquee, Crawdaddy, Scene, Flamingo, and the Barrelhouse Club switched their format from playing largely skiffle and jazz music to focusing on rhythm and blues acts. Indeed, the Crawdaddy Club was originally the Station Hotel until the owners changed the name after hearing blues singer Bo Diddley's "Doin' the Crawdaddy." Barry May, writing for the *Richmond & Twickenham Times*, visited the club just as it became a major youth club, declaring that the "deep, earthy sound produced at the hotel on Sunday evenings is typical of the best of rhythm and blues that gives all who hear it an irresistible urge to 'stand up and move' ...[the Crawdaddy Club] is on the map as far as youngsters are

[125] This conclusion is reached by analyzing the numerous pictures of the Ealing Club found in Bill Wyman's book *Rolling with the Stones*, 32-33.

concerned."[126] Reports such as these linked the youth sound with a particular area of the city designated for youth. Additionally, by the fall of 1963, the *Daily Mirror* reporter Peter Doncaster wrote weekly columns on the blues of the Crawdaddy Club. The *Daily Mirror* was invited down by a promoter to the Crawdaddy Club in order to detail what was occurring in the clubs of Soho:

> In the back room there were about 500 people, in a place designed for 100. The music transformed them, they stood jammed together – it was like a ritual. In half-darkness the guitars and drums started to twang and bang. Pulsating R & B. You could boil an egg in the atmosphere. Heads shake violently; feet stamp in tribal style, with hands above heads, clapping in rhythm. Like a revivalist meeting in America's Deep South. It happens nowhere else in Britain.[127]

Owners of these clubs, like Alexis Korner, used reports such as these to construct an image of the Soho club scene as *the* place in London to experience the blues. Furthermore, with ritualistic comparisons and allusions to the revivalist meetings of African American culture, clubs like the Crawdaddy and Ealing were portrayed as spaces for exercising one's thoughts and concerns through experiencing the music of the blues. A contemporary account by George Melly, of a blues night at the Alexander Palace in 1962, stated "the audience was dressed almost without exception . . . [in] a stylized shabbiness, the general effect was of a crowd scene from a biblical epic."[128] The blues club had replaced the Church hall as the site of spiritual experience and expression, cultivating a communal space for youth far more appealing than the Church or social halls

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[126] Barry May, "The Rollin' Stones at the Crawdaddy," *Richmond & Twickenham Times* (13 April, 1963), np.
[127] Patrick Doncaster, "R&B at the Crawdaddy," *Daily Mirror*, (6 june, 1963), np.
[128] John Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict*, 181.

outside of Soho because it addressed concerns and problems of the urban experience through the blues in a way that a Church sermon never could.

The owners of the Flamingo club, John and Rik Gunnell, promoted rhythm and blues as the music to characterize their establishment, giving regular appearances to the Spencer Davis R&B Quarter and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. The owners of the Flamingo also wanted to portray their club as a site of both racial and national cross-cultural exchange, with the billboard outside the club reading, "From the U.S.A., T-Bone Walker with John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers."[129] Consequently, these clubs were not only spaces for London youth to articulate their thoughts and feelings by imitating African American bluesmen, these clubs were arenas where avid enthusiasts of blues music could see 'authentic' representations of the bluesman, thus grasping a first-hand account of what an African-American sounded and looked like. While many of these African American artists were no longer artistically productive in their old age, young Londoners packed the clubs of Soho to see these geriatric musicians because they represented more 'genuine' cultural symbols of post-war London experience than any British cultural icons of the past. Reviewing a performance by John Lee Hooker at the Flamingo, backed by an all-English band headed by John Mayall, Max Jones wrote in *Melody Maker* that

> From where I was jammed it was impossible to see even the top of his head. But what I heard confirmed that Hooker can create the right kind of lowdown blues atmosphere within 20 seconds of hitting his first note. His opening shout 'Are you ready?' needed no answer, but got one. Then into the blues – unquestionably the real

[129] Account by British blues producer in liner notes of Mike Vernon, *History of British Blues*, (London: Sire Records, 1973), inside gate-fold cover.

> potent article with his urgent conversational vocal style over his pulsating guitar counterpoint and the throbbing rhythm of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.[130]

When African-American artists like Hooker collaborated with white Britons like Mayall at clubs such as the Flamingo, any suggestion of the absurd and contradictory nature of a white European singing songs bursting with politically charged allusions to racial inequality was reduced. This unease decreased because these artists appeared to the audience to have a mutual understanding of what epitomized the blues when they appeared on stage together in collaboration, singing blues ballads about being isolated and disaffected by urban life.

[130] Max Jones, "John Lee Hooker at the Flamingo," *Melody Maker* (Winter, 1964) reprinted in Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man*, 274.

Chapter 4: The Decline of English Blues and the Rise of 'the Mod'

With collaborative performances from Chicago and London bluesmen playing to sold-out club audiences in Soho, blues music was immensely popular, drawing hundreds of performers and thousands of record buyers and concert attendees. Yet in the summer of 1965 a serious unease emerged among many in the blues scene that the English model of African American blues music, and the persona of the bluesman, was no longer suitable for emulating. While interest in the music and the culture of the blues began less than a decade earlier with young Londoners inadvertently discovering exotic and strange blues songs out of the ether of radio waves beamed from American-sponsored stations in continental Europe, blues music was no longer distant and unattainable. Idealism and a cultural mythology is easily cultivated when understandings of the culture are developed through a distant gaze. Yet with the popularity of the blues among London youth came a far more direct connection to African American culture that brushed aside the idyllic rough 'gangsta'-bluesman image and replaced it with the weary aged men they were in reality. Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards addressed this issue frankly and bluntly when he remarked that the liability for

African American blues artists playing in London was "one, they're old; two, they're black; three, they're ugly."[131]

It was paramount for English blues musicians, in promoting albums and performing songs, that their connection to the likeness of the African American blues musician be maintained if the audience was going to accept the performers on the stage as authentic voices singing about urban poverty and alienation. Reviewing the Artwood's debut album "Art Gallery," the *Record Mirror* was terse in its disdain for the mimicry of African American blues songs, as the reviewer stated, "most of the songs are slightly lesser known rhythm and blues songs, all of which have been performed better by the original artists."[132] Leader of the group, Art Wood, tried to rekindle the image of the group by writing a letter to the *Melody Maker* to declare "We [the Artwoods] like to think our image is one of a musically valid, exciting group."[133] Yet, clearly the music press of London was beginning to view English blues more critically and with less palpable enthusiasm than was evident in reviews only a year earlier. The Artwoods were only one of many groups who began to receive strong critiques from the press. In a review of a Rolling Stones album in the *Melody Maker*, Bob Dawbarn observed that "a curious sidelight is shown by the one original tune on the album, 'Tell Me,' [as] the Negro mask slips away and both tune and lyric are second-hand

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[131] Interview with Keith Richards from *Melody Maker* (1965) reprinted in Schaffner, *The British Invasion*, 57.
[132] "Art Gallery" *Record Mirror* (November, 1966) reprinted in McStravick and Roos, *Blues Rock Explosion*, 10.
[133] Art Wood, *Melody Maker* (November, 1966) reprinted in McStravick and Roos, *Blues Rock Explosion*, 10.

Liverpool."[134] By writing a song that was proportional to the tame and clean songs of Liverpool groups, who largely wrote about the innocent love of a girl, the Stones, who supposedly experienced the gritty mean streets of London through the lens of the bluesman, no longer conveyed the image of being appropriate narrators of urban life. Reviewing the Rolling Stones single "Come On," a review in the *Record Mirror* stated "it's good, catchy, punchy and commercial but it's not the fanatical R&B that their audience wait hours to see."[135] The aspirations of the Rolling Stones to emerge out of the urban subculture of Soho compromised the authenticity that their London audience expected. Moreover, popularity and acclaim out of London threatened the urban outsider image cultivated by the group. By seeking to be heard outside of the interdependent youth community of Soho, British groups threatened to no longer sustain their strong link to the urban space of the bowery. The Yardbirds attempted the same commercial endeavours as the Stones, forcing Eric Clapton to quit the band because he thought they no longer promoted his romanticized vision of what the bluesman embodied.

Furthermore, visits from 'real' Chicago bluesmen became more frequent by 1964, as Sonny Boy Williamson became a mainstay at the Crawdaddy Club. Early stopovers by old musicians like Williamson contributed to the construction of the emerging Soho blues scene. Yet, once the neighbourhood, and the artists who played in the clubs had developed a reputation for being the home of the blues, African American musicians had a greater opportunity to offer their opinion on the London bluesman to a London press that was now paying more attention

[134]Bob Dawbarn, *Melody Maker*, reprinted in Neil, "'Hoochie Coochie Men': The British R&B Explosion 1962-1966," 72.
[135] *Record Mirror*, (8 June, 1963) reprinted in Wyman, *Rolling with the Stones*, 60.

to the blues music emerging from the city. After playing with the Yardbirds at the Crawdaddy, Sonny Boy Williamson declared, "those boys want to play the blues so bad, and they play it *so* bad."[136] White Londoners had constructed an identity in the urban context that relied heavily on a cultural practice rooted in authenticity. London blues players like Clapton and Mayall wanted to play the blues "so bad" because they believed its genuine portrayal of urban alienation in America could transfer into the context of experiencing London. English blues performers quickly learned that their musical skills for performing blues music were not on the same level as African American performers who literally had decades worth of experience performing blues songs. This inability to 'keep up' with these old bluesmen severely undermined and destabilized London teens' claims of being legitimate and 'authentic' bluesmen. John Lee Hooker's performances with Mayall's Bluesbreakers in the summer of 1965 caused a serious reassessment of English musicians' connections to African American blues artists. John Mayall states that playing with Hooker "was a very humbling experience because we all thought we were shit-hot players and knew what it was all about. Then you get Hooker onstage and that what you know flies out the window. You feel like rank amateurs."[137]

Poor reviews for English blues groups like the Rolling Stones, along with trouble during collaborative live performances with artists like Williamson and Hooker, coalesced to damage the authentic image of English blues enthusiasts, while calling into question their ability to be the voice of urban youth in London.

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[136] Jans Obrecht, "Transatlantic Blues: How American Blues Inspired British Rock and Pop," *Guitar Player* 32, no. 3 (March 1998), 67.
[137] Mayall quoted in Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man*, 274-275.

By commercializing the blues of London, as the Rolling Stones and Yardbirds eventually tried to do by 1965, musicians looked for financial ways out of poverty, no longer embracing the artistic possibilities of living down and out as the bluesman of Soho. The authenticity and realism of narrating experience in an urban context through the blues hinged on finding musical freedom in bondage, and when the blues fans' faith in this dialectic between the two began to wane, blues artists like Mick Jagger of the Stones were no longer the voice of post-war London youth.

Compounding this crisis of character, new cultural representatives for youth in London were challenging the authority of London blues enthusiasts. A growing popularity in Southern soul and Jamaican ska, acts like the Who, who initially wished to record a blues album, opted to discard most of their blues material. As they recorded their first album, Pete Townshend decided against including Howlin' Wolf's "Smokestack Lightin'" even though it had been well received during earlier live performances. Townshend recalled that this decision was made because he believed the bluesmen had become caricatures based on what fans expected of him, stating that the African American bluesmen who played to large audiences in London "seemed so pathetic, John Lee Hooker in his checkered jacket, doing his cabaret...somehow they weren't able to attend to the quantum jump that we'd made."[138] Townshend, and other young English teens, could selectively choose what musical style they wished to emulate when developing their music, and thus he had the power to decide when this allegiance

[138] Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man*, 299

to musical form could be severed. African-American artists like Hooker did not have the same luxury because they were directly linked to a particular musical form by their English fans and they expected Hooker to address certain issues and perform in a certain style because he came from the supposed 'home' of the blues, and the blues was what he was supposed to play. By the late spring of 1965, Hooker's live shows were not receiving the rapturous response they did in the years previous. Reviewing Hooker's show for the magazine *Blues Unlimited*, John J. Broven wrote:

> John Lee Hooker has embarked upon his third tour (and fourth visit) of England. The very thought of having Hooker here would have aroused frantic, delirious orgasms of rapture as little as two years ago. Now he is taken for granted, to the extent of complete apathy and utter disinterestedness. To all blues observers this must cause alarm, for Hooker is unquestionably a major figure in the post-war blues. On the surface there is an abundance of ammunition for those defeatists who claim that the blues is losing its glamour – I use 'glamour' freely, for although the blues is scarcely "glamourized" there can be no disputing that it has been highly, too highly, romanticized but a visit to one of Hooker's performances will reveal the real reason for this apparent negligence. Gone is Hooker, the bluesman of immense stature, whose qualities are known at all; in his place is a pathetically small character, singing a flood of up-temp numbers whose sole mark of distinction is in the lyrics – which were inaudible anyway; totally devoid of expression or – important – enthusiasm, contenting himself merely to strum a few chords on his guitar in rhythm accompaniment....He has not only let himself down – he has failed the blues.[139]

When you take Broven's very critical comments in concert with those of Townshend, it is clear that English blues fans, musicians, and writers had grown disinterested and apathetic with the 'authentic' bluesmen they had once desperately sought out on the radio and crammed into small venues in Soho to

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[139] John J. Brown, *Blues Unlimited* (1965) in Shaar Murray, *Boogie Man*, 301.

watch. The mysteriousness and mystique that surrounded the music of artists like Hooker as it wafted across the airwaves of Radio Luxembourg or blared from the record players of English teens earlier in the decade had been completely erased by 1965. As stated in the scathing review by Broyen, Hooker had been to England four times by the time he performed in early 1965. The idea of what the character of the bluesmen embodied in the music of African American artists like Hooker and Howlin' Wolf was unquestionable when it was played on radio programs or read about on the back of an album cover. Yet after several live appearances in London, the reality of who Hooker was, and what his music sounded like as he performed it live onstage, drastically changed how he was perceived. A London music writer, reviewing Little Walter's performance at the Marquee Club on September 17th 1965, criticized the Chicago bluesman for not recreating the sound of his records:

> The evening declined from its billed status of "An Evening with the Blues" to "An Evening of British Rubbish".... On this showing it was justifiable to think of him as a bluesman past his peak, slumping, if not into downright mediocrity, at least into the "betwixt and the between" world inhabited by many former "greats."[140]

Both Walter and Hooker may have asserted a persona of 'take no prisoners' machismo in their lyrics and audio recordings, but several tours by these old men sitting in a chair and being very polite and cordial to the audience called into question the validity of these lyrics for an English audience who wanted desperately to follow the hard-nosed qualities extolled in blues lyrics.

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[140] Glover Dirks and Gaines, *Blues With a Feeling: The Little Walter Story*, 233.

In an interview for *Melody Maker* in the summer of 1965, Spencer Davis told reporter Chris Welch that "rhythm and blues is such a wide term...we are sick of it...I think rhythm and blues artists killed themselves by being over-exposed. Kids saw them and said 'That was good, now let's think of something else."[141] It is clear from the blues musician's statement that the music that resonated with London teens only months previous was no longer the style of choice. London youth were no longer secure in African American blues music being the music of the modern urban teen. Groups like Zoot Money, Geno Washington, and the Vagabonds expressed new cultural influences as they played music that was heavily indebted to Jamaican rhythms and categorized in the press as being part of a 'rave' or 'riot' scene. References to the rebelliousness of this music in *NME* and *Melody Maker* accentuated a supposed vitality and aggression that was once the common theme of blues music in London.

Finally, as their popularity extended beyond the borders of England, many English blues artists began to question the promotion of their blues image when they took their blues music back to the land where it originated: America. Steve Winwood toured the US with his group Traffic for the first time and the guitarist stated that when he began the tour "the idea there was that I really wanted to stop copying this music."[142] Reflecting on his tour of the US, Eric Clapton emphasized his unease with the English blues image:

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[141] Spencer Davis quoted for Chris Welch "Last of the R&B Groups?" *Melody Maker* (12 June, 1965), 8.
[142] Steve Winwood interviewed for Figgis, *Red, White and Blues*, (2003).

> We had a lot of fun. But musically I kept stepping back and going "this isn't it," this isn't what I really want to do, or this isn't what I want to hold up, this isn't working to the principles that I'd been following all this time...what we were doing was becoming a bit of a circus...playing places where we were encouraged to do just silly things....I wanted to take it seriously, my music was a very serious thing to me, and I felt I was beginning to betray myself.[143]

Clapton moved from Ripley to London only a few years earlier with a strict adherence to the blues "ethos" and the goal of "bearing the flame" for a group of urban youth interested in African American culture.[144] Yet a visit to the source of the music suddenly raised doubts and unease about the motives of the London blues culture because performances by Clapton were becoming analogous to the comical versions of American music that dominated mainstream English radio during Clapton's teen years. Discussing an early encounter hearing blues artist Howlin' Wolf on an American-sponsored station, Eric Clapton stated he loved the blues because "it was one man and his guitar against the world." Yet, the English guitarist added, any clear understanding as to the context of the rebelliousness in Wolf's music, in terms of the harsh racism that was an everyday occurrence for black artists in the late 1950s, was not clear to him during his teen years because he "had the luxury of hearing from a distance."[145] By 1996 this luxury was gone, and the distance had shrunk. Artists from London lost faith in the blues 'ethos,' and the dialectic of finding musical freedom in bondage when they developed a

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[143] Eric Clapton interviewed for Figgis, *Red, White and Blues*, (2003).
[144] Eric Clapton: "I was actually very dogmatic, and I considered myself a kind of bearer of the flame." Clapton quoted for Peter Guralnick (1990) reprinted in Guralnick, Rober Santelli, Holly George- Warren and Christopher John Fahey, eds., *Martin Scorsese Presents: The Blues* (Amistad, New York, 2003), 235.
[145] Eric Clapton quote from *Mojo* (April, 1998), reprinted in McStravick, Summer and John Roos, eds. *Blues Rock Explosion, xxiii.*

clearer understanding of the bondage many of the blues mentors struggled to rise above.

Epilogue

Blues music brought London teens together for record listening parties and live performances at coffee bars in Soho, using African American music as the foundation for building a youth culture in a city that did not provide entertainment outlets for youth prior to the movement. Teens saw the desire for change in the lyrics and ethos of the blues as an ideal cultural form to cultivate a sense of shared interest among youth while instigating a shift in the cultural landscape of the city-- a controlled revolt against a cultural establishment that ignored their interests. As Craig Werner argues in his study of American black music, blues music is a key cultural factor in building a relationship between community and individual, as "most black musicians treat the desire for escape [hardship] as something that binds the blues 'I' to the gospel 'we.'"[146] Thus the proliferation of blues music in London was ideal in uniting a community of teens with the blues ethos to overturn the cultural hierarchy and develop a space for youth cultural production and spaces for youth entertainment. The multiple youth-run blues clubs, studios, production firms, coffee bars, record shops and clothing stores in Soho by 1965 emphasizes how blues music played a major role in overturning English cultural traditions in only a few short years.

The English blues movement between 1955 and 1966 offers an important example of cultural exchange between the United States and England, and is a

[146] Craig Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race and the Soul of America*, (Toronto: Plume, 1998), 88.

significant early example of a musical exchange that continued with country music and punk rock in the 1970s. As a cultural practice created by African Americans crossed both national and racial boundaries to flourish in London, it marked a significant change to English culture in the 1960s. In her essay on cultural hybridity, Pnina Werbner suggests that although there is an illusion of boundedness, culture "evolves historically through unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges and inventions."[147] This raises questions in relation to the normalcy, distinctiveness and rigidity of national or racial popular culture. By invoking a musical form infused with political commentary, particularly racial and national concerns in America, English musicians re-configured popular understandings of who were the 'appropriate' singers and listeners of blues music. Blues enthusiasts in London intentionally fused dissimilar social languages and images to assemble a unique cultural form that contested national cultural traditions.

Listening and playing the blues allowed London teens to forge a cultural hybrid with flexible devotion and attachment. While concepts of hybrid subcultures are considered more contemporary phenomenon, Bill Ogersby states that the "open-ended, fragmented identities many theorists see as common to the late twentieth century were, perhaps, anticipated by tendencies already present within youth cultural formations of the 1950s and 1960s."[148] The blues culture present in England between 1955 and 1967 is clear evidence of what Ogersby suggests. However, the blues subculture in London was not only an

[147] Pnina Werbner, "Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity," in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, eds. (New Jersey: Zed Books, 2000), 4-5.
[148] Bill Ogersby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (London: Malden P, 1998), 203.

early indicator of later cultural hybrids but also a significant early example of cultural hybridity in post-war England. This study underscores how English youth experienced and interpreted representations of African American culture in the 1960s, highlighting a primary instance of race being an issue in shaping youth culture in England. By addressing the significance of how English blues artists and devotees interpreted African American music, and how this influenced their production and presentation of English blues music, it is evident that the social language, style, and ethos of African American blues music had a significant influence on the youth culture of post-war London.

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