

Ben Jones* *School of History, University of East Anglia, UK*

.....

Football Casuals, Fanzines, and Acid House: Working Class Subcultures, Emotional Communities, and Popular Individualism in 1980s and 1990s England

Abstract

This article illuminates the dynamics of two of the most significant yet neglected youth subcultures of the late twentieth century: football's casual culture and the acid house scene. Through the lens of two influential fanzines, Liverpool's *The End* and London's *Boy's Own* I make a series of arguments about the relationship between 'popular individualism', emotion, and working-class communities. I argue that while conceptualizing the fanzines as 'emotional communities' can yield important insights about the role of feelings such as nostalgia in bonding people together, gendered sensibilities and satirical frameworks need to be taken into account in order to fully understand the subcultural affinities that the fanzines engendered. The framework of 'popular individualism' on the other hand can help to illuminate the tensions between individualism and collective belonging at a number of levels which the article discusses. The article concludes by noting that the analysis of these neglected subcultures offers fruitful ways of

* I would like to thank the three referees for their time and very helpful comments and criticisms which have undoubtedly helped me to improve the article. Georgia Walker Churchman and Matthew Worley cheered me up during lockdowns by talking enthusiastically about acid house and rave. Both also generously shared their unpublished research with me. Richard Mills was instrumental in guiding my early reading into casual culture and the scholarly literature about football more widely. My sincere thanks to them all. A huge thank you to my mentor Claire Langhamer for so many kindnesses over many years: thank you for keeping the faith! I would also like to thank Emily Robinson and Chris Warne for their kindness on a trip to the US many years ago. It was there that I went to Washington DC public library where I was first switched onto the power of the Zine by Lucy Robinson: this one's for you, comrade.

Advance Access publication 15 February 2023

© The Author(s) [2023]. Published by Oxford University Press.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

reconceptualizing community and belonging in a period when traditional forms of working-class organization were in decline.

Introduction

This article focuses on two important yet somewhat neglected youth subcultures of the late twentieth century: the casual culture of the football terraces of the late 1970s and 1980s and the acid house scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The term 'subculture' carries with it a range of connotations relating to research undertaken in the 1970s at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and it is worth spelling out what I mean by it for the purposes of the arguments that follow. As is well known, for CCCS scholars like Phil Cohen and John Clarke, earlier subcultures such as the skinheads of the late-1960s symbolized attempts to 'magically' recover feelings of community through an emphasis on territoriality and distinctive subcultural style. To simplify the arguments somewhat, this was about both generational conflict, whereby families which could previously have relied on wider matrilineal support networks were turned-in on themselves, and partly a working-class response to processes of slum clearance and suburbanization under affluence which destabilized (allegedly more cohesive) working-class communities. For Cohen: 'Mods, Parkas, Skinheads, Crombies all represent, in their different ways and attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture'.¹ For Clarke:

'One of the most crucial aspects is the emphasis on territorial connections for the skinheads [...] This territoriality, like community, has its own focal points around which interaction articulates—the street corner meeting place, the pub, and the football ground. Although the football ground did not necessarily coincide with the mobs' patches, its own local identification [...] provided a particular focal point for the mobs to organise around.'²

In the case of football casuals, there are clear homologies with earlier subcultures with regard to the symbolic significance of football in undergirding feelings of collective belonging. Similarly, the 'casual look' consisting of European sportswear and high-end designer clothing meant that a distinctive style was a central part of subcultural identity and belonging. However, it is equally apparent, as demonstrated in their incessant consumerist one-upmanship and embrace of individualism (see below) that

¹ Phil Cohen, 'Subcultural Conflict and Working-class Community [1972]', in Ken Gelder, ed., *The Subcultures Reader* (2nd edn, London, 2005), 89.

² John Clarke, 'The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community', in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London, 1996 [Originally 1976]), 101.

it would be difficult to characterize football casuals as 'winning space' for the working class through subcultural styles which were simply 'symbolically resistant' to the dominant contours of capitalist society à la Dick Hebdige.³ The work of Hebdige and other Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) researchers has been criticized for its neglect of gender differences, its emphasis on the realm of the symbolic (compared to what young people might have done, felt and thought), and, in Keith Gildart's words, its 'narrow focus on particular youth experiences', tending 'to concentrate on the "spectacular" and the "atypical" in order to theoretically embed and reinforce the more mythological aspects of English society in the 1960s and 1970s'.⁴ Indeed this article focuses on two stylistically unspectacular subcultures, whose overlaps and mutually reinforcing influence on high-end sportswear and mainstream men's fashions may help to account for their comparative neglect in the literature on subcultures. In doing so it contributes to a growing body of historical work which has enriched our understanding of the diversity of young people's subcultural affinities, practices and politics between the 1970s and the 1990s.⁵

While a number of good journalistic accounts were published in the late 1990s, it is only relatively recently that historians have begun to turn their attention to the origins and cultural significance of acid house and rave.⁶ Many sociologists who studied the phenomenon initially viewed rave through the lens of 'deviancy' and mapped-out how the tabloid press and an increasingly authoritarian state responded to the 'moral

³ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979). For some fine critical examples of this book's enduring influence, see the contributions to Keith Gildart et al., eds, *Hebdige and Subculture in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke, 2020).

⁴ Keith Gildart, *Images of England through Popular Music: Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1976* (Basingstoke, 2013), 5.

⁵ See e.g. Gildart, *Images of England Through Popular Music*; Matthew Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976-1984* (Cambridge, 2017); Sarah Kenny, 'A Radical Project: Youth Culture, Leisure and Politics in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History*, 30 (2019); Sarah Raine, *Authenticity and Belonging in the Northern Soul Scene: The Role of History and Identity in a Multigenerational Music Culture* (Basingstoke, 2020); William "Lez" Henry and Matthew Worley, eds, *Narratives From Beyond the UK Reggae Bassline: The System is Sound* (Basingstoke, 2021).

⁶ The pick of the journalistic accounts are: Matthew Collin, with contributions by John Godfrey, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* (London, 1997); Sheryl Garratt, *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture* (London, 1999); Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey through Rave Music and Dance Culture* (London, 1998). For recent historical approaches compare Caspar Melville, *It's A London Thing: How Rare Groove, Acid House and Jungle Remapped the City* (Manchester, 2019); Peder Clark, 'Claire and Jose Get Off Their Cake: Ecstasy, Raving and Women's Pleasure in 1990s Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, Published Online 19 October (2021); Lucy Robinson and Chris Warne, "'Embracing the Devine Chaos": Transcending the Sacred-Secular Divide in the 1990s British Rave Church Movement' in Georgina Gregory and Mike Dines, eds, *Exploring the Spiritual in Popular Music: Beatified Beats* (London, 2021).

panic' which raving and the drug Ecstasy engendered (see the discussion below, p. 22).⁷ Alongside this sort of criminology, sociologists such as Steve Redhead and Antonio Melechi argued that the acid-house's hedonistic, trance-like atmosphere saw the 'ecstasy of disappearance' of the post-modern self in the 'unculture of the hyperreal'.⁸ Innovative work has been published which has explored the formal, aesthetic and political characteristics of dance music.⁹ A handful of researchers working in the Bourdieusian and feminist traditions employed ethnographic methods to seek to understand what raving and clubbing meant to some of those hundreds of thousands of people who participated.¹⁰

In contrast, Football's casual culture, which overlapped with acid house, is relatively poorly served in academic terms. Social historians of British football have tended to follow contemporary sociologists in mapping the rise and decline of football hooliganism from the 1970s to the 1990s, rather than considering the wider subculture within which fans of football-related violence were embedded.¹¹ I examine some of the reasons for this focus on hooliganism and what it might tell us about the role of violence in shaping working-class masculinities elsewhere.¹² Here I take a historical perspective on casuals and acid house by analysing two influential fanzines: Liverpool's *The End* (1981–88) and London's *Boy's Own* (1986–92).¹³ In doing so I am building on the work of popular authors

⁷ These are well summarized in Chas Critcher's article "'Still Raving": Social Reaction to Ecstasy', *Leisure Studies*, 19 (2000), 145–62.

⁸ Antonio Melechi, 'The Ecstasy of Disappearance', in Steve Redhead, ed., *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Aldershot, 1993), 38. This was part of a wider turn towards what is sometimes termed 'post-subcultural' studies. As should be clear, while there were important critiques of CCCS approaches, I feel that the term 'subculture' retains its utility. For alternative views see Steve Redhead, *Subculture to Clubcultures* (Oxford, 1997); A. Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste', *Sociology*, 33 (1999).

⁹ See notably Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, *Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound* (London, 1999); Andrew Hill, 'Acid House and Thatcherism: Contesting Spaces in Late 1980s Britain', *Space and Polity*, 7 (2003); R. L. John Henry, 'UK Rave Culture and the Thatcherite Hegemony, 1988–94', *Cultural History*, 4 (2015).

¹⁰ See Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge, 1995); Maria Pini, *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: The Move from Home to House* (Basingstoke, 2001).

¹¹ See e.g. Richard Holt, *Sport and The British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989), 326–343; Dave Russell, *Football and The English: A Social History of Association Football, 1863–1995* (Preston, 1997), 188–94.

¹² See Ben Jones, 'Casual Culture and Football Hooligan Autobiographies: Popular Memory, Working Class Youth and Racialized Masculinities in 1980s and 1990s Britain', *Contemporary British History*, Unpublished material.

¹³ It is worth pointing out that while both fanzines covered casual culture neither were typical 'football fanzines', and this wider focus means that they are arguably a richer source for the historian of working-class youth culture than the narrower, football-club focused zines which proliferated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a flavour of these see Martin Lacey, ed., *El Tel Was a Space Alien: The Best of the Alternative Football Press, Vol. 1* (Sheffield, 1989); Phil Shaw, ed., *Whose Game Is It Anyway: The Book of the Football Fanzines* (Hemel Hempstead, 1989).

Dave Hewitson, Ian Hough and Phil Thornton and the pioneering sociological accounts by Steve Redhead.¹⁴ Moreover, in taking the views of the contributors and readers of these fanzines seriously, I am building on the work of scholars who have analysed the role of zines in shaping the subjectivities and politics of those involved in punk and riot-grrrl feminism.¹⁵ As Lucy Robinson has argued: 'Historians recognise them [fanzines] as an invaluable way into the messy traces left by subcultures, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) and fan cultures . . . they construct a bottom-up history; irreverent, both textual and visual, recycled and disseminated beyond profit and funding structures.'¹⁶

One way in which the messy traces and networks of affinity coagulate in the formation of subcultures is through emotion. This is something which Sarah Thornton pointed to in the mid-1990s in her influential book *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*:

Free from the constraints of maintaining readerships, fanzines don't have to worry much about being identified with a scene that has become passé. Much fanzine copy therefore wallows in nostalgia. Their writers reminisce about the legendary raves and hanker after the initial 'vibe'. Conscious of lying in the wake of a historic youth movement, even when they try to avoid sentimental longing, it often prevails. For example:

My Purpose is not to describe the pre-Fall idyll, some sonic paradise which we should wander as do unreconstructed hippies to Glastonbury [but] rather to lament the way clubland has so quickly become self-conscious and unspecial. Acid house was not the be-all and

¹⁴ Dave Hewitson, *The Liverpool Boys are in Town: The Birth of a Terrace Culture* (Liverpool, 2008); Ian Hough, *Perry Boys: The Causal Gangs of Manchester and Salford* (Wrea Green, 2007); Phil Thornton, *Casuals: Football, Fighting and Fashion, the Story of a Terrace Cult* (Lytham, 2003); Steve Redhead, *Football With Attitude* (Manchester, 1991); Steve Redhead, 'An Era of The End or the End of an Era', in John Williams and Stephen Wagg, eds, *British Football and Social Change: Getting Into Europe* (Leicester, 1991). See also Richard Giulianotti, 'Soccer Casuals as Cultural Intermediaries', in S. Redhead, ed., *The Passion and the Fashion: Football Fandom in the New Europe* (Aldershot, 1993).

¹⁵ On Punk fanzines see e.g. Teal Triggs, *Fanzines* (London, 2010); Matthew Worley, 'Punk, Politics and British (fan)zines, 1976–84: "While the world was dying, did you wonder why?"', *History Workshop Journal*, 79 (2015); The Subcultures Network, eds, *Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976* (Manchester, 2018). On Riot Grrrl and feminist zines see Rebekah J. Buchanan, *Writing a Riot: Riot Grrrl Zines and Feminist Rhetorics* (New York, 2018); Jennifer Sinor, 'Another Form of Crying: Girl Zines as Life Writing', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, 26 (2003), 240–64; Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York, 2009); Red Chidgey, 'Reassess Your Weapons: The Making of Feminist Memory in Young Women's Zines', *Women's History Review*, 22 (2013). I am grateful to Matthew Worley for alerting me to these references and for letting me read his unpublished research. For a fuller treatment of these contexts, see Matthew Worley, *Zerex Machine: Punk, Post-Punk and Fanzines in Britain, 1976–1986* (London, 2023).

¹⁶ Lucy Robinson, 'Zines and History: Zines as History', in The Subcultures Network, eds, *Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976* (Manchester, 2018), 39.

end-all, but it was a beginning, and something that was stamped out before it was allowed to develop. (*Boy's Own* spring 1990).¹⁷

The implication here is that this nostalgia is inappropriate: that it is somehow getting in the way of comprehending the subculture. Thornton seems uninterested in taking such texts seriously, concerned that their very historicity rendered them invalid barometers of meaning. Indeed, on the same page Thornton argues: 'Even after their proliferation, then, the fanzines tended to write about events *that happened months prior to their publication* and were well behind the consumer press.'¹⁸

This article takes as its starting point that emotions such as nostalgia are meaningful feelings which require historicization. As we will see, nostalgia was indeed a major note in *Boy's Own's* affective register; one which bonded the fanzine's producers and readers together in an emotional community. As Barbera Rosenwein argues: 'An emotional community is a group in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals. Thus it is often a social community. But it is also possibly a "textual community", created and reinforced by ideologies, teachings and common presuppositions. With their very vocabulary, texts offer exemplars of emotions belittled and valorized.'¹⁹ This analytic framing particularly suits the cultural world of the fanzines and their readers; one which is both social and textual. As Rosenwein argues, attending to the 'constellation' of emotions, to both the presence and absence of affective terms can also alert us to the dynamics of historical change by calling attention to 'emotives', William Reddy's term for 'emotion talk and emotional gestures', which 'alter the states of the speakers from whom they derive'.²⁰ As we shall see in the course of the arguments made below, 'history of the emotions' approaches such as these can illuminate some (although by no means all) important aspects of the social worlds of the fanzines and their readers.²¹

¹⁷ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 140. The omissions in this quotation are significant, as I discuss below. It is also worth noting that some elements of rave culture *did* hark back to the counter-culture of the 1960s, compare Kristian Russell, 'Lysegia Suburbia', in Steve Redhead, ed., *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Aldershot, 1993), 91–174 and George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (London, 1996), 101–126.

¹⁸ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 140. My emphasis.

¹⁹ Barbera H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2006), 24–25.

²⁰ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 18. And Reddy's further development of the concept in William M. Reddy, 'Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions', *Current Anthropology* 38 (1997), 327.

²¹ For a critical summary of the affective turn in the humanities generally see Ruth Leys, *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago, 2017). For the discipline of history compare Jan Plamper, *The History of The Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2017); Katie Barclay, 'The State of the Field: The History of Emotions', *History*, 106 (2021).

Beyond making the case that studying fanzines can tell us something about the significant role of emotion in forging subcultural affinities, this article also contributes to debates about the role of 'popular individualism' in mediating the transition from social democracy to neoliberalism in Britain.²² In an important article published in this journal in 2017, Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, and Natalie Thomlinson argued that the 1970s: 'was a key moment in the spread of a popular, aspirational form of individualism in post-war Britain'.²³ Pointing to evidence as diverse as class dealignment in voting and the rise of advocates for worker's control in industry to the consciousness-raising groups of the Women's Liberation Movement, Robinson et al. make a compelling case for investigating the tributaries of individualism prior to Thatcher. This is not to say that trends towards individualism have not been detected earlier. As Mike Savage has shown, much of the dualistic demarcation between 'modern', 'instrumentalised' individuals and 'traditional', 'solidaristic', and 'class members' was overdrawn by influential sociological studies in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁴ As an alternative, Savage suggests that we might profitably think of the 'rugged individualism' of the male manual worker complementing his class politics.²⁵ Notably, he drew upon the example of shop stewards at Ford's Halewood plant on Merseyside who were interviewed by Huw Beynon in the late 1960s.²⁶ Savage notes that: 'Beynon emphasizes that the shop stewards were not some "hangover" from "traditional working-class" cultures. They followed fashion, wore smart clothes and exemplified the new pop culture sweeping Britain in the 1960s. They were profoundly concerned to emphasize their individuality.'²⁷ Moreover, the tensions between individual autonomy and privacy and the collective ties of work and community have long been one of the defining features of English

²² The literature on neoliberalism is vast. For a useful critical summary of the historiography see Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Aled Davies and Ben Jackson, 'Introduction: A Neoliberal Age?', in Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Aled Davies and Ben Jackson, eds, *The Neoliberal Age: Britain Since the 1970s* (London, 2021).

²³ Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson, 'Telling Stories about Post-War Britain: Popular Individualism and the "Crisis" of the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 28 (2017), 269.

²⁴ Mike Savage, 'Sociology, Class and Male Manual Work Cultures', in John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell, eds, *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964-1979* (London, 1999), 24. A similar trend towards contrasting the 'traditional' and 'modern' was evident in community studies at the time. See Christian Topalov, "'Traditional Working-Class Neighbourhoods': An Inquiry into the Emergence of a Sociological Model in the 1950s and 1960s," *Osiris* 18 (2003); Jon Lawrence, 'Inventing the 'traditional working class': a re-analysis of interview notes from Young and Willmott's *Family and Kinship in East London*', *The Historical Journal*, 59 (2016).

²⁵ Savage, 'Sociology, Class and Male Manual Work Cultures', 31-38.

²⁶ See Huw Beynon, *Working For Ford* (London, 1973). On politics in the car industry more widely see Jack Saunders, *Assembling Cultures: Workplace Activism, Labour Militancy and Cultural Change in Britain's Car Factories, 1945-1982* (Manchester, 2019).

²⁷ Savage, 'Sociology, Class and Male Manual Work Cultures', 33.

popular culture, as Jon Lawrence has powerfully argued.²⁸ Nevertheless, as this article will demonstrate, the cultures of acid house and the football casual of the 1980s and early 1990s provide further evidence of a vernacular individualism that was both extremely popular and explicitly oppositional to Thatcherism.

The article is based on a close reading of all issues of *The End* and *Boy's Own*, supplemented by published interviews with the fanzines' editors and contributors and other autobiographical material. The first section will focus on the emergence of the casual look from the late 1970s and its proliferation nationally, thanks in part to fanzines like *The End*. Here I argue that casual culture offered a means of intra-class cultural distinction which provides a notable example of the kind of popular individualism identified by Robinson et al. The second section on London-based *Boy's Own* argues that ecstasy combined with acid house to produce a Janus-faced nostalgia which helped forge a sense of community in the early rave scene. I conclude by emphasizing that the oppositional class politics of both publications made their forms of vernacular individualism difficult to reconcile with the dominant modes of Thatcherite individualism.²⁹

The Origins of Casual Culture and Liverpool's *The End*

By the time that the first issue of *The End* came out in October 1981, the 'casual' look had been a feature of youth culture on Merseyside for about four years. It would be another two before *The End* writer Kevin Sampson's article for *The Face* would recognize the commonalities between London's 'chaps', Liverpool's 'scallies' and Manchester's 'perries'.³⁰ The novel style, whose adherents were initially variously dubbed 'Smoothies', 'Squares' and 'Scallies', first emerged in the summer of 1977, as Dave Hewitson recalled:

It's the 13th August, 1977. Wembley Stadium, the Charity Shield. Liverpool v Manchester United. [...] Before the football has even begun something else catches the eye outside the stadium. On the steps, close to the turnstiles are twenty young lads, between the ages of fifteen and seventeen [...] No colours, it is impossible to tell if they are Scousers or Mancs. Some are sporting a strange new hairstyle

²⁸ See Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The search for Community in Post-war England* (Oxford, 2019), 232–33 and *passim*. This is a fact that has been confirmed by the research of several generations of social historians. See e.g. Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940–1970*, (Oxford, 1995); Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth-Century England: Community, Identity and Social Memory*, (Manchester, 2012); Stefan Ramsden, *Working-Class Community in an Age of Affluence* (London, 2017).

²⁹ On the contradictions within Thatcherite individualism see Aled Davies, James Freeman and Hugh Pemberton, 'Everyman a Capitalist' or 'Free to Choose': Exploring the Tensions within Thatcherite Individualism', *The Historical Journal* 61(2018).

³⁰ Peter Hooton, 'On Adidas', in James Brown, ed., *The End* (London: Sabotage Times, 2011), 17.

effeminate in look [. . .] Attired in straight jeans and cords, they are also wearing adidas trainers, not common in the era of Disco and Punk fashion.³¹

The End editor and later frontman of *The Farm* Peter Hooton continues the story: 'By that winter, 1977-8, it was Lois straight jeans, Adidas Samba and snorkel parkas [. . .] Liverpool and Everton fans would wear these with a Fred Perry tee-shirt and flicks or centre-parts, not long hair.'³² Crucial to the success of this look in the era where flared-trousers were the norm was that the trendsetters came from tough working-class neighbourhoods; Hooton again: 'The areas where people wore these were places like Gerrard Gardens and Scotty Road, which were regarded as hard areas. That was the epicentre.'³³ Scotland Road was also central to Kevin Sampson's authoritative early account, which is worth quoting at length:

Let's rewind to the summer of 1977. Remember it? The Buzzcocks? "White Riot"? "Low"? That Berlin-phase Bowie LP may not have seemed that important at the time but in the Scotland Road area of Liverpool it was breaking down doors for the world of youth culture [. . .] Taking the cover of Bowie's "Low" as a point of reference, they mixed the bohemian cool of Bowie with punk's snazzier trappings. The resulting image was at once aggressive, effeminate, and extremely attractive. Mohairs worn with straights and plastic sandals, complemented by camel duffel coats. But it was the distinctive hairstyle that stamped SCALLY all over them, the unique and wonderful lopsided wedge.³⁴

The signature early look of the 'wedge' haircut, narrow jeans and trainers soon shifted to encompass a whole range of difficult-to-find training shoes, sportswear, and designer brands: 'Samba were soon replaced with Stan Smith and Forrest Hills. The jeans changed constantly, Lois, Inega, Fiorucci etc. Jackets came and went: Peter Storm, adidas.'³⁵ The speed with which fashions changed could be comically rapid, as Sampson noted:

'Between spring 1978 and winter 1979 the city's rag trade was turned upside down. The emphasis went on detail. First it was drainies rather than straights. Then it *had* to be Lois drainies. Then, come 1979, it was

³¹ Hewitson, *The Liverpool Boys are in Town*, 13.

³² Peter Hooton quoted in Thornton, *Casuals*, 19–20.

³³ Thornton, *Casuals*, 20.

³⁴ Kevin Sampson, 'The Ins and Outs of High Street Fashion', *The Face* 39, (July 1983), 22. Glam as a whole has received far less attention than Punk, despite being arguably much more transgressive of gendered norms and generating much broader popular appeal. For useful starting points see Keith Gildart, *Images of England through Popular Music: Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1976* (Basingstoke, 2013), 151–173.

³⁵ Dave Hewitson and Jay Montessori, *80s Casuals* (Wallasey, 2010), 8.

a new label every month. Inega, Fiorucci, Lacoste, FU's all had their moments, but never very long ones. Now *this* was fashion. No sooner was a new brand or colour established than it was cast off, replaced and ridiculed. The shops became wise to the movement and capitalised on the joke aspect of it. Stickers claiming "In for One Day Only!!!" were attached to gold jumbo cords.³⁶

Early issues of *The End* do not *explicitly mention* casual culture, but, through the 'Ins and Outs' pages, give an excellent (if not necessarily strictly accurate) insight into rapidly changing local fashions.³⁷ For example, in issue one (October 1981) we find that 'Dull colours, cord shoes, cord caps, cord jackets', 'normal trainees, denim (not the aftershave)' and 'Undertones Tee-shirt[s]' are 'in', while 'Leather trousers, Slazenger jumpers', 'Bright shirts/trousers, tennis gear (especially at night), cricket jumpers, Training shoes from Paris, Wedges/Mickey flickee and Lonsdale sweat-shirts' are 'out'.³⁸ The following issue's 'Scallywag's Ins and Outs', included 'Balaclavas', 'Leeds Utd Gloves', 'Pin-stripe suits' and 'Tennis gear in winter' in the 'ins' column and 'People who took the last out column seriously' in the 'outs' suggesting that the whole thing ought to be treated as an amusing satire on 'scally' culture.³⁹ Taking such levity into account, we can nevertheless learn something important here about casual style as a whole. As Blackburn Rovers fan Gary Aspenden observed, the desire and opportunity for individual distinction meant that there could be no overall uniformity: 'The constantly evolving look (particularly from 1979-1989), different brands and the one upmanship that drove the whole thing meant that there was never a defining look that could be imitated. To add to the confusion, post-1983 most towns and cities across the UK had picked up on it and each was adding their own unique twist on the style.'⁴⁰

³⁶ Kevin Sampson, 'The Ins and Outs of High Street Fashion', *The Face* 39 (July 1983), 22. Emphasis in the original.

³⁷ *The End* ran for 20 issues between October 1981 and the end of 1988. It was sold by the editors Peter Hooton, Mick Potter and Phil Jones in pubs and clubs and on the football terraces, and was stocked by Liverpool record shops Probe, Soundtrack and HMV along with a number of bars, newsagents and kiosks. At its peak in the mid-1980s each issue sold about 6,000 copies and there is evidence that it was read beyond Merseyside in Yorkshire, London and elsewhere. John Peel described it as his favourite fanzine and the fact that it was championed in the *NME*, *The Face* and on Radio One ensured that it had a wider circulation than would otherwise have been the case. See James Brown, ed., *The End* (London: Sabotage Times, 2011), 4-7 and 12-13.

³⁸ *The End*, Issue 1 (October 1981), in James Brown (ed.), *The End* (London: Sabotage Times, 2011), 26. To avoid needless repetition, future references to editions of the fanzine will be abbreviated to include the issue number and date of publication. All references are to the compilation edited by Brown.

³⁹ *The End*, Issue 2 (December 1981), 43.

⁴⁰ Gary Aspenden quoted in Hewitson, *The Liverpool Boys are in Town*, 7.

The early years of the casual style coincided with a sustained period of European success for Liverpool football club and this fuelled the mania for European sportswear on Merseyside. Continental away trips before the post-Heysel ban on British clubs in 1985 gave travelling supporters the opportunity to acquire (legally or otherwise) garments that were impossible to obtain in Britain.⁴¹ *The End* were quick to satirize the stereotype of scouse light-fingeredness with their regular paean to scally-masculinity 'The adventures of Joe Wagg'. After issue three described his successful shopping trip to London, 'without actually paying for anything', we next catch up with our hero on his way to Amsterdam: 'Joe and a few of his cronies had decided to go to Holland, which quite by chance coincided with a certain pre-season football tour. The intention of this trip was purely to take in the sights as any other tourist would do. But also on the list of attractions were certain sports shops and jewellery stores (these had always fascinated Joe but he could never explain why).'⁴² Such self-parody continued in the following issue which featured Joe Wagg's mate Dossa and his 'helpful hints for working away in the summer': 'If you meet any people from Liverpool who ask you to come out grafting with them the next day, it would be unadvisable to turn up in working boots carrying a flask of soup.'⁴³ This satirical take on masculine scouse culture widened to encompass compulsive liars ('Billy Bull'), bodybuilders, doormen and 'pricks who talk about cars all the time'.⁴⁴ Authority figures were frequently mocked with the police, Conservative politicians, the *Liverpool Echo* and *The Sun* targeted with repeated criticism.⁴⁵ Particular opprobrium was also reserved for those who fell out with the bounds of fashionable casual culture, and it is to this game of cultural distinction that I now turn.

Scally Individualism: Standing out from the Woollybacks

Besides caricaturing their fellow Liverpoolians, *The End* popularized casual culture by declaring the sartorial superiority of the urbane, fashion-conscious scouser over the slow-witted, painfully provincial 'Woollybacks'. While this derogatory term was liberally applied to denizens of small-town Lancashire, Cheshire and North-Wales, particular ire was trained on their rivals east of the Pennines in Yorkshire. We've

⁴¹ For accounts of European thievery, see Nicholas Allt, *The Boys From The Mersey: The Story of the Annie Road End Crew, Football's First Clobbered-Up Mob* (Lytham, 2004), 174–177; Colin Blaney, *Grafters: The Inside Story of the Wide Awake Firm, Europe's Most Prolific Sneak Thieves* (Lytham, 2004).

⁴² *The End*, Issue 3 (January 1982), 68; *The End*, Issue 4 (March 1982), 80.

⁴³ *The End*, Issue 6 (June 1982), 121.

⁴⁴ See e.g. *The End*, Issue 8 (October 1982), 159; Issue 9 (December 1982), 179; Issue 12 (August 1983), p. 229; Issue 14 (April 1984), p. 292.

⁴⁵ *The End*, Issue 9 (December 1982), 174; Issue 14 (April 1984), 270; Issue 4 (March 1982), 86; Issue 13 (December 1983), 258.

already seen the snide remarks about Leeds United goalkeeper's gloves, and issue two upped the ante with the mock advertisement for 'Sexy Dexys': 'First Look at Europe's Future Fashion: Just In—Star Jumpers by Jaguar, only £8.95; Just for you trend-setters—4-6 inch Stacks, £30; Why not post the coupon? Then perhaps we can help you. (Leeds Gloves Also Available).'⁴⁶ Arguably the pièce de résistance of trolling came in May 1982 with the pseudo-anthropological 'Disappearing World of the Wool' article:

Recently a party of explorers set out from civilisation as we know it, namely Liverpool, to try to find that long lost tribe known as the woolyback or wool for short. This tribe has inhabited Yorkshire and even parts of Lancashire for some time now, but in the past few months sightings of the wool have gone down dramatically, due to the wools learning from the appearance and the lifestyle of the explorers [...]. When the explorers approached a place know as Elland Rd., it became quite obvious that they were not welcome. The hostile wools had started to attack in vast numbers waving many scarves and banners above their heads (obviously and ancient custom) [...]. The wools sang and danced for over an hour, eventually working themselves up into a frenzy of hate directed at their friendly visitors. They even started to throw objects such as poisoned darts, spears and weapons made out of flint.⁴⁷

Besides its obvious target, the article also took aim at what was then one of the dominant academic explanations for football violence. For the social psychologist Peter Marsh and his colleagues such 'aggro', was actually an illusion of violence involving ritual displays of aggression among young men.⁴⁸ Marsh argued that similar 'primary level' displays were evident in the behaviour of chimpanzees, while he identified analogous tribal rituals among various groups of indigenous peoples in New Guinea and South America.⁴⁹ Furthermore, *The End's* sardonic depiction of, what would have been for many a common-place experience, delighted readers and prompted a flurry of correspondence through which individuals forged subcultural affinities and simultaneously promoted football-based rivalries. Paul Taylor, a Leeds supporter wrote to say he particularly enjoyed the 'Disappearing world of the wool': 'I feel I should point out that some of us do not look like the 'missing link' but we do have to stick together and can be found on the service train to away matches. We also go on expeditions such as recent treks to Upton

⁴⁶ *The End*, Issue 2 (December 1981), 45.

⁴⁷ *The End*, Issue 5 (May 1982), 96.

⁴⁸ Peter Marsh, Elizabeth Rosser, Rom Harré, *The Rules of Disorder* (London, 1978).

⁴⁹ Peter Marsh, *Aggro: The Illusion of Violence* (London, 1978), 43 and 46–65.

Park and White Hart Lane, as we feel we must continually widen our horizons, to observe the 'Farah People' of the South'.⁵⁰

While this sort of amiable rivalry filled the letters pages, *The End* increasingly began to ridicule the exaggerated reporting of the hooligan phenomenon appearing both in readers' letters and the national press. A 'Sun exclusive' interview with Charlton Athletic's leader 'Bubbles' featured the following: 'Like their famous neighbours Newcastle, Bubbles claims that you can tell a Darlington skin by his tartan kilt. Only their top boys wear these, mainly because it is quite cold in the North East during winter. Bubbles started to ramble then about how his great-great-grandfather led the first inter-city mob charging off the Stockton to Darlington train in the 1830s.'⁵¹ Another article in the 'What's wrong with football' vein attributed the violent unrest to 'the complete lack of real baldies in and around the football scene'.⁵² While the following issue was reported on a study by 'Dr William Streuth' which showed that 'people gaining access to sporting occasions did so because they refused to line the pockets of big business', and revealed the '10 most popular ways to jib in'.⁵³

Both these critiques of contemporary media discourses about hooliganism and the humorous rivalries which characterized the *End's* letters pages can tell us three important things about the patterns of feeling in late-twentieth-century working-class communities. Firstly, as football hooligans became the latest working-class folk-devil to exercise the imaginations of the press and politicians, the fanzine itself provided an alternative, grass-roots forum in which such myths could be satirized and ridiculed. Secondly, the sort of sartorial rivalry (clearly exaggerated for comic effect) between casuals and their unenlightened, 'woolyback' adversaries echoes earlier generational and subcultural divisions. Teds, Mods, Rockers, Skins, Punks had all marked themselves out as stylistically distinctive, both from each-other and mainstream conformist youths and their parents. Thirdly, and crucially, what makes the casual subculture different is that this sartorial claim to individuality (and to a modernist sensibility) was grafted onto pre-existing football-based expressions of collective belonging. The centrality of football to working-class masculinities and to long-embedded local and regional rivalries ensured that the casuals had a substantial impact on working-class culture, whether one regarded the phenomena with hostility, wry amusement or indifference. That both Liverpool and Manchester made proprietary claims over the northern origins of the subculture over London clubs should tell us something about the way popular culture served as another front in a

⁵⁰ *The End*, Issue 7 (August 1982), 145.

⁵¹ *The End*, Issue 13 (December 1983), 258.

⁵² *The End*, Issue 16 (May 1985), 308.

⁵³ *The End*, Issue 17 (February 1986), 328.

struggle for hegemony, which by the middle of the 1980s had been decisively (economically and politically) won by the metropolitan centre.

People clearly read *The End* because they derived pleasure and amusement from its content and sensibility. The fact that it was sold (by the writers) at everyday sites of working-class sociability like the pub and the football ground, narrowed the gap between producer and consumer and helped to engender a sense of belonging. As Peter Hooton recalled: 'We had some great nights out after selling *The End* at the match and met some very famous people some of whom became good friends but you know in all honesty the best thing about the whole experience was seeing people in the pub reading *The End* and laughing their heads off, now that is a feeling money can't buy!'⁵⁴ In this way, you could argue that, at least in part, the fanzine helped to forge an emotional community based around collective joy. Yet to read this simply as a community of affect, of shared feeling in this way does not quite ring true; it is certainly insufficient. It would be very difficult, for example, to apply Rosenwein's methodology of reading the texts for their emotional content in a straightforward way. This is because the tone of most of the fanzine is so resolutely in the piss-taking mode. Indeed, you could go so far to suggest that the piss-taking sensibility played a central role in reassuring writers and readers alike that they shouldn't take their feelings (whatever they might be) too seriously. The reader needs to be alert to the more occasional instances of political earnestness and genuine fandom that *are undoubtedly present* (more on which below). The fanzine's appeal then rests on the pleasure of recognition: of seeing a working-class subculture represented from within, at the time of its formation. A similar tendency can be observed in the success of our second fanzine which took off, just as *The End* was beginning to wind down.⁵⁵

Boy's Own and the Politics of Nostalgia

As we have seen, *Boy's Own* co-founder Terry Farley had written to *The End* as early as 1982 to float the notion of a London version but it wasn't until 1986 that the fanzine got off the ground.⁵⁶ He enlisted the help of his friend Andrew Weatherall, who recalled that: 'Terry was enthralled with *The End*. His words at the time were, "If fuckin' scousers can do it then I'm sure we can!" or some such pep talk. And we did. It was Pritt sticks

⁵⁴ Peter Hooton, 'Introduction', in James Brown, ed., *The End* (London: Sabotage Times, 2011), 4.

⁵⁵ While 13 issues of *The End* appeared between 1981 and 1983, just four were produced between 1986 and 1988, as other projects (notably the growing success of *The Farm*) occupied the editors' time.

⁵⁶ See the letters from Farley in *The End*, Issue 6 (June 1982) and Issue 8 (October 1982), 126 and 165.

and cutting things out on my coffee table.⁵⁷ The first editorial made it clear that they imagined their readers in their own image; clued-up casuals and working-class autodidacts: 'We don't want to pigeon-hole our readers but are aiming at the boy (or girl) who one day stands on the terraces, the next day stands in a sweaty club, and the next day stays in and reads Brendan Behan whilst listening to Run D. M. C.'⁵⁸

Acid house was many months away when the first issue of the fanzine was put together, and the focus of the summer 1986 issue reflected both Farley's Soul Boy status and Weatherall's musical eclecticism.⁵⁹ What is notable is that nostalgia, which was to become the key affect in 1988/89, was present from the beginning. Indeed, the very first article 'The Death of the Soulboy' was a wistful evocation of the golden-age of rare-groove:

The club was called Crackers, the queue was called soulboys, they named the shoppers Joe Public. The year 1976 was to be soulboy's finest hour. Joe Public laughed at soulboy, he looked queer. Many were gay, in fact the hippest clubs used by soulboy were definitely gay; Chargaramas and Louise's were the clubs to be seen in, while Scamps (Hemel) and the 100 Club were places to dance in [...] The highlight of the summer was down at Margate. Lunchtime sessions at the Atlantis, all night parties and a never ending supply of blues. Little did soulboy know as he bumped away to "Inside America", that something was about to happen down the coast that would ruin his life.⁶⁰

Bournemouth became the embryonic centre for an increasingly commercialized and, in *Boy's Own's* view, debased version of the subculture:

With the arrival of Joe onto the scene came a commercialisation. Every disco started soul nights and they wasn't cheap. At Crackers it was £1 entry and free sausage and chips, soul now meant money and soulboy wasn't getting anything for free, chips included. [...] The all-dayers

⁵⁷ Andrew Weatherall, 'Boy's Own Interviewed', in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy's Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 8. *Boy's Own* was put together using a typewriter, pens and pritt-stick (and towards the end an early Apple word-processor) by Terry Farley, Andy Weatherall, Steve Hall, Cymon Eckel, and Steve Mayes, a group of friends from Slough and Windsor. It ran for 12 issues between 1986 and 1992 and was distributed at *Boy's Own's* own parties and club nights, was available via mail-order from their offices, and was presumably sold at other venues. It is not clear what the circulation levels were.

⁵⁸ *Boy's Own*, Issue 1 (Summer 1986), in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy's Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 16. Hereafter references will be abbreviated to include just the issue number and date.

⁵⁹ Compare their respective lists on the 'staff tunes' page: *Boy's Own*, Issue 1 (Summer 1986), 19.

⁶⁰ *Boy's Own*, Issue 1 (Summer 1986), 17. For compelling accounts of Rare Groove see Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, 'Rare Groove and Raregroovers: A Matter of Taste, Difference and Identity', in Heidi Safia Mirza, ed. *Black British Feminism* (London, 1997); Melville, *It's A London Thing*, 115-31.

and clubs were now full of Joes building pyramids and getting drunk. In fact doing everything but the two main things in soulboy's life, serious dancing and dressing up. Joe also had no etiquette. At Crackers you only danced if you was good. If you wasn't you practiced hard until you was. Joe didn't give a fuck, he swayed side to side, he took his pint onto the dance floor, soulboy only ever took talcum powder to the floor.⁶¹

Their nostalgia for the golden era of the soulboy, and their denigration of 'Joe Public' for lacking the right subcultural capital prefigures the affective trajectory of *Boy's Own* in relation to acid house, as we shall see. It is also notable that a number of promoters and DJs involved in the southern soul scene (such as Nicky Holloway, Paul Oakenfold, Norman Jay and Carl Cox) were to become key players in the emergence of acid house.⁶² Indeed, we can trace their trajectories through the next few issues of *Boy's Own*. Issue 3 (Spring 1987)⁶³ featured an article in praise of the capital's recent warehouse scene: 'Here we had a rave that was fresh, fashionable, daring ... A rave that was safe from the wedgeheaded wallies and East End dolly birds who frequented the capital's tack-holes at weekends.'⁶⁴ But (ever nostalgic), the vibrancy of the last two years was no more:

The danger is that the whole underground/warehouse scene is no longer underground. Why? Because moody crews, snide DJs looking for instant cred, lack of suitable venues and the invasion of nonces (Arrgh!) has helped fuck up yet again a once safe scene (shame). Meanwhile Joe's now bought himself "the uniform". You know; those bloody black flight jackets, Doc Martens (oh no!), ripped his FU's (well they wouldn't be 501s, would they?) and boogies on down in the raves convinced he's a trendy (silly cunt!). Oh for the days of Dockland and Bear Wharf!⁶⁵

It wasn't until the following year that the *Boy's Own* crew would find something else to get excited (and rapidly nostalgic) about: the combination of acid house and the drug ecstasy.

⁶¹ *Boy's Own*, Issue 1 (Summer 1986), 17.

⁶² See Luke Bainbridge, *Acid House: The True Story* (London, 2013), 3, 11–12.

⁶³ This issue is cited as 'summer' 1987 in the collected edition but this must be an error as the following issue is presumably also misnamed 'spring'.

⁶⁴ Norman Jay, 'I'm Going Overground: How the Soul was Sold', *Boy's Own*, Issue 3 (Spring 1987), 84. The best historical account of this scene is in Caspar Melville's, *It's A London Thing: How Rare Groove, Acid House and Jungle Remapped the City* (Manchester, 2019), 83–131.

⁶⁵ Norman Jay, 'I'm Going Overground: How the Soul was Sold', *Boy's Own*, Issue 3 (Spring 1987), 85.

'It was a bit more love and peace'⁶⁶: Emotional Communities and the Early Days of Acid House

While *Boy's Own's* Andrew Weatherall and Cymon Eckel had taken ecstasy as early as 1986, it wasn't until they tried it again in the acid house atmosphere of the Rampling's Shoom night that they understood the appeal.⁶⁷ As Caspar Melville notes:

'In November 1987 Danny Rampling and his wife Jenni started Shoom, an invitation-only affair at the Fitness Centre, a shabby gym in Elephant and Castle, south London. With its love and peace ethos, drug-enabled positivity—embodied in the smiley face logo that Rampling nicked from an iconic 1970s design for one of his flyers, which rapidly took off as the logo for the entire scene—Shoom crystallised the 'luvved up' acid house formula. From the old soul stomping grounds of Streatham and Elephant and Castle, acid house swept into the West End.'⁶⁸

The impact on the fanzine's writers was immense, as Cymon Eckel recalls: 'Shoom was a magnet for all the hedonists in London. It just pulled you in. We'd started going in February '88, myself and Andrew. We found out about it late January. It just turned into these frenetic conversations on a Monday, Terry talking for two hours on the phone about this club: "Fuckin' 'ell, I've just had the club experience of my life." [...] So we were into Shoom and away.'⁶⁹

This enthusiasm was reproduced in the fanzine which for a short while became notably more cheerful. Spring 1988's edition of *Boy's Own* ('The only fanzine that gets right on one matey') included a key article cementing the connection between Ibiza's 'Balearic' sound and the club nights at Shoom and Paul Oakenfold's Spectrum. It is notable for including an early attempt to explain what being on ecstasy felt like: 'It takes you up and gives you a feeling of freedom. You know what you're doing, you just feel more confident of love. People tend to take the drug and dance the night away. (You hippie Oakenfold! – Ed.)'⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Boy's Own's* Steve Hall quoted in Jane Bussmann's *Once In a Lifetime: The Crazy Days of Acid House and Afterwards* (London, 1998), 41.

⁶⁷ Bainbridge, *Acid House*, 23.

⁶⁸ Melville, *It's A London Thing*, 149.

⁶⁹ Cymon Eckell quoted in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy's Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 6.

⁷⁰ *Boy's Own*, Issue 5, (Spring 1988), 135. Given MDMA's well-known psychonautic properties and capacity to instil feelings of empathy and well-being, the emotional effects of the drug are surprisingly under-researched in the humanities. For a sociological perspective on a later, North American context see Philip R. Kavanaugh, and Tammy L. Anderson, 'Solidarity and Drug Use in the Electronic Dance Music Scene', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 49 (2008).

At the same time, *Boy's Own* started putting on acid house parties in Surrey and Sussex. In August 1988 a legendary party took place on a farm near East Grinstead, Sussex where Shoom regulars, former soulboys and West End celebrities like Boy George mingled happily. Photographs appeared in the fanzine of revellers lounging on haybales in the morning sunshine. For Terry Farley, nothing would ever be quite the same, or quite as good again: 'It was really hot and we were watching the swans flying over the lake at dawn. It was the feeling that it would never be this good again, and it wasn't.'⁷¹ Notably, this was not an assessment that Farley made decades after the event; such nostalgia was being actively felt at the time: 'The Karma Collective barn dance: the real summer of love started and ended here.'⁷² Yet this instant nostalgia should hardly surprise us given *Boy's Own's* prior laments for rare groove and the warehouse scene in earlier issues. The same complaints regarding exploitative promoters and non-discerning punters were repeated, even in features which ostensibly implored people to stop moaning: 'Alright, alright, I know that some of the warehouses are a bit iffy and to say there are a lot of Teds about is an understatement, but think of some of the adventures that you've had in the past 18 months [...] The next time some plank in an E-T-shirt grabs you in a sweaty embrace and shouts "Can you feel it?", smile politely and say "I certainly can . . . but you'll never understand I'm afraid." Staying in and moaning means these people have won.'⁷³ This predilection for nostalgia was crucial in framing the emotional community which built up around acid house and rave:

One year ago I would have wiped a happy tear from my eye and presented club debutantes with aluminium whistles as they jostled to throw themselves onto the first guest-list they could find. Those were the halcyon days of clubbing, where *for the first time ever*, posing, boozing and prettifying took a back seat. People from the most heterogeneous backgrounds were transformed by a single entity – music – which for a few brief hours every night gave people a common language. Although acid house has been subject to a process of criminalisation since last summer, a lot of people liked it *and were changed by the glimpse of new possibilities* that the sound's configurations offered.⁷⁴

This feeling of nostalgia for a recent past *and* the promise of something which couldn't quite be realized—a radical nostalgia for a uchronic future—is central to understanding *Boy's Own's* emotional politics, which Sarah Thornton dismissed in her discussion of the fanzine (see the

⁷¹ Terry Farley quoted in Jane Bussmann's, *Once In a Lifetime: The Crazy Days of Acid House and Afterwards* (London, 1998), 40.

⁷² *Boy's Own*, Issue 6, (Summer 1988), 178.

⁷³ *Boy's Own*, Issue 6, (Summer 1988), 188.

⁷⁴ *Boy's Own*, Issue 7, (Autumn 1988), 260. My emphasis.

discussion at the beginning of this article). It is important to account for the criminalization of the acid house scene which is elided in Thornton's re-telling. To complete the quotation from *Boy's Own* which she cited: 'Acid house was not the be-all and end-all, but it was a beginning and something that was stamped out before it was allowed to develop. *Policing crowds is one thing, criminalising creativity quite another.*'⁷⁵ As Graham St John has noted, raving experienced 'a level of criminalisation unprecedented in youth and dance cultures':

'In the UK the immobilizing of rave began with Luton MP Graham Bright's Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990, which arrived on the heels of a nationwide policing network (the Pay Party Unit established in September 1989) and was followed by the deployment of riot squads and eventually the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (November 1994), which, among other things targeted unlicensed parties "wholly or predominantly characterised by the transmission of a succession of repetitive beats."⁷⁶

To participate in the nascent acid house subculture by 1990 meant bringing yourself into potential conflict with the state; it certainly meant risking arrest.⁷⁷ At the same time, entrepreneurs Paul Stains and Tony Colston-Hayter were enlisting the help of Margaret Thatcher's fixer David Hart to organize the Freedom to Party rally on a populist, free-market platform.⁷⁸ The 'freedoms' offered by the acid house were contradictory at the very least, if not downright incompatible with one another. Indeed, such advocates (the promoters) and opponents (the police) embody the contradictions of the Thatcherite programme, encapsulated by Andrew Gamble in the short-hand *Free Economy, Strong State*. The trajectories of both the casual and acid-house subcultures can tell us something about the contradictions inherent in the transition from social democracy to neoliberalism during the 1980s and 1990s, as I show below.

Race and Gender: Fanzines and the Contradictions of Community under Thatcherism

Politics was (alongside praise for bands and artists that they liked) one of the few subjects which *was not*, in the main, approached in *The End* with automatic levity. Indeed, their political discussions were often notable for

⁷⁵ *Boy's Own*, Issue 7, (Autumn 1988), 260.

⁷⁶ Graham St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures* (London, 2009), p. 9.

⁷⁷ Some sound-system collectives such as Spiral Tribe and Nottingham's DiY developed an anarchist critique of the state and were embedded in the 'new traveller' networks which had been subject to massive police violence at the 'Battle of the Beanfield' in June 1985. See Graham St John, *Technomad*, 36–55; Harry Harrison, *Dreaming in Yellow: The Story of the DiY Sound System* (London, 2022); Andy Worthington, ed., *The Battle of the Beanfield* (Eyemouth, 2005).

⁷⁸ Collin, *Altered State*, 83–115.

their earnestness. Peter Hooton recalled that when he enlisted Phil Jones, then editor of the mod fanzine *Time For Action* to set up *The End*, Jones envisioned it as more of a music magazine. Hooton felt that a publication focused on youth culture in the city more widely could sell: '*The End* was an idea I had after the riots. I was fairly political and there were other magazines in Liverpool, like *Merseysound*, that I felt didn't reflect the vitality of the Liverpool scene.'⁷⁹ Hooton's job as a youth worker gave him access to community printing facilities and local arts funding. The first editorial reflects this context and highlights the grim economic situation: 'Although the accent of *The End* is on music, we hope to cater for anything at all that will help the kids on the street [...] We are racking our brains wondering how, we as a magazine, can help say, the unemployment situation.'⁸⁰ For Hooton, the politics of the fanzine merely reproduced the common sense of those on the Left in the city:

There was one lad called Joe who was involved in right-wing politics who called us 'the pinko pop mag'. I think he was jealous because the working class were reading our magazine and not his but we didn't have political editorials or rants. We interviewed Terry Fields and Derek Hatton because they're interesting people to interview [...] We resisted any attempts by Militant to use *The End* as a vehicle but at the time the Labour Party in Liverpool was radical and Hatton was their spokesperson [...] Liverpool people don't really think of themselves as English, it's a melting pot and I think that's why right-wing politics never took off.⁸¹

Besides profiling local politicians, *The End* also featured interviews with Left-wing cultural figures including the screenwriter Alan Bleasdale, the comedian Alexi Sayle and the singer Billy Bragg.⁸² Despite Hooton's post-riot good intentions, the issue of racism which had been central to the Toxteth disturbances was barely addressed in the fanzine, which remained overwhelmingly white in terms of both contributors and coverage.⁸³ Two-tone bands like *The Specials* and the more pop-oriented *The Beat* were interviewed, but it is only in the interview with local reggae group *Cross Section* that persistent racial tensions were mentioned, and

⁷⁹ Peter Hooton quoted in Thornton, *Casuals*, 55.

⁸⁰ *The End*, Issue 1 (October 1981), 24.

⁸¹ Peter Hooton quoted in Thornton, *Casuals*, 58–59. For contrasting assessments of Militant compare Diane Frost and Peter North, *Militant Liverpool: A City on The Edge* (Liverpool, 2013); Neil Pye, 'Militant's Laboratory: Liverpool City Council's Struggle with the Thatcher Government', in Jonathan Davis and Rohan McWilliam, eds, *Labour and the Left in the 1980s* (Manchester, 2018).

⁸² See *The End*, Issue 9 (December 1982); Issue 14 (April 1984); Issue 16 (May 1985).

⁸³ The experience of Liverpool's Black population is usefully historicized in John Belchem, *Before The Windrush: Race Relations in 20th Century Liverpool* (Liverpool, 2014). On the 1981 disturbances see Diane Frost and Richard Phillips, eds, *Liverpool '81: Remembering the Riots* (Liverpool, 2011).

even here this came right at the end of a long interview.⁸⁴ Whatever the original intentions of the editors, the emphasis on oppositional working-class scouseness clearly resonated with readers in a way that expressions of Black culture or explicit anti-racism did not. Moreover, both major football clubs (Liverpool FC and Everton) had reputations for being among the most hostile places in the country for Black away fans and players.⁸⁵

While it is unreasonable to suppose that a fanzine of youth culture would not reproduce the racism of wider society, the relative silences on this issue are worth pointing out given Hooton's claims about the origins of the publication. Turning to *Boy's Own* we can see how the textual community of the zine itself, with the editors responding to their reader's concerns, obliged them to address (however imperfectly) inequalities of race and gender. Such was the reputation of Chelsea fans for racism and far-right activity in the 1980s, that Terry Farley felt that he had to address it when writing to *The End*, identifying himself as 'Terry of the Chelsea North Stand, Anti-NF by the way'.⁸⁶ This attitude shaped some of *Boy's Own's* politics which gave persistent support to anti-racist causes. For example, the first two issues of the London fanzine advocated for the anti-apartheid movement.⁸⁷ Issue four featured an attack on the failures of the Thatcher governments and praise for the election Bernie Grant, Diane Abbott and Keith Vaz.⁸⁸ It is surprising therefore that the following issues' editorial addressed accusations of racism. Perhaps this criticism can be partly attributed to persistent stereotypes about football hooligans, which the fanzine had covered, albeit not uncritically. *Boy's Own* were more vulnerable to the charge of sexism, however, as the editorial admitted: 'OK it's a fair cop guvnor, the mag's written by chaps (despite trying to recruit female writers). It is at this point I can suggest a top periodical written by ladies. The one, the only "Fresh Air"'.⁸⁹ While later issues did see the publication of articles by female contributors (Louise Grey and Jane Bussmann), a female editor (Fleur), and occasional contributions from Norman Jay, the fanzine remained largely a white, male preserve.⁹⁰ This was not lost on female readers. The final issue featured an excoriating takedown of the 1990s 'New Man' and an attack on the masculine bias of the fanzine:

⁸⁴ *The End*, Issue 6 (June, 1982), 119.

⁸⁵ Nick Lowles, and Andy Nicholls, *Hooligans 2: The M-Z of Britain's Hooligan Gangs* (Wrea Green, 2005), 223

⁸⁶ *The End*, Issue 6 (June, 1982), 126.

⁸⁷ *Boy's Own*, Issue 1 (Summer 1986), 27; *Boy's Own*, Issue 2 (Late 1986), 49.

⁸⁸ *Boy's Own*, Issue 4 (Spring 1987), 115.

⁸⁹ *Boy's Own*, Issue 5 (Spring 1988), 132.

⁹⁰ See *Boy's Own*, Issue 8 (Autumn 1988); Issue 11 (Summer, 1991); Issue 12 (Spring 1992). Norman Jay contributed to issues 3, 4 and 5.

And whilst I'm nagging I may as well throw in that while the title "Boy's Own" infers just that, and I'm sure that the initial idea behind the venture was "Hey, we don't want to make any money out of this and up the proletariat and all that" (and why not), considering you have a large female readership, how about adapting your market a little more and giving us members of the fairer sex a voice, rather than just the typing to do.⁹¹

While the editorial 'voice' of the fanzine was that of the working-class 'chap', the nature of acid house itself, combined with the suburban origins of the writers to blur the edges of class distinction so evident in *The End*. Farley, who moved to Slough from North Kensington as a child noted that the fanzine originated via a meeting of minds of friends from working-class Slough and middle-class Windsor:

We was living in Slough and . . . it was nicer over in Windsor, a few posh birds over there, so we used to go over there. We met Cymon Eckels and Andy Weatherall and I said I'd like to do a fanzine like *The End* but about London. Weatherall was up for creating this monster and he was very clever. My schooling and Steve Mayes' schooling was pretty non-existent, and Andrew, of the first half a dozen magazines, he did nearly everything.⁹²

Steve Hall concurred: 'Suburbia's our heartland really. We were quite West End snobby, but at a certain point we realised our support came from somewhere else. It was Slough, and it was Kingston and it was Romford and it was all of those places. We brought people into the West End. We were definitely suburban.'⁹³ For *Boy's Own*, acid house in general and ecstasy in particular (at least temporarily) reduced some of the violence associated with casual culture. Farley again:

Acid house grew out of casual culture. The football hooligan was dead and buried for the trendy hooligans. The casuals who were at the cutting edge of style, the ones who probably weren't the best fighters but who were the best dressed, had knocked it on the head, and were going to Shake 'n' Fingerpop and puffing in the corner together. [. . .] And the same people who started doing parties in places like Leeds and Edinburgh, they were all football casuals [. . .] You got the same high as being part of a firm and it was a way of making money. They put the party on, and they dealt the drugs and ran the door. Acid house gave casual culture a focus [. . .] Before that, it had just been

⁹¹ *Boy's Own*, Issue 12 (Spring 1992), 433.

⁹² Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, Interview with Terry Farley, 2005. <https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2018/03/terry-farley-interview> [Accessed 13 July 2022].

⁹³ Steve Hall quoted in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy's Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 4.

groups of kids in different towns trying to hurt each other. Suddenly you could go up to Leeds for a do. I remember that Charlie did a “do” at the Corn Exchange and about 500 people from London went up and suddenly we were talking to these kids who, a few years before, would’ve been trying to kill you.⁹⁴

While it is important not to overstate the case and to acknowledge that the scene provided opportunities for further criminality (as Farley notes), there is other evidence to suggest a decline in football-related violence coinciding with the rise of acid house.⁹⁵ While fully accounting for the extent of the connections between casual culture and the acid house would require much more sustained research, in what follows I outline what I believe we can conclude about the nature of the relationship between these subcultures and working-class communities from the foregoing arguments.

Conclusion

The neglected history of the football casual provides a compelling case study of ‘popular individualism’. The examples above allow us to see ‘how collective identities emerge through the mutual connection of multiple individual identities’ in an era when the opportunities for solidaristic action through trade unionism were being actively eroded.⁹⁶ *Collectively produced* and often *collectively consumed* at sites of everyday sociability: the football ground, the alehouse, the warehouse party and the club; *The End* and *Boy’s Own* were nevertheless indicative of a popular individualism at a number of levels. First, the casual style, with its emphasis on hard-to-come-by European sportswear, its celebration of the unique and its incessant one-up-manship, emphasized individual and an initially highly localized collective distinction. This was about standing out at the cutting edge of fashion whereby even fellow fans *in the same football firm* could be denigrated in the style stakes.⁹⁷ Secondly, we have traced the process whereby regionally specific subcultures of Merseyside (*scallies*), Manchester (*perries*) and London (*chaps*) of the late 1970s coalesced into a *genuinely popular*, nationally significant *casual* culture by about 1983. The casual culture was never ubiquitous on the terraces, despite its geographical range, and casuals marked their difference from the ‘teds’ and the

⁹⁴ Terry Farley quoted in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy’s Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 7.

⁹⁵ See for example the testimony in Colin, *Altered State*, 121128; Bussmann *Once in a Lifetime*, 56–58; Garratt, *Adventures in Wonderland*, 147–8, 319. On organized criminality and the rave scene, compare Mark Chester, *Naughty* (Wrea Green, 2003) and Wayne Anthony, *Class of 88* (London, 2018).

⁹⁶ Savage, ‘Sociology, Class and Male Manual Work Cultures’, 33.

⁹⁷ For a compelling albeit imaginative example of this, see Kevin Sampson’s *Awaydays* (London, 1998), 3.

'woolybacks' through their claims to subcultural distinction. Thirdly, the writers, editors and readers contributed to this culture as individuals, albeit as individuals engaged in a collective endeavour. The Do-It-Yourself spirit of *The End* in particular had a profound effect on some readers, as Mick Potter (contributor and co-editor) recalled:

People would ask us who did the interviews. I'd say 'me and Peter [Hooton]' and they'd be amazed. Just the idea that someone from a working class area was writing a magazine. We used to get lads from the match passing us poems, but saying 'don't use my name'. They were people who'd never written before in their lives [...] They wanted to be associated with us.⁹⁸

Inspired directly by *The End's* example, a similar DIY attitude infused *Boy's Own* alongside an explicit recognition of the tensions between individualism and collective identification, as Andrew Weatherall emphasized:

I was "The Outsider" because I was a bolshie little bastard! I always want to be in a gang but then I don't want to be. I want the best of both of worlds. So I thought I'd be able to write a sarky piece deconstructing or taking the piss out of everything you're about to read in the magazine [...] We all shared a common love of going out and all that that entailed. The music, the clothes, what happened afterwards when you discussed things like books, art... It was the whole social scene that generations before us had had. *I just wanted my scene. I was a bit too young for punk. So it was kind of my thing.*⁹⁹

Fourthly, in both their emotional orientation and capital 'P' politics, the fanzines displayed a markedly anti-Thatcherite ethos. *The End* celebrated and satirized a vernacular working-class culture rich in regional rivalries, while articulating a scouse socialism. Fuelled in part no doubt by a post-3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA) come-down, *Boy's Own* constructed an emotional community around the acid house, in which a Janus-faced nostalgia lamented the loss of a moment where it was possible to imagine a different future, formed out of the embryonic affinities forged on the dance floor. These fanzines encapsulate a moment of pre-digital community-making, combining the textual reinforcement of established emotional connections (amongst groups of friends) and the mediation of affective affinities among geographically distant individuals. They are therefore a salutatory reminder that even at a time where established forms of working-class association and organization were under

⁹⁸ Mick Potter quoted in Richard Haynes, *The Football Imagination: The Rise of Football Fanzine Culture* (Ashgate, 1995), 45.

⁹⁹ Andrew Weatherall, 'Boy's Own Interviewed', in Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster, eds, *Boy's Own: The Complete Fanzines, 1986-1992* (Bedford, 2009), 8-9. My emphasis.

attack, in Jon Lawrence's words: 'Community doesn't just survive, it flourishes, but because it often takes new forms—less constrained by geography, less formal—it is too swiftly dismissed by social commentators fixated on the old ways of living [...] The sociologists Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl argue that vibrant friendship networks provide the social glue of modern life—what they call its "hidden solidarities".¹⁰⁰ It is to some of these 'hidden solidarities' and the wider subcultural affinities that they engendered, that this article has sought to make more visible.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The search for Community in Post-war England*, 3.