Producing Bhangra: Music, Culture and Technology - Mediating Culture in Music Production

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Abstract

Producing Bhangra: Music, Culture and Technology - Mediating Culture in Music Production

Lightman's ethnographic research examines the evolution of the South Asian diaspora-based *bhangra* music brought to the UK and its ultimate hybridization and adaptation by diverse cultures seeking new identities and new commercial avenues. The focus of the research is based on Lightman's experience as a bhangra record producer in the early 1990s; his encounter with the negotiation and translation of musical form and cultural expectations, and the mediation between South Asian and Western sensibilities. Bhangra, originally a celebratory harvest music that accompanied dance, provided the secular space for the translation of ethnic music into a new diverse British music incorporating influences from rock, pop, reggae, soca, Bollywood and the technological advances made in synthesizer technology driven by Western popular mainstream genres and musicians. A majority of the initial mediation and subsequent research relating to this thesis, took place in recording studios. The subtexts of culturally grounded expectation and technological prowess, created unspoken power struggles between the stakeholders in opposition to the express intent to collaborate and produce a creative and commercially successful product. The outcome is a discourse of multicultural mediation which is herein evidenced and interrogated.

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Declaration:

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work has not be submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. I confirm that the work submitted is my own, except where work which has formed part of jointly-authored publications or published works has been included.

Copyright Statement:

Chapter 1: Introduction - Intercultural Musical Mediation

1.1 Questioning Culture: Biographical and Chronological

My first exposure to the cultures of the Indian subcontinent was as a boy in 1959. My father, Professor Jack Lightman, was working as a Professor of Social Work at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, when he was offered the opportunity to start a School of Social Work on behalf of the Ford Foundation in Chennai, formerly known as Madras (Lightman. J.B. 1997). Being granted a two-year sabbatical, he left Montreal and took the family to India. Already a young music student, I was exposed to several different styles of Indian music, often performed by street musicians on our doorstep. We travelled throughout India, where I absorbed the sounds, sights and smells and some of the customs of several different cultures of the Indian subcontinent, most of which I was unable to process at the time but all of which left an indelible impression on me that led me to gravitate towards an association firstly with the Indian subcontinent, and then with bhangra music in the U.K.

Other circumstances influencing my research refer to my experience as a young child in Madras. As I was very much on my own, playing in the grounds of the house that we had rented, I often observed the Indian children playing outside of the perimeter of the house who would stop in front of the gates and point at me, sometimes laughing.

Not having any understanding at that time of racial issues or the political landscape associated with the newly emerged independent India,[1] only established at that time for just over 12 years, I wondered naïvely why I could not play with the other children and why they would point at me. Even as a small boy, the underlying question was why I could not integrate socially with these local children and what it would take to create an environment where our cultures could interact. These questions were not fully formed by me at the time, but these questions matured over a period of years, becoming more clearly formulated.

[1] The British Indian Empire was partitioned in 1947creating the Republic of Pakistan (August 14th) and the Republic of India (August 15th). The upheaval and the attempt to create a Muslim state – Pakistan and a Hindu state – India, caused reciprocal genocide and the displacement of large populations of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs (French 2011).

On returning to Montreal after two years, I continued my musical education with the Royal Conservatory of Music (Toronto) and McGill University and eventually became a professional guitarist and songwriter. I lived in a predominantly French-speaking environment and the popular music scene was French Canadian, with lyrics that were often driven by the French-English divide. I often felt like an outsider, not entirely accepted and welcomed by my French counterparts. The province of Quebec was leaning towards separatism and there were protests and civil strife in the late 1960s and early 1970s that led to a short period of martial law.[2] Again the question of social integration from my childhood began to haunt me. I was, in effect, a cultural outsider working on the inside. At this time, I decided to leave Canada and pursue my career as a musician in the U.K.

On moving to London, I drifted from one musical engagement to another, working in West End musicals, doing the odd recording session as a guitarist, and touring with various artists. I was asked to join the reggae band The Pioneers,[3] where not being of Jamaican heritage, I was again a cultural outsider, as in my experiences in Montreal. I was part of a reggae movement and musical invasion of Britain, making a contribution, be it a minor one, whilst not having the background or cultural credentials that could validate the music to its new market. This pattern of employment seemed to continue as a running theme in my career. Having worked with several reggae/Afro-Caribbean artists and based on my technical background and studio experience, I was encouraged to set up a recording studio where this music became the main focus for my production activities. I began to produce reggae music and soca (calypso-Indian hybrid music from Trinidad and Tobago),[4] and the studio and I developed a reputation in these genres. Artists I worked with included Gregory Isaacs, Bunny Whaler, General Saint, Dennis Brown, Smiley Culture, and T'ippa Ire. The studio, Triple X

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[2] The separatist movement in Quebec in 1970 came to a head in what is now known as the October crisis where there were incidences of kidnapping and bombings perpetrated by the F.L.Q. (Le Front Libération du Québec).(Tetley 2007, pg.3).

[3] The Pioneers were a reggae band formed in Kingston Jamaica in the 1960s and were one of the first bands to release records and have hits in Europe in the early 1970s. Their song *Let Your Yea Be Yea* reached No.5 in the U.K. in 1971 (Discogs 2021).

[4] The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2011 census states that 35.4% of the population of these Caribbean islands was of South Asian descent and that Soca was the most popular music of the islands (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2011).

Studios, a 24 track analogue tape recording studio, was based in North Acton in an industrial estate and was close to Southall, a district of London in the Borough of Ealing, which has a large population of British South Asians, predominantly of Punjabi origin (U.K. Polling Report 2010).

I first encountered bhangra music in the recording studio in 1985. The studio was booked by a Gujarati production company called Savera Investments,[5] later to become Multitone Records, which was eventually sold to BMG Records, all of whom, in their time, were long-standing clients. A number of Punjabi recordings took place over the next few years. I engineered a majority of these recordings and was exposed to some of the early experiments of cross-cultural genre composition and production in which Punjabi folk-based bhangra, traditional melodies accompanied by dhol, dholak drums and harmonium, was arranged with the influence of Western popular music, mainly represented by pop mainstream charted music, at that time. Notably, an album recorded and produced by Kuljit Bhamra in 1987 called *Rail Gaddi* by Chirag Pehchan with singer Mangal Singh. The *Rail Gaddi* album proved to be a major international hit for Savera Investments and is considered to be one of the first successful international British Asian bhangra releases (Dudrah 2007).

As a result of this success, Triple X Studios became a destination facility for British Asian record companies hoping to emulate the *Rail Gaddi* success, and to some extent, this was achieved with various releases from acts such as Heera, Alaap, Holle Holle, Safri Boys, Apna Sandeep, Bina Mistry, Raga Kaka Winston and Extra Hot Ten, many of which I produced and engineered, or was involved in the arrangements, musical performances and in some cases, songwriting.

[5] Multitone Records, originally Savera Investments was a founded by Pranil Gohil in 1978 and specialised in Bhangra music. In 1992, the company entered into an arrangement with BMG (Bertelsmann Music Group) in order to market internationally. Following the buyout of BMG by Sony Music in 2008, the label became one of the subsidiaries of Sony Music Entertainment UK Holdings Ltd. where it is listed as being dormant (Poet, J. and Poet, J. n.d.).

Initially, the early British Bhangra recordings were very successful, but as sales started to diminish due to saturation of a repeated style of production, I approached two of the more active companies, Multitone Records and Fantronic Limited and suggested that I produce for them on the basis that I would inject more of a Western influence into the recordings without compromising the integrity of the Asian subcontinent roots and ensuring I would meet market expectations. This approach integrated Indian melodies, rhythms and traditional instruments into western popular music structures and arrangements. I will explore the different production, compositional and performance approaches taken by various producers of Bhangra music, including my own, later in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis.

The opportunity to get involved in the development of bhangra music was accidental, but to my surprise, I felt very comfortable in the genre and I now consider it an honour and a privilege to have contributed to the oeuvre. There were musical and social interactions between the musicians that held a resonance for me and reminded me of some of my experiences as a child in India. As an example, one of the projects I was involved in was the production of a religious ghazal[6] recording for Ramadan,[7] employing a mixture of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and me of Jewish descent. During the session, we took a break and all assembled to eat lunch. Although the menu was different for each cultural sub-group, we all ate together. This would have been an unprecedented occurrence during my childhood in India and in most circumstances at that time, other than being permissible within a creative environment, like a recording studio or a theatre (Pillalamarri 2019).

[6] Ghazal is a form of Urdu poetry introduced into India by the conquering Muslims as part of their Persian cultural heritage. It has been adapted as a musical form into Hindi and performed to the accompaniment of tablas and harmonium. A 'pop' ghazal emerged with the advent of cassette distribution in the 1970s (Oxford Music Online 2013).

[7] Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar exceptionally noted for being the month in which the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, was first revealed and a time when the gates of Heaven are open and the gates of Hell are closed. Muslims fast during the daylight hours of this month (BBC *Religions - Islam: Ramadan*. n.d.).

The accepted etiquette was that people of different religious cultures in India did not eat together as certain customs and food choices were unacceptable to other cultural groupings.[8] For example, Moslems kept Halal, and meat is slaughtered in a particular method that employs bleeding the animal, a practice that is abhorred by the Hindus who are mainly vegetarian. During this repast, there was naturally discussion and communication, the common denominator being music. But other issues, such as politics were touched upon, all in a non-threatening environment amongst people of different cultural backgrounds. Everyone in attendance had the same focus and objective; to achieve the best possible recording for the 'artiste'.

It was at this point the questions of my childhood, my career as a musician, producer, composer and arranger, all collided. Here again, I was an outsider on the inside, performing the role of an insider reaching out to a larger "outside" audience. I was helping to shape a genre based on a culture that was not my own, which I could never fully be a part of, but accepted me on an artistic level. This began to raise the questions of cultural acceptance and social integration all over again.

The new British Asian pop music is based on Western pop and dance structures, loops, beats and D.J. mixes combined with a smattering of Punjabi melodies and a few Punjabi words included to exoticize the music, identifying it with its British Asian creators. The rap is usually in English and the lyrical content is not usually grounded in South Asian culture. This urban Western approach to British Asian sensibilities may have been created as a result of the technologies employed in the early development of the genre and may have been the cause of its demise. Bennett (1997) refers to the over-hybridisation of bhangra with an early example of a show called The Bhangra Hustlers, a live D.J. show that merged bhangra with other popular genres.

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[8] The Hindu abhorrence of beef-eaters includes anyone who does not recognise the Hindu sacredness of the cow. This extended to the British, Muslims, and Christians and certain community conflicts have been provoked by reported acts of symbolic desecration involving animal parts -- pork thrown into Muslim neighbourhoods and places of worship and beef into their Hindu counterparts (Narayan 1995).

One of the only cultural saviours of bhangra music has been the Bollywood film industry,[9] which has incorporated the sounds and flavours of Bhangra music and dance into its once exclusively Hindi-centric pop presentation (Roy 2010). This represents an exodus of the music back to India via film, having been a distinctly British creation but now almost discarded in its country of inception.

This thesis draws upon my experience in bhangra production in the recording studio in the mid-1980s and 1990s, the period during which I was most active in the genre, although the wider historical context leading up to and the events subsequent to this have a bearing on the information and outcomes of the research. This informs a practice-based research project undertaken by me and one of the early bhangra producers, Kuljit Bhamra MBE, providing the case study outlined in Chapter 8.

The above experiences and their subsequent analysis have led me to summarise my research into three main areas:

- Mediation and Translation
- The Impact of Technology on Producer/Artist Dynamics
- The Role of the Cultural Specialist

These are the overarching themes of the thesis, addressed within the context of bhangra production and supported by my experience as a practitioner.

The research draws upon a number of disciplines: ethnomusicology, popular music studies, record production, and practice-as-research. This positions the study as an interdisciplinary hybrid.

[9] Bollywood refers to India's Hindi film industry based in Mumbai. It is the largest producer of films in the world. (Rao 2007).

1.2 Research Focus

The key themes are explored specifically within the context of the production of British bhangra in the 1980s and 1990s. The investigation includes insights into the role of the music producer and their interaction with artists within the recording studio environment and how this impacted the recordings. The accessibility of new audio technologies and the desire to explore creative possibilities using that technology may have also stimulated the formation of intercultural genres, but other issues, including financial opportunism and cultural curiosity, have played a part. These issues and their impact on producers can inform future practitioners who work in multi-cultural creative environments reifying how the interactions, mediations and negotiations can impact creative output. As a record producer working outside of mainstream popular music[10] at that time, I experienced extensive interactions with bhangra and reggae artists in the studio. This first-hand experience gives me additional insight and enriches the research. The combined experience viewed through the lens of the autoethnographic account (Le Roux 2017) plus one to one interviews with other producers, provides the foundation for this study. This combined autoethnographic and primary source study is an account of my professional practice, with an additional empirical study spanning ten years, from 1985 through to 1995 and further revisited in 2019 and 2020, where I employed newer technologies in the recording process. The study uses semi-structured interviews and reflective expert observations to interrogate the circumstances and processes surrounding the production of British bhangra music.

1.3 Mediation and Translation

Music, frequently mythologised as the universal language of mankind (Harvard Gazette 2019), is a language that claims to intersect culture and therefore has the potential to act as a social bridge between peoples of different backgrounds, languages, religions, races and philosophies (Reuell 2018). However, the language of music can also be misinterpreted through divergent discourses that create distance between the contributing sides of the conversation. It is often the negotiation and management of expectations and not the musical

[10] 'Mainstream' - The ideas, attitudes, or activities that are shared by most people and regarded as normal or conventional. Belonging to or characteristic of the mainstream: mainstream pop music (Oxford Dictionaries Online 2015).

form that requires discussion and translation in order that a musical collaboration can be undertaken. Creating a musical environment in which all participants are comfortable and interacting is often difficult in itself within a single set of cultural parameters, but creating a unified and mutually acceptable collaborative production between different cultures is an activity often accompanied by tension and misunderstanding (Community Toolbox n.d., Frith 2004, Hennion 1989). The record producer will, in this case, step back from the creative and technical role and act as an independent mediator between the cultural and artistic expectations of the artist and the demands of the record company in meeting timeframe, budgetary constraints and commercial objectives.

There are many different levels of communication that require translation and mediation in the music-making process. There is the musical language employed where different cultures collaborating need to develop an understanding of each other's musical expectations, roots and values, and then there is the negotiation within a musical context of communicating to a market, meeting that market's expectation and creating a product that has an advantage or added value in relation to its competition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of new multi-cultural popular music genres emerged in the U.K. as a result of increased access to digital and analogue audio technologies and more efficient distribution networks for product. This was also aided by the establishment of new broadcast media representing genre and culture in the form of local radio and television. In the mid-1970s through to the 1980s, after the offshore 'pirate' radio stations' closure due to the Marine and Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 (Legistlation.gov.uk 2020), the second wave of illegal community and niche audience genre radio stations emerged in the U.K. The proliferation of these illegal operators resulted in there being more 'pirate' stations than legal broadcasters by the mid-1980s. The 1990 Broadcasting Act allowed radio and television stations to target specific audiences and encouraged diversity broadcasting (Fleming 2009). One of these genres was British bhangra which emerged in the 1980s and broke new ground in terms of cultural significance and market penetration, being music that became a cultural identifier of the British Asian community.

Initially, bhangra was music that accompanied dance and migrated to the U.K. as a result of the Punjabi diaspora, dislodged during the independence of India in 1948. With its migration

to Britain and its lack of religious associations, it became the perfect conduit for the new emerging second-generation immigrant British Asian youth to associate with culture and heritage at the same time as interacting with other U.K. youth subcultures.

Very quickly, the new British Asian youth began to integrate Western sensibilities into their own culture and started to use drums, electric guitars and the new and more cost accessible electronic keyboards of the 1980s in their music. Basic recordings were made and cassettes were marketed to the communities attached to the newly enriched but not overtly changed music. However, the import of cassettes and vinyl records from India sustained successful sales and Taylor suggests that this provided a market and opportunity for new bhangra bands who had previously only played at private events (interview 2012). A few record companies were set up and began to employ the services of small recording studios such as Fair Deal Studios in Hayes, Middlesex and Planet Studios in Coventry, to facilitate the recording of these bands. Due to a circumstance of locale and fate, my own recording studio was one of these facilities hired. A number of producers, including me, began to use Western popular music arranging techniques and technologies in the recordings. This is where the language of technology was key - and the greatest stumbling block.

The role of the Western music producer or engineer holds certain responsibilities and qualitative expectations (Pras, Amandine, and Guastavino 2011). It has always been the objective of the producer/engineer to achieve the highest quality representation of the music recorded, at the same time as capturing the nuances of the genres and interpretations of the musicians performing. This is not necessarily a productive contribution to the musical output relative to audience expectation. The recording process can destroy the live performance of an artist and the captured sound can appear to be too clinical. This was particularly evident with the appearance of digital technologies in the early 1980s and with the change of consumer media from tape and vinyl to CD. Although the novelty of this new qualitative listening experience drove artists to explore new techniques, it also had the effect of gradually destroying established performance-based genres steeped in tradition and the analogue world (Chai 2013).

Bhangra producers were required to meet the technical and qualitative sonic expectations of the performers of this music, whose frame of reference was very much different to the

Western ear. I remember recording a tumbi[11] recording artist named Bittu, who insisted that dhol drums[12] should be distorted so that we could experience the excitement of the performance. Communicating the language of technical excellence and quality at this point became an issue of cultural values.

Another example of cultural unfamiliarity is the sound of Indian female singers to the Western ear. The cultural expectation of performance quality from a South Asian female voice, such as Sangeeta (Matters Musical n.d.), is for a very high register without falsetto, no vibrato, little dynamic range and as little implied harmonic colour as possible. This style of female singing is thought to suggest the idea of innocence and purity (Mrandmrs55 2012). I found this type of voice difficult to listen to and difficult for me to assess the performance element attached to this style of singing. At this early stage in my exposure to bhangra, I had to acclimatise my hearing in order to start to appreciate the performances and to judge whether they were acceptable relative to the market expectations. This required an acculturation of musical values in order to fully engage with the process of recording. Some of the vocal and instrumental tuning was initially difficult to discern, as there are microtonal modalities in Indian music (Pudaruth 2016). Another distinctive quality of South Asian vocal melodies is that they do not contain harmonies, which differs from the conventions within Western pop music (Jairazbhoy and Stone 1963). This creates an additional cultural demarcation. Translating these values and concepts proved to be a challenge and not altogether successful. I experimented with trying to create harmony in bhangra music by getting the singer to sing a melody and then mute that particular performance on a multi-track recorder. I then provided the singer with another melody, being the harmony, without them being able to hear the original recording. Achieving a good blend of voices complete with synchronisation was very difficult. To the Asian listener, accustomed to singular vocal melodies without harmony, this sounded dissonant.

There were also attempts at translating Punjabi lyrics into English, but these attempts were wholly unsuccessful. This removed the guttural expressive tonality of the Punjabi lyrics,

[11] The tumbi is a single stringed folk instrument that is plucked producing a high pitched note used in a percussive style (Roy, 2010).
[12] The dhol drum is a large, two headed instrument, played by beating it with two sticks and worn around the neck of the performer while standing (Roy, 2010).

which had as much to do with the sound of the genre as the contributions from traditional instruments.

Another mediated translation involved the recording process and its associated technologies. The Western-trained engineer approached recording from a technical point of view, including audio signal levels, clipping (distortion), dynamic range, room ambience and equalisation. The South Asian musicians' approach was far more immediate and, in certain respects, practical. They were focused on reproducing the performance and the emotional nuances or tempo and dynamics without worrying about the technical qualitative aspects. This was understandable but created more of a disconnect between artist and technician than the Western producer or engineer had been used to. So apart from any cultural or language differences, there was a technical divide that required negotiation and mediation.

By the middle 1980s, digital music technologies, including polyphonic synthesis and sampling, represented new opportunities for musicians and producers. This was an arena where all parties concerned could contribute equally and instead of culture harnessing technology, the technology drove the transition of British Asian music culture into mainstream music economies. Whereas originally only the bhangra musicians could participate in the music, now with the use of electronic instruments and digital sampling technologies, British Asian musicians, including those that were not of Punjabi background, white and black musicians and non-performing programmers could all contribute to the recording process: this encouraged inter-cultural collaboration and musical experimentation. The new technologies, initially based on Western sensibilities, also provided access to mainstream techniques and styles. The pre-programmed sounds on synthesisers were reflections of Western instruments and were used on pop and rock recordings. These tools in the hands of South Asian musicians bridged the divide between East and West but changed the nature of South Asian music creating an indigenous British Asian genre that drew from outside of the traditional South Asian sonic palette of instruments. A typical example of how music was affected by technology can be illustrated through the use of sequencers. The easiest and most accessible way of programming sequencers was to ensure that they were all playing rigidly to the same tempo. This had the effect of eradicating the tempo dynamics of bhangra music and standardising the tempo of each song. This also affected melodic content

as synthesisers were tuned to Western scales and MIDI[13] note programming was based on a chromatic keyboard. The only way of including quartertones was through the facility of pitch bending or live performance overdubbing.

The translation of Punjabi bhangra culture into a form acceptable by Western markets created other social dynamics within the recording studio environment as Western studio owners, engineers and programmers were holding some balance of control through their familiarity and expertise in operating within the recording studio environment. Their expertise was a necessary resource for the British Asians in order to facilitate the recording of their music and could be utilised to both learn from and access technologies that were closer to the outputs of the mainstream markets within which they hoped to operate.

Throughout the 1980s, recording technologies became financially accessible and more people could afford to record and experiment (Théberge 1997, Burgess 2014). Early synthesisers costing many thousands of pounds progressively reduced in price inversely to the facilities and features offered. The democratisation of music technologies and translation of musical forms such as drum patterns and orchestral arranging into a lexicon that was easily incorporated into that technology encouraged more access to compositional contributions from those who, in the past, had not been able to be part of the creative process.

1.4 The Impact of Technology on Producer/Artist Dynamics

Greene (2005) observes that as music synthesiser technologies became more accessible, sounds would be programmed, saved and used by musicians, and then appropriated by manufacturers as pre-programmed sound sets, or 'tone banks', to be sold with new iterations of their synthesiser product lines. Music makers are continually driving this development of technology and then in turn, the technology gives rise to new musical forms based on the new sound sets (Russ 2011). In the recording studio, the musician is inspired by the exploration of technology and the producer's role is to channel and facilitate that exploration. The result is sometimes the creation of a new genre or, less significant culturally, a new sonic style that

[13] MIDI is Musical Instrument Digital Interface and is a universal standard protocol developed in 1982 by Dave Smith of Sequential Circuits in association with Ikutaro Kakehashi of Roland, Japan and was launched in 1983 (midi.org n.d.).

may help to sell the recorded product. In the case of bhangra music in the 1990s, this resulted in a level of anxiety or mistrust by the artist in a technological environment that they had not been previously exposed to. It also presented unreasonable expectations and suspicion of the engineers and producers associated with music technology and the producer's role was often to smooth the pathways of experimentation or demystify the usage of the technology for the artist. This dynamic has all but disappeared due to the globalisation of music technologies (Théberge 1997). However, at the time, the use of new technologies required mutual trust between the parties concerned and the producer's understanding of the artists' expectations, managing those expectations, communicating what the technology could achieve, translating ideas into a technological format, all while maintaining commerciality and artist integrity. These areas required informed objectivity, but it was inevitable that the producer's creative subjectivity influenced the direction that artists took in the pursuit of commercial success. This was made more difficult when a producer did not share the same cultural roots as the performer. There were a number of compromises, adaptations and incompatibilities that required mediation; however, the most important aspect of the working relationship was trust and respect.

In my case, I have since discovered that although I thought at the time, there was a certain degree of a hierarchy of roles and that I was controlling the output, it was, in fact, the artist who was testing me, letting me push boundaries and then allowing the resultant product to progress only with their approval. In interview, Satwant Taak Singh, known as Raga Kaka Winston, an artist that I produced and collaborated with, revealed that he would let me put my ideas and suggestions forward and then get me to arrange some other aspect of a song, only allowing the suggestion to be executed if I could facilitate his request first; a form of creative testing and power broking. The assumptions that I made at the time were simplistic and naïve to a point, as the act of mediation was a two-way communication with different layers and nuances not easily discerned when operating within an unfamiliar cultural context. As we worked more extensively together, a trust and bond grew where the testing element disappeared and we worked more collaboratively and openly; although this was not necessarily obvious, neither was it voiced. It is only in retrospect and revisiting the events by the two parties involved that this can be substantiated and has been further evidenced with my work with Kuljit Bhamra, which is explored in Chapter 8.

The primary objective of the music producer in the studio, a view I have formed from decades of working and talking with innumerable producers, is to meet the creative and commercial expectations of both the artist and their record company. This may also relate to the expectations of the marketplace and the marketeers, distributors and commercial stakeholders that are involved in the promotion and sale of the end product.

The relationship between the producer and the artist takes on a different dynamic in the recording studio (Zagorski-Thomas 2014). The artist's performance is contained within a small area and has no interaction with an audience; their only audience is the other musicians in the studio and the producer and engineer. There are additional contextual factors that affect the musician's performance. There is a critical self-awareness and insecurity that often occurs in a studio environment and can affect the relaxed performance that the artist might otherwise enjoy with an audience. There is the pressure of not making mistakes as this is a recording and the playback of what has been recorded reveals all. The artist cannot hide behind charisma, stature, reputation or flamboyance. These are issues that a producer must address above and beyond any of the cultural issues or technical disciplines involved. The artist may have a tendency to blame the technology and the producer for their own ineptitude or sub-standard performances in the studio. A relationship of trust has to be developed between the producer and artist and sometimes, there is not much time to nurture this due to budgetary restraints. When the producer and artist are of different cultural backgrounds, this creates an additional level of complexity that needs to be addressed before trust can be garnered.

The producer also acts as an interface between the commercial viability of the recorded product and the artist. Mike Howlett, producer of Martha and the Muffins, A Flock of Seagulls and Blancmange, has used 'nexus' as a descriptor for the intermediary function between 'the creative inspiration of the performer, the technology of the studio and the commercial aspirations of the record company' (Howlett 2012, pg. 199). The producer must maintain a commercial and competitive intelligence when interpreting the creative elements of a recording. The producer has to make a high quality sounding record in order to meet the expectations of the market, increase the potential market and include elements that may attract listeners or buyers from other genre markets. This was and still is evident in the productions of non-Western cultural genre recordings and was of particular importance when I was commissioned to record both bhangra artists and reggae artists. The more detached the

genre is from the mainstream pop market, the more mediation is employed to get the artist to comply with the wishes of the record company in reaching the market and to get the record company to understand the creative objectives of the artist. The artist's motivations are often diametrically opposed to the record company objectives. The artist wants to put out a qualitative and representative statement of their art, whereas a record company's objective is to sell records. The producer becomes the mediator in this respect and the recording studio becomes the negotiation battleground. Sometimes the producer needs to defer to the record company, who is considered at the point of negotiation as being the paymaster (even though in most cases, the costs of recording will ultimately be covered by the artist's royalties), in order to ensure that the artist will comply with the requirements set, such that their art can be commodified. But often, the producer needs to be the intermediary and support both sides of the argument while maintaining the trust of both parties.

1.5 The Cultural Specialist

The question arises whether a producer, untrained as a cultural specialist, thinks that they can really understand the culture within which they are operating but not indigenously attached to and impose their impressions of culture on the music. There is a distinct hegemony that creeps into the mediation process, but often there is a jostling for position between artist and producer that ensues as to who has the last word in the decision-making process. There is a natural state of positioning and technological divide that is due to the artist's limited time spent in a studio environment compared to the producer, whose natural working habitat is the studio.

Social interaction and cultural traditions constantly shift and both bhangra and reggae are examples of this phenomenon. In researching some of the techniques employed in navigating traditional values in a recording studio context, I came across some well-intended but manipulative mediation by music producers that often occurred. But was it mediation techniques employed by producers, or was it, in effect, a double bluff on the part of the artist?

In some cases, the perceived 'otherness' was challenged in the studio by the artist as the producer tried to impose or suggest creative contributions within the recording studio environment. What mediation strategies could engender trust between the artist and producer,

and what effect did this ultimately have on the artistic and commercial success of the recordings?

There appeared to be a requirement to prove one's integrity through the initial interaction with the artist to establish hierarchy and maintain trust in the musical decision-making processes to follow. However, at no time did I consider myself a cultural expert and this at times would put me in an insecure position when interacting with musicians of a diverse cultural background. In comparing this with some of the British Asian producers I worked with, who were far more dictatorial than I, I may have compromised my position culturally and appeared far more vulnerable than I had anticipated. My intentions were to create a collaborative atmosphere, which sometimes worked on certain key musical levels but unfortunately not others and there was always an element of compromise attached.

1.6 Research Questions

The following is a list of the research questions addressed within the thesis. This is followed by an explanation of these questions as they relate to the key themes outlined above.

1. What were the creative incompatibilities and cultural inconsistencies within the bhangra genre that muddied the message and diluted possible market expansion?
2. How did power broking and territorial positioning in a recording studio environment affect the creative process and how was this amplified in cross-cultural recordings?
3. Was there an appropriation of culture, or was it a two-way exchange and did this result in a contamination of genre, which included the naming and claiming the origin of genre?
4. What was the value of the commoditisation of cultural outputs and was cross-genre exploration a form of exploitation of culture by willing participants?
5. How were sonic signatures utilised by producers in productions?
6. Were the approaches to mixing cultural mediations or just stylistic and creative decisions?
7. Did producers who were out of their cultural comfort zone initiate interventions by creating new musical dynamics and explorations?
8. Did producers take socio-cultural responsibility for the success of the product?

Creative incompatibilities and cultural inconsistencies

On reflection, there were many cultural inconsistencies within the bhangra genre that muddied the message and diluted possible market expansion. Although there was a constant search for new approaches from a musical standpoint, there was also a resistance to engage with newer compositional frameworks. An indicator of this was the use of existing traditional melodies, some of which, according to Bhamra (interview 2014), dated back hundreds of years. I was never entirely sure whether the melodies employed within the British bhangra oeuvre were original or could be subject to copyright (70 years after the death of the composer or lyricist) and many of the recordings were not registered for copyright with the Performing Rights Society (PRS 2020). The other area of note was the adherence to the lyrical themes, traditionally employed within the original Punjabi bhangra folk music. They referenced the tried and tested 'boy meets girl' relationship lyrical songwriting approach (Bradford 2005) but very seldom ventured outside of the observational narrative. This would include what a girl might be wearing, how she looked at a boy, what everyone was doing as they danced, how happy one or the other might have been and other such subject matters. There appeared to be very little substance or depth to the lyrics when attempting to translate these into English from Punjabi and some of the cultural relevance was lost in the translation. Delving into deeper emotional narratives and analysis within the lyrical content seemed to be avoided. There was also a reticence to attempt to start writing songs in English, although this was achieved successfully by a couple of artists, Cornershop (1997) and Monsoon (1981), who managed to access the mainstream English record-buying market.

Other cultural differences contributed to British bhangra and made it difficult to navigate in the studio and by record companies. The primary influence was Punjabi Sikh but other cultural agendas needed to be acknowledged and addressed. There was a separate Hindi Bollywood record-buying audience until bhangra was appropriated by the Indian Bollywood film industry (Roy 2010), and there was an underlying conflict between Muslim and Punjabi Sikh cultures that referenced the breaking apart of the Punjab during the formation of an independent Pakistan and India in 1948. These tensions diminished over time and through generations identifying with being primarily British Asian. Any artists that were able to transcend these issues, enjoyed success for a time.

Power broking and territorial positioning in a recording studio environment

It is a natural sociological trait to create ownership, territorial boundaries and establish a sense of seniority within social structures (Koski, Olson and Xie 2015). The recording studio provides a micro territorial example of this human behaviour. However, in addition to the expected producer/artist dynamics and territorial positioning within the studio context, bhangra created additional layers of the struggle for positioning leveraged on culture.

There could be any number of layers to be mitigated within this scenario. If there were a Punjabi Sikh producer working with a Punjabi Sikh band or artist, then the dynamic would be similar, taking into consideration the cultural influences of the Western producer/artist dynamic. However, if the producer was of a Western cultural background, as was the case for me, and the artist was of a South Asian cultural background, the dynamic would change. Add in any additional cultural differences such as religious or territorial backgrounds, and the dynamic became more difficult to negotiate. As I was bringing in not only my own cultural and musical influences but also some reggae cultures into the production mix, this created a complex layer of culture to be mitigated by all parties and stakeholders, including the record companies and the artists' families. For example, if a South Asian producer working with a predominantly Punjabi band was working with Western influences, including some reggae constructs, and some of the session musicians were not of South Asian descent, then things could get very complicated within the studio environment. The case studies in this thesis explore these dynamics.

Appropriation of culture and the contamination of genre

The appropriation of culture has been a subject of concern to the ethnomusicology academy since its inception. The interference in a culture and investigation, analysis, exploration and interrogation of the music of a culture is tantamount to contamination and can result in the dilution of genre or, at best, an adaptation that changes the nature of a genre (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). This concern relates to cultural values and does not take into consideration the commercial factors that more often drive genre adaptation, change and implementation. The examination of the exchange of cultural genre as a cultural output that

can be traded in the exploration of bigger and broader marketplaces is an area that warrants further exploration. The consequence of traditional bhangra morphing into British bhangra and then further being appropriated as a Bollywood genre is an attestation of the two-way exchange, but the idea that it is an appropriation rather than a willing transaction is still questionable. The internet has now played a significant role in the cultural migration of the arts and music. Culture no longer needs physical diaspora or migration for it to be adopted by other cultures. British bhangra as a genre was sparked off by the traditional migration of South Asians into the United Kingdom, but as communication technologies have progressed, the genre has changed and been appropriated by other genres such as Hip Hop (Hankins 2011). It can be argued that the British bhangra genre/culture has appropriated other genres for its gain. This is explored further within the thesis.

Homogenisation and development of the bhangra genre have different cultural meanings for different stakeholders. For the self-appointed innovators of bhangra, its origination is a calling card and a claim to the naming and origin of a genre. To traditionalists, British bhangra is a contamination of a long-standing traditional genre attached to the harvest and family celebrations. British Asians have wanted to integrate fully into British society while retaining a cultural identity. On the one hand, this entails maintaining cultural heritage in arts, design and food. On the other hand, these cultural pursuits have a tendency to adapt and change to meet market appreciation and consumption. As an example, food dishes such as chicken tikka masala and balti are considered South Asian constructs but are fully British inceptions designed to meet the British market (Sadar 2008). Whether this constitutes a contamination of genre is subject to debate but is further reflected in British bhangra music, a fully British construct but considered South Asian. Bhangra has now further developed and has incorporated dance, EDM (electronic dance music) and hip hop into its output, almost fully overshadowing the original traditional Punjabi bhangra performed in celebration of the harvest.

The commodification of cultural outputs

There are ultimately two diametrically opposed yet symbiotic views on the commodification of cultural outputs within the context of music. Music is often one of the identifiers or representations of culture and invokes cultural pride and identity (Baumann 1996), whereas

the commercialisation of music attempts to reach larger and thereby, more lucrative audiences. The resultant effect of music through commercialisation is often homogenisation or integration of the original cultural identity into new forms that no longer represent that identity exactly.

There are many cases of musical genres that reference culture or nationality, which after a period of commoditisation, adaptation, appropriation and homogenisation, have seen a revival of the original genre in a form that is appreciated and enjoyed by smaller groups of purists. This has been the case with traditional folk Punjabi bhangra in India (Roy 2010) and interestingly, as stated by Bhamra, has now started to emerge in pubs in Southall and Birmingham, where there has been an appetite for the 'original' British bhangra by the generation of South Asians who first participated in this musical and cultural phenomenon (interview 2019). This has only started as the generation associated with British bhangra culture are now in their late 40s, 50s and 60s and do not associate themselves with the current youth generation's homogenised genre, which although using Punjabi lyrical constructs, draws more on hip hop than the traditional folk bhangra that was the root of British bhangra. Whether this is a natural progression of genre and culture or a last effort to retain cultural roots is yet to be seen.

The mixing of genres by willing participants may be construed as exploitation by the participants without the express permission of the cultures within which the genres are embedded. However, there are no official gatekeepers associated with musical genre. There may be self-appointed guardians of genre who maintain that authenticity of form is essential in maintaining cultural values, but it is those that experiment with the so-called contaminates of genre that often benefits from the output commercially and then, as time passes, are attributed as the creators of a new genre (Nettl 1964). British bhangra is an example of this progression and the claim on authenticity and origination is bound up in conflict. This is explored further in the case studies, as is the creation of another possible new genre, through the collaboration of two producer-artists bringing two different cultural value systems into the recording studio.

Sonic signatures utilised by producers in productions

As discovered within the research and my own production methodology, producers have a tendency to include some sort of sonic signature embedded within their productions in order to identify themselves further and create an additional differential between producers' styles of production. Engineer Hugh Padgham was famous for the gated reverb sound used on Phil Collins drums (Computer Music 2019) and Phil Spector was known for his 'wall of sound' (Cleveland 2001). Many producers, including the case study productions and producers within this thesis, have their own sonic signature. For example, I always include a tabla in my productions, even if it is subtly mixed in with another drum and hardly discernible. I also try to include a vocal alaap, an introduction to a South Asian song, predominantly used in bhangra and the beginning to classical rags (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.), somewhere in a production or composition, if only in the background as a form of signature sound. In this case, the use of an alaap or tabla in a production, or any non-indigenously associated instrument or technique, could be assessed as a form of appropriation of culture. It may be performed in all innocence, but is there a subconscious agenda of wishing to be recognised by a particular peer group or is it a creative contribution to cross-genre collaboration?

Mixing approaches as cultural mediation

On completion of recording and overdubbing a track, the next step in the process is mixing. This involves collating the individual takes of each individual instrument or vocal and choosing the best performances, correcting any anomalies of level, tuning or performance, and then manipulating all the constituent parts to end up with a final product that meets the creative and commercial objectives of all stakeholders. Craig states that this is a separate discipline to the recording process and there is now a tendency for artists to have their tracks mixed by specialist mixers rather than the producer of the track (interview 2019). However, within the context of multi-cultural genres, the mixing stage is an arena for further negotiation relative to the dominance of culture and stakeholders' agendas. A common negotiation in the mixing stage is for singers or instrumentalists to want to hear their particular performance louder in the mix. This may not suit the market or the producer's objectives and this situation needs to be mitigated, ensuring all parties are happy with the result.

The negotiation and mediation of style is a process that is part of the fabric of a genre and culture, not just the music. Within the context of a multi-cultural genre, the requirement for mediation extends to negotiating which direction the mix might lean towards culturally. In the case of the *Country and Eastern* recordings outlined in the case study in Chapter 8, the mix needed to fulfil the objectives of two cultures seemingly fighting for dominance at the same time as creating an environment of collaboration.

Being out of the cultural comfort zone and creative interventions

In the case of productions where ideas are borrowed from genres not indigenous to the artist and the target market is unfamiliar, distractions, interventions and alternative techniques may be employed by the producer to engender enthusiasm and acceptance by the artist of a new idea. It may be a case of reaching out to the 'other side' or culture to create a bridge between the cultural divides within genres, especially when two or more producers from different cultural backgrounds engage in collaboration. These interventions are explored within the case studies.

Producers and the socio-cultural responsibility for the success of a product

Producers take the socio-cultural responsibility for contamination, experimentation and exploration of cultural boundaries and ultimately for the success or failure of a product. This takes the onus off the artist from a personal perspective, but the artist is the face and performer of the music and the public persona of the associated newly created genre. This can cause inner conflict within the artist, or they might rise to the challenge, especially if the product output is successful and use their new persona as a platform. However, the producer will often be blamed for any lack of success of an artist by all stakeholders. There is a constant issue of cultural mediation attached to this process. This is explored in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

1.7 Chapter Synopsis

This thesis is structured to include background information about the British bhangra genre, my involvement as a practitioner and an overview of the technological developments in

production in order to contextualise the case studies that provide the research and address the issues as outlined above.

Chapter 2: Studying the Music Production Process: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and the reflexive positioning behind the research. The majority of the research in this thesis is ethnographic and based on my activity as a producer which positions me as an expert participant observer. This empirical work draws on retrospective observation and more current practice-based activities. There is a discussion on objectivity within the research, that I was not only an observer but was also an intrinsic part of the research as a participant practitioner. Although there is an element of autoethnography at play here, the value and insight that can be drawn upon adds to the academic rigour of the research. The most difficult part of the assessment is maintaining objectivity. This can be balanced with third party observation. Unfortunately, this is not always available in these circumstances. However, the propensity towards subjectivity, which may be a natural by-product of a participant's viewpoint and biases, aids in reaching towards an objective stance by the researcher.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The literature review contextualises the ethnographic research in broader discourses by identifying and critiquing some of the key texts pertaining to cross-cultural music production, music technology, hybridity, ethnographic research and autoethnography. This is cross-referenced with interviews that I conducted between 2009 and 2017.

Chapter 4: The Record Producer and Technology

Chapter 4 explores the technologies employed in the recording process and the roles of producers from a historical and current perspective. There is a discussion on how this impacted the methods of interaction and facilitated mediation within the studio environment. The development of technology as a contributing factor in the development of the genre and the development of bhangra and how technology impacted the producer/artist relationship within the British South Asian musical arena are also explored.

Chapter 5: The Birth of British Bhangra

This chapter provides a background to British bhangra and its development within British Asian culture as an expression of Britishness and a way for the South Asian community to self-identify. Its development into a commercial musical genre is explored along with the advent of combining Eastern and Western constructs to produce a solely British genre. An overview of accounts of how bhangra helped to facilitate social inclusion in the United Kingdom contextualises the interaction between producers and artists within the recording and production process.

Chapter 6: The British Asian Producers and their Contributions to Bhangra

This outlines the key moments in the historical progression of British bhangra through the exploration of the production techniques of three South Asian producers during the 1980s and 1990s; Deepak Khazanchi (producer of bands Alaap and Heera), Kuljit Bhamra (producer of Premi, Sangeeta, Mangal Singh, and Heera amongst others), and Sanj J Sanj (one of the originators of the 'daytimer events', D.J., producer and one half of XZecutive). These three producers were key in shaping the genre of British bhangra and its social significance during that time. This chapter provides an insight into the methods and producer/artist interactions of these three producers, examining how their cultural backgrounds enabled them to deal with the complexities of bhangra from a position of cultural familiarity. I still maintain professional relationships with them and in particular Bhamra, with whom I have completed recording a collaborative album which forms the basis of the case study in chapter 8.

Chapter 7: Case Study - Satwant Singh Taak, also known as Raga Kaka Winston: Mixing Genres and Cross-cultural Mediation Within Production

This retrospective case study of my production of the artist, Satwant Singh Taak, provides an overview of the recording and production techniques employed over two time period; 1989-1992 and 2018-2020, along with the issues that were raised at the time relative to culture and the target markets. However, the final practice based project relating to this did not come to

fruition. The reasons for this provide further insight into the cultural objectives and relationships between producer and artist.

Chapter 8: Case Study – Country and Eastern: A Collaboration with Kuljit Bhamra

This chapter explores the intercultural mediation between two established producers, Kuljit Bhamra and Richard Lightman who embarked on a project to fuse two genres, bhangra and country music, into a new musical exploration; *Country and Eastern*. The differing approaches to production, recording and mixing, highlight the constant mediation that was employed throughout the process. Territorial claims on studio space and embedding styles in the unspoken struggle for genre dominance within the production process are explored, along with the relational attitudes and interaction between the two producers on a musical and technical level. The mediation techniques that have been used in recording studios in the past were employed by both parties, fully understanding the implications of those processes. As a consequence, through familiarity, this negated the tried and tested techniques and created an environment that encouraged the development of new methods of collaboration. Although still drawing upon past experience and procedural norms, this required a delicacy of approach to maintain the integrity of the output and the producers themselves. This chapter compares mediation techniques used by the two producers in the early 1990s and 2019.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The concluding chapter provides a summary of the findings, research and interventions that relate to the key issues. An assessment of the functions and outcomes of the mediation process within music production will feed into the arguments and provide further insight into methodologies employed in the recording studio between artist and producer. This is intended to help future recording artists and their producers understand the cultural motivations and circumstances that may create creative barriers that can be more easily broken down through an understanding of cultural influences, expectations and working practices within the production process.

Chapter 2: Studying the Music Production Process: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Through case studies, retrospective participant observation (Bulmer 1982), and in-depth interviews conducted by me, the thesis analyses the process of music production. This includes technical process and musical outputs, interpersonal dynamics within the studio environment and artists' responses to musical direction techniques. It extends the process of bhangra production beyond the purely technical or musicological confines: the creative production process is framed here as an interaction between societal influences, social interaction, cultural expectations, emotional responses, financial considerations, technology and musicality, resulting in a musical confluence.

2.2 Research Methodology

The analysis of primary source interviews and case studies outlined in Chapters 7 and 8 is central to the methodology. The interviews were conducted with prominent producers, musicians and relevant stakeholders producing music during the late 1980s and 1990s selected based on their chart successes and reputation within the music industry in popular music production of cross-cultural genres. The interviews were recorded digitally and then transcribed. The recording and transcriptions are stored securely on a hard drive, in line with the City University ethics policy of the time, where this research project began in 2011. These key practitioners operated within genres such as reggae, bhangra, Irish-influenced folk and rock, and what is generally termed ‘world’ music (Taylor, T.D. 2014). The choice of respondents represented a confluence of musical influences that were instrumental in changing the landscape of popular music in the U.K. and led to further developments in cross-cultural fusion music. Most interviewees have been influential contributors to their respective genres, achieving industry recognition in acknowledgement of their contribution to the music industry. All the respondents were presented with a consent form to be signed by both the interviewee and me, as researcher (a copy of this form is included in the appendix). Other data has been amassed from conversations or email correspondence with other producers between April 2012 and August 2019. The other main source is autoethnographic research, which details my experience as a bhangra and reggae music producer between 1978

and 1995. This positions this study's comparative and critical evaluation within the field of music production studies.

To provide additional contextualisation and comparative analysis, a new music recording was embarked upon in late 2019 and early 2020, providing the opportunity to compare methodologies rooted in retrospective observation and current practice research, allowing a comparison of technical processes and, most importantly, the cultural interactions that are key to the creation of the end product within a cross-cultural genre.

2.3 Interview Questions

The interview questions for artists, producers and, in some cases, record companies were devised to initially gain the respondents' confidence. The artists' questions started by addressing their musical output and, in the case of the record producers, their technical methodology and skills. These questions were used as prompts and fact-finding exercises, leading to more in-depth questions about interculturality, appropriation of culture through music and the commoditisation of their musical outputs. The objective was to solicit their views on culture and the relationships between artists, producers and record companies from a cultural perspective.

The majority of the interviews were conducted between September 2012 and August 2014. Additional ad hoc interviews were conducted up until June 2020. This did not include the material obtained during the case study process. The interviews revealed the negotiating techniques, between producer and artist, employed in facilitating the recording process. Some of these referenced my experiences with some of the artists. The reactions to my practice and the methods employed by some of the artists I worked with, to manipulate the situation to achieve their goals, were unknown to me. These revelations provide an insight rarely revealed within this area of research. A complete list of questions is included in Appendix F.

Participants were identified based on genre outputs from different perspectives, including artists, producers, record company executives and composers, in order to provide a balanced overview of the production process. My questions and key prompts for each interview addressed the motivations and approaches to the music they recorded. In the case of the

producers interviewed, they were questioned about their backgrounds and how they came to be producers. I then asked why they chose to work with the particular genres they were associated with and how they thought they had shaped those genres.

Conversely, as a producer, when interviewing artists, I observed that there were guarded responses at times, as the artists did not want to insult their producers or record companies. To circumvent this, at times I had to reference other artists and their producers who were not directly involved with the artist I was interviewing so that I could broach potentially contentious issues. This also applied to the record company executives I interviewed, who gave me very general answers to my questions. However, if I directed my questions away from them, they were more comfortable speaking about rival companies and their perception of the relationships between those companies, the artists and their producers.

There were other issues associated with the methods of research employed. All the respondents interviewed were colleagues or practitioners who were aware of my status as a producer in the music industry, which may have influenced the responses to my questions and the ensuing discussions. Walduck (1997) recounts a similar experience in interview responses, confirming that problems faced by producer-researchers are similar to those faced by other practice-based researchers, such as performers. The more familiar the respondent was with the interviewer, the lower the word count generated within the interview. There appeared to be an assumption of understanding and empathy attached to the interviewer, which resulted in less explicit information. Technical procedures and knowledge of processes were bypassed or alluded to in the discussions, as producers and artists had a tacit understanding of the methods and techniques employed when recording. For example, producer Rick Cassman revealed during his interview (2014) that he had once slowed down the tape to get a better feel and timing. Cassman was likely referring to the use of varispeed in this instance, but I wanted to focus the interview on the producer/artist relationship and did not probe his reference to a commonly used method of slowing down the tape machine's speed whilst recording would lower the pitch and speed of the track. This would make it easier for a musician to perform or sing during the overdub process, the procedure that records a musician's performance added on to an already recorded backing track. Once recorded using varispeed, a singer or musical performance would appear to be more in tune and in time when the tape machine was played back at the correct speed. This was one of

many techniques employed before the advent of digital technology and the use of plug-ins such as Autotune or Melodyne (Celemony 2019), which are now standard software tools used in the recording industry for correcting pitch and timing. In this case, I applied my specialised production knowledge to unpick many aspects of the interview. The shared understanding of procedures and their benefits was key to interpreting the methods employed by the respondents, and explicit descriptions of recording procedures were not required unless it was original or exclusive to the producer or artist interviewed.

Another problem with the interview process is the tendency for practitioners of the same discipline in the music industry to confederate, creating an informal subculture formed by like-minded professionals. Whilst constructing an atmosphere of camaraderie, producers are prone to position themselves as an elite group, taking a hegemonic attitude to their positioning within the music industry. Adopting this stance and sharing experiences anecdotally helps validate their position in the industry as creative facilitators, negotiators, and mediators in the studio, a form of self-administered permission to control the artists' output. This is not exclusive to music producers. This tendency for elitism within the music industry is further borne out by the formation of industry associations, initially formed as support groups to share experiences and create communities, but now present themselves as guilds and centres of excellence.

This has benefited producers who often work in isolation, separate from their peers.[14] I have observed that this shared sense of community elitism can impact the responses to research interview questions and sway discussions towards an industry sector bias, sometimes making an objective analysis of the interviews difficult. Mullen, Dovidio, Johnson and Copper (1991) explore the dynamics of the in-group and out-group perceptions of social hierarchy and how the in-group will take a collective position of superiority relative to the out-group.

[14] Industry associations today include the Music Producers Guild (MPG 2020), the Ivors Academy, formerly known as BASCA (Ivors Academy 2020), the Featured Artists Coalition (FAC 2020), the Music Managers Forum (MMF 2020), and the Association of Independent Music (AIM 2020). These organisations operate alongside collection agencies and trade unions, which have a more commercial remit and include the Musicians Union (2020), the Performing Rights Society (2020) and PPL (2020). The non-commercial industry associations have since developed to protect their members' rights. Even though they exist within the same industry, supporting practitioners with similar creative goals, they have different agendas and are often not in accord. My experience as the former Chief Executive of the Music Producer Guild from 2011 to 2015 exposed me to these scenarios.

Having to exert a certain amount of self-discipline to maintain an objective stance, I employed a technique that I have found to be successful when approaching the various production disciplines. This method involves adapting and shifting focus dependent on the circumstance. I use the metaphor 'the wearing of hats' to describe this. For example, whilst being the arranger on a track, I adopt a creative approach to the colour of the music I am arranging, and when I am performing on a track, I approach it as a musician and 'wear that hat' only. When I step back into the producer role, I approach my other contributions as if it was someone else participating and take a fairly ruthless approach concerning the production, sometimes editing or discarding what I have done as a performer or arranger. This 'wearing of hats' technique was applied to the analysis of the interviews, and I would consider myself a third person and subject to the same scrutiny and analysis as the interviewees.

There was also the issue of being a producer myself and maintaining objectivity. Stephen Cottrell (2004 pg.16) discusses this dilemma and identifies this as the 'native anthropologist', one who studies groups or cultures they already belong to. Cottrell recognises the possibility that ethnographic research by the native anthropologist compromises the objectivity of the analysis as the researcher is both an outsider (etic) and insider (emic) simultaneously. However, producers employ objectivity and subjectivity in the course of their activities and this combination of approaches can only be beneficial in understanding the views of other producers and analysing their responses to questions within an interview. Glossop states that the ability to set aside other considerations to focus on a viewpoint from a particular position is part of the producer's toolbox (interview 2015). A producer must evaluate a recording or performance from the record company's and listener's perspectives, setting aside their personal preferences. This technique applied to critical analysis as an insider looking in as if an outsider is a valuable and valid approach. It can present a balanced view of both sides of a situation.

It was also difficult getting the respondents to proffer their opinions and provide detailed explanations of events due to a sense of familiarity. On several occasions, I was met with responses that included my assumed participation in those events discussed. Answers like 'You know what went on…' and 'You know what he was like…' were difficult to process. During an interview with one respondent, San-j Sanj, I asked if he felt that British Bhangra

brought Punjabi music and culture to the attention of non-South Asian communities. His response was, 'Well, you know, you were there…' (Sanj 2013). If I stopped to ask them to explain what they meant by those assumptive phrases, I might have broken the flow of the interview and lost valuable information as my main objective was to get them to reveal how they reacted to events or procedures creatively or emotionally. Whether my position as a contributor or collaborator within bhangra distorts my objectivity may be questionable. Arguably this might be offset by the uniqueness of my outsider/insider status, but one has to be mindful that the ethnographic research can be affected by a personal bias and that some of the primary source interviews may be made less valuable in terms of their objectivity by a familiarity between interviewer and interviewee. However, this familiarity and trust enabled me to solicit more honest responses to my questions than from an outsider's ethnographic perspective. I chose to focus on interviews with people I knew, as they were the most revealing source of opinion and information, enabling me to circumvent some of the distrust and guarded responses from people unfamiliar with the interviewer.

Much of the literature attached to production outlines procedure. It is often anecdotal and details the events leading up to the results obtained in the studio. For example, one producer may have changed the lighting to affect the performer's mood in the studio and consequently, their performance. Another may have highlighted particular instruments in the playback or monitoring systems to encourage an artist to focus on a different approach to expression or dynamics whilst recording their instrument or vocals. Massey's interviews with top-drawer producers (2000-2009) delve into some of the artist-producer relationships from the producer's perspectives but are focused on the technological processes involved in producing records. It does little to address the cultural mediation and negotiation employed within the production process. Although there are comparisons between New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and the 'English sound', the cultural references only acknowledge technical production techniques, not the interpersonal relationships between producer and artist.

Through autoethnography, I am able to open the lid on this little-explored area. I have undertaken extensive semi-structured interviews with other producers, but I encountered a reticence to reveal their true feelings when responding to questions about their interactions with and reactions to artists. I have explored this in this thesis, but to include the element of production within an intercultural context adds another level of complexity. Producers follow

accepted technological and procedural practices, but this may be tempered by cultural referencing outside of Western cultural norms. A bhangra recording session may include other procedural practices that a Western pop recording may not.

Further to this, cross-cultural, creative, business, emotional and positional negotiations are intensified within the studio environment due to time and financial restraints, artistic expectations and a heightened sense of investment from the record company. Consequently, this complex, multi-faceted situation requires the producer to adopt different roles at any moment's notice. This constant changing role of the producer, from creative director to business and cultural negotiator, is a focus of this research.

An independent observer can also be an interference within a closed creative environment, making the outsider approach to ethnographic research even more of a challenge. For example, an artist in a studio environment may perform as if an audience has been invited to the studio and try to engage the observer in the performance. Whereas an artist may take a completely different approach if there are no other influences in the room other than the artist/producer/engineer and instead of playing to the crowd, will focus their full attention on the sound and interpretation of the material being recorded. My retrospective, autoethnographic approach to this research gives me the advantage of being both an outsider and insider and provides additional insight into what goes into the recording process. My autoethnographic account mediated by the insight afforded as a practitioner positions me as an expert practitioner observer.

The expert practitioner observer will have a holistic view of the events observed in a recording session. The experience and expertise will provide additional context to the procedure in addition to the events being witnessed in the studio. Bates (2008) posits that there is a distinct difference between the observation of the events in a recording studio and 'actual work' in producing music. The actual work includes the planning, pre-production rehearsals, scheduling, musical arrangements, songwriting adjustments, discussion and agreement with the artists, record companies and social interaction that all contribute to the recording process but not within a recording studio context. The time devoted to these additional processes is variable but often exceeds the actual time spent in the studio.

2.4 Case Study Selection

Numerous approaches to mediation in a recorded musical context are discussed in the interviews, including genre manipulation, the adaptation of traditional musical values, commercial intent, and intercultural interaction, which form the basis of the research for the case studies. These case studies concentrate on the approaches taken by two categories of producer: the technologist and the producer who is a musician or songwriter; neither category is mutually exclusive, but within the categories chosen, the orientation of the producer dominates their approach. The technologist may be a producer who has started as an engineer and, through recording session experience, has learned to direct musicians in the studio. Their key contributions are based on their knowledge of the technology, and this may include new recording methods or new sonic approaches to mixing. The musician or songwriter-producer more often contributes to melody and arrangement structures, and their creative contribution can be less technological than the technologist. These describe the primary motivations and disciplines drawn upon whilst producing.

The producers selected for these studies, including my autoethnographic account, shared similar career paths, learning their craft either from being assistant technicians in the studio watching other producers interact with artists or as musicians who absorbed the techniques of producers and engineers that they worked with. It is this time spent in studios that provided them with the skills to negotiate, mediate and collaborate with artists. To give additional social and cultural context to the case studies, I have provided a historical background to the genre's development. My methodology, therefore, draws on historical and musicological accounts of bhangra and in particular, how creative collaborations developed in the recording studio and how decisions about the musical direction and the fusion of different cultural genres were made.

The first case studies outline the careers of three significant producers who helped shape the British bhangra genre and how they interacted with their artists. Through interviews, they reveal their opinions and some of their techniques in negotiating with their artists.

The additional two case studies are autoethnographic accounts of my practice that provide an opportunity to investigate methods, interaction, creative contributions and communications in

the past and the present. The first of these two case studies is of Satwant Singh Taak, also known as Raga Kaka Winston, who, as a member of one of the most successful bhangra bands, Heera, decided to embark on a solo career. His background and interaction with the West Indian community in Peckham, South London, led him to create a cross-cultural genre that included British bhangra and reggae. This was also developed in parallel by Apache Indian (n.d.). As Taak's producer, I am able to recount and analyse the relationship between artist and producer as a retrospective expert participant observer. There was also an attempt to revisit the process, and we tried to start a current project, but this was aborted, revealing further challenging issues in the production process.

The second case study investigates the current inter-relationship between artist and producer within a culturally diverse context. This explores the viewpoint of two producer-artists of different backgrounds collaborating with the express objective of creating a new genre. The study is an account of a new album project started in 2019 between Kuljit Bhamra MBE and me, two producer-artists from different cultural backgrounds who had worked together on the early development and recordings of bhangra in the late 1980s and 1990s. It outlines the problems encountered in current technologies during this album project and how they influenced the outputs. The study also explores how the collaboration created distrust, or differences of opinion, between two people who are used to controlling a situation but had to temper their approaches and make compromises to rebuild trust and achieve a positive outcome.

2.5 Reflection on Practice

In undertaking this research and focusing on the methodology of interviews and participant practice, both current and past practice, memories of my childhood experiences in India and my unconscious desire to be accepted by other cultures that I was exposed to emerged.

Was I seeking cultural acceptance, or was my involvement in creating a new British Asian music a by-product of the culturally rooted South Asian musicians harnessing my expertise to further their objectives towards market acceptance for British South Asians in British mainstream culture? Whether my position as a contributor or collaborator within bhangra distorts my objectivity is also in the balance. Baily (2001) suggests that his experience as a

participant-observer may have a negative impact on objectivity. Arguably this might be offset by the uniqueness of my insider/outsider status, but one has to be mindful that ethnographic research can be affected by subjective viewpoints and that some of the primary source interviews may lack academic rigour due to the familiarity between interviewer and interviewee (Clarke and Doffman 2018). In taking this approach and formulating these research questions, I follow the path of various sound engineers (Hitchins 2014, McGuinness 2012, Bates 2008) into the cultural study of music.

Another question has emerged as to whether my contribution to the British bhangra oeuvre, through the use of Western musical structures and new technological advances in music production such as sequencing and sampling, has contributed to the eventual move away from the South Asian musical values and created music that hardly resembles its folk roots. Among Western producers, this self-reflection, if not critique, has rarely been discussed in the literature. Glossop, Sabharwal and Howlett agree that producers and sound engineers have long been aware of the delicate transactions that have taken place between cultures in the recording studio but are unwilling to discuss it (interviews 2012, 2014, 2015).

Perhaps this desire to be socially inclusive and less culturally isolated whilst still retaining a South Asian identity has led to an over-hybridisation and a homogenisation that has somehow lost its original identity. This is further explored in Chapter 6.

Was the excitement of creating a new entity and cultural identification through music ultimately the cause of the genre's disappearance? The contribution of technology to British bhangra and its indirect influence on culture and community is explored in Chapter 4.

How immersed in the artist's culture does a studio producer need to be, and what level of understanding, empathy and cultural referencing is required to meet the creative expectations of musicians and the commercial demands of record companies? Both sets of expectations and needs intertwine, and I attempt to explore this within the interview process.

2.6 Summary

Although one of the primary motivations for this research was to investigate the validity and processes of my practice as a producer, the question of cross-cultural communication quickly emerged as a key focus of the research. It became evident that this was a seldom-explored within the field of music production studies. Yet, it was important in the development of British bhangra and is also a key factor influencing other cross-cultural genres.

This is further complicated by cross-cultural interactions and their influence on creative output. However, ultimately the recording process is still a creative undertaking, and this exploration is undervalued, especially within the context of the producer/artist. The cross-cultural interactions have further significance within the creative output of a non-Western origin but seem to be bypassed by the academic community, especially in the field of cross-cultural producer/artist collaborations. This thesis makes preliminary enquiries into this area of research in the case studies and analysis of the interviews in Chapters 6 and 7. The themes are further addressed through my 2018 collaboration with Kuljit Bhamra, as outlined in the case study in Chapter 8.

In addition, the question of a requirement for a level of cultural expertise by producers in an unfamiliar cultural context and the influence of the expertise on the production process needs further exploration. My experience as a producer in this landscape and the resulting variances within bhangra and new genres born out of mutuality of cultural understanding only begins to address this under-explored field.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Technology

The study of audio recording technology and its relationship to music production has, until recently, been largely unexplored. The investigation into music technology, its impact on cultural practices, its effect on music-making and its distribution began to be studied by scholars such as Wallis and Malm (1984), Cutler (1985), Frith (1996), Faber (1997), Jones (1992) and Zak (2001). The explorations concentrate primarily on dynamics within a Western context and have not included the technological interrelationships between western popular music production and other world music.

Big Sounds From Small People (Wallis and Malm 1984) is one of the first books that makes the connection between technological developments in audio and its impact on musical cultures. However, this book focuses more on the industry pathways of distribution, copyright and remuneration rather than the interaction between producer and artist. This book highlights the commercial pressures on producers and artists from the commercial sectors, including record companies and music publishers. These pressures influence creative collaborations in a studio context, which is further explored within this thesis in Chapter 4.

Although Frith (1996) alludes to recording studios being a factor in the production of culture and there are accounts of musicians' reactions to instructions within a studio context, there is no actual analysis of the production process and its cultural significance. Negus (1999) provides an overview of the workings of the music industry, showing the inter-relationship between culture and commodification but again, there is a gap in the studies relating to the creative production process, not from a technical standpoint but a cultural perspective. Both provide invaluable insight into both the role of the artist and the record companies in respect of their influence on culture, but the production process is not featured, and it is within this process that the root of the cultural influences is taking place; providing a deeper understanding of the creative and cultural motivations of both artist and producer.

Horning's (2013) history of the recording industry and the technologies employed, although American-centric, explores technical 'interventions' in making music. But there is little on

the role of producer and the creative connection between the producer, the artist and the resultant recorded product. However, this does not provide the full picture of how technology impacts creativity. Without an exploration of the interactions between artist and producer, it is difficult to assess the value of the technological interventions and to fully understand what provides the impetus for these interventions.

Burgess' *'The Art of Music Production – the theory and practice 4th ed.'* (2013) provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the role of the record producer from an industry perspective. It also describes the career path and the social, legal and training requirements for anyone entering the field. There is a short chapter on the relationship between artist and producer and some of the social demarcations, responsibilities and how to deal with management and record companies, but the creative, collaborative process is overlooked as the book provides an overview of the landscape of the profession without too much detail on technique or creative input. Burgess (2009) highlights Sheehy, Director of Smithsonian Folkways recordings, comment on cultural collaboration in a previous edition. Sheehy states that for cultural collaboration in production to succeed, there must be a shared sense of knowledge and a shared mission (Burgess 2005, pgs. 233-238).

Sheehy alludes to a mutual understanding of objectives, not necessarily a shared cultural experience. If both parties agree on what market they are targeting, then the approach to the production, arrangement, and choice of material is easier. The artistic or cultural integrity is not compromised as the mediation has happened before the creative process. The creative process may then be viewed as a process addressed from different cultural viewpoints but with the same objectives. Most of what has been written on the subject bypass the drama, the psychology, the creative negotiations and the cultural mediations that are an intrinsic part of the recording process. This is especially evident in relation to recordings containing multicultural influences aimed at the U.K market. This research aims to explore a small part of this complex interaction with a concentration on diverse cross-cultural mainstream genres in the U.K., focussing primarily on bhangra, but acknowledging the significance of Reggae, World Music and Irish Folk music on the British music scene in the 1980s and early 1990s.

There are explorations of the relationship between musicians and technology relative to their performance in a World Music context in Greene and Porcello's (2005) edited collection

Wired for Sound, Engineering Technologies in Sonic Culture, but the producer's creative contribution and input are only addressed lightly, and none of the contributors' chapters covers British diverse music genres. However, it is as if there is an intentional emotional disconnect between the producer and the artist, creating a line not to be crossed in any of the writing. It is important to acknowledge that the technical interactions are impacted by the emotional reactions and interactions of both the technicians and artists. My investigations and reflections include these emotional elements, as I believe it has an important role and impact on the end creative product.

Burgess (2014), Bennett (2018), and Frith and Zagorski-Thomas (2012) provide invaluable insights into the development and role of technology in the recording industry along with process and approach. However, like Greene and Porcello, these publications do not delve into the essence of the creative processes and the emotional interactions between artist and producer in music production. They lean towards the technical rather than the interpersonal relationships that are key to the creative process. Burgess helps define the types of producers within the music industry landscape but again does not address the creative interactions, communication, and cultural significance of music production in a studio context.

Feld (1994, pg. 282) coins the phrase 'technological intermediaries' when describing the function of producers, which is an apt description, but only part of the profile. The producer's role is far more extensive and includes mediation techniques in respect of performances, cultural interactions, creative objectives and emotional motivations, as well as acting as the intermediary between the record company and the artist. This will be explored in the interviews and case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Although the integration and use of Western instruments and synthesizers in British bhangra are acknowledged in the writings of Banerji and Baumann (1990), Bloustien, Peters and Luckman (2008), and Dudrah (2007), the importance of technological advances is not addressed. The release of affordable synthesizers by Roland, Korg and Yamaha, along with drum machines and samplers, provided new opportunities for musicians in all popular music genres and the British Asian musicians were quick to adopt these tools. The adoption of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) in 1983 as an international standard format for communication between electronic instruments and the release of computer MIDI sequencer

programs in 1986 (Russ 2011) also played a significant role in shaping the new British bhangra oeuvre. The accessibility of the technology and the inclusion of synthesizers and drum machines in live and recorded British bhangra brought the music closer to globally dominant Western pop music. This will be investigated further in Chapter 4.

Deja (2013) identifies the recording studio as a space for diverse interaction and observes the creative process between engineer/programmer and Malawian musicians trying to explain the tempo and rhythm required for a song. Deja suggests that a recording studio is a space free of distractions and where diverse contributors to the process, artists and technicians from any cultural background, converge with the single objective of producing a good recording. This is certainly the case, but the other influences of cultural expectations, commercial objectives, technology, and multi-cultural interactions further feed into the process.

Théberge (1997) outlines the development of synthesis and digital technologies as a replacement for natural instruments. This culture of replacement and experimentation is key to the accessibility of instrumental sounds to producers and musicians and was influential in the development of British bhangra. To further illustrate this, a producer could include a synthesized string orchestra in their recordings without incurring the cost of orchestral musicians. Theberge's research then leads into one of the questions raised within this thesis, as to whether technology drives creative culture or whether creative culture drives technology in order to find solutions to accessibility and affordability of what might be out of reach of producers or artists; such as orchestras or instrumental players that are not easily located near the recording studio. For example, this might include instruments like a harp or tubular bells. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Democratization of the Music Industry, Goncalves (2013) looks at software as a recording technology available to all and a potential replacement for the recording studio. My experience supports Deja's view that there is a place for both the structure and separate space of a recording studio, which can create a culturally neutral zone, not subject to external distractions, where creative interactions can flourish. Although beset with distractions and technological inconsistencies, the home environment studio provides a different type of creative environment. The familiarity and security of a home studio can lead to other forms of experimentation and freedom of expression that would not usually be entertained in the

studio due to social and financial constraints. The case study of the recording of *Country and Eastern* provides an example of how different working environments influence the outcome of cross-cultural collaboration.

Hennion, in *The Producer of Pop Music* (1989), assumes that there is only one type of producer, and this misconception carries through much of the interpretation and analysis of the producer's role within the academy. The idea that producers are magicians' who 'turn up with their hands in the pockets without well-defined skills' (p.402) is a dismissive uninformed stance. Too often, the skills of the producer are not included in the consideration and assessment of the producer's value and contribution to the final product. Most of the time, the economic value of the producer is leveraged on their perceived past success, whether the artists they have produced were financially successful. This benchmarking determines whether the producer is commissioned and determines the negotiating power of the producer and their agents in respect of fees and budgets. The creative and technical skills are ignored by the paymasters and, in many cases, bypassed by the artists seeking success as a first objective over creativity.

What Hennion does outline, which resonates with my own experiences, is that the studio space is shut off from the rest of the world and provides a creative space. There is often no natural daylight, and the rooms are soundproofed, creating an internalised atmosphere where creative ideas can be explored without the interruption of outside influences. At this point, the cultural exchanges become more focused, and the points of reference take on more significance.

Ethnomusicology studies have ventured into the business/commercial aspect of the recording industry (Waterman 1990, Zemp 1996, Cottrell 2010) and have looked at the financial and business implications of cultural genres on societal development. For example, in the case of British bhangra, commercial gain was a key objective.

Thompson and Lashua identify a gap in the research that there is generally a focus on the music, arrangements and performances in a studio context, but it ignores the social and linguistic interaction that impacts the creative process and ultimately, the recording. The article, *Issues and Strategies for Ethnographic Practice in Recording Studios* (2014), goes on

to outline some of the key texts of Hennion (1990), Meintjes (2003), Porcello (2004), Gibson (2005), and Bates (2008). It criticises these authors' research as underdeveloped in terms of addressing the creative process.

Thompson and Lashua's, *Producing Music, Producing Myth? Creativity in Recording Studios* (2016) further explores the status and influence of space within recording studios. This identifies that certain recording studios are held in esteem due to the artists and particular albums recorded there or the reputation of the house backing musicians that played on those records. Examples include The Beatles recordings at Abbey Road Studios or the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section in Sheffield, Alabama. I was exposed to this as British Asian record companies favoured my studio due to early British bhangra hit albums recorded there.

In *Digital Tradition – Arrangement and Labor in Istanbul's Recording Studio Culture*, Bates (2016) refers to the process of loudness prominence in the recording mixes as an area of considerable negotiation and consternation between engineers and musicians in Turkish recordings. The relationship between melodic content and rhythm seems to invoke a struggle for supremacy and focus within the mixing process, even with an understanding of mutuality and interdependence. This is mirrored in the production process of bhangra, and the parallels between the two musical genres in relation to the negotiation and mitigation process are worthy of note. However, the nuances are distinctly different within the cultures that engage with the process. Within the context of participating mixed cultures, these nuances and inter-relational negotiations become more complex and loaded with unspoken subtext.

Hitchins' *Vibe Merchants: The Sound Creators of Jamaican Popular Music* (2014), Identifies the relationships between the Jamaican recording engineers and the artists within the context of reggae and post-reggae genres in Jamaica's recording studios, focusing on the 1980s and 1990s. The exploration of the engineer's role in scene-setting for the artist, both sonically and contextually in relation to atmospheric spaces, provides an insight into the influences and development of reggae from a technological perspective and parallels can be drawn with the development of bhangra. Both genres initially suffered from an issue of inconsistent audio quality due to the independent yet synergetic approach to volume, being a translator of excitement within the music. The concept of whether the music 'felt good' was an approach shared by reggae and bhangra practitioners and often manifested in volume levels. Although more blatantly practised in Jamaican recording studios (pp. 20-21, 95, 126-

131) with a focus on bass frequencies, the same method was taken in bhangra recordings to a level of audio distortion to emulate the excitement of dhol drums joining in for choruses during live performances. Hitchins also outlines the methods of composition and arrangement within reggae's progression, aligning it to the chronology of technological development, sound creation and recording. However, there is still a lack of addressing the emotional interactions between producer and artist. This book is localised within the Jamaican scene and does not focus on cross-cultural collaborations.

Bates (2016), Frith and Zagorski-Thomas (2012), Hitchins (2011), Meintjes (2003), and Born (2000) also look at the relationship between culture, music production and technology and are all steeped in ethnomusicological values. They delve into the intercultural creative power struggles, motivations and negotiations in relation to the emotional reactions of both producer and artist and how this impacts the end creative product and is an acknowledgement of cultural differences, but not the deep-rooted psychological and cultural drama that will often inform the creative process. This may involve a recording artist suffering from imposter syndrome, insecurities about their creativity, or in relation to culture, whether they are adhering to socio-religious acceptable norms. This has also not been addressed with regard to British bhangra, a genre that took root in the UK as a collaborative collision of Eastern and Western musical cultures.

The relationship between producer and artist is well documented from a procedural and creative influence perspective. The studies of Zagorsky-Thomas (2014), Frith (2012), Burgess (2005), and Farinella (2006) examine techniques for addressing the behaviour and performance of artists in the studio and how producers employ these techniques to get the best result from their artists, but there is little on the dispositional and emotional journey of the producer in this context.

Moore (2002) presents the concept of a tripartition of authenticity; the 'first-person authenticity of expression' within performance, the second-person authenticity of experience, validating the listener's experience, and finally, the 'third person authenticity of expression', which relates to the representation of the third person's ideas and in the case of what Roy is alluding to, the traditions of culture. These interpretations of authenticity are not as relevant within a recording studio context as the performative output is weighted towards the

recording process and the approaches within that process to produce the best possible end product.

There is also a distinct gap in the literature that skirts around the issue of communication and collaborative interactions of creators of cross-cultural musical genres. The emphasis is on socio-political discourse. Although there is value and a necessity for this area of investigation from a sociological perspective, the emotional and psychological implications that feed into the process are mostly bypassed. The other area that seems to be ignored is the music itself. Music is a highly creative discipline, and the complex relationships between artist and producer are ultimately geared towards the creative output. There are many outside influences relating to the commodification or end-user objectives, but the act of making and recording music is primarily a creative process.

3.2 Ethnography

Le Roux (2017) discusses the validity of autoethnography as a vehicle for research and whether the integrity and rigour of quantitative research within autoethnography meet the objectivity of qualitative research. Le Roux posits that academic rigour through disassociation must be established to validate the credibility of the research. It appears that autoethnography is under additional pressure and scrutiny to establish its accuracy and analytical objectivity. This has led this research into bhangra to be sensitive to the suspicious nature of academics who maintain that total objectivity can only be achieved by the non-participant observer. My view is that my retrospection as a participant provides valuable insight, and the objectivity can only be enhanced due to being a participant. There must, however, be objective disciplines applied. I have been careful to temper my opinions and provide an analysis that includes my experiences and personal reactions but attempts to do this in a disassociated and objective manner. This objectivity is enhanced by the time between events taking place and the retrospective analysis of those events.

McGarry (2016) explores the FAST project, 'Design Ethnography', which studies ethnography within studio environments as a research tool to assess the technological requirements of end-users. This is then used by hardware and software manufacturers to develop new products and improve existing products. However, the personal, interaction and communication cultures within the production process in studios are not factored into this.

In *Distributed Creativity* (2018), Donin claims to have kept a low profile as an observer and avoided active participation to maintain objectivity and academic rigour within an ethnography of an orchestra over a two-year period. The research has value, but the analysis can only go so far. It is my view that only a participant can delve deeper into the analysis of the creative processes as additional subtexts, such as the emotional investment in music creation and production.

Alpa Shah's journal essay, *Participant, observation, a potentially revolutionary praxis*. (2017) explains the value of participant observation within ethnographic research and uses four principles of ethnography as discussion points; long duration, revealing group social relations, holism, and intimacy and estrangement. Shah posits that the praxis of participant observation provides a deeper and more meaningful insight into the subject being researched. She presents the theory that this form of ethnographic research will lead the researcher to question their position and value systems within the world. It forces the researcher to look beyond the immediate and evaluate the external and social influences that may impact the respondent. It also has the ability to break down the hegemonic relationship between researcher and subject.

Although I fully support Shah's idea that participant observation delves deeper into the subject and promotes a deeper, more holistic view, there is a further level of participant observation not explored in this essay, which delves deeper and is more faithful to the ethnographic ideals than any other form of research. This requires that the participant-observer is unaware of the research values and objectives of the participation. The unknowing researcher participates fully and unreservedly in the process, ensuring that the research is not influenced in any way to suit the research aims. Although challenging to disseminate later when the participant turns researcher, it is more faithful to the ethos of impartial research. This can only be achieved through retrospective analysis, and the researcher must reflect on past events and their participation as active practitioners and become reflexive objective researchers. This scenario is difficult to achieve as the researcher must start out unknowingly observing their practice and those around them and then transform into a cognitive, self-aware researcher who can reflect on the behaviour, motivations, social interactions and politics of the subject of their research. This is further

complicated by any practice involving creative collaboration. The creativity aspect emanates from a less practical or intellectually level, mined from a deeper, less cognitive area of originality mixed with functionality (American Psychological Association, 2003). The problem with this is that the data collected is not empirically recorded at the time of execution and is reflective. It may be incomplete, slightly adjusted in relation to final creative outputs at the time of inception and perhaps even fantasised or romanticised. The question of objectivity becomes more of an issue here as it can be influenced by emotional reactions and inaccuracies in the data. However, the depth and understanding maintained within the research outweigh these factors.

The other factor to be considered is that the collaborative creative process forces the unknowing researcher and respondent to share the experience within a real-world dynamic that references the true relationship of the researcher to the moment and occupies the almost undefinable space occupied by creativity. There are moments only achieved in creative collaboration, a subjective experience that transcends verbal language.

In my case, I engaged as a practitioner without any objectives to research and became an active researcher after the event, reflexively. My ambitions drove the relationships and creative processes as a music producer, arranger and composer. Although there were many social and cultural hurdles to negotiate, this was performed in the interest of my ambitions and not research. This provides an additional layer of analysis and interpretation of my practice and offers additional insights into the mediation and negotiations entered into at the time.

With respect to Shah's exploration of the 'researcher actively seeking to immerse themselves in 'long term engagements with a group of people who were once strangers to us'(p51), this scenario is a natural occurrence in the field of record production. A producer will often commence working with an artist on a professional basis, including creative direction, sonic manipulation and musical arrangement. Over a period of time, the role of the producer may become blurred and can involve well-being advice and acting as a mediator between the record company and the artist or internally between members of a band. The exact role and intensity of the relationship is different in all cases. Although the participant-observer researcher is as close as one can get to immersive research, it cannot fully emulate the

experience of participating in the moment without the shackles of research objectives. Paradoxically, the reflexive participant-observer research cannot be planned but, given the opportunity, should be engaged with where possible.

Further ethnographic writing within *Situating Generational Frictions in Musical Ethnography in South Asia* (Mason and Walker 2017) investigates one societal influence on South Asian music from a generational perspective but does not begin to address the intricacies of the multitudes of societal influences such as fashion, cultural integration, Western mainstream expectations, commodification and youth identity, that were intrinsically linked to the creation of British bhangra; a music that relied on the interaction between Eastern and Western musical and cultural values.

Nooshin (2011) explores how the ethnography of music has now begun to adapt to changes in the study of music that was previously the domain of ethnomusicologists. Areas such as community and locale are now affected by globalisation and the term 'ethno', within ethnomusicology, needs to be expanded to include the global collaborations that do not require physical migration or diaspora, as the internet is now bringing cultural interaction and creative collaboration into a new arena. Nooshin's wider views and approaches to a more global perspective of ethnomusicology, including internet cross-cultural connectivity, influenced this thesis and helped shape my investigation into social interaction within the music production process. My experience with bhangra led to questions such as, how much of a cultural expert did I need to be, as a producer, to create a commercially viable product within a multi-cultural market environment? The value of the autoethnographic research brings on a new significance when applied to new cross-cultural musical genres and especially when the origins of the music that feeds into the new genres are from such different cultural roots, as with British bhangra. This is explored in the case studies.

Custer (2014) supports the view that autoethnography provides additional insight, sensitivity and, in some cases, therapeutic benefits. He suggests that the researcher benefits from 'honouring subjectivity' and, by doing this, becomes more objective. I would agree with the associated insight and sensitivity created within the research; however, I have not personally experienced any therapeutic benefits.

3.3 Culture

In researching the broad topic of community social integration via music within the British Asian community, I concluded that although there has been some generally qualitative writing on the subject, most of which has been centred around research undertaken by diasporic British Asians on British Asians (Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma 1996; Huq 2005; Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk 2005; Bakrania 2013). They have injected a sense of cultural defiance into their writing as a personal response to the negative historical actions perpetrated by the predominantly white Anglo-Saxon British colonialists. The analysis and critical evaluations lean towards cultural politicisation, and as most of the published works are by sociologists and not musicians, there is an essential element that is overlooked; this is the dimension of sheer joy and creative drive that is employed in music-making and its role as an art form.

With regard to books and journal articles relating directly to bhangra, there is a general agreement that the inception of British bhangra was part of a positive step forward in the landscape of social change for South Asians in Britain, but there is not the same level of agreement of the motivations or rationale, or even the actual historical development of the genre. Untangling the information and substantiating some of the chronology and facts, even having been a part of the process, has presented challenges. For example, Dudrah (2007) posits that British bhangra originated in Birmingham, whereas Khazanchi insists that the genre developed in London (interview 2012). There are many claims in both published accounts and interviews of being the first, the best, the most innovative or the most 'authentic' (Khazanchi 2000) and (Roy 2010). However, there is little empirical evidence to substantiate these claims. There are differing perspectives on the events of the time that unfolded and whether they had a positive or negative effect on the British Asian community. One view is that it diluted the cultural values of British Asians' whereas others contest that it was a natural progression and a form of cultural integration (Baumann 1996).

Scholars who have written on South Asian diaspora cultures, who do not directly address music, appear to have a more objective viewpoint and present statistical data substantiating their research conclusions. For example, Judith M. Brown's research in *Global South Asians* (Brown 2006) on South Asian diasporas provides a clear and concise view of their

motivations, including data relevant to the distribution of the South Asian migration in the U.K. There is also a good overview and analysis of the contribution that diasporic South Asians have made to the cultures and countries they have settled in. Brown identifies the severity of the stress on immigrant communities settling in new lands and that it is often through cultural mediation and interaction that the communities socially integrate into a new homeland.

Dudrah's overview of the inception of bhangra music from a Midlands-centric perspective offers an insider's insight into the history of bhangra in the U.K. This provides a more culturally oriented participant's view. Dudrah (2002) argues that British Bhangra provides a complex negotiation and translation within the British Asian cultural identity and additional negotiations, interactions and exchanges with other cultural subgroups.

Although Dudrah acknowledges the cultural exchanges and negotiations, he does not identify what those exchanges and negotiations are and why they have come to exist in the first place. His journal article, 'Drum'n'dhol Bhangra music and diasporic South Asian identity formation' (Dudrah 2002), has a sense of politicisation that leans towards racial discourse within the concept of Asian-ness, slightly redefining culture from an insider perspective. Dudrah's book *Bhangra, Birmingham and Beyond* (2007) is a valuable account providing historical background to the development of British bhangra, the music and its protagonists from a Midlands viewpoint. This has been especially useful as a comparison to Baumann's book, *Contesting Culture* (1996) and his focus on bhangra in the Southall area of London. The accounts from the two areas differ slightly, and it appears that a Birmingham-London rivalry emerged and was perpetuated by the artists, audiences and academics.

Dis-orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music (Sharma, S. Hutnyk, J. Sharma, A. 1996) is a collection of contributions from scholars in the field of sociology and is a snapshot of the political approaches to the analysis of British Asian youth music and its social significance as understood in the mid-1990s. As stated in its introduction, each chapter engages with different aspects of political imperatives (Sharma, Hutnyk, Sharma 1996, pg. 3). Twelve out of the thirteen contributors are British Asian. The thirteenth is a self-proclaimed Marxist (Hutnyk 2004, pgs. 1-8), and although there is a good presentation of background material and cultural contextualisation, the tone of the writing is highly

politicised and sets out to provide an overview analysis and validation of the protestations of the new emerging British Asian youth culture in the U.K. It uses the arena of Asian popular dance music as a platform for the discussion of racial issues without presenting a balanced view from a musical perspective. Sharma even questions the validity of naming the collective musical genre as 'bhangra' by Asian youths. The discourse focuses on racial and cultural issues within bhangra and does not present British bhangra as a positive cultural progression. Aside from the politicisation and underlying protestation presented in this book, it is one of the best representative snapshots of British Asian popular music in the mid-1990s. It provides an overview of the musical landscape, artists' particular styles, and audience profiles. However, what is missing in the literature is the pleasure of the music itself. As a practitioner and having completed a new cross-cultural genre project within the framework of bhangra, I can attest to the pure joy of playing and listening to the music and the interaction on a creative level with my collaborators. This is explored further in Chapter 8.

In *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth and Identity in a Post Colonial World* (2006), Huq presents a more balanced approach to British Asian popular music and, through interviews and case studies, provides a sociologist's interpretation of British Asian youth culture. It is interesting to note that Huq highlights that some artists felt misrepresented in the Press, including the British Asian Press, and that they were not trying to make a political statement of race or culture. They were only motivated by the desire to make music. Huq also compares the social ramifications of bhangra with raï, music originating in Algeria that gained popularity in France in the 1980s. However, the political overtones of raï were more intense than the reaction to British bhangra in the U.K, including censorship and violent protest in Algeria (Jones 2013, pgs. 474-484). There is also a discourse on the notions of authenticity and the commodification of music in relation to its function as a cultural identifier. Huq maintains that technology does not drive change but that social change harnesses technology. This provides an arena for discussion as I am of the opinion that technology drives musical development, which provides an avenue for driving cultural change relative to the technologies employed, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Taylor's overview of the positioning of world music in global markets in *Global Pop – World Music, World Markets* (1997), incorporates an insightful analysis of world music practitioners, their motivations and, in some instances, the techniques employed in accessing

new markets via adaptations and manipulations of their cultural heritage. The objective was to provide accessible product to a more extensive consumer base. In some cases, Western popular artists adapted other cultural influences to create new genres with the same objective. Taylor, T.D. (pgs. 125,127,135) calls this 'strategic inauthenticity' and exposes the act of musical exploitation. All stakeholders blatantly practised this exploitation within the British bhangra era; the Western producers, like me, looking to expand their markets, and the South Asian producers borrowing from Western pop formats to expand their reach. Taylor also explores the classification of world music, which has a propensity to base categories on ethnicity or cultural origin regardless of geography or chart and market success. An example of this is the band Monsoon, with singer Sheila Chandra. Being of South Asian heritage, their 1982 British hit '*Ever so Lonely'* was found in the world music sections of online music retailers and record shops. Whereas, '*Living on the Ceiling'* by Blancmange, also released in 1982, was classified as pop. These records were a premeditated mixture of South Asian and pop sensibilities, instruments and melodic motifs, and both records were top 10 British hits. This is an example of the music industry making sweeping generalisations based on ethnicity rather than assessing the genre values of a product.

Taylor's discourse on the world music scene and collaborative nature of the catch-all genre as an appropriation of culture and a politicisation of music in bridging culture, breaking down barriers and racial prejudices is relevant but somehow misses the point of motivation and commodification. Bhangra, as an example, is not the exception to the rule and has had a far-reaching effect on cultures, including the film industry, but in no way tried to explicitly address cultural, political or racial issues in its inception and practice. The use of traditional instruments in a cross-cultural genre is a cultural enactment to satisfy markets, not a politicised cultural statement. The lyrics are accessible and non-confrontational, mainly about love, and do not attempt to engage the listener in deep philosophical debate or political rhetoric. It is pop music created to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, and the cultural collaborations and infusion of Western musical structures were employed in the interest of increased sales. Using the music industry's classification model, one could argue that British bhangra is not world music but purely South Asian pop music emanating from the U.K. However, the concept of world music is a catch-all category for music that does not fit into any of the Western popular or art genres and is in itself ill-defined. There are parallels with the pop genre 'new wave' created by record companies in the 1980s as a marketing catch-all

genre for anything that did not fall into the existing rock and pop genres of the 1960s and 1970s and included anything from punk to new romantic and synth-pop.

Falu Bakrania's *Bhangra and Asian Underground* (2013) investigates the implications of bhangra's impact on 'belonging in Britain'. There is much self-reflection relating to the navigation of her own Asian culture and identification with Britishness and how music impacted the sense of belonging to Western culture while maintaining South Asian identities. The case studies and interviews mainly reference bhangra and British Asian hip hop artists of the late 1990s, collectively known as the Asian Underground, which presents a different perspective to my own experiences. There is some crossover and referencing of artists, but this is from an Asian consumer point of view and has a socio-political perspective. This was written from a female perspective within the Asian community and provides a critical historical and sociological viewpoint on the woman's role in the Asian Underground dance and music movement, a predominantly male preserve within a musical production landscape. Bakrania's observations helped contextualise some of my research in respect of the earlier development of bhangra.

Katz posits that technology has changed music in his historical overview, *Capturing Sound, How Technology Changed Music* (2010). Much as I agree that technology has provided a powerful tool and additional opportunities for manipulation of sound, which further feeds musical development, I would argue that the accessibility to technology as a cultural driver, for both performers and in a studio context, has made more of an impact and that cultural communication and negotiation has been more influential on musical evolution. There is a symbiotic relationship between technology and culture that has been operating since the invention of musical instruments, but the harnessing of the interplay between technology and practice by culture is more significant. The primary motivation for harnessing technology, certainly in the last few centuries, appears to be driven by gain; commercial or societal. The improvement of sound, musical representation or recording techniques have all been geared to the end-user/listener/audience and therefore, the market. The adaptation of technology is more often linked to accessing larger markets and more profitability. Cultures are constantly looking to appropriate other cultures' successes, and this is one of the core roots of power-seeking, broking and, on a grand scale, imperialism and land grabs. From a more creative context, the adaptation, appropriation and integration of other cultural genres only serve to

create an improved musical product that can be enjoyed by a wider culturally diverse audience, thereby creating an environment where the product can be further capitalised on.

A clash of cultures and adapting to expectations is explored in the BBC documentary, 'Nicky and Wynton' (2016), which follows the journey of Nicola Benedetti's interpretation and preparation for the debut and then a series of concerts of Wynton Marsalis' Violin Concerto in D Major, composed with Benedetti's input as the solo violinist.

Marsalis talks about the orchestra getting used to 'the language'. The culture of jazz and the way jazz musicians communicate is often based on an improvisational musical vocabulary and a mutual understanding of rhythmic structure, not usually found in standard classical repertoire orchestral contexts. Benedetti and Marsalis needed to negotiate this communication for the concerto to be completed as a composition and then performed. This scenario of musical negotiation exists when musicians operate within genres they do not necessarily feel comfortable in or have little experience with. However, with British bhangra, within the context of recording and production, there was a further layer of negotiation in addition to the musical interpretation of genre. This required an understanding of the cultural implication of the music and its relationship to its audience. It was not just a musical issue. It had undertones of social, geopolitical and inter-racial issues as well. This provides further evidence to suggest that in order to create product, one has to be a cultural expert to effect a commercially viable and marketable product.
Bhangra Moves – From Ludhiana to London and Beyond (Roy 2010) traces the movement of traditional bhangra music and dance from its roots in Punjabi Village life and the associations with harvest festivals to its global spread via diaspora communities and international communications. A comparison is made between bhangra's 'invading cultures' roots and the modern absorption and filtering process of diverse cultural influences, its eventual re-importation into India and the implications of this circular migration, and its impact on local and Indian entertainment arts. It also shows how music and dance are effectively mediated within the exposure and performance aspects of Punjabi bhangra culture. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Roy looks at the genre holistically as an Indian entity, including dance music and cultural lyrical content entirely from an Indian perspective. Although there is an implication by the

author that a world-view is taken, this book references the influences on Indian bhangra from an Indian perspective. It is important to note that it does not put as much emphasis on the importance of British Asian bhangra as was anticipated from the title. The political, sexual and deep-rooted cultural interpretations explore and challenge the integrity of any music that has evolved or moved away from its vision of the 'authentic'. The book reveals the conservative Indian academic view of bhangra. It provides historical insight into the origin and drivers of the cultural shift in bhangra performance in the South Asian Subcontinent, including its integration into South Asian culture through the Bollywood film industry, appropriating the newer British bhangra genre.

Roy also nominates and interprets the approaches, motivations and career progressions of the main protagonists of the Indian bhangra music scene, both historically and within an entertainment cultural context. The text delves into the socio-political religious threads that drive the artists' performances, related images, filmic representations, and musical and lyrical content. Roy presents as a cultural bhangra purist, which offers a valuable positional perspective. Although the case studies are presented from an observational standpoint, there does appear to be a weighting in favour of the 'authentic' versus the 'hybrid'. Hybridity is successfully explored but always uses bhangra folk music, which the author deems 'authentic', as a reference point. There are compelling arguments of authenticity within the social process, but the premise of cultural authenticity as depicted is questionable due to bhangra folk music's origins. Bhangra as a South Asian art form includes music and dance within one entity, and many historical influences within bhangra have been adapted from other cultures. There is, however, an acknowledgement of bhangra's early hybrid roots and cultural shifts of the numerous colonising ethnic and socio-religious groupings that are an intrinsic part of the history of the Indian Subcontinent.

The chapter on Bollywood's absorption of bhangra dance and music is an analytical and interpretative overview of the social and sexual signifiers that bhangra provides in the use of the 'body beautiful' in Bollywood films. Bollywood's incorporation of bhangra as a populist marketing tool further fuels Roy's theories of hybridisation and bhangra performance as a 'contestation of the ethnocultural identity' between traditional and modernist values. (Roy 2010, pg.26).

Although Roy seems to infer that the globalisation of bhangra has negative connotations and is a trade-off by bhangra artists as a means of commercialisation, this stance is tempered by a well-rounded, comprehensive investigation. The arguments are well-conceived and backed up by empirical evidence, but there is conservatism and a resistance portrayed to the inevitability of the transformation of the bhangra genre.

Baily (1994) outlines the internal demarcations by communities within Southall, illustrating that hierarchies exist within musical ethnic groupings and that even within single genres, social strata and the etiquettes are adhered to naturally or subconsciously. This presents a positive attitude to community but demonstrates an awareness of the constraints and fluidity of the social structures, which have impacted the early development of bhangra music. This provides context to the internal cultural interactions and British South Asian market forces that created the environment for British bhangra to emerge, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Herzfeld (1997) identifies cultural intimacy as a concept of shared identification by a culture, either by characteristics or traditional values. This understanding of cultural mutuality can be a negative feature, such as self-deprecation, or a perceived positive trait such as generosity, but as it is an underlying trait, the participants can operate on a level that may exclude those who do not share the accepted behavioural trait or are not from a shared cultural root. This can create an additional distance dynamic that a producer may be unable to bridge. For example, a producer may understand that there is an underlying socio-religious context attached to an artist's lyric or melody but may not fully understand the implications of changing this from a social or cultural perspective.

The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music (Stokes 2010) expands on Herzfeld's theories of cultural intimacy from a musical perspective. Some of Herzfeld's definitions, including 'embarrassment' and 'self-depreciation, are not easily adapted to musical frameworks, but it is the unspoken understanding between musicians that is highlighted and applies to my experiences in recording studios, particularly with respect to bhangra.

In the next chapter, the role of the record producer is explored, along with the relationship between technology and the development of British bhangra culture from a recording studio perspective.

Chapter 4. The Record Producer and Technology

4.1 Introduction

There is reciprocity between the record producer and the technology used in the purveyance of their art. This helps to explain the rationale behind the mediation undertaken by producers to achieve their objectives and provides a context to the relationship between producer and British bhangra artists. Producer requirements drive technological advances in the equipment used to record and the advances affect the role, creativity and scope of a producer's practice. For example, producers needed quick and efficient methods of compiling and editing vocal performances. This was initially facilitated on multitrack tape by bouncing takes (recording different existing takes onto a new track, line by line), and then through the development and use of sampling and digital audio workstations, the 'comping' of takes was made faster and easier. Technological advances have provided the impetus for a shift from producer as facilitator to the producer as creative collaborator. As technology has become more accessible to all contributors, the collaborations from all stakeholders are now more intertwined and less definable. This has resulted in record producers taking on multidimensional roles, and subject to circumstance, social and cultural dynamics and business influences, each producer now has a slightly different set of responsibilities and levels of creative contributions relative to each project they undertake. This is explored further in this chapter and within the case studies in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, where I provide evidence of bhangra producers' multifaceted, diverse and changing roles.

The dynamic of compromise and cooperation also exists within music culture and contributes to the dynamic of the creative process. The adaptation of non-indigenous cultural genres as a tool for producers in the quest for new sound palates is counter-balanced by those non-indigenous cultures adapting indigenous sonic signatures to increase the market for their product. Non-indigenous musicians exploit the skillsets of indigenous music producers to establish new products that reflect their cultural values. Inexorably, the exploitation then leads to an absorption of the producers' skillsets and becomes adapted and manipulated to serve the new creative cultural genres and associated entertainment lifestyles, which create a new form of cultural capital, providing status and value to the creative output that can then be exported to other markets worldwide. A new or evolved musical language affects the way technology is used, and as a result, the manufacturers of technology react to market trends

and demands by creating new products that meet this market. The new products are further adopted, absorbed and manipulated to create further sonic influences on creative cultural outputs, beginning the cycle again, constantly evolving and influencing style, genre and culture itself, in new and sometimes less innovative directions. The problem with an increased accessibility to the technology is that it creates more widespread usage, and resulting outputs can become more homogenous with popular mainstream genres. This is borne out by the homogenisation and shift of British bhangra's evolution into a genre barely discernible from mainstream hip hop, except for the use of some Punjabi phrases employed within the lyrical content (Sembhi 2014).

The technological development of instruments has influenced the progression of melody, texture arrangement and ultimately the tastes of listeners and their acceptance of sonic structures, melodies, harmonies and frequency bandwidths (Katz 2010) (Warner 2017). However, the advent and adaptation of technological advances used in the recording process and later used in musical instruments for amplification and synthesizer technology created a paradigm shift in music production, composition and consumption (Théberge 1997). For example, the simple change of vinyl to digital technology and the compact disc ended the requirement for programming two equal sides of approximately 18-20 minutes of music programme on a vinyl album. CDs were a continuous programme and could facilitate up to 80 minutes (Philips n.d.). Another example was the development of digital polyphony in keyboard synthesis in 1983; this allowed for increased multitimbrality resulting in more complex chordal textures and harmony to be produced without the use of orchestras or ensembles (Russ 2011). This put a broader palette of sounds in the hands of individual musicians who would no longer be limited to one instrument or timbre and could emulate orchestral textures or create new complex textures through synthesis. This, along with communication conduits such as radio, television and distributable recordings, created mass markets for music which had a continuous evolving effect on culture and, in turn, cultural expectations and market demands. This had an unprecedented and accelerated impact on the technologies that fed into them and facilitated the broadcast conduits. The question as to whether technology drove culture or whether culture drove technology - continuing today, becomes a dilemma of circular reasoning where micro examples will lead the answer in one direction or another. Ultimately, it is a natural duality of the evolution of technology and culture, driving each other in partnership at the same time as retaining a binary existence that

provides additional historical context for the shifts in culture and, within this context, musical outputs.

4.2 History of Production Overview

What is commonly known as record production has developed from two broad categories: the organisation and financing of a recording; and the creative musical direction and responsibility for the audio representation of the recording (Farinella 2006). The first of these categories was initially the primary function of a producer, starting with the emergence of recording technologies in the middle of the nineteenth century[15]. As the technology developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it became commercially viable to manufacture record players, generically known as gramophones, for entertainment purposes. The intermediary managing the recording process was known as the 'director of recording' or 'recorder', although the term recorder was often attributed to the audio technician. The term 'producer' as a creative contributor to the process was not used until the 1950s (Burgess 2014). Before this, the term producer referred to a recording session project manager or the record company releasing the product. This differs from today's notion of 'producer' as a creative entity and not just a facilitator or administrator.

The main objective of record companies was to create a desirable product or recording that would lead consumers to buy the hardware required to play the recordings. The RCA Victor record company was created to sell Victrolas, and the profit centre for the sale of records was of secondary concern. As critical mass in the music hardware buying sector increased, the record industry flourished and the role of producer developed further.

There is a direct correlation between hardware and content in music. An example of this is the case of iTunes and Apple Music, acting as the conduits for content that drives consumers to buy Apple products. As of 2019, all streaming revenue from all companies including iTunes, Apple Music, YouTube, Spotify and other platforms generated revenues of 11.4 billion dollars worldwide (Statista 2020), whereas the sale of Apple iPhones alone was 136.7

[15] The first known recording was of the song Claire de La Lune, made in Paris in 1860 on a 'phonautograph', patented in 1857 by Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville, which was soon superseded by recordings made on Edison's phonograph patented in 1877 (Burgess 2014).

billion dollars and sales of all smartphones, the principal device used for listening to streamed music, was 470.5 billion dollars. Although music is not the only driver of sales of smartphones, it is considered a key part of the user experience. According to a report commissioned by the BPI (British Phonographic Institute), each 1% increase in demand for music equates to a 1.4% increase in smartphone sales and a 2.2% increase in tablet sales (BPI 2017).

The recorder of the first half of the twentieth century captured the performance of artists that had been signed by a record company and the organisation of the recording session fell to the director of recording. The artist or conductor was often responsible for shaping the musical recorded output. This division of responsibility continued until the 1950s. Record companies and music publishers paid songwriters such as Carole King, Neil Sedaka, Burt Bacharach and Hal David, Neil Diamond, Sonny Bono, Phil Spector, Paul Simon and Marvin Hamlisch to write songs. Their Artist and Repertoire Departments (A&R) would then source artists to record these songs. Directors of recording (then known as 'producers'), and engineers or 'recorders' recorded the artists. From the 1940s to the 1960s, The Brill Building in New York City exemplified this model and housed many publishing companies, record labels, music agencies and studios. These companies and others like them enjoyed their greatest commercial success in the 1950s and 1960s with the birth of Rock n' Roll (Frith and Zagorski-Thomas 2012).

Some of the first producers to contribute creatively to the recording process were Phil Spector (1939-2021) in the USA and Robert George 'Joe' Meek (1929 –1967) in the UK. Spector, a songwriter who became an independent producer, began to sign artists and record them entirely under his direction (Cleveland 2001). Both of these producers created their own signature sounds. Spector's 'wall of sound' involved recording a large ensemble of musicians in reverberant rooms, while Meek employed new methods of close miking and favoured separation with little or no room sound. Significantly, the overall sound of their records was considered more important than the artists they were recording (Cleveland 2001). Both producers mixed to mono and used echo chambers extensively. This could be considered a milestone in the identification and acknowledgement of the creative contribution of record producers. Whereas producers prior to this time were largely considered to be administrators, the door to creative input was opened. As a result of the commercial success of these

producers and some other notable producers like Les Paul and his experimentation with early multi-tracking (Paul and Cochran 2016), producers began to actively contribute to the recording process creatively, 'shaping sonic structures' through the manipulation of technology - in the case of Meek and Paul, or through arrangements and musical interpretations as exemplified by Spector (Zak III 2001). Working independently of record labels, these producers licensed their recordings to established record companies for distribution. This new business model encouraged producers to expand their influence in more creative avenues. This was a form of music autocracy where all the decision-making processes, both creatively, technically and financially, were vested in the producer. The artist had little or no say in the product. However, with the advent of multi-tracking in the 1960s, this kind of hierarchy was to change. The goal was no longer simply to capture a single performance on tape. Multitracking opened up opportunities for experimentation in form, arrangement and texture. For example, one musician could add a number of different parts to the recording, or other arrangements of orchestral sections or vocals could be added at a different time.

There was also a distinct shift of power as artists became more involved in songwriting. The percentage of artists writing their own material in the Billboard Top 50 charts in 1950 was 7%. By 1960 this had increased to 22%, and by 1970 this had increased to 50%, rising progressively until 2004 when 88% of artists were writing their own material for release (Burgess 2014, pg. 156). Artists started to gain more control of their careers and were able to negotiate better contracts, which included more creative control. This is exemplified by the landmark deals signed by Ray Charles with ABC Records in 1959 when Charles was given complete creative control of his output. In a similar vein, The Beatles established their own record company, 'Apple', in 1968 (Roylance 2001). Taylor suggests that by the 1980s, producers were often chosen by the artist and their fees were paid for by the record company from monies that were recoupable from artist royalties; in this case, the artist technically employed the producer (interview 2012). This created the space for the producer/artist relationship to evolve into a creative partnership, tempered by the requirements of the record companies to produce marketable product and this, combined with more accessible developing technologies, resulted in the experimentation and use of technology as a creative tool rather than just a technical facility for recording.

The role of the producer or engineer includes a number of responsibilities and expectations (Pras, Amandine, and Guastavino 2011). There is the expectation of achieving the highest audio quality representation of the music recorded at the same time as capturing the nuances of the genre and the subtlety and interpretive performances of the musicians. This has often involved a trade-off between audio quality on the one hand and the natural imperfections of performance on the other. The critical factor for an engineer has been audio quality. The definition of audio quality from a technical standpoint is subject to debate but is understood to relate to the greatest amount of dynamic range, combined with the widest audible frequency range and the lowest amount of distortion (Carroll 2013). However, this is not necessarily a desirable attribute of the musical output of certain styles relative to audience expectation. The captured sound in the recording process can be perceived to be too clinical and can detract from an artist's live performance. Meeting listener expectations and maintaining audio quality has required innovative and creative approaches by record producers, especially when addressing diverse cultural genres like bhangra or reggae, where audio quality was of secondary concern in early recordings to the excitement of the performance aspects of these recordings.

By the mid-1980s, the producer's role had evolved and included acting as an intermediary between technology, creativity and culture. With the availability of synthesizers and the advent and general acceptance of early sequencer computer programmes like Steinberg's Pro 16 and Pro 24 (Hughes 1988), producers started to incorporate sounds and textures into recordings that were not indigenous to the genres they were working in. Bhangra producers started to utilise these sequencers and synthesizers in their productions, which was a new approach for the British bhangra musician. However, the artist often assumed priority in the hierarchy of creative input, which necessitated negotiation and justification by the producer for any of the producer's creative input involving these technologies. British South Asian musicians started to replace instruments like harmoniums with synthesizers, and basic percussion patterns were beginning to be programmed on sequencers.

Recording equipment in the 1980s became more financially accessible and more people could afford to record and experiment sonically. Between the mid-1970s and mid-80s, synthesizers costing many thousands of pounds, like the Yamaha CS80 or the modular Moog synthesizer, progressively reduced in price inversely to the facilities and features offered. For

example, the bulky and heavy Yamaha CS80, released in 1976, weighed over 90 kilograms and cost in excess of £3,750 (*The 14 Synthesizers That Shaped Modern Music* n.d.). By 1988, the Korg M1, weighing 13.5 kilograms, and the Roland D50 synthesizers became the mainstay of many British recording studios and could be purchased for just over £1,200 (Vall 2002). They were more adaptable, had more pre-programmed sound sets, more polyphony and tuning stability. Recording budgets could be reduced as studios became less expensive to hire and sound generation from synthesizers and samplers could replicate full orchestras. Record producers started to engage creatively with synthesizer technologies and became more immersed in the creative process as programmers, arrangers and textural sound manipulators. With the accessibility and affordability of digital technology, performers began to incorporate the technology into their performances. The technology became a creative tool rather than just a collection of machines and processors to facilitate recording. Musicians and non-performing programmers could contribute creatively to the recording process creating a democratisation of music and music technologies. An early example of this is Georgio Moroder's collaboration with Donna Summer, which employed programmed synthesis that replaced musical instrument performances with vocals providing the melody. Other examples of this were bands like Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Soft Cell, the Pet Shop Boys and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark (OMD). Later this developed and incorporated sampling technologies to create backing tracks, as was the case with Fatboy Slim (Warner 2017). Bennett, S. (2018) refers to this as 'tech-processual methodology' and gives examples such as Madonna, U2, Michael Jackson, Fatboy Slim and Blur, all of whom employed a mixture of synthesizer programming and artist performance in their recordings. This opened up many more possibilities for collaboration and experimentation between musicians and non-musicians as specialist knowledge was no longer a prerequisite in operating music-making technology. This made it easier for different cultures to collaborate, and new genres were created as a result. Its accessibility enabled me to contribute more extensively to the production and development of British bhangra. Synthesis and sampling have now been absorbed into the lexicon of music production and has become another sonic choice in the creative process.

As well as being an intermediary between the many people who contribute to the recording process, the creative record producer sometimes acts variously as a counsellor, a rights negotiator, a business development consultant, and a career mentor. They collaborate with

artists, negotiate with their management, administrate budgets, are responsible for delivering commercially viable product to the record companies, and prepare reports for PPL Ltd. (the organisation that collects performance royalties on behalf of the artist), the Musician's Union, and music publishers. The role of a producer today can be compared to the conglomerate of roles involved in film making, including Director, Executive Producer (finance), Director of Photography, Lighting Cameraman, Editor and Script Co-ordinator. Sometimes the producer also contributes to the songwriting and occasionally performs on recordings. These various roles will be explored in the case studies to follow. The production styles are individual to each producer, influenced either from a technical or musical background, or both, but all with the same objective: to produce the highest quality recording and artistic product given the budgetary, time and facility restraints.

4.3 The Role of the Record Producer

To assess the role of the record producer, it is important to understand the producer's function within the recording process. This section addresses the definition of a music producer and the different categories of producer. There is also a brief history of popular music production to provide a background to help illustrate the multidimensional role of record producers. Burgess (2013) breaks down the role of producer into seven functional categories. Further analysis and evaluation have been added to these categories, along with extensions to the definitions and examples to illustrate the roles of the producer. Six more categories have been added to this overview: the Cultural Interpreter, Cultural Manipulator, the Producer as Audience, Beat Maker, Vocal Producer, and AI Production. All of these categories apply to the production of British bhangra; however, some are more relevant than others.

The Artist Producer

The artist producer performs many if not all functions and produces themselves. They engineer, arrange and record their own performances and are only responsible to themselves. This scenario has expanded as the technology has become more accessible as entire recording studio capabilities can be facilitated on laptops with the addition of a modicum of hardware, including audio to digital interfaces and microphones. More artists are finding this method as

a fast-track introduction to recording and can produce industry-standard quality recordings with little equipment. These artist producers may start with the most basic recording setups and gradually build on the capabilities, versatility, and facilities they can use by investing in more equipment. They may also include other musicians on their recordings. Although the artist is in full control of their own output, the lack of interaction with other producers and technologists can limit the influences and therefore, the experimentation of the artist. This can also be detrimental to the commercial aspect of the product output as there is no third-party independent 'listener' engaged in assessing the viability of the recordings. There is also a tendency towards an introspective inward-gazing approach to production. This category of producer enjoys the ultimate level of control, but it can also expose them to direct criticism as the artist producer is entirely responsible for the success or failure of the recorded product and cannot hide behind or use a producer as an excuse for failure or technicians as a scapegoat for poor performances. In most other cases, if success is not obtainable, there is someone else to blame. The artist producer must maintain full confidence and belief in their art at all times as there is no one else they rely on to help bolster confidence and salve their insecurities. Watson, A. and Ward, J (2013) refer to this as the vibe that needs to be created in the recording studio to foster an atmosphere of creativity. This is achieved through a number of methods, including atmospheric lighting or alcohol or substance usage, but ultimately it is the relationships that are developed between the technicians and the producer/artist that will promote a relaxed space for the best performances. If the artist is unsure of their performance, they can often rely on a producer to judge the quality of output. This is not the case with the artist producer who must shoulder the responsibility for their performances, creative initiatives and the end product. This will sometimes result in a sense of hubris, and their arrogance can interfere with their relationships with other musicians, record companies and other stakeholders. However, as is the case with all methodologies connected with production, there is no 'right way' of production and there are many examples of artist producers who are revered for their contribution to popular music, such as Stevie Wonder, Jack White and Imogen Heap. Some British Asian producers like XZecutive, Deepack Kazanchi and Kuljit Bhamra also considered themselves artists and would at times release their own self-produced albums. This is explored further in Chapter 8, where two producers, as artists, produce and perform on their own recording.

The Auteur

The auteur is similar to the artist producer and is the primary creative force. They often compose, engineer, mix, perform and arrange the song before recording another artist singing over the completed backing track. These producers are often programmers who have ventured into composition and arrangement and, as a result of achieving success and the respect of their peers and the public, will attract guest artists, known as featured artists, to sing on their tracks. The commercial and contractual deals with these productions reflect the power of the producer or the artist. The power, in terms of attracting sales, of either the artist or producer, has a bearing on the percentage split of royalties and also impacts on the relationship within the studio. This also has a bearing on the name or credits on the recording. For example, *Waterfall* (2017) by Stargate featuring P!nk and Sia or, *Irreplaceable* (2006) by Beyoncé, produced by Stargate (Discogs 2020). There is a strong element of collaboration, usually only in the performance and not the production values, which provides a different dynamic to these recordings from those of the artist/producer. The most common procedure is that the auteur will create the entire track including writing a melody and the artist will sing on the pre-prepared track. Examples include Kanye West (with other artists), Stargate, Max Martin, Babyface and Timbaland. Often the Auteur starts a production company as a vehicle for their recordings. The Auteur was also a common style of approach for producers in British bhangra. They would programme and play on the recordings and then only get the artist or the singer of the band to complete the recording. There are methods explored in Chapter 6, *The British Asian Producers and their Contributions to Bhangra*.

The Facilitative Producer

The facilitative producer co-produces with an artist and is often involved in more technical aspects such as programming and engineering. The facilitative producer often comes from an engineering background and may have worked with the artist previously in the capacity of an engineer, but has been elevated to the role of producer in recognition of their sonic and technical contribution. This has been a traditional route for producers who have started their careers as interns serving teas and coffees, then to the position of tape ‘op’ (operator) or second engineer who used to thread tapes, align tape heads on multitrack tape recorders and set up microphones, and then to the role of engineer; taking direction from and facilitating the

technical requirements of the producer. Culture Club's producer Steve Levine is an example of this (Levine 2014). He started as a tape op at Red Bus studios and then gradually moved into a position as an engineer. Boy George asked him to help Culture Club with their demos and he became their producer, selling over 5 million copies of their debut album *Kissing to Be Clever* (1982). As the success of this album suggests, this development of the artist, combined with the growth of an engineer into a producer, engenders a certain amount of trust between the two parties. There is also an understanding and familiarity that can ease the creative process within the studio environment. This relationship does not necessarily continue outside of the studio and may be practised solely on a professional basis, as was the relationship between Levine and Boy George. In some cases, this relationship can negatively impact the recorded outcomes as the producer lacks experience in production and cannot draw on previous experience to expedite the recording process. This type of relationship was not as prevalent within British bhangra, as the artists were very reliant on the expertise and experience of the producers to create a marketable product for their prospective record-buying audience. However, there is no one route to success, and every production scenario is different and has its own set of benefits, problems and solutions.

The Collaborative Producer

The collaborative producer works as a member of the creative team and becomes the 'extra' member of the band/artist. Most producers consider themselves to be collaborative, but there are nuances within those collaborative roles. Producers' creative input may be technical, performance-based, compositional or part of a bigger conceptually creative picture as Tony Visconti was to David Bowie (Harford 2016). Some of these collaborative producers may have more expertise in the different creative disciplines. For example, producers like Adele's producer, Paul Epworth (Paul Epworth 2020) and Daniel Lanois, producer of U2 and Cold Play (Daniel Lanois Music 2020), are experienced musicians and songwriters. This was also the case with British bhangra producer Deepak Khazanchi who, in some cases, would collaborate with the artist as if he was part of the band, performing on the recordings as well as arranging and co-composing. My own experience of producing Raga Kaka Winston (Taak Singh) was very much a collaborative relationship, as is explored in Chapter 7.

This scenario often has the producers shifting between disciplines; the role of artist, musician, arranger, composer, engineer, songwriter and conductor. Ultimately decisions vest in the producer as mediator on behalf of all stakeholders, including the record companies, but some activities require an equitable position so that they can be undertaken successfully. This can include the producer's contribution as a musician or songwriter. Additional negotiations must be engaged with that impact on the remunerative income streams of all stakeholders concerned. Performances on recordings will attract other revenue payments from broadcasts, as will any contribution to the compositional copyright. The producer usually acts as a colleague rather than functioning as a controlling entity. There is more time spent negotiating creative differences in this scenario, but it can result in some of the most successful artist/producer partnerships as it promotes exploration and experimentation, which can lead to new creative vistas.

The Electronic Dance Music Producer

Electronic dance music (EDM) producers' strengths lie in programming and are more aligned to the 'Facilitative' rather than the 'Collaborative' producers. Many current dance producers are also artists and fall into the Artist Producer or Auteur category. They may employ 'featured artists' who may sing or rap on their productions. Producer examples include David Guetta, deadmau5 and Daft Punk. This subset description identifies genre as well as role and can intersect with other categories. However, it is used almost as a branding exercise within the music industry as it is clear in its genre definition and relates to the 'club' scene and dance market. Other tech-based producer/artist/composers of genres such as House, Trance, Hip-Hop and Grime will use the term producer as a branding term for composition, programming and performance, but it is more prevalent within EDM (Collin 2018).

The Enabling Producer

The enabling producer primarily refers to an early form of A&R (artist and repertoire) function, which has as much to do with discovering artists as it does with the recording process. Production credits for these producers have often been a point of contention for artists and collaborative producers who make a creative contribution to the recording process. Artists may feel that the production credit does not fully represent the role and that the

enabling producers should be described as an entrepreneurial talent scout rather than being credited with production. Although there are blurred lines in relation to the role of these producers, as many creative contributing producers have acted as talent scouts, this led to negotiations in 2011 by representatives of the Music Producers Guild (MPG), with PPL (formerly Phonographic Performance Limited, to provide contractual clarity and equitable remuneration for the creative contributions of non-performing producers (PPL 2020). Representatives of the MPG included Steve Levine (Culture Club producer), Mark Rose, Tony Platt (Gary Moore and AC/DC producer) and me, in the capacity of Chief Executive Officer of the MPG, were instrumental in creating, negotiating and implementing a procedure and contract that is currently in place that now officially recognises and remunerates non-performing producers for their creative contributions. The royalty model is based on the precedence of a conductor being present in a recording studio and not contributing directly audibly to the recording. However, their contribution is key to the outcome, but not as a performing musician. The same scenario in modern popular music contexts can be compared to the contribution of a producer who shapes the sound of a record but does not perform on it. As this royalty is paid from the artist's share of performance royalties, the artist must contractually agree to this and collection and distribution is handled by PPL (PPL 2012). This also helps further to delineate the categorisation of the producer's role.

The Consultant Producer

The consultant producer acts as a mentor to the artist and occasionally contributes to the production during a recording with advice but is seldom in attendance at recording sessions. These producers give credence to a recording by association and will provide guidance, counsel and direction to the artist. This arrangement might be encouraged by a record company launching a new artist as the association may help sell more records and bring the new artist to the target market's attention faster through the association with a well-known producer. On several occasions, I was asked for my opinion by Fantronic Records, one of my main clients, on other recordings that I was not involved in and provided some guidance for the producers and the record company. In most cases, I was given a fee and sometimes also credited as an extra producer on the record. This was the case on the Balbir Bobby album (PicClick UK n.d.), *One Patiala Mix* (1994).

Cultural Interpreter, Cultural Manipulator and Producer as Audience

The following three categories have been added as a result of my own experiences within the recording studio and broaden the scope of the definition of producer. These categories have also helped to inform the research and the formulation of the research questions. The identification of the Cultural Interpreter leads to the question as to how much of a cultural interpreter a producer needs to be, to effectively operate within a creative cross-cultural context. Further to this, does a producer need to be a cultural manipulator in order to reach new markets, or is it a by-product of the development of genres? Finally, the role of Producer as Audience may be a device for ensuring compliance of an artist in the studio and may have nothing to do with representation of the potential market.

The Cultural Interpreter

This producer needs to ensure that they meet market expectations within a cultural context and often are associated with World Music. They do not adapt or change that which is accepted practice within a musical, cultural genre as their role is to capture the best representation of that culture to the target market music consumer. These producers are often cultural experts and have a deep understanding of the nuances, language and structure of the music being recorded. How much of a cultural expert they need to be, if they are not of the target culture, is determined by how different the music is from their own mainstream associations. This was one of my initial roles as a producer of bhangra. I was not entirely comfortable in this role as I could not fully relate to the culture I was creating product for. This motivated me to start experimenting with cross-cultural musical fusion, as is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

The Cultural Manipulator

This producer will take existing culturally based and diverse genres, manipulate them, and adapt them for mainstream accessibility. It can be argued that the cultural manipulator appropriates culture for their own artistic or commercial gain, but this can be a reflexive arrangement where the cultural operatives are appropriating mainstream sensibilities to access wider markets. Bates (2008) suggests that one of his four key components in his

general theory for the study of recording production is linking technological manipulations with social forces. These social forces can further be manipulated to create new genres. British bhangra is an example of this relationship, and even though the bhangra producers often fell into other categories, they were also cultural manipulators. However, the manipulation that Bates alludes to is not the only factor in the equation. It is not just a technical manipulation that is in play. The use of technology to manipulate existing genres to feed into the new genre being created is not necessitated by technology. Technology is only a tool in the manipulation process, yet sometimes it is the technology that precipitates the creation of a new genre. Hip-hop and sampling is an example of this. As a practitioner, I had always considered the technology and the recording studio space as a tool or instrument in the interpretation of existing genres and when applied to Punjabi folk bhangra, an enabling tool in creating the new British bhangra.

The Producer as Audience

Hennion (1989) posits that the producer is the first audience and represents the potential consumer by introducing the function of listener to the performer, thereby acting as an intermediary between the marketplace and the art. This is a limited viewpoint based on the original concept of producer as a commercial representative of the taste of a potential market. This is still a consideration, but the function has gradually diminished, as producers have become a more intrinsic part of music-making. Although an important element in engendering trust between the artist and the producer relative to art and markets, the function loses impartiality the more the producer is involved in the creative process. This creative contribution needs to be tempered with commercial sensibilities but can be compromised by the producer's creative input. Within this category, the producer's function therefore leans more towards one of co-artist and facilitator. The producer does not act as a critic on behalf of the audience but rather presents their creative contribution to an audience. The producer becomes part of the creative process and is in a form of general communication with the audience through commercial concerns, projecting their own creativity and the artist's creative output at the listener.

Beat Maker, Vocal Producer and AI Production

These categories have evolved in the wake of technological advances and the streamed music economy. They emerged much later, after my activities as a bhangra producer, and did not directly impact the research.

Beatmaker

Beatmakers are an adaptation of an earlier manifestation of producer/programmer/creator where the producer will create or programme a backing track, or individual instrument, based on structures for a song or rap track, without the inclusion of a melody or lyric. The differentiation between beatmakers and producers lies in the financial model attached to the beatmakers' output. The beatmaker generates the beats or backing track and then offers it for sale or lease, royalty-free, for a fee. A typical contractual example would be the use of a beat by a rapper for a set fee, for usage up to 500,000 streams and for a duration of no longer than two years (Stokel-Walker 2019). This term can be extended, or a buyout can be negotiated where the copyright then vests in the purchaser, who can then use the beat for any purpose.

Vocal Producer

Vocal producers often work with beats or a backing track of a song provided by other producers or beatmakers. Their fees are leveraged by their reputation, expertise, and the number of hit singles they have worked on. They may only get involved in the latter stages of a production to work on just the vocal recordings. They may also be asked to source a singer to work with a top-line songwriter, one who writes the melody and lyrics only, as a preliminary assessment of the viability of a song or to determine which artist would best suit the release of the song (Abbey Road Institute Miami n.d.). This subgroup of producers has grown out of the changing model of the record industry, which no longer focuses on album production and sales, concentrating on single song releases and streaming revenues (Hesmondhalgh 2020). The ease of access of audio files via the Internet also means that different elements of the production process can happen in different locations and by different contributors.

AI Production

AI (Artificial Intelligence) is a relatively new method of music production that has not yet reached the point where it can generate hit records without the input and manipulation of humans (Time 2020). Pachet, Director of Spotify's Creator Technology Research Lab, suggests that the technology is very much at the beginning of its development. AI is increasing in its adaptability and function and has already been employed by artists such as Arca and Dadabots to augment their productions, or in the case of Ash Koosha, with artist Isabella Winthrop, to create and generate songs and lyrics for the AI pop star, Yona (Something Curated 2019). The issues surrounding AI copyright and master recording rights ownership have been points of discussion amongst CMOs (Collective Management Organisations) like the PRS and music publishers.

The Definitive Role of the Producer

As has been discussed, there are many producer roles within the recording process and they are often interchangeable. The lines are often blurred, which can lead to some confusion when trying to fully define the type or style of a producer. This is compounded by the fact that no production technique or recording is the same and that this is extended further by additional descriptive nuances when applied to cross-cultural genres. However, no matter how nuanced the roles are or how complex the genres, recording styles, contexts, or definitions, one theme runs through all producers' roles. Ultimately, producers are decision-makers. They may not be the right decision, and the decisions may negatively impact the end recording, but it is their function to make a decision within the production process. Mick Glossop, producer of the Wonderstuff and Van Morrison (interview 2020), maintains that the producer constantly makes decisions, including which songs to record, which microphones to use, which performances to include and how to approach mixing the track.

As will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, the producer is challenged by the artist as the producer tries to impose or suggest creative ideas in the recording studio. How this is mediated has a direct bearing on the trust engendered between the artist and producer and ultimately on the success of the recording. The sensitivity of this situation differs from producer to producer, but from the case studies and interviews undertaken, it appears that this

sensitivity is more acute in the musician-based producer than that of the technology-rooted practitioner. Technology becomes the mediator of culture, and producers act as interpreters. Through this interpretation, genres are born.

4.4 The Studio as Instrument

Current producers are now mostly multi-skilled and can operate across many disciplines. Most producers view themselves as musical practitioners with the same aims, functions, and aspirations as performing musicians but utilising different tools. When a musician performs on guitar, the guitar is the musician's instrument. Whilst in a studio, the studio becomes the producer's instrument. However, when working with an artist, the artist also becomes the producer's instrument, working within the same parameters as a musical instrument with restrictions and performance abilities, except that there are more variables and disciplines to negotiate; each artist exhibiting different characteristics. Much like the example used to define the non-performing producer recognised by PPL, a conductor must shape the performance of the individual instrumentalists along with the collective colour and texture of the orchestra as a whole. The producer has a similar function, but the function extends to the use of technology and additional experimentation of sonic techniques, musical arrangements, performance strategies and structure, all in the interest of achieving the best possible result. This is the shared objective of the performer, musician, conductor and producer within a recording studio context and supports the theory that the artist is the producer's instrument. Just as a conductor has varying degrees of influence over the orchestra and the soloists' performance, the producer has varying degrees of influence over the finished recording. This influence depends on the artist they are working with and the relationships between the producer and the stakeholders, including, but not necessarily limited to, the record company and their representatives, the songwriter/s, musicians, engineers and arrangers.

The technology of music productions and the creation of electronic synthesizers and guitar processing units have merged into a subcategory of technology that Susan Schmidt Horning terms 'instrument'. However, Schmidt Horning goes on to state that acoustical engineers had viewed the studio as 'an instrument in its own right' by 1947 (Frith and Zagorski-Thomas 2012). As a producer, guitarist, keyboard player, programmer, arranger, and studio engineer, I can vouch for this nomination of roles. When asked what instrument I play, my stock

response for the last 20 years has been; 'I play many instruments, but my main instrument is the recording studio.' The rationale for this is that my objective, in whatever I do musically, ultimately ends up being facilitated by or used in a recording studio environment. The environment provides the function, context, and creative workflow for all of my musical output. What is contained within the recording studio, the equipment within it, its digital, analogue or hybrid optimisation or the musical instruments available is all secondary to the greater entity of the studio itself. The studio enables the furthering of creative outputs, experimentation, and new genres, even if it is simply to document these entities.

Studios are also the means by which newly recorded music is distributed to a wider audience. Without the studio, music would only be performed live, and its distribution would not be as extensive. The studio becomes the first stage of a process for music to be distributed via all commercial and broadcast conduits. However, this is further complicated by the increased usage of bedroom or project studios (Walzer 2017). The facility is often just a software digital audio workstation on a laptop. Therefore, the laptop becomes the studio and the first stage in the creation and distribution process. The entire facility of a recording studio can be emulated or contained within the laptop with the addition of a soundcard and microphone. This then further illustrates how the studio/laptop is greater than itself. It is the enabler, tool, instrument and creative conduit.

4.5 Studios as Creative Spaces

It is not just the technology, stakeholders and creative contributors that influence the production output. The influence of the recording studio space that houses the technology can also affect production. Gibson's article, *Recording Studios, Relational Spaces of Creativity in the City* (2005) takes the view that all stakeholders in the music-making process, including those that are not directly involved in the creative disciplines, are affected by the space occupied by recording studios, and that recorded music is a product of more than the studio-artist-producer relationship. Gibson suggests that record companies, publishers, marketers, agents and managers, recording studios, technology and broadcasters have as much influence on the recorded product as does the artist. This may be the opinion of the individual stakeholders, who often feel the need to maintain or justify their positions within the industry and exert power and influence over an artist. The artist and producer will often pay lip service

to this dynamic to solicit support, but it is most often the producer's influence over the artist, the technological tools and the producer's vision that have the most significant influence on the recorded output. The producer acts as a filter, buffer and conduit for all the stakeholder inputs. It is the producer that represents the interests of all inputs, including creative, business, marketing and management, and has to negotiate any technological parameters and creative possibilities that technology has to offer at the time of recording. The producer's role is also to mitigate the suggestions made by any stakeholders as to the creative direction of the output. Sometimes it is simpler for the producer to reject any outside contribution, with the agreement or in collaboration with the artist, and just realise their own vision of the project. Gibson's theory that the recording studio itself is a significant contributor to the creative input of a recording has little grounding and inflates the importance of the spaces that are used to record in.

Recording studios have become iconic location markers and certain equipment used has become synonymous with success. For example, the custom Neve recording console, designed by Rupert Neve in conjunction with George Martin for Air Studios, is a draw for many musicians (AIR Studios online n.d.), as is Abbey Road Studios for their association with the Beatles and many other hit records (Bennett 2016). However, the use of the microphone that Elvis used in Sun City Recording Studios does not ensure a hit record. The eulogising of recording spaces and locations provide marketing opportunities for the studios to exploit. Artists and producers also employ them as a device to create a perceived space for creativity and inspiration. This can have the same effect as a talisman via suggestive psychology as a creative trigger aligning location, types of equipment and space with success, based on previous achievements and iconic associations. The success of a recording studio is often due to the local musicians that record in it or make up the session musician pool that feeds into the studio recording session culture and not the studio itself. Studio recordings such as those done at Motown's Hit Factory in Detroit were shaped by the session musicians (The Funk Brothers) that played on most of the hits, as did groups of session musicians like the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section and the Muscle Shoals Horns in the studio of the same name in Alabama. The Country Music sound of Nashville is not due to the studios situated in the city but by the musicians that are drawn to the location as a result of mythologising Nashville as a music centre. It could be argued that the location is responsible for musicians gravitating to the city, but it was the musicians that created the product that led to the

exploitation and mythology in the first place. This is a somewhat circuitous argument, but ultimately the success is attributed to musicians and producers and not the fetishism connected with the locale of the creative space that studios provide. This scenario has now nearly disappeared as a result of internationalism, virtual recording sessions with musicians adding their parts in different geographic locations, and the growing recognised influence of the producer in the process, now in many circumstances being nominated as the artist, with guest or 'featured' singers contributing to the output. Examples of this include Fat Boy Slim, David Guetta, Jay-Z, Calvin Harris, deadmau5, Kanye West and Dr Dre, amongst many others.

Gibson also states that studios that have upgraded their equipment continue to do well, but this has now changed and many top studios, unless aligned with production companies or record companies, have had to diversify to survive. Abbey Road Studios and Metropolis Studios in London, and RCA Studio B in Nashville have started to offer educational opportunities to music technology students, often in conjunction with established music higher education providers. They have also increased their mastering facilities to capitalise on the home or project recording market that require final mastering[16] to be done in dedicated facilities. The space associated with a creative environment has shifted from geographic locations to the contextual creative space managed and formed by the relationship between the artist and producer, each performing better within their own 'comfort zones', which may be environmental, technical, geographical, psychological or a combination of any or all of these, but driven and determined by the protagonists in question and not the actual studio space itself.

The cultural and artistic space inhabited by the artist can also be at odds with the technologically creative space inhabited by the producer and often requires a process of negotiation. This is explored in the case study of the recording of Country and Western in Chapter 8, where the flautist (bansuri player) keeps changing instruments in the middle of the recording of one song. Initially, as a recording studio is home ground for a producer, the artist

[16] Mastering is the final process of optimising a mix to ensure it is best reproduced in the format it will be delivered. This includes CD, vinyl, streaming formats and download formats. It is the mastering engineer's responsibility to ensure there is parity across all tracks on an album that may have been recorded at different studios, by different engineers and with different producers (Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011).

is slightly disadvantaged and not as comfortable in adapting to the environment, initially rendering it incompatible with creative endeavours. The artist needs to exert some control within the space, as this is not neutral ground, it is the domain of the producer. Placing instruments and belongings in the environment will aid in the process, tantamount to nesting or putting out markers. However, sometimes the artist will make unwarranted demands to exhibit a counter to the producer's position in the studio and to exert some control. These demands might include lighting, placement of furniture, availability of drinks or food, hiring in equipment not necessarily required for the session or having third party visitors attend the session. After a period of time manoeuvring and posturing, equilibrium is achieved and the creative collaboration commences. At what point in the posturing procedure both parties, artist and producer, acknowledge mutuality differs in each situation and is tempered by factors such as previous artist studio experience or the amount of time spent between the producer and artist in preproduction rehearsing or demoing the songs. There may be a mutual respect already determined by reputation but there is always an almost ritualistic jostling for position in the studio in order to set creative boundaries before recording commences.

The typical studio layout includes a control room, which houses most of the technology required to facilitate the recording process. The other room or rooms are the recording or performance areas that may include dedicated booths for vocals or drums, providing audio separation and different ambient spaces for the performers. These areas are often subtly designated or claimed by musicians as their territory, as the studio control room is populated by the engineer, the assistant engineer and the producer who in turn, claim this space as their territory with a hierarchy of command; the producer at the helm. This creates not only a divide of territory but can lead to a creative divide. The artist or musician will often, as a statement of territory, place belongings, instruments and instrument cases in inconvenient positions in the studio control room as a challenge to the control of the creative decision-making processes. It becomes a statement of boundaries, defining the space that is controlled by the artist and in some cases, an unconscious attempt to gain ground and take ownership of the space controlled and maintained by the producer. This subtle passive aggressive stance, if not resolved amicably, can result in a delay in the proceedings or impact negatively on the recorded output.

In the case of my own productions, I always marvelled at the similarity in behaviour between different artists who were unaware of their actions and the ritual that seemed to be observed every time a recording project started. Sometimes furniture would be moved around to facilitate the placement of cases or amplifiers without consulting the engineer or producer where there was no requirement for the moving of contents in the first place. This indicated to me, a challenge of authority. There were also attempts at familiarisation through social exchange in the form of banter, perhaps in an attempt to establish social order and demarcation lines. I was particularly sensitive to this as I was often working with cultures outside of my own comfort zone and felt that I had to be observant, in a learning capacity, and respectful of cultural rituals and behaviour in order to engender the trust and respect required to achieve my objectives as a producer.

4.6 Technology and Culture

Greene (2005,) observes that as music synthesizer technologies became more accessible, sounds would be programmed, saved and used by musicians, and then appropriated by manufacturers as pre-programmed sound sets, or 'tone banks', sold with new iterations of their synthesizer product lines. Music makers are continually driving this development of technology and then, in turn, the technology drives new musical forms based on the new sound sets. In this context, the musician is inspired by the exploration of technology, and the producer's role is to channel and facilitate that exploration. For example, the Synclavier was an early American digital synthesizer and sampler workstation, manufactured first in 1977 and used by Trevor Horn on Frankie Goes to Hollywood recordings (Warner 2003).

The result is sometimes the creation of new genres or at its least significance culturally, a new sonic style that may help to sell the recorded product. There is also anxiety, expectation and fetishism associated with music technology, and the producer often needs to smooth the pathways of experimentation or demystify the usage of the technology for the artist. This requires trust and an understanding of the artists' expectations, managing those expectations, communicating what the technology can achieve, translating ideas into a technological format, and mediation between the technologies, the artist and the record company to maintain commerciality and artist integrity.

All of these areas require informed objectivity, but the producer's creative subjectivity will inevitably influence the direction that artists will take in the pursuit of commercial success. Although commerciality can ultimately be verified through sales, it is an impossible task to assess the possible sales success rate during the recording and production process, even if the artist has a track record of sales in the marketplace. It is the producer's responsibility to deliver an end product that will provide the best possible opportunity for commercial success. This is tempered with what the artist may consider to be their artistic integrity. The record company's commercial interests and the artist's concerns over integrity are subject to negotiation between all parties concerned and often requires the producer to mediate on behalf of both sides, taking into consideration the cultural expectations of the target market. This is made more difficult when a producer does not share the same cultural roots as the performer. This was very much the case when I was producing bhangra in the early 1990s and is explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

In *Wired For Sound*, Pegrum (2005, pg. 84) describes producers as culture brokers who are 'forced by circumstance to find pragmatic solutions to…issues of appropriation, exploitation and legality...also finding a balance between the aesthetic and commercial'. This is closer to the actual process, but pragmatism is also tempered by the producer's creative input and emotional investment in a project. What Pegrum is referring to is the producer, in this case, the study of the recording of Australian aboriginal didgeridoo music, acting as an interface between the artist and the end recorded product, ensuring it maintains authenticity, artistic integrity and commercial viability. What is not covered is the producer's creative contribution and musical collaboration that has become standard practice in British cross-cultural genres. It could be suggested that the producer is as much an artist as the recording artist in these circumstances.

The producer's creative contribution within the collaborative exercise is as important to the music as technical facilitation. The producer may provide expertise in programming or recording, but the collective mediation and negotiation of the decision-making process has always been key to the success, both commercially and artistically, of the finished product. The artist/producer relationship is a subject explored by few scholars but what is almost entirely ignored is the emotional investment made by the producer and their reactions to the

mediation process. There are several compromises, adaptations and incompatibilities considered when meeting the objectives of all the stakeholders concerned.

4.7 The Normalisation of Hybridity

There are mixed listener reactions to the introduction of new technologies and cross-cultural genres, but eventually this form of hybridity normalises and new genres and subcultures are established (Nettl 2005). Associations with sonic representations of new technologies, including synthesizer sound-sets, recording techniques utilising outboard equipment and digital plug-in technology, encourage further explorations and inform the creation of new genres. However, this can also result in a certain amount of homogenisation within the music as the users of the technology will be utilising the same types of software and hardware. Perceived popularism of timbres used on ‘hit' records will play a part in feeding into the new hybrid genres in the interest of attaining commercial success, further normalising the genres.

The first discipline involved is the identification of the significant markers of indigenous emanation. Music of indigenous emanation can be defined as music that is associated with a locale, a community or a culture (Taylor, T. D. 2007). The markers will include sonic references like the use of a sitar to identify Sound Asian culture or the sound of a fiddle, employing specific phrases and bowing techniques to evoke Celtic culture (Strings Magazine 2009). Technologies also play a part in defining the culture that is associated with a music and its locale. For example, electronic dance music, rap, and hip hop programming techniques define and identify cultures. This is evidenced in hip hop culture where different programming techniques are employed in the U.S.A. (Snoop Dog, Drake, Eminem) to those used in the U.K. (Stormzy, Dizzy Rascal, Skepta) as a statement of identity and culture (Kajikawa 2015).

Next is the point at which normalisation occurs. This is when a hybrid music that has its roots in different cultures and/or musical influences loses its original meaning and merges with the music associated with local culture. This can be achieved with the use of technology, especially if the musical culture is rooted in technological, stylistic procedures. The normalisation of hybrid genres is then based on the technology and not necessarily on the cultures that initially fed into creating the new genres. This informed my practice as a

producer, as I employed technology to create what I perceived to be more interest in the music, without consideration of the original bhangra genre I was adapting.

As to music and its lyrics, the first and most obvious marker of normalisation should be language (Berger, H.M. and Carroll, M.T. eds. 2003). However, this is not necessarily the case now that some languages, such as English, have internationalised as a process of accessibility to knowledge exchanges and the globalisation of goods. With the advent and spread of the Internet, certain homogenisation of language has enabled cultures to interact in the virtual world.

Iranian Hip Hop, performed in Farsi, cannot claim to be indigenous music of Iran or the U.S.A. Normalisation is achieved to a point through the use of language and the use of Iranian instruments in the recordings. However, the music provides a more internationally accessible conduit for internal cultural and political expression on internet platforms rather than being a new genre created as a result of the fusion of indigenous roots and location origin, which was the case with British bhangra.

I have called this the normalisation of hybridity within music. This is established when music derived from two or more sources or influences becomes accepted as the indigenous music of the locale or nation it is associated with. One example that illustrates this is reggae, which was an adaptation of 1940s American Jump Jive music (Borthwick and Moy 2004), slowed down and adapted with the inclusion of Mento (an African and European fusion folk music) phrasing (Martens, Emiel, and Koen de Groot 2017). After popularising this music by artists such as Bob Marley and Eric Clapton, the music was normalised and identified as Jamaican. Reggae is now known internationally as the music of Jamaica, indigenous to Jamaica and has its roots firmly established in Jamaica. Sub-genres of reggae have evolved, and additional hybrid genres have emerged due to migration and interaction of cultures, both youth-orientated and market forces led. Determining the tipping point or marker when this normalisation occurs is complex and the boundaries are blurred by factors such as language and geography.

If music which has its roots in cultural diversity relative to a host nation, is then hybridised through cultural interaction and technology, thereby creating a new culturally-based music,

and is understood to be a new product of the host nation (Roy 2010), does that music then become indigenous to the host nation? In the case of British bhangra, internationally accepted as music that has been developed and produced in the United Kingdom, the genre has not been absorbed into the consciousness of British popular culture as a recognised indigenous music. The origin of the form was a hybrid emanation from the Punjab province straddling the border of Pakistan and India and was strictly an expression of dance, with the music serving the dance. The dance with accompanying music was an inseparable entity, and one did not exist without the other. Only on its adaptation by the British South Asian Punjabi community and its cultural fusion with Western popular forms and technology did it achieve independent status as a music from its dance origins, rendering it a British music and a genre in its own right losing its original cultural meaning. However, due to the use of Punjabi lyrics and the failed attempts at translation into English, as discussed in Chapter 7, Case Study – Satwant Singh Taak, it was unable to gain indigenous status in a mainstream British context. An illustration of this is given in Chapter 5, 'The Birth of British Bhangra'. This precipitated the integration of hip hop into the genre, as stated earlier, and created a watering down or homogenisation of what was considered British bhangra.

4.8 Technological Mediation

Sound aesthetics for different cultures and markets needs to be considered carefully by the producer. Whereas dynamics (different volume levels in areas of the performance) in Western Pop music use a limited dynamic range, other music utilises dynamics as a part of performance and composition. This can conflict with the conventions of Western mass-market, popular music production. Record companies will demand that Pop productions are released with a limited dynamic range in the belief that it will provide a better chance of radio airplay, be perceived to be louder and offer a competitive edge. This technique, using audio compression, became an expected function within mastering in the 1980s and was also used for television commercials to make the commercials appear louder than programmes. This was known as the Loudness Wars (Devine 2013).

Understanding cultural considerations and finding acceptable technological solutions to all parties is another key element in the producer's mediation toolkit. Both artist and company need to understand the commercial and artistic objectives, and the producers are often the

central mediating figure of this negotiation. Decisions will be weighted in favour of the paymasters, but that can be a complicated issue, as contractually, within the framework of the record company deal, the artist will ultimately be paying all costs.

Technological advances impact new musical languages, and record producers act as interpreters, giving rise to new genres. With the aid of producers, diverse cultural music practitioners harness new technologies, adapting the output of those technologies to shape their music. In the case of reggae, tape delay, reverbs and multi-tracking provided the tools for the development of dub mixing (Hitchins 2014), which in turn influenced the sound and development of British reggae. The genre, further facilitated by engineers and producers with more sophisticated recording technology, synthesizers and samplers, evolved into a commercially accepted part of mainstream popular music. With its roots in Punjabi folk music, Bhangra started to employ electric guitars, bass, drum kits and keyboards in live performances, which were then further translated into a programmable form by producers in British recording studios in the 1980s, contributing to a new indigenous British genre. The artist/producer collaborative process was, in effect, mediated by technology.

4.9 Technology Shapes Music Markets

Technology has a significant impact on music cultures and markets. The physical product itself imposes structure and delivery requirements on the production process. Original 12" vinyl records imposed time constraints on the musical programme content to 45 minutes over two sides or 22.5 minutes per side, but to increase bass response and volume, especially for music with low-frequency bass like dance music, this was reduced to 18-20 minutes per side (Masterdisk 2018). Each side would require an order of songs or material to compliment the artist's presentation and conform to length. The 'sides' represented a form of performance that conformed to listening expectations. Technological advances in digitisation produced the CD available to the public from 1982 and increased the potential playing time to 74 minutes, negating the requirement to split the performance or sequence of material into two equal parts. This provided the consumer with a different focus and expectation of the product they had purchased and how music was listened to. Tracks could be sequenced or skipped on domestic CD players, removing some of the concentration on song order for CDs. The shift to mp3 streamed and downloaded music has removed the necessity for song sequencing and

has almost negated the album format. This has changed music culture, listening habits and music markets through technology. As of 2017, streaming has overtaken records sales and become the most used vehicle for music consumption (UK Music 2017).

The music-buying public can be fickle, and music marketers and artists must refresh the product offered by introducing new and innovative sounds that will encourage sales or streamed music consumption. This has been a common factor in the mainstream record industry and can be shown in examples from the Beatles with *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) use innovative studio technologies such as backwards tape and flanging. Donna Summers' producer Georgio Moroder's seminal use of synthesized drums and sequenced bass on *I Feel Love* (1977) created a paradigm shift in the recordings of disco and funk genre productions. Although the artist's original intention was not necessarily focused entirely on record sales, there was a motivating artistic ideal to create something new, which was then harnessed and exploited by the record companies. Often this creative direction was the result of harnessing new technology, which then satiated the consumer hunger for something new for a short period, driving other artists to search for different and more unique sonic palates, resulting in further new sonic offerings, driving the musical instrument and recording industry manufacturers to provide newer, more accessible and other tools for creating music which again drove the product that consumers purchased to newer sonic vistas; and so the cycle continues.

4.10 Summary

Technological advances in synthesizer, sequencing and software technologies, as outlined earlier, have impacted the way music is made, performed, recorded and sold. The inter-relationship between music and technology often reflects social culture, and the advances made in technology are often driven by the insatiable desire to advance and experience the 'new'. There is an assumption that culture drives technology and technology drives culture, but within music technology and markets of a diverse framework, alterity is an additional factor to be considered. The challenge facing the producer of music that is not rooted in their cultural background, but which is influenced by and adapted to technologies that are the construct and culture of the producer, is to create a product that contains enough cultural authenticity for its diaspora market, at the same time as presenting a new and exciting

listening experience to attract as wide an audience as possible within the confines of the potential indigenous/local market. In the case of World Music, the producer sometimes has to curb the enthusiasm of the artist who wants to utilise new technologies, as the primary objective is to meet the expectation of authenticity by the marketplace. This assessment of authenticity may be misguided, inaccurate or fetishised but is represented within the music and helps to bolster sales to world market audiences. The producer has to represent cultural values, accurate or inaccurate, but not necessarily their own, and there is often an internal conflict as the producer's perspective conflicts with the artist's creative enthusiasm at the same time as missing the market expectation objective. Diverse cultural music practitioners harness new technologies and with the aid of producers, adapt and mould those technologies to fit in with their music. Reflexively the newly adopted technology influences and changes the music, creating new genres. In the case of reggae, tape delay, reverbs, and multi-tracking provided the tools for dub mixing, which influenced the sound and development of British reggae. The genre, further facilitated by engineers and producers with more sophisticated recording technology, synthesizers and samplers, evolved into a commercially accepted part of mainstream popular music. With its roots embedded in Punjabi folk music, Bhangra started to employ electric instruments, drum kits and keyboards in live performances, which were then transformed through programming by producers in British recording studios in the 1980s, creating a new indigenous British genre.

Chapter 5: The Birth of British Bhangra

5.1 Introduction

Bhangra originated as a folk celebration of the harvest and continued to be practised as a music and dance in the UK, primarily as a celebratory activity commemorating the New Year, weddings or births. Because bhangra is music that emanates from a secular folk root, the nonreligious associations of bhangra provided a unique position for music to invite participation from musicians of different cultural and religious backgrounds. The language and harvest roots of bhangra provided the defining cultural parameters but did not exclude other cultures or maintain exclusivity. Ultimately this provided a conduit for social change.

To contextualise the interaction between actors in the recording studio during the bhangra sessions, explored in the following three chapters, and the experiences I encountered and inform my research, it is important to outline the development of bhangra in the U.K. from a South Asian cultural-historical perspective. Significantly, there is no documentation or academic exploration of the period between approximately 1970 and 1979, and all the information is collated through interviews and broadcasts containing anecdotes and reminiscences of that time period (Rukus Avenue Radio 2020). The fact that we can only rely on oral history in such recent times is a comment on the lack of perceived significance of events at that time. Khabra (2013) observes that the history of British bhangra is elusive, and there is a lack of material or contextual detail available even from the musicians who contributed to the genre. He then goes on to discuss the debate as to whether the development of bhangra in the UK was a contribution to English heritage or South-East Asian music heritage. It would appear that bhangra was marginalised and that this continues to this day. Even during the 2012 Olympic Games ceremonies, Danny Boyle, director of *Slum Dog Millionaire* (2008), in identifying Britain and Britishness, only included British bhangra once within a video for 14 seconds during a live performance of Dizzee Rascal's song 'Bonkers' (Dizzee Rascal 2012).

5.2 The Roots of Bhangra

Bhangra, until British bhangra emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was a multi-faceted activity that included both music and dance without separate identities (Sardar 2008). In the U.K., in the 1980s, music became a cultural output that could be marketed, exploited and monetised (Straw 2000).

Punjabi bhangra, the South Asian folk music and dance activity commemorating the harvest, borrows from geopolitical structures and colonising cultures exerting their influence and conventions on a locale (Schreffler, 2012, pgs.333-358). Being on the border of Muslim Pakistan and Hindustani, Sikh and Buddhist India, its geographical positioning enabled the heterogeneous diverse cultures to become more homogenous within a Punjabi identity. Roy (2010, pg. 30) comments that bhangra's hybrid form is informed by the denigration of bhangra hybrids created by Punjabi culture.

The Punjab province is situated in a delta area rich in agriculture. The word 'Punjab' is of Persian origin and means 'five rivers' (Jeffery, R. and Jeffery, P. 1997). Its geographical positioning has attracted a multiplicity of invading cultures over millennia, making the area rich in its diverse cultural traditions, language, and religiosity (Sekhon 2002). The Punjab is also the birthplace of the Sikh religion, one of the top five international religions, along with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, all of which are represented in the area. The three prominent religious groupings in the Punjab, post-partition in 1947, are Islam, practised mainly in the Pakistani Punjab region, Hinduism in the Indian Punjab province, and Sikhism, which is spread across both areas (Ishtiaq 2013). Its multi-cultural population of over 125 million people share traditions and enjoy the position of residing in the 'Breadbasket of India', having more than 24 million hectares cultivated for agriculture in the Pakistani Punjab province (www.cotf.edu 2013).

One of the main cultural activities, and not uncommon in agricultural areas, is the harvest celebration, which often manifests itself in dance. The celebratory music and dance of the Punjab are inextricably linked, and accounts of this cultural activity refer primarily to folk dancing and not the musical accompaniment. Established in the 14th or 15th Centuries, this is what is now known as bhangra (Punjabiportal 2010). The primary instruments accompanying

the dance are the dhol, a double-headed drum played with sticks whilst the drummer is standing up, and a dholak, a smaller rendition of the dhol, and thereby higher-pitched, often played with just the hands and fingers (Jain 2009). These instruments were played with a dotted eighth-note rhythm with the downbeat on the third beat of each notional bar of 4/4 (as there is no tradition of notation in bhangra). They accompanied the dance, driving it by expressing excitement and interpretation through the vehicles of volume and tempo. This would often be further accompanied by single-note melodies played on a bansuri (wooden flute) or harmonium, a bellows-driven keyboard instrument constructed in a wooden case and played whilst the performer is seated. Lyrics extolled the virtue of a plentiful harvest, new birth or marriage in the community, or the welcoming in of the New Year. This was then extended to courtship rituals and marriage arrangements or celebrations within the Punjabi communities. This melodic, lyrical offering was accented by chants and calls, often guttural in nature, using phonetic sounds similar to hey, hoi, aya, or hu, (‘heɪ’, ‘hɔɪ’, ‘əyæ’, or ‘hʊ’), (International Phonetics Association 2011).

The general understanding of those producers and musicians that I interviewed between 2011 and 2014 from the Southall, West London Punjabi community, is that bhangra, from the late 70s onward, was a dance and music that involved both men and women, mainly in the celebration of weddings. Its origins show that the dance was originally the confine of men, and that women had a separate dance called the Giddha. This dance emanated from an ancient dance known as the ring dance, which is a demonstration of femininity performed at festive events in the Punjab (Bhargava and Bhatt 2006, pg. 215). This was a separate activity from the bhangra dancing enjoyed by the British Punjabi communities. Bhamra (interview 2020) posits that bhangra music resulted from the influence of disco music and the popularity of Saturday Night Fever (1977). South Asian youth in the late 1970s would go to discos dressed up in John Travolta-esque white suits, and the four beats to the bar bass drum beats, which accompanied disco, were absorbed into Punjabi folk music resulting in a British bhangra rhythm called ‘Chaal’ or ‘bhangra Chaal’. Traditionally, the dhol drum was used as an announcement or call to meeting in villages and as an accompaniment to bhangra dance in the Punjab but was not included in early folk music (Rukus Avenue Radio 2020). However, when included in Punjabi folk music in the UK, the dhol provided a sonic identity to the new British bhangra music. Bhangra then became a popular addition to Sikh wedding receptions. Prior to the late 1970s, there was no dancing at the wedding receptions and it was only the

popularity of the new music that precipitated a trend in bhangra dancing with live bhangra bands at Sikh wedding receptions.

Bhamra (interview 2018) recounts the story of his mother, Mohinder Kaur Bhamra, performing Punjabi folk music at a wedding where the men were dancing, and the women were in another room but peeking through a door watching the men. Controversially at the time, Mohinder Bhamra invited the women in to dance and demanded that the men let them in. Apparently, she sang 'Dance, ladies dance. Clap your hands', and the dance floor was populated by over-enthusiastic women dancing, who would later be joined by the men. Bhamra claims that this was the beginning of bhangra dancing in Britain.

Bhangra music has been synonymous with bhangra dance within Punjabi culture, and it is evident that within the context of bhangra as a traditional folk celebratory activity, the music was a simple adjunct to dance. However, with the advent of the hybridisation of traditional bhangra folk music with Western pop music into British bhangra, the music branched off to occupy its own domain, independent of its original function as an accompaniment to the dance. Punjabi folk music has now been replaced by bhangra in the UK. Although there is still some vestige of folk performance, the music has, to a certain extent, been 'bhangrafied' (Global Sound Village 2020).

5.3 Bhangra Dance in the UK

Originally, bhangra dance was the focus and motivating force in the creation of bhangra music and was the driver and focal point of the celebratory congregation. As in the Punjab, when communities danced in celebration of the harvest, New Year, marriage or birth, so did the diasporic British Punjabis dance at weddings and family celebrations. The events were a forum for dance, and as soon as a live bhangra band would start to play and the dhol drums started their syncopated rhythms, the dance floor would fill with participants. Kumar of The Heera Group, one of the biggest bhangra bands from the UK (Dudrah 2002), recounts, 'As soon as the dholki started, everyone was on their feet' (interview 2012).

The Punjabi music and dance traditions were brought over to Britain and adapted, resulting in both men and women participating together at bhangra events to celebrate weddings and

births. Within a very short time, from the mass diaspora of the 1950s to the late 1970s, these events became synonymous with British Asian youth culture and the weddings would be 'gate-crashed', rendering the bhangra dancing and music more important than the event it was originally designed to commemorate and celebrate. Mistry states that boys and girls were still segregated and chaperoned in accordance with the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh traditions, the three most prominent religions of the Punjab (interview 2012).

This phenomenon became the backdrop to the explosion of bhangra in the UK amongst, primarily, the Punjabi communities whence the music originally emanated, and then further on in its development, creating an environment of inclusivity for all Indian Sub-Continent diasporic Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities, predominantly amongst the youth sector. Kumar recalls that initially, the wedding parties would be a familial event, but as the reputation of the bands such as Heera, Alaap and DCS grew, the parties would be gate-crashed by fans and swell in numbers and all attendees, invitees and trespassers alike, participated in the dance (interview 2012). Dance, music and congregation were intrinsically linked together, and as the popularity of the gatherings grew, promoters who saw the viability of a captive market that could be easily exploited, by default, imposed a sense of formalisation on the genre by organising paid-for events. By the mid-1980s, promoters would book and promote the bhangra bands as concert events and venues would be hired in city centres. This provided an organised structure to bhangra performance and the British Asian youth who would come to socialise and dance. These venues included the Hippodrome and The Empire, Leicester Square, and Hammersmith Palais, West London – an ideal venue, as it was originally constructed as a dance hall in 1919 (BBC4 Last Man Standing 2007). Other venues included Rotters Nightclub in Manchester and The Dome in Birmingham (Dudrah 2007, pg. 31).

The old cultural traditions of the Punjab were maintained within the context of the socio-political environment in the UK, but this was diametrically opposed to British youth culture and the progression of social integration and inclusion of the various immigrant sectors of society as it maintained a culturally isolationist stance. This was music for British Asians and not the British mainstream.

It was not considered acceptable within British society that there should be male and female segregation within social events or entertainment, even though there was still an underlying inequality in the workplace between men and women (Esteban and Roser 2018). 2018). Punjabi social structure kept men and women separated until marriage unless chaperoned, and marriages were mainly arranged marriages (Sardar 2008).

These events held an important secondary function to entertainment. In the arranged-marriage culture of Sikhism, unmarried men and women, and teenage boys and girls, were segregated and only permitted to meet at family gatherings where they were heavily chaperoned. By the late 1980s, bhangra daytime concert/dance events, known as **'**Daytimers**'**, provided an arena where boys and girls could meet without the interference of their parents and, in most cases, without their parent's knowledge. In an interview with Sanfrad Manzoor of the Guardian (Manzoor 2011), Gursharanpal Singh Chana, known as 'Boy Chana', states: 'They took place on Wednesday afternoons when colleges had free periods. We'd tell our parents we were off to class, but we were off to party'(The Guardian 2012). These events were not chaperoned and provided another conduit for social change and gave the British Asian youth an opportunity to break from the traditions of their own culture. The old cultural morals were gradually being broken down by the newly emerging British Asian youth.

Sabharwal recounts that not only did the promoters benefit from cheaper daytime venue rental rates and easier booking availability, the secretive nature of the events meant that marketing was done primarily through word of mouth. This resulted in minimal promotional costs compared to the usual costs of concert promotion, including advertising and pre-event ticket sales. 'All we had to do was put up a few posters in Southall and wait. Thousands used to come, and we only had to sell the tickets on the door' (interview 2012).

Bhangra dance 'Daytimers' became the main conduit for youth interaction. The truancy of British Asian youth increased exponentially during the dance hall events. It was a form of Asian youth rebellion and a forum for expression for British Asian youth (Huq 2006). This was something that could be owned by an emerging community and act as an identifier of a youth movement, creating a sense of belonging and community. This was a club that provided congregation amongst a diverse community while providing an arena for rebellion and subversion, and a statement of intent towards social change and experimentation. Dance-

orientated events provided the arena for the development of traditional Punjabi music and dance and music into a new British bhangra music that the emerging modern British Asian youth, searching for their own identity, could lay claim to.

Although there was a reticence on the part of bhangra artists and performers to partake in activities that went against the traditions and moral values of their communities, the lure of fame and fortune, combined with the perceived superstar status and adoring fan base, proved to be a heady attraction and most artists participated in the surreptitious afternoon concerts that were clearly in breach of the moral codes set by the older generation or first wave of immigrant Punjabi communities. Musician and producer Kuljit Bhamra considers that, although this went against accepted behaviour, this was a necessary function of the progression of social inclusion.

> In a way, you could argue that was … what needed to happen because we were living in a different country, you know. There's that whole thing about generation issues, and then there's also things about being in England and how we embrace the new cultures and new ways of thinking (interview 2012).

The dance hall provided a venue for male and female youth to interact outside of the confines of traditional cultural expectations but still within a culturally familiar backdrop. This interaction would sometimes go further than just the innocent interchanges and physicality involved in dance. There were reports of fights breaking out between rival factions and, at times, sexual activity was entered into in the confines and seemingly inconspicuous dimly lit atmosphere of the venues. Kumar from Heera stated, 'It got to the point I didn't want to do the concerts anymore. I didn't like what I saw. We had to stop – you know, they were doing things…' (interview 2012). Bhamra recounted,

> I think, at some point, the bands began to realise because there was lots going on in those clubs; I mean there was even, um, sex stuff going…, and it hit a chord close to home. And then people (musicians) started to, to boycott it, you know, or not to do it. And they realised it caused a lot of anger in the community, so it (eventually) stopped … There are arguments for it and against it still (interview 2012).

The dance halls also presented opportunities for the British Asian youth to invite other cultures into their newly established British Asian environment on fairly neutral terms, against the backdrop of dance. It was here that black, white and other Asian subcontinent youth, not of Punjabi descent and subsequently not steeped in the bhangra dance traditions, were exposed to music that was not initially familiar to them. Singh recalls,

> There'd be Bangladeshis. There'd be Gujurats ... and a good crowd of Bangladeshis from Brick Lane. Areas like that, Tower Hamlets - you know, Hindus. Muslim and, of course, Punjabi. So, there was a good mix. And even…uhm, blacks and English. You know, they were all there… (interview 2012).

At this point, bhangra music started to branch away from being an inexorable component of the dance and take on its own independent form. Western and African Caribbean influences started to shape the music, and new forms and sub-genres were created. Although still geared towards a dance market, the resultant product was distributed as music created and released, predominantly as cassette tapes, for sale in street markets and British Asian record shops in the high streets of the Asian subcontinent diasporic community conurbations in the UK. So successful was the phenomenon, that it is estimated that sales of some releases exceeded the sales of hits in the mainstream music industry. But as they were not marketed through traditional channels, they did not feature in the published music charts. Geoff Taylor, chairman of the BPI (British Phonographic Industries Association), recalls that the bhangra record industry remained outside of the normal mainstream models and that there were very few registrations of copyright or licensed ownership of the music. 'Some of these records were outselling the mainstream charted hits, but we had no way of telling how many were sold as they were not a part of the system' (Taylor 2012).

By the beginning of the 1990s, British bhangra music had taken on its position as an art form separate to dance, and although people still danced to it, it was not a prerequisite to its existence as a form. However, some argue that it is still dance that drives the music. In reply to the question as to whether bhangra has now separated from dance, broadcast journalist and recording artist Bina Mistry replied, 'No, it's still, it will always be dance. With bhangra, it will always be dance' (interview 2012).

However, due to the new British Asian youth identity, politics and embedded culture of a music and dance that were inextricably linked had broken down (Sharma, Hutnyk, Sharma, 1996), and separate dance and music entities had been created that provided an opportunity for further development of bhangra as a musical form. The associations to cultural and religious morals and traditions may have forced the creation of an environment whose only outcome was a split from the original ethos of dance. The birth of the dancehall as a forum for social interaction, first between boys and girls of Punjabi background, and then the introduction of other diverse communities into the mix, created the perfect conditions for social change and the music separated from the dance element was much more adaptable to a new emerging market and the shifting social values of race and nationality.

The dance of the old traditional folk harvest roots did not sit comfortably in the new British Asian world that had started to integrate more successfully into life in the UK mainstream. The second and third-generation offspring of the original diasporic immigrants were no longer fully aligned with the countries of origin. Their origins sat firmly in the UK, and their sense of belonging was to their immediate locale. In a discussion of Asian cultural identity, Baumann posits that South Asian parents in Southall in the 1980s and 1990s were perplexed with youth describing their culture as Asian. The term Asian Culture, at the time, could be used in reference to activities that seemed to disregard many of the traditions and customs Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims considered sacrosanct (Baumann 1996, pg.158).

This insight into a geographic attachment within culture also points to the same associations that led to dance and music separating as entities. Dance became representative of a historical root and origin, whereas the new music represented the ‘here and now’ and an association to a geographic sense of belonging, whether it was London, Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow, Manchester, Leicester, or Leeds. Bhangra became an identifying marker for British Asian culture. In order to make it more accessible to a market eager to integrate into its new homeland culture, the music needed to embrace and absorb influences from other Asian subcontinent cultures outside of the Punjab, but more importantly, the Western popular cultural influences that would shape it into a solely British indigenous music and thereby quickly separate it from the bhangra dance of its origins.

Sharma (1996) observes that bhangra became an enabler for Asian youth to affirm their position and identity within a dominant culture that either offered assimilation into British-ness or exclusion from it (Sharma, S. 1996). Although Sharma's observation of cultural identity supports the idea of British Asian youth culture seeking identity, the position taken is somewhat rigid and does not allow for a median scenario within the integration process. It is either a process of assimilation or the act of exclusion from British-ness without acknowledging the gradual cultural shift that might happen over several generations, or the mixed stages of cultural integration that might exist within the community at any given moment in time. Sharma also uses the word assimilation rather than integration, which insinuates a loss of culture when referring to those who have been assimilated.

One can conclude however, that the act of separation of the elements of bhangra into dance and music provided a marker for the start of social inclusion and integration into British lifestyles and cultural structures. Exploration of beat, hybridised with other influences such as reggae and technology-based textures and processes, resulted in creating British bhangra. The variations in genre and hybridity within British bhangra, such as bhangra muffin and bhangra hip hop, have become a barometer of cultural integration and British-ness. This was not a negation of roots and culture. This is a shift towards modernity and social inclusion without negating cultural identification.

5.4 Moral Values

Regarding the daytime live bhangra events, a number of the performers felt uncomfortable about the aspect of truancy of a significant proportion of the audience at the time and took a moralistic position to the point of turning down offers of daytime concerts. Bina Mistry (2012) recounts how she would go into the toilets of the Empire Leicester Square, only to be confronted with school girls changing out of uniform into tights and high heels. She goes on to outline the seriousness of the situation with regard to parents who were unaware of this activity going on. According to Mistry, a school that reported the continual truancy of a number of their Asian students, notably when the band Alaap was playing, had one concerned father phone several music contacts, including Mistry, to find out where Alaap was playing. He went to the Empire, Leicester Square and demanded to be let in to find his daughter. The venue refused admission but, under threat of police intervention, extracted the

girl in question and returned her to her father. Subsequently, the girl was sent to a boarding school in East Africa to distance her from the bhangra concerts and the associated mixed-gender interaction. This serves to illustrate the gravity and intensity of the cultural morals that were practised by the first generation Punjabi diasporic community. Mistry also reflected on and described several fights that would take place at these concerts, especially if there were mixed cultural or religious groupings.

In interview (2012), other artists such as Bhamra, Kumar and Taak Singh have referred to the negative social implications of these events relative to their value systems, which are often steeped in tradition and religious conservatism. However, there were always those who were willing to overlook the legal and moral ramifications of running these events in the interest of monetary gain. There were bands willing to play and promoters willing to make a profit. Sabharwal recalls that the 'Daytimer' shows lost audience as the parents and schools clamped down on the truancy of the underage attendees. These shows also began to lose popularity as the audience became more sophisticated and the music less niche market, extending beyond the Punjabi community and spreading to other diverse subcultures by the early 1990s (interview 2012). Many of the artists I interviewed revealed that they felt uncomfortable about being involved in these events. Bhamra stated,

> I think it hit the singers, that 'Oh, this could be my daughter!' sort of thing. (interview 2012)

This unease sometimes stemmed from a position of personal moral values or socio-religious guilt and had its roots in a culture not entirely socially aligned with its new environment.

5.5 The Function of Bhangra Music

The function and structures of bhangra music composition are so designed as to regulate the frenetic movements of the dance that entails much energetic flailing of the arms and an almost jumping movement when the music is at its crescendo. The lead up to this crescendo is often in the form of a verse and, from a dance context, is a call to readiness of exuberance, all tying into the ethos of celebration of either the harvest, the New Year, a birth, or a marriage. It is a symbiosis of body and music. If one attributes the characteristics of modern

British bhangra to its cultural roots and the compositional structures rooted in its Punjabi folk origins, then it could be argued that the relationship between bhangra dance and music is unbroken and that one still does not exist without the other. However, if one's analysis of British bhangra music is based on its association to dance and its evolution as music that accompanied dance, then there is a defined cut-off point that is marked by the advent of the commercialisation and sale of British bhangra music as a separate marketable commodity at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. This can also be aligned with the move from live performance events to the mass marketing of recorded music. However, the performance element has never disappeared, and artists will claim that the recorded and released material was only a representation of the dance.

In an interview about the origins of the Heera Group, singer Javinder Kumar talks about the origins of the name bhangra in relation to music.

> JK: Then all the uni guys started booking us at all the student unions and, funny enough, they called us a bhangra band. I got really upset. I said, 'Don't call us bhangra. We are a singing band.' They said, 'It's the type of music you guys [are playing]; you are a bhangra band in that way. That's what we call you as bhangra, a band, you know. Heera, the bhangra sensations. I was still a little confused about it. Two years went on, with that name, as that title. Then it started sinking in. Because wherever we were, with our songs, people were dancing on the dance floor. You know, we are singing and they are really … enjoying themselves. Then it sunk in that the type of songs which we are providing to people; they were dancing numbers.
>
> RL: And they were bhangra dancing?
>
> JK: And that, and that dance is bhangra. So now, it has sunk in; Heera is a bhangra band. You know … singers who can provide dance music for bhangra.
> (interview 2012)

This illustrates the strong attachment that bhangra music had to dance from an audience and performer perspective. Although Kumar initially rejected the connection on an artistic level,

it became apparent that the success of his band lay firmly in its connection to the dance and all that was associated with it.

Whereas bhangra dancing is a cultural identifier of Punjabi culture, British bhangra as a musical entity is a cultural identifier of British Asian-ness and all the associated multi-ethnic subculture interaction between the various Indian subcontinent diasporic communities and their religious backgrounds. It represents the fusion of South Asian cultures through the simplicity of the Punjabi folk sensibilities but is an absorption and hybridity indigenous to Britain. Many British Asian youths no longer speak the languages of their parents. They are British citizens with a British education and British values that have cultural influences from a South Asian root but first and foremost, they consider themselves British. Bhangra acts as a cultural conduit that creates a space for multi-cultural interaction within the Asian communities via the contributions of other diverse communities, the commonality of Western popular music and the English language.

The use of Western idioms to cross-pollinate with Punjabi folk music, fused to create British Asian music, is further augmented by its exportation as a 'new music' to the rest of the world and ultimately back to India where it has now been absorbed into the Bollywood cannon. This is a common pattern that has been repeated within genres like gospel or South African choral music, which are exported back to Europe as a new construct but have their roots in Christian church music (Detterbeck 2002). However, in the case of bhangra, there was no shared language between the music practised in the new location and the originating genre. Bhangra absorbed Western influences but maintained its language and messaging roots (Bakrania 2013, pg. 38). This is the only example of a mainstream popular genre that has migrated and absorbed host nation musical forms but maintained its language, and has been exported back to its originating location and reintegrated into popular culture as indigenous music. One can only hypothesise how the originators of bhangra folk music and dance would have reacted to the concept of Western pop music being the conduit for their music to be distributed throughout the globe to finally be re-absorbed into Indian culture.

There is currently a purist backlash in the Punjab against the desecration of the original folk music, and a relatively new market has emerged for the old traditional folk music in India (Roy 2010). However, this is now a musical entity in its own right. The purity of original

bhangra dance and music as a collective entity has been further diluted by its re-emergence in a more controlled, well recorded and structured form within the current media-consuming culture.

5.6 Social Inclusion

Popular music has often acted as a catalyst for social change and social inclusion (Rinta, Purves, Welch, Stadler Elmer and Bissig 2011, pgs. 34-37). Through the medium of their music, diasporic cultures, including Punjabis, have reached out to other local communities as a form of communication and social identification. By meeting market expectations and adapting economic and delivery models relative to the medium, including live performance and cassette production, they invited indigenous cultures to embrace bhangra within the framework of their own cultures. This was particularly evident within other Asian subcontinent communities and contributed to the British Asian youth culture and its associated communities in becoming a subculture within their newly adopted location and thereby a part of the society to which an integration process could begin whilst retaining their cultural roots (Huq 2006). One example of this process lies within reggae music, which not only represented a discontented and disenfranchised West Indian youth culture, but was also adopted by similar discontented British youth protest social groupings, such as the Skinheads (Dagnini 2011). Gradually, through the widespread marketing and popularity of reggae, a better understanding of the West Indian British subculture was derived, helping to create an opportunity for further social inclusion and integration into British society.

One of the significant barriers to British Asian social inclusion into mainstream British life through music is and was language. All the lyrical content of British bhangra was in Punjabi. Although this maintained tradition where other traditions were being eroded, it put up linguistic barriers on a number of levels. The lack of understanding or translation of lyrics meant that anyone who was not of Punjabi descent could not understand the meaning of the words, nor were any of the cultural subtexts contained within the lyrics accessible to anyone outside of the Punjabi communities. Even with this, the music itself was so compelling that it reached beyond its lyrical content and was embraced by firstly other Asian communities and then by other diverse youth cultures in the U.K. However, it did not reach its full market penetration potential due to the language barrier.

In relation to this, I recount my personal experience of a meeting held in early 1989 with Mike Collier, my music supervisor and publisher at Carlin Music, Saville Row, London. I had been working on several bhangra recordings as a producer and musical director and had brought in a selection of bhangra tracks to play to him. I had previously produced and published several Disco releases under the name of Disco-very (1979), and as bhangra fulfilled the dance criteria, I thought it would be interesting to introduce bhangra music to Carlin Music. On playing the introduction to a track by Raga Kaka Winston, the artist I was co-writing with and producing, I immediately met with an enthusiastic reaction, especially when the dhol drum rhythms started to play. However, as soon as the Punjabi sung lyrics started, it curbed all enthusiasm for the music. To Collier, the track had suddenly taken on an inaccessible foreign form with little or no commercial appeal. Collier, unfamiliar with bhangra, may have had an intellectual curiosity about the track but had lost the sense of excitement and exoticism that the song initially triggered. This was an illustration of the reaction invoked in non-Asians by the use of Indian subcontinent languages in music and is a contributory factor as to why British bhangra was not embraced by the general mainstream music consumer in the U.K.

The barrier to social inclusion was not the structure, rhythm, textures or melodic content of the music. It was simply language that was the primary exclusion element. A few attempts to translate the lyrics were made, but these were initially unacceptable to the British Asian record-buying public, and the idea to integrate the music fully was abandoned. Gradually over the years, the lyrical content has changed to include more Western idioms and English lyrical content as more British Asians count English as their first language. Many of the new wave of British Asian artists of Punjabi origin are not fluent in Punjabi, or in some cases, do not even speak any Punjabi, and it is possible that within a decade of this research, Punjabi will not be used in the lexicon of British Asian-produced music.

Although there is no denial of the pride that they retain relative to their Asian-ness, current generations of British South Asians consider themselves to be British first, above all other considerations, with an Asian heritage. However, some British Asians do not want to be aligned with nationality and prefer to be associated with a location such as London or Birmingham. Angadi states, ‘I’m a Londoner. I live and was born in London of Asian

background. I don't want to consider what the British were and be a part of that, but London is my home' (interview 2012).

In addition to providing an opportunity for boys and girls to meet and challenge some of their traditional values, the 'Daytimer' events of the 1980s and 1990s also provided a forum for musical experimentation and cross-cultural musical collaboration. As traditional social values were being challenged, so were the musical traditions being examined, adapted, and fused with other influences in line with the changing social status of the British Asian youth, its integration into British mainstream society and its interaction with other cultures. New forms were being developed that would eventually lead to further cross-pollination of music. Bhangraga or bhangramuffin (a hybrid of bhangra and dancehall reggae), bhangra hip hop and bhangra pop all developed out of these cross-cultural collaborations, not all of them maintaining longevity, but all moving away from the traditional structures of the bhangra folk music of the Punjab originally brought over to Britain and creating an identity of their own that was distinctly British.

The combination of traditional Punjabi celebratory music and new electronic sounds and rhythms was also a result of technological advances and the sociological changes that accompanied the technology. The subconscious desire to move on from the old traditions and embrace a new life in a new land using new technologies was a creative driver of the new, emerging bhangra music in the 1980s. At the same time, there was a cultural need to hang on to roots, and the new music was able to fulfil the two requirements for safe progression of the youth subculture; moving into the new technological age whilst embracing Western popular musical forms all representing modern life, and the retention of a strong link with past traditions, Indian subcontinent roots, and language. As the music developed, it relied less on the traditional instruments, including the dhol drum, harmonium and tumbi, and more on Western popular music instruments such as drum kits, synthesizers, electric guitars, bass and later on, samplers. Indian musical textures of dhol and tablas were often added after the synth-pop recordings to inject an Asian reference within the music to meet the market expectations of the Indian communities. I experienced this with the band Safri Boys (Discogs 2020) in my studio in 1992.

The melodies and song structures retained their Eastern roots, but the main contribution, which maintained a cultural continuity, was language. In the case of bhangra, this was almost always Punjabi. Other British Asian musical genres and Bollywood songs were sung in Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu. Although bhangra was now a complete hybrid entity and a meeting of East and West, it maintained its cultural integrity by being performed in Punjabi, partly to meet market expectations and partly to connect to its cultural roots. In an interview with Satwant Taak, performing under the name of Raga Kaka and one of the founder members of the Heera Group, it was revealed that he had felt uncomfortable during the 1980s when deviating too far from the Punjabi traditions. He felt that he had let down his family and the Sikh religious sect to which he belongs by straying too far from the traditional folk music with his experimentation with reggae/bhangra cross-cultural fusion music. There was almost a sense of regret in his admissions, even though he enjoyed tremendous success as an artist in this genre. In an interview, Taak reveals, 'I wouldn't personally partake in that again. For more than one reason, obviously, you know, I'm not, you know, 25 anymore. And also I don't think my family, colleagues, friends, would appreciate it now' (Taak 2012).

The desire to connect to their roots was a significant contributing factor, even in the new modern bhangra. In spite of the opportunity and enthusiasm levied on a music that could move forward, progress and grow into new modern popular music forms, there was a sense of the music being tempered by a deep-rooted desire to maintain tradition and cultural integrity. Bhangra music never lost the dance, and the dance never lost bhangra. Both elements are always connected to the old traditions and were cultural identifiers.

5.7 Summary

The traditions of dance and cultural expectations were considerations residing in the background of all bhangra productions that took place in my recording studio during the late 1980s and 1990s. The cultural identifiers and social markers within the music have now brought to the fore questions of my origin, identity and belonging and whether it was apt or appropriate for me to be a part of the development of British bhangra. Although I was not intentionally attempting to create new styles or adapt genres, my motivation was to produce music that would be commercially viable and attract new audiences. I did not invent bhangra; I adapted it to suit what I thought may have been of greater appeal to the existing bhangra

audience and expand into other markets. Did I need to be a cultural expert at the time in order to produce within a genre that was not part of my own heritage? This did not enter into my consciousness as a practitioner at the time. As a retrospective participant researcher, it is important to understand this dynamic and how it impacts other practitioners dealing in a multicultural music production landscape. At the time of my collaborations with my bhangra clients, I was getting to know them both personally and culturally. I had no exposure to the history of bhangra or Punjabi folk music prior to these recordings. Through my experiences and interactions, I started to glean bits of information about the history and culture attached to the development of bhangra. These cultural references also formed the basis of the banter and joviality attached to the process of composition and recording. When I asked where the melodic and lyrical content came from in bhangra songs, I was met with the response that they dated back tens of thousands of years, an exaggeration that became an in-group joke when someone wanted to include something in a production in the interest of modernisation. Getting to know the artists and other producers of bhangra has enriched my career and informed my practice, as is shown in the case studies in Chapters 6 and 7. The history of the development of British bhangra music helps to contextualise my research and further feeds into a later discussion as to whether one needs to be a cultural expert, or sensitive to cultural expectations, in order to practise within the confines of that culture; in my case, Punjabi bhangra.

Chapter 6: The British Asian Producers and their Contributions to Bhangra

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the production techniques, history and artist-producer interactions of three key British Asian producers, Kuljit Bhamra, Deepak Khazanchi and Sanjay Sabharwal (known as San-J Sanj), all of whom I have worked for and collaborated with at different times. Although other bhangra producers were working during the 1980s and 1990s, these three producers were all significant in their contributions to bhangra both from a musical and cultural perspective. They were not only ground-breaking in their contributions, but they also represent the progression of the genre in the early development of British bhangra. I have included my contributions and comments with reference to these producers to contextualise my relationships with them. I was fortunate to have been a participating observer of their work, which now affords me the opportunity to act as an immersive reflexive researcher. Although at the time of participation, I had no idea that the producer and artists I was working with would be recognised for making significant contributions to British bhangra. Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (1996, pg. 224) state that Khazanchi, along with the band Alaap, were instrumental in creating a new British or Br-Asian bhangra, Bhamra was awarded an MBE in the year 2009 'For Services to Bhangra and British Asian Music' (Ghaint Punjab 2018), and San-J Sanj's creation of the first Daytimer Events provided the space for bhangra to develop as a British Asian genre.

In terms of my work within bhangra, it was a matter of practising my craft and attracting clients to my studio. Gradually, as I learned more about the cultural significance of the music I was engaging with, I became more connected, enthused and creatively inspired by the genre to a point where, rather than just providing a service for my recording studio clients, I started to contribute to shaping the genre through creative collaborations. In retrospect, this was an unconscious gradual progression, but I look back on it with gratitude for having been accepted into a musical community and am proud of my contributions and achievements.

6.2 Kuljit Bhamra - Producing from the Inside

I first met Kuljit Bhamra in 1989 when he booked my studio, Triple X Studios in Acton, North West London, to produce and record Chirag Pechan's *Rail Gaddi* (1989) album featuring Mangal Singh. We developed a good working relationship in the years that followed. Bhamra was a regular contributor to my productions in his capacity as a South Asian percussionist, with his main instrument being the tabla. We continue to collaborate, and he has lately contributed to a film score I composed, arranged and produced for the film *Tear Me Apart* (2015). As a producer, Bhamra's understanding of the listener expectations and the marketplace relative to his own British Asian cultural sphere has resulted in several best-selling albums in the worldwide South Asian market. His ability to adapt the ideas of an artist into a commercial format, along with his track record of translating the needs and directions of record companies and production companies into viable product, has resulted in his working as a musical director on 'West End' London theatrical productions *Bombay Dreams* (2002) and *Bend It Like Beckham the Musical* (2015), (Music Matters n.d.).

The interview sessions that I held with him stretched over three years, and it was my objective to explore the motivations and the methods he employed as a producer and arranger in the earlier bhangra productions. I wanted to assess his interactions with the artists and musicians on the basis that he was operating within a culturally familiar genre framework and that communication with artists and record companies was also on a shared cultural playing field – unlike the basis of the interactions I had engaged with as an outsider trying to fit in and bridge the creative cultural divide.

The first objective was to establish Bhamra's background, influences and musical heritage in order to contextualise his outputs. As someone who had grown up in Britain, he would have been exposed to similar musical influences that I had, but his cultural roots and upbringing exposed him to additional layers of musical influences that I would only absorb much later in a much less intense or deeply ingrained manner. For Bhamra, South Asian music was part of his upbringing, whereas, for me, the knowledge base was acquired through observation and application. Finally, as there was a level of trust and mutuality in our relationship, he was able to offer a candid and unhindered account of his methodologies and interactions. In most

cases, we were both familiar with the artists, musicians and record companies that were the subject of our discussion. The depth of his accounts was not hindered by unfamiliarity with the interviewer, or any possible suspicions as to the motivations or hidden agendas that an interviewer might be harbouring. It could be argued that the conversations or discussions could have taken on an almost conspiratorial tone, as two friends might adapt as a stance, but this was outweighed by the richness, depth and detail of the information provided, especially with respect to motivations, interactions and the techniques employed to produce commercially viable products. This often occurred in situations that were not necessarily conducive to smooth and efficient production workflows and might include creative incompatibilities, as will be discussed later. In revisiting our past working relationship in these interviews, we decided to embark on a new recording project involving the two of us in the capacity of both disciplines: producer and artist. This provides the material for the last case study and is explored in Chapter 8, 'Country and Eastern'.

6.3 Kuljit Bhamra - Biography

Bhamra was born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1959 but emigrated to the U.K. at the age of two. He contracted polio when he was one year old, which impacted the way he could sit. So as a self-taught student of the tabla, and later as a professional musician, he had to play whilst seated on a chair rather than on the floor, which is the accepted position for a tabla player (Mengajar n.d.). He reflects that this may have influenced him to seek new approaches to the Punjabi folk bhangra music he was initially exposed to via his mother, Mohinder Kaur Bhamra, a singer who performed at Punjabi weddings in the UK. It is interesting to note that although Bhamra's family roots were Indian-Punjabi via Kenya, he considers himself English. On asking him whether he also considered himself Indian, he replied, 'I really don't know what I am but I'm definitely more English than I am Indian; by nature, and by mannerisms, by thinking and by personality,' (interview 2015).

Bhamra attributes the start of the British bhangra genre to his mother. He recounts that she encouraged her audiences to dance at the weddings she performed at, something that was not practised before. He states that bhangra, a folk dance and music, was only performed as a theatrical representation of historical significance, re-enacting the harvest celebration or the union of two families via marriage. It was very much a formal presentation and usually in

costume. The original dance troupes were generally between four and ten male dancers. It was only with the advent of modern bhangra in diaspora communities, predominantly in Britain and then spreading to the North American continent, that men and women would dance at bhangra music performances (Ballantyne 2006). Having moved to the UK in 1961, Bhamra's first professional engagements as a young boy were accompanying his mother on tabla with his two brothers playing harmonium and mandolin.

His first foray into recording was in 1979 to record his mother's first album *Baharan Khirh Paiyan* (1981). This led him to work with several Punjabi British Asian artists, predominantly in the Southall and Hayes areas of West London, where he was based. By 1989 he claims he was recording 15 albums per year whilst still holding down a job as a civil engineer. One of these albums was the *Rail Gaadi* (1987) album by Chirag Pehchan, recorded at my Triple X studios, which went on to achieve worldwide gold and platinum sales.[17] Although Bhamra operated within a South Asian musical paradigm, he claims his influences were pop acts such as the Bee Gees, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder and George Benson. It is perhaps the universality and commerciality of these acts that influenced his productions and were a contributing factor in his success. Producers coming from a Western popular music background, as I did, tried to integrate or even enforce the pop genres onto the South Asian musical structures, but Bhamra and other Asian producers, such as Deepak Kazanchi and San-J Sanj, drew upon the Western influences more sympathetically, ensuring that the core bhangra sensibilities were not challenged.

I later learned that my approach of merging other genres, such as reggae and rock into bhangra, was an affront to certain sectors within South Asian culture, especially the more religious Sikh community, and an inadvertent attempt to subvert established custom and tradition. My production and arranging technique was to start with pop, rock or reggae rhythms and then adapt the bhangra song to fit into my created rhythmic 'feel'. I would manipulate the Punjabi melodic content to suit my bass and drum backing track, sometimes adhering to South Asian structures, but only by accident, not design. Although this created

[17] The British Phonographic Industry (BPI) nominate that sales in the U.K. in excess of 100,000 units constitutes a gold record and that platinum sales represents in excess of 600,000 units. The figures in the U.S.A are 500,000 (gold) and 1,000,000 (platinum) respectively (BPI 2017).

new sub-genres and sonic textures, it was more difficult to address the British Asian music market. As noted above, Asian producers such as Bhamra, injected western influences into their music production as a second-tier approach with more subtlety and a greater acknowledgement of the core bhangra genre. However, there was a symbiotic relationship between the non-Asian producers' approach and the Asian producer. As sales started to wane in the traditional bhangra market, record companies turned to people like me to come up with a fresh approach. This in turn would be adopted by the Asian producers who would go on to have more success based on new techniques. As we all worked together, we would share ideas; in some cases, appropriate ideas, but always in the interest of exploring new musical vistas with the explicit intention of selling more records.

Bhamra's prolific output was also attributed to a response to the shifting focus of the market for British Asian music. As religious and celebratory associations with bhangra music started to diminish, and there was an increased appetite to break from tradition, music became a form of entertainment and a driver of South Asian organised disco events. As a result, more material was required and more live bands were formed. Bhamra recounts having found a calendar for 1990 identifying 600 different bhangra bands booked across the U.K. The shows included 'daytimer gigs' in Birmingham and London (Dudrah 2006) and this encouraged truancy amongst Asian youth. In normal social youth interactions within the community, separate sexes would be chaperoned by parents or relatives. The daytimer events provided a space where the British Asian youth had the freedom to express themselves without recrimination. This led to sexual exploits on the dancefloor of the venues during the bhangra daytime concerts. In response to this Bhamra helped to set up the Asian Musicians Artist Association (AMAA) as musicians were concerned with the ramifications of their performances in venues where this kind of sexual activity was perpetrated. A few meetings of AMAA resulted in a number of artists including Heera, Premi and Safri Boys refusing to play the daytimer shows. This did not prevent these shows from continuing as they were profitable for both promoter and performer, but as the negative reputation of these events spread and a groundswell of anger in the British Asian communities grew in response to the existence of the daytimer shows, they became less popular and eventually stopped by 1992 (interview 2017).

6.4 Production and Arrangement Methodology

Bhamra's production and arrangement method was to work out the structure and melody of a song on a harmonium. He suggests that the structure was 'generally the same' and his interpretation of bhangra song structure is as follows:

Introduction music with a melodic motif
Verse
Chorus
Interlude music (not the same as the introduction music)
Part verse
Interlude music
Part verse repeat
Interlude music
Chorus
Outro

His artists would come into the studio with, as he put it, a vague melody and chorus, and then he would have to adapt this into a more coherent form. After working out the structure and melodies on a harmonium, he would start recording. As a percussionist, he would record the tabla first without a click track, maintaining that his own slightly shifting tempo had more of a traditional flow to the rhythm rather than the metronomic influence of programmed drums. Apparently, his method made overdubbing, the process of adding instruments or parts, one at a time or in small groups of instruments, more difficult, but he felt at the time that this would create a better flow to the music.

After the first tabla track was recorded, he then recorded a guide harmonium track, which helped him to better interpret the rhythms via re-recording the tabla track. He would then build the song up instrument by instrument with dhol, dholak, matki (clay pot), tambourine and any other percussion instruments that he felt would add to the production. The dhol was only used during the musical interludes and Bhamra identifies this as a characteristic of his 'sound'. The other technique employed was to do a single hit on the tambourine and he employed it in his own recordings as a signature sound. It was only at this point, when all the

other percussion instruments had been recorded, that he would add a bass drum. As stated by Glossop, this is particularly significant as the method utilised by many pop producers, including myself, has generally been to start with the bass drum pattern and bass, and use this as the basic building platform to add additional instruments and with the vocals being added last (interview 2014). Bhamra's next step was to get the singer to sing a guide vocal on the song. From this he built up melodic and choral textures including simple bass lines. By his own admission, he concentrated on the percussion element as the driving force of the song and used this to accentuate the mood of the melody, lyrics and instrumental sections.

As MIDI sequencing and programming became more accessible and the Atari 1040 computer became a standard piece of equipment in studios, Bhamra started to use them for his initial structure but found that the tempo variations he used in his arrangements were difficult to programme. He also progressed to using the new drum machines that came out onto the market in the mid 1980s (Twells 2014) and used the LinnDrum[18] and Roland TR808[19] drum machines. However, he found them very mechanical, so he used them sparingly. Again, this is in diametric opposition to producers like me who depended on drum machines for their basic rhythm programming. He enjoyed the use of some of the synthesizers like a Korg M1, Roland D50 and Roland JV1080[20] that were available at my studio and he would book the studio just so he could use them.

One of the attractions of studios at that time, which helped to give them a competitive edge, was the collection of synthesizers for use by their clients. These instruments were often very

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[18] The Linn LM-1 drum machine, designed by Roger Linn, was available in 1979 and was the first drum synthesizer to use samples as opposed to oscillator generated sounds. It retailed for $5500 U.S. The more streamlined and user friendly LM-2, known as the LinnDrum was introduced in 1982 and cost $2995. It employed a better sample rate for higher quality samples and became a popular tool in recording studios (McNamee 2009).

[19] The Roland TR-808 was a drum machine synthesizer released in 1979. Due to poor sales, it was discontinued in 1983. As prices for the discontinued unit dropped from $1,200 U.S. to nearer $100, and with its use on Marvin Gaye's 1982 hit '*Sexual Healing'* (Discogs, 2017), it became the main tool for the emerging hip hop artists and its sounds, mainly the bass drum, remain one of the most used sound sources in pop music (Werner 2015).

[20] The Roland JV1080 was a 1990s rack mounted synthesizer that was known to be able to provide excellent emulations of 'strings and evocative ethnic instruments'(Roland online n.d.).

expensive and would require a significant investment on behalf of a musician or producer. A producer might choose a studio based on the collection of synthesizers available. Today this has been superseded by software plug-ins, many of them emulations of the original synthesizers, which are available at a fraction of the cost, making the instruments accessible to anyone with a computer (Russ 2011).

Bhamra sees himself as being well organised, controlling and dictatorial in the studio but empathetic to the artist's creative objectives. However, he does not let artists distract him from his own musical vision. The acts he produced accepted this. As he puts it, 'I made them look good'. They seldom played on their own records or he mixed their instrumental performances low in the overall mix so that they were barely discernible. He concentrated on the vocal and percussion elements and his approach resulted in many of the recordings becoming hits in the British Asian music scene. Much time would be taken up by recording the vocals because often the vocalists would drink too much alcohol during the session, making it difficult for them to perform or even pitch accurately. Bhamra attributed this to nerves (interview 2014). However, it seemed to be a common practice as it occurred in my bhangra sessions as well, regardless of the dispositional states of the singers and musicians.

As the artists became more successful through record sales and radio exposure on dedicated Asian radio stations such as Sunrise Radio, they started to make more demands in the studio, asking that certain instruments like the dhol or dholak be used throughout the song or that the singer should be mixed louder in the track. This may have been the result of someone identifying the inclusion of a particular instrument in a chorus or instrumental section of a hit song and that this should be played all the way through a track to ensure its success. Bhamra had to mediate these types of creative demands and strategically took a dictatorial approach in the studio to counteract this. He would avoid musicians and singers listening to the final recordings before a mix. His rationale was that it was his musical vision and the vocalist should sing as instructed. He would never solicit the opinions of the artist as this would open the door to arguments over suggestions of changes to the vocal performance or demands for additional inclusions of performances from the musicians. According to Bhamra, due to the problem of alcohol, when the band assembled together in the studio, it would inevitably end up in a physical fight. Within the context of my own practice, I felt uncomfortable with a dictatorial approach to dealing with artists as it was important to me that I solicit the artists'

full approval. I was of the opinion at the time, that collaboration was a key element in the creative process, even if it slowed down the production process due to experimentation and pandering to artists' demands.

As a producer working in bhangra, I was always exploring ways of communicating with the artists I worked with. There were language barriers and cultural differences that I was constantly mediating, interpreting and trying to understand to a level that I thought would enable me to provide a credible contribution to the recording process but this was usually done by taking an unintended but naturally hegemonic approach due to the technological divide.

In the case of producer Kuljit Bhamra, hegemony existed within his own Punjabi/bhangra culture and was accepted by the artists he worked with as a normal accepted state.

> I guess they just trusted me. I would do the music in the studio before they would come in and I would just get them to record vocals. Later on, they would demand that some of the musicians play on the records. I would let them but would have their tracks low in the mix. Then after I mixed it, I would get them in and let them listen. They liked it because it made them sound better than they really were. (interview 2014)

In most cases, Bhamra would be in total control but would allow for some contributions from the musicians to make them feel that they were part of the process. He was in effect, manipulating the outcome and the reaction of the musicians to the final product, based on a cultural understanding of the musicians he was working with.

The artists ultimately trusted Bhamra as he had proven himself with the success of his past recordings. He also employed some of the tactics that we all used at the time when dealing with demanding clients. He would increase the level of a fader (volume control) on the recording console that was not connected to anything and then ask the artist to listen to the difference, who would invariably agree that there was an improvement. Some of the producers actually had boxes with knobs installed, known in the industry as DFA ('Does Fxxk-All') boxes, connected to cables that terminated in blank inputs on the console

(Kerridge 2017, pg. 208). Bhamra also recounts the story of one of his clients asking him for more MIDI on the track. Instead of explaining that MIDI was a computer interface protocol, he agreed and adjusted another un-associated control on his recording console.

His current studio has a large recording console and large Tannoy Super Red 3808 15 inch speaker monitors[21]. He calls these 'ego boosters', as he can turn them up to impress his clients or the artists he has recorded, but he openly admits that he cannot really work with them as they do not accurately reproduce the sound of the recording and are not representative of how a consumer will listen to music. He, like many producers, uses a set of Yamaha NS10 Monitors. Many employ the axiom that 'if it sounds good on NS10s, then it'll sound good on anything' (Ward, 2009). This approach to listening or mixing is an area of debate and contention within producer circles as there are some very good close monitor systems now on the market that are of high quality but, as Van Morrison producer Mick Glossop (interview 2015) posits, 'It is all a matter of taste and I will never recommend speakers to anyone. It is what you get used to or what you or your client thinks sounds good.' The large monitors are symptomatic of the producer-artist relationship where the producer needs to engender the respect of the artist, and sometimes that can be achieved through the largess of volume.

Bhamra prefers an unfettered approach and to not have the artist or bands in the studio while he records the individual parts. He found that in the past, having the artist in with him was disruptive, making it more difficult to experiment with the arrangements and instrumental textures. In his own words, he 'wanted the freedom to get things wrong', without the interference of artists who did not have a holistic view of the end recording. He was also aware that he had to create a different character in the music for each of the bands or artists that he was producing and would watch them perform live to identify their key sound. He would then try to recreate those elements in his recordings to ensure that the albums he recorded each had an individual characteristic associated with the artist as he was the main musician playing most of the instruments on the records and did not want them to sound similar, except with different voices. Although he would use synthesizers, he tried to

[21] In 1958, Tannoy released its dual concentric speaker system the Tannoy Red Monitor that was used extensively in U.K. recording studios including Abbey Road Studio between 1958 and the mid 1970s. The design of the speaker remained the same for over 30 years with only improvements on power handling (Pickford 2014).

maintain a live approach to his recordings and would avoid programming. ‘I think a record is called a record as it records an event' (interview 2014). The more authentic the record was, with real playing and not programmed sequencers, the more it appealed to his sense of authenticity within his productions. Another technique he always employed was to put a sad ballad on each album to balance the emotional excitement of the predominantly up-tempo dance-oriented music. Bhamra suggests that this technique was a form of audience manipulation and created a dynamic between his recorded output and the record-buying public, who would hold an expectation of the listening journey that was extended to them via his productions.

He was also unhappy with the manufacturing quality and packaging of his recordings and so he set up his own record company, KEDA Productions in 1984 and then a new entity, KEDA Records in 1992 so that he could specify better quality cassette stock in the manufacturing process and improved artwork and packaging of his product. The quality of the tape had a bearing on the listener experience and may also have contributed to the success of the productions at that time. According to Bhamra, the word spread in the British Asian community that his recordings were of better quality than the other British Asian record companies. His objective was to make good music and money was not always the motivating force behind his production work. As he puts it, ‘I was only really interested in buying the next electronic gadget, the money all went into that and I kept my job as an engineer until I really could give it up for music’ (interview 2017).

Bhamra’s background was both technical and musical and he falls into Burgess’ Collaborative Producer category as discussed in Chapter 4. However, he also exhibited strong entrepreneurial skills and ambitions and started his own record company. This combined with his creativity and technical skills enabled him to build a successful career, maintaining a prolific output. It was this that contributed to him being awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) ‘For Services to Bhangra and British Asian Music’ in 2009 (Gualeen, 2018).

6.5 Deepak Khazanchi

The South Asian community recognises producer Deepak Khazanchi as one of the more significant contributors to the British bhangra scene in the 1970s through to the 1990s. Punjab2000 online (2009) refers to him as a 'bhangra supergod'. He is the self-professed originator of 'modern bhangra' (British bhangra), but as observed in the interviews recorded as research for this thesis, the main protagonists all lay claim to be originators or take responsibility for the success of the genre. This trend can be observed within accounts of the history of the blues, where many of the early blues players claim to be the 'Father of the Blues', 'King of the Blues', 'King of the Delta Blues', 'Originator of the Blues', and other claims (Wald 2010). I have never laid claim to my contribution to bhangra music and the rock and reggae influences that I used in my productions that arguably created a new sound, but I have never felt either the need or the authority to make any bold claims or statements as I was simply using existing popular and socially relevant musical forms and putting them together in the interest of reaching a bigger audience. Matos (2011) posits that genre is created from names associated with the musical form, and so, by association with the name, an artist can lay claim to the creation of the genre. For example, 'reggae' comes from the title and lyric of a Toots and Maytals song *Do the Reggay* (1968), 'bluegrass' emanates from Bill Munroe's Blue Grass Boys (1938-1996), a Kentucky acoustic country band and hip hop's name purportedly comes from the Grandmaster Flash and the Sugarhill Gang (1979) lyric 'I said a hip hop, hippie to the hippie, the hip, hip a hop'. However, in all these examples, the genre existed beforehand in some form or another and was renamed or categorised to identify the market. It is the claims of its practitioners as originators by association which creates a paradox. It could be argued that genres exist before they are recognised as new genres (Fabbri 1980). In naming the genre, a signifier is provided, thereby creating or giving rise to a new genre.

Khazanchi's contribution was an important part of the development and history of British bhangra. His activities extended beyond that of a record producer, arranger and musician. He established a record company and focussed on bringing bhangra product out of the traditional Indian trading model of selling cassettes from a market stall into western models of distribution, royalty and copyright framework (interview 2021). His label, Arishma Records, was, at its peak, one of the most successful bhangra labels in the U.K. (Banerji 1988). His

approach to production was single-minded, dictatorial and non-compromising but his success rate compared to other producers was significant. Whether his approach to production was the formula to success or whether this approach, which seemed to be endemic to those working within the genre and from a shared heritage, was a cultural norm, is a theme that pervades this research.

Khazanchi was born in Srinagar, Kashmir, India and moved with his family in the 1950s to Uganda when he was aged two years old. Here he spent his most formative years listening to and learning to play music. He recounts that his neighbour, Charles Desouza, from Goa, was a musician and played the guitar, often letting the young Khazanchi play his guitar and occasionally teaching him the basics of music. On his 10th birthday, his uncle bought him a harmonica and he learned to play this as well. His talent did not go unnoticed and one of his teachers, after auditioning him, asked him to play every month at the school assembly with student audiences numbering in excess of 1200 pupils. Khazanchi nominated this experience as the trigger that led him on to a career in music as he enjoyed the adulation of his peers when he performed.

Khazanchi listened to and was influenced more by Western popular music. Seeing Cliff Richard and The Shadows in the film '*The Young Ones'* (Furie 1961) with the hit song of the same name, apparently spurred him on to sell his bicycle and buy a guitar. He formed a small ensemble and started to play in the expatriate clubs in Uganda, which became his training ground for live performance. He was playing material from Gerry and Pacemakers, The Animals, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. He would also play at Ugandan Asian community events, including weddings and religious celebrations, and his band would play some of the Bollywood film hits.

He left Uganda in 1970 and emigrated to the U.K., studying music at the London College of Music. However, he found that his talents as a guitar player were more in demand in the British Asian Bollywood bands and began to focus on South Asian music. With exposure to some of the new synthesizer technology, Khazanchi started to work with some of the traditional bhangra bands, infusing Western textures into their music and contributing to the arrangements. He recounts that his first recording was an album titled *Teri Chunni de Sitare* in 1980 by the Alaap Group in Apollo Studios in Victoria, London. He recalls it was an

unsuitable studio for the purpose as it was ill-equipped and too small but 'I got paid, so it was my first produced album' (interview 2012). Due to the success of Nazia Hassan's *Disco Deewane* (1980) collaboration with British Asian producer, Biddu, in the Indian pop music market in South Asia, Kumar states that Khazanchi was asked by Multitone Records, one of the larger British Asian record companies, to work with several Asian artists as he was well versed in Western pop traditions (interview 2012). He collaborated with engineer Peter Moores, recording a Hindi version of the band Boney M. He created a two-female Asian singing group called Agha with sisters Salma and Sabine Agha recording the *Agha sings Abba* (1981) album, with Hindi renditions of Abba's hits and recorded the *Chal Disco Chal* (1981) Indian pop/disco album with Sharon Prabhakar and Musarrat Majeed Nazir, known as Sharon and Musarrat, (Discogs 2017) which generated much attention and was commercially successful in the South Asian market. When called to work on Alaap's second album, *Dance with Alaap* (1982), Khazanchi resolved to use programmed drums and synthesizers and employed the LinnDrum and the Roland Jupiter-4[22] synth. By the time Alaap's 1984 album *Best Wishes from Alaap* was produced, he was using MIDI sequencers extensively in his recordings. The technique employed was much the same as it was for everyone at that time which included the use of an Atari 520 or 1040 computer synchronised via a SMPTE to MIDI converter, reading off a time code recorded onto track 24 of a 24-track analogue tape. Track 23 was often left empty so that there would be no bleed from the adjoining track 23 onto the time code track 24, increasing the stability of the time code (White 1989). The faster the speed of the tape, the less wow and flutter would influence the time code that was recorded onto to the tape and there was greater stability in triggering the MIDI sequencer. Consequently, most recordings were done at 30 inches per second (30 ips) rather than 15 ips. This also afforded better representation of the higher frequencies, less distortion and more headroom (the maximum level above 0db that could be recorded to tape).

By the time Khazanchi recorded the Heera Group album *Diamonds from Heera* (1986), he had adopted a technique for addressing the arrangements of the material he was presented with that integrated the use of synthesizers and drum machines with the more traditional bhangra arrangements and use of instruments that the bands were playing. Heera's first

[22] The Roland Jupiter-4 Synthesizer was the first polyphonic synthesizer available for sale to the public. It was limited to four voices, or four notes at a time, and was first released in 1978 (Vintagesynth.com n.d.).

album, as discussed previously, was produced by Kuljit Bhamra. Bhamra recounts that around that same time, Khazanchi formed his own record company, Arishma Records, with business partner Ruchera Manjay, known as Manjit (interview 2017) and was looking for artists to sign. Due to the success of the first Heera album, they decided to sign them to their label and were able to entice them away from Diamond Discs Productions, a small company that had engaged Bhamra as a producer for Heera's first album *Jagh Wala Mela* (1984). Bhamra managed to retain the rights to this recording and was able to re-release the album in 2010 in association with his contribution to *The Southall Story*[23] (2011). Arishma released the next three Heera albums, and Khazanchi was the producer and arranger. The albums were as follows: *Diamonds from Heera* (1986), *Cool and Deadly* (1989) and *Kohinoor* (1991). From a business perspective, Arishma also managed its artists and was able to control their publicity and marketing. This ensured that the live performances were beneficial to both the band and the record company and worked to enhance their bands' profiles. This helped to create additional income streams through commissions on shows and television appearances. It was the first time within the British Asian music industry, that artists' careers were nurtured and developed through television, radio and personal appearances and this led to Heera becoming internationally recognised 'superstars' within their sphere.

His method was to get the band to bring the melody and lyrics to him and he would re-arrange, adapt and change the melodies to suit his vision. He created new rhythmical foundations and tempos for all the songs. This was done via sequencing with drum machines and a constant tempo was maintained. The lyrics, on the whole, would remain intact but everything else would change. He would first sequence all the songs in Cubase, a MIDI sequencing program, on an Atari 1040 computer and then overdub additional instruments on the recording such as tabla, dholak, dhol, congas, santoor, mandolin and guitar using session musicians and sometimes, but not often, members of the band. I worked with him as an engineer on a number of recordings and remixes and he seemed to be more dictatorial and uncompromising with the artists rather than with any of the session musicians or engineers.

[23] The Southall Story was created by Kuljit Bhamra with Shakila Maan and Ammy Phull, to document the story of Southall; its community, culture and arts, and was AHRC funded (The Southall Story 2011).

Khazanchi's production technique adhered to the strict rhythms and tempos generated by programming the sequencer. This was different to Bhamra's approach of trying to maintain a more authentic live feel with shifts of tempo. The strict rhythmical sequenced approach was more in-line with the modern western pop and dance music styles at that time and proved to be a huge success for Khazanchi, resulting in international sales and acclaim in South Asian markets. What was always important to Khazanchi in his productions, was maintaining the integrity of the bhangra rhythm. He was adamant that bhangra was a dance and that the beat was all-important. My observation of his methodology was that he seemed to take a haphazard approach to production. His methodology was uniquely personal to him and appeared to rely on instinct alone, rather than pre-planned procedures. In interview, he was reticent to articulate the procedures and techniques that he employed. This was not because he wished to remain secretive about his practice. He implied that by analysing his production methods, he might be jeopardising a successful formula by questioning it. His main approach however was to adhere to a bhangra beat. Khazanchi states (interview 2012): 'You could put anything on top of the beat, even Chinese lyrics, but as long as you had a bhangra beat, it was bhangra music.'

This approach differed from my technique. I did not adhere to the original Bhangra rhythms as a base for my recordings. Although I used them and integrated them into my work, I was not as faithful to the rhythms of the genre as both Bhamra and Khazanchi were. I understand, in retrospect, why they may have felt that producers like me were contaminating the genre, perhaps with the effect of destroying the core essence of bhangra, as will be discussed in the conclusion chapter. In an Eastern Eye (1996) article about my role as a producer and engineer in the bhangra scene, entitled, 'Play that bhangra music White Boy' (see Appendix H), I am quoted as saying that in order to become internationally successful in the mainstream market, bhangra artists would have to sing in English. This was an attempt to justify my position as a bhangra producer. The record companies that were my clients wanted to achieve sales figures similar to the mainstream pop market, but when I presented them with pure Western pop productions of their artists, they did not like the results. This was particularly acute when presented with English lyrical content. Any sales deficiencies of my productions, in comparison with the pop market, were excused as the Asian record companies wanted to maintain the sales of their core market and did not want to jeopardise their sales by including English lyrics. My approach to meeting my client's expectations was to use pop music

structures and take bhangra beats and related instruments and integrate them into the productions. My response in the article was geared to a public relations attempt to endear myself to the Asian record companies and their artists.

In my defence, I would put forward that this was a natural progression: Bhamra with his live percussion approach and then adding sequencers that had to slightly change tempos to sync with the live records, Khazanchi with the strict sequenced tempos that had overdubbed percussion, and my method of using Western rhythmic structures and then adding bhangra rhythms on top. The genre then merged with reggae, creating bhangramuffin, with artists like Apache Indian and Raga Kaka Winston. The more dance-oriented genres starting with DJ-producer Bally Sagoo evolved into an Asian hip hop genre with Asian Underground artists and producers such as Rishi Rich, Jay Sean and H. Dhami, (Bakrania 2013). The once British Asian bhangra then migrated to India and became an integral part of the Bollywood filmic oeuvre (Roy 2012).

6.6 San-J-Sanj and XZecutive

The shift of association and participation from music performed for a celebratory or religious event, to music for dance and physical expression progressed the status of the DJ in a South Asian music context. This produced a number of mixers and DJ programmers, which in turn gave bhangra an opportunity to engage with hip hop structures and production values (Dudrah 2007).

San-j Sanj and his brother Amit, known as XZecutive, produced six albums using samples from other Indian recordings and were front runners along with Bally Sagoo in using new technologies and hip hop techniques in bhangra music, both artists recording in my studio. Sanjay Sabharwal, known as San-j Sanj, recounts how the daytimer shows started. As a DJ team known as Xtra Hot, he and his brother were playing clubs and pubs but found that the ratio of boys to girls was approximately 10-1, (interview 2014). He recalls that there was a high propensity of fights that would break out between the boys, many of them from rival Southall gangs: The Holy Smokes and the Tooti Nungs. In an attempt to counteract the fighting, Sabharwal decided to try putting on a daytime event in the back room of a pub in Southall in December 1984. This backroom, with a capacity of 100, became the model for the

daytime events that were held at venues such as the Empire Leicester Square, the Hippodrome and the Hammersmith Palais.

Amit and San-j split up amicably as a DJ duo act in the summer of 1987 (XZecutive 2010), with Amit setting up BADD Company DJ nights in the Midlands and Sanj becoming a producer and Sunset Radio broadcaster. The brothers continued to work together producing the successful Extra Hot remix albums for Multitone Records. Sanj knew that there would be parental and community backlash to the daytimer events but attributes the breaking of taboos of South Asian women, being finally allowed out unchaperoned at night, to the success of the daytimer gigs. 'It needed to happen. It was an inevitable next step for the Asian community' (interview 2014).

XZecutive were using samples to create music in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Their technique was to allocate an edited and tuned sample to a note on a MIDI controller keyboard and then programme the track using the keyboard to trigger the samples in a sequenced order to create new tracks and rhythms. They mixed this with drum loops, much in the same way hip hop producers were doing at the time. Kuljit Bhamra expressed his opinion of this in interview. 'This was OK in the studio but didn't represent the real music' (interview 2016). He felt that this went against the cultural roots and significance of bhangra. He also complained that the mixing of Western beats had the effect of denigrating the cultural values within the music. In the interview, I admitted that I was also partly to blame for this. He jokingly responded by saying 'Oh, so it's your fault!', but we amicably agreed that it was an inevitable consequence of the search for commerciality and new genres.

The significance of the Sabharwal brothers' contribution was two-tiered. From a technical perspective, XZecutive pushed bhangra towards the 21st Century, employing DJ sampling and manipulation techniques and moving bhangra music from its folk roots into a hip hop and dance genre. What was more significant, was the cultural paradigm shift caused by their idea of a secretive daytime event run in the afternoon in the back of a pub in Southall, Middlesex. This grew into the 'daytimer' events promoted in Birmingham, Manchester and London in large venues. The ramifications of this were enormous in terms of cultural integration, class and gender emancipation and the coming of age of the South Asian diverse youth culture as part of a normalised U.K. diverse society.

6.7 Summary

The producers outlined here provide a snapshot of the styles, methods, motivations and progression of the bhangra genre in the 1970s through to the mid-1990s. The British bhangra journey, from folk music into a more sophisticated representation using music technology and Western popular music instruments, mirrored the integration of South Asian culture into British mainstream culture at the time. The transition of the predominantly second-generation British Asian community into a fully integrated diverse community paved the way for new genres and the absorption of Western technologies and creative formats, initially in the interest of commercial success. It is apparent that the inclusion of non-Asian producers, like me, interfering with the progression of the genre, was simply part of the process of maturation of style and the progression of the diverse U.K. cultural mix, and that my contribution was not unlike others insofar as it strived towards a more commercially viable, market-friendly product base. This is often confused with the contamination of purity within art but in the case of music production, results in a culturally hybrid product. This product eventually normalises and in some cases, homogenises into a 'pop' product that may have less cultural character for genre aficionados, but is more accessible to the general marketplace. The British bhangra pathway started as celebratory folk music performed at weddings and parties, and then progressed to a modernisation of the genre via the contributions of producers such as Bhamra, Khazanchi and Sabharwal. It then moved through a progression of cross-cultural experiments and adaptations including disco, reggae and rap, to finally end up as music that differs very little from current Western pop music, but with its own cultural identity. The migration of British bhangra to Bollywood was only the beginning of the journey and already, British Asian hip hop has started to move to India and may, as British bhangra, become a South Asian continent cultural identifier. The next chapter is a case study of my production work with Satwant Taak Singh (Raga Kaka) who had previously worked with Khazanchi and Bhamra and explores the mixture of genres and cultural identifiers within a bhangra, reggae and rock context.

Chapter 7: Case Study - Satwant Singh Taak (Raga Kaka Winston)
Mixing Genres and Cross-cultural Mediation Within Production

7.1 Introduction

Although Satwant Taak was a member of one of the most successful bhangra bands, the Heera Group (DESIblitz 2018), it is his solo career and my involvement with him that is the focus of this study. There were more successful solo artists, but it was with Taak that I had the most immersive experience as a producer, musician and co-composer. There are few opportunities where a practising participant researcher can be a part of the ethnographic research without the participation colouring the research due to the subjective approach being a prerequisite to participation (Stebbins 1970). This case study is rooted in my autoethnographic research but is bound up with both Taak's and my memories and experiences and the relationship between artist and producer, then and now.

However, it brings into question whether an ethnographer can genuinely represent the subject of their research without having been an active practitioner in a similar field. For example, the researcher can observe, critique, and analyse a musician's performance, but only if the researcher is a performing musician can they empathise with the inner feelings of the performer, including the elation, adulation, and anxiety that accompanies a performance. I have found during this research, that the emic view of those who have been practitioners results in a better understanding of the interaction between producer and artist than those who were simply observers. Burgess (2005), Hitchins (2014), Zagorski-Thomas (2014), and others have a deeper understanding of their target research, having been music producers prior to their academic careers. However, the perspectives of those not involved in music production (as producers) have also provided me with some foundation material for critical reflection and theorisation. For example, the work of Simon Frith, who is neither producer nor musician, is seminal for popular music studies. Such work provides theoretical depth and gravitas, rooted in social and cultural analysis (Frith 2004), which cannot always be gained from the studio experience alone. Frith's collaboration with Zargorski-Thomas (2012) is noted here. The following case study provides further examples of the kinds of insights I am claiming producers can bring to the table of academic studies. I provide not only details of the practice but also a view of the psychological and cultural dispositions of the protagonists

involved. This would be impossible to experience without prolonged exposure to and immersion within studio culture.

7.2 Background to the Recording and Production Process

It is important to outline the processes involved in creating British bhangra and additional subgenres like bhangramuffin[24] to contextualise the analysis of the mediation and negotiation processes involved. This outline includes my involvement in the genre and how I met and came to produce Satwant Singh Taak, also known as recording artist Raga Kaka Winston and a member of the Heera Group. It includes the inception, musical development, recording and mixing techniques and the marketing decisions made in relation to the final recorded output by the record company in consultation with the artist and producer.

I had been working with a number of bhangra artists in various capacities including engineer, musician and producer from 1987 and had developed a reputation as someone who could translate the musical ideas of British Punjabi bhangra artists into a music technology compatible format through programming. This resulted in my multitrack audio recording studio, Triple X in Acton, London, being booked by many of the London based bhangra artists and their producers.

The format utilised at the time was industry standard 2 inch 24 track analogue multitrack tape recording, supplemented by newly developed and enhanced MIDI programming. This was synchronised to an Atari 1040 computer running Cubase, a digital MIDI programmable work station where individual synthesisers and basic samplers could be triggered simultaneously to create an electronic ensemble. The samplers at that time were limited and could only record (sample) up to a maximum of 63 seconds, shared by no more than 32 different samples (Vintage Synth Explorer n.d.). This might enable the use of sampled percussion instruments or a vocal line, but the use of digital recording was limited and did not allow for the same flexibility available today which has almost unlimited digital recording time and manipulation of those recordings.

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[24] Bhangramuffin, also known as bhangragga, is a form of bhangra music hybridised with reggae and influenced by Jamaican dancehall, developed by artists such as Apache Indian (Sharma 2010, pg.125) and to a lesser degree Raga Kaka Winston, the subject of this case study.

The synchronisation process required a SMPTE time code [25] (Ratcliff 1999), to be recorded on one of the tracks on the multitrack tape, reducing the number of tracks that could be recorded on by two as the 24th edge track of the tape was used for the code and to ensure this was not corrupted or had spill from any other track. The adjacent track 23 was left unused, reducing the track count to 22. This system seemed to be favoured by producers at the time, and the artists were happy to let me facilitate the programming and recording processes.

As I gained more experience in the genre, I was afforded more creative freedom, contributing ideas to the production and was given more responsibility within the creative decision-making processes when recording and mixing. This might have entailed the placement of instruments in the stereo field and the sonic quality control when recording, adding guitars and mandolins, programming synthesized percussion, or creating keyboard parts, including basslines and chordal pads. Sometimes I was asked to work on recordings from India that were not of sufficient quality for release in the U.K. market, and it was my responsibility to enhance the original recordings by adding musical parts and remixing the multitrack tapes from India. Another example of my contribution was adapting the output of a South Asian based artist and Westernising their sound. This was the case with the popular band AWAZ from Pakistan. The directive from record company BMG, who financed the project, was to inject harder-edged rock sounds into the music. I co-produced AWAZ's multi-million selling album *Shola* in 1996 with the three principal members of the band, singer Harood Rashid, keyboard player Faakhir Mehmood and guitarist Asad Ahmed, 'sometimes referred to as the *Take That* of Pakistan' (Pakistani Music.com 2016). This included their biggest international hit 'Mr. Fraudiay' (Rashid 1996). This album included elements of Western music production and is less Eastern than their previous two albums (BBC-Awaz n.d.).

[25] SMPTE is a standard protocol for timecode set by the Society of Motion Picture Engineers and was developed by engineering company EECO in 1967. EECO assigned the intellectual copyright to the public domain. It is used to synchronise different devices such as video machines and has also been used to lock audio tape machines to computers via a SMPTE to MIDI converter (SMPTE.org n.d.).

7.3 The Route to Production– Social interaction

The route to my involvement and consequent production of Raga Kaka Winston started with previous recording sessions with the Heera group in 1991. Satwant Singh Taak, also known as Satta or Sammy to those more familiar with him, was the keyboard player and one of the composers of the Heera group, and I worked extensively with him and with producer Deepak Khazanchi[26] on a number of Heera recordings[27]. During the recordings, it became evident that Taak was getting increasingly frustrated as his songwriting and musical performance contributions were not being acknowledged within the band. It appeared to him that all the credit was being taken by the front-man performers, Kumar Bhupinder Singh and Pavinder Dhami and the producer Khazanchi, who was credited on all recordings as 'Music by Deepak Khazanchi'. During these recording sessions, Taak suggested that we might meet as he had a project that he wanted to discuss with me.

Taak had previously recorded an album with producer Deepak Khazanchi employing some reggae rhythms and some rapping based on the success of a Birmingham bhangra artist, Steven Kapur, who went under the name Apache Indian. Kapur had been signed by Island Records in 1992 (Larkin 1998). Khazanchi wanted to exploit this market and used Taak as the vehicle for this foray into bhangramuffin. This first Raga Kaka album enjoyed a modicum of success, but the relationship between Khazanchi and Taak was strained, and Taak had decided to look elsewhere for a producer with whom he could have more input and control (Taak 2017).

We arranged an evening meeting and Taak picked me up from my studio in North Acton, London, insisting that we discuss his project over dinner at his home in Peckham, South East London. The association of food with social interaction and business dealings presented as a model for all future negotiations. It proved to be a social structure employed as an initial stance of commonality and parity at the start of any negotiation or creative activity that ensued between the bhangra practitioners and me. Bell (1999, pg.216) explores the

[26] Deepak Khazanchi, music producer of Heera, Alaap, Kalapreet, Holle Holle, Bhangra Fever.

[27] Recordings of the Heera band that I worked on include *Cool and Deadly* (1989), *Diamonds From Heera* (1992) and *Beyond Control* (1994).

relationship between food sharing and the absolute limit to any commonality within social interaction. Many cultural interactions and communications centre around food and I always ensured that the musicians in the studio were fed and were informed in advance of all proceedings that they would be breaking for lunch or dinner. During my recording sessions, I would provide snacks and beverages that I thought, sometimes incorrectly, would appeal to the artist and further build trust. Within the circumstance of the negotiation practice that I found myself in, the establishment of commonality via the sharing of food acted as a device that smoothed the way for the continuance of negotiation rather than the establishment of distinct and limiting parameters.

On arrival at his house, I was welcomed by Taak's wife, Jasvinder, known as Batta. We sat down in the lounge and I was offered a whiskey. We discussed the type of approach to recording Taak would like to take and what was possible, given the limitations of track count and synthesizer technology. He was very insistent that although he would like to incorporate reggae influences into the music, he wanted to maintain the traditions and sensibilities of a more traditional Punjabi bhangra style within the song structures and arrangements. This was discussed at length and I pointed out that although it was an important element of the music, in order to reach a larger potential market, be-it an international South Asian market, we needed to be flexible in our approach. I did reassure him however, that I would respect his judgement and give him the power of veto should he dislike the direction the production was taking. This may have seemed vague or unspecific, but it was designed to enlist his support of what I may bring to the creative 'table' rather than to try and outline specifics that would undoubtably change during the process of recording. This was the start of the negotiation process and a jostling of position of control as both parties were getting to know each other within a creative context, without committing to any exactitudes at that time. The sense of empowerment given to an artist with the concept of control or veto, is a powerful tool in the mediation process. The artist is made to feel that they are in creative control, even if they are not leading or even contributing significantly to the process. I revealed to Taak, over 20 years after the event in an interview conducted in December 2015, that one of my methods in the negotiation process was to get the artist to think that they had come up with a creative idea that I had presented earlier. This act of acknowledgement, attributing an idea to the artist, had the effect of empowering them and in effect, massaging the artist's creative ego. This is a tried and tested technique that I adapted from earlier dealings with advertising clients. When I

was producing radio and television commercials, I noticed this technique was constantly employed by the advertising agency account managers or commercial directors when dealing with their clients. They would defer decisions to a client representative in the studio, even though the creative idea had already been executed. The other technique employed was that of deflection. This I encountered on film sound stages I had worked on as a film composer and sound designer and again with client, actor, writer or agency interaction and intervention. The procedure was such that if a client or an actor, would have an idea that was not initially in a script, the director or producer would react in a slightly enthusiastic but diplomatic manner by extolling the virtue of the idea and commending the client or actor on coming up with the suggestion. They would then suggest that they try what was originally in the script first and to see how it went. The original plan or script was adhered to and the idea tabled was more often than not, completely forgotten about by all parties. On later revealing these techniques to Taak, his reaction was 'Now you tell me!' He then went on to state that he always felt that I had a reactive approach to his ideas and that anything I had initiated was subject to his approval anyway and so felt it was entirely a collaborative process. However, he felt that the decision was weighted towards him in terms of hierarchy and the approval process. This further illustrates the constant jostling of conceived positions within the creative process when artists and producers collaborate. It is especially evident when there are cultural differences between the parties concerned. These differences may be techno-cultural (Penley and Ross 1991), cultural background, or both, but it amplifies the power brokerage between creative stakeholders. It is a case of otherness on both sides of the creative relationship where the boundaries are constantly shifting as one party becomes more comfortable with the other's creative input. The lack of cultural intimacy (Stokes 2010) becomes a barrier that requires further mitigation. The dynamic differs greatly from that of two parties being from a similar background.

At Taak's home, after discussing the overall approach and arrangement style for the project, a large plate of Punjabi style chilli chicken was brought into the living room. This was a substantial offering of food and we continued to discuss schedules and the time required for the recording project whilst eating. This was a delicious repast and I finished my plateful only to have it refilled. I did not understand the etiquette of South Asian hospitality, which entails ensuring that a guest does not go hungry. The way to indicate, as a guest, that you have been well fed, is to leave something uneaten on your plate to designate that you are

replete and that your hosts have been generous. Having devoured three plates of chilli chicken, I had to refuse a fourth helping, using the Western traditional method of thanking them profusely for the wonderful food and stating that I could not possibly eat any more. I was unaware that this may have be construed as an insult and that it indicated that you did not like the food, but I was assured in a later conversation when recounting the story back to my hosts years later, that they did not take offence to my actions and in fact found it amusing. However, at that time, I was unaware that the chicken was simply an appetizer and prelude to a full meal and I was led to the dining room where I was presented with another full plate of food. At this point I really could not finish my plate and inadvertently the etiquette of feasting within a South Asian context was maintained.

This was the first of a number of social interactions and discussions, which followed the same pattern, this time without the embarrassment of eating too much appetiser. It was evident that a social bond needed to be established as a precursor to embarking on a creative exercise. This was not the case with other musical cultures I had worked with. Usually, the social bonds were created and developed as a result of the creative recording process rather than being an intrinsic part of the meeting, socialising and planning process. This was the case in different Western genres I had worked in including rock, metal, disco and reggae, but in the case of bhangra, gazal or Hindi pop[28] genres, a social acceptance combined with a shared experience and commonality, needed to be developed prior to going into the recording studio. This possibly smoothed the way and created space for collaboration based on a deeper understanding of each other's cultural values. It would be difficult to assess as to whether this made for a more productive, innovative or overall creative use of our time in the studio, but it clearly established some of the ground rules and a mutual understanding of values, hierarchy and aptitudes prior to engaging with the recording session and enabled us to harness the cultural creativity of our differing backgrounds for collaboration and to aim for agreed goals and creative outcomes prior to the sessions. This procedure was not unique to Raga Kaka. The ritual pervaded through most of my interactions and negotiations with British South Asian artists, producers, and record company executives.

[28] The origins of Hindi pop are attributed to Ahmed Rushdi, a Pakistani singer who recorded the first South Asian pop song, *Ko Ko Korina* in 1966. This style of Hindi popular music has been included in Bollywood films since the late 1960s (The Express Tribune 2010).

At our next meeting, we delved into Taak's experience with the producers he had worked with previously and he aired his opinions and grievances. Deepak Khazanchi, who had produced his last album and the Heera group, of which Taak had been a member, was the main target of his dissatisfaction and complaints. Taak recounted that Khazanchi, in his opinion, was dictatorial and seem to push the artists and musicians he worked with to extremes, demanding numerous retakes and making creative decisions contrary to their wishes. These types of stories coming from South Asian musicians and artists talking about their producers were not uncommon and I remember at the time wondering whether this kind of accusatory assessment and dissention would be directed at me in the future. I too had worked extensively with Khazanchi as an engineer, programmer and session musician and I had maintained a relationship that appeared to be rooted in a sense of mutual respect. This may have been influenced by the fact that in addition to facilitating the recording sessions, I was also the owner of the studio and he was my client. I did however, observe that the recording sessions that involved practitioners and producers of the same or similar South Asian cultures, promoted a different atmosphere within the studio environment and that the producers did take a more dictatorial approach. Khazanchi's treatment of his artists, at times became uncomfortable for me as the working atmosphere in the studio could become very tense. This approach was not exclusive to Khazanchi and at the time I put it down to cultural familiarity and an expected behavioural approach. It has to be pointed out however, that Khazanchi had started his own record company, Arishma Records in 1986 and had produced some of the most successful British bhangra albums including artists Alaap, Heera, Kalpreet and Holle Holle (punjab2000, online). It was Arishma records that released Raga Kaka's first albums, *Mambo Jambi ina Bombay* (1992) produced by Khazanchi. Taak claims that in excess of 40,000 copies of these records were not accounted for by Arishma Records. The album was distributed in the U.K. by Fantronic Records. In an interview discussing music piracy Taak (2015) states,

> I learned that when I went to Canada - this was after the first project. Deepak was with me. It was a very embarrassing moment because I went to this outlet and there was something happening in the cellar downstairs. This one outlet, they shook my hand and said, 'Absolutely amazing, last week we sold forty thousand copies,' and my jaw dropped and I thought if you sold that much in one outlet and it's just come out, then there would be royalties. Deepak tries to quickly intervene and says 'Oh yes

> but there's this and that and the other, then obviously you have to send off to…' He totally changed the whole dialogue of the story and I'm thinking this is not right. Obviously certain things were being achieved on a big scale but I was not seeing any of it.

I cannot validate any of these claims as the British Asian music industry did not comply with the BPI (British Phonographic Industry Limited) standard formats at that time for music charts and record company sales figures. The industry operated entirely outside of the accepted parameters of the music industry. Taylor of the B.P.I stated that this included publishing copyright, financial models, structures and conventions. The model for the British Asian companies mirrored the music industry in India, where the rights were held for very short periods of time and then became public domain and were not subject to any royalty distribution or copyright, (interview 2012). As a result, the British Asian music business was subject to insider bickering, accusations, arguments and business battles between record shops, distributors, record companies and artists. It was only later, when the major record companies got involved in this market, specifically EMI and BMG, who bought Multitone Records, that song copyrights were registered with collection agencies such as PRS (Performing Rights Society), MCPS (Mechanical Copyright Protection Society) and PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited), and audits were done. Even with this, there was still an element of unchecked accounting and from a Western perspective, irregular business practices. To the South Asian cultural business practitioner, many having come from being market stall traders, this could be construed as normal business practice and to mitigate for this, the ethos of cash in hand and buyout[29] payments prevailed. To further contextualise this, in the case of films, record companies and film production companies in India would pay fees to composers and actors as a final buyout fee and then would sell the territorial distribution rights, also in the form of buyouts, to the different geographical distributors, who could then exploit the products, records or films, in any way they saw fit without any requirement to account for, or pay royalties.

[29] A buyout within copyright, is the fully transfer of the copyright to the purchasing party. The originator or former owner of the copyright still retains what is known as moral rights and can object to the derogatory treatment of the original work, insist on the right to attribution, object to false attribution and maintain privacy, but this is subject to the individual laws of the county in which the copyright was originally registered (gov.uk 2016).

To illustrate how the Bollywood film industry works: A typical Bollywood film might arbitrarily cost ten million dollars (US) to produce. This includes all costs; actors, director's fees and expenses, distribution costs, writers, marketing, legal fees and composers (known in India as the music producer therefore creating some confusion in international markets). The original Bollywood production company then sells the territorial rights for distribution and exploitation on the basis of a buy-out to other distributors at a profit. For example, an American distributor might pay seven million dollars, an Australasian distributor; three million, a European distributor; one million, a U.K. distributor; 500,000 and so on within the different territories providing the original film company with a guaranteed profit, retaining the Indian rights for theatrical exploitation in India, yielding yet more profit. There are no onward accounting and distribution costs for royalties or residual payments making the whole exercise a very simple operation and enabling the production company to then put its resources into the next film. It is this simplification that enables a high output of product and has made Bollywood the biggest producer of films in the world (McCarthy 2014). This is a simplified illustration and there are other territories and some additional arrangements not covered in this example, but it was this business philosophy that informed the practice models within the U.K. for bhangra music. The South Asian record companies did not expect to pay royalties. In an interview with Pratish Aggarwal of Fantronic Records, he addressed the integrity of this model, responding with 'Why pay royalties? I had already paid the artists!' (Aggarwal 2014). There also seemed to be a culture of piracy within the industry. The album that I produced by Awaz purportedly sold two million copies in Pakistan and India, had only one million copies registered as having been pressed and two further million albums were returned to the record company from the retailers. This was indicative of stories of piracy within the South Asian music industry. The members of the band Awaz made very little money from the highly successful but seemingly pirated album, but the main benefit to the band was to maximise the potential audience ticket sales for their live shows. With the advent of digital music streaming and YouTube exposure reducing the potential revenue streams and record sales for many musicians, artists are moving towards a reliance on live performance revenues rather than a dependence on record sales and are using recorded output more as a promotional vehicle rather than a core revenue source.

7.4 The Record Company - Fantronic and the Negotiation Procedure

The next part of the process was for me to visit Pratish Aggarwal, the owner of Fantronic Records, who had agreed to finance and release Taak's (Raga Kaka Winston) new recording. This album was to include facets of reggae influenced rap and rhythms and was somewhat outside of the normal representation of Fantronic Records' catalogue, which was made up of a combination of traditional Hindi and Bollywood music from India and bhangra recordings from Southall artists. It was important that Fantronic allocate an adequate budget for recording and marketing to include a fee for my involvement as a producer and musical contributor. I had previously engineered or produced a number of recordings, remixes and productions for Fantronic[30], and Aggarwal had suggested the idea of a collaboration with Taak previously. Taak had wanted a change of record company from Khazanchi's Arishma Records and had approached both Multitone and Fantronic. Pran Gohil at Multitone Records had offered Taak a recording contract and sent him a cheque as an advance for signing. As Taak's objectives were to broaden his market, and he was known for being adept at copying accents, Gohil suggested that instead of mixing reggae with bhangra, that Taak should record in Cantonese. Taak's reaction to the suggestion was negative. '…for real?! I do reggae and can mimic a few things, but how the hell am I supposed to sing in Cantonese?' (Taak 2012). This suggestion was clearly not acceptable to Taak, who returned his advance royalty payment to Multitone, despite the fact that Multitone had more resources at its disposal, having signed a joint venture in 1992 with BMG Records (broom03.revolvy.com n.d.). Subsequently, Taak decided to sign with Fantronic.

My own negotiation with Fantronic again took on a similar format to the negotiations with Taak, as Aggarwal insisted that we share a repast at a local Indian restaurant in Slough, Middlesex, very close to where his offices were located. During the meal, we did not discuss budgets, deadlines, marketing release dates or production and only talked about peripheral activities surrounding the recording industry, gossip about other record companies and artists,

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[30] Richard Lightman production and engineering credits for Fantronic Records: *One Patala Mix* (1993), Heera *Beyond Control* (1993), *Bhangra Fever II* (1992), Bina Mistri *Been-a-Mistri* (1992), *Take One* (1993), *Glassy Junction* (1994) *Madi Jo and Amma Dekh* (1994), Deepak Khazanchi *I, me & myself* (1994), Ragga Kaka Winston *Bhangra Rastafari* (1994) Ragga Kaka Winston *Ruff Enough* (1994).

the state of the South Asian bhangra market and our families. It was only on return to the Fantronic offices that Aggarwal broached the subjects of discussion pertinent to the project. Not much time was devoted to discussing the production values as he felt that it was entirely my responsibility, but he did make a point of emphasising that the initial market was South Asian community based and that any attempt at appealing to a wider audience meant that the core audience must be catered for first. In his opinion, this meant that dhol and dholak drums were a priority instrument group to be used as these were the signifying instruments of bhangra and that I must include these elements. Fortunately, I did agree with him and then the most difficult part of the negotiation began; costs and remuneration. As my studio was being used for the production it was difficult to get Aggarwal to understand that studio charges were different to my production fees. I learned later in interviews that this was a bargaining ploy on Aggarwal's part and that he fully understood the distinction between facility and the role of the producer in this scenario but feigned a comprehension of the demarcation lines between these disciplines in order to try and negotiate a better price. He also, as explained earlier, objected to the idea of royalties or my claims of copyright within the composition of any of the songs. I finally managed to convince him that it would be better to register the copyright as a publisher as there may be additional revenue streams through broadcast or sync rights[31]. As he did not have experience in this area, I offered to co-publish this with him through my own publishing company, Richard Lightman Music, and use this as a vehicle for registration and administration. This provided me with an additional stake in the production and enabled me to use this as leverage to appear to reduce my overall production fees, which ultimately, I did not. It is important to note that although budgets and deadlines including additional musician costs were set at that meeting, the parameters and set budgets were continually adjusted, sometimes up and then sometimes down during the recording process. Later, in interview, Aggarwal explained that this was a technique of checks and balances he employed to ensure that the costs of his projects did not escalate during the production. He explained that he had experienced producers coming back to him with demands of increased costs after recording had started which would leave him in a difficult position of having invested in a project and then to be forced to put more money into it to get

[31] A sync license is a license used for visual works. It will give the licensee synchronisation rights and are mainly used in film, TV, video games, and commercial advertising. When a composition is used in any visual media, a master license must also be obtained in order to use the original recording in conjunction with the publishing copyright. All these licenses can generate fees and royalties (musiciansunion.org.uk n.d.).

it finished or risk losing his whole investment. Over a period of years between 1989 and 1996, I worked on many projects for Fantronic until the closure of my studio and the launch of my children's record company, Meringue Productions in 1997. During the time I worked with Aggarwal, we developed a trust and mutual respect within our working relationship, but the negotiations and meetings were always punctuated by meals in nearby Indian restaurants before discussions turned to finance.

Figure 1. *Richard Lightman with Pratish Aggarwal of Fantronic Records*. © Lightman, G. (2012).

7.5 Musical Influences and Image Issues

Taak later revealed that the main influence for his melodies came from the hymns he would sing with his father after his father's Sunday morning Sikh prayer sessions reading the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib. Apparently, those hymn sessions, or Shabads (Sikhs.org n.d.), grew in complexity as Taak's brother started to accompany him on tabla drum and Taak learned to play the melodies on a harmonium. It was these melodies that provided the inspiration for later compositions. He did not copy them but used elements of the phrasing and structures for his songs. He was also influenced by his upbringing and being exposed to pop music in the U.K., having moved to London with his parents from Amritsar in the Punjab when he was nine months old. Amritsar is the location of one of the holiest Sikh Gurdwaras, or temples, something that Taak is still proud of and maintains a close bond. Although he grew up as a British South Asian in the U.K., he sustained a strong association with his cultural roots and still wears a turban. His one major regret within his musical career was that he was convinced by Khazanchi to remove his turban to project a more Rastafarian image with long hair for his first solo release *Mambo Jambi ina Bombay* (1992) on Jupiter Records, published by Arishma Music and distributed by Fantronic Limited in the U.K. and Arishma in the U.S.A and Canada. He followed instructions, permed his long hair and put it into a pony tail. His Sikh peers questioned him at the time for his actions as for them, it represented a rejection of his culture, beliefs and background. However, when he played in the Heera Group, which was a more traditional representation of bhangra music, he wore his turban.

This image change still seems to haunt him now as he claims it was not a true representation of self. It was done to conform to a commercial image at the time. I questioned him later in interview as to whether this affected his music and his response was that he may have held back and taken a conservative approach when performing, or in his compositional structures, to compensate for having capitulated to record company pressures to change his image. In retrospect, I was able to facilitate the branching out of musical forms by injecting additional and more experimental reggae and rock influences into his music thereby taking responsibility of moving away from traditional formats from him and placing them within my sphere of influence. This perhaps deflected some of the guilt away from him and therefore one of my functions within the collaboration was to provide a guilt pillow and supply a deflection for any criticism levied at him by his own community. This was not so much of a

scapegoat role for an artist's perceived cultural misdemeanours. This was a place where the artist would take responsibility for their actions, but could apportion blame or lay claim to being coerced into taking a creative direction that may not have adhered to the social norms and expectations of their culture. This then brings into question whether another of the producer's roles is to provide an excuse for an artist's creative explorations that may be subject to scrutiny or criticism by their culture or community. The producer may also hold the function of scapegoat for an artist's output should the output be commercially unsuccessful or publicly criticised.

There was a large Afro-Caribbean community based in South East London where Taak grew up and he claims that Jamaican 'patois' fascinated him. He was able to mimic accents and so when he started to write music, he wrote the English lyrics in a Jamaican MC, or rap style, referencing reggae, lovers rock and dancehall records[32] that were popular in the late 1970s and early1980s. For example, lovers rock artists included Dennis Brown, Winston Reedy and Honey Boy and dancehall artists included Barington Levy and Shabba Ranks (Moskowitz 2005). Taak's genius was to incorporate South Asian cultural concepts and use these in conjunction with Jamaican rap and position them within bhangra music structures. By the time I worked with him I had recorded and worked with a number of reggae artists[33] and brought some of the production, melodic influences and bass lines to the compositional mix. An example of this collaboration was the track 'Bhangra Definition', which included a heavy reggae synth bass line and drum pattern arranged and composed by me combined with Taak's cross-cultural lyrical content and Indian melody.

[32] Lovers rock was a genre of reggae developed in the U.K. in the late 1970s that was influenced by American R'n'B music. The lyrical content referenced romance rather than the political messages of mainstream roots reggae. Artists included Gregory Isaacs and Dennis Brown, both artists I worked with (allmusic.com n.d.). Dancehall was a subgenre of reggae with a focus on a shared vocal between the DJ and the singer. It emerged in the late 1970s (Pitchfork.com n.d.).

[33] Reggae artists Lightman worked with included: Aswad, Dennis Brown, Desmond Decker and the Israelites, Clint Eastwood and General Saint, Winston Francis, Bunny Lee, The Message People, The Pioneers, and Tippa Irie (RichardLightman.com online n.d.)

7.6 'Bhangra Definition' Lyrics

The track starts with the bass and drum pattern with the following lyrical rap.

Dis a bhangra
Dis a bhangra
Dis a bhangra
I wanna tel ya all about bhangra dance
Ah ting wid style, fashion an romance
Drums, music, dance un dresses
Colour, glamour, beauty hit possesses
Ah type ah ting not hevery body can do
Some tekka-turn, some tekkaffah dem shoe
Move like ah snake han sharp like ah spear
When doin' di bhangra dare's notten to fear
Baal owt ah song ar rap owt ah line
Join up yar haan do it one more time
Love un respectin' all yah people
Take yar time don't rush to beat all
Having fun is the way to be
Some make friends, some choose to leave
Carin, helpin' dah ones in need
Show the way or make a wordy deed
Tradition, cultures here to stay
Save it, love it, don't betray
Bhangra
Dis a bhangra

The track reverts to Punjabi lyrics and melody bringing the song back to traditional bhangra roots only to return to the reggae bass line and an infusion of heavy rock guitar textures, creating a new complex cross-cultural bhangra musical genre. This may be categorised as a form of bhangramuffin but it extended beyond this with the additional blues and rock

elements. The rap, although performed in a Jamaican patois, was a Punjabi narrative and overall does not deviate from its cultural root. It was this approach and permutations of this that we employed for the two albums, *Bhangra Rastafari* (1993) and *Ruff Enough* (1994), which we co-wrote and I produced.

7.7 The Recording Process: Negotiations in Recording and Composition

Once the budget of £12,000, to include studio hire and musicians was agreed, we set about the task of recording. This was scheduled in batches of three songs at a time. We completed these recording, but did not mix the tracks, before moving on to the next three songs. This was designed to maintain focus, as much of the process was also apportioned to composition as well as recording. Another more practical reason for working on three songs at a time was that the two-inch tape that was used on the larger industry standard format 12 inch reels, was run at 30 inches per second (ips) to maximise signal to noise ratio[34], frequency response[35] and dynamic range[36]. This format allowed for a programme of approximately 15 minutes in duration. As songs averaged between three and five minutes, and allowing for the count-in at the beginning of a song and time for a fade out, only three songs of average duration would fit on a reel of 24 track two-inch tape. Working with three songs at a time meant that it was not necessary to change the tape reels whilst working on these songs. This cut down on studio time and costs as changing reels and lining up the tape heads with that tape, a procedure that was done at the beginning of any session, could take up to 20 minutes.

The following is an account of the process of recording and composing of one of the songs, 'Gidda Balieh' (Taak, Lightman and Baktohr 1994), that appeared on the second album we worked on together, *Rough Enough*, recorded and released in late 1994.

'Gidda Balieh' is a song about a girl in a dance routine. As Taak (2015) describes,

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[34] The signal to noise ratio is the maximum level of audio signal to the residual noise (White 1989, pg. 249).

[35] Frequency response is the measurement of the frequency range that audio equipment can facilitate (White 1989, pg. 227).

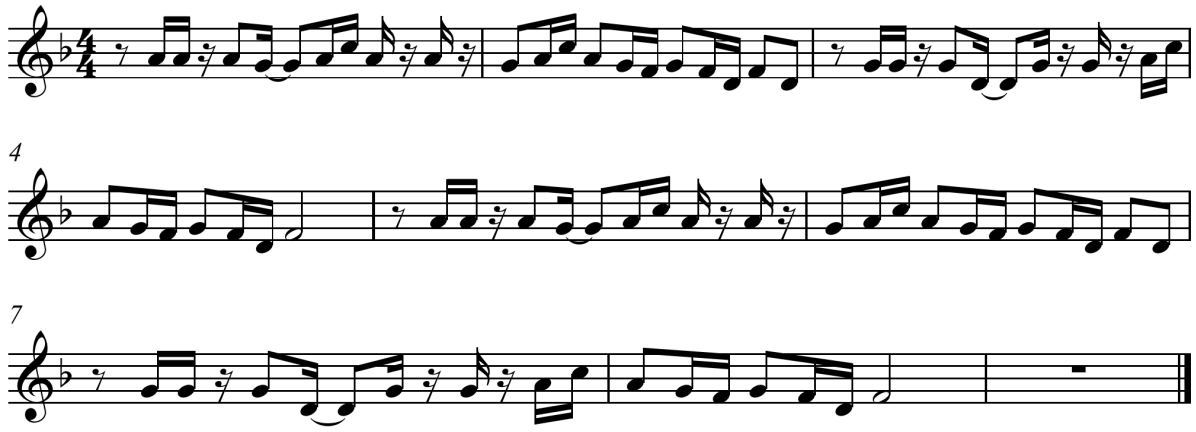
[36] Dynamic range is the range of level expressed as dB between the highest signal and the lowest audible signal that disappear into the noise floor (White 1989, pg. 224).

‘Gidda is another term used for a type of dance routine, and means bringing your hands together. When you put your hands together, bet your bottom dollar, there’s going to be some dancing involved. Balieh is referring to the girl. Gidda balieh is a clapping girl; basically, describing her moves, what she’s doing and how wonderful her dance routine is. That’s … the song. It’s about a young girl who’s in a dance routine and is going to set the place alight with her fantastic manoeuvres and routines’ (Taak 2012).

The first recording session involved Taak bringing in a harmonium and playing the introduction motif and the melody for the song. We discussed the structure of the song and settled on a tempo of 98 beats per minute (bpm). It was decided that the main theme would follow a traditional bhangra structure of a percussion and chordal introduction featuring the dhol, dholak and tabla. This included a reggae rapper call of ‘Bhongra, L’aad have mercy. See em g’al how am move. Why she luscious ya!’. This was followed by an instrumental motif that was repeated during the song as an introduction to the verse and chorus sections. The whole song was performed over a reggae-syncopated beat of programmed drums, bass and guitar as the basic rhythm on which dhol and dholak were played to provide the Asian texture required. We agreed that the end of the song would contain the patois Jamaican rap, with the balance of the song to be sung in Punjabi. This was a negotiation that met Taak’s wish to maintain traditional values within the song at the same time as providing the cultural extension of reggae that might appeal to a broader audience. I did think at the time that if the track was successful within the British South Asian market that we might consider an English translated version. In other experiments in translating the lyrics, it was found that the cultural references did not translate into viable Western pop subject categories and that the performance without the guttural sounds of Punjabi did not have the same impact or compliment the excitement that the dhol drums imparted on the music. Long and Barber (2015) suggest that powerful emotions relating to love, hate and sex are the narratives that drive pop songs. This intensity of emotional connection is not common in Punjabi lyrics and so translations into English did not contain the same intensity or cultural associations. However, the structure of the song met the criteria of the record company and its primary objective of meeting their already established market. This was a compromise on my part as I wanted to include the rap element much sooner in the track but the compromise was necessary to placate all stakeholders and we progressed with the composition.

Taak recorded the harmonium elements with a Roland D50[37] keyboard he had programmed to emulate a harmonium and left the recordings on a cassette with me. I then programmed the drum pattern, bass line and searched for synth sounds that could be used as replacements for the harmonium motif and the short solo sections that followed it. I decided that a horn section playing the motif would perhaps be at odds with the Western expectations of what a horn section would play, but that there would be a familiarity of sonic colour that would make the track more accessible to a broader market. This sound also needed to reference the harmonium acknowledging the traditions of the genre. I did this by layering the sounds on separate tracks. The solo section could then be performed by a solo alto saxophone synth sound in a register similar to a bansuri or Indian bamboo flute.

Figure 2. *Instrumental motif played on the harmonium*



The next recording session was devoted to finalising the structure on the computer, an Atari 1040 with 1 megabyte of RAM, and to continue the programming of the drums to include fills and pattern changes to reflect the differential between the verse and chorus sections, although most of this was to be punctuated by the live dhol, dholak and tabla drums. The bass line was then set and gave us the structure to then overdub the different elements of the song.

[37] The Roland D50 was first released in 1987 and was the first commercially available synthesizer to use sample and synthesis. This utilises recorded samples which can be manipulated with synthesis filters and voltage control amplifiers to create more realistic synthesized representations of real instruments (Russ 2011, pg. 252).

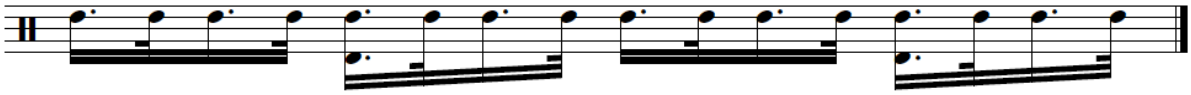
To ensure that the drum programming could be synced with recorded material, a SMPTE code was recorded onto track 24 of a Studer A800 multitrack tape machine on Ampex 456 two inch tape. To make sure that this track maintained its functional integrity through the recording, the adjacent track 23 was kept empty so that no spill from that track would contaminate the timecode on track 24. This code was then sent to a separate SMPTE to MIDI time code converter made by MOTU (Mark of the Unicorn) and the MIDI code triggered the Atari 1040 computer. At that time, my MIDI computer programme of choice was Cubase by Steinberg, which had been developed for the Atari computer.

Subsequent sessions were split between keyboard overdubs and guide vocals, followed by the all-important percussion session. The dhol and dholak drums, being particularly loud, required careful recording as they could distort very easily and the drums were played by using a bent stick which could easily hit a microphone if the microphone was placed in a traditional manner near the skin of the drum. I had to place the microphones, one on either side of the drum, as it is a two-skinned instrument, off axis from the skin to avoid inadvertent collisions with the microphones with their sticks during the more animated or forte (loud) sections of the music, bearing in mind that from a Dhol player's perspective, the chorus sections needed to be played louder and harder with more physicality and movement to support the message of the song. This was a further negotiation of technical requirements versus cultural norms within the musical framework and I was constantly looking for solutions to this dilemma during the recording process. This included singers wishing to dance in more intense moments within the song and instrumentalists wishing to sway during the recordings to maintain tempo.

Figure 3. *Dhol drums played by The Dhol Foundation* (union.wisc.edu, n.d.)

The first live instrument to be recorded was the dholak drum. This drum is the size of a small conga with skins both sides and was traditionally used to maintain the rhythm of the bhangra dance (Princeton Soundlab n.d.). It worked well with the syncopated reggae beat accentuating the third beat in the bar, which is a characteristic of reggae music.

Figure 4. *Dhol pattern*



The difficulty was to get the dholak player, musician Naushad Sheik, to play in time against the very regimented sequenced drum track. This was achieved by recording in sections and a technique known as ‘punching in’ (Thornton n.d.). This technique required a performer to play along with a section before the section they were going to re-record due to mistakes or drifting out of time, and for the engineer to drop, or punch them into record at exactly the right place to continue recording. The engineer had to then punch them out of the next section that was correctly played. This technique was highly skilled within analogue technologies as any mistake by the engineer would appear as a ‘glitch’ or anomaly in the recording and it would have to be done all again. This is now very easy to achieve in the digital domain as

recording is now non-destructive and sections can be pasted or joined together with absolute precision. The dropping-in technique was used for all non-programmed performances.

The next percussion instruments to be recorded were shakers, finger cymbals, cowbell, guiro[38] and cabasa[39]. They were included to create colour and texture and subtly differentiate between sections of the song. Although the guiro and cabasa are Latin percussion instruments and not often used in South Asian recordings, they were an adapted signature sound for my productions and were included in the track. This now provided the upper and mid frequency percussion elements and left the dhol drum to be recorded. Three performances of the dhol were recorded to provide the impression of an ensemble of dhol drummers and gave a bhangra character to the track, especially at the end phrases of the verses. The tablas were recorded on the track simply because the percussionist brought a set with him. This was an afterthought which I was unsure would work but its tonal characteristics cut through the rest of the track providing more variation and created more interest within the percussion textures.

By the time we were at a point where percussion overdubs were being recorded, Taak and I had developed a creative understanding and communication, but I was still unsure as to whether the other musicians, who were predominantly of Punjabi origins, either understood my directives or took me seriously. I had observed, when working with British South Asian producers, that they employed a more dictatorial approach and even when appearing to be interested in the suggestions made by the musicians, would keep to the prescribed arrangements and record the music entirely in their own style and to their own specifications. This did result in some very successful record sales figures but drew upon the model from India where the producer or musical director would create the entire musical arrangement and artists would simply perform the songs as instructed. This was an approach I felt uncomfortable with and as I was not fully steeped in the cultural roots of this music, nor could I speak Punjabi, I did not feel qualified to produce the music without the input of others

[38] A guiro is Latin percussion instrument made from a long hollow gourd or carved hollow wooden tube with closed ends, with a grooved surface, played by scraping a stick along the grooves (Carved Culture online 2020).

[39] A cabasa is Latin percussion instrument consisting of a cylinder on a handle surrounded by loose beads that are rubbed to create different rhythms (FreeMusicDictionary online n.d.).

who were more familiar with the genre. It was important for me to collaborate, but this in turn created other communication and creative problems. I was fortunate that I had the full support of the artist in this as I later learned that the percussion players had asked Taak if I knew what I was doing. His response was for them to make up their own minds based on what it sounded like. After a short time, recording, the feedback was, 'It sounds good. He understands our music.' I understand that this information then spread through to the rest of the South Asian London musician community and having then developed a reputation, I started to field many enquiries from South Asian artists looking for a producer. Unfortunately, I had to turn down a majority of these offers as the budgets presented were often not sufficient enough for me to cover costs and my fee.

My initial unfamiliarity and subsequent immersion in the cultural and musical aspects of bhangra led me to further experimentation, expansion and cross-cultural referencing within the genre. It is unclear as to whether this was driven by a desire to make a cultural statement based on my own musical and societal roots or whether this was a subconscious attempt to legitimately gain acceptance within an unfamiliar cultural forum without appearing to mock or belittle another culture from a hegemonic position based on technological expertise and experience within mainstream pop production methodologies. It is difficult to analyse or question my own motives, however there is the possibility that being uncomfortable with some of the cultural frames of reference that did not conform to Western social norms or expectations, may have informed my creative decisions. There were inevitably, social or cultural misunderstandings, coming from the musicians or being projected by me as the producer. I was instinctively aware that these issues, even if I was unable to identify them, may have to be addressed and that I would need to mediate a scenario that would make the artists feel at ease regardless of how it impacted on my emotional disposition or addressed any of my own social insecurities. In these situations, I would often reflect on my childhood experience of observing villagers in India pointing at me and laughing and I tried to use this in a positive light in my negotiations in the studio by sometimes allowing the musicians the latitude to use me as the brunt of a joke during the recording sessions. I would use this as a technique to diffuse some of the tension that would often build up in the studio or to help break up disagreements. Although recording is a creative and collaborative process, the pressure of performance and achieving a high-quality resultant recording can be very high, causing tempers to flare up between performers.

The next and arguably the most important part of the process was recording the lead vocal. In the case of 'Gidda Balieh', there was a Punjabi lyricist who had been commissioned to write lyrics and who stayed with us in the studio to ensure that pronunciation and inflection was correct and maintained the integrity demanded by Taak conforming to the expectations of the Sikh community. This included inflection when pronouncing words, particularly if they referred to a girl or woman. I would often invite a linguist or a relevant cultural expert to monitor my sessions if I was working in a genre that was in another language. This included recordings in Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarat and Jamaican or Trinidadian patois. One word or phrase may have different meanings dependent on the pronunciation. By having a cultural expert on site avoided any cultural embarrassment or insult.

A Neumann U87 microphone[40] , TL Audio C1 Valve compressor[41] and the mic preamps on the AMEK Angela[42] recording console were used to record the vocals as this combination provided the best warmth, immediacy, clarity and control of level that was available to me in my studio. The U87 microphone continues to be a high-quality industry standard microphone used in most studios throughout the world. The use of a valve compressor gave an additional slight harmonic distortion associated with warmth and excitement. This combined with the additional natural analogue compression that is created by recording onto magnetic tape, provided the punch and depth of sound I was looking for. This effect is much sought after in current digital recordings and valve emulation plug-in software, along with vintage hardware in the signal path, is often employed to recreate this (Senior n.d.). My tried and tested technique for recording the lead vocal was to record five or six separate performances of the same track and then to bounce[43] the best 'takes' or performance of each line onto another

[40] The Neumann U87 multi-pattern condenser mic is one the most widely used studio mics in the world and is often used for vocal and acoustic instrument recording. (Shappler 2008)

[41] TL Audio C1 is a valve compressor providing an extra warmth to audio signals. (TLA n.d.)

[42] The Amek Angela was a 32 channel in line console manufactured in the U.K. between 1982 and 1997 and was highly revered by engineers and producers world-wide selling over 500 units. (Langley Design 2011)

[43] Bouncing tracks is the process of mixing a number of tracks down, selecting the best performances from each track and recording that mix onto a new track. This then can free up the tracks used for the initial recording (4SoundEngineers.com n.d.).

track. In some cases, this was done word by word. In this way, the original recorded tracks were still available should any choices be inconsistent in tuning, attack or lacking in continuity between vocal lines in a song. This method also allowed for any further repairs and retakes of lines sung by the vocalist should all of the variances from the recorded tracks be unusable. This was a precursor to non-destructive digital editing and what is currently known as 'comping'[44].

The process of choosing the best takes was initially down to my personal choices with consultation with Taak. Some of the rationale for the decisions made was also based on pronunciation, for which I was not qualified to comment on. My contribution referred to continuity and performance interpretation, tempered by tuning, although the tuning of Taak's vocals was seldom an issue. It was sometime down to a decision as to whether a vocal phrase had more impact within the South Asian market or whether it was more accessible to the Western ear. This was of nominal importance especially if the performance was in Punjabi and not English. When the final edited vocal take was agreed upon, the other tracks could be erased and used for other instruments. Digital technology with almost unlimited track counts and non-destructive editing,[45] now allows all takes to be kept regardless of whether they are needed or not, but at that time it was necessary to erase tracks to facilitate recording more instruments.

The same multiple take technique was used to record the guitar solos that were performed by me. The use of rock and blues phrases against the two chord F to Eb pattern was initially at odds with the expectations of the artist but after a few listens, there was a sense of sonic acclimatisation and Taak realised that the inclusion of another genre related style in the music might reach yet another market. We had previously employed some rock guitar phrasing in the song 'Bhangra Definition' (1994) and this had been well received by the public who had bought the previous album *Bhangra Rastafari* (1993), which had also been played

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[44] Comping is a similar function to bouncing except that it is done through cutting and pasting in a Digital Audio Workstation and does not require deleting the original tracks used for recording to make room for additional recording (4SoundEngineers.com n.d.).

[45] Non-destructive editing, also known as non-linear editing is the process of editing in the digital domain where the original audio files remain intact and a new representation of the edit is what is played. This enables reworking of the audio files and going back on any mistakes made in the edit (Inglis 2011).

extensively on Asian community radio stations; primarily Sunrise Radio[46]. The use of genre related phrasing in this case acted as its own negotiator in mediating the East-West collaboration of culture within the music as there were pop, rock and bhangra rhythms all intertwining, producing a cross-cultural rhythmic feel.

The final parts were added to the recording including the solo section that proceeded the verses after the melodic horn motif. This was played on the Roland D50 synthesizer. Taak had previously programmed a hybrid flute and harmonium sound patch which he used for soloing live with the Heera group. We decided to use this sound for continuity and as an association marker with Heera, which was one of the most popular bhangra acts at the time. We also put backing vocals on the song. We got anyone who was in the studio at the time to gather around a microphone and shout 'hoy, hoy, hoy, hoy' on each beat of the 4/4 bar. This is a traditional bhangra folk chant used in many bhangra recordings. I recall that I put the tape machine into record 30 seconds before the part was needed and ran into the vocal booth to join the others in the 'hoy' chorus, adding another voice to the existing throng of 4 people, therefore making it 5 voices. We doubled this giving us ten voices in total. I also re-recorded the 'chop'[47] reggae guitar on the second and fourth beat of the bar in traditional Jamaican reggae style, and the song recording was then complete.

The final discipline in the recording process was mixing the track. In addition to any technical considerations this required additional discussion, negotiation and mediation based on personal preferences, cultural expectations and commercial motives. The main areas of mediation related to the volume, or level of the vocal against the drums, percussion and bass lines in the mix. My own values were informed by the 1980s and early 1990s pop chart mixes where the vocals were set further back within a track as if they were a part of the ensemble. Although the lyrics were usually discernible within a rock or pop mix, it was a focus on texture and blend that drove the sound balances. There was a shift towards boosting the lower

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[46] Sunrise Radio Southall was launched in 1989 and was the first 24-hour commercial radio station broadcasting to the Asian market in London (Hear and Now 2014).

[47] Reggae guitar chords are mostly played as percussive full chord chops that last the duration of a crotchet (UK) or quarter note and is played on the 2nd and 4th beats of a 4/4 bar. As a guitarist, I played in a number of reggae bands, the first being The Pioneers in 1977. It was Eddy Grant who taught me the techniques of playing reggae guitar.

frequencies including bass parts and bass drums as domestic speaker systems were becoming more efficient and there was a marked shift in accenting those frequencies in dance music to support the sub bass speaker systems installed in clubs and discos. There was also a trend for drums to be louder in mixes compared to the mixes of the 1970s and early 1980s. It was these trend motivated values that I was trying to apply to the bhangra mixes. Fortunately, the level of the drums, especially the dhols and dholaks did not present a problem as these percussion instruments were the driving beat behind bhangra dance and there was no argument from the artist or the record company, as to how loud they should be as long as they were almost omnipresent. In fact, the record company's preference was for the dhol and dholak drums to be dominant in the track, but I needed to give some prominence to the bass parts and some of the other instrumentation including the Western oriented, programmed drums. I was however, constantly aware that I had to placate both the artist and my paymaster, the record company, at the same time as maintaining my own musical and creative integrity as a producer. There were a number of compromises that had to be made, not necessarily in my opinion to the betterment of the track and there were times when I would have to defend my position in order to maintain the integrity of the artist and the song. For example, I had to use a slightly less distorted and 'present' sound for the guitar than I would have liked to or was used to. I still regret giving in to pressure from Fantronic Records in relation to this on the basis that they felt their market was not acclimatised to this type of sound. The idea that this was a relatively new and unique hybrid of bhangra, reggae and rock genres, almost a new genre in its own right, was overlooked as a selling point by the record company and the overall mix ended up slightly watered down by taking a safe approach as requested by the company.

The vocal level and effects applied were also subject to a series of negotiations and compromises. My ear was attuned to the mainstream pop market and I had to satisfy South Asian market expectations. Bhangra vocal levels tended to be louder than everything else in the track to a point of employing a 'brick wall' limiter on the vocal, a form of severe compression that prevents levels from exceeding a preset maximum level on an audio signal as a way of controlling the vocal or other instruments' signal from overloading and creating a clipped distortion. Used too harshly, the audio signal has the aural effect of being squashed and in some cases, creates a pumping effect against the instruments on a track. Bhangra vocals would be set extremely high ensuring the brick wall effect of the limiter would be

triggered at all times causing a squashed or semi-distorted representation of the vocal sound in the interest of what was perceived as being exciting. This references the experience of live singers singing too close into microphones, creating what is known as the proximity effect,[48] and also the use of low quality PA sound systems, which distort. My compromise was to set a high compression ratio and apply it to the vocal to maintain a constant level, but not to 'slam' the vocal by constantly pushing a brick wall limiter function on the compressor to the point of distortion. The South Asians were also used to hearing large amounts of reverb tail lengths of three or four seconds in duration on the vocals. I wanted a more immediate and intimate vocal sound and so reduced the length of the reverb to 1.7 seconds. I still used more percentage mix of the reverb effect that I would have liked but this met with everyone's approval.

All of these mixing approaches were more than artistic or stylistic compromises. They were cultural mediations. There is the possibility that at the time, I was trying to force my cultural musical values and associations on a genre in a competitive and aggressive manner. My objectives may have been completely at odds with Punjabi cultural values without recognising it. The cultural expectations were different from both sides of the collaboration and this created a constant conflict of approaches to the final product. Being convinced that my approach was right, I tried to inflict values on the artist that may have been as foreign to them as their language was to me. Somehow my otherness became more of an issue at this point in the process and I felt I had to defend my views more than ever, leading to further insecurities within me. I started to question whether I had done a good job on the production and if I was being taken seriously, or whether my clients were just paying lip service to my suggestions and protestations as I defended my approach. I then became concerned as to whether I would be dismissed from continuing with the project. I had argued or defended decisions with artist and record companies before this but as I had a stake holding as not only a producer, but also as an arranger and co-songwriter, the artiste insecurities crept in and was compounded by the insider/outsider duality of my status within the genre. Fortunately, all was finally agreed, complete with compromises on all sides and the record was released.

[48] The proximity effect enhances the bass frequencies when sound sources are too close to a cardioid or unidirectional microphone. This is particularly evident when close miking vocals (Huber and Runstein 2017).

7.8 Song Structure – 'Gidda Balieh'

The following is the resultant structure of the song in its final presentation.
(See Appendix C)
The basic structure of the song is **ABBAB**.

- There is an eight-bar reggae intro featuring dhol, dholak and tabla, with a synth piano preset on the offbeat, a muted guitar providing six semi-quavers ending half-way through the bar and a bass synth starting at the fourth bar.
- The first two beats (at 98bpm) of each bar are over F (the key), the second half-bar over Eb. Then there is the melody motif intro, announced on the first beat by a triangle/bell: an eight-bar brass line, played on a synth brassy harmonium pre-set doubled by a string preset an octave above, with just percussion and harmonium pad repeated. The pad plays the root, changing to the dominant first inversion on the fourth beat of the second bar, returning to F for the last two beats of the fourth bar, which also features a quiet brass phrase. The triangle is re-introduced on the fourth beat of the second bar and the third beat of the fourth bar to denote, or underline the chord changes. This section is followed by the second intro; the synth bass returns plus a busier synth brass line with ornaments in the phrasing and a small element of portamento in the sound is played over the percussion intro's F and Eb progression. These chords form the basis of the verse. The bell-like percussion preset then appears on every minim.
- The lead vocal on the 10-bar chorus features for a bar before an instrumental interlude for the same length. A melodic motif is then played with the brass sounds an octave apart, the one with inherent pitch bend solo for the second half of the phrase. The first vocal line is then repeated, with the backing vocalists shouting 'Hoy' on the eighth quaver three bars running. The melody does not have much variation but builds towards the end as the percussion is played with more intensity in the final three bars.
- Then, after two bars of backing, an eight-bar country guitar solo is played with a thin sound reminiscent of a santoor, a dulcimer like instrument. Next, a new brass part is played for four bars with the harmonium holding the root chord, swelling from pianissimo to almost forte.

- The song then progresses to the verse, or bridge, which is not very different to the chorus. There is a modulation to the sub-dominant after four bars but only for two bars. The brass plays a more predominant role; first a short phrase at the end of the first four bars, and, at the end of the eighth bar, a climb in both quavers and tone steps to introduce the Bb with a major chord to punctuate the first beat of the following bar. The percussion follows the pattern of the chorus with added excitement for the last three bars.
- Once again there are two bars before the reprise of the original brass sections, although the second, solo sound, has some variation. This is followed by another verse and, after the usual two-bars of percussion and bass backing track, there is another chorus and then four bars of backing.
- This leads to another verse but the brass does not feature here; instead, the guitar solos in the background with fills. The modulation to the Bb is repeated. The track continues over the two-chord pattern inclusive of a Jamaican style lead vocal.
- The song then fades out.

The cultural influences and distinct genre markers such as Jamaican rap, blues/rock guitar, West Indian reggae and Trinidadian soca (Dudley 1996), rhythms Punjabi bhangra motifs, Western popular music harmonic structures and bhangra dhol drums co-existed comfortably within the composition, the performance and the production. Each cultural strand would at times come to prominence during the song, sometimes within the production's use of synthesizers, the arrangement or within the vocal performance or instrumentation, making their own statement, but in a non-competitive way.

The objective was to add to and enhance the content of the produced track to better represent the artist and the song. It was not contrived and it was not designed to be some kind of musical fusion. It became a conversation within the song between the contributing collaborative cultures.

This technique was employed throughout the album, with the concentration and cultural focus differing slightly form track to track. For example, in 'Bhangra Definition', there was more of a hard edged reggae rock texture with a Jamaican rap to start the track. This then led into a vibrant and pulsing bhangra beat with Indian percussion, referencing Punjabi dancing.

This musical conversation moved from section to section, finally ending up with the more hard-edged reggae rock texture and finishing with the word 'bhangra'. Each cultural reference worked together but was also being represented separately. The different cultural strands sat comfortably together with a musical familiarity but were also taking a completely fresh approach. This was not intentional or premeditated. This evolved as the record was produced and came out of the collaboration process.

7.9 Cultural Appropriation

There was a commonality of objectives exhibited by all involved in the project. The South Asians appropriated Western cultural values in order to create a more commercially viable product in their marketplace, and I appropriated their musical cultural values to further enhance my career and for commercial gain. This was a process of mutual consent between two, or arguably three cultures if one includes Jamaican reggae, with the objective of reaching new markets. This ultimately drove the creative relationship and the collaboration. There were no blatant declarations of appropriation, but there was definitely an undercurrent of competition and combativeness fuelled by the prospect of financial gain. Each party was convinced that they were in the driving seat and that their use of the other parties' cultural values was a clever manipulation, but both sides were actually aiming at a common goal. The common goal may have seemed collaborative, but the motivations were personal, self-seeking and mercenary. Taak and I were able to reflect on this many years later and in retrospect, the whole process may have gone much smoother and with better results had we made our intentions known at the time. It is only years later in reflection, that we were able to recognise this. Perhaps the composition and recording of the songs on the two albums I produced for Taak needed the tension and combativeness in order to achieve the new styles and approaches to a genre that had become slightly oversaturated in its market and for a short period of time, we were very successful. The constant negotiation and mediation were as much a part of the new genre as the music itself.

7.10: Case Study – Fast forward to 2017

When last interviewing Satwant Taak Singh, it was mooted that we might explore revisiting our collaborative relationship and work towards recording a few new songs. If this process

worked out, we could then consider recording a new album. I thought this would be an ideal opportunity to observe how the mediation process had evolved and to explore new digital technologies and musical styles within the now older British bhangra genre. We arranged to meet and discuss the viability of such a project.

I visited him at his home in November 2016 and, drawing on my experience of the past interviews and recordings, ensured that I had not eaten as predictably, a small feast of savoury snacks and cakes was offered. We talked about events, family and associates but did not talk about the focus of my visit during the eating and drinking social experience. Finally, we embarked on discussing the idea of the project and the methodology that would be employed to complete stage one. I insisted that the first stage would explore the recording of up to three songs before we could agree to carry forward to the completion of an entire album.

The first thing that I did was to play Taak some more modern but relevant cross-genre productions that I had worked on, including a Gypsy folk dub step recording, string arrangements on rock and reggae recordings, rock and EDM (Electronic Dance Music) cross-genre productions and some film music I had composed and produced for the feature film *Tear Me Apart* (2015), which included the use of an alaap, the vocal introduction to a bhangra song or in classical Indian music, setting the scene for the raga (Chakraborty, Mazzola, and Tewari 2014), combined with tablas and string arrangements alluding to a dark, foreboding, yet lamenting narrative. His reaction to the tracks we listened to was almost wide-eyed surprise. He was unaware that these sorts of musical arrangements could be achieved and now could be implemented through digital technologies and digital audio workstations. He then tried to relate the idea of borrowing from other genres, and he suggested that this could be a way of reaching a much bigger audience, setting him apart from the traditional British bhangra recordings that were still played and sold within the marketplace, albeit on a very limited scale. He also asked if I could get the recordings to other record companies, and I had to explain how the newer models of record releases and digital distribution was now working in the U.K. and internationally. I explained that a critical mass had to be achieved in digital sales by an artist before a major record company would take on an artist and that he would be better served by self-releasing through his own record company. Explaining the economics of self-releasing, as there is limited or no

manufacturing cost incurred, and that an artist can make up to 70% of the wholesale price of a download or the full apportioned revenue of a stream, rather than the 12-20% of what a record company would pay, appealed to his business sense. Taak is a successful entrepreneur and property developer in his own right and instantly saw the advantages of setting up his own entity. It was agreed however, that the first step was to actually create some marketable product before embarking on setting up a record company. I got the sense that part of the attraction of my involvement in the project was that I could access additional markets, had contacts within existing record companies and that my associations with the Music Industry could be exploited. Taak then revealed he had discussed recording with a couple of British South Asian producers but was not confident that they could deliver a suitably commercial product or introduce him to viable distribution companies for the product. My first motivation for embarking on this 'journey' was research but I could see that the attraction for him was purely commercial and he blatantly admitted that he could exploit my business connections to further his musical outputs. It was interesting that the intentions and motivations from both sides were transparent and it was because of the trust garnered in the past that we were able to accept both parties' agendas. I took this to be a positive development going forward so that anything that we collaborated on would be easily negotiated to suit either of our requirements and the artistic differences could be mitigated with either my research or his commercial intentions. We also agreed that if there were any profits from the enterprise, we would split them 50/50 after all direct marketing and manufacturing expenses and that in addition to this I would provide studio space and my time and he would cover the costs of any musicians or costs incurred during recording.

As we had come to a mutual business agreement, to be formalised at a later date, it was then time to concentrate on the music and Taak got his harmonium to play me a song he wanted to record. He explained that this was based on a very old Punjabi folk song and that he had adapted some of the melody, added his own interpretation and re-wrote the lyrics. I had brought a portable recorder to capture the essence of his ideas, the melody and what might be the harmonium accompaniment. He started to play it to me but kept stopping to explain what I would be bringing to the arrangement. He constantly referenced reggae, dubstep and rock without a clear understanding of whether the approach would work with the very traditional song that he sang. I asked him to sing the song a cappella (without accompaniment) as a temporary measure so that I could use the recording of the melody as a sample within my

DAW as a guide for programming ideas that we could listen to and assess. With this, we could then restructure and rewrite the song. It was interesting that he was unable to sing without tapping out a tabla rhythm on the table, only to then insist that this was not the rhythm required and suggested that I would put a reggae spin on it. This tapping, however, did inform some of the rhythmic programming for the demo as it was unavoidably audible in the vocal demo recordings. I was also surprised that Taak did not understand any of the technology I was suggesting we use, and I spent time showing him how it worked on my laptop, playing him samples of horns, strings and percussion and showing him how these could now be harnessed in the programming stage. I did explain that I wanted to incorporate as much of the real Indian instrument performances as possible, and we discussed a mandolin player he was working with, who also happened to be his nephew, and I suggested some of the other musicians we had worked with in the past who could add to the 'Asian flavour' of the recordings. We agreed I would take the recordings we did that day and programme some rhythms for him to listen to before settling on the song he suggested we work on first.

A week later, I took Taak's vocals and imported them into my DAW, in this case, Logic Pro X, and edited the vocals into verse and chorus sections, removing conversation and his explanation and arrangement suggestions such as 'mandolin plays here' and 'drums start here'. I then worked on a reggae drum rhythm to sit in with the melody and included a tabla sample loop to reference the South Asian root and the suggested percussion element for the song. I complimented this with a reggae style bass line and a muted picking guitar performance. The chords, of which at this point consisted of only two, the tonic and the subtonic (natural minor seventh) in C# minor, were performed with Steinway piano and Hammond B3 organ samples to emulate the sounds that would have been used on original reggae recordings. I also included a synthesizer pad part, much like a legato string arrangement, to tie the Asian and Caribbean feels in together. As this was simply a short demo for assessment and review, I left it as was, and after doing a quick mix, contacted Taak with a view to sending him an mp3 of what I had done for his review and comments.

When I contacted him, I was surprised at his insistence that we meet to listen to the work I had done. I discerned a discomfort or sense of insecurity from him in listening to it by himself – a sense of being out of his cultural comfort zone. It was as if there was an expectation that I would guide him through the process and that he relied on me for artistic

support even at the listening and appraisal stage. Again, the cultural formality of social interaction through the sharing of a repast emerged, and Taak insisted that after we reviewed the track, we would go for a meal. We agreed to meet at my home studio. We did discuss the track, and I commented that I had found that the melody of the song was steeped in Mogul influences and had more of a traditional Punjabi folk approach rather than the current trend for Bollywood pop or UK bhangra style melodies. I also told him that I felt uncomfortable with the original tempo and discussed this as a warning precursor to our meeting, in advance of him coming to listen to my demo. This was what I thought to be a conscious ploy on my part to manage expectations, knowing as well that I could easily adjust the tempo through time stretching the vocal melody and changing the tempo of the programmed instruments to match within the DAW. This, I anticipated, would be done during our listening session to demonstrate and communicate my wish to slow the tempo down substantially from 75 beats per minute (bpm) to 57 bpm.

The experience of trying to arrange a mutually convenient time for our review of the programming I had done proved to be problematic and reminded me of the experiences I had encountered with time-keeping with South Asian artists in the past. There were always incidences of lateness when arranging sessions or meetings and I had forgotten that this was another seemingly cultural trait. I had even discussed this with Taak in an interview, and he had admitted it was a problem with Asian artists and that it annoyed him. He did not admit that lateness could also be applied to his own arrangements. We originally arranged to meet at 3:00 pm in the afternoon and after a series of communications via text and phone during the day, we finally agreed to meet at 5:00 pm. At 7:00 pm, Taak arrived at my home accompanied by his brother in law. I was not expecting another visitor but was happy to welcome him as well. Taak may have brought him for moral support as he had as yet, not visited me at my home, and even though we had done much work together, I got the impression that he was uncomfortable out of his familiar surroundings and felt somewhat insecure on his own. My offered hospitality included making them Masala Chai (Indian tea) and that act of bridging culinary cultures seemed to instantly create an atmosphere of conviviality and trust. We then progressed to a room in my house that has been converted into a recording studio, and I explained the process I had undertaken in programming a backing track against the recorded audio samples of the song Taak had sung to me at his home two weeks earlier.

On listening, the reaction to what I had done with the arrangement was mixed. On the one hand, Taak and his brother in law, Pammi, were amazed at what could be achieved without other musicians and how I had mixed the vocals using reverb, compression and delay effects on the voice that was recorded in Taak's living room. I had tried to obscure the finger tapping in the background using EQ filtering and some noise suppression software by Izotope (RX6), but it was still present in the background. Taak, in an almost embarrassed fashion, asked if I could slow the tempo of the track down as I had suggested in my telephone conversation to him previously. I removed the voice and changed the tempo from 75 bpm to 57 bpm, and he tried to sing along with this new tempo as he liked the overall effect of the slower backing track. This attempt to sing slower was confusing for him until after some manipulation with time stretching the files, I demonstrated how the original vocal recordings would sound at a slower speed. I then sang a few lines of the melody to him to further reinforce the viability of this and illustrate how it could work. This he understood and took over singing the song, firstly along with me and then on his own with lyrics. At this point, he became animated and started to perform as if he was on stage. He told me that he was now really excited by the prospect of recording this project and suggested we go through this same process for the other two songs he had selected.

I was pleased with the outcome of this encounter and felt a certain level of achievement and gratification that I had won him over and got him to agree with my assessment of the song and some of my arrangements and melodic ideas. It appeared that I had successfully manipulated the situation and the raw materials given to me, into a workable format that would meet Taak's criteria and convince him that this was the way forward. However, it was revealed to me that in fact, this was a test to see if I could achieve something with the most difficult of melodies. It was I that was being manipulated and under scrutiny, and Taak wanted to see if I would slow down the tempo and give him the kind of programming and arrangements for the music that he was looking for. Although he admitted that he was unsure as to what the right approach would be until he heard it, it was his decision, his approach and his objective that I was fulfilling and adhering to. He also revealed that he had approached two other British Asian producers and had tried a similar scenario to see what they would come up with. He felt that they had not met his expectations, nor were they sympathetic to his musical direction.

Instead of being in total control of the situation as I had perceived, I was being controlled by the artist. This then presents the question as to where the power dynamic sits in the creative recording process and even when it appears that the power and control is vested in one of the parties, in this case the producer, there is a natural law of creative balance that then puts the control into the hands of the other party which creates, by default, a sense of equality and balance within a creative context. This seems to be more acute when there is a cultural divide between parties resulting in a very strong collaboration.

After this initial exploration, I tried to arrange the next session in order that we might further hone the arrangements and songs we would record. There seemed to be a reticence on Taak's part to continue the process and he seemed to be evasive in responding to my calls and emails. Finally, on confronting him and assuring him that there was actually no pressure on him to engage with the production if he chose not to continue, he revealed that there was some social and community pressure on him to not pursue this form of music and to maintain a very traditional socio-cultural and religious musical pathway. His decision was to not upset the cultural framework within which he was operating and to adhere to their wishes. I assured him that I understood his decision and that he should do what he felt was best for his circumstances. This whole experience was interesting, revealing and has fed into my research and so I do not feel that time has been wasted. In fact, the experience highlighted some of the dynamics between producer and artist and revealed a number of issues, including artist insecurity, power broking and creative control.

7.11 Summary

Taak’s desire to tap into extended markets not traditionally associated with the South Asian community led him to experiment with a variety of genres, whilst drawing upon his own experience of growing up in a diverse cultural environment. What did emerge during the process were creative incompatibilities that crossed cultural lines. These had an impact on the acceptance of Taak in his own Sikh community, which exerted external pressures on him to conform to accepted cultural norms and created an inner conflict with his creative objectives. This appears to have impacted him more now than in his younger, and perhaps arguably, more rebellious years. The attempt at the appropriation of culture from a creative standpoint

was a two-way exchange as Taak exploited my musical culture at the same time as his Punjabi roots being exploited by me. It could be argued that as Taak had grown up in the U.K., his experience and understanding of Western musical cultures were more familiar to him than my experience and understanding of Punjabi folk music and bhangra. However, my language and creative objectives were also vested in the technology, which was the 'foreign language' for Taak. The translation and mediation process was not necessarily driven by musical or creative ideology. It was also firmly embedded in technology and economics, something that is often overlooked in the analysis of artist–producer relationships, creating power broking dynamics and additional layers of social interaction outside the creative forum.

8. Case Study - Country and Eastern: A Collaboration with Kuljit Bhamra

8.1 Introduction

I have argued in Chapter 4, and in accord with Burgess (2013, pgs. 130-145), that the social and creative hierarchical positioning of the record producer in a studio context is determined by the technological and cultural dynamics within the studio and the relationship between the producer and the artist. The permutations and influences are many, but this relationship between the parties concerned is shaped by the individuals' cultural associations and cultural commonalities. When the parties are not from the same cultural background, differences appear to exacerbate incidences of insecurity, and there are external, internal and stakeholder perceived pressures on the producer to meet diverse expectations. These same pressures exist within the framework of the same-culture producer/artist creative process, but there are elements of translation and interpretation removed from the transaction that are of additional concern to those outside of these parameters (Frith and Zagorski-Thomas 2012). There is persistent questioning as to whether either party is understood. Glossop suggests that on a creative level, the creative ideas and influences, objectives and outputs are not necessarily articulated in a fully comprehensible form, leading to a sense of insecurity on both sides of the relationship (interview 2014). This can be a positive contributory element to the creative process but does inject an additional dynamic into the interactions. Kerrigan (2013, pgs. 111–127) posits that cultural transference is embedded into an individual's understanding of codes and practices within a culture and that this then gets transformed into creativity. When the individual is the practitioner, it follows that their understanding is not necessarily shared with other collaborators. Unless the codes and practices are clearly defined between the parties concerned, there can be a confusion of objectives and approaches to the qualitative, creative or commercial assessment of the output.

The analysis of the functions and outcomes of the mediation process within music production in a diverse cultural context provides further insight into the required negotiations and methodologies employed in the recording studio between artist and producer. The following outlines some of those processes through an autoethnographic case study of an album recording. This may help future recording artists and their producers to understand the

cultural motivations and circumstances that inform the expectations of both parties within the production process, which can then be applied positively to enhance the end product.

I had explored the South Asian production techniques and producer/artist interactions as a producer in the 1980s and 1990s, but it became apparent that it would be an invaluable addition to the research to experience and evaluate the relationships and dynamics from an equitable stance as both producer and artist. I would then be able to extend my understanding by evaluating whether the production process and connected interactions had progressed.

It was an accidental opportunity that allowed me to explore this further. I had arranged for a concert performance of Bollywood and bhangra artists and dancers for the University of Kent. The musical director was my former associate and bhangra producer Kuljit Bhamra, MBE, who had provided some research material via interview and with whom I had worked as an engineer and as a session musician in the early 1990s. We both worked with some of the same artists as producers in the past, and this has provided an opportunity to compare our styles, approaches and cultural interactions as part of the research. During the programming of the event, Bhamra suggested that the two of us play together as an opening act to the concert. We had played on each other's productions as session musicians over the years, overdubbing parts onto existing arrangements, but had never played together before. I was unsure whether a performance by the two of us would work. On discussing the possibilities, we decided that I would play a style on guitar (my first instrument) that would sit comfortably within my cultural background and musical lexicon, and Bhamra would accompany me on tabla and Indian percussion putting his cultural stamp on the music. We met at his studio to test the concept where we played together, extemporising and moving in and out of Western and Eastern styles. Being so enthused by this, we decided that after the concert, we would record an album together with the working title of *Country and Eastern*, which would communicate the focus and musical direction of the album. This would afford an additional opportunity to investigate the relationships between the two cultures but with a balanced sense of production skills from the two protagonists, acting as both producers and artists. There was an awareness that this could create friction. However, it could also create an intensity within the creative process that came from technical and musical expertise with the possibility of creating a new genre. The success of this collaboration would depend on both an understanding of each other's cultural influences and a tolerance or acceptance of

breaches of each party's musical forms and the framework that surrounded this. The other contexts that needed to be incorporated into the equation, with a requirement for negotiation, mediation, tolerance and eventual consensus, were the technical procedures and habitual processes employed by each party from a production perspective. Both of us were accustomed to different procedural methodologies when addressing our recordings, and the differences could cause frustration or, conversely, might be the interventions that could break both of us out of our technical comfort zones, creating new sonic vistas through non-familiar approaches to the production process. In addition to the musical interventions, these technical considerations were adding to the excitement of the anticipated collaboration, from both sides, at the same time creating a sense of trepidation that the project might not work out at all. Most productions are embarked upon with a certain sense of confidence by the production team, having a sense of familiarity and technical prowess that can feed into the process. In this case, this confidence might be destroyed by a confusion of approaches, but we were willing to take on the challenge.

As we sat and played together, we recorded our ideas as we went along onto a portable recorder. These recordings acted as a notepad for the musical concepts and structures that we could draw upon later when embarking on recording the album. Three of these ideas were developed further for the concert but were left unfinished within an arrangement framework to enable us to further extend, develop and extemporise both structurally and melodically during the concert. The concert was a success, and we were much enthused by the performance, providing further encouragement to proceed with the recordings. The initial plan was to record basic backing tracks within the studio and then take the tracks away to our own studios, where we could add parts to the tracks. These additions could then be compared and adapted for the final recordings.

The element of trust was rooted in the target final product and the project's commercial viability. Whereas both parties enjoyed the creative process, we were aware that apart from the research element, the end objective was also profitability. The objectives outweighed any creative misunderstandings of form and by doing so, provided the creative tension and space required to create something bigger and better than either of the parties concerned could create independently. This outlined the negotiated processes between artist and producer or, in this case, producer/artist and producer/artist, the roles being almost inconsequential. All

parties had something to gain, and it is partly this positive outlook that mediated any internal power struggles that may have existed between the parties. Even when creative differences become untenable, there is still the end goal that can bring a project back from the brink of failure and, through this form of mediation, create a success that has used misunderstanding, confusion, power broking and creative differences as the catalyst for success. In this particular case, there was the basic understanding that neither of us was going to waste our time on just creative pursuits. Ultimately, we needed to generate income/profitability for this project at a rate of no less than £5,000 per person. We had discussed the market for this project in advance and had put an arbitrary value of £10,000 + on it before even exploring the musical viability. World music producer Ben Mandelson states that although he is always in a situation where he is looking to exploit the market through his artist's creativity, he is always looking for a fair deal for all, including enough remuneration for the participants to make the production worth doing (Cottrell 2010).

Much phone discussion ensued between us, and we agreed to come up with ideas for tracks that we might work on. I got the impression that Bhamra did not want this project to appear to emanate entirely from my lead, and he wanted to contribute at the onset to the creative compositional pathways that we might explore. We agreed to independently put some additional musical ideas down onto any recorded media, including an iPhone, and to then get together to compare our ideas.

After much negotiation over time availability and diarising, I went to Bhamra's studio, taking fourteen different guitars with me, including a Martin steel string acoustic, a Taylor 12 string acoustic, a Gibson ES345 electric semi-acoustic guitar, a Contreras classical guitar, a National dobro steel guitar, a three stringed shovel guitar (an oddity made from a Spear & Jackson shovel), a Wurlitzer mandolin banjo, a Gold Tone electric banjo guitar, a Star sitar guitar, a Gretsch Electromatic deep body electric guitar, a Washburn 5 string fretless acoustic bass, a Fender Telecaster electric guitar, a Fender Stratocaster and a Gibson Melody Maker electric guitar set up for slide. The purpose of this was to have a palate of sounds that could be employed if they were sonically compatible with Bhamra's extensive tabla set-up of seven drums. This was not done consciously to be competitive, but in retrospect, it was a way of setting one's store out to show versatility and prowess on one's instruments. Bhamra's studio stores over 100 percussion instruments and drums, and it could be argued that this was a

show of strength on my part not to be outdone outside of my environment. It references the observation that musicians will jostle to claim geographic possession of space when arriving in a recording studio, often placing instruments or cases in awkward positions near the console to establish territory. Once the lines have been drawn, and the session settles down, these areas in some way become a safe space for the musicians who will invade or wander into the producer's 'space' in a form of territorial confrontation. It is only after a long period that these boundaries are no longer significant, although they do maintain their integrity throughout the session. This was not my intention during this writing session, but there may have been an underlying personal agenda that even I was unaware of at the time.

Another element in the process was that Bhamra was initially unsure as to whether this project would work out or not. Even with our foray into performance, based on my compositional lead, he thought and voiced his intention of bringing me into his musical landscape while I was intent on dragging him into mine. He played a few motifs on the harmonium, and in response to listening to them, I selected an instrument that I thought would best represent what he was doing. I copied the motif and he would assist me further by suggesting the bends and inflections that I should play to further incorporate the Eastern flavour of the music, even if it were to be played on a Western styled instrument such as a banjo guitar. As he started to play the tablas and I joined in on whatever instrument I chose for the particular composition, we both started to smile, as the interaction and tonality of the two approaches to the same piece of music was creating a new and exciting stylistic approach within our playing. It was too early to definitively state that we were creating a new genre, but it was obvious to both of us that something different and 'magical' was happening. Bhamra later admitted to me that he was so unsure that this would work that he was using the session to assess whether to continue with the project but within a very short space of time we were engrossed in the process and continued to create new motifs and structures for the next six hours. We had over twenty collaborative compositions; some driven by my guitar constructs and some by his tabla rhythms with melodies augmented with the occasional harmonium motif. We agreed to review these and reduce the output to 10-12 compositions, constructed so that they could be cut down to useable lengths to support usage by moving image producers and editors – a key target market. This meant that there would be different mixes and occasional three or five-second motifs, known as stings, that reference the composition and could be used for television, film or interactive visual media.

Bhamra requested that I send all the files that we recorded that day as I had brought a portable digital recorder with me. He suggested that he edit up some of the better sections and that the compositions would evolve and we would have a clearer direction as a result. Combined with the audio recordings that we had from the previous session in preparation for our live performance, there were approximately eight hours of recordings, the audio equivalent of notes taken as it included discussions between us.

8.2 The Studio Recordings

After some discussion, ten compositional ideas were chosen and we booked to go into the studios at the University of Kent. The following is an account of the procedure.

Day 1

For the initial recordings, I arrived relatively early at the studio with an arsenal of guitars which I set up on stands and tuned so that this would not take up valuable time and interfere with the actual recording process. From experience, any activities that could be addressed in advance, such as tuning, restringing or tightening of loose parts, were a valuable investment in time and therefore would not impact negatively on the time allocated to the actual recording or the creative workflow within the studio. I asked Bhamra to arrive two hours after the start of the booking so that we could mike up the guitars and amplifiers in advance. Bhamra arrived and along with engineer, Charlie Flemming, we collectively unloaded, set up and miked his percussion instruments in consultation with him and the experience that he had with recording his own instruments in his Red Fort studio in Southall. There were two AKG 414 mics with a cardioid pattern set up near his tabla drums and two Neumann 184 condenser mics set up at approximately 1.5 metres away to capture the room in which we set up the drums. There was much-relaxed banter at this point, which was a way of easing any tension of the impending recording and this provided a sense of confidence between us as musicians, producers and with engineer Flemming.

Deferring to Bhamra's experience and advice on the matter, we decided not to worry too much about recording the tablas in stereo as the bass tabla should be presented in mono and any additional drum would also benefit from a centred focus in the stereo field. The guitar

miking utilised Neumann k184s microphones, a Neumann TL102 and an SE ribbon mic along with a DI (direct injection from the pickup of the acoustic guitar) so that all sources were accommodated.

By the early afternoon, we had reviewed the structures and musical arrangements that came out of our jam sessions and decided to try to record a couple of tracks. Most of the recordings were first takes and a single performance all the way through the song. It was agreed that the tracks would benefit from additional bass, percussion, bansuri flute and additional guitar overdubs and that an organic approach to the recordings, by not using midi instruments, should be maintained. We played against a click track, a metronomic click put onto the song to maintain tempo, which was sometimes disconcerting as we were both often playing in syncopated rhythms, but remarkably we played in time. Both of our experience of years in studios was evident as the playing and approach was very relaxed. We were able to musically 'bounce' off each other creatively as if we had been playing together for many years, which was not the case. Nods and hand signals were instantly acknowledged and the whole experience was extremely enjoyable. After two actual hours of recording, we had recorded two songs and as Bhamra had to leave early for another engagement, we left all the equipment and instruments in place so that we could convene the next day. Backups of the project were copied onto separate portable hard drives. This is a very important part of the procedure to ensure no files are lost.

Day 2

On this day, we recorded four tracks. The arrangements were almost organic by nature and we played the different sections of the songs by signalling to each other. The arrangements were done spontaneously, knowing that we could cut and paste sections during an editing stage at a later date, should we decide to change any of the arrangements. The collective experience of the two musicians and the understanding of what works from a compositional perspective meant that ultimately, the arrangements were not changed for the final mixes. Initially, there was a difference of opinion as to how to structure compositions. Bhamra veered towards repetition to encourage dance as per Bhangra dance music, whereas I veered towards traditional Western A/B A/B C arrangements. Bhamra wanted to repeat sections that he thought that South Asian dance audiences would react well to. A compromise was achieved very quickly as we knew there were opportunities for editing and rearranging the

individual compositions after recording with digital editing. Fleming, our engineer, gained confidence and started to participate in some of the decisions during recording as to which takes and what sounds were acceptable. During these types of recordings, the engineer is encouraged to proffer their opinions, making a valuable contribution and acting at times as arbiter in certain situations. This is particularly pertinent in this case where the artist is made up of two experienced producers. There are many examples of this where producers have not necessarily been able to agree with the artist or another producer on the final performance takes. In the case of Steely Dan (Jones 2018), many different solos or performances by different musicians on a track would be recorded and then the decision would be made after much discussion between Donald Fagan and Walter Becker and their engineer as to what to include in the final mix.

After a number of takes, the day was deemed a successful and productive session and all recordings were backed up onto a separate portable hard drive for the purpose of review at my personal studio and for safety.

Day 3

On this day we started with repairing some of the performances on the tracks that we had recorded. The microphones and instruments were still in place and so we were able to overdub any replacement parts with the same sounds. Most of the repairs were done as a result of reviewing the recordings at my home studio. This process reduced studio costs and as the context is different during the review, there is a better sense of objectivity in assessing the recordings. After identification of the areas requiring repair, I could then liaise with Bhamra in the university's studio and agree as to what should be played in the various identified sections. Both guitar and tablas were addressed. There was little to repair and we also edited the arrangements on two other tracks, extending their lengths by cutting and pasting sections into the songs. After two hours of attempts to create a new arrangement for the 'funk' track, I took the decision to rerecord the guitars. This was recorded and a few repairs were made through overdubs and cut and paste editing. This track never did seem to gel and the decision was made later not to include it in the project, reducing the output down to nine tracks.

Three new tracks and additional overdub percussion such as shaker, dhol drum, bell and clay pot on three tracks from the earlier days were recorded. At this point it was agreed to record two more tracks on Day 4 and to do percussion overdubs on the rest, leaving Day 5 for guitar overdubs. Then a rough mix would be prepared and sent to Bhamra to devise flute melodies. A further session was to be booked for the flute player. The usual backups to a separate hard drive were done.

Day 4

The last two tracks were recorded and this was the smoothest of recordings in terms of agreeing on arrangements or finding the relevant percussion patterns to compliment the guitars. On reflection, we had now settled into a routine and the studio working environment was now more familiar to both of us. Perhaps we should have started the process of recording the first few tracks again to improve on the initial recordings but time allocation and other commitments did not allow for this. The earlier recordings required further editing of some of the parts to correct some mistakes or patterns played in the wrong place.

The rest of the day was dedicated to overdubbing additional percussion instruments such as clay pot, shakers, scrapers, bells and other percussion-based paraphernalia, like bunches of keys or a bag of coins, that Bhamra had collected over the years that when hit, created an interesting sound. There was one small squeezable talking drum that Bhamra referred to as the 'Nag' as it sounded like someone nagging you to get something done.

All initial percussion overdubs were finished by 7:00 p.m. and this left the fifth day for some of the guitar overdubs that I thought would benefit from being done in the studio rather than in my own studio. This included acoustic guitars utilising the ambience of the room and numerous microphone placements, and electric guitars requiring the use of the amplifier set up in the room, again with ambient mics.

Day 5

This day was attended by just the engineer, Charlie Fleming, and me. There was a relaxed atmosphere but on reflection, the inclusion of an engineer in the session added another element and distraction to the process of my producing my own performances, something that I had grown accustomed to doing on my own in my own private studio environment.

Some tensions started to emerge in terms of the procedure of recording as I have very set routines in recording my own performance but this was mitigated by the sense of hierarchy where I was the producer and had the last word. We completed rough mixes of all the material. All that I had set out to achieve in terms of overdubs, mixing and planning for additional instruments to be done at a later date in my own studio was completed and we packed up all the guitars and ended the session at 4:30 p.m. after backing up the session files.

The initial recordings in the studio were deemed a success but observationally, much of what I needed to play involved syncopated rhythms and although it was easy to play all my guitar parts on my own or against a click track, as soon as the tablas were playing with me, I found it much more difficult to keep in time and follow the expressive mood of the music ('feel'). The musical influences of East and West and the musical communication between the two musicians had elements of confusion from a very base level. This could be attributed to the differing cultural roots that not only contributed to the creative process but also hindered creativity as it needed to be addressed at all times within the playing. This highlights a possible scenario that may exist in all intercultural interactions within production. The basic forms of music communication are continually impacted by an understanding or misunderstanding of culture; a sort of give and take. The things we musically and culturally grow to rely on suddenly dissolve in these circumstances. Country and Eastern was not without its inherent predetermined creative conflicts due to cultural referencing; friendly as they may have been.

8.3 The Next Step

The next step was to add some bass guitar and additional textured guitars at my own studio. I did some more rough mixes and was given an opportunity to talk about the project on BBC Radio Kent's show, The Conversation with Dominic King (BBC Radio Kent, November 15, 2018) and I mixed and mastered one of the tracks with the working title 'From Amritsar to Alabama' in the morning in preparation for playing it on air in the evening. I have been a regular guest on the radio show and this gave me an opportunity to discuss the project with a broadcaster and journalist and try to explain the objectives of the project. It was difficult to explain from a general viewpoint, how the intercultural negotiations and mitigation impacted on the creative output and so it was the music itself that had to communicate this to the

audience. Apparently, there was some good social media reaction to it from the BBC listeners.

The rough mixes were sent to Bhamra who was busy with curating and organising the artists for the London Mela 2018[49] in Southall, Middlesex. When he finally listened to them 4 days later, his reaction was that they were 'really classy' and that he was excited to go to the next level of the production. We discussed how we both enjoyed the communication of two experienced professionals in the studio rather than the 'experience' we had with Bhangra artists in the past. He suggested that he write some motifs for the bansuri flute to play and that we would record these when he had completed them.

8.4 The Bansuri Flute Recordings

There was a three-week delay between the initial recordings and the bansuri overdubs. It was decided that it would be easier if the bansuri flute was recorded at Bhamra's Red Fort Studios in Southall, as it would be easier for the flautist to get to the studio and as Bhamra was to be in charge of this part of the recording, it would be more convenient and faster in his environment. Part of the discipline of recording is negotiating the space, and if one feels very familiar with that space, it usually eases the workflow of the recording. However, sometimes the familiarity aspect creates too much of a relaxed atmosphere and less is achieved in the allotted time. Gibson (2005) states that recorded music is a product of more than the artist-producer relationship and is also affected by all the stakeholders and, more specifically, the space where the recording occurs. The space is employed as an additional contributor to the creative process.

The session was booked for 10 a.m., and I arrived fashionably late at noon which, as explored earlier from a South Asian cultural perspective, was perfectly acceptable, only to find that Kuljit Bhamra was not yet ready to record and that the bansuri flautist, Robin Christian had not yet arrived. Christian (his name by birth) was a first-generation British Asian and Hindu

[49] The London Mela is an annual South Asian music festival, the first being held in 2003. The Mela was held for the first time in Southall, Middlesex in 2018. The word mela derives from the Sanskrit phrase 'to meet' and is generally understood to mean a festival or large gathering (Zee London Mela 2018).

by faith with his first language being Hindi. He is known for his performances of Indian Classical music, World Music and Meditation Music and for devotional music: Bhajans, Punjabi Shabad, Bangla Baul, Gujarati Lagna Geet and Garba[50] (Robin Christian n.d.).

Christian arrived at 2 p.m. with a collection of thirty-five bamboo flutes. I subsequently learned from him that they were built to facilitate different scales, key signatures, grace notes, flourishes and tunings. According to Christian, bansuri flutes made in India are either made during the monsoon season or in the heat of summer as the tuning will be affected by weather conditions depending on the season. Although there was purportedly an address of any tuning inconsistencies through the choice of instrument, the flutes in question were all hand carved from bamboo and susceptible to warping, shrinking or expanding, reacting to humidity and temperature changes, and this needed to be adjusted with the mild use of tuning software to ensure that the takes were in tune with each other and the backing tracks. We put all the recorded flutes through Melodyne, which is an auto-tune software plug-in within the digital audio workstation (Celemony.com n.d.).

Bhamra was quite dictatorial with Christian and gave him exact melodies to play with very little freedom of expression. My approach would have been different and in fact, I intervened at one point for the last two tracks and asked Christian to extemporise on the tracks. This resulted in some interesting additions, some of which we kept in the final recordings. On the whole, Bhamra and I agreed as to which performances were acceptable for review and further editing later.

The verbal reference to notation and musical descriptions that were used during the session related to the classical Indian scale and Christian kept trying to describe what he was doing in English to include me in the conversation. During the recording, if he was asked to change a grace note or flourish, he would then get another flute out. This was difficult as the sound of each flute was slightly different and we kept asking him not to change flutes in the middle of

[50] Bhajans are religious Hindu psalms originating in North India. A Punjabi Shabad is a Sikh hymn and those that are attributed to Guru Granth Sahib are known as Garba. Bangla Baul is the music of a sect of mystics made up of Vaishnava Hindus and Sufi Muslims emanating from the Bengali areas of Bangladesh and India. Gujarati Lagna Geet are marriage songs from the Gujarat area of Northern India (Oxford Music Online 2019).

a song. This was to ensure that we maintained the integrity of the original flute timbre on the track. Bhamra kept making snide remarks about this in the studio control room out of earshot of Christian which seemed to maintain Bhamra's amiable disposition whilst dealing with the frustration of guiding the musician's performance. This is a common occurrence that I have encountered in studios between producers and engineers whilst recording artists. It is a form of reinforcing the stature of hegemony and technical pecking order within a studio context. Although the artist is mostly unaware of this, it helps to alleviate the frustrations and tempers the approach of the engineer and producer in dealing with the artist's demands, inconsistencies and moods. Most of the approach by producers and engineers is to ensure that the artist or performer feels comfortable and there is much documented about the methods producers and the techniques use to alleviate tension and insecurities that the artist might be experiencing in order to get the best performance. The case studies in Farinella's *Producing Hit Records – Secrets from the Studio* (2006) and Massey's *Behind the Glass: V.2* (2009) document the approach of producers and the techniques used to alleviate tension and insecurities that the artist might be experiencing in order to get the best performance. However, there are producer and engineer stresses that are often bypassed when analysing the creative recording experience.

To further research this, I asked Mike Paxman, producer of Judy Tzuke and Status Quo (Discogs n.d.), how he related to the stresses of recording with insecure, demanding and non-compliant artists, and what techniques and interventions he used to address the producer's frustrations, insecurities, self-doubt and having to deal with difficulties in the studio. He revealed that he knew of some producers who would go home after a session and drown their frustrations with a bottle of wine but it was interesting that he avoided his own personal and emotional reactions to this and deferred to the methods employed in dealing with the artist in order to achieve the best-recorded results.

> The producer's vision can be a contentious area. The producer's planned direction for a recording's outcome has to be in most cases, fluid, and you have to allow for some wiggle room; otherwise, you're always going to be frustrated or displeased with the outcome. Recorded music, as live performance, has a life of its own and invariably the way to get the best outcome is to direct things as much as possible and then allow the piece to grow of its own accord. This of course means that you must always be

> prepared to change your mind or to adapt if something comes up that looks like it will change the course of things for the better.
>
> Either way, in all sessions and at some point, during every project, for whatever reason you are likely to hit a wall or reach what appears to be an impasse. At this point, the producer can really have their work cut out. My approach has always been quite simply to not get stuck. Change something, even if it means a break to do other things, a trip to the pub or a restaurant, a left-wing musical suggestion, a change in sound, a different way to monitor things, count the tempo in triplets etc. Sometimes it's best to go on to something else and come back to the problem area another time with a different mindset. The producer Brian Eno developed some cards for this very purpose which he calls Oblique Strategy cards (Eno 2019). The idea is that when you are stuck or in need of an idea you take a card, which may suggest a different way forward.
>
> I do not often suffer from self-doubt when in the studio, but I have various techniques to deal with periods of tension and frustration. The good thing about being the one 'in the chair' is just that… you can make decisions to shape the project, not that your approach will ever be the 'only' way to approach the task at hand, but if you proceed down the path of your choosing with a degree of skill, confidence and belief, hopefully, that will lead to a good outcome. It's really important to be well prepared, to know the music you are working on inside out and to have more than one option in mind.
>
> I try to make it clear to the people I work with, particularly if they are not very experienced in the process of recording, that my choices, critiques and focus is about making the music better. It makes for a better producer/artist understanding if the artist or writer does not feel your critique of their music or performance is a personal affront! (email correspondence 2019)

In contacting other producers, I received even more evasive or deflective answers that addressed the outcome of the recording and the qualitative results achieved, but revealed little about their own well-being and dispositions. It is perhaps the role of the producer to remain

impersonal and private in order to get the best results in the studio, and this then is reflected in their outward public facing, even with people that have a commonality of experience. My method of relieving the intense frustration of working with some artists was to go home and play the guitar very loudly and aggressively.

We finished the bansuri recording session by 7 p.m. The files were left with Bhamra to choose the best takes and edit up the files for inclusion in the original project session files.

8.5 The Bansuri Flute Edit Process

After having recorded the bansuri flute at Bhamra's studio, the next process entailed a further act of trust. Many different takes were recorded of the bansuri flute, and I left Bhamra to choose the best performances and phrasing. He then provided me with an edit, which I could import into the original recording software project. The editorial control, at this time, was entrusted to him, and I relied on his in-depth understanding of the South Asian approach to flute performance, phrasing and tuning. When Bhamra had finalised his edits, he sent the files over to me with the proviso that I could further adjust the placement and timing of the files to best suit the overall track. What was refreshing in this case, was the fact that there was a total understanding of the technological process between us and that this did not interfere with the creative process. The choice of performance was left to Bhamra and the overall decision on timing placement was left to me. This method of remote collaboration, with the use of three different studios, highlighted the change and malleability of localisation of the technology but also supported the idea that the creative cultural collaboration needed to include a large element of trust. That trust can be evaluated in terms of the cultural expertise and understanding of the parties concerned. The more cultural expertise that exists, the more artistic freedom and relevancy can be exercised. Cultural metacognition is used as a benchmark and indicator for the success of cultural collaborations within business contexts. The greater the understanding of the other cultures participating; the greater the chance of success (Chua, Morris and Mor 2012). Although there was also a cultural assimilation of technology for the implementation of creativity, the main focus was on the creative collaboration itself and the technology was a simple facilitator. There was no harnessing of technology as a creative influencer in this case. It simply made the act of recording, sharing

files, choosing performances and including the performance into the original concept as a form of compositional contribution, much easier to facilitate.

I spent two days in the studio manipulating the exact timing of the flute performance files. One technical problem that I encountered, was that Bhamra had imported the rough mixes into his own system without taking into consideration the original BPM (beats per minute) timing and had arbitrarily inserted his own timing into the individual track programmes. When the tempo (BPM) of the original track and the new recordings are not the same, any imported files are then positioned incorrectly, or 'out of sync'. This could have been mitigated in terms of timing, with a locked file function within the digital audio workstation. However, the work-around was to mix his tracks with an exaggerated level for the flute and then import the individual tracks into the original workstation projects, along with the exaggerated mix, as a guide for track placement. I then had to align this new rough mix track with the original track and then align the individual regions or flute takes, to sync up with the whole track. This may have taken additional time but fortunately, it achieved the required result and both recordings, the ones recorded at the University of Kent and Bhamra's Red Fort Studios were amalgamated into one digital workstation project.

8.6 Overdubbing Additional Guitars

The next step was to take the amalgamated project files to my home studio and overdub additional guitars. This enabled me to experiment without any time or financial pressures. I was aware that I did not want to 'over cook' the production by layering the recordings with too many instruments and was careful to be sparse about what was recorded so as to not dominate the percussion on the tracks, which plays such a key part of the compositions. The idea was that on completion of my recordings, Bhamra would have a right of veto of any of the additional guitar parts subject to negotiation. Again, a sensitivity to the cultural integrity of the project and the knowledge that some creative and cultural negotiations would ensue influenced the creative decisions taken in putting additional instruments on the tracks. In this instance, it was Bhamra's turn to trust that I would make the correct decisions in the parts that I put onto the individual compositions and that I would not corrupt the initial creative dynamic that existed when we originally recorded just guitar and tabla. During this process, there was a sense of self-reflection as to my validity as a cultural expert exerting my own

cultural influences on the recording and performances, much as I had felt when producing Bhangra recordings in the 1990s. The restrictive insecurity of not wishing to go over the line, to keep a cultural creative balance, was an important influence on my performances within the overdubs that I recorded on guitar. There were times when I tried to emulate South Asian phrasing but pulled back from this approach as I felt it was inappropriate and not authentic. The question of two completely different creative cultural influences meeting in the middle brought up the question of authenticity. At what point would my approach, or even Bhamra's approach be considered not authentic, as the end product was to be, in effect, a new genre? I could emulate certain South Asian phrasing, but was that emulation performed as a self-styled cultural expert or was it a true influence within my own musicality? I decided to take a less contentious approach and follow the route of being true to my own cultural roots, letting the music evolve through the confluence of strong Eastern and Western influences finding common ground in an almost combative fashion.

8.7 The Harmonica Session

To further the cultural mix, I wanted to try to balance some of the bansuri flute with another Western instrument for three of the songs. I thought I would attempt to use harmonica on these tracks and contacted harmonica player, guitarist and singer, Tim Staffell. I had produced two albums for him in the past. Staffell was the original singer and bass player in Smile, the band, which then became Queen and had much experience in the studio. (Nolasco 2018).

I invited Staffell to come to the studio in Kent to record and suggested that we make this an informal social occasion. Above and beyond the social interactivity, having worked with him in the past, I knew that this was an almost guaranteed method to get him relaxed in anticipation of recording in the studio, in order to achieve the best performance.

We set up two microphones, a Neumann U87 and a SE ribbon mic so that there would be a choice of nuanced sounds to use in the mix. The Neumann would provide a qualitative and airy sound whereas the ribbon mic was more earthy and 'blues' oriented, with less transient high frequencies being recorded. Staffell deferred to the standard position for harmonica players of being as close to the microphones as possible. I asked that he stand three to four

feet back from the mic so that I could achieve a more open and natural sound, to complement the bansuri flute on the album rather than the brash blues harmonica sound achieved by close miking. Staffell, being relaxed and experienced with working with me, was most compliant with any requests for retakes and we even joked about the producer intervention often used where a producer tells the performer that the take was fantastic, but 'could we try another one?'

The difficulty I encountered in the session was that of the rhythmical feel of the track from Staffell's perspective. Even though the three tracks he was playing on were of a country or blues root, he found it difficult to play against the syncopated rhythms of the tabla based percussion. Whereas on the whole, I felt comfortable with this when I was playing guitar, Staffell would drift and lose focus as to where he was within the bar relative to his musical phrasing. The solution to this was to give him a 'four beats to the bar' click track, playing in addition to the other instruments, so that he felt more grounded in a Western musical environment. This was surprising as Staffell is well versed in jazz and syncopated funk rhythms, but he felt uncomfortable with the Eastern approach. This gave me further insight into the creation of cross-cultural genres; each contributor must feel comfortable in their own musical cultures but must also feel comfortable in those creative cultures that come from being immersed in another musical background. It is more than just an intellectual understanding of the 'other' genre, it is also an emotional and cultural adaptation that is required for the cross-cultural interaction to be mutually acceptable and ultimately successful.

When we finished recording, the files were saved on a separate hard drive for me to take to my own studio to compile and choose the best takes, as Bhamra had done with the bansuri flute takes. Bhamra was not present at this session as he was in India at the time but I liaised with him and we agreed to get together for the final mix.

8.8 The Review Session

In reviewing the final recordings and compiling the harmonica takes in the appropriate tracks, I then tried to step back from the process in terms of my creative contribution and reviewed the tracks with a view to their commercial viability rather than just the enjoyment and reflective analysis of having played on the recordings. How would these tracks sit as background to a moving image; the most desirable and potentially commercially viable market for this material? I felt that there were a few elements missing that would appeal to Western film editors' sensibilities and so I added some guitar parts to bring some of the focus back into a Western idiom. This included some acoustic guitar parts with picking arpeggios, a blues style solo and for interest, a backwards guitar part, but the primary focus was to balance the East-West musical values of the tracks. I then did quick rough mixes and again reviewed the tracks making notes on how to address the final mix. This included the types of effects and any issues with editing, equalisation, panning or tuning.

8.9 The Penultimate Mix

I then embarked on what I would consider the first mix. This involved careful scrutiny of instrument volume levels, EQ, panning, effects and some judicious editing of instruments that might be interfering with other instrumental performances. One of the main technical difficulties was the sonic interference between the bass tabla, or 'baya' (Britannica.com n.d.) and the bass guitar. Both of these instruments occupy a similar frequency bandwidth and as the bass tabla has a sustain that is not found in Western musical genres with bass drums or other percussion instruments, it created an unpleasant tonality when playing with the bass guitar that was not easily addressed though equalisation or side-chaining[51], an effect used in pop music to lower the volume of one instrument when another is playing.

[51] Side-chaining is the technique of splitting a proportion of an audio signal to be processed separately in some way. Compressors will sometimes be set to employ side-chain signals to control their signals (White 1989).

This effect is often employed when mixing bass drums and bass synths or guitars in dance music. My solution was to use a multipressor[52] that compresses only specific frequencies of an audio signal. This had the effect of taming the bass guitar on the frequencies that clashed with the tabla.

The mixes were completed and then checked on many different audio systems, including large studio monitors, small nearfield monitors, domestic hi-fi speakers, an in-car stereo system and headphones. This part of the process assessed the sonic continuity and compatibility between the tracks and how they would sound in different environments. After some adjustments, the tracks were then put through RX8 mastering software to ensure level, compression and EQ compatibility. Upon completing this process, I then sent the tracks to Bhamra for his comments. The following comments were as follows by email:

> Hi Richard
>
> I think it all sounds fantastic!!!! - Even track 4 which I think has a nice Punjabi folk bounce to it! Here are some notes which I think will help to create some contrasting textures and narrative arcs. Also, to introduce new sounds and delineate sections as the tracks unfold.
>
> TRACK 1:
> 0 - 0:25 increase tabla so that it boldly 'answers' the guitar questions thrown at it.
> The tabla can also be featured more at 2:56 - 3:27 and 4:27 - 4:44.
> I find the flute overpowered by the guitars during the 3 main themes at:
> 0:48 - 1:24, 1:46 - 2:24 and 3:49 - 4:27. It could be that the guitars need to be lowered (or made less bright?) and the flute raised in volume (or brightened). He used two flutes in this track (!!) and the low-sounding one is duller and lost in the mix.

[52] Multipressors or multi-band compressors, are devices that split the audio signal into typically, three to five separate frequency bands, each with its own compressor. The advantage of a multipressor is that a loud signal in one frequency band will not affect the other bands (Owsinski 2017).

TRACK 2:

I love this track!

Again, I find the flute too low (or not present enough compared to the guitars) especially evident during the Q&A section with the guitars at 1:56.

The flute is rushed for its first 3 arpeggios at 2:37 and will need stretching a bit - esp the very first phrase.

Could we cut the tablas & perc after the downbeat at 3:56? It would make a better ending.

TRACK 3:

I love this track too!

It's a bit of a shock when the guitars first come in at 0:49.. perhaps they could be eased in or softened a bit??

The low flute needs to be raised or made more present (compared to the guitars) at 0:49 - 2:22 and 3:54 - 4:15. I wonder if the flute is too wet? Perhaps a subtle delay as opposed to a reverb might be better?

The guitars levels are good 2:22 - 3:10, but cabasa could come up here.

Perhaps bring the guitars down 4:22 onwards ..??

TRACK 4:

I'll need to add some dholak and some santoor, which I'll do and send you the stems.

With this in mind, please remove the cabasa/shaker throughout - except in the following sections: 0:30 - 0:39 , 0:48 - 1:06 and 2:46 - 3:17.

TRACK 5:

Reduce the reverb on the tabla ?

Remove cabasa/shaker at 0:09-0:23 and also 1:34-1:49.

Otherwise, it all sounds great..

TRACK 7:

I love the reverse guitars!

Try removing the bass 0:25 - 0:36.. it will make more sense I feel..

Remove Pot 1:02 - 1:26 , 2:28 - 2:45 and 3:56 - 4:06

Increase flute slightly 2:29 - 3:37
Raise level of the tuned tablas 3:34 - 3:56

TRACK 8:
Increase dholak level slightly overall to balance the tabla..
Remove Tabla/Dholak & Increase the Dhad as a main perc feature in these two sections: 1:12 - 1:32 and 2:34 - 2:52.
Increase Guitar power chord at 3:19 ?? or add some delay or something..!!??
It appears as though there's a mistake with the flautist missing a phrase at 4:00.. copy the one at 4:03 and insert it here.

TRACK 9:
I'll add some santoor overall and tumbi 2:30 - 3:05 and send you the stems.
Please pan the dholak left and tabla right as in Track 8.
Remove the Pot 0:00 - 0:47 and 1:54 - 2:29
Otherwise, brilliantly C&E!

TRACK 10:
Lovely and soothing!!
Again, I think that the flute is fighting to be heard above the guitars.. Please increase its volume/presence (or duck it against the guitars!?) - especially in these 3 sections 0:14 - 1:00 , 1:45 - 2:51 and 3:24 - 4:09 where it does a Q&A with the pedal guitar. .
Is it possible to remove the sitar/guitar until 1:03? (sorry!)
.. and then perhaps one of the other guitars 3:24 - 4:02 and then at the outro 5:42 onwards..
I feel that the layered guitars could be structured so that they're not all playing at the same time throughout ..
Remove the Pot until 1:03

Hooray - it all sounds fab!!!

(email correspondence 2019).

My reaction to this email was that apart from some of the constructive suggestions of more space and dynamics, Bhamra was now trying to exert some additional Eastern influence on the end product, whereas I had purposefully oriented the mixes towards a Western approach to meet, what I conceived to be, the market expectations particularly of the film and television editors; my perceived key target market for this recording.

I replied in a friendly tone suggesting that Bhamra was doing what all producers do during sessions and using the familiar set routine of 'I really liked that take. It was fantastic, but could we just try another one?' This was all done in the interests of comradery and collaboration, but there was an underlying cultural power struggle here that exists within all producer-artist relationships and especially when there are two producers who are from differing cultural backgrounds collaborating.

When two distinct cultures merge to try to collaborate and both parties are not only producers but also the artists, the dynamics and roles relating to technological, musical, hierarchical and cultural perspectives become fluid. There are no defining circumstances that identify the merger or separation of cultures. Within this scenario, the boundaries that define the roles of engineers, producers and artists are amplified, questioned and redefined at almost every juncture. The subtexts of cultural diversity and technological competitiveness create unspoken power struggles between the protagonists, diametrically opposed to the express intent to collaborate. The differing production, recording and mixing approaches highlight that constant interactive mediation was employed throughout the process. The unspoken struggle for genre dominance within the production process seemed to come to the fore at the mixing stage. The race for the finish line seemed to exacerbate the tensions and inherent worries of both collaborators. It was the final negotiation; however, our collective objective was to maintain the integrity of the output and ourselves as producers.

This tension and struggle for dominance was tempered by mutual respect, but it was still there as an undercurrent to our interactions. It seems that all the jostling for position in the recording studio, including territorial placement of instruments, along with taking control of the recordings at different junctures, were all precursors to the final unstated but most important negotiation; which side of the West or the East was the final product going to lean

towards. My objectives were rooted in my perceptions of the Western markets, whereas Bhamra was looking at the South Asian market.

This ebb and flow of respect, collaboration, justification and negotiation continued. After Bhamra had sent me the additional stems (santoor, dholak and tumbi tracks) for inclusion in tracks 4 and 9, I encountered the same technical problems that I had when the bansuri flute tracks were sent to me. The additions recorded at Bhamra's studio in Southall were overdubbed with my mixes, and the beats per minute were set incorrectly relative to the original recordings. This meant that the positioning of the recordings was incorrect when inserting them into my project files.

I phoned Bhamra to discuss this and how we would deal with this. He agreed to rerecord the extra instruments as this would be the easiest solution. The conversation then moved to my assessment of his email comments on my mixes and he took a very apologetic stance, saying that these were not dictates and that I could ignore them if I wanted to. He stated that these comments were first reactions but he had listened to them on a number of speaker systems, as is the standard procedure for checking mixes will work in different environments and through different speakers or headphones. It was as if the negotiating balance had shifted due to some form of insecurity relative to the tracks submitted from the artist's perspective and not the producer. We even remarked in jest that as he was only the drummer and I was the guitarist and that I would be the one with the informed view. This referenced a long-standing derogatory joke amongst musicians about the choice of instrument; 'What do you call someone who hangs out with musicians? Answer: The drummer.'(Ashton 2019). Even with all the technological expertise, a lifetime of experience, shared values, collaborative intent, peer acknowledgement and successful past achievements, the artist/performer insecurities rise to the surface. This dynamic needs to be addressed during the producer/artist collaborative process, and there is constant negotiation between the practitioners. This further identifies the requirement for the producer to provide a secure space where a more balanced and less emotional, empirical approach can be found. However, the producer may also expect to act as therapist or untrained psychologist during the producer/artist interactions (The Music Producers Guild 2014).

8.10 The Final Mix

I completed the remix incorporating Bhamra's comments, using some discretion as I did not fully agree with every point, but I appreciated that his comments would have been initial reactions and that we would both have addressed this process in a similar manner. It has been my experience that the first reaction, rather than a laboured considered reaction to mixes, is more intuitive. Although there may be inconsistencies in the comments, there is more validity than if they were tempered by consideration, review and polite protocol. I have also found this generally to be the case with numerous takes on one performance; the first performance in the studio needs to be captured as it is the most intuitive and expressive. It may contain mistakes, but they can be rectified. The more the performer retakes and rerecords, the more the essence of the performance is lost in the more calculated and planned ensuing performances.

The reaction to the mixes was positive. He expressed a profound emotional response to the overall sound, stating that he 'loved it' and was incredibly proud of what we had done. We agreed to meet up to plan the album's release and finally name the tracks.

The following names were the result of our meeting and discussion. Explanations and justifications for the names are also provided.

'From Amritsar to Arkansas'
This references the location of the main Sikh Temple in Punjab (Amritsar) and one of the main centres of Bluegrass music in the United States (Arkansas). However, later discussion, when looking to finalise artwork and liner notes for the album cover, Bhamra pointed out that the use of Amritsar in this context may offend Sikh sensibilities. We decided to change the name to *Agra to Arkansas* in acknowledgement of this sensitivity and in respect of Sikh values. This is an example of how cultural expertise is necessary to meet social and cultural expectations and uphold values.

'Rajasthan Rockies'
The track has a majestic feel to it and it was deemed apt to reference the location of many of India's most famous majestic monuments and the mountain range of North America.

‘Journey to Moksha’
Moksha is a Sanskrit word that means enlightenment (Wisdomlib.org n.d.), and we thought this track had a calming and meditative feel.

‘Barn Dance Gidda’
We created a visual narrative of Gidda, the Punjabi women’s dance, being performed in the streets of Memphis, Tennessee.

‘Bluegrass Bhindi’
This title brings together American bluegrass and the bindi. The bindi is the decorative dot worn as a decoration on the forehead to acknowledge creation (Jha 2018). This identifies the style of the track and subtly infers that a new bluegrass South Asian genre has been created.

‘The Maharaja Express’
This track feels as if there is a train journey attached to it while portraying a majestic feel.

‘Funkadelhi’
This play on words and the city of Delhi provided a quasi-comical approach to this driving but funky track.

‘Beale Street Bhangra’
This track has bhangra rhythms mixed in with American hoe-down constructs. It was a natural acknowledgement of the mix of the two genres.

‘Juhu Beach Blues’
We both felt that we could hear the inference of the sound of the ocean on this track, so it was named after the most famous beach in Mumbai.

The making of this album was an entirely enjoyable experience, and both of us were very happy with the results. The exchange of ideas, compromises and cultural referencing was exhilarating and challenging, and several unexpected musical interventions were required to enable the recording of this project. The photograph at the end of this chapter embodies the

relationship between Bhamra and me, the exchange of musical cultures and the pure enjoyment of music making even when there were challenges to be addressed.

8.11 Summary

Country and Eastern supported the hypothesis that the confluence of two creative minds, and in this case also cultures, results in an output that is greater than the sum of its parts (Copleston 1999). It also provided an opportunity to explore the artist/producer relationship and observe further that despite the experience and wisdom of, in this case, two record producers, artist insecurities will always surface during the creative process, but also that the producer bears the inherent stress element of the responsibility of the overall recording. When the producer/s are also the artist/s, this can cause an internalised conflict that needs to be addressed. The project also further underpinned the theory that a practitioner's cultural expertise significantly impacts the creative success and implementation of a production. The creative contributions and performances are easier to facilitate and become more effective with a greater understanding and absorption of cultural values. Creating a musical environment where all participants are comfortable and interacting within one set of cultural parameters is often difficult. However, creating a unified and mutually acceptable collaborative result between different cultures, an activity often accompanied by tensions and disagreements, requires the negotiation and management of expectations and an acknowledgement and understanding of the diverse cultural values. Producers and artists should make further efforts to engage with the different cultural values and the mutual collaborative objectives set out when embarking on a recording.

Figure 5. *Kuljit Bhamra and Richard Lightman in the University of Kent, Centre for Music and Audio Technology recording studio* © C. Taylor, 2019.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The research has shown that culturally embedded musical influences, producer-artist dynamics, genre progression, advances in technology, perceived popular trends, socio-cultural identity, nationalistic identity markers, market forces and objectives all contributed to the creation of British bhangra, its ultimate adaptation and migration back to India, and its slow decline in the U.K. A reflexive examination of the recording processes and production techniques, in-depth interviews and the evaluation of my contribution as a practitioner within a cross-cultural context has drawn the following conclusions.

9.1 Objectivity Within Autoethnographic Research

As discussed in Chapter 2, autoethnography as a research methodology establishes academic rigour, integrity and validity through objective distancing (Le Roux 2017). As a practitioner and subsequent researcher, it was essential to maintain objectivity, and this was achieved by adopting the role of a reflective observer perspective, allowing objectivity through the passing of time between events and self-reflection. In some cases, I found that my memories may have been distorted by time. Kellog (2016) points out that this can sometimes occur to suit one's research objectives. For participant researchers, subjective reaction to past experiences may contradict an objective stance. Researchers who emotionally distance themselves from the target of the ethnography, are more rigorously objective via disassociation. I was mindful of this during the research process and tried to disregard my emotional reactions to past events.

Whilst it is important to maintain objectivity as a researcher in the analysis of personal reactions to past participation, the autoethnography of our perceived actions and reactions and the analysis is skewed by the social and emotional investment we make at the time of interaction. For example, during the initial recordings in the 1980s and 1990s, I considered the inability of British Asian singers to harmonise vocals as a musical skillset missing from their training, but I did not realise at the time that this was not a harmonic device that was included in their musical lexicon. As value systems evolve with time, this can create an inner conflict that may not ever be resolvable. An example of this is that I can appreciate the artistry of the female voice used in Hindi singing, where high registers and falsetto are

employed, but the sound is still not something that I find enjoyable to listen to. In addition to this, the observer of today may have a different view of social norms and acceptable social practice than the practitioner of the past. However, this can be a positive advantage if the researcher acts as a third-party observer of events as if they were not participating. Drawing on the primary sourced interviews with bhangra artists, producers and record companies with whom I had worked with provided a greater insight into the culturally mediated interpersonal dynamics, creative collaborations and my contribution to British bhangra. The passing of time facilitated the lessening of emotional attachment to my past actions. The retrospective critical assessment of these actions and the events surrounding them was more detached. This distancing from the intensity of the creative experiences and attached financial pressures enabled a more objective approach to the research.

9.2 Mediation and Translation

Creative Interaction and Cultural Expertise

The creative interaction between producer and artist is multi-faceted, and the methods employed by producers in terms of their creative contributions, the control of the end product and acknowledgement of the market objectives is a narrative that is constantly changing and adapting to technology, artistic, stylistic and societal trends. Within the cross-cultural landscape, there is the additional factor of negotiating cultural expectations from both the producer and the artist, which may themselves be misinterpreted due to cultural objectives harboured by the actors, including financial objectives and success in the target market.

My contribution to the bhangra genre was a short-lived success, as what I produced had a non-sustainable novelty factor attached to it based on the cross-referencing of traditional bhangra, rock and reggae genres within the productions. I may have been partly responsible for the sales of millions of albums worldwide for a short period, but I was not able to continue to create hits as the worldwide audience expectation, made up of predominantly Punjabi diasporic communities, was for a product with more traditional values. The successful bhangra producers with sustainable careers within the genre were those whose background cultures were the same as the artists and had a complete in-depth and ingrained understanding of the culture, its musical roots, its history and the elements that made the

music acceptable, and therefore successful, to its core market. I was never able to fully extend the market for my bhangra productions outside of the British South Asian demographic, even if that was a secondary objective to sales targets. I made every attempt to understand the artists and the marketplace I was operating within, but I was not part of the core market itself and could not fully comprehend the cultural nuances that were a subtext of the genre within which I was working. The British Asian producers, with their own approaches and styles, were more successful than I within the bhangra oeuvre, as they were accepted purveyors of the culture. The artists ultimately trusted the British Asian producers' emic approach to the creative project, although they may not have entirely trusted their motives or approved their processes. However, the recorded product met the artist and market expectations; the front-leading objective for all concerned. It is therefore my conclusion that to be fully successful within a culturally informed creative endeavour, one has to be a true cultural expert, and to be a cultural expert, having not come from that culture in the first place, is extremely difficult to achieve, even when immersed in that culture from a young age. A producer, untrained as a cultural specialist, operating within a culture they are not indigenously attached to, is likely to struggle to achieve the same level of success within that culture as the practitioner that exists and operates naturally and intuitively within that culture and is a perceived purveyor of that culture.

Production Objectives

The foremost objective of music production is making a commercial product. Production is tied to making a commercial product, whether that commerciality is purely for financial profit or the enhancement of culture. The denial of commercialism within production is usually used as a banner to disguise a lack of success a producer might have within the commercial landscape. Commerce has a significant influence on the creative process, and decisions are often taken based on market trends, commercial audience attraction and past successes of techniques or approaches.

A further example of commerciality as the key objective of the production discipline can be seen within the mixing process. Once all the parts, performances and variations of performance have been recorded, and all parties agree that recording has been completed, the mixing process becomes an area of conflict of interest between the stakeholders and

contributors. It requires another set of mitigation and negotiation techniques to be employed by the producer. This is possibly the greatest area of frustration for producers as a mix is only considered completed when all stakeholders agree that it is finished or the stakeholder with the greatest controlling interest deems it to be complete. Producer Cameron Craig states that even when everyone has approved the final mix, and the mixes have been sent off for mastering, there is often someone within the process who wants something changed (interview 2019). This might be someone from the record company, a member of the band/artist or the songwriter/composer.

During this process, there is a jostling for prominence between the individual musicians; the guitarist, the percussionist, the singer and all key contributors often want their instruments or performance to be prominent. This is further exacerbated by genre representations if there is a mixed cultural approach to the music recorded. This was the case during the process of mixing the *Country and Eastern* album. If the guitars were dominant in the mix, then it was considered by Bhamra to be too Western, and if the tablas and bansuri flute were dominant in the mix, then I considered it to be too Indian. Compromises had to be made to fulfil everyone's musical objectives and sometimes, this was achieved by the focus on particular songs; some tracks were aimed at being more South Asian and others leaned towards being more Western. In the case of this album, there were two producers/composers/performers each vying for cultural dominance within the mixes to meet what they perceived to be their markets. The balance was only fully achieved on two of the tracks of the album, where different sections of the songs deferred to the dominant genre through the use of instrumentation, providing equal weighting to both genre leanings; country and eastern.

In all the case studies, when there was a blend of cultural influences in the music, the dominance of genre was ultimately the deciding factor in the way the mixes were presented and the controlling parties, those usually paying the bill, dictated the cultural direction of the mixes. This was usually defined by the record company's agenda for creating product for a target market, and it was the producer's job to represent this remit while trying to maintain the wishes and creative aspirations of the artist. Ultimately the main driver within the decision-making process, above performance aesthetics and technological sonic quality, was the attainment of profit from the creative product.

Music as a Sonic Signature of Culture

Art and music reference representations or signatures that reflect culture. This may include sonic signatures, colours, artwork styles and language. However, art and music may also adapt populist or commercially successful signatures within the context of a cultural associated marketplace or locale. Within music, cultural sonic signatures invoke feelings of pride, a sense of belonging and community, cultural participation and communication. These signatures can act as a cultural marker (Davis 2009). This was the case with bhangra music and the associated instrumentation within the British Asian culture (Khabra 2014).

There is also the producers' practice of appropriation of associations to culture, style, genre or epoch through sonic signatures (Herbst 2020). The usage then eventually becomes an identifier of the producer, sometimes to be further adapted to new interpretations and uses by other producers, creating new genres, styles and cultural associations. My use of tablas in my non-Asian related productions, even if unnoticed, is the inclusion of an instrument that I neither play nor is a part of my cultural background. It represents a statement of interdisciplinary music culture and practice and acknowledges my career within bhangra. Bhamra states that he uses a tambourine, not his primary percussion instrument, as his sonic signature (interview 2019). It represents the sound of the ghungru, or ankle bell, worn by Indian dancers (Grove Music Online 2022).

However, if a sonic signature or accepted musical theme or framework is incorporated into a new genre, and it generates commercial success or increases the awareness of an associated culture, the new genre may be incorporated into the culture's musical lexicon. As is the case with bhangra, the British-conceived version of the genre became a cultural and commercial success and as a result, migrated to India and was absorbed in the Bollywood film oeuvre, acknowledged by Roy (2016) to be the main populist cultural driver of music, entertainment and film consumption in the South Asian continent. This absorption and subsequent appropriation of the genre into South Asian culture has been driven by commercial success.

It would seem that the original appropriation of Punjabi folk music by British bhangra has been further appropriated by the South Asian Bollywood culture. Further to this, British bhangra is now no longer a popular genre as Desi hip hop has subsumed it and replaced it

within the British Asian cultural mix. It is questionable as to whether Desi hip hop can be further hybridised or subsumed into another genre as the hip hop genre is now recognised as an international construct (Succi 2020), not easily appropriated by an individual culture, nor can it be nominated as a cultural sonic signature except as a signifier of its original roots in Caribbean/American black music culture (Gadet 2012). Due to their global spread and appeal, meta genres like hip hop and rock take on a position of dominance and recognition and cannot, therefore, be subsumed by other genres. To illustrate this further, Desi hip hop and Iranian hip hop are sub-genres of hip hop and identify with hip hop as the dominant genre, whereas British bhangra or other hybridised cross-genres are their own genre entities, not sub-genres.

Within British bhangra recording practice of the 1980s and 1990s, and in the case of my *Country and Eastern* recordings with Bhamra, cultural sonic signatures were used with the objective of increasing potential commercial success and listener appeal. This commodification of culture was practised with the intention of maintaining cultural integrity whilst exploring new ways of assessing existing markets but the main objective was always the commercial exploitation of a recorded product. The measure of success and acceptability was often the reaction of the producer's peer group, which would act as a benchmark for stakeholders such as the record companies or publishers. If everyone thought it was good, it was then suitable for distribution and sales to the buying public. If it did not sell, the producer would be the first to be blamed for the lack of success.

Commercial potential was the rationale for Western and South Asian producers to appropriate each other's musical cultures. If the resultant recordings were unacceptable to the culture's musical practices but the released music was commercially successful, the practice would be absorbed into the genre, or a new genre would be created. Examples of this include drums, bass and guitar being absorbed into the bhangra genre, and reggae infused into bhangra, forming a new genre of bhangramuffin. The early experiments by bhangra artists and producers of cross-genre bhangra and reggae were shunned by the communities, families and peers. However, when artists like Apache Indian and Bally Sagoo started to see commercial success with this cross-genre, other artists and producers, including Kazanchi, Bhamra and I, began to incorporate reggae into the bhangra recordings we were working on. The underlying reticence to accept this form of cross-genre or cross-cultural approach still

exists in some sectors, as illustrated by Taak Singh's (Raga Kaka Winston) decision to desist from revisiting his bhangramuffin successes and focus on spiritual Punjabi music.

Whilst some authors consider the commercial considerations of making and recording music that draws upon different cultural musical constructs, creating new genre variations, as contamination of culture (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000), a hybridised approach to art reflects the confluence of cultures in British society. It serves as a vehicle for cultural change and transition, or modernisation. Broadcast media, the internet and streaming services have now facilitated increased audience access to music, giving rise to faster shifts in culture. There has been an increasing and insatiable audience appetite for new material linked to the audiences' own cultural identities. At the same time, artists appealing to those audiences want to reach a wider global audience. This has resulted in an increase in product output along with a homogenisation of genre evidenced by country artists and Latin artists employing mainstream pop music structures and production formats. Examples include Taylor Swift's *Shake it Off* (2014), Miley Cyrus' *Midnight Sky* (2020), Bad Bunny's *Pero Ya No* (2020) and Rauw Alejandro's *Todo de Ti* (2021).

The contributions, adaptations and manipulation of the genre by non-British Asian producers, such as myself, may have appeared as a threat to the essence of bhangra, even to the point of being accused of contaminating the genre. This was directed at me by members of the Sikh community for my Ragga Kaka Winston productions. However, bhangra, like many other popular culturally folk-based genres such as reggae and raï, is constantly evolving and borrowing from other popular genres, adopting new technologies and manipulating lyrical content and structure to meet market trends and increase market penetration. My contributions to bhangra were part of a whole groundswell of change and adaptation that has led to the adoption of bhangra as an intrinsic part of the Bollywood oeuvre.

9.3 The Impact of Technology on Producer/Artist Dynamics

The Myth of Production Technology and Methodology

Some producers have been eulogised to the status of sage or grandmaster due to some of the recording techniques and psychological interventions employed. Acknowledgement of their genius and the study of their techniques is a well-worn academic path, but it is important to understand that these developed techniques were often happy accidents, tools available to everyone, or just experiments with microphone placements and manipulation and usage of outboard effects in the audio signal path as they were not meant to be used or designed for. These were mostly unplanned 'what if' experiments rather than carefully planned systematic investigations. Examples include the output of producers Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois who use multiple reverb treatments on instruments creating spacial textures, Tony Visconti who experimented with numerous microphone distance placements on a single vocal performance, the moving panning techniques on guitar by Jimi Hendrix, and George Martin's backwards recording (Bates 2007). It is also important to credit the artists, who may have come up with ideas or pressured the producers into directions they had not anticipated. However, the canonisation of some highly respected producers is also leveraged by their commercial success. It could be argued that the success of a producer can be attributed to their contribution to the recording process, to the artist, or a collaboration of both, but ultimately the benchmark is the success within its target marketplace, and that benchmark is mainly commercial.

The technical experimentation has always been restricted by the equipment available and the cultural context. Even today, there are limitations within the digital environment in which most productions are recorded. However, the cultural context has a greater impact on this experimentation than the actual technology and the cultures may refer to commercial culture, popular culture or diversity. It is these influences that put the greatest restrictions on production techniques employed. This was very much the case with British bhangra and the ensuing cross-cultural experiments. For example, Apache Indian and Punjabi MC mixed reggae with bhangra. Bhangra musicians wishing to extend their markets and meet what they thought to be mainstream expectations used electric guitars, basses and synthesizers with Western tuning. These instruments and technologies, in the hands of musicians of a different

cultural background and market context, created a new sound which was then harnessed and further enhanced by producers.

In the case of bhangra, technology was employed as a testbed for creative collaboration. The geography of the studio and the use of cultural bridging techniques such as food and light-hearted banter all contributed to creating an environment where cross-cultural music genres could be created. The intercultural mediation sat outside of the music in socio-cultural exchanges forming the basis of cooperation, which could be translated into a musical language and negotiation of technology. Social interaction provided the bedrock of creative interaction rather than the other way round.

If newly created sounds and approaches proved to be commercially successful, then both the artist and their producers were deemed to be bankable commodities, and the outcome of any experiments could be commercially exploited in any way possible, including the nomination of the producers as creative geniuses as part of the marketing process. The exploitation of this experimentation still pervade today. The *Country and Eastern* recordings are an example of this, where the record company claims the recordings to be an act of ground-breaking inspiration from the producers.

Sustainability of Musical Cultural Genres in Emerging Technologies

As the global music market becomes more accessible via streaming distribution conduits and record companies rely more on metrics and algorithms to assess the viability of the type of product to release, there is a question about the sustainability of culturally rooted genres. These genres are becoming more homogenised so that they can meet the market criteria set out by the Music Industry, and it may follow that only enthusiasts and niche music makers will continue to create new music within the cross-cultural musical landscape.

From a production perspective, as AI becomes more adaptable, less costly and its created musical output more aligned with consumer taste, there may be a diminishing focus on producers and more reliance on technology. There is already the creation of AI holographic pop stars like Yona (Time 2020), whose performances are entirely computer generated and their lyrics and melodies created by AI, based on the analysis of previous hit records. We

may have witnessed the peak of cross-cultural musical collaboration, and a new music hybridity may be emerging that supersedes the producer/artist collaborations as the next natural progression of popular music culture.

9.4 The Role of the Cultural Specialist

Integration or Appropriation of Genre

The motivation behind mixed genre-based approaches, from both a South Asian and Western perspective, was leveraged on achieving the greatest amount of commercial success in the marketplace. The use of hip hop, rap, rock or R 'n' B structures within bhangra, or fused with bhangra, was done in the interest of new product that would create a more significant profit base. The borrowing, integration or appropriation of genre was a financial issue and not a cultural desire to integrate into a new culture. The idea that the integration of a genre into culture may have had some store in relation to a diasporic culture trying to settle into its new home, as was the case with the South Asian community in the UK, but ultimately this is a normal progression of music culture. In my experiments with cross-cultural productions of bhangra, I was looking for new markets. The artists and the record companies I worked with were seeking greater profits.

Cultural Acceptance

Throughout my activities as a bhangra producer and subsequent reflective investigation as a researcher, there appears to be a personal exploration and underlying insecurity in seeking acceptance by a culture not indigenous to my background. My motivation for trying to instigate a new recording with Raga Kaka (Taak) and the subsequent failure to achieve the project is an indicator of my desire to revisit the earlier career successes, to validate or be accepted within the bhangra culture and an opportunity for qualitative and immersive research. Not being able to get Taak to embark on the project indicates that I am not enough of a cultural specialist and am not sensitive enough to the cultural nuances that surround the music and its associations, to enable me to convince him of the benefits of the project. There were other factors at play here including timing, changed market and family and peer pressure, but this would have been addressed had I the cultural expertise to adapt to the

situation. As it transpired, Taak did end up collaborating with Deepak Khazanchi, another bhangra producer featured in this thesis, on a recording project that was more geared to Sikh religious values, something I would not have been able to facilitate.

Cultural expertise also changes with trends and is intrinsically linked to the time period in which one is operating. Understanding cultural values, the market and consumer expectations are necessary to create a product for the epoch in which a producer is working. However, it is particularly difficult to anticipate how the music will be received in the future as genres change and cultural expectations evolve, as has been the case with the music consumed by the South Asian British community. My idea to revisit the past from a musical perspective was ill-conceived.

My co-production with Bhamra highlights an interesting dynamic in respect of cultural acceptance. Both of us are producers that have enjoyed success in different genres. I cannot reel off the names of every British Asian or South Asian bhangra artist as it is something that I have not felt to be intrinsic to the production process. Although I am experienced in producing many genres and styles, I cannot lay claim to being a bhangra expert from a historical or musicological perspective. Neither Bhamra nor I professed to be cultural experts in each other's musical spheres but used the commonality, experience and respect of each other's cultures to collaborate. We were relying on each other for expertise in our respective cultures to enable us to create a new exploratory cross-cultural genre. The recognition of the differences and the acceptance that either party would never fully be immersed in the other's culture provided the space for creativity. This exchange could be explored further in terms of understanding its dialogical processes and as a practice for producers and artists. The technique I eventually employed was not to make assumptions and to try to understand the cultural values that were influencing the musical performances in the studio. The recognition and celebration of cultural difference became one the most powerful tools for me in the production process.

9.5 Re-positioning the Producer's Role in Inter-cultural Recordings

As a participant observer, the analysis of past events, including the interview process, the case studies, and taking into account the research of other scholars in the field I have determined that within the context of bhangra production, on needs to be a cultural expert to maintain commercial success. However, acknowledging the cultural differences gives a better chance of success as the producer can defer to the artist's understanding of the nuances in their cultural marketplace. Instead of the producer trying to manipulate the performances and end product, acting as a facilitator further enlists the trust of the artist and ultimately brings the project closer to the market target it is aimed at. A producer who comes from the same cultural background as the artist is not limited by unfamiliarity and is more able to successfully experiment with influences outside of the culture with a view to increasing market share. They will have a better understanding of what might appeal to the market while having the certainty of the core product's viability to its target audience. This immersive cultural familiarity supports longer-term, genre-based career sustainability for a producer.

Even immersed in the British bhangra genre, I could never fully comprehend the end consumer's musical tastes, expectations and buying patterns. When working on a cross-cultural genre project, I could bring my culture to the mix, but as an outsider, I could not expect to fully understand the artists' and record companies' market objectives, so compromises had to be negotiated and agreed on all sides to achieve any product output. This additional layer of negotiation would not have been required had I been a cultural insider. The nature of the compromises that needed to be made related to the headline objective of financial gain. All parties were seeking commercial success, so the venture into cross-cultural genre collaborations was driven by this objective but required an acknowledgement of each other's cultures. The communication and dialogue with Bhamra during our collaboration as producers on the *Country and Eastern* project were based on a maturity and understanding that our cultures were individual and could generate a collaborative environment but were not exchangeable.

Referencing my experience and practice in studios with cross-cultural genre creation, the recognition of my limitations in respect of my understanding of culture was key to more productivity during the recording sessions. Acknowledging that I could only reach a level of

communication that lacked the deep-rooted cultural values afforded me respect from those I was collaborating with. My expertise in recording technology and Western musical practices became my accepted entrance contribution to the cross-cultural genre we were creating.

The investigation within this thesis is limited to a British bhangra context, and additional research is required in the area of cross-cultural genre studio production. Such additional insights could help to creatively enhance and increase the output of cross-cultural genre collaborations on a global scale.

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Appendices: Page

Appendix A

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Appendix E:

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Mediating Culture in Music Production

Name and contact address of Researcher:

Richard Lightman
12 West Park Avenue
Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4AL

Name of participant: _____

Address: (optional) _____

Telephone: (optional) _____

Email: (optional) _____

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix F:

Interview Questions and Prompts

The following is a list of questions directed at the respondents. Some questions would sometimes be addressed by the respondent together with a response to another question, so these questions acted as prompts for discussion rather than a strict questionnaire or poll.

Interview Questions for Producers:

Bhanga Producers Production Technique Questions.

1. What techniques did you employ in the early development of Bhangra in incorporating midi programming into live recordings?

2. What software programmes did you use, and what computer platform did you use? For example, did you use Cubase or Creator later to become Notator and then Logic on an Atari 1040ST.

3. When did you start to use digital technology with your recordings, and what platforms did you use? Did you use a Tascam DA88 or Alesis ADAT?

4. Did you start with a melody or rhythm as the basic building block of your production?

5. How did you build up the layers of your productions?

6. What techniques did you use when recording vocals?

7. Did you ever use harmonies in the melody lines or backing vocals of your recordings?

8. What instrumentation did you use?

9. What synthesizers did you use? Are there any personal favourite sounds?

10. How long did each production or song take for you to record?

11. Where did you record most of your projects?

12. What do you think contributed to Bhangra music becoming less popular in the mid-1990s?

13. Do you think Asian Pop and Asian Hip Hop are successors to Bhangra music or do you think they attempt to further Westernise Asian music culture?

14. Bhangra became synonymous with Asian culture, and awareness of it spread outside of the Asian communities. Some artists like Bally Sagoo and Cornershop managed to cross over into the mainstream charts. Do you think this helped the general acceptance and integration of South Asian communities in the UK at that time?

15. Do you think that it has contributed to different South Asian cultures interacting together to create a British Asian identity?

Generic Producer Questions:

1. The initial questions I will ask are based on the unmitigated emotional trauma and frustration that a Music Producer goes through whilst recording an artist. There is much documentation and many case studies of how producers deal with intransigent, insecure, belligerent, demanding and generally nasty artists and have to use various techniques and interventions to achieve the best performance and/or achieve the producer's vision.

2. But what about the producer's frustrations, insecurities, self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and generally having to deal with impossibly difficult artists? What techniques did you and do you use to relieve the tension or frustration? Do you rationalise your actions in and out of the studio in support of your well-being, or do you accept that this is the producer's plight? You can refer to any methods you might have employed in the past, and if you wish that it is not included in the thesis, that is fine. I can always refer to it as a method of coping but not attribute it to you directly.

3. Can you tell me a bit about your background and how you got into the music industry and production?

4. I'm interested in your cultural background and how that impacted your career, and how you interact with other cultures.

5. Relative to the genres you are best known for, what are your favourite recording techniques and do they impact how the artist relates to you?

Interview Questions for Artists:

1. You crossed the cultural divide with your music incorporating Reggae, Rock, and Western Pop influences. Was this a result of being immersed in British culture, or were you looking for a new sound?

2. Did synthesisers, sequencers and recording technology play a big part in this?

3. What markets were you trying to address as an artist?

4. Where did you perform in the U.K.?

5. Where did you tour outside of the U.K., and were there any differences in attitude or culture that you encountered as an artist playing to a South Asian audience?

6. Who were the record companies or promoters on a worldwide basis that you dealt with?

7. What influenced your decision to work with me on the albums we recorded?

8. Were there any cultural considerations in this decision-making process?

9. Were there any etiquettes or strategies in getting to know me from a professional perspective, such as meals together or inviting you into your home?

10. Describe the process of composition of a particular song.

11. What was the next process in arranging the song in the studio?

12. What was the recording procedure?

13. When working with the musicians in the studio who were contributing to your tracks, were there any issues that you encountered outside of the direct musical performances?

14. How did you deal with my understanding or lack of understanding of the cultural implications of the music or language?

15. Did you consider language a barrier or an advantage (able to communicate with your peers without me fully understanding what was said) when negotiating musical ideas and concepts with me?

16. When other musicians were in the studio, did you consider me an insider or outside the genre? Were there any considerations of hierarchy within the studio?

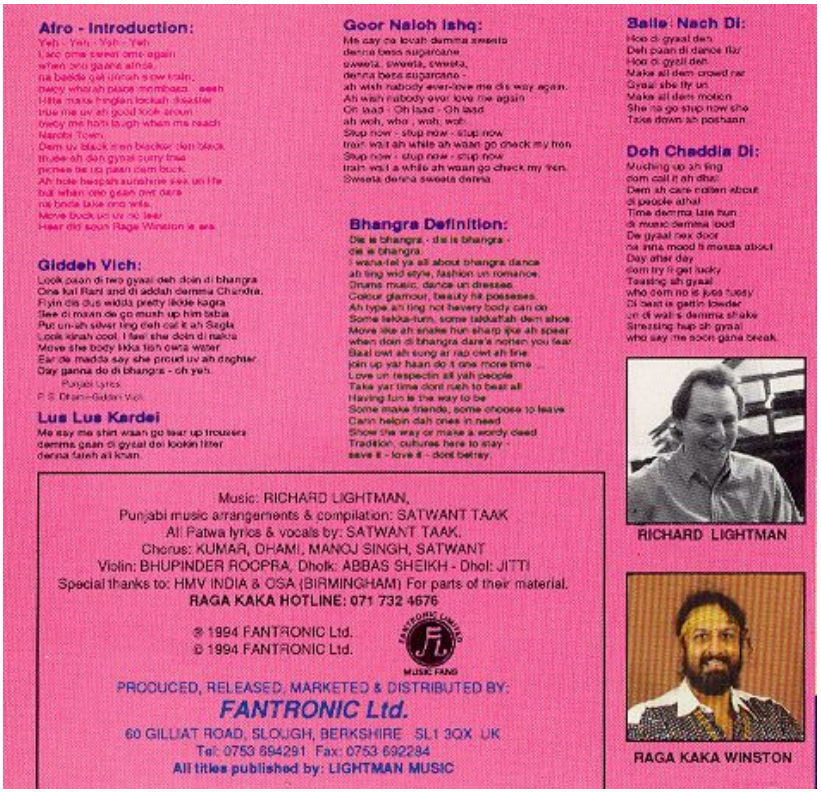
17. Did you consider it an asset to be able to communicate with the record company using me as a mediator, or did this complicate the negotiations?

18. What meaning and value did you or your fellow musicians find or aim for in the music. Did you see this as an economic opportunity? What was the financial gain? Did you encounter any criticism?

19. If you could have done anything differently, what would it have been?

20. What are your general views on record producers? Are you aware of the criticism levelled at some producers? What makes a good producer for your music?

Appendix G:
Bhangra Rastafari – Raga Kaka Winston



Afro - Introduction:
Yeh - Yeh - Yeh - Yeh
Lacc ome senet ome again
when you gonna arrive
na bedda get umah sow train
baby what ah place mi missus seeh
Hitta mata tingken lockah disaster
true me uv ah good look aroun
baby me hart is ugh when me reach
Nando Town
Dem uv black men blacker den black
mujee-ah deh gyaal sorry fine
pichee be ca pasn dem buck
Ah bole keepah sunshine see, on life
but when ceo gaan ovt dare
na bodie take mo wife
Move buck us uv no fear
Hear did soun Raga Winston ie are

Giddeh Vich:
Look paan di two gyaal deh doin di bhangra
One kal Rant and di addah demma Chandra.
Flyin dis dus wadda pretty likkle kagra
See di maan de go mush up him tabia
Put un-ah silver ting deh cel it ah Segta
Look kinah cool. I feel she doin di nakra
Move she body likka fish owta water
Ear de madda say she proud uv ah daghter
Day ganna do di bhangra - oh yeh.
Punjabi Lyrics
P.S. Dhami-Gidderi Vich

Lus Lus Kardei
Me say me shirt waan go tear up trousers
demma gaan di gyaal doi lookin fitter
dernna fateh ali khan.

Goor Naloh Ishq:
Me say ce lovah demma sweeta
dernna bess sugarcane
sweeta, sweeta, sweeta,
dernna bess sugarcane -
ah wish nabody ever love me dis way again.
Ah wish nabody ever love me again
Oh lead - Oh lead - Oh lead
ah woh, woh, woh, woh
Stup now - stup now - stup now
train wait ah while ah waan go check my tren
Stup now - stup now - stup now
train wait a while ah waan go check my tren.
Sweeta dernna sweeta dernna.

Bhangra Definition:
Dis is bhangra - dis is bhangra -
dis is bhangra
I wana tell ya all about bhangra dance
ah ting wid style, fashion an romance.
Drums music, dance an dresses
Colour glamour, beauty he possesses
Ah type ah ting not bevery body can do
Some lekka-lum, some lekka-lah dem shoe
Move like ah snake hun sharp like ah spear
when doin di bhangra dare's nothin you fear
Baal owt ah sung ar rap owt ah line
join up yar haan do it one more time
Love un respectin all yah people
Take yar time dont rush to bear all
Having fun is the way to be
Some make friends; some choose to leave
Carin helpin dah ones in need
Show the way or make a wordy deed
Tradition: cultures here to stay -
save it - love it - dont betray.

Baile Nach Di:
Hoe di gyaal deh
Deh paan di dance flor
Hoe di gyall deh
Make all dem crowd rar
Gyaal she fly un
Make all dem motion
She na go stup now she
Take down ah poshann

Doh Chaddia Di:
Mushing up ah ting
com call it ah dhol
Dem ah care nutten about
di people athal
Time dernma late hun
di music demma loud
De gyaal hex door
na inna mood fi messa about
Day after day
dem try fi get lucky
Teasing ah gyaal
who dem no is jusa lukey
Di seat is gettin harder
un di wait is demma shake
Stressing hup ah gyaal
who say me soon gana break

RICHARD LIGHTMAN

RAGA KAKA WINSTON

Music: RICHARD LIGHTMAN,
Punjabi music arrangements & compilation: SATWANT TAAK
All Patwa lyrics & vocals by: SATWANT TAAK.
Chorus: KUMAR, DHAMI, MANOJ SINGH, SATWANT
Violin: BHUPINDER ROOPRA. Dholk: ABBAS SHEIKH - Dhol: JITTI
Special thanks to: HMV INDIA & OSA (BIRMINGHAM) For parts of their material.
RAGA KAKA HOTLINE: 071 732 4676

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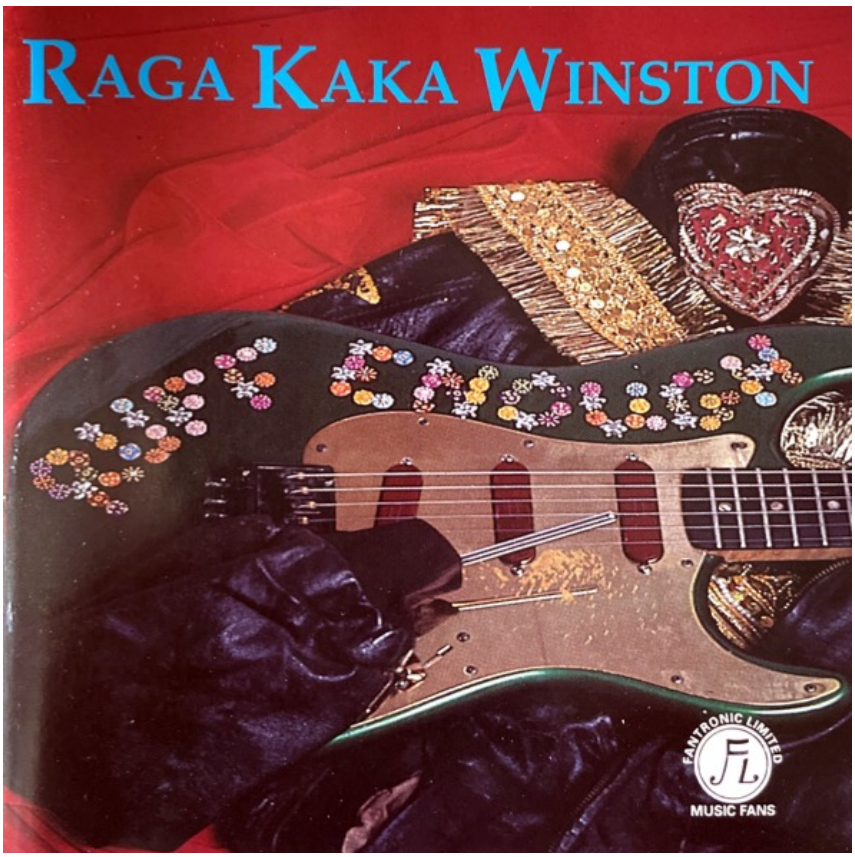
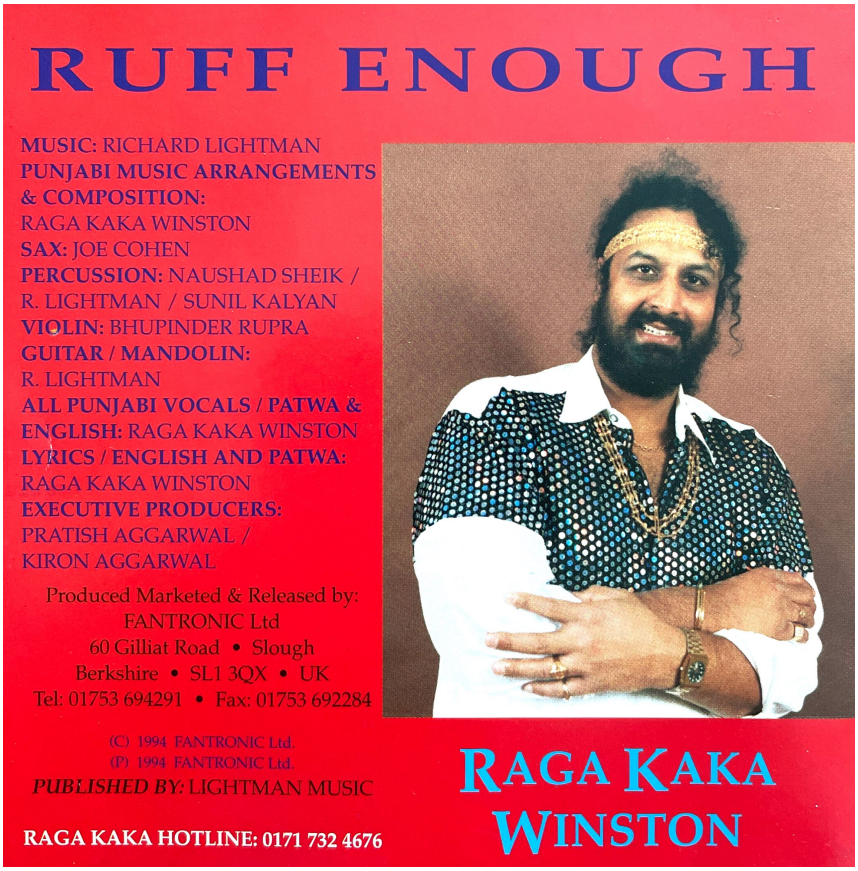
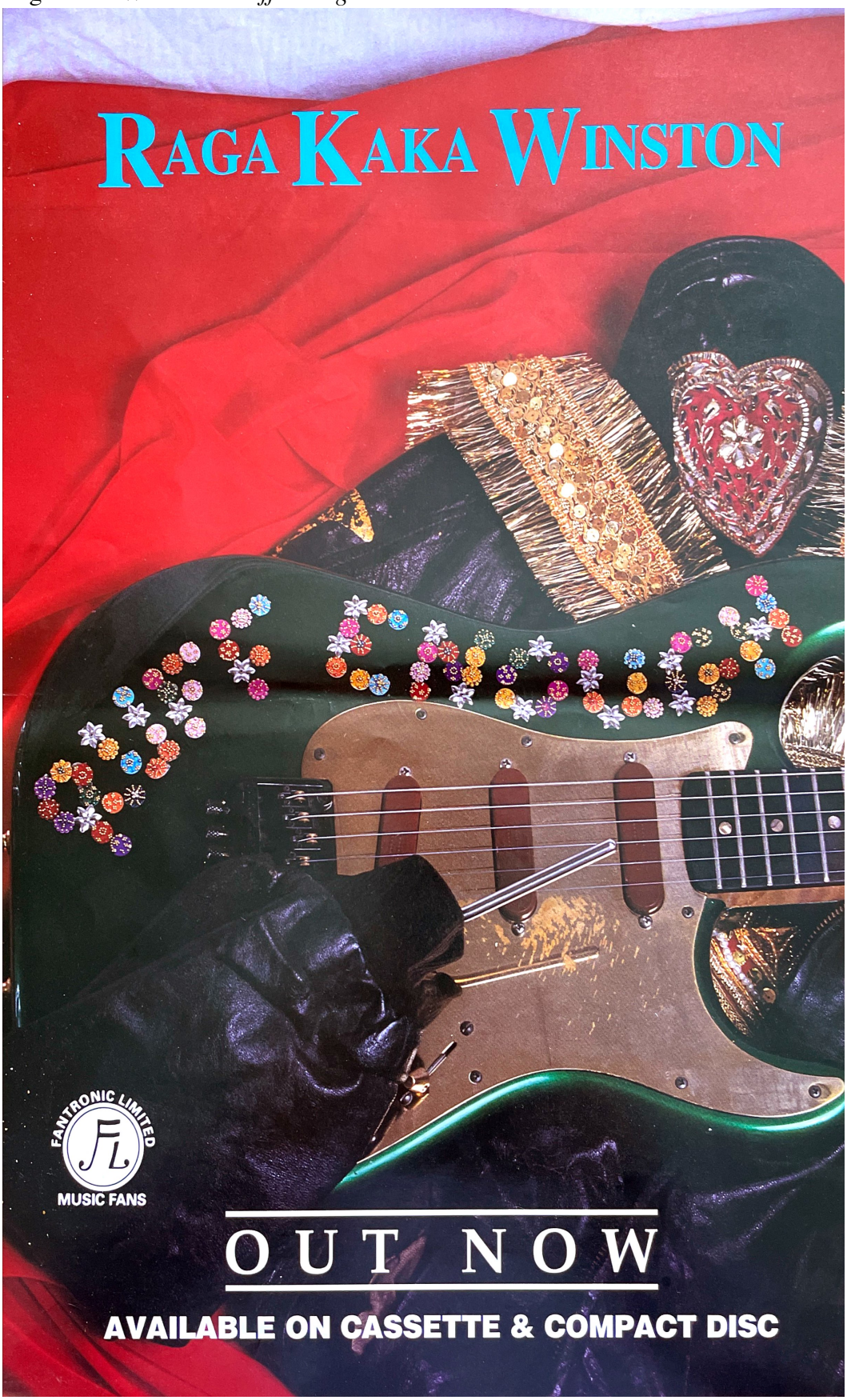
Appendix H:
Ruff Enough – Raga Kaka Winston





Appendix I:
Raga Kaka Winston – *Ruff Enough* Release Poster



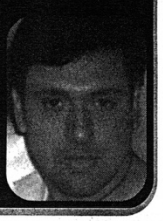
Appendix J:
Eastern Eye newspaper cutting - *Spice* 1996. Feature on Richard Lightman

Friday April 19 1996

PULL OUT!

SPICE!

INSIDE
Govinda: Ten years at the top



Play that bhangra music White boy!

Raj Ghai speaks to the Canadian-born maestro behind some of Britain's biggest Asian hits...

If you asked someone what kind of business they'd expect to find in a west London industrial estate, I doubt they would come up with an Asian music studio run by a Canadian and an Englishman.

Nevertheless, in between car repair centres and pasta factories in London's Park Royal area, lurks the famous 'Triple X' studios.

Canadian-born music-maker Richard Lightman and his partner Rick Cassman own and manage the company. The pair have been creating music for a number of years and have worked with the likes of rock legends Status Quo, boxer Henry Cooper and the group 'M' who enjoyed huge success in the 80s with the single 'Pop Muzik'.

Obviously the mainstream market pays far more money than the Asian music industry, but Richard and Rick choose to concentrate on bhangra bands.

"We were investigating different styles of music and ethnic influences," says Richard.

"Multitone Records approached us many years ago because they wanted to book the studio to put together the 'Rail Gaddi' album by Mangal Singh."

The album soon became a massive hit and led to Triple X being booked for numerous other Asian projects. "We then worked on an album for Premi amongst other famous bands," continues Richard.

"I then approached Multitone Records and asked them if they would let me produce something of my own for them, they seemed a little sceptical initially but eventually they agreed."

Since that time, the Triple X pair have produced over 40 Asian albums working with names such as Parras, Bina, Ragga Kaka, Heera, DCS, X-Zecutive, Safri, Amar and more recently, with Pakistani pop stars Awaz.

Richard, whose influences include Motown, jazz and the blues, likes to mix Asian sounds with Western influences. "What I like to do is to take outside influences and mix them with my own influences," he says.

"What you currently have is Asian artists trying to sound Western - what I want them to do is to sound Asian. I want them to use their musical roots and to inject Western influences into it rather than try and be completely Western artists."

STAR SERVICE
Richard has worked with some of the biggest names in bhangra

As a non-Asian, but one that knows Asian music extremely well, Richard has his own ideas as to why bhangra has not yet crossed over into the mainstream charts.

"The music is catchy, it's very accessible and when I play the modern style stuff to 'Westerners', immediately what they hear is bhangra beats, dhol and dholak, good rhythms etc.

"They say 'hey I like this', so from a world music point of view it's interesting, but when the lyrics kick in they think it's Indian restaurant music!

The other problem is that, on the whole, the music is recycled from old popular songs. There are very few artists in this country that write new melodies.

"They claim that they write new songs but they don't, they're old structures from traditional village folk songs that are not accessible to the Western ear, it's very much a folk music base."

The solution to the problem is clear to the music man: "What they need to do is to come out of the folk thing and produce something more progressive. They will have to sing in what is known as the 'International Music Language' - which is English! - only then will they have a chance."

Richard has a collection of over 50 Asian CDs at home. What does his wife think of it all? - "She thinks I'm nuts but it pays the rent!"

Appendix K:
Collection of guitars used on *Country and Eastern* recording. (© Lightman 2019)

Appendix L:
Bass guitar and amplifier used during *Country and Eastern* sessions. (© Lightman 2019)