

MAKING THE CUT

space

resistance

place



EVA INTERNATIONAL
IRELAND'S BIENNIAL



reaffirming
the intentions
of those
who shaped their
version of an
international
underground culture for
their own

space.

Limerick youth culture 1968-1973; towards a modern template.

[Paul Tarpey, 2014]



the words of John Mortimer in 1971:

‘dissenters wear long hair and colourful clothes
and dream their dreams of

another world in

small bed-sitting rooms in Notting Hill Gate.
In place of sermons with their lurid phrases about damnation,
We have magazines reflecting

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Limerick holds no monuments commemorating the late Sixties activities of the working class Hippies, the local followers of Baha'ullah or the Irish Revolutionary Youth Movement of 1970. The street actions of the Magic Mushroom gang, who once illegally re-furbished a derelict building, have only their own memories of this. The counter-cultural impact of the 1968 Little Ellen boutique is unremarked as is the significance of the Church halls that hosted protest-inclined beat groups. Many details and consequences of Limerick non-conformity in the time slot of 1968-73 continue to remain underground or subsumed within a general history of post-war modernism.

A majority of these activities are music-based and are conventionally regarded as pop-cultural sidebars in the context of the wider process of post-war Irish Modernism. In the context of non-conformity, rebellion and resistance they also remain sublimated in relation to the War in the North. What does remain to be excavated is a strain of non-conformity that manifests itself as a type of resistance particular to Limerick.

As part of EVA International 2014, **Making The Cut** recognises this authentic voice of protest and re-affirms the intentions of those who shaped their version of an international underground culture for their own space. It celebrates the impact of those who went, returned and applied a new mindset to their home town. An affirmation of this is to be found in excavated history that celebrates an under-represented cultural legacy. Making the Cut draws from these countercultural memories.

'you cannot learn,
through common sense
how
things are:
you can only
discover where they
fit
into the existing
scheme
of
things.'

stuart hall

Cha Haran, 2013.



L-R: Johnny Fean, Paul Hanrahan, Noel Liston, Christy Murphy, Guido DiVito, c.1969.



An interest in open-ended cultural agendas

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Much of this stemmed from harvesting the peripatetic practice of short term labouring in London.

Space – Resistance – Place.

In 1968–1969 a generation of Limerick youth came of age with social and cultural aspirations radically different from those of their parents. Seeking a break with church-regulated authority the youth reached out first to the mod ‘scene’ and then to the English and American folk/hippy movement for authentic counter-cultural markers. This reflected a thirst for expansive ideals and communal values that were tempered with a distrust of authority.

In circa 1966 an interest in open-ended cultural agendas was evident in the city as different tribes desired to establish a counter-cultural equivalence of the international youth movement. (1) Many who came through this era eventually followed paths in leftist politics or became professionally involved in the national project of modernisation of the arts. Many others participated in what could be regarded as an ongoing project after forging their own understated connections for change. Much of this stemmed from harvesting the peripatetic practice of short term laboring in London. This practice of termed emigration to England in the late 60s opened a cultural conduit managed by a generation more receptive to cultural change than their parent’s generation. They saw London as a transitional environment to be engaged with as participants and never stayed long enough to develop the psychic condition of ‘dwelling in displacement’. This was an unfortunate condition that befell those who remained, in essence, in limbo for decades as the ‘traditional’ Irish. Instead of the standard home away from home of London’s Kilburn, Notting Hill became the destination for many of Limerick’s progressive travellers. Here, in the words of John Mortimer, ‘dissenters wear long hair and colourful clothes and dream their dreams of another world in small bed-sitting rooms in Notting Hill Gate. In place of sermons with their lurid phrases about damnation, we have magazines reflecting a totally different society from that in which we live.’ (2) The new Limerick generation took these independent publications and responded to the open boundaries suggested within them. A 1969 *International Times* editorial proclaimed that,

‘If you want revolution—sexual freedom, freedom of thought, freedom to discover who you really are—in short if you want a new world and won’t settle for less, then these journals are your only covert material. One suggestion: start more of them. But remember, if you want to change things, however peaceably, those people who like things as they are will make trouble for you. Those are either the ones in authority of the ones thoroughly conditioned by authority.’

The contrast between the fixed Irish nationalist conceptions of ‘home’ with its attachment to land and a church controlled matrix of fixed relations and potential of communal life represented by Notting Hill cannot be underestimated. Under the stewardship of Sean Lemass’s programme for economic expansions Ireland in the Sixties had accessed foreign investment resulting in GNP growing nearly 50% over the decade. However such progress was not evenly spread across the country. It did not automatically bridge the urban-rural/socio-cultural divide. As the post-war conservatism persisted so did a steady trend of emigration which accelerated with the economic slump experienced in the Seventies. The notion of the youth leaving the land, particularly in the west, was ritualised to the extent that the Irish became and remain the largest migrant population in Britain. Once abroad it was a population that remained socially together establishing a longstanding population in construction

and healthcare. The cultural tropes associated with this traffic ranged from transposing the gathering of the Irish dance to London as well as the composition of songs that drew on the migrant experience itself such as ‘Mc Alpines fusiliers.’ Much of the social make up of the Irish in the enclave of inner city London had remained in place since the late 19th century. Its rituals were simple and above all designed to prioritise reference to the home country.

With the advent of the Sixties a different paradigm was available to migrants before they left. Most men were still labourers with many women choosing nursing but this generation left with more cultural curiosity than previous. Within this wave there was a desire to articulate curiosity and explore notions of change to properly reflect their own generation. Although aware of their place in the migrant timeline many were intolerant of the persistence of the previous generation in maintaining a subservient attitude to the host country. For these migrants the London of the Sixties was to be dug for knowledge.

Now as participants in the London scene more than the previous generation the Limerick youth experienced and proselytised change. In this they may be seen to have politicised, for following generations, the ritual of ‘working on the sites for summer’. As transients who returned they rejected the submissive mindset of previous emigrants who regarded London as an anonymous building site to be tolerated. Collectively they rejected the self-regulated remorse of the ‘paddy abroad’ and seized their own time before returning home as a vanguard for an international counterculture. London was a resource.

‘As teenagers, who had followed the mod scene in Ireland, walking down the street in London of 67,

we didn’t look too different and we had the same attitude as those our own age that we passed’ (James Haran, singer and London resident 1966-67).

‘That was the big difference from Limerick of course, we immediately sought out all the spots where the bands would play and they would be full of like-minded people.’ (Michael Donovan Notting Hill resident 1969).

When these returning Limerick labourers described their exposure to multi-cultural events, communal living and various situations of protest they found receptive teenage audiences. And in spreading the reputation of Notting Hill as the new destination for sixties Irish youth they came across as ambassadors for a new purpose. Accentuating the cut between the new and old London destinations they would have responded to graffiti in Notting Hill posted by the English proto-Situationists King Mob, proclaiming that ‘Joyless work causes cancer.’ (3)

Once home, counter cultural activity ranged in strength from (literally) shouting on street corners to the quiet sharing of the mainly London alternative press. Issues of *The International Times* (IT), *Black Dwarf*, *Time Out* and *OZ* magazine were circulated to certain youth that would be thought receptive. There was always an avid readership of the English ‘pop’ press in Limerick city but with the radicalism of the underground now in on the street, options and questions arose. The radical press encouraged a much more political type of participation over simply consuming non-conformity as style. Papers such as the *International Times* with its utopian philosophy took its

‘That was the big difference from Limerick of course, we immediately sought out all the spots where the bands would play and they would be full of like-minded people’ Michael Donovan Notting Hill resident 1969.



Michael Donovan (left) taken in Notting Hill 1968.

lead from the American countercultural press who had taken advantage of the evolution of printing technology to undertake print runs of thousands. The San Francisco Oracle which featured *Psychedelica* as a key editorial tool had a circulation in 1967 of 107,000 issues. It was accepted that such an alternative volume was needed to confront the organs of establishment. Distrust of the mainstream media was a given and it became an ethical task to confront the spectacle in the medium of print. This became a democratic task that any group could undertake as there was an agreement between the various publications to share information and articles.

‘If you’re not careful the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.’ (Malcolm X).

The significance of this early Sixties pivot in the US remains in how small regional magazines with local issues of protest quickly found a readership far outside their locality. Inclusion was the key as communities found similar issues in their locality as networks were created. By 1965 these networks defined the counterculture in England as well as America. The term underground referenced the wartime anti-Nazi clandestine publications of resistance. Sean Stewart, a historian of the underground press, underlines the importance of inclusion

‘Unified on some fronts and divided on others, attendance was the price of admission, and the points of entry were as many as they were varied’

Underground publications questioned the concept of the spectacle for a wider audience and advocated political change sound tracked as ever by music. Significantly, for an Irish readership, it was the British independent press who began to cover the war in the North of Ireland from an international perspective of civil rights. According to the editor of the *East Village Other*, the freedom of the counter-culture magazine should be ‘thought of as a Television Set.’ (The Book Free Press).

At their most vital the underground press rallied thought and recorded incursions. Reflecting on the history of the countercultural movement in 1972, David Widgery reminded readers in *OZ* magazine that ‘Of all the intellectual property speculators of the 60’s (the underground) made the most sizeable incursions into capitalism’s ideological real estate, the family, school, work- discipline, the ‘impartial law courts’ and the British Broadcasting Corporation. Unlike previous movements of radical arties, it actually transmitted its mood of indiscipline to young people of all classes.’

Change on the conservative post-war streets of Limerick was slight and the youth gradually began to build a base for themselves as they alerted like to like. There was no dramatic shift but instead a steady vernacular support for the necessity of the ideal of counterculture within in the city environment. To visualise this became a task. Sometimes the presence of a kaftan-wearing longhaired youth patrolling O’Connell St holding a Bob Dylan or Mothers of Invention LP before coming to rest in the Continental Café was enough to remind Sixties teenagers that there were alternatives. These exotic figures represented the ad hoc cultural boundaries of post-war Ireland and how the future they signified was to be found if the youth came together to consider new perspectives. It often hung on the simplicity that existed to be transmitted in the audio visual

experience of a long playing record listened to with friends.

A Limerick Leader end of year photo supplement in 2011 mentioned a ‘Speakers Corner’ operating at the corner of Thomas Street and O’Connell St in the late Seventies. This was the place where ‘anyone with anything to shout about could do so’. Saturday afternoons were ‘very popular with young lefties.’

The famed ‘LP walk’ often surfaces as a vernacular marker in many Limerick histories. Spaces were investigated and musical mentoring took place with the return of Limericks premier beat / rock / and eventually psychedelic band Grannies Intentions playing a major part in translating the zeitgeist for the local. Of course these slight performances emphasised the difference between town and country as well.

‘If I walked out ten miles from Limerick wearing what I used to wear and met a fella my own age on the road, he’d think I was an alien. There was that much difference between Limerick and spaces outside the city.’ James Haran.

As resource material flowed between Limerick and London new philosophies, politics and styles were unpacked and reformatted for the crucial time of 1968. The significance of this year for Irish youth rests in the decision by the then Pope Paul who delivered the *Humanae Vitae*. This ruling reiterated the Catholic Church’s ban on contraception. Such re-affirmation of church and state in the personal lives of its citizens widened the generation gap in Ireland. It was a sign delivered from the Vatican that the calls for the type of freedom made by radical European and American youth would not feature on any future agenda. Realising that this ruling was intended to shore up the status quo many then made the break with the Catholicism of their parents. The socio-cultural discrepancy between the severity of this announcement and the call for freedom suggested by international protests of the same year consolidated a generational discourse of change as well as highlighting the problematic rigidity of Ireland’s post-war mentality. ‘All that revolution in Paris in 68? I honestly thought it would spread’ Michael Donovan Limerick resident of Notting Hill 1969.

In the city the notion of a spiritual journey unconstrained by Catholic restraints persisted for a transitional space as the adoption of the use of psychedelics and ‘foreign’ spiritualism fuelled the vision of those returning home. A good intentioned vagueness in distancing oneself from ones parentss gods was facilitated in a mix of new sacraments and new scripture. Popular authors such as Carlos Castaneda were included in the mix to confirm that a cut, in terms of ‘belief forming’ relevant to the age, was to be made from ones Catholic upbringing. Variants of neo-paganism were also available for reference. In 1968 the profile French author Alain de Benoist founded the *Groupe ment de recherché et d’études pour la civilisation européenne*. He described it as an ‘ethnonationalist think-tank’ and with it advocated a rejection of Christianity with a return to Paganism.’ Socially Benoist was no Luddite. He promoted positive future thinking based on a social rejection of Catholicism as an ongoing repressive force.

Familiar counter-culture terms such as **finding oneself** or **spiritual journeys** remained dangerously alien to the post-war church state. Any hint of interest in foreign beliefs or the adoption of them by Limerick youth would have garnered a volatile



Limerick man, Noel Muirvhill, beaten by police during a demonstration in London (Time Out magazine, 1972).

reaction from the city's matrix of moral guardians. Promoting self-knowledge in any form marked one out as a fifth columnist. The lack of University status held by the city would also have contributed to an attitude of self-learning amongst groups once described as 'working class hippies.'

In April 1968 the front page of the International Times asked of its readers, Why Tribe? In an ecologically themed essay the noted American beat poet Gary Snyder proclaimed that 'the revolution has ceased to be an ideological concern. Instead, people are trying it out now—communism in small communities, new family organization...the signal is a bright and tender look; calmness and gentleness, freshness and ease of manner, men women and children—all of whom together hope to follow the timeless path of love and wisdom in affectionate company with the sky, winds, clouds, trees, waters, animals, and grasses : this is the tribe'— Snyder used the term 'tribe' intentionally. He referenced the subculture of Gypsy life where 'values are maintained' irrespective of what country one is in.

disparate happenings into a distinctive chapter in the city's history. There are no profile pop-cultural representatives for the age or iconic bookshops as would be found in the various alternative scenes in London, Paris or San Francisco. Instead a coalition of groups can collectively be seen to represent various modes of counter cultural production mostly centering on what developed from the beat music scene. In fact many individuals who generated the networks that created Limerick's contribution to the Irish beat are still active in the city.

What is always worthy of re-visiting is an investigation of the networks that facilitated a dialogue of defiance to occur. To tease out nuances, reframe events and balance the long and short-term gains for non-conformist resistance in Limerick. 'Get rid of flimsy foundations, of Heaven, Earth and things without shadows'. 'International Times—a finality that binds things together by communication'. (Slogans from the February 1968 issue of the International Times). When conventional historical timelines for the era of 1968–1973 are considered the hegemony of a surface history of Irish Modernism persists. Local understated histories that represent alternate universes are relegated as sidebars.

Two examples in particular where the presence in Limerick (albeit briefly) of internationalist icons **Che Guevara (1963)** and **Joseph Beuys (1974)** feature conventionally as historical curiosities. If ever referenced by the local media the populist legacy of both men frames their presence in the city as tourists, simply passing through Limerick.

In the case of Guevara the counter-cultural link with Limerick rests in the memorial work to the revolutionary figure that was killed in 1967. The artist Jim Fitzpatrick was a teenager working in his family's bar in Killkee, Limerick's seaside destination, and remembers the visit of Guevara who was exploring the area for his Irish ancestors. Later, outraged at the nature of his death, Fitzpatrick conceived his now famous Che portrait and sent it to left-wing political activist groups across Europe. He insisted that it be disseminated as widely as possible. Talking to the BBC in 2007 he said he deliberately designed it 'to breed like rabbits'. The iconic graphic was based on Korda's photograph taken in Cuba. After Guevara's death it featured as a poster distributed across Europe as well as in several magazines including Germany's Stern. Fitzpatrick initially saw it in Stern but later via the countercultural network he received an original copy of the image courtesy of a group of Dutch anarchists called the Provo who it is said received the image from directly from Jean Paul Sartre. Controversy over the removal of the image of Che in Killkee Co Clare 2013. Local authorities feared that the presence of the original mural would upset visiting American tourists. Artists responded by generating many more images of Che around the resort.

Drawing various strands together, in Limerick an understated historical attitude of cultural resistance along European lines did emerge in the era 68-73. It continues to influence succeeding generations of youth as a type of resistance described by the French theorist **Michael de Certeau in his book 'The Practice of Everyday Life'** as 'silent production'. This type of production encourages users to adapt the dominant cultural economy for their own 'rules' and create 'the network of the anti-discipline'.⁽⁴⁾ For Limerick versions of such a produc-

In 1971 the substance LSD was criminalised as 'class A'. As a force of resistance the followers of Timothy Leary and other like-minded counter-cultural figures championed LSD and psychedelics. Leary's writings on this were popularised in the likes of the International Times. This promoted a political reading of LSD and celebrated the power of psychedelics to decondition one from the so-called external power structure.

This awareness was intended to reconvene individuals to an 'underground' perspective. A myriad of groups interpreted this message in a variety of forms based on their particular interests. As Craig Sams, the founder of London's Whole Earth Foods said 'LSD clarified you.' In a 1969 Issue of IT Leary explained the semantics of his patented phrase

'turn on, tune in, drop out'.

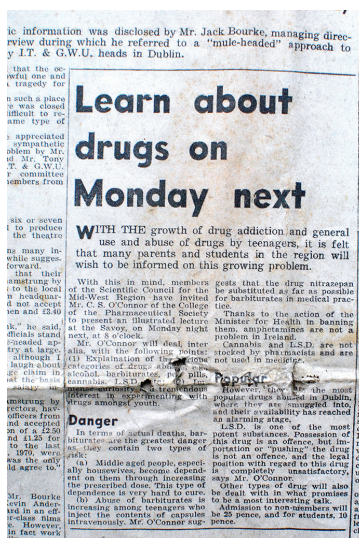
'In Limerick LSD allowed you to think different. Many progressive characters, and even those who joined the civil service here came through this road in the seventies, of course they would never admit it even now.' Anonymous (retired Civil Servant, Limerick 2013).

In terms of accessing new scripture 1967 is notable for the Irish governments unbanning of work by writers such as Camus and other figureheads of the counter culture. The 1967 Censorship of Publications act now limited the period of probation of books to twelve years. The significance of this in the Irish media did not register this as anything other than a routine act of government but passing it did allow access to 5,000 previously banned books. These included those ranging from the classic French of Gide and Proust, to the contemporary American voices of James Baldwin, and Norman Mailer.

In Limerick newspaper archives there are (un-collated) editorials that register the alien nature of sightings of the new age in Limerick. A hint of change is acknowledged but represented as either exotic, or outright dangerous;

'The people of Limerick must wake up to the threat that is facing them and they must unite to run all those connected with such a (Maoist) movement before serious damage is done to the community as a whole' (editorial-Limerick Leader 1970).

As befits a loose, un-materialistic movement there remains no general reference, or go-to central source that collates these



Limerick Leader, 1973.

The site of the Maoist bookshop, in Nicholas Street opposite King Johns castle.



tion remain in the disparate links between actions unique to Limerick particularly as it sought to process the accelerated possibilities of 1968 in a way that foregrounded the revolutionary potential of post war youth. There were always style-based types drawn from a commodified strand of rebellion and sometimes one platform fuelled another. An example that illustrates the importance of keeping this in mind, while sifting through the latter part of the era, is the showing of Jean Luc Godard's 'Sympathy for the Devil' (aka 'One on One' 1969) as an event organised by the Limerick Art College then situated in George's Quay. Care was taken with how the invites were disseminated in a way that suggested that the event was framed as a significant happening instead of a conventional cinematic experience. This was a call to 'those in the know.' Godard's earlier film *La Chinoise* (1967) had at its centre a young Parisian Maoist sect and had dramatised the French intelligentsia's modish adoption of the rhetorical appeal of Mao's language of violence as a revolutionary tool for western rebellion.

In *One on One/Sympathy for the Devil* incidents of dramatic tableaux that portrayed preaching revolutionaries was set against the documentary recording of the Stones rehearsing their song 'Sympathy of the Devil.' The film was not a commercial success on release but it and another London based film, Nicholas Roeg's *Performance* where the identity of a pop star morphs into a Gangster (1968), remain for underground interest in Limerick.

In the context of those who travelled back and forth to the English capital the fractured narratives contained in both these films can be seen to function, as a type of psychographic history of Notting hill. The area itself features in *Performance*. These fractured narratives existed, as a historian observed regarding this film and the place of Notting Hill, 'as examples of how journeys through urban space can be overlaid with psychic space and how this can be read as a process of politicization in so far as they reflect the transformation of the personal into the political.' Intense new ways of seeing featured in the disjointed narrative of both of these films which significantly starred Mick Jagger who himself was dealing with a complex transformation from entertainer to being regarded as a cultural spokesperson. Jagger's journey from a simple RnB copyist to counter-culture figurehead was avidly followed worldwide and Irish audiences were no exception. His brand as a flamboyant spokesman was such in Limerick that the occasional Limerick youth who overtly mimicked his style in attire acquired the nickname 'Jagger'.

The film performance came to Limerick with impeccable revolutionary credentials. Its reception was much more of an underground event that its showing in London where it was received more as a hip artifact of an liberalised over ground. The *International Times* had glowingly reviewed it as

'an evil movie'

while reporting that its corporate film distributors, Warner Brothers, had issued a warning to people not to see it while under the influence of LSD. In an interview with a Danish paper, 'Politiken', Jagger discussed the film as well as plans by the Rolling Stones to tour and use some of the profits to fund revolutionary movements such as the Black Panthers. He also mentioned a belief that American Corporations were funding rightwing organisations and he wanted his money to be used to

fight against this.

New perspectives resonated here for a cinema audience. Particularly for those who had appreciated the early rebellious noise of the Stones as a counterblast to their parents soundtracks and then as those who experienced the actual space of the Stones London in the mid to late Sixties. Now, in Limerick and at home with their peers, they re-watched the psychic space of London deconstructed in front of them on a Limerick screen. Conceptually this was something that they felt compelled to explain to those who had yet socially to make their own cut.

The

context of showing
Sympathy for The Devil
on the Georges Quay site

is significant as it was close to the premises of what was briefly Limerick's first and only Maoist bookshop. Godard features an absurd scene set in a Maoist bookshop in his film and this perhaps mirrors the audacity of a group led by the 21 year old Arthur Allen from Drogheda who called themselves the Revolutionary Youth. In 1969 Allen and two other youths arrived in Limerick to preach the gospel of Maoism. In an uncalculated affront to sensitive authorities they based themselves in a small premises in Nicholas Street across from King John's castle. This subsequently infamous site became a beacon for Catholic protest led vigorously by the then Mayor, Alderman Stevie Coughlan. The Mayor saw the very idea of the presence of an outpost for Maoism as encapsulating an international threat that was embodied in godless Marxism, eastern religion, and gender politics. He publicly encouraged Limerick citizens to shun these corrupted youth.

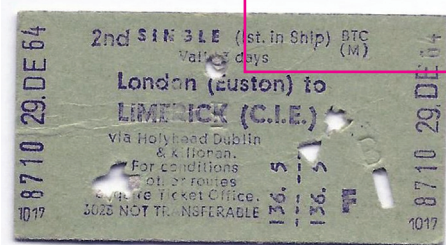
The Maoists, according to the mayor, are looking way ahead. They are seeking to indoctrinate the 17-22 age group into a fairytale world which they could create by tearing down the entire Irish cultural structure."

Fear of 'Red' propaganda infiltrating Limerick schools prompted a meeting of their Catholic administrators who publicly announced that they would implement a 'secret plan' should their fears be realized. The resented bookshop was not tolerated and eventually sustained a violent closure in 1969 when a shot was fired through the window. This incident is Limerick's contribution to a countercultural narrative held in the history of the international free press. It featured in a long article for a 1970 issue of the high-end America counterculture magazine *Scanlans* where its cover headline read

'Maoists in Limerick.'

The Maoist bookshop was one space created and maintained by the youth, albeit not local youth but it functioned briefly in tandem with music-based events in official spaces commandeered by like-minded locals. These were essential meeting spaces for non-conformist youth at a transitional time.

The pace or directions chosen for sound-tracked change in Ireland could conceivably have no comparison with similar intentions in Britain but any music-based activity that set itself against the church sanctioned rural-leaning dancehall society could not help but draw rebellious support and set its own pace. Limericks Club a Go-Go is seminal in this respect. Teenagers who refused to adhere to the nationalist social boundaries



The Go-Go Club in Post Office Lane, Limerick, c.1966.



sound tracked by either 'native' i.e traditional Irish reels or the sanctioned populism of the variety show/showband scene supported this space.

In 1966 the international aspirations of the **Go Go club**—as it was rechristened from its Dublin franchised name—**was a mix of UK and American fashions with a commitment towards mod themes**. Fashion competitions to choose Limericks 'Miss Mod' were a popular feature with such events consolidating the ethos of the crowd. As distinct from the well-dressed female patrons of the dancehall Miss Mod strove to be a symbol of the future and not a version of the past. The clubs were the first post-war social spaces that promoted an equality between the sexes that was not associated with the rigidity of the 'men on one side women on the other' dancehalls.

Often the importance of these clubs is sublimated within the history of the dancehalls themselves in a reductionism that portrays the Irish youth as simply dancing to weekend cover bands where contemporary dress was optional.

By the time the **Go Go** and the equally popular **Cavalier club** closed in the mid '70's it was renowned as a key Limerick space that was organised by the youth themselves. Evidence of this can still be found in the building that hosted the club. Upstairs in Cummins picture framers in Post Office lane are the remnants of the murals of the **Go Go** club painted by the last of the club's youth.

As the transition sifted its influences in the city occasional events situated around

the Limerick 'Beat' music scene became tangentially linked with revolutionary political activity which in turn meshed with various random, and sometimes violent, public expressions of the zeitgeist by youth gangs as overlapping tribal behavior.

This was reflected in disparate intersections between industrial protests emanating from the Shannon industrial zone, soccer gangs, and even the beat groups themselves who were sometimes set against each other in competitions hosted by venue owners keen to tap into their popularity.

The activity of 1968-1973, disparate as it seems in conventional retrospect, drew on the open-ended nature of an international counter-culture to exercise agency for creative communication. In the Limerick of that era it can be said that this is what the political theorist Chantal Mouffe describes as a condition of 'agonism' (as distinct from antagonism) where 'adversaries may share common symbolic space, within which conflict can take place'. (5)

In contemporary terms social acts of resistance that contest dominant ideologies are a form of social practice in which creative intervention shapes and affirms specific communities. Creative responses are therefore political documents validated by the response of the citizen.

Looking at the space of Limerick as key the case should be made that the resonance from this era's activity is a distinct part of the city's cultural identity. Limerick in 1968-1973 is not a stop on a road where the retrospective fashionable re-shaping of psychedelia is positioned as a colourful backdrop for utopian wishing associated with understanding that era. Psychedelia and beat-related activity were tools for Limerick, youth to make the cut not only with their previous generations social habits but also with promise of a specific future. The clean international future suggested by the images of corporate

modernism glimpsed in the world's first free trade zone (1959) located in nearby Shannon airport. Their own version of Irish nationalism, shaped by the international slant of civil rights and their generation's reflection on the key events of 1968 and 1969 in Belfast and Derry, which led to British troops being deployed on Irish soil, had also to be addressed outside the singularity of traditional nationalism.

Registering all of this invites a re-visiting an amount of under-represented activity that is focused through the lens of 1968-73. Material gleaned from such representation can be directed towards the creation of new archives as well as re-animating contemporary discussions on the weight and forms of resistance that reference an underground perspective specific to Limerick space.

In April 2014 at a Making the Cut workshop veterans of the Limerick 1968-1973 scene spoke to a group of contemporary youth on how the styles of non-conformity may change but the ethos of nonconformity will always transcend style. Greg O' Shaughnessy reminded the youth that **'this conversation is not about how one generation reacted to Limerick back then versus how today's teenagers react to Limerick now. Its not a generational thing at all its about a universal process of identity that must always question what is in front of you and**

do you want it to be there?'

(1) The conventional 1960s concepts around utopian retreats and the rejection of the city did not feature to the extent they did in the US of the UK.

(2) A description of the counter-culture by John Mortimer who was the defence lawyer at the OZ trial of 1971.

The 1968 February issue of International Times, where Timothy Leary discussed the phrase Turn On, Tune In and Drop Out.

See also <http://psypressuk.com/2010/03/24/literary-review-'the-politics-of-ecstasy'-by-timothy-leary/>

(3) Quote From the pdf download Notting Hill 1968. <http://www.vaguerants.org.uk/wp-content/pageflip/upload/TL/timelinechap11.pdf>

(4) The politics and strategy of classic French Situationism as a mode of production in a Limerick context must feature as well. As Situationism references both artistic and traditional political directions as a 'disruptive power'. The Practice of Everyday Life by Michel de Certeau (Author), Steven F. Rendall (Translator) University of California Press; Reprint edition (December 1, 2011).

(5) Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for critical Artistic Practices?' Published Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006, pp151-171.

See also: **On the Ground: An illustrated Anecdotal History of the Sixties Underground Press in the U.S. (2011).**

Free Press: Underground & Alternative Publications 1965-1975.

(Jean-Francois Bizot, Universe Publishing, 2006).

Joseph Beuys:

Regeneration thinking in the White House in 1974.*

THE ARTIST JOSEPH BEUYS ARRIVED IN LIMERICK

in September 1974. He spoke in the current location of Limerick City Gallery and delivered a message of art-based social integration using diagrams chalked on a blackboard. These 'actions' were meant to communicate the universal idea of change.

Precise details of the talk are not available and even a description of the audience are contested. When the Beuys estate revisited this event decades later the Guardian newspaper reported that the Limerick audience for the actual event 'consisted of two nuns and a passer-by.*' The talk was attended by many of the then Limerick art community.

Beuys had a long-standing interest in Ireland where he sought to explore folkloric traces within a wider plan to feed into what he conceptually advocated as an expanded form of art. An art in which activist based citizens would engage in a form of social sculpture. He proclaimed that 'only on condition of a radical widening of definition will it be possible for art and activities related to art to provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline:

to dismantle in order to build

A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART*

This most modern art discipline – Social Sculpture, Social Architecture – will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor, or architect of the social organism.'(1)*

He outlined the alternative in his manifesto 'The Theory of Sculpture to an Energy Plan for Western Man.' Alternative directions could be manifested in many forms in journeys from the philosophical to the practical. Social sculptures were intended to deliver transformative and curative properties. The process was 'an experimental model of reality driven by the revolutionary power of art.' (2)

Beuys promoted this all-encompassing countercultural agenda during the 1970s as a conceptual resource under which polarised situations (even the then war in the North of Ireland) could draw on. The Energy Plan was intended to 'mobilise human creativity in the context of a political situation.*' This 'regeneration of thinking' was embodied in his desire to set up a Free International University. This would have included an Irish chapter. (3)

The 1974 Limerick visit was organized by his collaborator Caroline Tisdall with Mary Lanagan as the contact at what was then the Carnegie Free Library and Museum in Pery Square. The reception of the event was inevitably predicated on the media's portrayal of Beuys as a performer. This perception would also feature in the then contemporary art media.

Whatever his intentions were to translate new social systems fuelled by creativity into practicalities he would have first had to filter these intentions through a formidable media image of himself to a curious Limerick art community. According to one attendee, as an International art figure 'he wasn't that well known.' In this situation what 'type' of art was to be discussed, and for what ends?

The 400 drawings by Beuys called 'The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland' had featured as part of this tour. Traditional mark making framed as a hung exhibition initially went some way in registering him as a conventional artist for a Limerick audience who still remained somewhat unsure of how to receive him. In a post-sixties art world environment of institutionally regulated movements and succeeding movements what type of art was being discussed here?

This uncertainty centered on Beuys's radical conception of art as a force for change. The practicalities of which appeared to advocate jettisoning the traditional securities held around the conception of an art practice. Such a cut appeared necessary to close the gap between art and life.* It also required an engagement with political and activist activities to reflect the true creative potential of a citizen.*

Beuys's legacy statement remains 'everyone is an artist'. However his manifesto for a 1974 Limerick audience may have suggested that an over reliance on traditional forms as an end in itself restricts creativity. Was he advocating such a cut from convention from this audience?

In respect to his 'Aufruf Zur Alternative' (Appeal for an Alternative) he was.

What is rarely, if at all, mentioned about this event is that Beuys and some of the students and staff from the Limerick School of Art conferred after his action in the White House bar in O'Connell St. Through a translator the Limerick audience attempted to clarify the extent of the cut Beuys considered necessary for a progressive change. When one student asked him

'was there any room for tradition in all this?'

Beuys replied 'THAT'S ALL SHIT.'

A lecturer then put it to Beuys that if such a philosophy was the basis of a necessary cultural progression then does that make 'ART' as it has been received to date redundant?

In reply to this Beuys simply shrugged.*

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'everyone is an artist'

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(1) <http://www.berlinart.com/joseph-beuys-at-the-hamburger-bahnhof/>

(2) Text from 'The Appeal for an Alternative' by Joseph Beuys.
(for the exhibition 'The Year of Germany', Russia 2012/13)

(3) Joseph Beuys and the Celtic Wor(1)D: a Language of Healing.
By Victoria Waters.

as he travelled over Sarsfield Bridge.
has a youth hurling the symbolic Maoist red book
at the motorcade and actually hitting Nixon
One version of this event

kennedy 1963

1970

visit of the

37th President

Richard Nixon.



reagan 1984

clinton 1996

obama 2012

‘HOW IS MARXIST LENINIST THEORY to be linked with the practice of the Chinese revolution? To use a common expression, it is by ‘shooting the arrow at the target.’ As the arrow is to the target, so is Marxism-Leninism to the Chinese revolution. Some comrades however are ‘shooting without a target,’ shooting at random, and such people are liable to harm the revolution.’
From The Red Book ‘Rectify the Party’s Style of Work’
(February 1, 1942).

Limerick City has hosted five US presidents. Kennedy in 1963, Nixon in 1970, Reagan in 1984, Clinton in 1996, and Obama 2012. The most overlooked, and contentious, of these visits remains the 1970 visit of the 37th President Richard Nixon.

By October 1970 Nixon was en route to Paris to broker an exit strategy for the US in Vietnam. He stopped off for a three day visit to Ireland at the suggestion of an Irish businessman as all agreed that it would be good PR to shore up the

Irish–American vote.

This was important as it was thought that had he played up his Irish roots in the famous 1963 election he would not have lost the presidential election to John F Kennedy. His Irish ancestry had connections on both the maternal and paternal side of his family. His Mother, Hannah Milhouse’s ancestor Thomas Milhouse of Timahoe in Kildare emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1729. They were Quakers. An invitation was also extended to visit the ground where his paternal ancestors had originated. It was made by the Northern Premier Captain Terence O’Neill and was rejected by Nixon.

On arriving in 1970 he was entertained in
Kilfrush House, Limerick where he was
provided with the de-rigueur
Irish-isms of an ‘Irish Cabaret’

Kilfrush House, was owned by a John A. Mulcahy. A photograph taken there shows Nixon surrounded by a costumed ensemble of dancers and singers as well as a strangely nervous Taoiseach of the time, Mr. Jack Lynch.

The American party also featured Henry Kissinger who was part of the diplomatic team for the Vietnam talks. In 1971 Kissinger negotiated rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China before the relations between the US and China were formalised in 1972.

In 2013 declassified tapes from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library showed that a diplomatic end to the Vietnam War was viable in 1968 but Nixon, then a presidential candidate, convinced the South Vietnamese delegates that they would get a better deal under his presidency. The delegates withdrew and the war continued until the Paris Peace Accord was signed in 1973. Nixon was re-elected by a landslide in 1972 with himself and Kissinger jointly named that years Men of the Year by Time Magazine, before resigning in disgrace in 1974.

As well as stewarding the endgame of the Vietnam War Nixon’s legacy includes the atrocity on American soil of the Kent State killings. On 4 May 1970 four students in a crowd that were protesting against the Vietnam War were killed by state

'One day we will get them,
we'll get them on the ground where we want them
and we'll stick our heels in, step on them hard and twist—crush them,
show them no mercy.'

From the Limerick Youth Service archive.



'Troopers in an act instigated by the then governor Ronald Reagan. Three weeks beforehand Reagan threatened the protesting Kent State youth with the statement 'If it takes a bloodbath, then let's get it over with.'

As his motorcade made its way through the city a crowd of 4000 Limerick citizens lined the route.

They included a group of leftist protestors
who attempted to draw attention
to American foreign policy.

This was a direct protest by Limerick youth who were
able to take advantage of the perception by the American secret
service that the brief trip through Limerick City would be
without incident.

The Limerick Leader reports that a young man lunged at the presidential motorcade on Sarsfield Bridge and another was spotted on William Street waving a suspicious object before running from the Guards. Near Arthurs Quay another group unfurled the Starry Plough, the flag of Irish socialism, and again the Guards gave chase. As the protest gained momentum Alderman Stevie Coughlan weighed in. Coughlan was a well-known anti-Communist and was reported as tearing up the protestors placards and struggling with Councilor Quinn who declared that it was a democratic country and he was entitled to speak. One version of this event has a youth hurling the symbolic Maoist red book at the motorcade and actually hitting Nixon as he travelled over Sarsfield Bridge. Another version recounted by a member of the crowd that day has a youth breaking towards the motorcade before being rendered unconscious by a guard 'who used a knuckle to the lad's head'.

Mao's red book was a potent symbol for many European 1968 youth. In the introduction to Mao's Little Red Book' (2014) a study on the phenomenon 'Alexander C. Cook described it as a 'spiritual atom bomb.' Almost a billion copies were produced in official and unofficial print runs between 1961 and 1971. For nervous western establishments the presence of a revolutionary tract in such numbers worldwide literally evoked a 'red tide.' The book was originally produced for the Red Army and came in a distinctive red waterproof cover symbolically hinting at a functionality associated with combat.

If such a physical incident of protest by a 'red' Limerick youth had literally connected with a head of a Western State and the volatile metaphor had made the international news it would have been highly symbolic in the context of Nixon and the Vietnam peace accord.

Nixon was a ruthless politician who detested the radical questioning posed by the youth. There was a general perception that such questioning was an extension of the communist threat to a sanctified American way of life. Nixon's earlier time in politics regularly used strong anti-communist rhetoric for electoral purposes. One 1946 campaign leaflet (anonymously attributed to his team) mentioned the 'subversive Jews and communists who intended to destroy Christian America and our form of government.' By the Sixties a wide definition of the counter culture embodied a constant threat that he wished to eradicate in total. Francis Wheen's book 'Strange Days Indeed' quotes Nixon in 1971 saying 'One day we will get them, we'll get

them on the ground where we want them and we'll stick our heels in, step on them hard and twist—crush them, show them no mercy'.

Nixon told the Limerick Leader that Ireland was 'his favorite place in the world for a break.' There are no reports of anyone who took part in the Limerick protest officially charged with affray.

In Dublin the protests for the President were much more organised and intense. Theatre featured where a mock trial was enacted complete with a burning effigy. This time a group of determined protestors waited for the motorcade with some dressed for clandestine purpose as American tourists. They managed a direct hit with eggs that splattered the windscreen. One of those protestors, the noted activist Mairin de Burca, recalls the ease of which they were able to register their act was in no small way facilitated by the local Guards on the route. 'We had heard that the secret service had thrown themselves about so much that the Guards had said: 'Stuff this, let them look after their own president' type of thing.' (Irish Examiner October 2010).

This laxity was never to feature in the Irish visit of an American President again. By the time of George W. Bush's visit to Dromoland Castle in 2004 the government temporarily ceded many sovereign powers regarding security to the Americans to the extent that, on that occasion, space in Limerick Jail was reserved for anyone considered a threat to the President. Limerick at this time was an ad-hoc base for many protesting youth regarding the war in Iraq.

The pre-security checks for Bush included a cordon around Shannon Airport, a controlled fly zone, road works and the strategic positioning of snipers but most contentiously security vetting. The cordon was enforced before the visit and extended to residential areas and industrial units.

This effectively placed Irish Citizens under American
authority for the duration of the visit.

Passes were issued based on security vetting where PPS numbers were requested from all who lived in the area. An Irish youth who regularly worked as a contractor for a branch of a multinational American company based in Shannon, but had previously been to Palestine as an anti-imperialist protestor, was told by the Irish managers of the company that he did not have the required security clearance and was not to come to work until after Bush left. No explanation on the decision was given and afterwards he was told his services would not be required in future by the company.

INTENTIONS FOR A NEW AGE

Teenagers in 1960s Limerick were most conscious of a generational discrepancy between their own and their fathers' time.

Such

a changing
of the guard
is a natural process

but in the early sixties the intense cultural gap it brought with it felt more acute. In the early sixties a young James Haran registered this lack as something to be acted upon. As neutral Ireland's isolationism changed to meet international modernism there had to be representative space for contemporary youth in this place. Such a space would not be inherited or even shaped from previous foundations as its definition of the future differed from the preceding generation's definition.

It would have to
be constructed
anew.

In 1965 Haran was one of the founder members of the Limerick Beat band the Intentions eventually known as Granny's Intentions who recorded 4 singles and one LP of original material for Deram records London in 1967-68. This choice was in itself an act of resistance as the concept of 'working' as a beat musician had no Irish precedent. Such a trade was foreign and something to be consumed as an exotic diversion. Not only did Haran and his peers sign up for this future, they insisted on promoting it within Limerick.

The change conventionally demanded by Modernism and associated with the policies of the Irish premier Lemass were acknowledged in Limerick. This was the central narrative of post-war Ireland. It suggested the country was ready to participate in the post-war project. We were to be 'the new europeans'. Yet, and for decades to follow,

we were the old Catholics and the youth were to be reminded of this particularly as they socialised.

The pace of social interaction in the sixties was still mediated by church-regulated authority in the moral administration of youth clubs and especially adult dancehalls. Focusing on the arena of the dancehall, Haran and his peers used this space to resist Catholic hegemony as it dictated social spaces. Adopting the countercultural stance of the mod they channelled a necessary attitude for Limerick using material generated by their counterparts in Britain and America.

The dominance of a Church-regulated social space was uninviting and unsustainable from the perspective of an Irish adolescent. The Irish clergy's moral supervision of the dancehall appeared inappropriate for a period of international change, which took into account the reaction of Pope John XXIII to the challenges of the counter-culture as manifested in evangelicalism, Marxism and Feminism.

Teenagers in Limerick began to assert themselves. As purveyors of their own world they resisted the prescribed title of young adult and

began to mark
their territory
most notably
with their own sound. They moulded style sourced from magazines and pirate radio and liaised on this with their

English counterparts. The Irish mod style was without the transitional history and reference points of its English counterpart and this registered it as unique to Limerick. It was a unique resource that allowed them to create on their own terms under the guise of social trends.

It was not anarchy
but was revolutionary.

Being a mod in Limerick confirmed what English critic Stuart Hall described as the 'double articulation of youth.' This referred to British teenagers who participated both in the culture of their parents and the dominant culture.

The Irish term 'beat' as in beat group was adopted to channel both the influence of the Beatles, who visited Ireland in 1963 and the American Beat movement. Historically Irish 'Beats' are unique and not specifically tied to any 50s beat philosophy but as the term functioned as counter-cultural shorthand long after falling out of favour elsewhere it continues to hold significance.

Ireland did not have the class template for an equivalent appreciation of the urban English 'Revolt into Style.' Yet a rudimentary acquaintance with the attitude embodied in imported rock and roll culture was enough to imagine a template for music led rebellion. This was the energy that encouraged Sixties Irish youth (who would not be regarded as teenagers in the international sense until the late 1970s)

to seek out city space
for authentic expression.

And in promoting a youthful manifesto for that ideal they sought to propagate an ethos sound tracked by the noise of

American Soul music. This put revolutionary space between them and the ethos of the conservative dancehall.

The otherness of black American Soul music felt transgressive enough for this task. Also it was not mediated through national media channels. It was, as Paul Nettl, the Bohemian musicologist described dance music in 1921, Gebrauchsmusik (utility music) sound that spoke for a function in a language still under construction from the youth.

MUSIC FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE.

The influence of non-national radio and British publications cannot be stressed enough. The access to the culture of a virtual peer group was through the commercial medium—and long-wave broadcasts of Radio Luxembourg (1933–1992) and Radio Caroline (1964–1969). Caroline in particular had the desired frisson due its 'Pirate' image. Its owner, Irishman Ronan O'Rahilly told the International Times that the ability for pirate radio to unite the youth was the equivalent of a 'human-be-in.'

In 1930 the audacious illegal radio transmissions of two Limerick teenagers calling themselves Billy Dynamite and Al Dubbin were briefly broadcast citywide. It was well received in the city pubs that put it on each evening for their customers. The youth played the underground sound of their day—Jazz. Until they were caught they broadcast using the title of the 'City Broadcasting Service.'

After 1962 both Irish and British state radio observed that an American dominated era of swing and rock and roll had been



Granny's Intentions 1967.

Left to right;
Johnny Hockedy,
Jack Costelloe,
Guido diVito,
John Ryan,
James 'Cha' Haran,
Johnny Duhan.

superseded by pop cultural scene that was London centric and more participatory. The trajectory of change and the reception for youth orientated product that was music based was unlike anything experienced before and the official channels were reticent to acknowledge this. Change, as reflected in the marketplace where music featured, was being acknowledged but state radio in Ireland held its stake in the music of the fifties well into the seventies playing, as Paul Brady once described, 'music from the other side of the fence.'

As ever, boundaries always exist in regard to one's parents and their social soundtrack.

Magazines such as the *New Musical Express* and *Fabulous* covered the social movements that were constantly dealing with the dynamic of international pop cultural movements. These magazines were essential style guides for kids who wanted to be different. The magazine *Fabulous* cost the most at a shilling but was the most desired in Limerick as its coverage and content was designed to, as Jon Savage commented, 'introduce a more direct rapport between the stars and their keenly attuned audience (the Guardian 2009).

Youth was, according to the press of the period, a powerful but concealed metaphor for social change: the compressed image of a society which had crucially changed, in terms of basic life-styles and values changed, in ways calculated to upset the official framework, but in ways not yet calculable in traditional political terms.' (Limerick Leader 1972).

'*Fabulous* ran theme issues such as an edition called 'Gets the Vote' which looked at pop stars and politics (the October 1964 UK general election). This referencing of the wider society amongst the magazines flexed boundaries by introducing 'news' items tailored for a teenage audience. In the Irish media such boundaries remained fixed. Politics were an adult concern and the Irish teen was regarded as a powerless transitional being, a 'young adult'

Transmitting a tone of urgency coverage in the UK teen press communicated the power of tribal behaviour representing a vital urban-based demand that constantly verged on the self-sufficient. Their teenage movement (and its spending power) appeared to shape their environment to the extent that teens were being regarded as stakeholders with their profile trend-setters such as Mick Jagger being interviewed as social leaders.

In the UK, magazines were essential documents to the extent that they replicated their mission in their small ads where other magazines and event descriptions were to be found. This tone translated as a more engaged one and contrasted with insular social material delivered in the equivalent Irish youth magazine, *Spotlight* (1963-79).

This popular publication averaged weekly sales in Ireland of 50,000 with content primarily led by the traditionalism of the Irish showband scene. Though not totally averse to covering the radical 'beat' scene *Spotlight* proudly advertised itself as 'The Showband Magazine' whose regular readers prioritised a rural-based culture over the potential possibilities of an urban outlook. By promoting social gatherings, carefully

soundtracked by showbands, *Spotlight* maintained and regulated a measured pace for its readership. In its coverage of the 'scene' it recognised the dominance of a church-supervised rural based version of social progress in the culture of the dancehall and adjusted its content accordingly. This was most evident in the chaste advice given to young women who wrote in to its problem pages.

Rural audiences were aware of pirate radio as consumers leaving a more engaged impact of listening to their urban peers. By dedicated listening to foreign radio the 'beat' youth pro-actively responded to an attitude absent in the so-called respectable culture promoted in the culture of Irish Showbands.

Haran describes the necessity of the practice of 'international listening' as 'essential'. Channeling the foreign sounds of soul in the bands they promoted confrontational agency in a common symbolic space inspired by a London vanguard.

It is no coincidence
that Haran and his band
originally called themselves
'The Intentions.'

Stuart Hall, again from his renowned tract

'Resistance through Rituals,'

'A culture includes the 'maps of meaning', which make things intelligible to its members. These 'maps of meaning' are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectivated in the patterns of social organisation and relationship through which the individual becomes a 'social individual'.

Culture is the way the
social relations of a group
are structured and shaped:
but it is also the way

those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted.'

An example of this rebellious attitude, mentioned by Haran, would be the 1964 cover version of Buddy Holly's 'Not Fade Away' by the Rolling Stones. Haran mentions this song as formative. By 1966 his band The Intentions sought specific sound for specific ends. English bands such as the working class Kinks and the middle class Rolling Stones and The Who had a teenage rawness predicated

as much how they looked
as how they sounded.

The first American-style Jukeboxes arrived in Limerick in 1964 and the soundtrack for beat youth in the likes of aptly named Continental Café in Patrick Street focused on the upbeat and foreign.

Haran and his peers understood that any Irish translation of this futurism must respect that particularly in how they rehearsed songs by the Rolling Stones for example. He knew that a cover of 'Not Fade Away' undertaken by the Showbands would have rendered it, in the format of American-tinged light entertainment, as unthreatening. It would have been a safe translation played only to confirm its position in the UK's hit parade. There would be none of the aesthetics of confrontation hinted at in the version by the Stones. It was important to communicate that the difference implied by how the Stones looked and sounded was universal. It was representative of an international age of the teen.

The sharp modernity of the original American/British translation exemplified in 'Not Fade Away' may have reflected the optimism of modernism as it was practised in London but there was not an equivalent Irish reception. There was no such thing really as an Irish teenager or teen movement. In retrospect contemporary reflection on the hysteria that greeted the 1963 visit by the Beatles focused on the spectacle of the event on a par to the visit of US president Kennedy the same year.



James Haran and Maureen, 1965.

Until the 1980s the idea of developing platforms in the media and national broadcasting to operate as outlets for youth-based culture did not function as a priority. TV and Radio existed primarily for News and entertainment was regarded officially as separate and conventional for an adult audience.

Before the establishment of RTE2 in 1979 there was an average of only three to four hours of youth-orientated music a week. This was the basic amount of pop broadcast on RTE radio and none of it could be described as representative of the zeitgeist.

The lack of state recognition or consideration gave rise to the importance of the space of the dancehall. The hall which became an essential place for people to hear contemporary sounds translated by showbands who functioned in part as jukeboxes for a bigger space. This came at a price as the dancehalls were a contained and regulated space.

If the congregated space of the church was represented in the structure of the dancehall as issues involving licensing and regulations more than not included local clerical input. A certain amount of the rituals featured on a show band night were deemed obsolete by Haran's generation. They included the design of chaste music for courting embodied in the 'slow dances'.

The initial lack of profile for Irish beat-based sounds combined with the increasing conservatism held in Spotlight, as well as an increasing amount of dancehalls being managed by local politicians, signified a desire by the establishment to maintain a staid, safely-managed, traditionalism for a generation groomed to reap the benefits of a modern state.

This overstatement may seem excessive but the moral self-regulation of the dancehall was an entrenched social fact ever since the instigation of the 1935 Dancehall act.

This act, which remains in force today, initially castigated types of dance music such as Jazz as being detrimentally 'foreign.' The act was intended to reserve cultural space for traditional Irish music and dance

while acknowledging space for contemporary socializing. A so-called balance involved managing the act through the monitored social space of the dancehall where the codes of clerical input was a given. This was then recognised, promoted and self-regulated by the suited performers of the show bands. Early versions of this scene were advertised as 'Band Shows', the title alone suggesting boundaries were in place for regulated and socially acceptable entertainment.

This is how Ireland sounded for its majority. For example the presence of a showband singer officially representing Ireland in the 1965 Eurovision Song contest (Butch Moore) would have attracted a derisive reaction from Haran's peers but it would have been proudly seen as properly reflective by rural Ireland.

Haran was conscious of the lack of contemporary material balance, on Irish radio. Although domestic record sales were healthy, the bulk of the product would have supplied a manifesto of conservatism in songs that merged Irish airs with the reassurance of an American country style.

It was Haran who directed the look of the first lineup of 'The Intentions'. In a calculated act of rebuke to the 'shiny suited' show bands, he dressed the band in the Twenties style of American gangsters using pinstriped suits and hats sourced from Limerick's Army Surplus store. The coded message was understood by the youth who saw it as confrontation but also appreciated it as 'Mod' style. This sourcing of new uniforms from old was an established youth practice of dress for the Eng-

lish scene initiated mainly by the Teddy Boys who re-tailored Edwardian dress as gang style.

This type of 'bricolage' or appropriation specific to this time is a recognised socio-political act by the way one form of commodities is subverted by symbolically placing them in a different context and stripping them of their designated 'straight' purpose. In choosing this flamboyant apparel Haran also played with the potent Irish image of the 'returned yank.' This celebrated figure usually embodied the returned emigrant and symbolized an entrenched romantic notion of making it abroad but never at home. Haran dressed as half gangster and half Tammany Hall Irishman was constructing a parody of this worn yet potent narrative,

The English critic Peter York comments on the significance of bricolage as resistance 'if all that you owned was your threads and your music then you could 'work with that'.

York is referring here to an outsider as a public image not tied by conventional uniform to an institution.

In post-war fifties London

the very act of walking in full teddy-boy dress alongside a group of tradesmen or bankers was fraught with contention.

The teddy boy's dress was the complete repudiation of this. Patrolling the urban public area with a non-conformist agenda held its impact in its original London setting until the concept was commodified in the late Sixties and became as a British export in music and Cinema.

York makes the distinction between the fashion statements of the working class and the choices made by the rebel fashions of the middle class.

This reclamation differs for Limerick examples that would be referencing a version of youth rebellion that was not class-based.

Yet a version of the teddy boy patrolled Limerick in the sixties and inevitably this Irish ted took an instant dislike to the Irish Mod. Haran confirms this was part of the then rites of change. As well as a generational reaction by one tribe to another it also involved a clash of identity and territory in regard to the general environment of Limerick. Street uniforms to signify allegiance to the specifics of change then became necessary. The mods as ever were the most attuned outfitters.

To understand the complexity of this coding one had to be young and involved in generating variants of the style for yourself and the group. One example would be the

English mods' adoption of the army surplus fishtailed parka. This distinctive cloak was a visual acknowledgment of the continuing American military presence in England as their cultural resource for imported music and style.

Combining the parka with a sharp Italian suit simply communicated the mods' respect for a combination of black American soul and European modernism. In Ireland the few Army Surplus stores did not register as a vital resource for 'gear' but their existence as a go to spot for the times were essential all the same. In the mid sixties the rural youth who frequented the dancehall would not have seen the surplus store as a place to visit to dress for

the weekend. Their dress code held a respect for the embedded courting rituals signified in 'the Sunday' suit for the men and the 'best dress' for the women.

The staged rigidity of posed women in features titled 'beauties from the ballrooms' was a typical feature in the Irish issue of *Womans Way*.

Freelance photographers worked the city dancehalls at the weekends as it was expected that a record of the night would 'make a good picture.' The appearance of couples or 'young adults' in these images remained unchanged from the late forties to the late sixties until commercial versions of the mod look (the mini skirt for example) finally relegated the increasingly staged look as arch conservative.

As he developed a public persona on stage Haran understood that the simplest visual redirection had impact and each performance was an opportunity for cultural commentary. As a modernist he confronted the codes that sought to extend the conservatism of the post-war social arena for another generation. He constantly sought to challenge the psychology of the conservative shrine embodied in the dancehall to the extent that he designed confrontation as performance.

On stage with his band *Granny's Intentions* in Cork, on an early support slot for a show band, Haran appeared wearing a Californian styled 'Hippy' poncho. This would have been familiar counter-culture wear for the band's street followers but alien to those of those night's showband audience.

He vividly remembers the confusion created on the mixed crowd of young and old. Playing on this incongruity The Grannies struck up the intro to a Country and Western Larry Cunningham anthem. This accentuated the confusion before the band sacrilegiously segued into a raucous English beat number such as the Kinks' 'you really got me'. Sonically the Irish modernism of the Grannies remains embodied in that cut for that short transitional performance the band presented an antagonistic and deliberate act of confrontation. It confronted the compliance of an unquestioning community trapped, as such in the then culture of the Catholic Dancehall. They repeated that act many times. Their 'bit of country' statement existed to call out the prescribed nature of the country dancehall.

The 'bit of country' routine was also a rebuke to the practice of having to operate within the early 'scrap' slots that were given to the beat groups by the showbands. The evident hegemony of the showbands was held in the power to delegate rankings.

The showbands and their managers had little interest in any revolutionary or overt social agenda hinted at by the beat bands. They were content to maintain their hold on the market and operate it as a going concern.

Beat music fans regarded this conservatism as reductive and biased if not somewhat corrupt.

As underdogs the beat audience supported any music-based broadsides against the establishment as legitimate and in regard to the status of the Catholic ethos embodied in the commercial dancehall it became necessary to address the role of the showband personality, as demonstrated by the Grannies, in this even as parody.

The singer who most represented the desired sociability of the establishment was the famed 'Country and Irish' singer Larry Cunningham. The County Leitrim singer more than any other showband idol represented the conservative choice of the previous generation and any disrespectful shown towards his

ethos would be perceived as blasphemy. Due to his immense popularity and the influence of his conservative sound on the landscape he was a profile target for the beat agenda.

Larry Cunningham had successfully transposed (almost copyrighted) a maudlin type of sound sourced from American Country and Western music and this sentimentality came to represent a conservative sound that became internationally known as the sound of Country and Irish.

In October 2012, at the time of Cunningham's death, a Limerick blogger called *Bock the Robber* wrote on the legacy of the show band staple. Bock pointed to the adoption by the Irish to the commodity of the Irish-American translation of the sentimental ballad.

'It had a profound effect on the Irish' he says, 'this attempt to render a nation childlike, pliable and unquestioning, and it had a side effect. It gave our grandfathers a deep affinity for the myth of the Old West that was under construction at the same time and for the same purpose:

to hide the truth.

In Ireland's case, the unwelcome truth was that adult, mature ideas existed in the wide world beyond our sainted borders, while in the American case, the truth was that the heroic Old West was built on genocide. Both truths needed to be

obliterated'.

Cunningham had found the template for a sound that resonated with an Irish Audience at home and abroad. He sourced Reeves's unknown 'cowboy songs' from scarce records and translated them simply for a rural and emigrated audience. The 'homestead referencing' low sung ballad was to have a huge consequence for post 1950s Irish storytelling. On a visit to Limerick in 1964 Reeves was not billed in the Limerick Press as a Country and Western singer but simply as a 'western' singer. These melodic reassurances became a trademark for the main performers such as Cunningham. In celebrating those who had seen off both the 1960s and the declining classic showband era, audiences venerated Cunningham in the 1980s as a force of reassurance. His gentle songs, often referencing specific townlands, became reassuring anthems that functioned as a rural standard. These songs operated as a type of social metronome that transcended the threat of change.

In the 1960s Irish showbands staked a sole ownership of the dancehall heartland in uniformed 'Irish Palaces' built just for them. A sense of entitlement prevailed to the extent that the bond between the event, community and landscape allowed the practitioners to believe that their reductionism represented a type of authorised 'Irish music'. The noted participation of local councilors and public representatives who had a commercial stake in the dancehall trade encouraged reductionism for management purposes. A collective consensus was formed, 'a rural cocoon' according to Limerick-born broadcaster Terry Wogan. In a 1964 book on the Royal Showband, 'The Brendan Bowyer Saga' by Gus Smith, Wogan states that,

'The truth of the matter is that the showbands are sensitive to criticism, mainly because they have



Dr Strangely Strange.
Delivering a Beat-psychedelic communiqué from Cork.

grown up in what I like to describe as a protective laudatory cocoon and look perhaps upon those who criticise bands as 'knockers' and maybe worse, as anti-Irish'.

The showband supporters are recorded addressing the issue of what constitutes contemporary music as evidenced in this excerpt from a 1968 letter to the RTE Guide (the house magazine of the National broadcaster) detailed in Darragh O'Halloran's 2006 book *The Green Beat*.

'I have never written to a newspaper before, and didn't think anything would ever move me to write. I regret that it should be in annoyance and not satisfaction that motivates me. Last week's Television programme '20 Minutes With Granny's Intentions'

was disgraceful.

I am as partial as the next (I am only Twenty) to pop music, but I would emphasise

the word 'music' which is
I presume what Granny's Intentions
thought they were making in this
programme.

I could hear neither words nor music.
The songs took second place to the
gyrations of the lead singer in the intrusive,
eccentric lighting of the set.

Mind you, I am prepared to believe that the lighting man (or director) realised that Granny's intentions were so bad they couldn't carry on the programme without gimmicks.

What a pity.'

In 1964 a clash of cultures did occur between the old and the new. The ground was the influential Late Late show in 1964 and the topic was the reputed drug culture being fostered in venues that hosted the new Irish Beat bands. On this particular show a member of the GreenBeats, a popular beat group, accompanied by a beat club manager was pitted against representatives of the Irish Ballroom owners association.

The format was the establishment versus the hipsters with the ballroom owner's righteousness being the dominant tone. The imported beat clubs were drug dens and cleansing was needed. After a period of subjection singer Jimmy Dunne of the Greenbelts turned to the host Gay Byrne saying;

'You've just been subjected to a load of lies and rubbish that the public of Ireland are expected to swallow'.

A measure of Byrne's stewardship is not recorded but his choice in inviting the ballroom owners as the voice of authority suggests a certain sympathies and awareness of his rural/dancehall audience. An account of this incident is taken from *The Green Beat*. The segment ends with Dunne's summary of the event 'drugs were nonexistent (then); it was the ballroom manager's effort to kill off this rising thing.'

By 1969 a beat-psychedelic communiqué from the Cork band Dr Strangely Strange was embedded in their song 'Donnybrook Fair.' Lamenting the disenfranchised freethinking youth it appropriated some blame to a fictional showband called 'The Mighty Cretin Showband'. They sang of 'the pike men being led from the rear, while nobody notices the unicorn quietly standing there'. Cunningham's band in 1969 was called 'The Mighty

Avons.' Another missive came from beat rockers Skid Row whose Irish album 'Skid' (1970) contains the track 'Un Co-Op Showband Blues' equates participation in the showband ethos as a type of Slavery.

The modernism of the 1960s Irish beat scene quickly formed cultural lines that pitted the establishment against a seemingly degenerate strain of anti-authority. Gerry L'Estrange TD (representing Westmeath The Country and Irish heartland) spoke in the Dáil castigating the nascent beat scene from a 'moral and health' point of view.

Contemporary historical commentary on the beat scene frequently positions its cultural importance and anti-establishment artistry as significant. The singer Paul Brady, on the occasion of a commemorative portrait exhibition '20 Men who brought Rock to Ireland' told the Sunday Times in 2009 that
because we were on the fringes of society,
both stylistically and musically a lot of what
went on was poorly documented, as if the mainstream
media didn't pay it a lot of attention.'

In 2012 one of the original Irish Punk bands, the Radiators deemed it necessary to record an album of Irish beat songs due to their relative obscurity. In a supportive review the writer Declan Lynch referred to the original impact of the Irish Beat movement.

'Naturally, because the beat scene was good,
official Ireland tried to destroy it.'

By 1965 Haran was committed to the potential of what it meant to be an Irish Mod. He organised and played in Limerick beat bands and became ambassador for the Limerick scene. He played regularly in Dublin and Cork before moving with his band-mates to Dun Laoghaire. A turning point for the Intentions was their support slot to a highly regarded Dublin mod band called the Chosen Few. This happened in the Caroline Club in Dun Laoghaire a nightclub owned by Ronan O'Rahilly who was the young Irish owner of Radio Caroline. The significance of Caroline and its reputation as a resource for Irish and British youth remained consistently high until its demise. The Intentions, now Granny's Intentions moved to London and gigged in the transitioning post-mod circles, which in turn became the so-called psychedelic movement.

Haran left Granny's Intentions and moved back to a still relatively unchanged Limerick in 1968. With his wife operating as a clothes designer he opened one of Ireland's only clothes shops/boutiques that were based directly on the London model. The shop was called *The Little Ellen Boutique*, situated in Ellen St in the city centre.

The contemporary stock of clothes referenced the hybrid countercultural look of California via Carnaby Street London.

Some stock came from London but some items were bespoke Limerick created by Haran's wife Maureen who was inspired by the continuing conduit provided to the counterculture from magazines. The Little Ellen Boutique quickly became a hub for an alternative street scene.

The boutique was the first retail premises to include in-store music with a selection of contemporary sounds (a mixture of psychedelic, American and British music) being played on a record player which featured as part of the décor. The design

of the space featured other deliberately conceptual touches notably a minimal window installation commissioned from a Limerick artist Mick O'Sullivan who painted the 10' x 8' window white with blue light as an edging that gave the impression of a huge television screen. As it looked like no other retail space its presence functioned as a repository for the continuous desire of the counter-cultural Limerick mod.

Haran extended the shop's ethos further by staging an event associated with the shop in a traditional Limerick City centre theatre. For the event he featured, possibly the only psychedelic lightshow along the lines of the ones done by the famed Boyle Family in Notting Hill, ever seen in Limerick.

Its significance must include the fact that its projection was brought to Limerick for the night by two of Dublin's beat / rock royalty, Phil Lynott and Skid Row's Brush Shields.

This was the physicality of the imagined meeting places one had read about in the magazines. It embodied counter-cultural space where one could express an allegiance with the idea of local and international change. Regarded in English terms a lightshow production such as this was a minor version of a type of a 'hippy' led contemporary space in Soho or Notting Hill. However in Limerick, being a sole outpost for the counter-culture at the edge of Europe and physically the last such spot before America, it invites historical significance.

The unusual presence of Miss Ellen would have also registered in conventional civic conversation. This was an immediately successful retail space that functioned on a foreign ethos and was run by a returned emigrant who represented the counter-culture. That in itself was unusual as it broke with the contemporary convention of the returnee of the time.

As the 1955 commission on emigration stated, post-war emigration had become 'a part of the generally accepted pattern of life'. This pattern is often described in reductive terms where the 'usually rural returnee' takes up their life where they left off and denies the transitional experience of being abroad.

In returning as a practising modernist

Haran reacted to the set role of the emigrant and the enforced concept of exile 'this significant ingredient of Irish consciousness' familiar to his generation.

Haran and his band continue to play to this day in Limerick (2014). He occasionally seeks to re-open the original club spaces traversed by his generation of the sixties to re-convene the original cohort and reintroduce the attitude of those times for the present generation of youth. He also maintains a network of contacts with other scencesters for occasional collaborations. His association with his hometown will always be marked by the transforming nature of his sixties work. As a youth-centered modernist he recognised a system of international references for application for Limerick space and in the application of these references he transcended the spatial and temporal boundaries of his influences. In that sense the cut that Haran and others made with post-war Ireland was not wholly generational in that his template as inspiration remains for contemporary Limerick youth.



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20/6/2014



This publication was produced in conjunction with a performance of Making The Cut for EVA 2014 featuring The Cha Haran Band with Johnny Fean, DJ Deviant and Limerick youth including members of the Limerick Youth Service. The Go-Go murals were recreated by Eoin Barry. The performance was held on 20 June 2014 in The Limerick Performance Club, Cecil Street, Limerick. (previously a beat club venue)!

This publication was produced by Paul Tarpey as part of EVA International 2014. Printed in a limited edition of 100 copies.

