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Hard Floors, Harsh Sounds and the Northern Anti-Festival: Futurama 1979-1983

Abstract: *This article explores the history and context of the post-punk festival Futurama, inaugurated in 1979 within the cavernous, makeshift and disintegrating venue of Leeds Queens Hall, and running on an annual basis for five years. As a musical statement Futurama gathered the provincial post-punk micro-scenes that were congealing in many cities in the North and beyond, building upon a vaguely coherent common strand of moving beyond punk, by adding a sense of industrial angst and futuristic ambiguity. It was a festival without an equal at the time, as large festivals emerging from the hippie and rock scenes had settled with events like Glastonbury and Reading and catered for audiences within those scenes.*

The article sets out the first academic documentation of the five Futurama festivals. It presents an antecedent timeline of festival culture and discusses how both punk (and post-punk) and the North became excluded from this culture. It then documents the immediate post-punk environment as it grew in the industrial (and post-industrial) North by looking at the bands included over the span of Futurama's duration. Building upon existing work documenting these post-punk scenes and the problematic status of Leeds as a city trying to assert its own post-punk identity, I draw out the origins of the goth subculture as emerging from the Futurama concept.

The time of Futurama is then looked back on in both a hauntological context and a discussion of place (and buildings within place). The locations of the events and their staging as a kind of inversion of the open space and fresh air ideology of festivals is considered within a framework of architectural other-directedness.

Key words: Leeds, Post-punk, Futurama, Goth, Festivals, Dystopia

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In 1979 the Leeds based music promoter John F. Keenan announced Futurama: The World's First Science Fiction Music Festival. This event would take place in Keenan's home city, at the disintegrating Leeds Queens Hall. The venue had been constructed as the Swinegate Depot for Leeds City Tramways in the early 1900s and extended for more vehicle capacity in 1914. Following what appeared to be a minimal makeover, it was switched to general entertainment use in May 1961 with the hosting of an Ideal Homes Exhibition. As the final decades of the century played out, Queens Hall witnessed indoor Christmas fun fairs in the 1960s, large scale concerts by rock and pop bands, northern soul all-nighters in the 1970s and giant flea markets. The building was recalled as being

makeshift and unsuitable at many levels regarding its conversion of use from transport depot to venue; it had poor acoustics, shoddy facilities and suffered from dreadful climatic conditions.[1]

Futurama was an ambitious event that strived to bring a showcase of the genres of punk and its immediate offspring - post-punk - to this Yorkshire outpost. At the time, Leeds was a city that was at a standstill, struggling under a cloud of gritty northern poverty and a pervasive psychological curfew made real through the brutal series of murders by Peter Sutcliffe, dubbed as the Yorkshire Ripper, carried out in a relentless and monotonic rhythm.[2] Thus, Futurama enjoys something of a conflicted history. It can be read as an event that invites readings of trauma, disorder and negativity at the cultural and social levels, however it must be emphasised that it was seen at the time (and is still remembered by many) as an important event and a brave attempt to create both a scene in Leeds and a fusion point for the various other city-based post-punk scenes.[3]

The 1979 event formed the first of a series of five festivals under the umbrella title of Futurama, the event running over an autumn weekend for each year until 1983.[4] Though these events featured national bands, there was a strong Northern English post-punk presence, mirroring the city-based scenes that had started to coagulate following the initial fireball of punk rock. Furthermore, Futurama was pitched in a specific way and played out in an equally specific, but unpredictable, manner. The scope for uncertainty and deviation was high from the start, with the elements of the music itself, its manifestation in the North in both location and geographic nexus of bands, the strange nature of the venue, and a hostile music press reaction that paradoxically fed the scene around the festival year after year.

The countervailing factor in the hopes for Futurama concerned the specifics of the genres of punk and post-punk, most notably that these were genres of music that eschewed a festival atmosphere and mode of consumption, preferring to dwell in niches of both sonic and existential difficulty, introspection and awkwardness. They demanded a degree of attention and proximity in both the

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[1] 'Motörhead complained about the acoustics, and it was absolutely freezing in winter, with ice forming on the retained tramlines' from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queens_Hall,_Leeds or 'The Queens Hall, supposedly a top venue ..... a converted tram shed, with the appalling acoustics, a floor of rock solid concrete, appalling climatic conditions, stinking toilets & terrible catering set in those days the most dismal part of the city!' from http://secretleeds.com/viewtopic.php?t=668

[2] Peter William Sutcliffe is an English serial killer who was dubbed the 'Yorkshire Ripper' by the press. Sutcliffe murdered 13 women between 1975 and 1980, initially targeting prostitutes in the Leeds and Bradford area. He was captured and convicted in 1981.

[3] The promoter John F. Keenan has been supporting the Leeds music scene since 1977, and still continues to promote gigs in the city - see http://www.liveinleeds.com/ . A retrospective round table talk featured Keenan and other key musicians and activists from the Leeds scene in November 2015. There was general agreement that Futurama was a key event and a good thing for the city at the time - see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3sTeMFQHNI

[4] The name Futurama was then taken up for a festival in Deinze, Belgium. A final Futurama 6 was put on by original promoter Kennan in 1989 utilising the Palace venue at Bradford. This event, due to it occurring after the fracturing of the post-punk scene, is not considered in this chapter. A 'rival' event called 'Daze of Future Past' occurred in 1981 due to a London promoter booking Leeds Queens Hall and putting on a direct copy of the two day Futurama format. It was this event which forced Keenan to temporarily move Futurama 3 out of Leeds.

filtering in of the anxiety and angst within the sound and lyrical structures, as well as a space to embody and express emotion and uptight-ness. Narratives of spoken (or voice sampled) content, sonic ambience and musical style moved towards themes drawn from industrial and technological claustrophobia and futuristic ambiguity, a brittle and spittle of deviant punk in grim cities. The traditional festival ambience, formulated through the counter-cultural drifts of the 1960s and 1970s, with its embrace of positivity, unity and hope, its correlation with fresh air to carry both the sound-in-itself and the vibe associated with the sound, its shared space of letting go and becoming 'as one', were antithetical to punk and post-punk. Futurama, and its space of the cavernous, dark and dank Queens Hall, inadvertently formulated itself as a kind of *anti-festival*. It was outdoors in a sense, in that it brought a version of the outdoors as a kind of eternal wet, cold and distinctly Northern night into the indoors. Being a depot and not a public station, the building utilised a basic build of internal girders and repeating triangular roof sections, as opposed to grand ferro-vitreous structures associated with turn of the century passenger terminals and arcades (Schivelbusch 1986: 49). This meant that a sublime experience of light, an 'impressionistic dissolution of the object' (Reynolds 1995: 204), would not be facilitated. Instead the Queens Hall offered something more akin to Joy Division's 'Shadowplay' - darkened spaces with objects as shadows-in-themselves as opposed to object and associated shadows - a perfect ambience for the event. Futurama would take place over a weekend in September, with punters allowed to blend with the industrial palimpsest and simply sleep on the dirty, concrete floor between each day. There were no festival codes followed, no invitation or opportunity to get in touch with nature, with spirits, with yourself.

With the academic milieu seeing a new interest in the general historification of the UK festival scene,[5] Futurama has continuously evaded discussion, mimicking perhaps its original circumstances (if not premise) of never quite being a festival. It presents an uncomfortable fit and resides as an outlier to narrative, eluding inclusion in various lists of key events and timelines.[6] This article redresses this imbalance, whilst at the same time working within the antagonistic constellation that surrounded the original series of events such that I propose to consider Futurama historically as an anti-festival in the fullest sense of the term. Firstly I will situate the 1979 Futurama festival at the junction of various cultural and social trends leading in to the moment of the event, secondly I will examine the dynamics of these trends over the five years of the festival's duration with particular regard as to how Futurama became a cipher for reading a direction of music and Northern identity emphasising the post-punk lacuna in Leeds at the end of the 1970s, and finally I will develop a new series of narratives and contexts for understanding the Futurama phenomenon as anti-festival. With academic consideration and accessible resources of Futurama at a bare minimum, my work will be partly autoethnographic, drawing on my own recollections of attending these events, and partly developed through testimony mined from deeper enclaves of the internet such as specialist music discussion forums and responses to hosted videos on sharing sites such as YouTube.[7]

[5] See McKay (2015) as the most recent example.

[6] Both Clarke (1982) and McKay (2000) have chronologies, as well as the UK Festivals website http://www.ukrockfestivals.com/index.html

[7] Futurama 2 (1980) was recorded in its entirety and edited down for a short television programme. Residual recordings have emerged over the years and have been added to YouTube to evoke various responses.

Towards Futurama 1: the context of 1979

I will now situate the occurrence of the 1979 Futurama within five overlapping themes: a timeline of festival culture leading up to 1979, the cultural dynamics of post-punk within the UK, the spatial dynamics of post-punk and the notion of Northern enclaves of stylistic differentiation, the concept of sci-fi, and a wider concept of the cultural representation of the North.

Festival culture in the UK is generally acknowledged as starting with the 1956 Beaulieu Jazz Festival, with the 1960 edition of the same event also providing first evidence of subcultural factionalist scuffles.[8] This early incident of disharmony within the micro-worlds of post-war subcultures sets out the first media marker of festival induced errant behaviour. Alongside this, a second contour is set out with the reporting of the Aldermaston CND marches as an organised form of getting together using music and dance, forging a counter-cultural festivity-within-activity. The final 'folk-devil' associated with festival culture emerges within the Richmond and Windsor festivals organised by Harold Pendleton, with the 1965 event bringing nomadism and dirt (McKay 2000: 6) alongside a general squalor (Clarke 1982: 27) to the foreground of public attention. This notion of dirt and squalor would re-emerge in a different context within Futurama.

The 1960s saw festivals gather force despite these media portrayals, with the counter-culture of the decade seizing upon the opportunities opened up through the festival format. This extended into outdoor spaces (Flower Children at Woburn Abbey in 1967, Isle of Wight from 1968, Hyde Park in 1969, Phun City at Worthing in 1970), all-night club events (such as the UFO club at the Roundhouse), and indoor events at hired spaces (Psychedelicamania at Camden Roundhouse for New Year's Eve in 1966, Christmas on Earth at Olympia in 1967 and the 14 hour Technicolor Dream at Alexandra Palace in 1967).[9] Throughout this period festivals began to define the decades and their music scenes.[10]

Depictions of dirt, disorder and anarchy aside, the festivals also worked a vein of positivity and hedonism, embodying what McKay (2000) originally framed as 'vital spaces, vital moments of cultural difference', and then expanded to 'utopian desire… temporary heightened space-time having the fundamental purpose of envisioning and crafting another, better world' (McKay 2015: 4). Clarke (1982: 25) emphasises the fusing of festival culture and counter-culture, with regard to the transformation of society and the bohemian retreat, an Edenic and holistic reading that persists into the present.[11] At the same time, the 1970s saw music genres shift more towards powerful rock and glam-rock performances with an emphasis on volume and spectacle, creating a new breed of festival

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Futurama 1 was not recorded as a film event but various sound recordings exist. The inclusion of Joy Division in the line-up has meant that recordings of their set have populated YouTube.

[8] An internecine dispute between modernist and trad jazz fans, see McKay (2000: 4) and Hewison (1986: 186).

[9] See Miles (2010: 217) for extensive details of the 14 Hour Technicolour Dream event.

[10] Sounes (2006: 42) describes the riot at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival as a 'semi-colon between the music scene of the 1960s and the new decade', whilst McKay (2000: 17) uses the 1969 USA festivals at Altamont and Woodstock (both beset with controversy) as signalling 'the end of not just the decade but the sense of the decade, the idea of the sixties'.

[11] Recent work looking at a Lefebvre derived 'rhythmanalysis' approach to the festival (Tjora 2016) documents a leisurely drift around a sanitised festival environment.

that celebrated the communal appreciation of the music as a priority. The music and this open-air mode of communal listening seemed to symbiotically entwine, leading to mega-events such as the Donington Monsters of Rock Festival starting in 1980.

The dawning of punk in the second half of the 1970s would square up to this sense of festivity, optimism and lyrical and sonic allegiance to communal listening. Wicke (1990: 94) describes the old regime of rock as an 'immediacy of the musical experience and the highly personalised relationship between artist and audience', and such a nested and mediated set of modes of operation would be questioned as part of punk's critique and continual self-examination.[12] Whilst Malcolm McLaren devised an initial festival *of a sort* to both launch and claim the punk movement with his event at the 100 Club in September 1976, the fit between the festival and punk rock suddenly seemed out of joint.[13] This situation proved itself with the disastrous attempt to hold a punk festival at Chelmsford Football Club in 1977 - punk rock and festival culture would not make good bedfellows.[14]

My second theme to explore regarding Futurama 1979 is a brief contouring of the post-punk scene with specific regard to the line-up for the event. Reynolds (2006) provides the clearest and most extensive introduction to post-punk, and I will use his work as an overarching guide. He takes the symbolic impetus point of post-punk to be the implosion of the Sex Pistols in January 1978 and then suggests the period 1978-1984 as the post-punk years (neatly encapsulating the five Futurama events). The key releases occur through 1979 with the Public Image Limited (PiL) single 'Death Disco' (June), Joy Division's album *Unknown Pleasures* and finally the PiL album *Metal Box* (December) - these releases signalling a clear break with a hackneyed punk sound but plunging deeper into disconcerting moods and cross-genre infections (dub, disco, funk-noir). By featuring both Joy Division and PiL, Futurama was certainly up to date with the pulse of post-punk, and these bands featured most prominently in the reviews of the event. The appearance of PiL and their vocalist John Lydon was a typically fraught affair. They performed in the early hours of the morning and offered what would be the first airing of tracks from *Metal Box*. The band were quoted as having a 'horrible time' with Lydon reacting by playing with his back to the audience. The sound was poor, the crowd were exhausted, and the tracks previewed from the pending album were described as 'bewildering and indecipherable'.[15]

My third theme concerns post-punk's heterogeneous region-specific rooting of sound across Northern England. A staggered temporal take up of music on a geographic basis pre-dates punk with the complex dispersal of the mod scene in the 1960s renegotiating sounds and codes to form the northern soul scene.[16] Post-punk's centrifugalism is predominantly unpacked through bands, labels,

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[12] A clear example of this is provided by Laing (1985: 27) who dissects a sample of punk rock lyrical themes set against popular music genres.

[13] Buzzcocks manager Richard Boon quoted in Haslam (2015: 241) described the 100 Club event as 'a shop-floor window for things that hadn't yet been produced'.

[14] The event billed as Chelmsford City Rock failed to attract any crowd and quickly descended in to a farce. Clarke (1984: 152) has brief details though a more comprehensive report can be found at http://www.ukrockfestivals.com/city-rock-chelmsford-1977.html .

[15] See http://www.fodderstompf.com/GIG%20LIST/leeds79.html

[16] See Anderson (2013) and Beesley (2014) for good overviews.

city-scenes and nuanced stylistic coagulations - with many of these divisions often lining up in parallel sequence (for example a label may crop up to represent a city with a particular sound). Of the approximately 30 bands that played Futurama 1 we can group around half of them as being attached to the cities of Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield, cities that were associated with a specific sound within the variegated post-punk milieu. Reynolds (2006: xxiv) turns his attention to these cities and, speaking of Manchester and Sheffield,[17] tries to pin down the underlying drive to the sound and lyrical structures as 'the problems and the possibilities of human existence in an increasingly technological world… pondering the dilemma of alienation vs adaptation in a machine age… aestheticising panoramas of decay'. In his recent network-sociological approach to post-punk, Crossley (2015) works back across similar ground to Reynolds and etches out the socio-economic and cultural specifics of the North that forged both a nuanced and unified set of differences[18] regarding the sound and style of the music, seeing a common factor as being rooted in industrial decline and the opportunities opened up by cheap and accessible warehouse space. Crossley's work focusses on the modelling of networks, but it is possible to expand on this idea of desolate and semi-derelict industrial space as configuring an orientation to the genre influenced by the bleak hopelessness embodied in the aesthetics of the space.[19] There is also the emergence of a nascent club scene specific to the post-punk expressions in each of the four cities, with Haslam (2015: 286) suggesting the Limit (Sheffield), Factory (as a venue in Manchester that predated the label), Eric's (Liverpool) and the F-Club (founded by Keenan in Leeds) all providing a creative hub and refuge within each city.

Other factors created specific dynamics and I can briefly cover these on a city-by-city basis. Manchester post-punk was forged by a strong core of individuals who brought in a wider palette of skills with individuals such as Martin Hannett (experimental producer) and Peter Saville (designer) uniting with Tony Wilson to craft a very strategic sound and identity for Factory Records. Wilson is described in Crossley (2015: 170) as someone who 'loved the transgressive nature of punk, he loved the North West of England, and he cherished the opportunity to bring the two together', pinpointing the nature of Factory's ambition to create their own sound within post-punk as a regional thing. There was even a semi-ironic attempt to curate an open-air festival at Leigh with Factory organising a kind of ceasing of (mock) hostilities between Manchester and Liverpool, but reports suggest that this event was woefully attended and has slipped into a historical grey zone.[20] Reynolds (2006: 174)

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[17] Manchester would be the dominant city represented in Futurama 1, however Sheffield would dominate Futurama 2 in 1980.

[18] By this I mean that northern cities were unified in creating something different to punk, even if that unified difference in sound and style then manifested itself as contrasts and diversity between cities.

[19] See Edensor (2005) for a detailed study of the extended aesthetics of industrial ruin, with particular regard to ruin as representing a prefiguration of future degeneration.

[20] The festival ran for three days - 25, 26, and 27 August 1979 - with Factory (Manchester) and Zoo (Liverpool) providing what is now considered as something of a classic line-up of bands with an official Factory number (FAC 15). In the end it is reported that between 200 and 500 people attended. Documentation of the event is listed at http://www.cerysmaticfactory.info/fac15.php .

in turn emphasises the urban landscape of Manchester that fed into the music, such that a 'desolate denatured environment persisted'.

Whilst Manchester post-punk seems to have been catalysed by a Sex Pistols gig that has achieved mythical status, Crossley (2015: 174) suggests a similar event in May 1977 by a different London punk band, the Clash, catalysed the Liverpool scene. This led to a loose consortium of individuals gathered together as a kind of *super-group* (Big in Japan) that only existed as a kind of agency to facilitate the formation of other bands who went on the define the Liverpool post-punk scene. Again there is a regional factor dictating both the coming-to-be and in-itself of the scene, the decline in the once busy docks of Liverpool creating cold and cavernous spaces of opportunity for bands to practice.

In Sheffield there was already a post-punk sound emerging with Cabaret Voltaire in the pre-punk era, setting out as early as 1973 and then using the punk boom to 'rise to prominence in a nexus of DIY musical activism inspired and triggered by punk' (Crossley 2015: 164). The Sheffield post-punk look and sound was very specific and based heavily on synthesisers and electronic machinery, Mallinder (2007) situating the Northern-ness of this in both an economic context: 'with a drum machine, sequencer or super-8 projector, frequently cheaper or more available than a guitar amp or drum kit, access and affordability gave modernity an ironic appeal' and also a socio-cultural context as a 'sonic nexus of electronic technology and regional dysfunction'. The Sheffield electronic sound was etched out in a very different way to the strategic and style-oriented approach in Manchester, utilising ephemeral space opened up at the University (Lilleker 2005: 7). The brutal industrial landscape - both a brutality past of metronomic steel forges and a brutality present of dereliction - seeps into the music, bleeding in to the wider theme of dystopian science fiction that Futurama touched upon. Martyn Ware of the Human League is quoted in Reynolds (2006: 150) as 'growing up in a science fiction noisescape'.

The Leeds scene is harder to pinpoint, without a local record label to bring together a possible sound or direction within the city's post-punk milieu.[21] Music seems to be centred around the University, Polytechnic and Art College with bands such as Gang of Four, the Mekons, Delta 5 and Scritti Politti developing an anxious, edgy and introverted-agitational sense of (dis)achievement looked over by art-activist tutors such as T.J. Clark (ex-British situationist) and Terry Atkinson (Art and Language). This connection to academia extending from contiguity to collusion could be considered as a barrier to a coherent identity as exemplified in other Northern cities, leaving Leeds as a lacuna in the North. A recent move to celebrate and historify the Leeds scene via a film about the Mekons saw some critical reflection on how the scene developed within the strictures of the city, and there is a focus here *away* from ghosts of industrial past (Sheffield and Manchester) and more towards a very real horrific presence at the time with the grip of fear put upon the city through Peter Sutcliffe. This extreme cloak of psychological dread merged with more diffuse forces around racial tension and a culture of violence made prominent with the reputation of the large 'firm' attached to the city's football team.[22] Thus, the Leeds sound is not defined reflecting and reacting against nuanced

[21] The small print for the flyer for Futurama states that the event is hoping 'to establish a new record label and possibly a rock magazine for this part of the North' such that 'to the musicians/artists of this area it could mean the difference between success and obscurity'.

[22] A firm is the vernacular term for an aggressive gang or aggregation of hooligans.

conditions of the city, but is defined in terms of its existence in spite of the totality of its surroundings. It emerged, survived and grew through a sense of preparedness to create music and a stubbornness to keep going.[23]

My fourth theme to situate Futurama concerns its claim to be a sci-fi festival, though this is often a misnomer as the wider effects of the festival as a series have played out in history. However, the flyer for the first event labels it as 'the world's first science fiction music festival' and advertises a constant flow of films including *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *Freaks* and *Barbarella*, with supporting side-shows, slide shows, laser displays, street theatre and artwork. It is possible to semantically deconstruct the statement as being a declaration of the music itself being science fiction, a kind of grouped branding of the genres within the city-specific scenes. Certainly a key British author such as J.G. Ballard would be a possible unifying theme between the Sheffield and Manchester scenes; the lyrics of Joy Division drawing heavily on Ballard's works whilst the synth-based sounds of artists such as Cabaret Voltaire and Human League emerging directly from within a Ballardian post-industrial cityscape.[24].

My final theme concerns the wider context of the North represented in the media and popular culture around the time of Futurama in 1979.[25] This crosses over into the other themes, for example the simple historical fact that ascendant festival culture and the North were not coterminous such that the chronology of festival culture outlined above has the North as a conspicuous absence.[26] Another clue to the cultural annexing of the North occurs on the Futurama flyer, giving the location of Leeds as being 'at the other end of the M1 from London', the original multi-lane and complete motorway built in England and therefore in itself an icon of modernity. This gives substance to the fine differencing between suggesting the M1 goes to Leeds or ends at Leeds, the latter terminology prioritising the road itself against the destination. The M1 played a significant part in Leeds claiming an identity, firstly it became synonymous with 'The North' due to signs on the motorway always stating this as the final destination (Moran 2009: 71), and secondly it branded itself as 'motorway city of the seventies' with all mail from the city employing this proud franking mark (Moran 2009: 204). Both of these instances can clearly be interpreted in an ironic manner, dovetailing back into the previous theme of sci-fi and the Ballardian investigations of motorway culture.

At the sociological level Taylor et al (1996) offer a comparison of Manchester and Sheffield using testimony gathered in the early 1990s, and this enquiry provides strong evidence of the intra-region

[23] O'Brien (2012) documents the specifics of a gendered post-punk identity within the aggressive male culture of early 1980s Leeds.

[24] Ian Curtis's reading of Ballard is explored by Jon Savage in his *Guardian* column https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/may/10/popandrock.joydivision

[25] Davidson (2005: 209) identified the North as starting at Sheffield, marked by the feeling of 'an arrival on the other side of the frontier'.

[26] Clarke (1982: 43) details the Krumlin Festival 14-16 August 1970 as the first festival in the North, taking place on farmland in West Yorkshire. The event was beset by atrocious weather and photographs of the event resemble a humanitarian relief action. See http://www.ukrockfestivals.com/Krumlin-festival-1970.html

differences of cities in the North by working with the idea of structures of feeling.[27] Russell (2004) gives the historical overview of the North within the national imagination, though his critical eye loses focus as he brings his work into the late 1970s. Cultural readings of the region can be difficult to disentangle between a blanket North (versus South)[28] and place-specific representations, though Barry Hines television screenplay for *Threads* (1984) was a key moment even if it falls just the wrong side of the Futurama years. This disconcerting BBC drama depicts the nuclear apocalypse played out in Sheffield, and the theme of nuclear annihilation was a key signature in the lyrics of many punk and post-punk songs. Finally, it would be the work of novelist David Peace who would create the strongest images of life in the North at the time around 1979, particularly the Leeds area under the grip of fear from Peter Sutcliffe. Peace's writing relentlessly disrupts harmony, understanding and nostalgia with his attempts to 'establish alternative relationships between time frames… Peace does not turn to the past neutrally or offer history as consensus' (Shaw 2011: 3), thus leading to a sense of the North as both 'in an obstinate state of marginality' and 'a fractured peremptory of conflicted and conflicting space' (Shaw 2011: 11).

Convergence of phenomenology and affect

Asylums with doors open wide,
Where people had paid to see inside,
For entertainment they watch his body twist,
Behind his eyes he says, 'I still exist.'[29]

> 'September 8 1979 and the glittering hi tech sci-fi Futurama festival, billed as cutting edge science show with futuristic music, restaurants and sleeping facilities. ..... what a load of bullshit !!!!!! the conditions could not have been worse or more opposite the promised paradise, a huge dark dirty old bus depot with concrete floor, no restaurant or food, no drinking water, the toilets were six inches under water, and there were ever growing piles of puke, bottles and cans in the back two thirds of the cavernous bus depot. The accommodation was..... sleep on the concrete floor!!!!!! That was a fucking hard night on that concrete with no bedding or blanket except my jacket!! Numerous fights broke out during the day as foolish 'entertainers' tried to put on a show in the side 'stalls' around the edges, this was attempted in almost complete darkness. One by one they were bottled off within seconds, some of them running for their lives!!!!!!! Psycho bouncers circled looking for the slightest excuse..... all in all the conditions would be unacceptable in a concentration camp..... enter Joy Division'.[30]

> 'That floor - yes, I managed to find bit of cardboard to lay on and my leather did a good job and getting up early to find a warm drink. Remember the films shown about 1am - the

[27] The work attempts to redress the dominance of a realist political economy approach (such that the assumed economic poverty of the North provides a blanket way of understanding the region, its cities and its people), opting instead for a 'perspective of cultural sociology' (Taylor et al 1996: 8).

[28] Shields (1991: 207-251) provides an overview of the North as cultural representation.

[29] Joy Division 'Atrocity Exhibition'

[30] Testimony of event from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cQT5qTyqCs

> Dali film repeating the razor blade through a woman's eye - over and over then some idjit screeching a guitar meaninglessly on the stage till threatened off it'.[31]
>
> 'You felt momentarily what it was like to be homeless, to sleep on a concrete floor, like in a bus station, to just lie down in the midst of whatever chaos had ensued through the day'.[32]
>
> 'All i can remember about the Queens hall ones were all the bodies all over the floor in a right state and the smell. It looked like a hospital casualty ward with no lights'.[33]

Crossley (2014: 222) considers Futurama 1 as a hub within his wider scheme of sociologically mapping subcultural networks: the festival 'contributing to the formation of both a national post-punk identity and concrete ties which lent that identity substance'. But the festival worked for many of those attending on a different level, due to the quick deterioration of the conditions within what was a difficult environment to start with. It was at this point that the affective themes of dystopian sci-fi and post-punk explorations of totalitarianism and brutal tests of endurance and discipline converged into an actual experience. As the *NME* review pointedly remarked in what it headlined as 'the Squalor of Leeds', Cabaret Voltaire's 'No Escape' and Joy Division's 'The Atrocity Exhibition' took on a rather ironic meaning.

This concordance of musical and lyrical affect with phenomenological actuality formed a mental scar on many of those attending the event. The post-punk *habitus* of attending gigs, seeking out obscure and adventurous records and consuming music in a thinking space was interrupted with the forced conditions of the festival - bands performing relentlessly one after the other[34] within deteriorating conditions, the sense of an eternal gloom as night-time was sensed (but no one was quite sure) and the only option was to lie down on the floor and try to go to sleep. *Guardian* music journalist Dave Simpson attended the 1979 event and amidst the great bands he witnessed he recalls that 'the Queens Hall venue floor came off on your clothing: by the end of the Saturday everyone was a uniform bleak grey… 27 years later, I can instantly remember that unmistakable, echoey atmosphere, the smell of glue and the desperate feeling of trying to get to sleep at 2am while a man onstage plays electric guitar in front of a film of earthworms'.[35]

The contemporaneous review of the event in *NME* provides a good insight into the wider themes I outlined feeding in to the understanding of Futurama and post-punk 1979, inadvertently providing a cut-off between the current and the futures to come. In reviewing the first day Andy Gill tries to align Futurama with the Isle of Wight Festival, both events bookending 1970s festival culture. Gill

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[31] Ibid

[32] From conversation with Sheffield musicians who attended Futurama 1.

[33] Ibid

[34] Keenan devised a twin stage set-up such that as one band performed the next band could be setting up ready to play straight after.

[35] See http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2006/oct/25/themusicfestivalthatchange1

states he attended the Isle of Wight event and suggests the squalor that unites the two events somehow signals the sense of the end of an era. Gill as a professional journalist would have moved through the decade being paid to proclaim and promote the next big things to an *NME* readership eager to be instructed in the latest trends,[36] but he fails to remark on how post-punk (and punk) had escaped and critiqued the festival format as the 1970s played out. The squalor of the original 1970 festival culture can be understood as part of a wider *celebrating* of a hedonistic other of transcendent politics and living, rooted to the earth and outside of a politics of authority. The squalor of Futurama is not embraced as a glimpse of a way forward; it emerges as the forced physical embodiment of the affective dystopia of post-punk. Taken together, the two festivals suggest a mirroring cultural mutation of what Giorgio Agamben might classify as 'bare life' as formulated through the work of Hegarty (2007: 146) who takes his noise subject as 'subjectivity as a coming undone of subjectivity replaced by existing as the sole purpose of existing'.

Futurama unfolds: distaste and displace

The chastening review in *NME* did not deter the festival from moving on to a second event in 1980 even though the situation of the Queens Hall had not improved from the squalor it was accused of bringing about. Futurama 2 quickly accrued an equally impressive roster of bands and was much anticipated by the fans of post-punk in the North (and beyond), suggesting that the conditions of the experiencing the event and their congruence with the music was seen as part of the thing itself, an ironic holism. Fans still bedded down on a cold floor stained with 50 years' worth of petrol, diesel and engine oil. However, what marks out Futurama 2 as particularly interesting is the shift of dynamics in the music scene of the time. Both *The Face* and *i-D* magazines launched in 1980, and it was clear that post-punk was fracturing along a diverse number of lines of style and commercialism that would eventually overrule discernible stylistic delineation based upon region. These magazines promoted a barrage of tightly manicured and stylised images - either of a band or an evanescent and miniscule subcultural expression - with an aim to stake out commercial ground and make an impact on the mainstream music scene. The years of 1981 and 1982 would see the charts shaken up with many of the obscure acts from these events, artists rising from wilful (and possibly woeful) obscurity to appear on key music television programme *Top of the Pops* within a matter of months.. The line-up of Futurama 2, and to a lesser extent Futurama 3, resides as a kind of tipping point of such opportunism, with many artists about to go on to carve out wider success as pop-punk (Siouxsie and the Banshees, Altered Images), guitar pop (Echo and the Bunnymen, U2, Simple Minds) and synth-pop (Soft Cell).[37] Other included bands would quickly re-group and re-format after 1980 and seek out commercial success (Vice Versa became ABC, Frantic Elevators became Simply Red).

At the same time, a second strand of subcultural formation grew outside of this toying with commercial potential, with groups asserting a harder sound mixed with tailored identities encouraging loyal followings. This is initially evident with Futurama 3 which features the first shoots of a tightly packaged goth image and sound (Bauhaus, UK Decay and Sisters of Mercy performing

[36] Co-reviewer Ian Penman, covering the second day of Futurama, resorts to talking about bands not appearing but who are, in his account, fashionable.

[37] Soft Cell appeared at Futurama 2 as an unknown band; however 1981 saw the breakthrough of the synth-pop scene and by the end of the year the band had a number one hit with 'Tainted Love'.

their first major gig) as well as Theatre of Hate who were developing a hard punk-rockabilly blend. Whilst three of the four aforementioned bands are from the South, they would have a substantial impact on the music scenes in the North. Futurama 4 would see a second day made up predominantly from northern goth bands (Southern Death Cult, Danse Society, Dead or Alive, March Violets) with horror-punk godfathers the Damned and newer artists Gene Loves Jezebel and Sex Gang Children contributing to the goth aura. Futurama 5, held at the end of 1983, consisted almost entirely of goth and 'Theatre of Hate style' bands, most of whom were resigned to ploughing a furrow in a difficult career satisfying a niche audience.

The sense of displacement and disarray that was engendered with Queens Hall to enmesh with the music itself continued through Futurama 3 and 4 as the festival itself was displaced from Leeds. Futurama 3 was held at Stafford Bingley Hall in the West Midlands, described as a '10,000-plus capacity shed owned by the Staffordshire Agricultural Society, purpose-built to accommodate penned farm animals' (Haslam 2015: 213).[38] Conditions here were equally dystopian as, like the Queens Hall, it was designed to be a one-off event place where a headline act was experienced without time or motivation to examine the actual surroundings. It is said that sleeping arrangements here became more surreal with black bin bags being given out.[39] Futurama 4 moved to an equally obscure outpost with the Deeside Leisure Centre in North Wales, enabling a 4,000 capacity crowd to witness music through the covering of the ice rink. Free camping was offered nearby and an all-night game of football ensued on the pitches between the Saturday and Sunday.

It was this continued spatial and psychological squalor and the evidence of a new subculture emerging within the squalor that contributed to the *NME* generating a strong distaste for the whole thing. Seeing themselves as something beyond tastemakers, embodying a kind of Bourdieu inspired mode of post-punk distinction, the reviewers of the events were tempered by both the flowing out of some Futurama bands to unlikely success in the charts and the honing down of other bands into what would form the goth and positive punk scenes.[40] Reynolds (2006: 270) describes the *NME* reaction to Futurama 2 as 'Castle Donington for the angst-rock brigade', further quoting *NME* journalist Adrian Thrills describing the crowd as 'post-punk's new hippies' and Paul Morley signalling

[38] See also http://www.last.fm/venue/8864379+Stafford+Bingley+Hall

[39] 'I'm surprised it had electricity and it smelt bad. The only other facilities were some porter-loos and a little club-house pavilion thing bar that wouldn't have been out of place beside a village cricket green. We also had the draconian licensing laws in 81 so it only opened 12-2pm and 7-10pm. Nowhere else to buy food/drink and we were probably about six miles outside Stafford but there was an infrequent bus service back into town. Everyone was kicked out of the shed at the end of the night as we weren't even allowed to sleep with the beer cans. However there was a cattle parade ring outside and they did allow us to sleep in the little grandstand that overlooked it. The organisers even handed out black bin liners to kip in. A thoughtful gesture.' From https://www.myheartland.co.uk/viewtopic.php?p=89253

[40] The origins of goth as a formulated genre tend to drift backwards, though surprisingly early Factory Records publicity used the term to describe some of their artists. At the same time the comic-horror strand of punk would be developing a goth mode without referring to goth itself. The moniker of positive punk was a short lived scene that ironically came to be in an NME feature in what must have been a slow news week. Most of the bands labelled positive punk, if not just an evanescent operation to catch a trend, would become part of the goth scene. The best history of the goth incunabulum is http://www.historyofgoth.com/ or goth journalist Mick Mercer's archives at http://www.mickmercer.com/index.html

‘the unwelcome rise of a new underground… playing to the fans who are not so much the converted as the contained’.

Batcave or Batley? A new Northern cult

The persistence of the goth scene in heavily stylised and easily recognisable subcultural forms into the current era of ‘neo-tribes’ means that critical work on the goth phenomenon permeates contemporary research into youth subcultures (see Haenfler 2010 and Gunn 1999). Thus, it is possible to understand goth as emerging from and travelling through certain distinct, and sometimes contradictory, formulations and clusters of moments, and at the same time lose a sense of the actual history of the scene. I assert here the historical imperative of Futurama and Leeds (and the North) as an important foundation in the goth identity.

Firstly, it is useful to look at a couple of British cultural histories other than Reynolds’ post-punk magnum opus that document the possible beginnings of goth in the UK. Carpenter (2012) focusses upon the August 1979 release of the Bauhaus single ‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ to mark out what he calls a stylistic ‘ground zero’, whilst at the same time acknowledging a more nebulous but prolific ‘second-wave of gothic rock’ (page 31) emerging with bands such as Sisters of Mercy. Michael Bracewell attempts to plot the contour of pop delinquency in Albion and positions goth predominantly at its later stage, as it has pervaded into wider geographical realms, such that it can be classed as a ‘suburban and provincial cult’ dominated by a ‘style indurate to the capriciousness of either fashion or pop’ (Bracewell 1997: 119). In the same way that Bracewell writes his understanding of goth into the wider theme of his work, Haslam initially offers a version of goth instigated in the London club scene with the opening of the Batcave club in 1982. The Batcave was part of a sequence of fast-changing subcultural makeovers that permeated the tight London club scene in the same era as post-punk, seeing the birth of the new romantic scene as a particularly London-centric phenomenon. Numerous histories of this new romantic scene are evident in our nostalgia-heavy times, and the brief flowering of goth within this milieu is often taken as something more than what it amounts to. A couple of bands were specifically promoted with the Batcave, emerging overnight and disappearing just as quickly when the next trend was ushered in. However, Haslam almost confesses to fudging the issue, and immediately tracks back on his words by including notes from a discussion with West Yorkshire based author David Peace (discussed above) where Peace squarely places goth in the West Yorkshire outlands of Leeds and its associated satellite towns: ‘It wasn’t showbiz. Being cut off from London gave it an endearing insularity’ (Haslam 2015: 274). Haslam looks to be out of his comfort zone here, away from the cool and hip world of rare-groove and proto-funk clubs that were part of the early to mid 1980s, but Peace’s words put us back into the true heartland of goth culture.

Peace talks of his experience at Wakefield’s Hellfire club, a small club that supported a goth scene in one of the many West Yorkshire towns in the early 80s. Wakefield is a typical town within the region that shared a sense of poverty and disillusionment amidst a botched and stifling urban stricture. Davidson (2005: 207) documents a socio-spatial experience of a typically similar town at the same period in time when looking at the novelist Angela Carter’s reflections on Doncaster, itself in South Yorkshire but bordering onto Wakefield, describing these places as ‘newly built town centres, already failing to function as the genuine centre of anything’. West Yorkshire consists of a labyrinth

of such places, sprawling endlessly sideways and diagonally, making progress through the region convoluted and laden, allaying any optimism derived from a misconstrued hyperboreanism.

A remarkable cultural document of the West Yorkshire nurturing of goth was made as a bizarre one-off project around the Xclusiv nightclub in Batley, the film beginning with a trawl around this town that would be a million miles away from the thoughts or cares of the ephemeral goth fashionistas congregating around London's Batcave.[41] The film is essentially a two-hour documentation of a night at the club which stylistically can be read as a marker between Andy Warhol's tedium endurance films and a modern artwork in the participative genre such as Phil Collins' 2004 work *They Shoot Horses*. The soundtrack is diegetic so that the many jump cuts between shots mean that the music is stuttering and striated.[42] It is easy to lose sight of the landmark cultural documentation the film affords through its strange hybrid of amateur-professional production values, but the entire work perfectly captures how this scene took root in the nexus of West Yorkshire towns that would have been absent from any pop cultural history.

The Futurama festival gave this region a specific post-punk direction with the goth sound and style. It instantly took hold in these smaller towns, supporting local autonomous scenes whilst feeding into a perceived goth stronghold in Leeds. The brutal nature of the spatial experience of Futurama itself, whether in Queens Hall, Bingley Hall or Deeside, energised a kind of other-directedness that spread from Futurama itself into the smaller enclave towns such as Wakefield, Bradford and Doncaster. The concept of other-directedness is theorised by Sandvoss (2005: 58) in regard to spatial experience as part of the consumption pattern of fans, itself drawing on work by Relph (1976: 92). Other-directedness is a stronger term than the more fashionable psychogeography; the experience of the space is determined in a forced, awkward and disconcerting sense, rather than the privileged drifting or 'deriving' psychogeographer being able to play with the codes of the space for their own subversive pleasure. Leeds Queens Hall was not open to such a psychogeographic reading, it remained a cold tram shed etched with an industrial palimpsest, repurposed as an entertainment space, and then stretched beyond the limits of this fragile and flimsy repurposing by submitting the audience to an extended duration bleeding over into a temporary regime of dwelling. The nuanced codes of Northern post-punk lyrics and sonic readings were then 'unconcealed' in the Heideggerian sense, the cipher removed in the other-directedness of the brutal space.

Conclusion - the ghost dance

Whilst goth emerged as an identity to choose from within what cultural critics such as Polhemus (1994: 131) call the 'supermarket of style', I also maintain that it emerged as a distinct subculture forged through a historical sequence of cultural and spatial negations. It involved a choice of engagement but then developed a direction towards a cultural vortex. Post-punk spoke a certain message to a subset of youth, and the Futurama festivals, and their staging in the city of Leeds,

[41] The documentary was made seemingly as a private work and then sold to local fans of the scene. Footage survives at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9sMZ_5NjM8 , whilst details of the film's history and its survival is detailed at https://ilegality.wordpress.com/2015/01/01/the-height-of-goth/

[42] Alexis Petridis documents the film in a Guardian article, describing it with much compassion as a 'moment of transcendence' even though at the same time as being 'unwittingly hilarious, fascinating and incredibly boring'. See http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/may/13/alexis-petridis-height-of-goth

catalysed and fused a certain articulation of blankness and other-directedness. Leeds was the only city in the North to not have a post-punk difference and identity, and so the brutal tactility and sensoriality of Futurama gave birth to this new Northern cult of goth. The elements of the space itself, the mix of dystopian sounds coming in from other cities, the warning sign pre-cursors of attaching the notion of festival to both punk and the North, created a kind of self-seeding counter-flow. It would not be London bands such as the Clash and the Sex Pistols that catalysed the Leeds scene, but a mix of pre-established Northern scenes meeting in the cavernous other-directedness of the Queens Hall.

The venue was demolished at the end of the 1980s, and now functions as an emptied space in the role of a car park. Whilst the building as an external monument can be recalled and revisited through archive images, it is the brutality of the interior that lingers in the memory. The memorialisation of interior space is dramatically configured in the idea of artistic negative space as developed by artist Rachel Whiteread and her work *House*, using a brutalist grey concrete cast of the interior presented as an exterior facing object of contemplation. A casting of the interior of Queens Hall can be imagined as set out in a dense and dark material somehow other than grey concrete, while the artistic negative space of the interior was experienced as darkness, noise and squalor, a more quotidian understanding of the word negative in both the moral and ontological context.

The haunting presence of the space of Queens Hall is subsumed by the haunting presence of the music of Futurama, and the transition between post-punk and early goth, bleeding out into unremarkable and indistinct suburbs of Leeds and satellite towns within the West Yorkshire conurbation. If punk appropriates and rejoices in the phrase - out of context, amphibological, or otherwise - from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as 'signifying nothing' then post-punk can perhaps be understood as signifying nothingness. That is, leaving behind the detailed context of the original quote, signifying a something that is nothing, rather than not signifying anything. Derrida (1994: 24) speaks of the haunting presence of the past as a 'disjuncture in the very presence of the present, [a] sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself'. His notion of hauntology runs into a complex and derelict terrain with the haunting past of a 'no future' brought to bear in the present. The presence of the present cannot be avoided, but the no future of the sonic and lyrical nihilism and dystopia of both Joy Division and PiL becomes trapped in the empty space of the no longer Queens Hall and the re-rendered grain of a YouTube video.

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