

Chapter 5

Nostalgia and Simulacra: Blackpool in Song

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The link between the popular music history of Blackpool and its status as a seaside holiday resort are illustrated by an episode from its recent efforts to re-invent itself, one which touches on a number of recurring themes. In 2009 Frank Barrett, the travel editor of *The Mail on Sunday*, voiced his indignation about a Blackpool tourist board promotional video, intended to modernise the image of the town. The video, aping the imagery and style of arthouse film, appears at first to be set in a Parisian café before its true location is revealed. In lamenting the promotional campaign Barrett makes reference to the popular music history of Blackpool. The film, he complains:

attempts a sort of French cinema arthouse take on the seaside resort. At first glance, you might think that Blackpool is making a pitch for the French tourist market. In fact, the French aren't really keen on holidaying anywhere outside France (thank God, you might say)... Rather than indulging in smart arty films, Blackpool ought to be concentrating on celebrating its core values: harking back to the glory days of George Formby, Gracie Fields and Albert and the Lion. (Barrett 2009)

Perhaps predictably for a feature writer on a publication noted for its flag-waving nationalism, Barrett's ire is aroused by the thought that the campaign might have been appealing to the French. But the issue of class is also implied: Barrett suggests that Blackpool's arthouse pretensions might indicate that the town had ideas above its station. In invoking the popular music of pre-war Blackpool, Barrett's critique brings together some of the persistent themes and anxieties in postwar musical references to the town: nostalgia, Englishness, class, decline and the notion of the 'fake'.

Nostalgic Nationalism: freedom, conformity and decline

Blackpool has been referenced within popular music for the best part of a century. Its place in popular culture derived originally from its success as a place for tourism and entertainment. In the 1930s 'glory days' that Barrett invokes, Blackpool was the most popular resort in Britain, with an estimated 7 million visitors to the resort each season (Walton 1998). It is the very success of Blackpool in the first half of the twentieth century as a place of leisure and entertainment that has led to the vein of nostalgia that runs through postwar references to the town in popular music. The three popular music references cited by Barrett involve artists

who were major recording stars and live performers in the 1930s: Gracie Fields, Stanley Holloway and George Formby.

It would be hard to overstate how popular Gracie Fields was in Britain during the 1930s, nor the strength of her association with Blackpool. She starred in eleven feature films during that decade and appeared at the Blackpool Grand Theatre on thirteen occasions between 1932 and 1938. The importance to the lives of Lancashire mill workers is central to the narrative of her 1934 film, *Sing As We Go*. The fame of Blackpool and also the irreverent and transgressive sense of fun connected with the holiday resort are evident in Stanley Holloway's 1932 recording of a comic monologue with musical accompaniment, 'The Lion and Albert'. It begins, 'There's a famous seaside place called Blackpool, that's noted for fresh air and fun'. It goes on to tell the story of a small child being eaten by a lion at Blackpool zoo, a narrative whose ostensible horror is humorously undercut by the phlegmatic, matter-of-fact pragmatism of the cast of working-class characters. The songs of George Formby celebrated the joys of the town when it was a mecca for popular entertainment and at a time when he was one of its most successful regular performers. He wrote songs referencing Blackpool including 'Blackpool Prom', 'Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower' and most famously, 'With My Little Stick of Blackpool Rock'. As Barrett implies, artists like Formby and Fields represent the high tide of Blackpool's popularity as the premier English holiday resort of the prewar and immediate postwar years. As we start to examine Blackpool as it manifests in the songs of the past 60 years, it is clear that high water mark is a constant implicit reference point in characterisations of the town.

The ascendancy of Blackpool as a holiday destination for British working-class families in the days before cheap foreign travel, connects with a kind of nostalgic nationalism in postwar popular music. A typical example is 'Blackpool Belle', which the Bolton folk trio, the Houghton Weavers released in 1993.

I remember - very well
All the happy gang aboard the Blackpool Belle
I remember them pals of mine,
when I ride the Blackpool line

'Blackpool Belle' had originally been released by folk singer Howard Broadbent in 1983. It was a song he and fellow Bolton songwriter Jimmy Smith had written eight years earlier about their memories of the train that took Lancashire workers to Blackpool. Its lyrics speak of happy memories of bygone days and of the sense of comradeship that was reinforced by those excursions.

The seaside holiday for many people conjures up memories of childhood, as in the song *Blackpool* released by indie band the Delgados in 1998.

Turn attention those we mention
Seasonal attraction beckons
Leave your thoughts at home and come away
Can't imagine how exciting
Was to come here so inviting
When we were young in September days

The song is a reminder that the nostalgia for Blackpool is not a purely English phenomenon: working-class Scots visitors also arrived in the town en masse during their traditional industrial holidays. The reference in the lyrics to 'September days' also reflects these local patterns of leisure; the Delgados were a Scottish band who come from Motherwell in North Lanarkshire, which traditionally has its Autumn Public Holiday in late September.

The Jethro Tull song 'Up the Pool' also conjures up childhood memories. The band's frontman and songwriter Ian Anderson spent much of his childhood in Blackpool after his parents moved to the town from Scotland. Jethro Tull started as a blues based rock band in the Blackpool in the late 1960's, but by 1971 when 'Up the Pool' was released the band was labelled as 'progressive rock', a genre which in the UK tended to eschew Afro-American musical forms and lyrical references. Anderson's songwriting increasingly referenced English themes and musical styles. The lyrics are written from the viewpoint of a child and that that lyrical concept is reflected in the musical setting. Jethro Tull, like many progressive rock acts, were known for creating music of rhythmic and harmonic complexity, but the verses of the 'Up the Pool' feature a simple melody in a major, in repeated six note phrasing, harmonised in a predictable pattern of tonic, dominant and sub-dominant chords. Only in the last two lines of the verse does the melody become less predictable in its phrasing and tonality.

I'm going up the 'Pool
From down the smoke below
To taste me mum's jam sarnies
And see our Aunty Flo.
The candy floss salesman
Watches ladies in the sand
Down for a freaky weekend in the hope
That they'll be meeting Mr. Universe.

Those final two lines of the verse take the song into a second section, where a minor tonality is introduced under a drone-like melody, creating a sense of dream or reverie as the singer lists the sights and sounds around him.

There'll be buckets, spades and bingo,
Cockles, mussels, rainy days,
Seaweed and sandcastles, icy waves,
Deck chairs, rubber dinghies,
Old vests, braces dangling down,
A suntanned stranded starfish in a daze.
Oh, Blackpool.

Instrumentally 'Up the Pool' also differs from most of Jethro Tull's output at the time. In place of Jethro Tull's usual rock band instrumentation of drums, electric guitar, bass and keyboards, the track is largely carried by Anderson's acoustic guitar, supplemented by bass and a string arrangement. This stripped-down instrumentation provides a more intimate musical setting and so creates the impression of a more personal reflection on the past. The contribution of other band members merely add atmosphere: some rough unison singing reminiscent of an informal sing-song on a seaside charabanc trip and a brief organ part quoting the melody of 'Oh I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside'.

In writing his paean to Blackpool, Anderson was choosing to reflect national identity both lyrically and musically in a conscious rejection of the American music that influenced so many other British bands of the era.

...we always had a dislike of bands like The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds and Chicken Shack... not personally, but I could never understand why they felt it necessary to sing the blues with an America lilt in their voice. And, indeed, within their playing. This was great music but it wasn't *their* music. Almost without thinking we found ourselves within the music. It helped that I had a flute. Not a well-known instrument of the blues but we were determined to keep our Englishness intact. (Middles 2010)

That conscious aversion to aping American music did not only extend to avoiding adopting an American accent, but also led to a conscious attempt to avoid drawing upon Afro-American musical influences. This was characteristic of many British progressive rock bands, but while most drew upon influences from European classical music, Jethro Tull also rejected those elite art music traditions and instead drew from English folk music, both compositionally and in choice of instrumentation.

If in 'Up the Pool' Anderson paints an elegiac picture of Blackpool, in the Kinks' 1967 single 'Autumn Almanac', Ray Davies seems to be affectionately mocking the traditional Blackpool holiday.

I like my football on a Saturday,
Roast beef on Sundays, all right.
I go to Blackpool for my holidays,
Sit in the open sunlight.

Like Anderson in 'Up the Pool', Davies uses a simple three chord major key structure for this section, in contrast to the more adventurous harmonic progressions featured elsewhere in the piece. Melodically this section is reminiscent of the kind of Edwardian music hall song that might have been performed in an end-of-the-pier show. The song's episodic structure resembles a musical scrapbook, changing its tonality and lyrical voice as it lights on different topics. What nonetheless gives the song coherence is its overarching theme: as Kieth Gildart (2012) points out, the song 'ultimately describes the working-class attachment to locality and place'.

That attachment is not presented as an entirely rosy sunlit scenario, however. Immediately after the brief 'Blackpool and roast beef' section, the song abruptly shifts into a minor key and the melody becomes more poignant as the comforts and limitations of community are considered.

This is my street, and I'm never gonna to leave it,
And I'm always gonna to stay here
If I live to be ninety-nine,
'Cause all the people I meet
Seem to come from my street
And I can't get away,
Because it's calling me, 'come on home'.

The social realism of Ray Davies song writing led to the Kinks releasing a series of songs celebrating English working-class life and communities. But the stifling conformity of English culture is also a recurring theme in his work. The song's narrator vows never to leave his street, but also acknowledges that he 'can't get away'. It is very likely that due to the Wakes Week tradition, many visitors to Blackpool in 1967 would have frequently encountered their workmates and neighbours during their stay.

One consequence of this was that the social relations of the mill town— their hierarchies, norms, prohibitions, rules of address and etiquette —were transposed to Blackpool for the duration of the holiday. (Webb 2005: 126)

This may have been welcomed as comforting and familiar, but it may also have limited the sense of felt freedom experienced by visitor.

Davies was also aware that although in decline, the English seaside resort held a particular kind of magic for working-class youth. Blackpool had been central to John Lennon's childhood. The Davies family would regularly holiday in Ramsgate and Southend. The image of Blackpool in 'Autumn Almanac' is a celebration of the mass leisure and consumption patterns of the English working-class. The song is evocative of Lancashire Wakes Weeks and the image of Blackpool in the Gracie Fields' film *Sing As We Go*. (Gildart 2012)

'Autumn Almanac' celebrates working class mass leisure while also gently mocking the conformity it engendered. George Formby had struck a similar note a generation earlier, in his 1944 song recounting an excursion with his real-life wife Beryl, at a time when wartime rationing was still in place.

On Blackpool prom on Saturday I had a lovely time
I queued for breakfast,
I queued for lunch, I queued for bananas in a bunch
I queued for a glass of bitter, the old woman was watching the pram
I queued for the Beryl's gin and lime, it really was a pantomime
Before I got served they shouted
'Time', so I queued for a queue in a tram

As Gildart implies there is also a sense in 'Autumn Almanac', as in many of Davies' songs, that the England he writes about is in decline or under threat, a theme that was explored at length a year later in the album *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*. In 'Autumn Almanac' the imagery is of a gentle and comfortable decline from high summer.

By the 1980s however, with Britain experiencing the application of Thatcherite economic policies and the North of England in particular being in the throes of de-industrialisation, a grimmer picture of the town was painted by John Robb in a song released by his punk band the Membranes in 1988. The Membranes had formed in Blackpool a decade earlier and the song 'Tatty Seaside Town' did not depict the town from the viewpoint of the visitor, but instead reflected the experience of young men growing up in Blackpool.

With big maloney boots on, they're hassling me
Fairground's lonely banter a frightening scene
The sheer thrill of violence on a warm August night
I'd much rather run than get stuck with this fight
Hey, when the sun goes down, I'm in a seaside town
Hey, when the sun goes down, I'm in a seaside town
With a bunch of single tickets, the train is pulling out
Goodbye pier, town and autumn lights
The pungent smell of adrenalin
Seaside mafia met in town tonight

The sense of threat that lurks behind the facades of a seaside town is not a new theme. The lyrics of 'Tatty Seaside Town' conjure up images reminiscent of Graham Greene's 1938 novel *Brighton Rock* and its 1947 film adaptation directed by John Boulting. But the decline of the town in the 1980s is dramatized in the Membranes song which ends with the image of people leaving the town on one-way tickets. In today's Blackpool one does not need to stray far behind the bright lights of the Golden Mile to see evidence of deprivation and decay.

Fakeness, Artifice and Englishness

The distance between the glittering surface and a grimier reality appears as a recurring theme. In many songs Blackpool is presented in the context of fakes and simulacra. Sometimes the artifice is welcomed and celebrated. The Houghton Weavers' song 'The Blackpool Belle' recalled an actual train service that linked the Lancashire mill towns with the resort, but in reality, there was no train that bore that name. The Blackpool Belle was the name of an illuminated tram in the shape of a Mississippi paddle steamer which ran along the Promenade in the 1950s. Blackpool may have been located in the North of England, but visitors were happy for the town to dress itself up and play at being in the Deep South of the United States.

The *Mail on Sunday* writer Frank Barrett bridled at the pretention of the fake French art house film, because, he said, that the resort was typically English and had nothing to do with France, but in his critique he apparently found no contradiction in noting one exception in passing: 'apart from its Eiffel Tower clone'. The Blackpool Tower features in many of the songs cited in this chapter, yet it is so much a part of Blackpool's identity that, even in those songs which critique the artificiality of the town, the Tower itself is not condemned as a simulacrum. In 'Blackpool Tower Suite' (1990), the Manchester indie band World of Twist presented a personification of the Tower almost as a female deity presiding over the pleasure grounds of Blackpool.

She's been here a long time
Bringing us good times
Two miles high
She's in her steel
You can see her from the wheel
She's out on the coast line having a good time

If Blackpool sometimes seems to pretend that it was located on the other side of the channel or the other side of the Atlantic that could be seen as part of its allure.

The artifice of Blackpool, its apparent freedom from the weight of reality and history is a quality of which Baudrillard might have approved. He contrasted his European homeland with the allure of Disneyland and Hollywood:

First of all, it is the sense of having rediscovered a realm of fantasy and of disruptive energy which I find it difficult to come to terms with here, where I find myself up to my neck in culture. The seemingly flat, extensive, immanent world of California delighted me, despite its lack of seduction, in the theatrical sense of the word. (Gane 1993; 134)

But the willingness of Blackpool to imitate the USA is ridiculed and roundly condemned by the Welsh rock band the Manic Street Preachers in their 1998 song, 'Elvis Impersonator: Blackpool Pier'.

20ft. high on Blackpool promenade
Fake royalty second hand sequin facade
Limited face paint and dyed black quiff
Overweight and out of date
American trilogy in Lancashire Pottery
Is so fucking funny, don't you know
All American trilogy in used up cars and bottled beer
All American trilogy the future's dead, fundamentally
It's so fucking funny, it's absurd

The artifice of Blackpool is not viewed as playful amusement, but as totemic of the Americanisation of British culture. This impersonation is 'dyed', 'fake', 'secondhand', and a 'façade' that is ultimately not only as 'absurd', but as a sign of a country that has no future of its own. The critique is not only of cultural decline, but also of the political and economic damage wrought by neoliberalism that was a theme of *Everything Must Go*, the album on which it appeared. The following year another Welsh rock band, the Stereophonics also used Blackpool to reference a sense of fakeness. The band clearly did not share Baudrillard's

delight in the artifice of California and their song 'Plastic California' (1999) lampoons what they see as its fakeness, opening with the line, 'Plastic California looks like Blackpool'.

Blackpool and California are both used to denote fakeness by Mark E. Smith in The Fall's 2003 song 'Idiot Joy Showland'. The Mancunian Smith sneers at what he sees as a fake and vacuous Manchester music scene.

Freddie and the Dreamers, come on up
Hey you imitators, come on up
Hey little singer, come on up
Show us your house and
Show us your cock
The working class has been shafted
So what the fuck you sneering at?
Your prerogative in life it seems
Is living out an ad man's dream
Idiot Joy Showland
California has Disneyland
And Blackpool has a Funland
And Flanders had no man's land
This place idiot show bands

Blackpool's Funland amusement arcade and Disneyland in California are both employed to condemn what Smith depicts as the fake and empty entertainment offered by the Manchester music scene, whose musicians he damns as 'imitators' who are merely engaging in 'competitive plagiarism'. Specifically he targets those who pose as working class rebels while chasing the 'ad man's dream' of commercial success. He compares them to the Manchester pop group of the 1960s Freddie and the Dreamers, who had early commercial success as Beatles copyists and light entertainment comedy act; Freddie and the Dreamers frequently performed in Blackpool, including appearing for a season in pantomime at the Grand Theatre.

One aspect of fakeness referenced in songs about Blackpool is not associated with the seaside holiday. Blackpool is used as a location for the annual conferences of the major British political parties and the town becomes the backdrop against which the optics of political positioning are staged. In Jethro Tull's 'Up the Pool' among the characteristic sights of Blackpool listed in the song are noted, 'The politicians there, who've come to take the air, while posing for the daily press'. The Liberal Democrat Conference was held in Blackpool in September 1988 and the Beautiful South song 'Oh Blackpool', released the following year, is

explicit in its condemnation of the centrist politics of the 1980s represented by the Liberal SDP Alliance and its attempt to replace the Labour Party as the main opposition to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government.

Blackpool help me out, Scarborough pull me through
So help me out
They wore enamel badges of David Steel on their sleeves
And nuclear power no thanks, not sure and yes please
And their faces were two-fold and their teeth they were gold
And they wore their pinstripe suits with a rip at the knee

In Paul Heaton's song these politicians are portrayed as two-faced, with false teeth made of gold. They wear clothes associated with a ruling elite, adapted with a contrived and spurious symbol of rebellion. However, Heaton is not uncritical of his own industry; he, like Mark E. Smith, derides the fake rebellion that is to be seen in the political posturing of pop musicians, arguing that 'pop music only ever apes what they think is the most left-wing thing they can get away with. It's that vacuous' (Kinney 2014). But the juxtaposition of leading politicians and sites of working-class recreation provides Heaton with an opportunity to lampoon the attempts of the powerful to present themselves as 'men of the people'. The reality of Blackpool conference season is that it provides little contact between the British political elites and the predominantly working-class holidaymakers who visit the town. Since the IRA bombing of the Grand Brighton Hotel during the conference of the ruling Conservative Party in 1984, party conferences take place under security measures that tend to limit the interactions to well-orchestrated photo opportunities.

Carnavalesque and the Spirit of Punk

In truth the Blackpool has never been a theatre for the mingling of different social classes. If some seaside resorts invite us to consider the applicability of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival, Blackpool resists that analysis precisely because it lacks that essential defining characteristic.

This is a very important aspect of a carnival sense of the world. People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free familiar contact on the carnival square. (Bakhtin & Emerson 1984: 123)

The North Pier, built in 1863, was expressly constructed as a safe middle-class recreation area, with a toll to deter working class visitors. The South Jetty was completed five years later as a place of working class entertainment. As Webb points out, the avoidance of

carnavalesque non-hierarchical association was built into the very architecture of the town from the moment the railway began to bring working class visitors to the resort.

In Blackpool, then, there were two crowds segregated by class. This class segregation was deliberately engineered and was supported by local government. The two piers themselves, stretching a quarter of a mile out to sea, were visible from almost everywhere and served as a reminder of the permanent presence, the immutability, of class distinctions. Hierarchical barriers – both symbolic and physical – were central facets of the way in which Blackpool was sold and experienced. Not only were social relations in Blackpool not egalitarian, nobody pretended that they were. (Webb 2005: 125)

But if Blackpool failed to offer that breakdown of hierarchical social relations, it did at least promise the other carnivalesque elements identified by Bakhtin: freedom from the ‘piety, and etiquette’ of everyday life and a chance to indulge in a little *profanation*:

carnivalistic blasphemies, a whole system of carnivalistic debasings and bringings down to earth, carnivalistic obscenities linked with the reproductive power of the earth and the body. (Bakhtin & Emerson 1984: 123)

The seaside resort is celebrated in twentieth century popular culture as a place of relative sexual freedom, the location of a ‘dirty weekend’, where it might be possible for an unmarried couple to share a bed in anonymity, or at least permissible to enjoy the vulgarity of a saucy postcard while wearing a hat that is emblazoned with the slogan, ‘Kiss Me Quick’.

Even the twee nostalgia of the Houghton Weavers’ song, ‘Blackpool Belle’ reveals a story of relative sexual freedom. The train that is memorialised in the song is not one that carries industrial workers’ families to their summer holidays, but the Saturday evening train, “known locally as the passion wagon”, that took the youth of Lancashire towns to Blackpool, away from the watchful eyes of their families and local communities (Kelly 2018).

Oh the Blackpool Belle was a getaway train that went from Northern stations
What a beautiful sight on a Saturday night bound for the illuminations
No mothers and dads just girls and lads young and fancy free
Out for the laughs on the Golden Mile at Blackpool by the sea

George Formby’s songs celebrated that sense of sexual freedom with gently suggestive comic lyrics and use of double entendre. In ‘My Little Stick of Blackpool Rock’ (1937) the potential phallic symbolism of the popular seaside treat is not wasted.

It may be sticky but I never complain,
It's nice to have a nibble at it now and again
A girl while bathing clung to me, I shouted out, "Oh!"
She cried, "I think I'm drowning, and you'll save me I know
I said, "Well if you're drowning would you mind letting go
Of my little stick of Blackpool Rock."
With my little stick of Blackpool Rock,
Along the promenade I stroll
In the ballroom I went dancing each night
No wonder every girl that danced with me, stuck to me tight

Formby's humour is akin to the humour of the saucy seaside postcards of Donald McGill, ridiculous rather than erotic, they are designed to provoke laughter rather than stir the passions. But as Shields points out in his discussion of pre second world war Brighton postcards, even such images relate to Bakhtin's concept of carnival:

The carnivalesque as ritual inversion of the norms of 'high' culture is underscored by the corpulent excesses and flows of the grotesque body and the 'lower bodily strata' as opposed to the controlled disciplined body of propriety and authority. (Shields 1992: 92)

In World of Twist's 'Blackpool Tower Suite' by contrast, in place of risqué comedy the sexual possibilities of the town are presented in a more sensual iconography. The lyrics eschew the obvious phallic symbolism of the Blackpool Tower and instead gives the structure a female personification, that echoes Jim Morrison's eroticised depiction of Los Angeles in the Doors' song 'LA Woman'.

Try to please you at the pier
I spin some sugar candy from your hair
Riding on the cork screw feels so fine girl
Down the twisting tunnels of your mind

The song is underpinned by a pulsating dance rhythm typical of the Manchester indie bands of the early 1990s. There is no evidence of ironic distance in the music or in the lyrics of the record. Blackpool is presented not ironically, nor nostalgically, nor critically, but as a place of sensual excitement. As depicted by World of Twist, the town's glory days were not in the past: Blackpool was *cool*.

Paul Heaton presents a different view however in 'When I'm 84' by The Beautiful South. The song imagines future old age as being resistance to the comfortable conformity presented

by Lennon and McCartney in 'When I'm 64'. Far from being 'cool', the Blackpool holiday is emblematic of a state of giving in to old age and senility.

No dribbling or incontinence
No longing for the old sixpence
Just smoking weed till age make sense
When I'm 74, I'll dream on
They all save for Blackpool
Just for the cheap companionship
Meanwhile he counts pennies
For a different trip.

And yet despite this stereotype, Blackpool has in fact retained some connection to rebellion and carnivalesque debasement through its embrace of punk rock music, a genre that in its origins was perfectly suited to the task of engendering moral panic. In the 1970s the middle-class reaction to punk rock was akin to the anxieties of middle class Victorian visitors to the influx of working class visitors arriving via the railway system with 'an excess of unbridled vulgarity' (Bennett 1986: 138).

While most punk bands shared a leftist political agenda and employed selective use of outrage, for the Macclesfield based punk band The Macc Lads, causing outrage with a politically incorrect "excess of unbridled vulgarity" was the essence of their act. The lyrics of their song 'Blackpool' (1985) are structurally similar to the Houghton Weavers' 'Blackpool Belle', in that it recounts a trip to Blackpool and the comic misadventures that befall their party. However there the similarity ends; the song boasts of outrageous and offensive behaviour and delights in depicting what Shields called 'corpulent excesses and flows of the grotesque body' (ibid).

One day after closing I was lying on me nest,
When Stez shouts "get yer bags on, come on outside."
So I grabbed me stripey tank-top, I 'ad beer stains on me vest,
An' I said "best get some cans in, it's a long ride."
Well, we drove along the M6, chuckin' cans at other folk,
An' stopped at all the services that took us.
Picked up some fit hitch-hikers,
An' we told 'em filthy jokes,
An' piled them in the back seet fer to fuck us.

Of course rock music being the cause of such moral panics represented a continuity from the preceding decades. The outrage provoked by punk rock was prefigured by incidents such as the 1964 riot that took place when the Rolling Stones played at the Empress Ballroom Blackpool, which began when some of the audience began spitting at the band (Hughes 2008). In the twenty-first century punk rock, like the Rolling Stones, has lost its power to shock and its threat to upend the status quo, but it still engenders a spirit of solidarity. The annual Rebellion Festival is a highly success fixture on the Blackpool tourism calendar, which attracts many major bands from the heyday of punk, including the Membranes who play the event regularly. Sham 69 who played the first Blackpool punk rock festival in 1996 celebrated the event and the punk values of acceptance and solidarity with their song Blackpool, which was released the following year.

Turn it up loud for the Blackpool crowd
Yeah I'm a punk and I'm so proud
I wanna turn it up, turn it up loud
Cos I'm the one with the safety pin
I'm the one that said let 'em in... so
Let 'em in, let 'em in, let em in

Blackpool is an example of the kind of song Sham 69 founded their career upon. Although the band was never as explicitly political as many of their punk rock contemporaries, songs such as 'Hersham Boys', 'The Kids are United' and 'Hurry Up Harry' celebrated working class solidarity, attachment to community and kinship.

Conclusions

In the postwar years, references to Blackpool in song are, in one way or another, the shadows cast by the glorious sunlit days of the town's past. The depictions of Blackpool in popular music represent a wide range of attitudes to the town, from elegiac nostalgia to disdain, but because of the history of the town that connection to the working class, and specifically to the English working class, is inevitably a persistent seam running through those musical representations. However, when that seam is mined, it can yield very different elements. In some songs it is recognition of the social reality of English working-class life that delights in Blackpool as a theatre for fun, sociability and freedom from the restrictions of daily life is expressed. Others point out a harsher or more tawdry reality beneath the surface and anxieties are revealed about the artificiality of Blackpool's glittering facades, decline in the town's fortunes and the loss of its identity. To choose to write a song about Blackpool is to choose to engage with questions of class and national identity. The disparate nature of those musical

responses underlines the failure of Blackpool to fulfil the role of carnival as described by Bakhtin, as a place free of hierarchical barriers. As such, the body of musical representations of Blackpool can be seen as emblematic of that same failure within society at large.

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