

# Popular Music And Television In Britain

*Edited by*  
**Ian Inglis**

An **Ashgate** Book

POPULAR MUSIC AND TELEVISION  
IN BRITAIN

*for Eleanor*

# Popular Music And Television In Britain

*Edited by*

IAN INGLIS

*University of Northumbria, UK*

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2010 by Ashgate Publishing  
Published 2016 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

Copyright © Ian Inglis and the contributors 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Ian Inglis has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editor of this work.

### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Popular music and television in Britain. – (Ashgate popular and folk music series)

1. Television and popular music – Great Britain – History.
  2. Television broadcasting of music – Great Britain – History.
  3. Television music – Great Britain – History and criticism.
- I. Series II. Inglis, Ian, 1948–  
302.2'345–dc22

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Popular music and television in Britain / [edited by] Ian Inglis.

p. cm.—(Ashgate popular and folk music series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7546-6864-0 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Television and music—Great Britain. 2. Popular music—Great Britain—History and criticism. 3. Television music—Great Britain—History and criticism. I. Inglis, Ian, 1948–

ML68.P66 2010

781.640941—dc22

2010025098

ISBN 9780754668640 (hbk)

Bach musicological font developed by © Yo Tomita.

# Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	ix
<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	xiii
Introduction <i>Ian Inglis</i>	1
<b>PART I HISTORY AND HERITAGE</b>	
1 Constructing The Histories Of Popular Music: The <i>Britannia</i> Series <i>Paul Long and Tim Wall</i>	11
2 Television Documentary, Pop Stardom And Auto/Biographical Narratives <i>Ian Goode</i>	27
3 <i>Classic Albums</i> : The Re-Presentation Of The Rock Album On British Television <i>Andy Bennett and Sarah Baker</i>	41
4 Stone Fox Chase: <i>The Old Grey Whistle Test</i> And The Rise Of High Pop Television <i>Peter Mills</i>	55
<b>PART II PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCES</b>	
5 <i>Ready Steady Go!</i> Televisual Pop Style And The Careers Of Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw And Lulu <i>Adrienne Lowy</i>	71
6 Sworn In: <i>Today</i> , Bill Grundy And The Sex Pistols <i>Mark Duffett</i>	85
7 Indie On The Box: The Contribution Of Television To UK Independent Music From <i>C86</i> To Britpop <i>Rupa Huq</i>	105

**PART III COMEDY AND DRAMA**

- |    |   |     |
|----|---|-----|
| 8  | <i>Dad's Army: Musical Images Of A Nation At War*</i><br><i>Sheila Whiteley</i>                                   | 123 |
| 9  | <i>Little Ladies: Rock Follies And British Television's Dramatisation Of Rock Music</i><br><i>Peter Hutchings</i> | 137 |
| 10 | <i>Pop Half-Cocked: A History Of Revolver</i><br><i>Richard Mills</i>   | 149 |
| 11 | <i>A Sunken Dream: Music And The Gendering Of Nostalgia In Life On Mars</i><br><i>Estella Tincknell</i>           | 161 |

**PART IV AUDIENCES AND TERRITORIES**

- |    |   |     |
|----|---|-----|
| 12 | <i>Here, There And Everywhere: Introducing The Beatles</i><br><i>Ian Inglis</i>                           | 179 |
| 13 | <i>Granada TV, Johnny Hamp, And The Blues And Gospel Train: Masters Of Reality</i><br><i>Mike Brocken</i> | 197 |
| 14 | <i>A Postman Mans Up: The Changing Musical Identities Of Postman Pat</i><br><i>Nicholas Reyland</i>       | 213 |
|    | <i>Bibliography</i>   | 231 |
|    | <i>Index</i>  | 243 |

# List of Tables

12.1	The Beatles' UK Television Appearances 1962–63	185
14.1	Tagg's Hypothesised Dualities Of Male And Female Scoring Clichés	219
14.2	<i>Postman Pat</i> Main Title Shots And Sound Effects Density	220

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

## Notes on Contributors

**Sarah Baker** is Lecturer in Cultural Sociology at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. She has previously held research positions at the University of Leeds and the Open University, and was an ARC Research Fellow at the University of South Australia. She is the author of *Creative Labour* (with David Hesmondhalgh) and an editor of the *Journal Of Sociology*.

**Andy Bennett** is Professor of Cultural Sociology and Director of the Centre for Public Culture & Ideas at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. He has authored and edited numerous books including *Popular Music And Youth Culture*, *Remembering Woodstock* and *Music Scenes: Local, Trans-Local And Virtual* (with Richard A. Peterson). He is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal Of Sociology* and a Faculty Associate of the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University.

**Mike Brocken** is Senior Lecturer in Popular Music Studies at Liverpool Hope University. His books include *The British Folk Revival 1944–2002*, *Bacharach: Maestro! The Life Of A Pop Genius* and *Other Voices: Hidden Histories Of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes 1930s–1970s*. He hosted his own series – *Brock'n'Roll* – for nine years on BBC Radio Merseyside, and he is the director of Liverpool Hope's MA in The Beatles, Popular Music & Society, the first postgraduate degree devoted to the music and career of the Beatles.

**Mark Duffett** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Chester. After completing an MA on the Canadian music industry, he worked briefly for Sony Music. His doctoral research explored the relationship between Elvis Presley and his fans, and his published research, in journals such as *Popular Music*, *Information Communication & Society*, *Convergence* and *Popular Music And Society*, includes articles on webcasting, heckling, fandom, and gender.

**Ian Goode** teaches Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow. His current research interests and publications focus on non-fiction and documentary television, and he is also developing a project on the history of rural cinema in Scotland.

**Rupa Huq** is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Kingston University, having previously practised DJing at various live music venues. She is the author of *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth And Identity In A Postcolonial World*, and is

currently preparing a book on socio-political shifts in contemporary suburbia. Her research interests include youth culture, ethnicity, and Islamic identities.

**Peter Hutchings** is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Northumbria. His books include *Hammer And Beyond: The British Horror Film*; *Terence Fisher; The British Film Guide To Dracula; The Horror Film*; and *The Historical Dictionary Of Horror Cinema*. He has also published widely on topics relating to British cinema, and genre theory and criticism.

**Ian Inglis** is Reader in Popular Music Studies at the University of Northumbria. His books include *The Beatles, Popular Music And Society: A Thousand Voices*; *Popular Music And Film*; *Performance And Popular Music: History, Place And Time*; and *The Words And Music Of George Harrison*.

**Paul Long** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Theory at Birmingham City University. His research interests encompass the creative and cultural industries, popular music culture, media histories, and archiving. He is the author of *Only In The Common People: The Aesthetics Of Class In Post-War Britain* and the co-author (with Tim Wall) of *Media Studies: Texts, Production And Context*. He is currently overseeing the development of the archive of the BBC documentarist Philip Donnellan, and co-editing his autobiography.

**Adrienne Lowy** is a researcher and writer whose doctoral thesis explored the inter-relations between pop music, television and fashion, through the television work of Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw and Lulu. During her lengthy academic career in the School of Art & Design at Liverpool John Moores University, she also worked extensively as a freelance fashion journalist for consumer and trade publications, and as a marketing and public relations consultant to the fashion industry.

**Peter Mills** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Popular Culture at Leeds Metropolitan University. He was the singer and lyricist for the band Innocents Abroad, who made two albums, *Quaker City* and *Eleven*. He is the author of *Hymns To The Silence: Inside The Music And Lyrics Of Van Morrison*, and was a substantial contributor to the various editions of *The Rough Guide To Rock*. He has published work on Samuel Beckett, Olaf Stapledon, Hungarian folk music, Pink Floyd, national anthems, and The KLF, and has taught music, literature and philosophy at universities in the UK, Hungary, Romania and Croatia.

**Richard Mills** is Programme Director in Cultural Studies at St Mary's University College, London. He has taught at the University of Ulster, the University of Lodz, Liverpool John Moores University, and Goldsmiths College, London. His research interests are in Irish literature and popular culture, and his work has appeared in *Irish Studies Review*, *Writing Ulster* and *New Voices In Irish Criticism*.

**Nicholas Reyland** is Lecturer in Music at Keele University. His primary research interests are Witold Lutosławski and Polish music, musical narrativity, film/television music, music theory and analysis. His articles have been published in *Music & Letters* and *Witold Lutoslawski Studies*, and he contributed several entries to *New Makers Of Modern Culture*. He is currently writing *Zbigniew Preisner's Three Colours Trilogy: A Film Score Guide*, and is the co-author (with Alexandra Lamont) of a study of sound and vision in modern children's television.

**Estella Tincknell** is Reader in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of the West of England. She has published widely in the area of popular culture and film, and is the author of *Mediating The Family: Gender, Culture And Representation*, co-editor (with Ian Conrich) of *Film's Musical Moments*, and joint author (with Deborah Chambers, Richard Johnson and Parvati Raghuram) of *The Practice Of Cultural Studies*. She is currently writing a book about the films of Jane Campion, and preparing an edited collection of essays about *Ageing Femininities*.

**Tim Wall** is Professor of Radio and Popular Music Studies, and Director of Media and Cultural Research, at Birmingham City University. His research ranges across popular music culture, the record industry, music radio, and the implications of new technology. He is author of *Studying Popular Music Culture* and the co-author of *Media Studies: Texts, Production And Context*. He has published work on a wide range of topics including jazz, northern soul, 1950s dance fads, music programming, internet radio, the significance of the transistor radio, and is currently working (with Paul Long) on a major project about television's representation of popular music's past.

**Sheila Whiteley** is Emeritus Professor of Popular Music at the University of Salford. As a feminist musicologist with strong research interests in issues of identity and subjectivity, she is known for her work on gender and sexuality, as well as for longstanding interests in popular culture. She is the author of *The Space Between The Notes: Rock And The Counter Culture*; *Women And Popular Music: Popular Music And Gender*; and *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age And Identity*. She is the editor of *Sexing The Groove: Popular Music And Gender* and *Christmas, Ideology And Popular Culture*, and co-editor (with Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins) of *Music Space And Place: Popular Music And Cultural Identity* and (with Jennifer Rycenga) of *Queering the Popular Pitch*.

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# General Editor's Preface

The upheaval that occurred in musicology during the last two decades of the twentieth century has created a new urgency for the study of popular music alongside the development of new critical and theoretical models. A relativistic outlook has replaced the universal perspective of modernism (the international ambitions of the 12-note style); the grand narrative of the evolution and dissolution of tonality has been challenged, and emphasis has shifted to cultural context, reception and subject position. Together, these have conspired to eat away at the status of canonical composers and categories of high and low in music. A need has arisen, also, to recognize and address the emergence of crossovers, mixed and new genres, to engage in debates concerning the vexed problem of what constitutes authenticity in music and to offer a critique of musical practice as the product of free, individual expression.

Popular musicology is now a vital and exciting area of scholarship, and the *Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series* presents some of the best research in the field. Authors are concerned with locating musical practices, values and meanings in cultural context, and draw upon methodologies and theories developed in cultural studies, semiotics, poststructuralism, psychology and sociology. The series focuses on popular musics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is designed to embrace the world's popular musics from Acid Jazz to Zydeco, whether high tech or low tech, commercial or non-commercial, contemporary or traditional.

Professor Derek B. Scott  
Professor of Critical Musicology  
University of Leeds

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# Introduction

Ian Inglis

When, in 1981, MTV's president Tom Preston explained the success of the newly-formed channel by commenting that it had merely brought together two of the world's favourite leisure pursuits (watching television and listening to music) it was, for many people, a statement of the obvious. But, while the immediate impact and enduring popularity of MTV (and the many similar channels that followed) have made explicit the dynamic nature of the connections between the two forms, music television is, in truth, only a small part of a much broader historical trajectory that stretches back to the birth of television itself.

Indeed, whatever the range of its transmission or the size of its audience, British television has, from its outset, recognised and used the popular music of the day – most obviously in its performative functions. BBC-TV's first public broadcast, from London's Alexandra Palace on 26 August 1936, began with the music of Duke Ellington, accompanied onscreen by a caption card that announced 'BBC Demonstration to Radiolympia by the Baird System'. In the half-hour variety show that followed, the first performer to appear was vocalist Helen McKay, singing 'Here's Looking At You'; the transmission was watched by several hundred viewers, mainly in the London area. The launch of ITV, two decades later, followed a similar pattern. After coverage of the opening ceremony from London's Guildhall on 22 September 1955, the channel's first programme was simply called *Variety*: introduced by singer, bandleader and radio-DJ Jack Jackson, it featured singers Shirley Abicair and Sheila Matthews, and the Billy Cotton Orchestra. It was watched in around 100,000 homes in the South East of England. Thirty years after that, a total audience of more than of 1.5 billion in 160 countries across 24 time-zones tuned in, at some point, during the 16-hour *Live Aid* concerts, broadcast jointly from Wembley Stadium, London and JFK Stadium, Philadelphia, on 13 July 1985. And on 24 August 2008, 778 million viewers watched together as Jimmy Page and Leona Lewis (the winner of ITV's *The X Factor* in 2006) performed Led Zeppelin's 'Whole Lotta Love' during the closing ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. In theory and in practice, pop and rock have contributed much to, and benefited greatly from, the historical development of television in the UK. And, as popular music and popular musicians enter non-performance based areas of TV production and programming from which they have previously been largely absent,<sup>1</sup> it seems logical to predict that the relationship between the two mediums will continue to expand in future years.

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bethany Klein, *As Heard On TV: Popular Music In Advertising* (Aldershot, 2009).

Commenting on the persistent interplay between music, audience and media technology, Wikstrom has noted that:

Music is an integral part of most media. Movies, radio, videogames and television all depend on music as the core or the enhancement of their products [and] the music industry is completely dependent on the media, as a promoter, user and distributor of its products.<sup>2</sup>

And although there has been an expanding interest in the associations between popular music and film, which has led to a substantial number of important contributions by British researchers in recent years,<sup>3</sup> there have been relatively few concentrated investigations of the relationship between music and TV.<sup>4</sup>

This is, to say the least, surprising. Given the rapid, and parallel, evolution of television and popular music in the UK through the 1950s and early 1960s (as cultural forms and domestic industries), the number and variety of television outputs that consistently make use of popular music (entertainment, drama, documentary, advertisements), the commercial value of TV exposure (as shown by the impetus to new careers and the resurrection of old careers that frequently follow television appearances), and the importance of television as a principal source of contact between audiences and performers (especially since the advent of music video and the explosion of music channels on satellite and digital TV), an analysis of the opportunities and reciprocities that exist between the two mediums is, clearly, long overdue.

The chapters in this book attempt to supply an initial version of such an analysis. They reflect current research, provide indicative contributions to what remains a somewhat sparse academic literature, and may stimulate further investigations. The focus throughout is on British television and, for the most part, British popular music. Although the form and content of both have been heavily influenced by American models (notably in their formative stages) the intention here is to demonstrate the particular routes along which television in the UK has actively sought to incorporate, organise and distribute information about, and images of, popular music – often in unique and groundbreaking ways – rather than

---

<sup>2</sup> Patrik Wikstrom, *The Music Industry* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, John Mundy, *Popular Music On Screen* (Manchester, 1999); Kay Dickinson (ed.), *Movie Music: The Film Reader* (London, 2003); Ian Inglis (ed.), *Popular Music And Film* (London, 2003); K.J. Donnelly, *The Spectre Of Sound* (London, 2005); Steve Lannin and Matthew Caley (eds), *Pop Fiction: The Song In Cinema* (Bristol, 2005); Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell (eds), *Film's Musical Moments* (Edinburgh, 2006); Kay Dickinson, *Off Key: When Film And Music Won't Work Together* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> *Popular Music 21/3* (2002) contained discussions of music (of all kinds) and (international) television; *Music, Sound And The Moving Image* (published since 2007) takes a similarly broad approach, considering music and sound in television, film, computer games, mixed-media installations, digital art, etc.

merely imitate transatlantic tastes and styles. While the ‘international’ dimensions attached to assessments of television and popular music are rightly seen as key facets of their production and consumption – indeed, they have consistently been depicted as important elements in the process of globalisation<sup>5</sup> – their status as domestic cultural products and practices is too often overlooked, and the book aims, in part, to redress that balance.

The book is organised into four broad sections, each of which illustrates a familiar area of TV programming. *History And Heritage* examines various facets of British television’s documentation and representation of popular music history. In the first chapter, Paul Long and Tim Wall present a critical analysis of BBC’s prestigious *Britannia* series which, since 2005, has endeavoured to tell the definitive story of the evolution of specific musical genres and related cultural activities. Their assessment concludes that although there is much to admire in the programmes, television’s desire to produce a single, authoritative version of history often results in a ‘closed narrative’ in which complexities are avoided, contradictions are conveniently negotiated, and alternative interpretations are unheard. To the extent that *Britannia*’s historical accounts are shaped more by the policies and practices of television than by musical experience and insights, the stories they relate are not inaccurate, but they are incomplete. Ian Goode examines the current popularity of (auto)biographical TV documentaries about individual pop/rock stars. Growing out of the emergence of reality television, the cult of celebrity, and the demands of a highly competitive industrial arena, such programmes purport to offer exclusive insights into the ‘real’ or ‘true’ story of the stars they feature. However, he suggests that one of the key determinants in the presentation of their stories is the degree of control exerted by the star subject upon the film makers. As a result, the articulations of self are often centred around self-presentation, self-narration and self-promotion. They reflect, and contribute to, levels and stages of stardom in popular music, and pose important questions about the increasingly dispersed functions of documentary and non-fiction television. Andy Bennett and Sarah Baker consider the contribution made by BBC’s *Classic Albums* series to the concept of ‘heritage’ (and the growth of a heritage industry) that underpins a considerable part of television’s approach to popular music. They argue that, in the context of the series, the appellation ‘classic’ has emotional and cultural repercussions that go far beyond the mere evaluation of a collection of songs; it invites an investment in, and identification with, musical artefacts that may become as important for the producers and consumers of given albums as it is for the critical discourse that surrounds the historical development of rock. Finally, in this section, Peter Mills provides an assessment of the importance of BBC’s *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. By choosing to ignore the commercial vagaries

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Serge Latouche, *The Westernization Of The World* (Cambridge, 1996); Daya Kishan Thussu, *International Communication: Continuity And Change* (London, 2000); Terry Flew, *Understanding Global Media* (London, 2007); Thomas L. McPhail, *Global Communication* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

of chart success, and pursuing a musical agenda derived from notions of ‘cultural connoisseurship’, the programme succeeded unequivocally in establishing itself as the ‘serious’ face of popular music on television in Britain. Its historical importance is twofold: musically, it reflected the sense of ‘maturity’ increasingly attributed to popular music (and the division between ‘pop’ and ‘rock’) in the late 1960s and early 1970s; televisually, it created a continuing legacy for subsequent programmes, built around understandings of ‘liveness’ and ‘authenticity’.

The second section, *Performers And Performances*, presents a series of illuminating case studies that explore the importance of specific programmes in the careers of particular musicians. Adrienne Lowy’s account of ITV’s *Ready Steady Go!* focuses on the contours of music, dance, design and fashion that provided the site from which Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw and Lulu constructed their iconic TV images and launched their musical careers. Its innovative studio environment, active audience involvement and informal mode of presentation helped to create an immediate, and unique, correspondence of televisual and musical styles, that not only informed the personae of the four performers throughout their careers, but provided a template that many other TV music shows have sought to emulate. Mark Duffett’s investigation of the origins and repercussions of the Sex Pistols’ appearance on ITV’s *Today* news magazine programme demonstrates that the significance of television in determining the careers of popular musicians is not limited to their participation in music shows. While their interview with Bill Grundy (and the media response to it) created an exaggerated and sensationalised wave of national outrage, it also introduced the group to many millions of viewers and defined the (sub)cultural and behavioural dimensions of punk in succinct and simplistic ways. But rather than merely relate the events, Duffett disentangles the ‘meanings’ inherent in the (non-musical) performance – as a historical narrative of the 1970s, as a piece of television footage, and as an encounter to which we, as contemporary viewers, can return. In Chapter 7, Rupa Huq traces television’s portrayal of indie music in the 1980s through to the emergence of Britpop in the 1990s. Against a background of broadcasting deregulation, political change, technological innovation and a rebirth of cultural regionalism, much of the public’s perception of the transition from the perceived austerity of indie bands to the unashamed ostentation of Britpop’s star performers was coloured by the presentations, and re-presentations, provided by television. Within this complex musical-historical context, her discussion of the Smiths offers a compelling assessment of a band whose conscious refusal to adopt the conventional vehicle of music television (the music video) in favour of live, studio-based performance allowed them to occupy a distinctive, if uneasy, position as visual and musical stylists.

The chapters in *Comedy And Drama* explore the ways in which popular music has become an integral, almost indispensable, feature of TV entertainment, either as soundtrack or as subject. Sheila Whiteley documents the importance of the musical content in what is perhaps Britain’s best-loved comedy series, BBC’s long-running *Dad’s Army*. Produced and broadcast in the 1960s and 1970s (and

frequently repeated in subsequent decades) the series employed the popular music of the 1930s and 1940s in its evocation of day-to-day life in wartime Britain. She shows that in addition to providing appropriate incidental links, the music also performs powerful ideological functions. Blending humour, nostalgia and optimism in its re-creation of an era beyond the memory of many of its viewers, *Dad's Army* used songs from that period to effectively communicate an impression of national identity that had equal resonance within the fictitious world of the Home Guard in Walmington-on-Sea and in the emotional responses of its contemporary audiences. Peter Hutchings examines one of the few British television drama series set within the world of contemporary rock. ITV's *Rock Follies*, which related the fictional story of the Little Ladies over twelve episodes in 1976–77, remains one of the most distinctive programmes of its type. Not only were its downbeat realism and televisual style in sharp contrast with the glamorous escapism that characterised much of cinema's conventional exploitation of popular music, but its emphasis on female performers and their friendships produced a more complex treatment of notions of authenticity, talent and ambition than was apparent in many male-centred movies. Although its apparent engagement with politics may have been stylised, understated and ambiguous, it identified rock music as a dramatic setting from which to comment on broader social and cultural trends, and justified it as an agent of personal and political resistance. Furthermore, its reliance on original songs composed especially for the series allowed those tracks to be integrated into the narrative in an unusually evocative manner. In Chapter 10, Richard Mills offers an evaluation of the relatively unknown and defiantly individual *Revolver*, which ran for just eight programmes on ITV in 1978. Starring the satirical comedian Peter Cook as the manager of a decaying and disreputable club, the show presented live bands who performed to an audience inside the fictitious venue, while Cook made racist and sexist jokes about the musicians, delivered a string of abusive comments about their music, and maintained a sarcastic and insensitive contempt for his customers. Mills suggests that *Revolver's* unorthodox blend of postmodern irony, political satire, contemporary music and commercial cynicism was unfamiliar to the producers and consumers of television comedy, and led directly to its failure. It provides a telling example of the difficulties faced by programme-makers who wish to present popular music in innovative ways. Moreover, in its combination of parody, self-parody and pastiche, it can be seen to offer a less polished, unglamorous version of the storytelling devices used in such films as *The Rules: All You Need Is Cash* (Eric Idle and Gary Weis, 1978) and *This Is Spinal Tap* (Rob Reiner, 1984). Estella Tincknell provides a concentrated assessment of the musical components of the hugely successful *Life On Mars*, whose innovative portrayal of a contemporary policeman propelled back in time from the first decade of the twenty-first century to the alien surroundings of Britain in the early 1970s provided the narrative context for a series that explored the cultural and political tensions between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. The series effectively used the popular music of the day for the exposition of dramatic tension and as an ironic commentary on the central character's emotions as he struggled to come to terms with the personal

and professional dynamics of his new surroundings. However, she suggests that in pursuit of its 'realist' intentions, the show's radical possibilities were potentially disrupted by an underlying nostalgia for a 'lost' form of working-class masculinity and male solidarity that was significantly reinforced by a soundtrack which was predominantly white, male, and genre-specific.

The book's final section, *Audiences And Territories*, investigates the provision of popular music for specific target audiences and within discrete geographical and cultural boundaries. Ian Inglis re-assesses the importance of their early TV appearances in the career of the Beatles. The common version of the group's history emphasises the significance of a small number of prime-time, nationally-transmitted entertainment and variety shows towards the end of 1963 that suddenly alerted the country to the Beatles and their music, and created the conditions for their spectacular breakthrough and the onset of Beatlemania. However, he argues that they had, in fact, achieved a substantial popularity long before those appearances, largely as a result of their willingness to participate in a steady round of regional television appearances through 1962 and 1963 (often very brief, and in off-peak viewing hours) that included slots on children's shows and news magazine programmes – neither of which were aimed at audiences obviously associated with the consumption of popular music.

In Chapter 13, Mike Brocken considers the production in 1964 by Granada (one of ITV's original regional companies) of *The Blues And Gospel Train*. He contends that the Manchester-based company was particularly well-equipped to present the pioneering, 40-minute special, which showcased many of North America's leading blues musicians, at such a time because of its political commitment, its creative ethic, its strong regional identity, and the singular presence of the influential producer Johnny Hamp whose knowledge of musical cultures and tastes was evidenced by the number of jazz, blues, gospel, pop, and rock'n'roll TV specials he produced for Granada in the 1960s. In addition, the visual imagery employed in the programme challenged (stereo)typical patterns of music and race, and contributed to a broader social debate about regional community, cultural geography and the role of television. Finally, Nick Reyland provides a fascinating, and detailed, analysis of the manner in which plot and character developments in the children's stop-motion animation series *Postman Pat* have been paralleled by changes to its musical score. From its first appearance on BBC in 1981, the programme's central character has undergone four distinct incarnations, moving gradually from a placid, good-natured, village postman to an all-action hero. The musical changes have been no less startling: the gentle, folk-pop ballad of the earlier episodes has been replaced by an approach which mixes elements of hard rock with Britpop sensibilities, and there have been significant increases in the density of sound effects. Overall, Reyland demonstrates how *Postman Pat's* associations between musical identity and televisual identity work to supply its young viewers with musically-mediated stories that introduce them to a set of ideological roles and stances.

As a child, I sat cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by members of my extended family, watching black-and-white pictures (that were likely to disappear completely if any other electrical appliances in the home were in use) on a small, square screen, contained within a bulky wooden cabinet in the corner of the living-room. Today, I watch high-definition, colour images (often pre-recorded or remotely-programmed) on a large, flat, wide screen from the comfort of an armchair, while my own children watch online or streamed programmes in their own bedrooms. Television-viewing as a domestic activity has been re-modelled in recent decades; how, when, and where we watch TV has changed significantly. At the same time, the way in which we listen to music has overcome the restrictions of time and space imposed by the transistor radio, the jukebox and the record player. The variety, availability and accessibility of popular music have been transformed by a string of new technologies that store and deliver music in alternative ways (the audio-cassette recorder in 1963, the Sony Walkman in 1979, the compact disc in 1982, Napster in 1999, the iPod in 2001). Despite these developments, the role of television as a vehicle through which exposure to popular music is facilitated, and ideas about it are generated and circulated has never been more vibrant, as the success of shows like *The X Factor* (ITV, 2004–) and *Britain's Got Talent* (ITV, 2007–), both of which reach end-of-series audiences of nearly 20 million (63 per cent of the viewing public), clearly demonstrates. Furthermore, its influence has extended into the routine aesthetics of live performance, as increasingly flamboyant stage presentations attempt to satisfy expectations of visual (as well as musical) entertainment from audiences accustomed to the extravagant imagery of much music video. The significance of popular music's proven ability to embellish programmes, provide new topics for documentary investigation, and attract and retain audiences has become a central component of television production, and the chapters that follow supply a wide-ranging assessment of those reciprocal patterns of interest, involvement and interaction.

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

PART I  
History And Heritage

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# Chapter 1

## Constructing The Histories Of Popular Music: The *Britannia* Series

Paul Long and Tim Wall

Since the broadcast of *Jazz Britannia* in 2005, BBC-TV has produced several documentary series and one-off programmes about the history of musical genres and related cultural activities in the UK under the 'Britannia' label. These programmes include *Folk Britannia* (2006), *Soul Britannia* (2007), *Dance Britannia* (2007), *Pop Britannia* (2008), *Prog Rock Britannia* (2009), *Synth Britannia* (2009), *Blues Britannia* (2009) and *Heavy Metal Britannia* (2010). In the same stylistic vein, *Classic Britannia* (2008) ventured outside popular music forms and *Comics Britannia* (2007) extended the idea to print culture.

In this chapter, we explore the significance of these programmes within the context of the place of music on television. Notable for the manner in which they treat their subject matter, we suggest that as a whole the *Britannia* series represents a remarkable commitment of resources to music television under the guise of 'quality TV'. We explore this characteristic for what it tells us about the institutional context of production and the cultural politics of such programming. A key concern is with the approach to music taken in the series, and the way in which the various projects are worked through as historiography. Our examination reveals much that is original and innovative about the series, but also some continuing limitations attendant upon the relationship between popular music and television. This raises some questions about the project of the BBC as a public service broadcaster, and the expectations generated amongst the intended audiences for these series.

### Quality Television And Music Programming

The issue of 'quality' has engendered much discussion among academics in television studies. Questions arising relate to problems of judgement and critical evaluation (or its avoidance); hierarchies of taste, consumption and power; conflicts between ideas of culture and commerce and the way in which ideas of quality inform broadcasting policy and regulation.<sup>1</sup> For television producers, markers of 'quality' are important aspects of brand identity and in market differentiation. This

---

<sup>1</sup> See Charlotte Brunson, *Screen Tastes : Soap Opera To Satellite Dishes* (London, 1997); Mark Jancovich and James Lyons (eds), *Quality Popular Television: Cult*

sometimes results in a distancing from the traditional dismissal of TV as a mass-produced, culturally ephemeral medium. As one US channel's publicity claims, 'It's not television. It's HBO'.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, the BBC has a well-established (if contested) reputation for culturally valuable public service output, expressed most explicitly in the aim of its digital TV channel BBC4: 'to offer an intelligent alternative to programmes on the mainstream TV channels'.<sup>3</sup>

Launched in March 2002, BBC4 was the first of the Corporation's forays into the digital delivery of TV, 'establishing a reputation as an originator of high-quality, distinctive programming, proving it was possible to be both unashamedly intelligent yet stimulatingly pleasurable'.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the channel has been lauded for its strength in music programming. Peter Maniura, BBC's Head of Classical Music, and one of the people charged with formulating the channel's music policy, has said that his intention for BBC4 was to give airtime to music such as folk and jazz, genres not usually covered on 'mainstream' channels, in order to 'broaden the mix and give more depth and volume'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Janice Hadlow, BBC4's original controller (2004–2008), has said that the channel aimed to challenge viewers: its goals in music programming are to 'allow people to enjoy what they know and love already, but also about introducing an intelligent and discerning audience to new and challenging music'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the channel offers music-themed nights or extended seasons of music programming, 'acting as a testing ground for new approaches to music broadcasting'.<sup>7</sup>

Even within such a context, the various *Britannia* series offer a distinctive approach to music addressed to the intelligence and discernment of BBC4's intended audience. *Jazz Britannia* created a template for further series, with its three-part history of jazz in Britain narrated by actor Terence Stamp. Formally, the series draws upon an impressive wealth of archival research and uncovered material: clips from television, film and radio, still images, press cuttings, and original interviews with British jazz players from the post-war period. In addition, critics and chroniclers of the genre such as Val Wilmer and John Fordham are also employed to lend weight and perspective to the narrative focus and interpretation.

To date, a generous range of appreciative previews has heralded each series. These have served to highlight the programmes as instances of 'must-see' TV,

---

*TV, The Industry And Fans* (London, 2003); Jane McCabe and Kim Akass, *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television And Beyond* (London, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion, see Jane Feuer, 'HBO And The Concept Of Quality TV', in McCabe and Akass, *Quality TV*, pp. 145–57.

<sup>3</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/faq/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/faq/).

<sup>4</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/controllers/janicehadlow.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/controllers/janicehadlow.shtml).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Maniura, quoted in 'The Insider: BBC4', *Music Week*, 13 August 2005: p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/controllers/janicehadlow.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/controllers/janicehadlow.shtml).

<sup>7</sup> Maniura, quoted in 'The Insider'.