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Part II
Music, Place and Tourism

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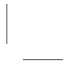

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Abbey Road Studios, the Tourist, and Beatles Heritage

Peter Atkinson

EMI Studios, Abbey Road, London NW8 was renamed Abbey Road Studios by EMI in 1970 after it was made iconic by the eponymous Beatles long-playing record (LP) with its famous cover of the four group members on the zebra crossing before the building. In this chapter I use Urry and Larsen's concept of 'the tourist gaze' to discuss the changing meaning of Abbey Road Studios over the course of several decades and a wider relationship between the work of the Beatles and tourism. I will examine the processes through which the development of the music the group recorded at the studio in the period 1965–1969 became symbolic of wider social and cultural change and argue that some of the songs prefigure the leisure and tourism activities and structures of later decades. In relation to its promotion as an object of the tourist gaze, I note that EMI and the Beatles' company Apple exploited Abbey Road Studios in the 1980s during a period when there was an increased emphasis on national heritage. I conclude by arguing that the coinciding of an aggressive rebranding of 'The Beatles' in the mid-1990s with the retro-aesthetic of the newly named 'Britpop', reinforced the notion of a British rock tradition and lineage. This is seen to elevate Abbey Road Studios into a cultural symbol, giving it further appeal as a tourist destination.

An object of the tourist gaze

Abbey Road Studios is the object of a number of different forms of tourism: Beatles fans attend it; Beatles 'pilgrims' attend it as a 'shrine' (see McCarron 2006: 171–180 for an engaging analysis of the distinction between Beatles pilgrims, fans, and tourists); tourists have themselves photographed on the zebra crossing in front of the studio (and Abbey

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Road Studios' own 'Crossing Cam' facility records and archives shots of individuals who cross it – www.abbeyroad.com/Crossing); guided rock tours of London visit the site; the history of the studio is documented in several publications, some of which feature an extensive range of photographs and copies of archive documents (see Lawrence 2012; Lewisohn 1988; Southall et al. 2002); and fans and scholars access and scrutinise the extensive listings, details, and analysis of Beatles recordings made there as provided in an array of literature and websites devoted, or related, to the topic. It should be noted that there are few opportunities for tourists to enter the studios themselves as these are still active and in considerable demand. Abbey Road Studios has provided some special on-site events for visitors but, mostly, tourists visit the zebra crossing outside the studio and view the studio complex from outside its walled and gated perimeters. Some tourists leave their mark with graffiti on the perimeter wall, '[p]ilgrims to the wall' – McCarron calls these, or on the street sign for Abbey Road (McCarron 2006: 175).

For Urry and Larsen pleasure in tourism is derived from making a 'departure', a 'limited breaking' with the everyday and mundane (Urry and Larsen 2013: 3). They note the development of photography in the objectifying activity of 'the tourist gaze', a metaphor – emphasising the visual – for the increasing consumption of sites (sights) as tourism became a popular activity in the mid-to-the-late nineteenth century. The tourist gaze is 'not a matter of individual psychology', but a 'socially patterned' way of seeing. People gaze upon the world 'through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education' (ibid.: 2). It is constructed through signs derived from many sources, predominantly through media in the modern age, and tourism involves 'the collection of signs' (ibid.: 4). Urry and Larsen note the changing nature of the tourist gaze in the era of globalisation and paraphrase Bauman who defines such conditions as a move 'from a solid, fixed modernity' to a 'liquid modernity'. In the latter, the 'time-space compression' evident since the late 1990s involves not only 'rapid flows of travellers and tourists' but, also, 'complex intersections' between increased 'corporeal travel' and 'virtual and imaginative' travel enabled by digital communications technology (Urry and Larsen 2013: 23). One consequence of globalisation is that 'different countries, or different places within a country, come to specialise in providing particular types of objects to be gazed upon' and Britain 'came to specialize in history and heritage' (ibid.: 55). The Beatles made EMI Studios, Abbey Road, famous in what Samuel terms the 'modernizing hour of the 1960s' (Samuel 1996: 154). This was during a time which Bauman labels 'solid' modernity. For him

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this was an '*era of mutual engagement*: between the supervisors and the supervised, capital and labour, leaders and their followers, armies at war' (his italic) (Bauman 2000: 11). The methods of production used to make the Beatles' records at Abbey Road Studios reflect such an arrangement of labour. However, the experimentation evident in their later studio productions, the soundscapes and lyrics of which often combine an array of diverse cultural references and images, prefigure the accelerated circulation of images, the global mobility, and the virtual and imaginative travel in liquid modernity. This transition in the group's work is examined below.

First it is useful to recall the early history of EMI Studios as this emphasises the hegemonic associations of its heritage and provides historical context. EMI installed the studio complex in the 'elegant' suburb of St John's Wood in 1931 and it was opened with a rendition of *Land of Hope and Glory* by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by the celebrated English composer Sir Edward Elgar (Southall et al. 2002: 19). Two blocks away from the famous Lord's cricket ground, where the England cricket team plays its test matches, and around half a mile from Regent's Park (a Royal park, appropriated by Henry VIII), this was an upper middle-class area in the 1960s and, in the modern day, is an extremely desirable and expensive area. The studio is thus associated with the upper-class and what is termed 'the establishment', qualities characterised by the man who was chairman at the time the Beatles were with the label. Sir Joseph Lockwood was an establishment figure, an industrialist and businessman who had held a position of responsibility ensuring food supplies to Europe as countries were liberated towards the end of the Second World War. He was later made a Director of the National Research Development Association before taking over as Chairman of EMI in 1954 where he turned around the company's fortunes and was subsequently made a Knight Bachelor in the New Year's Honours List in 1960. EMI Studios was the 'workshop' of the lower class, provincial Beatles from 1962 until 1970 after being signed to EMI's Parlophone Records label following an audition at Abbey Road in 1962 (Southall et al. 2002: 68) (Figures 6.1).

The Beatles' work at the studios is notable because the way they recorded their music there, and the content of that music, changed dramatically in a short space of time. Considerable critical attention is paid to the difference between the method of recording their first LP *Please Please Me* (Parlophone, 1963) and the methods used for their revered work *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Parlophone, 1967) (Everett 1999, 2001; Hertsgaard 1995; Julien 2008; Womack 2009). AQ1, 2
For the former, ten songs were recorded at the studio in a continuous

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Figure 6.1 Abbey Road studios
Source: Photography by David Dennison

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12 hour session in one day, on two-track recording equipment (EMI had four-track, but considered the Beatles too 'lowbrow' to be afforded access to it, Zolten observes) (Zolten 2009: 39). Essentially, the live sound of the band is recorded at this session, with a little enhancement through over-dubbing on the limited two-track equipment. By contrast, *Sgt. Pepper* took six months to make, involving 700 hours of recording, at a cost of over £25,000 (Julien 2008a: 5). This historic leap in the methods of music production was the result of the Beatles being 'rewarded with the virtual freedom of the studios' because of their commercial success (Southall et al. 2002: 76). From 1965, they worked there on a succession of 'studio-savvy albums' (Zolten 2009: 34). These include: *Rubber Soul* (1965), *Revolver* (1966), the aforementioned *Sgt. Pepper*, *The Beatles* (1968) (more commonly known as 'the White Album'), and *Abbey Road* (1969). This body of work is widely considered to have changed the face of popular music: Macdonald writes that their recordings comprise 'an outstanding repository of popular art' and a 'cultural document of permanent significance' (Macdonald 1995: 33). The progression of the Beatles' music during this time involved an increased creativity which was realised within the workspace of EMI Studios. From the time of *I Want to Hold Your Hand* (November 1963) the Beatles increasingly explored the possibilities of a recording studio, realising that 'recording no longer had to take place in real time', and that recorded work could be *composed* (Zolten 2009: 40). The paternalistic producer at the studio, George Martin, later Sir George Martin, helped the group fulfil their creative vision, orchestrating skilled productions and 'fashioning' their sound (Womack and Davis 2006a: 2). A variety of technical devices and tricks (overlays, backwards tracking of instruments, phasing, flanging, verispeed, Artificial Double Tracking (ADT), tape-loops) was used in the sequence of ground-breaking albums. 'Studio technique abounded, and functioned as an instrument itself, wholly integrated into the art of the music', Zolten contends (Zolten 2009: 45). An expanded range of musical instrumentation was also employed (brass, strings, full orchestra, Mellotron, sitar and many more) in order to realise the Beatles' musical vision. Songs simultaneously acquired a new 'literary' dimension (see Burns 2009: 225). The emergence of a new kind of pop song in the early 1960s, profiled by the likes of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and Joan Baez, 'focused attention on the words, encouraging listeners to assess song as text', Cook and Mercer observe (Cook and Mercer 2000: 97). This is relevant to the concept of the tourist gaze, because a broadening of subject-matter in Beatles songs and the representation of more active and socially mobile subject positions (evident in the

songs of other artists also), anticipated the expansion and increasing diversification of tourist activity in the mid-to-the-late 1960s.

Representative of an expanding experiential reach

To provide some examples of this shift in the subject-matter of Beatles songs and in the music, Cook and Mercer observe a 'sparseness of situational detail and precise reference' in the lyrics of Beatles' earlier work where songs are 'conversation-like' and tend to be about emotional issues (Cook and Mercer 2000: 93). Their narrow, generalised focus – as illustrated in songs such as *From Me to You* (April 1963) and *I Want to Hold Your Hand* – is predictable in music which has its origins in the pop and rhythm and blues genres, their simplicity perhaps necessary for a working band performing regularly for excitable young audiences (ibid.: 96). Later songs 'are far more specific about people, places, … times' (ibid.: 93). In what MacFarlane terms the 'middle period' in the Beatles' career (1965–1966) the subjects represented broaden and there is a representative gaze at much more detailed and varied social circumstances (MacFarlane 2008: 34). This mirrors the expanding 'experiential reach' in modernity that Wang refers to (Wang 2000: 194). Elsewhere in this volume Mazierska refers to the concision of the form of popular songs; their brief gaze at some aspect or topic is 'touristy'. Songs may be like short films in their depiction of situations (indeed George Martin compares the studio production of the Beatles' later work to film editing, as Kimsey notes) (Kimsey 2008: 134). Davis writes that the Beatles 'metamorphosed, discarding childish, hackneyed, borrowed forms to blossom into the most admired, most studied, … songwriters of our age' (Davis 2014: 28). I argue that the change implies an increased 'social mobility', to use Marwick's term, which refers to the changes in lifestyle, socio-cultural awareness and expectations that derive from increased wealth and social status (Marwick 2003: 127). Thus, in the sexist song *Norwegian Wood (This Bird has Flown)* (December 1965) the songwriters portray life among London's wealthy young elite. The girl who is the object of the protagonist's thwarted desire has indulged in the importation of Scandinavian design, which was fashionable at the time. The 'Norwegian wood' in the song acts as a metaphor for the 'counterfeit' nature of the relationship portrayed, which is conducted in a newly decorated flat: the wood the couple refer to is in reality 'cheap pine', Decker observes (Decker 2009: 79; see also Miles 1997: 270). The song is indicative of an expanded experiential reach as it incorporates concepts such as female assertiveness and independence

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(she rejects his advances – in her own flat – because she has work 'in the morning'), fashions in contemporary interior design, and male violence in a middle-class social setting (as the insinuation in the lyric is that the protagonist sets the wood interior alight the next morning in revenge for his rejection) (Miles 1997: 270). MacDonald comments that the song's 'unusual instrumental colour' is provided by a sitar (played by George Harrison) doubling the descending main melody line (MacDonald 1995: 132). He further notes that Harrison had been interested in the sitar since he had heard it being used to 'spice up' the soundtrack of the Beatles movie *Help!* (UK, 1965). As one of the authors of *Norwegian Wood*, Lennon was introduced to the instrument through hearing, along with the other Beatles, 'exotic' *raga* phrases played to him by David Crosby of the American group the Byrds in August 1965 when the Beatles rented a house in Los Angeles during their American tour. MacDonald contends that elements of the song are influenced by the drone common in all Indian classical music and that the descending melody is an attempt at reproducing Oriental intervals, which Lennon had also been introduced to by the Byrds (MacDonald 1995:132). These influences, and the way in which the Beatles were introduced to them, are indicative of broadening social and cultural horizons associated with increased mobility and anticipate the increased global communication, mass travel and tourism, and the lifestyle consumption which have developed since then. *Day Tripper* (December 1965) refers more directly to issues of leisure and tourism although the punning reference to the 'tripper', an occasional drug-user, as a 'Sunday driver' is a metaphor (McCartney quoted in Miles 1997: 209). Nonetheless, the subject of the song plainly exercises a range of lifestyle choices. Lennon and McCartney were the main writers in the Beatles and they usually conferred in the creation of songs. As working-class, provincial boys from Liverpool, their new experiences, both in London where they mingled with the creative elite, and abroad as they travelled, informed their song-writing. The portrayals within their middle and late period songs may be said to reflect the 'wide-ranging structural and cultural developments within contemporary societies' (Urry and Larsen 2011: 97). Urry and Larsen observe that the 'rapid and significant change' in tourist practices cannot be separated from such developments, AQ4

> [M]ass communications have transformed the tourist gaze which is increasingly bound up with, and is partly indistinguishable from, all sorts of other social and cultural practices. This has the effect, as 'tourism' *per se* declines in specificity, of generalising the tourist

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> gaze – people are much of the time 'tourists' whether they like it or know it. The tourist gaze is intrinsically part of contemporary experience.... (Urry and Larsen 2011: 97)

That the Beatles and their work are emblematic of the 1960s zeitgeist is precisely what has made them object of the modern tourist gaze (see Whitely 2009). As a result of this, Abbey Road Studios, which was the production base for the main output of the Beatles' music, becomes a symbol for the creative intervention made by the group in their time. As Urry and Larsen note, paraphrasing MacCannell, all tourists 'embody a quest for authenticity', this quest being 'a modern version for the human concern with the sacred' (Urry and Larsen 2011: 10). Abbey Road Studios is the authentic article, the place of the Beatles' work, and it is the object of tourist activity.

The 'late period' Beatles (1967–1969) finds the horizons of the representative gaze in their songs further extended (MacFarlane 2008: 35). This reflected their experience of travelling extensively for purposes of work, leisure, and self-fulfilment: *Child of Nature* (1968, never released) is about their experiences in Rishikesh as guests of guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; *Sexy Sadie* (November 1968) was originally titled *Maharishi* and is a polemic about the yogi's alleged hypocrisy during their visit; *Back in the USSR* (November 1968) begins with the sound of a Boeing jet taking off and 'satirizes the absurdities of the Cold War by situating nostalgia within Soviet Georgia', Whitely asserts (Whitely 2009: 214). There is a depiction of fantasy, spectacle, and surreality influenced by the fantasy worlds depicted in English literature, particularly those of Lewis Carroll, in *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* (June 1967) and *I Am the Walrus* (November 1967) (MacDonald 1995: 190; Zolten 2006: 51). *Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite* (June 1967) depicts a Victorian circus of 1893 (being inspired by a poster of the event Lennon purchased in an antique shop). *A Day in the Life* (June 1967) is a dystopian evocation of fate and death in modern day life. The *Magical Mystery Tour* concept, which included an EP release and television film (December 1967), is meanwhile a psychedelic-flavoured, carnivalesque inversion of the staid, British working-class holidaying traditions of the industrial age. (This was partly inspired by Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters' road trip around America promoting hallucinogenic drugs in a multi-coloured bus in 1964.) (Womack 2007: 191). Again, such subject-matter anticipates the range of gazes and activities of the 'new tourism' in the age of post-Fordist consumption. This is 'segmented, flexible and customized' and a host of different, often themed, tourist experiences are offered to

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the consumer and might include literary tourism, dark tourism, heritage sites and theme parks (Urry and Larsen paraphrasing Poon 2013: 52–53). In their revered 1967 album the Beatles create a band – 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' – that is a simulation. The album's opening 'sound collage', of crowd noises and the band tuning up, are sourced from an existing Abbey Road stock of recordings and sound effects and used at the whim of the Beatles. This technical effect acts as 'narrative source and as a psychological way' of creating a mood of 'shared festivity', Whitely suggests (Whitely 1992: 40). The concept of the work mirrors the simulated structure of 'themed' tourist spaces and attractions – as the line 'a splendid time is guaranteed for all' from the album track *Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite* suggests. Such themed attractions represent, for Urry and Larsen, 'a paradoxical mix of presence and absence, here and there', and are also 'typified by high capital investment' – just like with *Sgt. Pepper* (Urry and Larsen 2013: 125).

In songs, 'sound-shape, together with the socio-cultural element superimposed upon it, consolidate to form a distinct form of communication', Whitely asserts. The musical landscapes and lyrical worlds of this Beatles work, and that of other musicians at that time, broaden the *scope* of representation in popular song (Whitely 1992: 3). The band was a primary influence in the development of modern rock/pop music which was considered to be a vehicle of expression in the later 1960s 'counter-culture' when it was 'thought to say things of cultural and political significance, to have a message' (ibid.: 1). Such music has an overtly ideological dimension and therefore impacts upon the 'particular filter of ideas, … desires and expectations' through which the tourist gaze is 'socio-culturally framed' (Urry and Larsen 2013: 2). The most disturbing example of the influence of rock music of the mid-to-late 1960s is that of Charles Manson who thought the Beatles were 'directing secret messages to him via their songs' – and through *Helter Skelter* (November 1968) in particular. Manson blamed 'the White Album' for inciting the murder of seven people by members of his 'Family' in 1969 in California (Miles 1997: 488). There are currently websites that promote tours of sites relating to the murders, thus illustrating how cultural interpretation of rock songs translates into tourist productions.

Abbey Road and Beatles heritage

Having been the workshop in which Beatles' creativity was crafted into an internationally significant and culturally valued product, Abbey Road Studios provided the stage for an important event in the

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development of globalisation in 1967. The significance of the Beatles as emblems of nation and of the so-called 'cultural revolution' of the 1960s was reflected in their being chosen to represent Britain in the first global satellite television link-up, *Our World*. This was broadcast by the BBC to an estimated audience of 400 million in June that year with the band singing *All You Need is Love* (1967) from Abbey Road Studio One, produced by George Martin. This is an early example of the construction of an image whereby the Beatles, in their workplace of Abbey Road, are selected to be representative of the nation on the global stage.

In the 1980s the connotations of Abbey Road Studios changed. It started to be seen as part of English heritage. I now outline how this aspect of the studio was emphasised at this time. Since the National Heritage Act of 1983, and the increasing privatisation of the heritage/museum 'industry', cultural observers have noted the importance of heritage to tourism (Hewison 1987; Marwick 2003: 322–323; Samuel 1996). Focusing on it 'affects both what overseas visitors expect to gaze upon and what attracts British residents to spend time holidaymaking within Britain' (Urry and Larsen 2013: 55). There was some feeling at the time that this was a reaction to de-industrialisation of the nation, and Urry and Larsen suggest that '[h]eritage is seen as involving a strong sense of lineage and inheritance' and it has 'an identity-conferring status' (ibid.: 141). Samuel writes that 'perhaps as a result of the collapse of ideas of national destiny', there is the increasing importance of 'memory places' and in 'ideas of the national past'. Certain locations do the 'memory work which in earlier times might have been performed by territorial belonging' (Samuel 1996: 39). As Waterton observes, the places that are promoted as being representative of the nation are mostly those favoured as one of the 'cultural symbols of an elite group' – the white middle class. Such touristic places 'become ideological spaces', she concludes (Waterton 2010: 155).

The Beatles disbanded in 1970. John Lennon was murdered in 1980 and, from the early 1980s, EMI increasingly realised the commercial and promotional potential of their holdings of archival Beatles material and their ownership of Abbey Road Studios. These were employed to attract tourists, and to create new Beatles products, in summer 1983 when Studio Two opened to visitors in the event *The Beatles at Abbey Road Studios*, initiated by Ken Townsend, studio manager, who had worked with the group (Southall et al. 2002: 169). Again, stressing the value of authenticity to the tourist experience, part of the studio was set up 'exactly as it always had been for Beatles recordings, compete with all the original microphones', for the event which was a considerable success, attracting 22,000 visitors. A two-part video including rare footage,

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photos, interviews and previously unreleased versions of songs was also released (ibid.: 170).

New compact disc (CD) technology provided further opportunity to exploit Beatles heritage. A CD version of *Sgt. Pepper* was released in June 1987 on the twentieth anniversary of the original, and the release was celebrated by a party, again in Abbey Road Studio Two, the site of the original recording. In the same year, Mark Lewisohn was commissioned to write a book detailing all the Beatles' recording sessions. *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions: The Official Story of the Abbey Road Years* was published in 1988, a lavish publication which featured collages of text, photographs, record covers and reproductions of studio recording sheets and other studio documents. This is a fetishisation of place, artefacts and events as heritage, and enhances the appeal of Abbey Road Studios to the tourist. In 1992 *The Making of Sgt. Pepper*, a television documentary featuring producer George Martin and other members of the Beatles, was broadcast on Independent Television's (ITV) *The South Bank Show* to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the record's release. Meanwhile the Beatles themselves recognised the value of archival sound recordings as heritage product in the CD age and were planning the *Anthology* project.

The *Anthology* collection of products was designed to rebrand the Beatles some 30 years after they had initially achieved near global recognition. Decker argues that in 1991 the Beatles' 'reputation for cool ebbed low' among teenagers increasingly fed on a diet of MTV audio-visual pop (Decker 2006: 183). He suggests that McCartney in particular was interested in 'protecting the Beatles' textual legacy' and spearheaded 'a massive revision of Beatles history' (ibid.: 185). This involved a series of archival releases including the CDs *Live at the BBC* (1994), *Anthology 1* (1995), *Anthology 2* (1996), *Anthology 3* (1996), *The Beatles Anthology* television documentary and video cassette (1995) (later released as a DVD boxed set in 2003) and *The Beatles Anthology* book (2000). As with Lewisohn's book, *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions: The Official Story of the Abbey Road Years*, the *Anthology* releases made considerable use of archive material – recordings, documents and the testimony of those involved in the recording of the original music – derived from Abbey Road Studios. A virtual Beatles 'reunion' was also contrived. Two of Lennon's private demo tracks from the 1970s, *Free as a Bird* and *Real Love*, were engineered using studio technology by the remaining Beatles – with the help of producer Jeff Lynne for the former, and George Martin for the latter – into 'new' Beatles tracks and released as singles (Burns 2000: 178). These simulations also appeared as tracks on

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Anthology 1 and *2* respectively. The *Anthology* series was an exercise in creating heritage products for consumption and stressing the value of authenticity. The CDs comprise mainly of out-takes from recording sessions through which it is possible to observe the development of individual songs. Combining these with the *Anthology* documentary, the Beatles 'attempted to create the simulacra of Beatlemania', Decker contends. By 'accentuating the band's textual corpus', he argues, 'McCartney established the illusion that the Beatles had yielded their position as subject and were now in a position to reminisce over their considerable output' (Decker 2006: 187). As a consequence of this rebranding the Beatles enjoyed a second 'phoenix-like rise' in the mid-1990s (ibid.: 184).

It is notable that the later *Anthology* CD releases in 1996 garner a more favourable critical response. This suggests that it took time for the value of such documentary works to be appreciated. In the *RollingStone* review of *Anthology 2* of 4 April 1996, Jerry McCulley writes that the 44 tracks from the period February 1965 to February 1968 'document what is arguably the most creative 36 months for one band in rock history'. Noting that the majority of the album consists of early takes of songs, he admires the *Strawberry Fields Forever* selection of out-takes which 'quantum-leaps in three cuts from a troublesome acoustic demo' to 'a technically problematic masterpiece'. He concludes that such tracks 'offer a compelling human story along with one of the most crystalline definitions of *synergy* in popular culture' (McCulley 2014). In the *RollingStone* review of the Beatles *Anthology 3*, Puterbaugh observes that, for more than two decades after the Beatles broke up, the band and their producer 'insisted that everything of quality that they created in the studio was already a matter of record'. However, he contests that,

> The extraordinary 1968 demos at the start of *Anthology 3* – seven songs taped in gorgeous, unplugged form at George Harrison's home in Esher, England, shortly before the sessions for the epic double album *The Beatles* … – show that those who make history are often the least qualified to judge it. … This is warm, intimate music making, a rare close-up of the Beatles in private, creative ferment, and it is one of the many reasons why the three double CDs' worth of rough cuts and outtakes in the *Anthology* series ultimately enhance rather than dilute the legacy and wonder of the Beatles. (Puterbaugh 2014)

The release of these raised the profile of Abbey Road Studios, the products seeming to bring to life the process of the Beatles recording there. Its heritage is emphasised as the scope of knowledge of the Beatles' working methods is extended with the repackaging of material from the

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studio's archives in new formats delivered through a diversity of media forms (audio media (CD), television, audio-visual recordings (video and DVD) and publishing. As noted earlier, the development of mass communication technologies and the development of the 'information society', means that the tourist gaze in contemporary society is increasingly less distinct from 'other social activities' (Urry and Larsen 2013: 97). Urry and Larsen write that,

> [C]ulture as an economy of signs is more central in the organisation of present-day societies. There has been a dissolving of the boundaries, not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms, such as tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping and architecture. (ibid.: 97)

In such a milieu, the *Anthology* collection synergistically made the Beatles and Abbey Road Studios newly visible in the mid-1990s. Utilising Waterton's conceptualisation of the process of imaging in heritage tourism: because it is so strongly associated with the Beatles, Abbey Road Studios, with its iconic zebra crossing image, is 'pushed forward' as part of a 'limited range of apparently consensual images' to define and articulate 'the story of the nation' and its heritage (Waterton 2010: 159). Samuel speaks of 'ministering to an appetite for roots' and such functions may be ascribed to Abbey Road Studios as it becomes focus of the modern tourist gaze (Samuel 1996: 39). The granting of Grade II Listing status confirms this. The Beatles, and the studio, are seen as part of an English music tradition, in a similar way in which literary figures such as Shakespeare, Dickens, and the Lakes poets are seen as part of an English literary tradition. The studio site has become one of the 'idealized images' of '[i]nstitutionalized heritage tourism' in England (Waterton 2010: 158).

Related events in 1995–1996 meanwhile emphasised the studio's heritage as will now be observed. DeNora notes that the past seems to come alive to 'its soundtrack', the *Anthology* releases provide the added value of contextual information to this process (DeNora 2000: 67). Decker validly claims that the Beatles 'carefully manipulated their symbolic valuation to augment the economic value of their canon' with *Anthology* (Decker 2006: 193). It has been seen above that the documentation of the developing creative process enhances the Beatles' reputation as artists of the rock genre in the mid- and late 1960s. The final aspect in the chronology of events which I highlight as being key to the promotion of Abbey Road Studios as a tourist destination, and object of the tourist gaze, occurred in the same year that *Anthology 1* was released and *The Beatles Anthology* television series started. In 1995, the

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'1960s retro-aesthetic' of what became termed 'Britpop' was the subject of attention from British media (Bennett and Stratton 2010: 1).

Look back in 1995–1996

Britpop was a generic label for the music of several white English, mainly male, guitar bands – Blur, Oasis, Pulp, Suede, Sleeper and Dodgy who emphasised a 'lineage' from the rock/pop music of the 1960s and the English punk of the 1970s (Du Noyer 2010: 255). Bennett and Stratton write that it was,

> branded by music journalists and critics alike as a critical resurgence of British … or more specifically, 'English', popular music that rekindled the spirit of the mid-1960s 'British' invasion of the US by groups such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Who and the Small Faces. Indeed, a number of these groups, notably the Beatles, the Kinks and the Small Faces were frequently cited as key influences by leading Britpop artists such as Blur and Oasis. (Bennett and Stratton 2010: 1)

Partly the result of 'the Movementism beloved by the music papers', *The Guardian* claimed on 8 December 1995, Britpop also gained national exposure as the result of the '[t]abloidized' Blur versus Oasis battle for top spot in the record chart in August 1995, an echo of a (mythological) rivalry between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the mid-1960s (O'Hagan 1995: 20). Britpop was seen as a challenge to the hegemony of US popular music, particularly grunge and rap (Bennett and Stratton 2010: 1; Harris 2003: 88; Whitely 2010: 55). The punning phrase 'Cool Britannia' meanwhile began to be used in 1996, carrying echoes of the self-confident, mid-1960s 'Swinging London' (Huq 2010: 90).

The simultaneous media profiling of Britpop and the rebranding of the Beatles in 1995–1996 crystallises a moment in which an ideological and commercial investment is made in the past. This has generic and ideological implications. The *Anthology* CDs comprise *unfinished* product until now 'not considered worth releasing' – a 'collection of scrappy old Beatles demo tapes, TV recordings, and studio outtakes', Caroline Sullivan argues in *The Guardian* on 24 November 1995 on the release of *Anthology 1*. To relate the *Anthology* set to Britpop: Huq contends that the sub-genre 'began as an offshoot' of the British 'indie' music scene' (Huq 2010: 93). Bannister refers to 'indie guitar rock' that defined itself against its 'other' – 'mainstream', manufactured music – in the 1980s and early 1990s (Bannister 2006: 87). It does so, he argues, by

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rearticulating 'the traditional rock insistence on the superiority of live performance to recordings' and qualities of 'liveness' in recordings by 'the minimisation of technological mediation' are favoured (ibid.: 92). For indie fans and artists, 1960s jangly guitar-pop is seen as 'pure', authentic. There is a tendency to idealise (a construction of) that epoch with the creation of 'a transcendental, ahistorical ideal', Bannister argues (ibid.: 87). Indie guitar rock looks back towards a selective body of valued, canonical works (particularly by guitar bands), having a 'huge investment in a version of the past, in its own voicing' of 'rock tradition' (ibid.: 81). The *Anthology* set affirmed the Beatles' position within the rock/pop canon in this respect. It documented their development from a raw grassroots band enthusiastically copying American musical styles, the collection of out-takes also exhibiting the unfinished qualities of liveness and authenticity valued by indie guitar rock.

Whitely views use of influences from the 1960s as 'pop cultural revivalism – the imagery of modern culture as a data base and dressing-up box' (Whitely 2010: 55). Nonetheless, the indigenous rock/pop heritage is emphasised by Britpop and the simultaneous release of the *Anthology* archive material. This enhances the notion of a British, or English, music tradition and this, in turn, promotes identification with Abbey Road as a landmark in this tradition – hence promoting it as an object of the tourist gaze. As Urry and Larsen observe, discourses of heritage and memory authorise 'different kinds of gaze' in tourism (Urry and Larsen 2013: 19). Whitely offers that 'it is [...] possible that by selectively invoking the sound and sensibility of English popular culture of earlier eras', such as white male guitar-pop of the 1960s, Britpop 'managed to erase the troubling reminder that Britain is a multi-ethnic society' (Whitely 2010: 57). However, as noted earlier, the tourist gaze is shaped by, and reflects, dominant ideologies. For Wang, tourism offers a homogenised, simplified, idealised, and beautified spectacle (Wang 2000:165). The pushing forward of 'consensual images', mentioned above, is at the expense of *others*, not highlighted, not foregrounded in the practices of representation of the dominant group (see Waterton 2010: 155).

It has been seen that the *Anthology* series marketed in the mid-1990s centres on Abbey Road Studios. Connell and Gibson write of '[m]ythologising the local' and of localised music 'scenes' which evolve partly because local music cultures are distinctive, but partly, also, because there is a 'fetishisation of localities' associated with particular 'sounds' (Connell and Gibson 2003: 110). For them,

> The identification of musical difference through regional sounds is an integral component of the fetishisation of place – securing the

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> 'authenticity' of local cultural products in particular physical spaces as they move through national and global economies. Connections to place emphasize roots and points of origin. Remaining 'true' to one's roots emphasises credibility. (ibid.: 111)

The release of archive holdings of recorded Beatles studio out-takes at a time when Britpop was attracting much media attention mutually enhances the notion of a British, or English, music tradition. The profiling of authentic practices of music-making in the former, and the retro-aesthetic of the latter, extend the discursive scope relating to English popular music heritage. On the day that Abbey Road was given Grade II Listed status in February 2010, Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said:

> Some of the most defining sounds of the 20th century were created within the walls of the Abbey Road Studios. English Heritage has long recognised the cultural importance of Abbey Road – it contains, quite simply, the most famous recording studios in the world which act as a modern day monument to the history of recorded sound and music. The listing of the building is a welcome acknowledgement of the contribution the studios have made to our musical heritage.... Listing is a way of saying that a building is special and that every care should be afforded to decisions affecting its future. English Heritage warmly welcome EMI's appreciation for the cultural value embodied in the building and their understanding that listing is an appropriate way to recognise that value. (English Heritage)

Beatles tourism focuses primarily on Liverpool, the focus there is on the *origins* of the Beatles. In the case of Liverpool, the Beatles' 'past has been summoned to rescue the present', using Hewison's assessment of the function of the heritage industry, for the city was in economic decline, even when it was famous for nurturing unique pop music in the 1960s (Hewison 1987: 21; see also Cohen 2007). Interestingly, items featuring Abbey Road iconography (including reproductions of the album cover on cards and coasters, and of the street sign on fridge magnets) are the best sellers in a range of Beatles souvenirs at the Museum of Liverpool gift shop, retail manager Karen O'Connor observes. This is surprising considering that there is also a range of goods on sale which features images of the group's Liverpool past. Abbey Road Studios, in economically dynamic London, is meanwhile part of a vital *present*: it remains a working studio, active in a vibrant popular music scene. The continued, and extensive, critical attention paid to archival Beatles material ensures its discursive buoyancy. It is an active site literally and virtually, the latter

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being a vital prerequisite of the modern tourist gaze. Once the workshop of the Beatles in the fixity of solid modernity, Abbey Road now hosts discursive engagement which derives from that history in the electronic fluidity of liquid modernity. Authenticity, Connell and Gibson argue, 'hangs on nostalgia' and nostalgia 'can be seen as a new way of imagining communities, harnessed in by the post nation-state, an attempt at a connivance of a recovery of a lost childhood, a return to the m(other) land' (Connell and Gibson 2003: 272). Yesterday is engaged through Abbey Road in the fast flow of global traffic and tourism in liquid modernity. There are places some communities are persuaded to remember.

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