Introduction: London's sonic space

London provides a vast space – bigger in some senses than the nation – in which cultures can be differently imagined and conceived. (Kevin Robins)

This book is about three black music multicultures in London in the 1980s and 1990s: rare groove, acid house and jungle. It is a critical exploration of the role they have played in the production of what Stuart Hall once identified as London's 'workable, lived multiculture' (Hall 2004). These are not the only important black music scenes in London: that list would include soca, jazz and Afrojazz, Afrobeat, dancehall, hip hop, UK garage, R&B and grime, and to include them all would have called for a much bigger book. So, this is not a comprehensive study of all black music produced and consumed in the city. I focus on rare groove, acid house and jungle because they are three moments that involved inter-racial collaboration, in terms of both production and consumption, around black music. They were music scenes which put the racial divisions of the city into question and worked against the logic of spatial separation. They explored new ways in which culture could be inhabited collectively. In ways both deliberate and contingent, these musical scenes involved collaboration between young people from different sides of what the great black American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) identified as 'the color line', and hosted lived multiculture on the dancefloor. Around each scene, discourses developed to address this cultural intermixture, and within them were forged new ways of dancing, listening and making

culture together. This was a complex. contested process, where gains were often temporary, but it was also one within which new forms of interculture emerged that transformed the city.

We can conceive of these musical scenes as moral economies (Gilroy 2010; Davies 2018). They are economies because they are organised around economic objectives: promoters, DJs and the music markets which sustained them all had the underlying motivation of making money, of getting paid. Dancers paid to enter the dance. Though they were largely informal economies, they were driven by the ambition to build a viable future in the midst of de-industrialisation and brutal urban neoliberalisation. They are moral because they are bounded by particular social and ethical norms and amount to networks of affiliation and creation which are not reducible to financial exchange – many dancers did not have to pay but could get on the guest-list (known in the parlance of the time as a 'squeeze'), which built strong bonds of obligation and mutual care. Something of the moral underpinnings of the club scenes this book focuses on can be heard in the lexicon of the time. Among the most common words used in these scenes – for greeting, assent and parting – were the words 'safe' and 'respect', keywords taken, as was so much of the basic form of these scenes, from reggae sound system culture, a pointer to the core values of security and mutual recognition which underpinned these informal social movements against a backdrop of a city and a society which were, for many, unsafe and often unable to accord citizens recognition of their worth.

The solidarity made available here was easily won, pliable, as is true of all the black music cultures of the city, because it was essentially open. Anyone who was down with the music, and especially anyone who was willing to dance, was welcome. This amounted to a flat rejection of the racist injunction to 'stick with your own kind' which held sway outside the dance. This can help us understand the apparent paradox that London's black music ecosystem took its particular form both *despite* and *because of* the enduring power of urban racism. The legacy of these scenes became a resource for the creation of new ones – like the garage and grime of the 1990s and the Afro-rap and jazz resurgence of 2018,

all of which were or still are in some ways continuous with black music scenes of the 1980s and 1990s – and they can also be used as a resource by which to write an alternative history of London's culture. These scenes created and were created by multicultural constituencies which reconstituted, remixed, the moral and political geographies of everyday life in the city. But they have been largely overlooked in histories of the city and accounts of British culture or the creative economy.

As the cultural theorist Paul Gilroy, who is particularly sensitive to the political and cultural impact of the forms of cultural mixture made possible by music, has frequently argued, such informal music scenes and their 'mechanisms of cultural transmission' (Gilroy 2000: 271) are 'poorly understood and only partially mapped' (Gilroy 2003: 387–8). Such a mapping, to which this book seeks to contribute, forms part of a larger project of coming to terms with the legacy of empire and the post-colonial constitution of the British nation, a necessary rediscovery of a hidden history (Hall 1990: 224) which contributes to 'the unfinished history of the black British diaspora and its intricate interweaving with British life' (Hall 2002).

Mapping space, music and multiculture

Part of the project of this book, then, is to map the emergence of musical multiculture in London – where it happened, who participated, the conditions of emergence and decline, and the music, from Jamaica, America, Brazil, the Latin Caribbean and from London itself, which was always at the centre. The notion of mapping is a spatial metaphor. I think a fruitful way to understand the shape of these music scenes – which perhaps has implications for how we understand all popular music – is by thinking about them in terms of space. We can understand how they were formed and what they felt like inside by thinking about what was happening in the space around them, in what sociologists call 'the constitutive outside'.

As the feminist social geographer Doreen Massey has convincingly argued, space and the social are mutually constitutive and space is

always 'an expression of and a medium of power' (Massey 1994: 104). Black music scenes in London, because they were black, were subject to extreme forms of spatialised power, and they responded by making new spaces, where new ideas about how social space could be organised were front and centre – imaginary spaces with real social consequences, the kind that music can take you to. Race, gender and class, as well as other forms of social inequality, are produced, and reproduced, spatially. Massey coins the useful term 'power geometry' to describe the process by which distinctions of class, race and gender are enacted spatially and spaces become coded in particular ways that reveal underlying power relations (for example 'a woman's place is in the home', 'no-go areas', 'sink estates').

In recent times, at the interface between geography and critical race studies sometimes called 'black geography', particular attention has been paid to the way race is produced, and racial division maintained, spatially (McKitterick 2006; Woods and McKitterick 2007; Neely and Samura 2011; Brand 2018). This work continues the project of anti-racist sociologists who analysed how race is reproduced spatially under 'racial rule', such as David Theo Goldberg's comparative analysis of the forms of spatial segregation that produced race in apartheid South Africa and the segregated American city (2004). In each case, Goldberg argues, racial ideology is produced and reinforced through a variety of spatial policies both judicial, like the passbook laws under apartheid, or extra-judicial, like urban zoning policies and spatialised policing, which often draws its power from the 'discretionary' power of police officers, security guards or club bouncers. In each case the effect of racial power geometry is to contain racialised populations 'in their own' areas, to circumscribe their access to private space (lunch counters, cinemas) and curtail their free movement in public space. Thus spatial power upholds 'the fundamental principle of racial rule': segregation (Goldberg 2004).

Britain has never had state-mandated racial separation like South Africa or the degrees of segregation characteristic of the American city – which, as the geographer Ceri Peach shows (1996), in some cities can reach 100 per cent – yet it has enacted its own forms of racialised

power geometry. Between 1969 and 1975, for example, as a response to the perceived threat of the 'ghettoisation' of migrant populations from the former colonies, Birmingham and a number of other British cities instituted a 'set ratio dispersal policy' for social housing which mandated that no more than one property in six could be allocated to black tenants (see James and Harris 1993; Huttman et al. 1991). The policy led to the 'shunting out' of black families from their homes in familiar areas to 'the white hinterland' in the interests of integration (James 1993: 262). This is just one example of the way race and space have been articulated together in British urban policy.

Writing about New Orleans, the music historian George Lipsitz (2007) has shown how struggles over space are often the way race is most directly experienced in the city, and music often plays a central part in these conflicts. He notes that these conflicts involve both actual geographical spaces and a clash of opposed 'spatial imaginaries'. Exploring the conflicts between the New Orleans black community and police over the ritualised marching of the Mardi Gras Indians – 'social clubs of black men who masquerade as Plains Indians and parade through their neighborhoods in flamboyant costumes twice a year' (2007: 10) – Lipsitz shows how spatial struggles, which are also often sonic struggles over the right to play music, are processes of racialisation, part of the way that race is made in the city (Banton 1977; Brand 2018).

The reason why music is so strongly implicated in these processes is that it, too, is a spatialising technology, as geographers concerned with music and music scholars alert to space have argued (see Eisenberg 2015). Music, according to musicologist Steven Connor, 'procures' space for its own sonic purposes and makes particular 'spacings' available to the listener – the studio, the concert, New Orleans or Havana, the space of technology, outer space… music can take you entirely out of the place you are occupying geographically and take you elsewhere.

> The kind of sound we feel minded to call music is sound as space rather than sound in place. What matters in music is not the space that the music is in, but the space and *the spacings that the music puts its listener in*. (Connor 2010: 6, emphasis added)

In his canonical book *The Production of Space* (1971), the Marxist social geographer Henri Lefebvre brings these two ideas – that space and the social are mutually constitutive and that music has the potential to disrupt spatial power – together in an exploration of the social and political technologies which 'produce' space. For Lefebvre, space is a product of the relations between physical form (the *perceived*), instrumental knowledge (the *conceived*) and symbolic practice (the *lived*) (Eisenberg 2015). He characterises the social formation as a spatial struggle between the forces of rationality, the 'established order', who dominate the right to define (he consequently calls this power 'Logos', the power of the word), attempting to fix, dominate and control space in the interests of power, and those – the 'Anti-Logos' – like the founders of the Paris commune of 1871 – who attempt to 'divert' or 'appropriate' space, to 'restore it to ambiguity' and 'dramatise' it in the interests of freedom (Lefebvre 1994: 392). In this 'unequal struggle between Logos and Anti-Logos' over space, Lefebvre reserves a special role for music. Despite the scale of the forces attempting to dominate, spatial practice is not finally 'determined by an existing system', he claims, because of the potential energy of those who can divert space for their own purposes: 'Space is liable to be eroticized and restored to ambiguity, to the common birthplace of needs and desires, by means of music' (Lefebvre 1994: 390). Lefebvre did not have in mind the music of James Brown, Joe Smooth or Roni Size when he wrote this, but his arguments are applicable to the way in which rare groove, acid house and jungle in London, as continuations of the long lineage of Afro-diasporic dance musics, deployed music to divert space, recode the libidinal energies of the post-industrial city and create the space for new forms of culture.

Lefebvre, as the music writer Greil Marcus demonstrates in *Lipstick Traces* (1989), developed a line of thinking influenced by Dada of the 1920s and the Situationists of the 1950s (he was friends with both Tristan Tzara and Guy Debord, though he fell out with both) which Marcus calls a 'theory of moments', within which the everyday and temporary zones of the festival, occupations (like those of Parisian factories in 1968 or of Wall Street in 2011) or indeed the nightclub can be imagined as

opening up new spatial possibilities and political alternatives in the face of attempts to dominate and fix space in the service of the status quo. This might sound fanciful – it *is* fanciful – but it takes imagination to think beyond the world as it is and, having been French Marxism's leading theoretician in the 1940s, Lefebvre had become convinced that instead of focusing on the structures of economic production and social control that are the usual grist to the Marxist mill, it was the tiny epiphanies of *la vie quotidienne* (everyday life) which mattered. They were temporary: 'they passed out of consciousness as if they had never been, yet in their instants they contained the whole of life' (Marcus 1989: 134).

Could it be that those fleeting moments of common feeling forged on the dancefloor on a Saturday (or a Sunday, a Wednesday or any other) night were more than merely a way to let off steam, more than mere distraction from the important arenas where real political change is forged?

This book was written to try to convince you that they were. Combining these ideas about space and music – that social distinctions are produced and maintained spatially, that music lays hold of space and can 'divert' space and put into play new spatial ideas and practices – it approaches these three musical scenes from the perspective of the racialised power geometry in which they emerged. It asks you to consider the ways in which they challenged the racialisation of city space, 'diverted' space in the interests of alternative ideas about how to build a good society and unleash new spatial imaginaries which materialise both a diasporic spatiality – a 'history of other spaces' in the words of Barnor Hesse (1993) – and the imaginative resources for forging new worlds.

Time keeps on ticking

I began the research on which this book is based in 1997 as a study of jungle, then a relatively new music scene. Jungle, although it is a globally successful branch of club culture, is now well into middle age; V Recordings, the London-based jungle and drum and bass label run by Nigel 'Jumping Jack Frost' Thompson and Bryan 'Gee' Guerrero,[1]

for example, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2018. Much has changed since the end of the twentieth century. Entirely unanticipated circumstances – from the development of the internet, social media and mobile phones as ubiquitous technologies, to 9/11, the war on terror and the 7/7 terror attacks in London, to the financialisation of the London housing market (Minton 2017) and the privatisation of public space – have transformed the space of London, and the possibilities for new kinds of culture it appeared to promise back then. But it is too early to let the music multicultures of the 1980s and 1990s pass unnoticed into history. One aim of writing a book about these historical cultural forms now is to render musical cultures that are in danger of being forgotten into text, to get them in the archive and make them part of the debate around British urban culture, where their example might better inform our understanding of both the relation between music, race and space and the history of the post-colonial city.

There is plenty of academic discussion of popular music cultures of the 1970s through to the 1990s, punk and post-punk (Savage 1991; Reynolds 2006; Cabut and Gallix 2017), Brit pop (Gilbert 1997; Stratton 2010) and hip hop (Turner 2017), but very little on the London club cultures of rare groove or jungle, and what there is about acid house is in my view partial (as I argue in chapter 3). One of the reasons Paul Gilroy's work (1987, 1993, 2000, 2003, 2010) is so important to this discussion is that he remains one of the only theorists who has taken seriously the role black music and dance cultures in the city have played in consolidating an 'alternative public sphere', bonded through social dance rituals and what he calls the 'ethics of antiphony', offering 'a different rhythm for living' (1993: 200–2).

Gilroy's work has foregrounded the expressive cultures of reggae and soul and their role in creating the grounds of 'black particularity' and an emergent black British subjectivity, in the light of histories of racialised terror and contemporary forms of urban racism. I apply these precious insights to a new set of objects: the post-soul and reggae dance cultures of rare groove, acid house and jungle, and focus on the constitution of forms of multicultural alliance and subjectivity made available through

them. Gilroy's depiction of the importance of black music cultures and their real-time performance traditions in the city in his first book, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), are largely affirmative, but by the time Gilroy writes *The Black Atlantic* in 1993 he is already taking a more pessimistic tone, noting that 'the power of music and sound are receding' relative to the 'relentless powers of visual culture'. This sense of loss becomes the dominant tone in his later work, where he mourns the loss of analogue recording in the light of now ubiquitous 'deskilling' digital production technologies (1999) and sees the life-enhancing potential and oppositional spirit of black music subordinated to the process of neoliberal marketisation and commodification (Gilroy 2000; see also Hesmondhalgh 2013: 169). But I think he moves rather too quickly in this direction. In this book I offer evidence that while black Atlantic musical culture may have receded as the central force in articulating a black subjectivity in the late twentieth century, in the spaces of the warehouse party, the rave and the jungle club, even when produced using digital technology, this music and its cultures served as a vital resource to build and sustain multicultural forms of sociality and, to use Gilroy's own term, politically significant multicultural 'conviviality'.

Multiculturalism versus multiculture

Multiculturalism is a horrible word; it's too long and there is an unfortunate sense of the doctrinaire with that 'ism'. It's a word that is 'stubbornly imprecise' (Gilroy 2000: 244); and even those, like Stuart Hall, who are assumed to be its strongest advocates have baulked at using it: 'I don't like the word multiculturalism,' he told Bill Schwarz, 'but I am interested in the multicultural question' (Schwarz 2007: 150). Part of the problem has been that the term has been employed to describe at least two different processes: on the one hand 'descriptive multiculturalism', the manifest and everyday fact of diversity, especially in post-colonial cities like London; and on the other hand, 'prescriptive multiculturalism', which attempts to manage the problems that are presumed to be attendant with this diversity, through forms of regulation and state policy.

In his 2014 book *Multiculturalism and Its Discontents* the journalist and author Kenan Malik argues for a clear delineation between the two: while the fact of lived diversity in the city is to be welcomed, for the cosmopolitan benefits it brings and the way it acts as a solvent on racism and ethno-nationalism, prescriptive multiculturalism amounts to an 'authoritarian and anti-human outlook' (2002), which, through its promotion of an ideology of absolute cultural difference and the empowerment of dubious 'civic leaders' assumed to speak for whole communities, merely reinforces cultural difference and attempts to 'manage and institutionalize diversity by putting people into ethnic and cultural boxes' (Malik 2014: xi). This works against genuine social cohesion, Malik argues, partly by disallowing the idea of universal values, which are taken to breach the requirement to respect cultural difference.

The events of 11 September 2001 in New York ('9/11') and the threat of fundamentalist Islamic terror it announced to the world lent a hysterical tone to debates over multiculturalism, pivoting around the fears over the incompatibility of Islam and the West, over unchecked immigration (of which the Brexit vote of 2016 was only the most obvious articulation) and a concomitant sense that multicultural policies had been responsible for enabling the rise of domestic terror. In February 2011, for example, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that 'state multiculturalism' had failed and that what was required to address the threat of terror and enable social cohesion was a renewed sense of national identity.[2]

Such views found support from journalists like David Goodhart, who had long been arguing that social cohesion and national unity were being undermined by a population which was, in the words of a notorious 2004 article for *Prospect* magazine, 'Too Diverse' (to be fair, the headline had a question mark at the end, but the thrust of the argument was that too much diversity was a bad thing because it meant that 'the idea of fostering a common culture, in any strong sense, may no longer be possible'). As sociologists Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley show (2011), since the turn of the millennium, there has been a 'crisis in multiculturalism' in which 'a grab bag of societal problems, from

terrorism, "radicalization" and "ghettoisation" to youth unemployment, sexism and homophobia are pinned squarely on multiculturalism'. They note the way in which the debate over multiculturalism provides 'a shorthand for all that was wrong with the guilt-ridden, relativist, overly permissive West'. This perspective, they argue, has licensed a return to the idea that mixture is a threat.

This book is not about the official regulation of diversity, or multi-cultural policy, but about the everyday politics of diversity and the role that music cultures have played in creating spaces for living with and through difference. It is not about multicultural*ism* as policy but about multiculture, those everyday forms of what Gilroy specifies as 'convivial post-colonial interaction … that enrich our cities and drive our cultural industries' (Gilroy 2004).

It explores club cultures where the idea that mixture is threat and that 'people prefer their own kind' (Goodhart 2004), and the racial-ised power geometry which mandates separation, are questioned and overcome through what sociologist Ash Amin defines as 'everyday mixity' (2010). It argues that we still do not know enough about these conduits of crossover, and that examining how they emerge, constitute themselves and decline will aid our understanding of how multiculture is made. This is an analysis of the role that music cultures have played in fostering the forms of everyday mixity and cross-race collaboration which 'descriptive multiculturalism' describes.

Methods, disciplines, sounds

As a latecomer to academia, trained in the anti-discipline of cultural studies (Turner 2012), I have always bridled against the tendency to subdivide critical enquiry into camps, disciples and subdisciplines that, despite the lip service paid to interdisciplinarity, remain separate and often antagonistic, and do little to challenge hierarchies of knowledge. The black-studies scholar Christina Sharpe argues that we should strive to crash these disciplinary borders, to become 'undisciplined' (2016: 13). In this book I follow Sharpe's lead by making use of ideas from

across disciplines – cultural history, cultural studies, critical race theory, musicology and popular music studies, radical geography and creative industries – ranging as wide as I can to find ideas I can use.

Academic accounts of culture can too often proceed without the voices and experiences of those who participate. I want to put the voices of the people who made and participated in these cultures into the centre of these debates. The first decades of my working life were spent as a music journalist, mainly writing for small London-based music publications *Touch* magazine and *Blues & Soul* and the jazz magazine *On the One* in San Francisco in the 1990s.[3] Many of the musicians, rappers and producers I spoke to as a journalist talked eloquently about their lives and work and its wider connection to history and politics, but the limitations of music journalism, attuned to the priorities of record-company release schedules and personal brand management, restricted the space for wider discussion of the political and social significance of popular music (which is not to say that many music journalists do not write brilliantly about these issues[4]). In this book I put these voices into conversation with the cultural theory to which my life as an academic now gives me access. I'm not suggesting that the producers of art and culture should necessarily monopolise their interpretation. But I am arguing that those involved in the production of a form of culture which the Jamaican scholar Sylvia Wynter has described as an 'underground reservoir of cultural heresy'[5] need to be brought into the ongoing debate about these cultures, how they were made and what they mean.

This book draws on a large collection of interviews I've recorded since 1997, as well as some unpublished interviews by other people (a full list of interviewees and interviews is given in the Appendix). In radio stations and record stores, pubs, clubs, coffee shops and the back seats of cars I spoke to a wide range of cultural producers – DJs, promoters, MCs, dancers, white and black, male and female – and attended a wide range of events, concerts, club nights and other places where music and dancing happened in the city. This book includes the voices, and draws on the experience of, musicians, DJs and club promoters across a range of genres, from reggae and jazz funk to techno and jungle, and

the non-professional dancers – the ravers – who were (and are) a vital, and too often overlooked, part of the production of music cultures. I supplement my own interviews by drawing on insider accounts and oral histories like Lloyd Bradley's *Sounds Like London* (2013), Mark 'Snowboy' Cotgrove's *From Jazz Funk and Fusion to Acid Jazz: The History of the UK Jazz Dance Scene* (2009), Luke Bainbridge's *Acid House: The True Story* (2013) and Brian Belle-Fortune's oral history of jungle *All Crews: Journeys Through Jungle/Drum and Bass Culture* (2004).

This research started well before Web 2.0. Since then, a growing archive of oral history – of a rich but variable and sometimes factually dubious kind – has become available on the internet. This book has made use of blogs, podcasts and discussion forums, much of it produced by club culture insiders like the DJ/writers Greg Wilson, Terry Farley, Bill Brewster, Frank Broughton, Seymour Nurse and Gilles Peterson.[6]

Researching club culture history is especially challenging because so much of it was not recorded or written down. Cultural activity around music and dance often takes place in performative spaces that are temporary or hidden by design, spaces that 'hosted a complex process of intercultural and transcultural syncretism' (Gilroy 2003: 387–8), which, though they largely depended on recorded music, took place in real-time relations between music, DJs and crowd. As historian Lara Putnam argues, reflecting on writing histories of the African diaspora within which technologies of remembrance were more frequently oral-sonic than written, 'it is far easier to trace the history of the print-centered public … but the international consciousness generated by the black performative realm may have mattered more, and mattered to many more' (2013: 149). The forms of consciousness made available in London by the 'black performative realm', which both nurtured the emergence of a distinctly black British identity and became moral and economic resources available to all, are at the heart of this book. The place to seek an understanding of the development of multiculture in the city is in these black performative realms – the clubs, dances, sound systems, blues parties and raves which constituted the everynight life of late twentieth-century century London. Here we find 'the narratives and

poetics of cultural intermixture' and can trace a history of the aspiration to build 'collective or shared space as a commons in which majorities and minorities participate as equals' (Amin 2010: 14).

It's a London ting[7]

Though rare groove, acid house and jungle drew on musical influences from across the African diaspora – New Orleans, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Kingston, Havana, Lagos – my focus is on just one place: London. This is not because London is the only place in the UK where significant black music club cultures emerged. There are linked, but distinct, stories to tell about the dance music cultures of Manchester (Haslam 1999), Bristol (Johnson 1996), Birmingham (Jones and Pinnock 2017), even the Yorkshire market town of Huddersfield (Huxtable 2014) and the Essex seaside town of Southend (whose musical history is yet to be written), both of which are surprisingly rich in black music culture.

Partly this London focus is pragmatic; a full accounting of black music cultures in the UK is beyond the scope of this, and perhaps any single, book. But equally there is much that is distinct about London, which fed the development of music in the city in particular ways. Trevor Beresford Romeo, aka Jazzie B, the DJ-entrepreneur behind the Soul II Soul clubs and recordings, may have been a little hyperbolic when he claimed in the foreword to Lloyd Bradley's *Sounds Like London* that London is 'probably the most important city in black music worldwide', but the reason he gives for his assertion – 'because it wasn't just one style that started here, it's been years of different movements' (Bradley 2013: 10) – bears further investigation. There are distinct characteristics of the city that have made it a cauldron of black musical innovation, pulled generations of black musicians and black music lovers from across the diaspora into its orbit, and produced forms of music and dance culture that have wielded a huge influence on the development of Afro-diasporic music and global club culture. Part of this is precisely because it has been the city where black music has stimulated the creation of racially mixed music cultures, and the legacy of this has been the flowering of

new genres and new kinds of interculture which challenge the division of social life into discrete racially marked camps.

London is the historic capital city of the world's largest empire, with a large post-colonial population who are 'here because you were there' (Kushnick 1993). It is historically a city of migrants, defined by the traffic of wealth, goods and people to and through it; it 'is not, and has never been a city of native Londoners' (German and Rees 2012: 232). The key to understanding London, as historian Roy Porter insists in his social history of the city, is the British empire: 'As capital and port, finance and manufacturing centre all in one, London was the beneficiary-in-chief of Empire' (Porter 1994: 2). One axis of the argument in this book concerns precisely the traffic of people, ideas and commodities to and through London from the former colonies in America, Africa and the Caribbean that we might call, following Elam and Jackson (2005), black cultural traffic. Half of the migrants from the West Indies who arrived in Britain between 1948 and the late 1960s – 'the Windrush generation' (Phillips and Phillips 1998) – settled in London; of this group, more than 60 per cent were from Jamaica (James 1993). This settlement has had huge consequences for the cultural life of the city. This book considers these consequences with respect to the emergence of post-colonial music cultures within which the descendants of colonial migrants have played a leading role.

The migration and settlement patterns of imperial and post-imperial subjects is one factor powerfully affecting how the city was remade in the late twentieth century. Another axis concerns the unplanned 'patch-work' nature of the London to which they arrived, the consequence of centuries of messy speculator-driven construction and destruction, waves of local-authority planning, economic boom and bust, and the Blitz of 1940–1, which pockmarked London with bomb sites, reclaimed for public housing in the post-war period. London has never been subject to the kind of grand rationalisation like that of Baron Haussmann which transformed Paris in the 1860s; it remains a hodgepodge of medieval streets and alleyways, suburban sprawl, property speculation and distinctly un-joined-up local-authority planning – though London has

had a degree of central planning under the Greater London Council (1965–86) and, since 1999, the Greater London Authority, overseen by a mayor (since 2000), it is still administered largely by thirty-three separate councils (thirty-two local authorities and the Corporation of the City of London). One consequence of this patchwork, as demonstrated in the famous 1885 map of London poverty based on the research of social reformer Charles Booth, is that the richest in London never live very far from the poorest – though, as Anna Minton shows in *Big Capital* (2017), this distance has been growing in the twenty-first century – and consequently London has escaped the kinds of absolute class and racial ghettoisation that is characteristic of many American cities (Moretti 1998; Goldberg 2006).

With late twentieth-century globalisation, London became defined as a 'global city' (Sassen 2001), linked through international flows of capital and financial services and information to other nodes – New York, Tokyo – of an emergent global information network, a challenge to the primacy of the nation-state. This book focuses on flows at another scale and considers how London operates as a node in a different supranational network which links it not to other global capitals of finance but to the cities of what has been called variously the 'West Atlantic' (Patterson 1994), the 'circum-Atlantic rim' (Roach 1996) and the 'black Atlantic' (Gilroy 1993).

Music and dance in black London

In *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (2016), an account of how London came to serve as a hub for black activism and de-colonial politics in the early to mid-twentieth century, historian Marc Matera suggests that London in this period could be considered an 'Afro-metropolis'. Through a network of political clubs and ad hoc associations, and the intellectual labour of exiles and sojourners like Kwame Nkrumah, Amy Ashwood Garvey, George Padmore and C. L. R. James among many others, a transnational black political culture was nurtured in the city, with multiple connections

to the Caribbean, Africa and the USA. Central to this political culture was the social culture around black music:

> London was a crossroads of musical cultures. African, Caribbean, and African American met regularly, collaborated, and shared the bandstand…. Their evolving sounds were artifacts and articulations of black internationalism, even when not explicitly political or oriented toward an immediate agenda. (Matera 2016: 149)

This internationalist black culture cohered in London as early as the 1920s, in places like the Urskine Club on Whitfield Street and the Black Man's Café on White Lion Street, among the first establishments catering to a black clientele. An informal black social and political culture grew in the bars and clubs of Soho, such as the legendary Florence Mills Social Parlour at 50 Carnaby Street, run by Amy Ashwood Garvey (who had been briefly, unhappily, married to Marcus Garvey) and founded in 1936, where 'music was an ever-present part of black sociability and anti-colonial activity' and, when live music was not being played, 'the 78 records of African American, Caribbean and African musicians spun late into the night' (Matera 2016: 145–7). This venue continued to be a significant black space in Soho until the 1980s, as the Blue Lagoon, the Sunset and the Roaring Twenties (later, Colombos), where sound system operator Count Suckle first brought Jamaican sound system culture to the West End in 1961.

The Florence Mills Social Parlour was one among many Soho venues of the 1930s and 1940s which hosted black music for a mixed crowd – 'blacks of all classes and jazz aficionados as well as homosexuals, socialists, and young white Britons drawn by the mix of exotic pleasures it offered' (Matera 2016: 162). Matera's list includes Frisco's on Frith Street, the Shim Sham on Wardour Street, the Big Apple and Cuba Club on Gerrard Street, the Nest and Bag O' Nails on Kingley Street, Jig's Club (raided and closed in 1942) as well as the Barbarian, Panama, Goose and Gander, Havana Club and the Café de Paris.[8] Black musicians from the Caribbean, Africa and the USA, often barred from the best-paying gigs, especially after the 1935 Musicians' Union ban on foreign musicians

(Williamson and Cloonan 2016), found space to play and mingle in cramped Soho basements, where new hybrid musical forms emerged – 'a black international in sound' – and alliances, personal and political, were forged:

> These spaces become models of a more egalitarian social order and for equality across ethnic, racial, regional and class differences, but like the utopian visions and oppositional subject positions they inspired and articulated, these spaces were fragile, susceptible to internal pressures, co-option and outside repression. (Matera 2016: 199)

This diasporic musical culture, which mixed American jazz, Caribbean calypso and West African highlife, was a music and dance culture that transformed the city's cultural landscape.

Parallel to the development of the black metropolis that Matera describes, dancing to black music was taking place, from around 1918, in the dance halls that were a significant form of entertainment for white mainly working-class Britons. In his cultural history of dance halls, *Going to the Palais* (2015), social historian James Nott argues that 'race and dancing were inextricably linked' in the dance hall because, though the crowd was predominantly white, the music and dance styles – from ragtime, jazz and swing to the jitterbug, black bottom and Charleston – were from black America. As the racial make-up of British cities changed over the twentieth century, the dance hall became one of the most significant sites of racial interaction in Britain (Nott 2015: 278). They were also, as Nott demonstrates, suffused with racial anxiety, particularly around the issue of black men dancing with white women, and spaces where stereotypes about the 'primitive', innately rhythmic and implicitly threatening nature of blackness circulated widely.

These concerns over 'cultural contamination' reached fever pitch during the Second World War, when 130,00 black US servicemen were stationed in the UK. Nott shows how the British government and the dance establishment responded with a variety of strategies designed to limit inter-racial mixing and institute 'proper' styles of dance – including banning 'primitive' jitterbugging, and promoting instead an 'English style' which mandated physical restraint.

One of Nott's examples is the Mecca Dance Hall at the Paramount on Tottenham Court Road in central London, which in the 1940s attracted an increasing number of black male dancers, who were often the preferred partners for white women, leading to growing tensions with local white men. After a series of fights, the Mecca introduced a number of measures designed to limit black attendance, including the requirement to bring a dance partner (difficult for the largely male black population of the time, who were going to dance halls specifically to find dance partners). In 1943, following a fight, black dancers were banned for forty-eight hours, 'for their own safety' (Nott 2015: 271). Although the Colonial Office objected to this colour bar, on the grounds that it was not government policy to support racialised exclusion, it remained in force. The Jamaican Enrico Stennett,[9] who had arrived in London in 1947, and was a regular and especially talented dancer at the Paramount, recalled that police would target black men who were leaving the venue with white women, deliberately provoking them (Stennett 2007).

Matera's and Nott's mappings of black London and the emergence of the intercultural dancefloor provide the context for what followed in the 1970s and 1980s, showing how music and dance became implicated both in racialised understandings of music and in creating the conditions of crossover and interculture. The forms of racial anxiety and spatial discipline that were written across the dance-hall period (which effectively ended in the 1960s, with the birth of pop music) reappear in club culture, as we shall see, in the exclusion of black youth from leisure spaces in the 1970s and in the founding of new spaces for interculture in the city, like the sound system, the warehouse party and the rave.

Journalist Lloyd Bradley's affirmative history *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* covers the period from 1919, when the Syncopated Southern Orchestra became 'the first black band to play in London' (2013: 14), to the twenty-first century, with rappers like Tinie Tempah and Dizzee Rascal. Bradley details the impact of West Indian musicians and bands from well before post-war migration, like the Trinidadian double-bass player Al Jennings, who arrived in the city in the 1920s, and the Guyanese clarinettist Rudolph Dunbar, who

arrived in 1931 and became the first black conductor of the London Phil-harmonic, in 1941. Covering the emergence of calypso, steel drum, free jazz, Afro-rock, lovers rock and Brit funk and the rise of the DJ-led club culture of the 1980s, Bradley focuses on the emergence of new kinds of musical hybrids in the city, as Africans, West Indians and Americans met and collaborated with British musicians, producers and audiences, in many of the same Soho venues (though often with new names) that Matera writes about.

These books do an important job of showing how specific forms of black music arrived and were remixed in the city and the role music played both in founding and supporting internationalist and diasporic forms of black identity and in hosting encounters across the colour line that fed London's multiculture. Work emerging from British cultural studies of the 1970s, in particular that by John Clarke and Tony Jefferson (1973) as well as Dick Hebdige's work on subculture (1974, 1979), provides some of the theoretical coordinates that help understand how white youth subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as ways in which white working-class youth were negoti-ating their identities, and their relation to blackness, through music. Hebdige's still pertinent assessment is that white youth subcultures like mod, skinhead and punk can be understood as a series of symbolic responses to the black presence on the streets in Britain; he reads punk, for example, as the invention of a 'white ethnicity' influenced by Rasta-farian style (1979).

Simon Jones's *Black Culture, White Youth: Reggae Tradition from Jamaica to UK* (1988), another book to emerge from Birmingham cultural studies, explores the role of reggae sound system cultures in Birmingham in creating the conditions for the emergence of shared forms of culture in the city. But it is in the work of Paul Gilroy, particu-larly *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* and *The Black Atlantic*, that we start getting the sense of the emergence of *black subcultural space*, organised around sound (systems), and its intricate connections to the Caribbean, Afro-America and Africa. It is through music, he shows, that blacks who are born in Britain experience their relations to other parts of the

diaspora, where those who are 'not Jamaican but connected to Jamaica, not African but connected to Africa, not American but connected to America' (Paul Gilroy interview, 21 September 2017), and not, because of racism, allowed to be fully British, negotiate their identities and subject positions and produce new possibilities not beholden to fixed biological ideologies of racial difference.

Yet despite these histories, black music in Britain continues to be underestimated. Residual, and not so residual, racism and conservative nationalist sentiment garnished with 'postcolonial melancholia' (Gilroy 2004) continue to support the view of black popular music 'as a kind of bastard tradition of minority interest made by people not really British' (Stratton and Zuberi 2014: 3) or as a threat to law and order, or even life itself (Thapar 2018a). This book, along with these vital antecedents,[10] suggests we need to think harder.

Structure of this book

This book is organised chronologically, taking the three moments of rare groove, acid house and jungle in the order in which they happened. But it starts with some historical framing. Chapter 1 examines the racialisation of London through processes of settlement and migration and authoritarian forms of spatial control that served to contain and exclude London's black populations and to militate against multiculture. Alongside discussions of specific judicial and extra-legal forms of spatial control, like the 'sus' law and the racialisation of leisure – pubs, football – it examines the emergence of specific kinds of semi-autonomous musical space in the city around reggae sound systems, which were, in part, a response to this racial containment, though they were also much more. The chapter also considers the emergence of multicultural space, in schools and the musical cultures of soul, which provided the resources for the development of 1980s club culture.

Chapter 2 focuses on the emergence of warehouse parties, and the interrelated cultural economy of record shops, pirate radio stations and informal clubs within which developed multicultural alliances around

music. Against the background of London's racialised geography, the chapter maps the way the warehouse party scene diverted space, and it analyses the 'rare groove' genre, the rediscovered music of 1970s America, which provided its soundtrack.

Chapter 3 is about acid house and the rave culture it spawned. This much-mythologised musical culture is rarely included in the taxonomy of black music, something that, as I argue, fails to do justice to the race–space dynamics of house and techno, or the contribution of black London to the emergence and transformation of rave.

Chapter 4 is about jungle, arguably the first distinctly black British musical genre, which (re)combines house and techno with (other) diasporic genres like jazz, hip hop and reggae, and in its deployment of technology like sub bass and time stretching articulates a specifically Afro-diasporic approach to technology, put in the service of multiculture.

Throughout the discussion of these three musical scenes I draw attention to the way music became caught up in debates about race, and the way that the music diverted and procured space for the founding of important, though often temporary and vulnerable, forms of multicultural alliance. My aim is to contribute to an understanding both of how London has been produced as a particular kind of racialised space and of how self-generated musical cultures produced from the margins, often by those who had few other cultural or economic options, have opened up space for counter-narrative and the founding of multicultural alternatives.

The black arts

Black music is rarely considered a form of art but the music at the heart of these scenes and this book – from James Brown to Roni Size – is, in my view, undeniably beautiful as well as (and this is one of the reasons it is not considered proper art) socially useful: like in all black music traditions, dance is intrinsic. 'Throughout the history of black music', writes the musicologist Samuel Floyd, 'its black listeners have also

been dancers' (1991: 269). It functions to carve out performative space for those whose access to other spaces – economic, public, moral – is severely limited and creates spaces which, in principle at least, are open to all.

It is art that creates the conditions for community (though it doesn't always achieve this) and that reflects but also moves beneath and beyond the social and political conditions in which it is born. It is an art defined, in Arthur Jafa's words, by its 'beauty, power and alienation' (cited in Brown 2018). While black music's more experimental manifestations – from the music of Sun Ra to jungle and grime – can sound alien, alienated, alienating (Eshun 1998), it can also work to 'unmake alienation' and allow the emergence of a repertoire of new cultural and political possibilities (Spillers 2006: 25). The stories and histories that this book tells matter, and not just as a contribution to black history, but to London history and the story of the nation. As the dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson suggests, this story 'is a part of the fabric of British life, British culture' (Linton Kwesi Johnson interview, 20 February 2017). But this story of repeated, promiscuous border-crossing works against the idea that the national should be the primary frame of analysis. Black music has been one of the key resources for developing forms of affiliation and notions of belonging that exceed the narrow boundaries of the nation state. I would like to think that in the context of revivified ethno-nationalism, the backward-looking desire to put the 'great' back into Great Britain and the pervasive inhospitality to difference which seems to be currently defining Britain, placing these musical cultures at the heart of the history of the nation's capital might work in the opposite direction.

Notes

1 Throughout this book I use the names of DJs and producers that they use in their professional lives. If this is not their given name I will identify them, but it makes sense to cite them in their professional persona as these are the names by which they are known by the public; they are in effect their own personal brands and are not (always) identical with the private person, the

more so the more famous they are. See James (2015: 145) on the relationship between the person and the *corporate person*.

2 See 'State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron', BBC News website, 5 February 2011, accessed at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994 on 15 July 2019.

3 My music journalism career reached its nadir in 1999 with an awkward encounter with Jennifer Lopez in New York, when my desire to discuss popular music in the context of wider cultural politics came up against the immoveable force of brand JLo. See Melville (2001).

4 Of course, this is completely contradicted by the brilliant writing of music journalists like Nick Cohn, Jon Savage, Greil Marcus, Ellen Willis, Val Wilmer, Richard Williams, Penny Reel, Simon Reynolds, Dan Hancox, dream hampton and Greg Tate and others, who earned an autonomy in their writing which I never did.

5 This quote is taken from Sylvia Wynter's manuscript 'Black Metamorphosis', which at the time of writing remains unpublished; see Kamugisha (2016: 145).

6 See for example Greg Wilson's blog 'Being A DJ', at https://blog.gregwilson.co.uk; Gilles Peterson's podcast archive on Mixcloud, at https://www.mixcloud.com/gillespeterson/stream; and Seymour Nurse's 'The Bottom End', https://www.thebottomend.co.uk (all last accessed June 2019).

7 This heading is the title of a track by DJ Scott Garcia released in 1997, an example of the post-rave London-born genre UK garage. It was reused as the main sample for a grime reworking by Jammz in 2016. The nearly twenty-year distance between the two can be measured in the difference between the sunny but the inarticulate celebration of 1990s multiculture of the first versus the articulate anger of the second, which posits poverty, corporate gentrification and an act of street violence as the real 'London tings'.

8 On Saturday 8 March 1941, the twenty-six-year-old Guyanese bandleader Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson, leader of the West Indian Dance Orchestra, was killed, along with several other musicians and dancers, by a German bomb which fell on the Café de Paris (see Tackley 2014: 11).

9 Enrico Stennett, who was mixed race and spent his life battling racial discrimination in the UK, published an autobiography in 2011 that foregrounds his experience of living 'between race' in the title: *Bukra Massa Pickney (White Masters Child)*.

10 Nabeel Zuberi does an excellent job of this in his discussions of Tricky, Massive Attack and Barry Adamson, in his book *Sounds English* (2001), as does the collection *Black Popular Music in Britain Since 1945* (2014) edited by Jon Stratton and Zuberi, which makes the case for the importance of, among other things, Brit funk and African jazz in Britain.