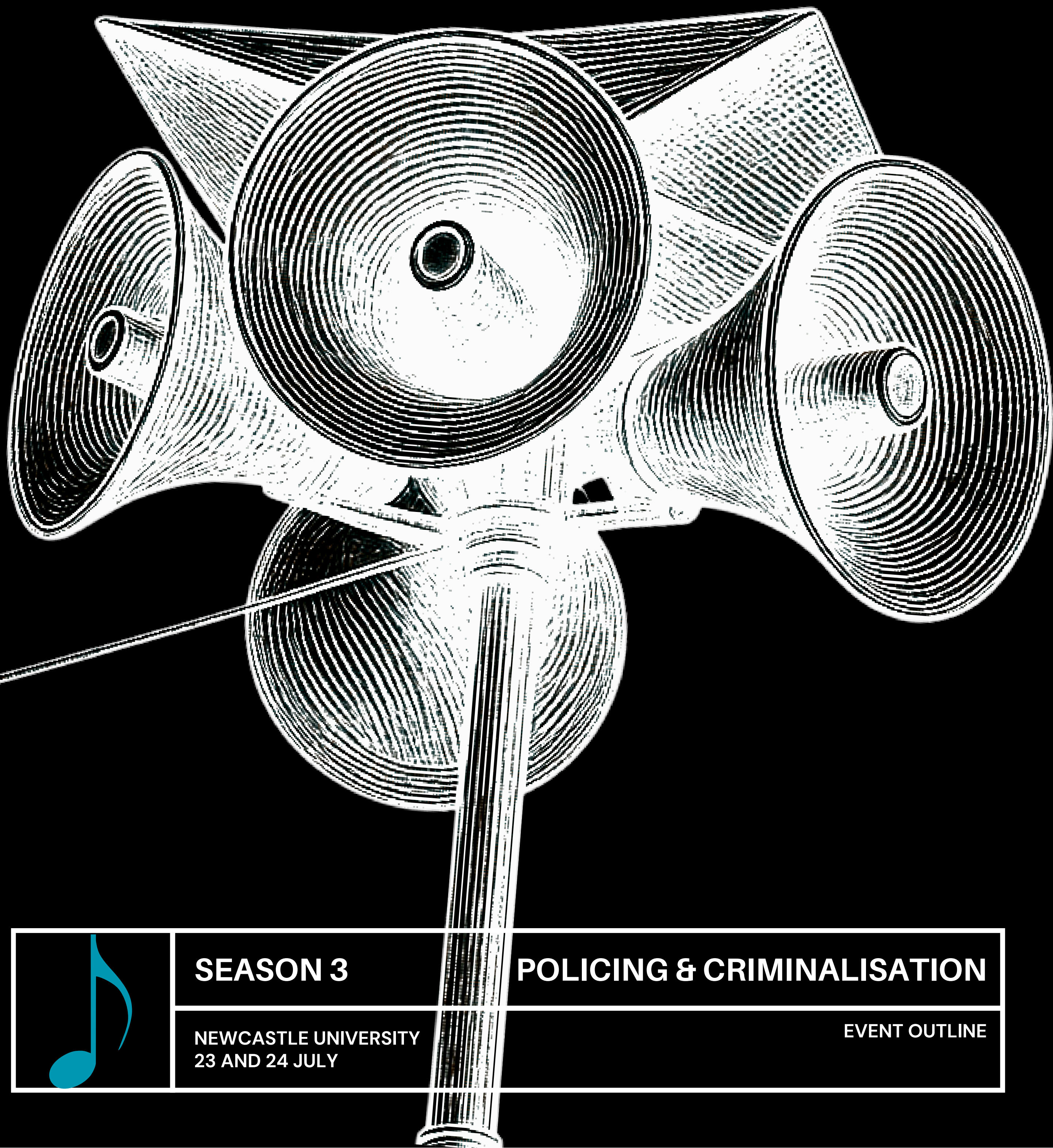


SONIC REBELLIONS

ART NOT EVIDENCE



SEASON 3

POLICING & CRIMINALISATION

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
23 AND 24 JULY

EVENT OUTLINE



THE ARMSTRONG BUILDING

During the day, Sonic Rebellions III will be held in the Armstrong Building of Newcastle University, where the Department of Music is based.

If arriving from the **main stairs** up to the campus, take a left under the arches by the **three heads**.

Follow the path around, passing the **Martin Luther King Jr statue**.

SRIII will open with a welcome address in the Kings Hall, where MLK was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1967.

ACCESSIBILITY INFO

- Wheelchair accessible from THIS SIDE
- Gender neutral toilets are available
- All rooms have microphones. We ask that when speaking, Rebels make themselves heard. If you prefer to wear a hygiene mask, please consider a transparent mask so as not to obstruct lip reading.
- There are green spaces and benches outside, or you might use our lunch room (G.70) for quiet space.



SEBNEM ALTUNKAYA

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD - AMPLIFICATION PROJECT

AMPLIFIED HISTORIES: THE POLITICS OF ANATOLIAN ROCK & THE RESONANCES OF THE SAZ

Anatolian rock is not just a genre—it is a contested political project shaped by sound, state power, and cultural struggle. Emerging at the intersection of 1960s counterculture, Turkish folk traditions, and Cold War geopolitics, it continues to animate cultural imaginaries in Turkey and its diaspora, particularly through its recent revival.

This research centers on the electrified saz—a rural, microtonal instrument transformed through amplification—to ask what happens when “tradition” is made loud, distorted, and mobile within uneven regimes of power. Drawing on critical ethnography and interviews with pioneering and contemporary musicians, it examines how Anatolian rock is mobilized to negotiate—and at times resist—state narratives of heritage, modernity, and dissent. Attending to intersecting dynamics of class, gender, and migration, the project argues that amplification is not simply technical, but political: a site of conflict through which voices are made audible, reshaped, or silenced.

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GEORGIANA MIHAELA VARNA

‘DANCING WITH THE DEVIL’: CRIMINALISATION & POLICING OF HIP-HOP & GRIME IN THE ANGLOPHONE WORLD POST- 1990: UK, USA & AUSTRALIA-NZ

In today's polycrises, youth's right to occupy un-policed physical, mental and emotional spaces needs protecting more than ever. Our cities are commodified, militarised, fragmented and sanitised —the raw public energy actively suppressed. Via high-fidelity conceptual mapping, I analyse how the 'right to the city' intersects with policing across five sonic suppression styles. I evaluate US physical isolation practices (Immortal Technique) against algorithmic sonic erasure, tracking how UK lobbyists weaponise online interfaces to exclude dissenting artists like Lowkey. This invisible segregation mirrors US hearings where expressive lyrics were legally weaponised against Snoop Dogg. Concurrently, public space policing mutated into civilian-subcontracted vigilance: geographic exclusions inciting structural racial raids on affluent coordinates — a reality confronted by Stormzy in 2017. Yet as the state attempts silence, unbreakable community resilience emerges. An inverted thesis: state restriction no longer achieves silence — it produces existential hyper-compression and the blossoming of rich anti-establishment music. Resistance is no longer Futile but Fertile. Audiences will co-trace and co-map how suppression techniques transcend concrete prisons in today's multi-layered acoustic urban hybrid reality.

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KWAME PHILLIPS
(AKA THE DREADSTAR MOVEMENT)
WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART

"THE VAGINAL HUBRIS MIXTAPE": EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES IN EXPLICIT MUSIC

This multimedia presentation examines the policing and contested reception of explicit musical expressions by women. "The Vaginal Hubris mixtape" explores the history of such songs, focusing on those that foreground sexual autonomy and bodily self-representation. Taking "WAP" (2020) as a contemporary flashpoint, the project interrogates how such sonic practices are subject to moral regulation, cultural backlash, and gendered scrutiny.

Using the curatorial and generative methodology of mixtape scholarship, the mixtape traces a historical trajectory of explicit, self-authored sexual narratives, placing these voices in dialogue, and revealing how the policing of women's sound operates across time, often intersecting with race, class, and respectability politics. These histories demonstrate that such expressions are not new, but rather repeatedly subjected to cycles of suppression, moral panic, and recuperation.

The sounded presentation positions explicit feminist sound as both a site of criminalisation and a resource for reimagining power, voice, and embodiment.

JONNY NEAL

THE UNAUTHORISED ARCHIVE: FOLK SONG AND THE POLICING OF LABOUR MEMORY

While the 1984–85 miners' strike is cemented in British memory as a heroic defeat with a celebrated musical legacy, the 1980 national steel strike remains marginalised. This research identifies the 1980 strike as a discursive laboratory for policing strategies later used against miners, yet Teesside's resistance has been subjected to neoliberal forgetting and archival erasure.

To counter this, I propose an unauthorised sonic archive, arguing that regional folk song functions as agonistic memory. These songs preserve the reality of the policed picket line through entrainment (mimicking industrial rhythms to act as a contrapuntal voice against state narratives.)

Aligning with the Sonic Rebellions theme of policing and sound, this interactive session features a presentation on coal versus steel musical legacies, a collective listening session of Teesside field recordings, and a roundtable. It demonstrates how folk music provides the material to reconstruct dignity in the face of state-sponsored cultural forgetting.

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PRECIOUS KENNEDY
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

GREAT INSURRECTIONS: LEGACIES OF SLAVE REBELLION & RESISTANCE TO POLICING OF BLACK CARIBBEAN MUSIC SPACES

This presentation begins with a discussion of how we can connect histories of slave rebellion to the contemporary creation of spaces of black resistance. I will introduce work from black radical scholars such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Beatriz Nascimento to collectively think through how contemporary sites of black resistance such as dance and music venues draw from legacies of slave rebellion..

I will then share archival footage and news cuttings to invite discussion with specific reference to the policing of black Caribbean music venues in Britain during the 70s and 80s. With examples from Bristol, Cardiff and Liverpool we will discuss how colonial ideas about race and gender have informed moral panics about black criminality and sex work, and how this legitimises racist policing of black music spaces and diverts attention from the state's role in perpetrating sexual violence.

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WANDA CANTON

SONIC REBELLIONS

ABOLITIONISM AS NOISE, POLICE AS PLACE

The police, according to Jacques Rancière, is an order by which people are assigned a proper place. I compare this to a metronome keeping people in time; *mètron* meaning 'measure' and *nomos* meaning 'regulation/law.' This suggests that abolitionism, as a movement against prisons and the police, must abolish the beat, refuse to stay in place, and is therefore best articulated as noise. I consider the recent use of whistles against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the US as an example of noise and disorder against the assignment of place. However, drawing on Attali's socio-musico compositions, we must be mindful that neoliberal-carceral hegemony is defined by the reorganisation of noise and 'equality' before the law. Abolitionism must, I argue, refuse the count altogether.

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FLOOR VAN DER HOUT

¡ESCUCHA LA TIERRA! EXPLORING WOUNDED TERRITORIES AND HEALING THROUGH SOUND WITH WOMEN TERRITORY DEFENDERS IN BOLIVIA

In the first part of this presentation, I share the results of ¡Escucha la tierra! – a collaborative radio project with women territory defenders from the Tariquía and TIPNIS territories (Bolivia) that explores the ways in which the women's bodies and lands are threatened by extractivist expansion. Inspired by the concept *cuerpo-territorio* (Cabnal 2011), the project's sonic methodology provides insights into ruptured body-territory relations and the relational and embodied layers of anti-extractive resistance. Drawing on sound recordings, I argue that colonial extractivism produces wounded territories through inflicting wounds on women's body-lands, as well as through undoing the relational and collective make-up of territories. ¡Escucha la tierra! challenges the hegemony of written 'academic' outputs, honours Indigenous oral and musical traditions, and highlights listening as a decolonising practice. In the second part of the presentation, attendees are invited to reflect on their embodied relationships with/in the university as relational space through listening exercises.

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ANDRA LE ROUX-KEMP

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

POLICING SONIC ACTS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE: “KILL THE BOER” & THE TRANSNATIONAL MIS-LISTENING OF STRUGGLE MUSIC

Struggle music is a collective, embodied, historically situated form of political sonic expression, rooted in communicative practice and functioning as a participatory mode of mobilisation, identity formation, affirmation, and memory. This session examines the South African struggle song "Kill the Boer, Kill the Farmer" as a sonic act of political struggle that is policed through law, (mis)interpretation, and transnational circulation. Some audiences, for example, regard the singing of this song as hate speech. In tracing the political and legal history of the song "Kill the Boer, Kill the Farmer", participants to this session will explore three listening frames through which struggle music is policed: first, that "mis-listening" operates as a form of policing when audiences impose external meanings; second, that courtrooms function as sites of sonic interpretation, translating collective performance into textual evidence; and third, that these tensions expose limits in transformative justice frameworks in post-apartheid South Africa.

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MATT DAVIES
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO RIO DE JANEIRO

GUSTAV THOMAS
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY (MUSIC DEPARTMENT)

WILDPop: MUSICKING BEYOND THE POLICING OF CULTURE

wildpop researches musicking that resists and critiques the political and economic boundaries of the culture industries. Corporate music in a post-digital context narrows and constricts music's wider potential through the reinforcement of conventional forms. Yet there are numerous cultural developments that transcend the industry model and expose its contradictions and the extent to which it engenders widespread repression. wildpop is concerned with the processes, relations, and conditions through which music beyond the horizons of corporate culture is produced, emphasising spontaneous action alongside political economy and the material and social dimensions of making. wildpop reimagines music not merely as a space or practice of consumption, but as a site of radical political and social possibility. We aim at the tension between a hierarchically ordered distribution of roles and labour in the culture industry and the creativity (and wider social and material conditions that sustain creativity) that the industry seeks to subsume. wildpop examines the potential space for organising subjects through experiments in free, self-manged, and unalienated labour.

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ALEKSANDRA BARJAKTAREVIĆ
MAX WEBER INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY,
HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

PTK
PROTESTMUSIK

CLUSTER AS SONIC PRACTICE OF THINKING FOR POLITICAL ACTION FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

We present the concept of cluster—a sonic practice for political action for refugee rights—through a multimedia presentation. Music has long been central to political critique and collective mobilization, yet musicians are rarely recognized as knowledge producers, and their work may face censorship when challenging state power. This marginalization is particularly evident in academia, where rap is often treated as an object of study rather than a source of knowledge. Responding to debates on decolonizing knowledge production, we introduce a co-authoring methodology developed through collaboration between a sociologist and a rap artist. Our approach builds on cluster, a sonic network generating collective awareness, creativity, and resistance. Drawing on the Antinational Embassy, a music collective formed during the occupation of the Gerhart-Hauptmann-Schule in Berlin-Kreuzberg, we show how cluster transformed jam sessions into the sound of a movement. Furthermore, cluster bridges artistic practice and sociological theory, revealing new forms of knowledge.

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VICTORIA WORRALL & TONY WARD

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

BEATS ON TRIAL: A REFLECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL ACCOUNT OF TEACHING THE CRIMINALISATION OF DRILL

Despite the widespread use of drill music as criminal evidence, this area is rarely addressed within legal education. This presentation offers a reflective pedagogical account of a seminar within an undergraduate Law and Popular Culture module that addresses this gap.

Students worked directly with materials from the prosecution of Unknown T, engaging with bad character evidence, expert testimony thresholds, and the legislative framework that permits this evidence to be adduced. Most students had no prior familiarity with drill music, and initial engagement with the lyrics on paper differed significantly from responses once the music and accompanying visuals were introduced. This presentation examines what those responses reveal about the assumptions students bring to this material, about the interpretive limits of criminal evidence doctrine, and about the possibilities and limits of teaching this area within undergraduate legal education.

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ASHRAF HAMDAN
FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE

GEORGIA EDWARDS
OOTO AGENCY

TOLERABLE DISRUPTION: SOUND, PROTEST, AND THE MET

Since 2022, anti-protest legislation in the UK, has given the Metropolitan Police power to restrict, or arrest where sound causes "serious disruption". This is a category with no decibel limit, no objective measure, only an officer's judgment performed within legal ambiguity. The threshold above which a protest becomes criminal is not a fixed threshold. It's a ghostly line, and it moves depending on who is making the sound.

Many of the Palestine solidarity marches in London since October 2023 have been subjected to these conditions.

By layering official police documents and audiovisual recordings from London's Palestine solidarity marches we present a spatial reading of how the Met's post-2022 powers operate in practice. Through a screen-based presentation we combine legal text, mapped routes, and the sonic material of the marches themselves. Then we locate where the threshold of permissibility ends and criminality begins and how that liminal space moves.

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BETHAN MATHIAS PROSSER
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

STRIVING TO BE A SONIC REBEL: HOW CAN I KEEP ON LISTENING WITH OTHERS?

SiSince its inception, Sonic Rebellions has created the space to critically reflect and generously connect with others on the intersections and interplays between sound and social justice. I chose the word “striving” in 2023 whilst writing with other sonic rebels to describe my methodological approach, participatory listening research. This approach offers a way of listening with others to the environment to generate new knowledge and discoveries, whilst embracing different listening experiences, practices, and positionalities. Within ongoing academic precarity, I continue to strive for opportunities to keeping listening with others in meaningful ways to social in/justices. This session will share progress since our last gathering by screening a short film Sound Sparks: listening to seaside gentrification together (2026). I will ask fellow sonic rebels to help think through where it could go next and draw out resonances with the SRlll themes of policing, criminalisation and sound/music.

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SHARON 'LAZIBYRD' MARTIN

THE VALUE OF COLLABORATIVE SONGWRITING: LISTENING TO WOMEN WHO HAVE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF GAMBLING

Songwriting enables listening to lived experience of gambling, and recovery journeys. It is creative, inclusive, emotional, and enjoyable for participants, developing their skills. Songwriting can be part of transformative justice as it responds to harms centring women's lived experience. Songwriting develops strong research relationships (Fairchild and McFerran 2019, McCaffrey 2021) breaking down traditional barriers and hierarchies (McCaffrey et al 2021, Crockett Thomas et al 2019). Songwriting enables agency within narratives for those with lived experience, and those narratives can be a social force and call for social justice (Presser and Sandberg 2019). Songwriting and song sharing are collaborative and can be co-produced. Songwriting, recording, and performance are participatory, facilitating public engagement. The theoretical framework for this research draws on narrative criminology and post-structural feminism. The methodology is participatory, Interpretivist and qualitative. Songwriting research can counter the under-representation of women in gambling harms research. Challenging dominant narratives of vulnerability revealing resilience, skills, and strength. Songwriting can contribute to the sharing of stories raising awareness and, destigmatising lived experience of gambling. I would present in powerpoint including sharing some of the songs created.

ANDREA DANKIĆ

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

ERICA ÅBERG

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU, FINLAND

FEAR, EMPATHY & REFLEXIVITY: EMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF RESEARCHING A CONTEMPORARY NORDIC RAP SCENE

In this presentation, we explore the role of emotions in researching contemporary commercial rap subgenre referred to as gangsterrap, which emerged in Sweden in the mid-2010s. Influenced by drill and trap, this scene exists in both Sweden and Finland, where urban marginalisation, youth violence, and public debate intersect with cultural expression. Using reflexive autoethnography, we combine fieldwork, personal research experiences, and emotional responses that arise when engaging with narratives of violence, masculinity, and popular culture. Through our examination of how everyday affective encounters intertwine with research practice, we argue that researcher reflexivity is essential within narrative and cultural criminology. Emotions play a key role in how crime-related cultural narratives are interpreted and made meaningful by both audiences and researchers. By highlighting the researcher's affective position, we show the limits of analytical distance and propose more grounded approaches to understanding the cultural and emotional dimensions of contemporary Nordic rap.

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HANNAH KEMP-WELCH

LISTENING AND NOT-LISTENING WITH THE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

Reflecting on a podcast project with young people engaged with a Youth Offending Service, this presentation examines listening as a relational, methodological, and artistic practice. It focuses on a moment when participants' podcasts converged around the theme 'no one listens to me', using the project to talk back to social workers and articulate experiences of judgement, power imbalance, and institutional oppression.

I reflect on ethical tensions that emerged and the conversations this sparked within the Youth Offending Team. Some youth justice workers said listening is central to their role, raising the question: how do young people still feel unheard? I suggest institutional structures shape listening, with risk management protocols encouraging defensive forms of attention that colour what is heard, and challenge reliance on therapeutic listening modes that risk being performative rather than prompting action.

HEATHER McMULLEN, RICHARD ROACH & ELINOR WHITTLE

RHYME AND REALITY: EXPLORING SAFEGUARDING VERSUS CENSORSHIP IN THE YOUTH CENTRE MUSIC BOOTH

Times are tough. Young people, youth workers, and the services that support them are under continual pressure, navigating precarious systems with no guaranteed path to a positive future. At times, this struggle surfaces as violence or harm. Creative youth workers encounter these realities in youth music studios: via the lyrics and stories shared in the booth; or in the non-judgemental, supportive conversations central to youth work practice. Amidst a landscape of violence and extraction, Drill music is increasingly criminalised. Our research asks: how do youth workers respond when young people bring lyrics to youth centre music booths that may represent harm? What are their practices and perspectives? What does the criminalisation of lyrics mean for youth work? We draw on 25 qualitative interviews with youth workers and others in the conversation and present a thematic analysis highlighting youth work practices, the tension between safeguarding and censorship, and concepts that help illuminate the issue. We introduce a practical resource that acknowledges the complexities of this work and offers strategies for supporting creative expression in the music booth. The session will include presentations, scenario-based activities and verbatim theatre. Participants will be invited to consider the booth and explore key findings from the research.

HOLLIE ROCHFORT
MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
NWCDTP

INVESTIGATING LINGUISTIC BIAS WITH CHILDREN IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

This research highlights the need to investigate linguistic bias within the Youth Justice System as a matter of social justice. Through recognising language as a powerful site of inequality we can observe how dominant ideologies marginalise children who speak in 'nonstandard' varieties, and through centring young people's lived experiences and valuing linguistic diversity, we can aim to disrupt these harmful narratives.

As Heller et al., (2018, p.8) put it 'who we are considered to be, and who we can become are language matters. And who we can become is all about our access to things that matter.' The things that matter and that shape us are opportunities, education, and resources, which can be economic or cultural.

The criminalisation of UK drill is an example of a cultural form of expression and art being deemed as 'inappropriate', 'deviant' or 'risky' and access to it being denied by an institution.

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CHARLIE APPLETON PILBEAM

CONCERTS & COURTROOMS: WHY DRILL IS ART NOT EVIDENCE AND WHY LAWYERS SHOULD CARE

Drill music is most often employed at trial as evidence of 'bad character'. Inherent criminality, attendance at a crime scene, a guilty mind and gang membership are introduced in the form of lyrics, music videos and songs played to jurors. This presentation focuses on the use of drill music as a problem for lawyers and advocates, adopting a legal perspective on the debates of fact vs fiction, the gang narrative, and the effect of using drill in court on human rights.

This presentation will include breakdowns of real cases and legislation, proposals for the future of rap in courtrooms, and the responsibility of centuries-old legal institutions in protecting defendants, rappers, and children. Into a background context of legislative reform, this presentation introduces a responsibility for ethical procedural practice and sets out how courtrooms and concerts should be worlds apart.

REVEKKA PERIKLEOUS

THE SONIC TRIBUNAL: ON TRIAL FOR BEING HEARD

This session examines how sound becomes a site of regulation, conflict, and resistance in public space. It explores how sonic practices — amplified sound, chanting, recorded tracks — can transform space, gather bodies, and provoke intervention. It is precisely this capacity that renders them subject to management, and at times criminalisation.

The session develops three case studies: a Bronx block party where music was contested by police, protest soundscapes in Nicosia met with state violence, and the criminalisation of drill music in London. At its centre is a "sonic tribunal" in which participants are invited to adjudicate each case. The exercise questions how sound becomes governable: what justifications are used, what risks are identified, whose discomfort counts.

The session argues that sound is policed not simply for what it expresses, but for what it does — and asks what is at stake when being heard becomes grounds for intervention.

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