

## **Session 11 and 12:**

### **ADF, “Real Great Britain” (2000) and Asian British Hip Hop after 9/11 (2006/2007)**

#### **1. Music and National Culture in the 1990s**

##### **Eric Clapton in 1976:**

Expresses his support for Enoch Powell at a Birmingham concert expressing that Britain is about to become a “black colony” and that he wants “the foreigners out” (Tyler 2007).

→ leads to **RAR (Rock against Racism)**

##### **(Steven Patrick) Morrissey (formerly lead singer of The Smiths) in an interview with NME in 2007:**

“I don’t have anything against people from other countries, [but] the higher the influx into England, the more the British identity disappears. [...] If you walk through Knightsbridge on any bland day of the week you won’t hear an English accent“

“[t]he gates of England are flooded. The country’s been thrown away” (qtd. in Byrne 2007),

##### **reprise of the ‘Finsbury Park Incident’ (Morrissey opening for Madness) in 1992**

##### **Britpop (rising in 1995 with the success of Blur, Oasis, Pulp etc.):**

“As far as the *NME* and *Melody Maker* were concerned [...] the old leftist worries about the politics of patriotism – last voiced in early 1994 – seemed to be completely forgotten. Layouts were set in red, white and blue, and writers infused their reports with a newly acceptable kind of patriotism” (Harris 2004, 202-03).

##### **Simeon Reynolds (1995):**

“Britpop is an evasion of the multiracial, technology-mediated nature of UK pop culture in the 90s. If it started a few years ago as a revolt against American grunge [...], it has

now extended itself into the symbolic erasure of Black Britain, as manifested in jungle and trip hop” (Reynolds 1995).

### **The Political Instrumentalisation of Britpop and “Cool Britannia”**

#### **Tony Blair (opposition leader) at *Q* magazine awards:**

“I just want to say two things to you here. First of all, rock’n’roll is not just an important part of our culture, it’s an important part of our way of life. It’s an important industry; its an important employer of people; it’s immensely important to the future of this country. [...] The great bands I used to listen to – The Stones and The Beatles and The Kinks – their records are going to live forever, and the records of today’s bands, the records of U2 or The Smiths and Morrissey, will also live on because they are part of our vibrant culture. I think we should be proud in Britain of our record industry and proud that people still think that it is the place to make it.” (qtd. in Harris, 2004, 191)

In summer 1995 (heyday of Britpop, Blur vs. Oasis showdown):

Blair’s Damon Albarn secretly recruited by one of Tony Blair’s men to help in the upcoming election campaign.

#### **Noel Gallagher (Oasis) speech at 1996 Brit awards (best album):**

“And if you’ve got anything about you, you’ll go up there and you’ll shake Tony Blair’s hand, man! Power to the people!” (qtd. in Harris 2004, 273).

#### **Tony Blair at 1996 Brit awards (speech for lifetime award to David Bowie):**

“British music [is] back once again in its right place, at the top of the world,” adding a distinctly Mancunian (The Smiths, The Stone Roses) touch to a received Britpop legacy leading directly to Oasis: “At least part of the reason for that has been the inspiration that today’s bands can draw from those that have gone before. Bands in my generation like The Beatles and The Stones and The Kinks. Of a later generation: The Clash, The Smiths, Stone Roses.” (qtd in *ibid.*)

In Autumn 1996, Noel Gallagher finds himself on the cover of the *New Labour New Britain* party magazine, backed by a Union Jack (cf. Cloonan 2007, 39)

**Vanity Fair** magazine proclaims in 1997 after Labour election victory that “London Swings”, spreading the term “**Cool Britannia**” (Tory invention!)

A high gloss picture of Tony Blair subtitled “The Visionary” is shown next to images of Britpop greats

### **The Re-Branding of Britain and Corporate Multiculturalism**

Responding to warnings by e.g. the British Council that British businesses “had become wary of overtly marketing their national identity for fear of the more negative connotations associated with Britain – businesses did not want to be thought of as insular, old-fashioned and resistant to change” (Dinnie 2007, 30)

Corporate think-tank called Demos produces a 70-page pamphlet titled *Britain<sup>TM</sup>: Renewing Our Identity* (Leonard 1997).

Shift from ‘sheer whiteness’ of Britpop to official Multiculturalism: **Gordon Brown in 1998:**

“My vision of Britain comes not from uniformity but from celebrating diversity, in other words a multi-ethnic and multinational Britain” (qtd. in Alibhai-Brown 2001, 100).

### **Rajeev Balasubramanyam (2008):**

“multiculturalism refers to propaganda that tells us that Britain, a multicultural society, is not racist, or rather, that the state and corporations are not-racist and so the society is moving in this direction.

The problem with this is that it isn’t true. The state and corporations *do* practice racism. And yet, they spend millions on spreading this false propaganda of multiculturalism, millions which could be spent combating racism. The next question, then, is *why?* [...]

Multiculturalism is fashionable. Racism, despite being endemic in the world today, is unfashionable and fashion is a tool of the capitalist world used to sell products based on their image rather than their substance.”

At the same time the Labour government steps up measures against Asylum and ‘illegal’ immigration, and cut’s funding for projects in the urban ‘problem areas’, increases police force against ‘young black criminals’ etc.

## 2. Asian Dub Foundation. "Real Great Britain"

### Real Great Britain

Union Jack and Union Jill  
Back up and down the same old hill  
Sell the flag to the youths  
But who swallows the bill  
"Murdoch she wrote"  
Him have his hand in the till

Blairful of Thatcher  
Stuck on the 45  
The suits have changed  
But the old ties survive  
New Britannia cool  
Who are you trying to fool?  
Behind your fashion-tashion I see nothing at all

Care for the commodity  
Cuts the nation into three  
Rich pickings for the first  
Bottom third you never see  
While middle England keeps swinging its loyalty  
No concern for the future  
Just with dead royalty

#### *chorus:*

So will the real, the real great britain step forward  
This is the national identity parade  
Shoegazer nation forever looking backwards  
Time to reject the sixties charade

Not enough schools  
Not enough homes  
Just "Phony Care" in his Millennium Dome  
More prime cuts than beef on the bone  
And there's too many questions you're not answering tone

Union Jack and Union Jill etc.

So will the real, the real great britain step forward etc. (printed in ADF 2000)

### Verse:

- ‘Union-Jacking’ and national image campaign
- curry-favouring with corporate capital: “murdoch she wrote”
- nursery rhyme (first set down in 1760 in John Newberry’s *The Original Mother Goose’s Melody*: “Jack and Gill / Went up the Hill / To fetch a Pail of Water / Jack fell down / And broke his Crown / And Gill came tumbling after” Newberry 1969, 37), (Jack=Tony, Jill=Maggie)
- “Blairful of Thatcher” / “Brimful of Asha”
- less playful and more straight forward rhetoric in the third stanza (Not enough schools / not enough homes”
- prime “cuts” minister Tony Blair’s “Phony Care”

### Chorus:

- “So will the real, the real great britain step forward / This is the national identity parade”: both sarcastic/ironic *and* serious
- “shoegazer nation forever looking backward.”
  - o Central metaphor in song, referring to ‘shoegaze genre’ (white English guitar rock providing the missing link between 1980s post-punk alternative acts like The Smiths or Jesus and Mary Chain, and the advent of Britpop in the 1990s - My Bloody Valentine, Lush, Chapterhouse, Ride, and Slowdive).

“Guitarists, especially, seemed to spend the whole gig staring at the floor. There was a prosaic reason for this: The billowing amorphousness of shoegaze’s guitar sound relied heavily on foot-controlled pedal effects. But the shoegaze bands’ seeming inability to meet their audience’s gaze captured the essence of this neo-psychedelic genre, which involved escaping from a troubled world into a narcoleptic dream-state.” (Reynolds 2007)

“There is a curious aptness, too, to the way so many young people during the ’80s and early ’90s went into a kind of cultural exile by hiding in ‘the ’60s’ (the music of Byrds, Velvets, et al.) just as Thatcher and her allies were steadily abolishing the gains of that decade” (ibid.)

→ Cool Britannia is at heart still a nostalgic “shoegazer nation, forever looking backward”

- serious call for “Real Great Britain” to step forward:

ADF’s Dr. Das:

“Culture constantly moves very fast. It doesn’t have to dilute anything. We see our music as a natural outcome of having been brought up in this country. [...] Our music is the sound of urban London today. It’s like a soundtrack. It’s real Britpop – not revivalist or nostalgic” (qtd. in Zuberi 2001, 182).

### **Didacticism and political single-mindedness of the lyrics:**

**Nabeel Zuberi (2001):**

In an atmosphere of continuing racism, ADF “are to be admired for channelling their rage into music,” their songs “serve as funky pedagogy for young people, even if their ‘politics’ are sometimes narrowly defined and programmatic” (ibid., 222).

**My view: clear-cut politics and didacticism of lyrics is necessary so they are not appropriated into rivalling musical discourses:**

- a) **electronic dance music futurism**
- b) **world music liberalism**

## **3. The Politics of Sound**

**ADF characterise their sound as**

a “combination of hard ragga-jungle rhythms, indo-dub basslines, searing sitar-inspired guitars and ‘traditional’ sounds gleaned from their parents’ record collections, shot through with fast-chat conscious lyrics” (ADF 2002a) – or: “Asian Jungle Punk”

**Asian:**

- Asian British background of band members
- Many samples of Indian recordings

- Guitarist Chandrasonic tuning his guitar to one note like a sitar, later dhol drums etc.

### **Punk:**

- refers less the sound of the genre than to an approach to technology (sound more dominated by “ragga-jungle propulsion” than by punk guitars)
- ADF:  
“the sequencing was done using Cubase on an Atari and the sampling with an Akai S3000XL,” while loops were “programmed in a Boss DR660 drum machine”  
→ affordable street gear, ‘raw’ sound, low-tech vibe  
“The idea of punk was to make good music and to use what original resources you have, which relates to dub as well” (Chandrasonic qtd. in Zuberi 2001, 218).

### **Jungle:**

- “first truly *British* black music” (Collin 1997, 260)
- “the ‘jump up’ hard ragga-jungle that had its heyday around 1994-1995” (ADF 2002b):
  - o (ca. 80-90 beats per minute) fundament of sound system drum and base (dub)
  - o On top of the dub fundament, layers of paced-up breakbeats
- **jungle (drum n base) vs. hip hop:**
  - o both share “the basic materials and production (breakbeats and bass lines, samples, drum machines, microphones, and sequencing program)” (Hesmondhalgh and Melville 2001, 100).
  - o “unlike hip-hop battling, jungle’s about unification. The whole point of the music was to break down racial boundaries” (Grooverider qtd. in Zuberi 2001, 170).
  - o “Jungle is an Afro-diasporic soundtrack that narrates the continual flow among the United States, the Caribbean, and the United Kingdom. Syncretism, rather than the expression of some form of racial essence, is at the centre of black musical practice” (Hesmondhalgh and Melville 2001, 102).

### **Black Dance Music Futurism (Kodwo Eshun 1998):**

- philosophy of the “sampladelia of the breakbeat” (Eshun 1998, 25-61)
- sampler as the “the universal instrument, the instrument that makes all other instruments,” operating as an “anachronizer that derealizes time,” effortlessly layering, for instance, “a snare from ’69 Michigan United Studio, a duet of the Bombay Studio Orchestra from ’72 on Led Zeppelin’s *Friends* with gunshots modulated from a CCTV clip to videostatic from a ’63 ZDF documentary on Dogon cosmograms.”

- **The effect of sampladelia (for Eshun) results from**

both the reality-effect of samples you recognize and the Origin-Unknown effect of samples you don’t. These Unidentified Sonic Objects can suddenly substitute themselves for the world, eclipsing it, orphaning you, washing you up on its shores. There’s a powerful sensation of deletion as samples trigger successive waves of synthetic defamiliarization. (ibid., 57).

- **But breakbeat sampladelia is no longer an aesthetic, but a purely physical experience:** “As beats ensnare you in the parallel complexity of amplified jungle, your skin starts to feel what your ears can’t. At these convergences, beats shift, cross a threshold and become tactile sensations that sussurate the body” (ibid., 76-77)

→ **hip hop and jungle should give up politics. Politics, verbal content and ‘message’ are in the way of a digital cyborg culture of sonic “hyperembodiment via the Technics SL 1200” (ibid., -2).** “There’s so much intention in these musics that the machines can’t hardly breathe” (ibid., 90)

### **!!ADF counterbalance their ‘moderist’ soundscape with the ‘romantic’ authenticity of their lyrics!!**

- emphasis on live performance and on-stage sampling
- combination of sampling technique with live instrumentation
- emphasis on ‘organic’ and collective composition: ADF write



“Composition for the material on “Rafi’s Revenge” and “Community Music” was done collectively. The computer [sic] would be programmed with guitar and bass being jammed alongside, with each of these influencing the programming as well as each other. Even Sun-J would be ‘dubbing up’ the sequences through the mixing desk. There would always be a pool of samples and rhythms and basslines etc. that we’d try out in different songs. Sometimes, we used the same samples in different songs but ‘Eq’ed and pitched differently. A song wouldn’t necessarily start from the programming but from anywhere – a guitar melody, bassline or lyrical idea.

For us, programming wasn’t just a technical issue, but carried emotional weight – certain sounds suggested certain themes and lyrics. We often wrote words, all of us sitting around a piece of paper, scribbling down ideas. (ADF 2002b)”

## **The Discourse of World Music**

ADF make sure via their lyrics in particular that the kinaesthetic power of jungle propulsion does not absorb the social and political – this matters also with regard to the conflicting discourse of “World Music”. (ADF often appear at WOMAD festivals)

- ‘World Music’ invented in June 1987 in a London pub when eleven small record companies convened in a London pub to talk about possible routes by which international popular music that does not fall within the established categories of high street record shops could be marketed.

### **Simon Frith (2000):**

Critics often refer to this mythic moment of origin “to show that the very idea of world music was an assertion of Western difference, with core – Anglo-American – musics being protected from the encroachment of other sounds, and peripheral – non-Western – musics being assigned to their own shop display ghetto” (Frith 2000, 306).

But: World Music also replaces Western (romantic) rock which is no longer seen as ‘authentic’ in a digitalised culture (cf. Auslander, session 5):

“This move is familiar enough from the long European Romantic celebration of the native (the peasant and the African) as more real (because more natural) than the civilized Westerner. The implication is that world musicians can now give us those

direct, innocent rock and roll pleasures that Western musicians are too jaded, too corrupt to provide.” (Frith 2000, 308)

### **How can the ‘modernist’, technology-based soundscape of ADF be accommodated in world music discourse?**

- World Music has rapidly embraced ethno-musicological insights into music globalisation and transcultural exchange which emphasise the ‘naturalness’ of cultural borrowing, bricolage and technological syncretism: Frith:

“This is the argument that best suits (and is most used by) world music companies; it defines hybridity as authenticity and implies that musical creativity depends on a free trade in sounds; ‘uncorrupted’ music can now be seen as stagnant music, music constrained by reactionary political and cultural forces” (Frith 2000, 312).

Problem for bands like ADF:

- ‘hybridity’-discourse does not replace a “tourist mentality” and exoticism
- excessive ‘culturalism’ is problematic, because it ‘disarticulates difference from equality’ Eckstein and Leypoldt:

“the critical preoccupation with reaching a multicultural consensus encourages us to feel good about our supposed ability to tolerate difference in an apparently fluid contact zone, while it lets us ignore the manifest economic differences or political problems behind the spectrum of equally recognized cultures” (Eckstein and Leypoldt 2007, 256).

**Ashwani Sharma** (on Asian British music culture)

“The ‘new’ politics of hybridity [...] not only tends to essentialize Asian culture, it further ignores the exploitative relations of power between the overdeveloped West and the underdeveloped zones of capital. In this way the politics of hybridity tends towards the erasure of the workings of highly differentiated global capitalism and racism.” (Sharma 1996, 25)

→ Importance of the punk element and ‘radical’ pedagogy in ADF’s lyrics. E.g. “Jericho” on debut album *Facts and Fictions* (1995):

Sample this. It’s an education  
The sounds of the Asian Dub Foundation  
We ain’t Ethnic, Exotic or Eclectic  
The only ‘E’ we use is ‘Electric’

[...] this militant vibe ain’t what you expected  
With your liberal minds you patronise our culture  
Scanning the surface like vultures  
With your tourist mentality we’re still the natives  
You’re ‘multicultural’ but we’re ‘anti-racist’ (ADF 1995)

#### **4. The Politics of the Media**

##### **The Ethics of Sampling**

###### **View 1:**

Thomas Porcello (1991):

“rap musicians have come to use the sampler in an oppositional manner which contests capitalist notions of private property by employing previously tabooed modes of citation” (Porcello 1991, 82).

Henry Self (2002) :

a legal system rooted in “print culture that is based on ideals of individual autonomy, commodification and capitalism” marginalises musical modes drawing on “a folk culture that emphasizes integration, reclamation and contribution to an intertextual, intergenerational discourse” (Self 2002, 359).

Only the 4 major labels can afford departments to track down samples they own the copyright of, they are the only ones who benefit

**View 2:**

Dave Hesmondhalgh (2006 and 2000):

- Problem of the corporate ‘borrowing’ of recorded sounds from “more vulnerable social groups” (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 55)
- continuation of the debates about neo-colonial exploitation in music: E.g. Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album.

**Case Study: TransGlobal Underground, “Temple Head” (1991):**

- two samples (uncleared) taken from recordings of Tahitian gospel choirs.
- the copyright went instead to BMG with whom Nation and TransGlobal struck a licensing deal.
- “Temple Head” featuring the first sample was chosen by Coca-Cola in 1996 for their Summer Olympics advertising campaign in the UK (cf. Hesmondhalgh 2000, 289).
- All the money went to the Bertelsmann Group rather than to the Tahitian women

**Practical Problems**

- Different copyright situation, e.g. in India
- ‘ethnic’ sounds often owned by corporate bodies (e.g. Smithsonian Institute)
- payment directly to the artist is often difficult

**ADF’s solution:**

- acknowledging the most obvious samples
- compensatory investment in long-term social projects, e.g.

Free Satpal Ram campaign

ADFED: educational branch, government co-funded organising music technology workshops and sound system events “designed specifically to represent issues relating to Asian/Black and Ethnic minority youth cultures, particularly around issues relating to young people facing socio-economic barriers; social exclusion; gender imbalance, refugee/asylum issues and more” (ADF 2002c).

## **5. Asian Britain and post-9/11 Anxiety**

**Avtar Lit**, chief executive of London-based Sunrise Radio (“the greatest Asian radio station in the world”) (on banning the term ‘Asian’ in news bulletins):

“In the wake of September 11th and also following the [Bradford and Oldham] riots last year we have had a lot of calls from Sikhs and Hindus worried that in many people’s eyes the word Asian links them to events involving Muslims. Hindus and Sikhs feel that Muslims are bringing the Asian community in disrepute in Britain and do not want to be put in the same bracket as them.” (qtd. in Hyder 2004, 22)

Report on “the identity and public engagement of Hindus in Britain” in 2006:

- 75 percent of the British Hindu population reject the term ‘Asian’ and prefer being called ‘Hindu’

BBC documentary (2006)

- similar tendency among British Sikhs, but British Muslims prefer the inclusive term ‘Asian’

**How does the Asian British music scene react to this situation of anxiety and collective stigmatisation?**

ADF, “Enemy of the Enemy” on *Enemy of the Enemy* (2003)

September 11th: Babylon is REALLY burning this time. Who’s responsible? It turns out it was the enemy of the enemy who isn’t a friend anymore. So brown-skinned people beware: whatever your religion or allegiance, we reserve the right to kick you off the plane.

Climbing out the subway burning eyes spinning head  
Walking through the station breaking into a cold sweat  
Is the ticking time bomb in my head or in your bag  
Have you been snorting white lines with President Gas  
Crawling from the wreckage of my tumbling tower block  
Someone else had to finish the job  
It was the enemy of the enemy  
The enemy of the enemy The enemy of the enemy  
He’s a friend Til he’s the enemy again  
[...]  
Choose the enemy Know the enemy  
Love the enemy Feed the enemy  
Sleep with the enemy Arm the enemy  
Sell the enemy Bomb the enemy  
Keep your friends close Keep your enemies closer (printed in ADF 2003)

**Fun’da’mental, “Cookbook D.I.Y.” on *All Is War: The Benefits of G-Had* (2006)**

band formed in 1991 around Aki Nawaz; militant pan-Islamic ideology, e.g. sampling of speeches by Malcom X (Nation of Islam)

album produced in Pakistan, South Africa and Britain and includes a range of very different songs which do not exclusively play on post-9/11 and 7/7 anxiety

opens with the manifesto “I Reject,” which deliberately fuels the latent Islamophobia of middle Britain:

“I reject your pork I reject your beer / Reject everything you stand for / [...] Reject your mini skirt liberation / Reject your concept of integration / Reject your arse lick no10 invitation / Reject Tony Blair he’s a fucking liar / Reject your order of the British Empire” (Fun<sup>^</sup>da<sup>^</sup>mental 2006).

“Che Bin Pt 1” and “Che Bin Pt 2.”: “Pt 1” consist of a speech by Che Guevara in Spanish (“Acts of sabotage are very important”), while “Pt 2” juxtaposes a related speech in Arabic by Osama Bin Laden (“How about the killing of innocent civilians”) – both are translated in the album notes.

Album produced in a secret location outside of Britain on a newly set up label: Aki Nawaz (band leader): “All the manufacturers pulled out. I’m also having trouble with my distributors. They love the album and back what I’m trying to do. But they say the media frenzy made it too hot to handle – shops and warehouses were refusing to stock it”

Public furore around track “Cookbook D.I.Y”: MPs calling for Nawaz’ imprisonment under the new Anti-Terrorism legislation; *The Sun* calling Nawaz a “suicide rapper”

### **Cookbook D.I.Y.**

I’m packed up ingredients stacked up my Laptop  
Downloaded the military cookbook PDF  
Elements everyday chemicals at my reach  
Household bleach to extract the potassium  
Chlorate Boiling on a hotplate with hate  
recipe for disaster plastic bomb blaster  
I mix up 5 parts wax to Vaseline  
slowly ... dissolve in gasoline  
add to potassium in a large metal bowl  
knead like dough so they bleed real slow  
Gasoline evaporates... cool dry place  
I’m strapped up cross my chest bomb belt attached  
deeply satisfied with the plan I hatched  
electrodes connected to a gas cooker lighter  
switch in my hand the situation demands  
self sacrifice hitting back at vice with a £ 50 price

I'm 31.. numb ...but the hurt is gone  
Gonna built a dirty bomb  
us [sic] this privilege and education  
My PHD will free me  
Paid of [sic] the Ruskies for weapons grade Uranium  
Taught myself skills from Pakistan Iran  
upgraded its stage two of the plan  
Rage... a thermo nuclear density gauge  
stolen by the Chechens from a Base in Georgia  
I get some cobalt 60 from a food irradiator  
so easy to send the infidels to their creator  
it takes a dirty mind to build a dirty bomb  
The simplicity is numbing genius is dumbing  
down the situation to a manageable level  
to make the world impossible to live for these devils  
a suitcase of semtex a mobile phone trigger  
Blow them all to hell for a million dollar figure

I insist I'm a legitimate scientist  
paid by the government with your finances  
I got a private room in the Whitehouse suite  
So I can develop according to presidential Brief  
The megaton don Gulf war veteran  
The foremost proponent of the neutron bomb  
at the centre atomic surrounded on all sides  
wrapped in layers of lithium deutaride  
the bomb detonates causing lithium to fission  
into helium tritium neutron into Fission  
The blast causes shockwaves that melt body fat  
uniquely though it leaves the buildings intact  
I made the 25 megaton daisy cutter  
a great blast radius with very little clutter  
There's less radiation so your get a cleaner bomb  
its [sic] your money people, it cost a billion (printed in Fun^da^mental 2006)

**Chris Campion in *The Observer*:**

the song is “neither a manual for terrorism nor a jihadi recruitment tool” but “in its entirety dissects the hate that hate breeds” (Campion 2006).

**But: - different distribution of sympathy in lyrics**



Ambivalence between seriousness and silliness (esp. music video)

→ see video

**Isabell Hoffmann in *Die Zeit*:**

Asks whether Nawaz is not “more clown than terrorist” when he “masterly plays on the fears of those societies which he so eloquently decries,” concluding that if so, he is still playing with fire (Hoffmann 2006, my tr.).

**Chris Campion in *The Observer*:**

“Only an abject fool or someone with an agenda would suggest that music has the power to incite others to kill” (Campion 2006).

**Main problem: uncompromising vision of a world in which “there can be no rapprochement between white and black” and “[w]e are headed for an apocalyptic racial war” (Zuberi 2001, 212-13) simply inverts white racist propaganda, even if only strategically**

**M.I.A., “Paper Planes”, on *Kala* (2007)**

- **M.I.A.** = Mission in Action **or** Missing in Acton
- **family history**
- alternative Turner Prize for her Artwork
- 2005 release of *Arular* (influence of Baile Funk)
- 2007 release of *Kala*

If *Arular* “goaded every genre hiding within immigrant Britain into 14 songs,” *Kala* performs “the same trick for the whole of the planet” (Miller 2007)

- e.g. “Bamboo Banga”: sound samples from the Tamil ‘filmi’ *Dalpanthi*, plus lyrics of Jonathan Richman’s indie classic “Roadrunner”
  - “Bird Flu”: samples Tamil filmi *Jayam* underneath a cacophony of cackling birds;
  - “Jimmy” Boney M.-style Eurodisco-feel via the sampling of the Bollywood disco anthem “Jimmy Jimmy Aaja Aaja”
  - “Mango Pickle Down River” remixes recording by the aboriginal New South Wales hip hop outfit Wilcannia Mob, adding M.I.A.’s vocals to didgeridoo breaks
  - “20 Dollar” (referring to the price of an AK-47 in African war-territory): bass line inspired by New Order’s electronic classic “Blue Monday” plus distorted variation of the Pixie’s “Where is My Mind” for the vocal chorus
  - “Hussel” (featuring young Nigerian rapper African Boy) and “Boyz”: based on live recordings of Tamil Nadu temple drummers which were later reworked in the context of Trinidadian soca (cf. M.I.A. 2007)
- album recorded in “India, Trinidad, Australia, Jamaica, Japan and America” (Petridis 2007).
  - Reason:

“Paper Planes” most successful single release

- musical backbone sampled from The Clash, “Straight to Hell” (1992)
- relation to punk, but technologically and internationally updated

### **Paper Planes**

Ill fly like paper get high like planes  
[If you] catch me at the border I got visas in my name  
If you come around here Ill make em all day  
Ill get one done in a second if you wait.. (2x)  
Sometimes I think sitting on trains  
Every ste[/o]p I get to Im clocking that game  
Everyones a winner, we ’re making our n[/f]ame  
Bonafide husteler making my name. (2x)

*chorus:*

All I wanna do is [4 sampled gun shots]  
And I [sampled cash till ringing]  
[And] take your [money.] (4x)

[Pirate skulls and bones  
Sticks and stones and weed and bombs]  
Running when we hit em  
A [lethal poison for the system.] (2x)

Noone on the corner had swag(ger) like us  
Hit me on my bun[r]ner prepaid wireless  
We pack and deliver, like UPS trucks  
Already going hell for [/just] pumping that gas. (2x)

*chorus*

[M.I.A. third world democracy  
I got more records than the KGB  
So, no fun business – are you all ready y’all?]

Some some some [a] some I murder,  
Some a some I let go (2x)

*chorus* (printed in M.I.A. 2007 [compare fig. 18], additional words and deviations  
in performed lyrics in square brackets)

lyrics: ambivalence between:

- a) personal, and slightly juvenile vendetta against U.S. immigration politics
- b) serious attempt to give a (threatening) voice to “third world democracy” and terrorist fantasies of the losers of globalisation

confirmed in music video: → see video, 9/11 references etc.

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