

Engineering Reverberation:



Campaign music, military cadences, and Muzak.

The constellation of material hereabouts comes from work done on ‘Rhythm Is Gonna Get You’, the most recent issue of *Grafters’ Quarterly*, a publication I co-edit. Part of the research undertaken for the issue was concerned with how music has been deployed in work environments and how it has, literally, been taken into the body, offering a slight alcove of reprieve as well as a performance of intensified exploitation. In his book *Work Songs*, Ted Gioia links songs in prisons to the work songs (as songs sung *whilst* working, not those sung about work), particularly those connected with slavery:

As with workers on the outside, convicts relied on the music to alleviate the drudgery of their labor, and coordinate the effort of the individual with the rest of the group. The words of the songs also no doubt played a symbolic role, and must often have served as a type of code language within the inner circle of participants. John Storm Roberts has noted that the “use of oblique or cryptic references” is a striking characteristic of African music, one that clearly became highly useful in the New World among slaves or in prison settings where the rights to protest, or even of communication, were frequently curtailed. These songs must also have helped to protect the individuals who sang them. As Bruce Jackson has explained: “They kept a man from being singled out for whipping because he worked too slowly. The songs kept all together, so no one could be beaten to death for mere weakness”. [...]

Yet prisoners also derived more positive, if somewhat intangible, benefits from this body of music. By offering a rare opportunity for self-expression – or rather group expression – in the midst of suffering, the songs provided, as Jackson points out, an “outlet for the inmates’ tensions and frustrations and angers”. Singing and ire rarely coexist comfortably: the music must have imperceptibly mitigated the harshness of the surroundings, so as to soften tempers and make it marginally easier to cope. [...]

In the last century, music produced solely by workers has almost been engulfed by the usage of music in the workplace by employers. Muzak Cooperation, a pioneer in music usage in post-WWII industrial workplaces, termed their products’ efficacy ‘stimulus progression’. Muzak (as a company name and subsequently the often derogatory term for a type of music), founded by Major General George Owen Squier, aimed to impel workers to greater productivity by encroaching and hijacking the space for private thought opened by mind-numbing work in increasingly mechanised workplaces. Just three years after Muzak’s birth, the BBC begun broadcasting a daily radio programme in 1940 called ‘Music While You Work’ following a government suggestion that industrial workers’ morale would benefit from a specific type of music being pumped into factories. Aiming to help the ongoing war effort by encouraging workers to whistle or sing along above factory noise, the specially recorded music was to abide by specific requirements. Strictly prohibited was music that was too slow and unsuitable for speeding up, music of too variable dynamic level, as well as any music deemed to have insufficient melody. Muzak Cooperation filed for bankruptcy in 2009, being purchased two years later by Mood Media, who scrapped the use of the irretrievably tarnished term ‘muzak’. An international company providing music, vocal recordings, signage, and scents for brands, in their promotional video Mood Media claim to offer “experience by design”, delivering “targeted messaging” to “drive inspired purchasing decisions”. Licensed popular music has replaced specially recorded instrumental versions of songs, marking the trajectory from the relative anonymity of background “stimulus progression” to what is now known as “foreground music” in which businesses offer consumers “experiences”, associating themselves with products of popular culture.

A parallel manifestation of this transformation is the shift from specifically recorded campaign songs – ‘Nixon’s The One’ for Richard Nixon’s 1968 campaign, for example – to parties adorning themselves with specific “messages” in popular music, often met with varying amounts of publically voiced displeasure from artists who are not consulted but are at the whim of record companies.

All the songs presented in the parabolic loudspeaker have been used by UK and US political parties - perhaps the two countries most focussed on instrumentalising culture - to support/embody their campaigns:

-Bruce Springsteen, 'Born in the U.S.A' (1984) - 1984 US Republican Party (Ronald Reagan)

-Keane, 'Everybody's Changing' (2004) - 2010 UK Conservative Party (David Cameron)

-U2, 'Beautiful Day' (2000) - 2004 & 2016 US Democratic Party (John Kerry & Hilary Clinton); 2005 UK Labour Party (Tony Blair)

-Fleetwood Mac, 'Don't Stop' (1977) - 1993 US Democratic Party (Bill Clinton); 2015 UK Conservative Party (David Cameron)

-D:ream, 'Things Can Only Get Better' (1993) - 1997 UK Labour Party (Tony Blair)

To constellate this material are the following selection of military cadences and the poem 'wait for it' Fred Moten from his 2015 book of poetry, *The Little Edges*.

- Johnny Herbert, June 2016

'Hey There Young Marine' Cadence

Hey there, Hey there, Young Marine
How did you get so dog on me?
For 20 years I walked this land
Lord please help me I'm only a man

Hey there, hey there young Marine
How did you get so dog on me?
Been to Vietnam my ribbons are stacked
Lord please help me don't send me back

Commmmuunisimmmmm!!!!
Old Ron Regan had a plan
Lord please help me I'm only a man

Hey there, Hey there, old Marine
How did you get so dog on me?
I served three tours in Iraq
Lord please help me don't send me back

Hey there, Hey there, old Marine
How did you get so dog on me?
I served four years in this Corps
Lord please me I can't do more

Hey there, Hey there, old Marine
How did you get so dog on me?
I said, I served four years in this Corps
I changed my mind I'll do four more

Terrrrroorrrrissssmmmm!!!!
Old George Bush has a plan
Lord please help me I'm only a man

'Somewhere there is a Mother' Cadence

Somewhere there's a mother
She's crying for her boy
He's and Airborne Ranger
With his orders to deploy
Don't you cry for him
He don't need your sympathy
He's an airborne ranger
That's the best that you can be.
Somewhere there's a father
He's crying for his son
Son's an airborne ranger
With a war to be won
Don't you cry for him
He don't need you sympathy
He's an airborne ranger
That's the best that you can be.
Somewhere there's a sister
She's crying for her bro
Bro's an airborne ranger
That's the only way to go
Don't you cry for him
He don't need your sympathy
He's an airborne ranger
That's the best that you can be.
Somewhere there's a daughter
She's crying for her dad
Dad was an airborne ranger
Now he's just a folded flag
Don't you cry for him
He wouldn't want your sympathy
He was an airborne ranger
That's the best that you could be.

'Join the Army' Cadence

I don't know why I left
But I must've done wrong
Refrain:
And it won't be long
'Till I get on back home
Got a letter in the mail
Go to war or go to jail
Sat me in that barber's chair
Spun me around, I had no hair
Used to drive a Cadillac
Now I pack it on my back
Used to drive a limousine
Now I'm wearing Army green
Dress it right and cover down
Forty inches all around
Nine to the front and six to the rear
That's the way we do it here
Used to date a beauty queen
Now I date my M-16
Ain't no use in lookin' down
Ain't no discharge on the ground
Ain't no use in going back
Jody's got your Cadillac
Ain't no use in calling home
Jody's got your girl and gone
Ain't no use in feeling blue
Jody's got your sister too
Took away my faded jeans
Now I'm wearing Army greens
They took away my gin and rum
Now I'm up before the sun
Mama Mama can't you see
What this Army's done for me
Mama Mama can't you see
This Army life is killing me

'We are Marching By' Cadence

Let 'em blow let 'em blow
Let the four winds blow
Let 'em blow from east to west
The US Army is the best
Standing tall and looking good
Ought to march in Hollywood
Hold your head and hold it high
_____ Platoon is marching by
Close your eyes and hang your head
We are marching by the dead
Look to your right and whatya see?
A whole bunch of legs looking at me
Dress it right and cover down
Forty inches all around
Nine to the front, six to the rear
That's the way we do it here

'Motivation Check' Cadence

(Key: NSI=instructor; PLA=platoon)

NSI: Motivation check!
PLA: *Hoorah!*

NSI: Motivation check!
PLA: *Hoorah!*

NSI: Mota-mota got alotta motivation!
PLA: *Mota-mota got alotta motivation!*

NSI: Deda-deda got alotta dedication!
PLA: *Deda-deda got alotta dedication!*

NSI: Deter-deter got alotta determination!
PLA: *Deter-deter got alotta determination!*

NSI: Mootaaavaaatiioonn!
PLA: *Mootaaavaaatiioonn!*

NSI: Deeadacaaatiooon!
PLA: *Deeadacaaatiooon!*

NSI: Deeteerrminaaation!
PLA: *Deeteerrminaaation!*

NSI: Motivation! Dedication! Determination!
NSI: Hoorah!
PLA: *Hoorah!*

NSI: Hoorah!
PLA: *Hoorah!*

NSI: Ah-ha!
PLA: Ah-ha!

NSI: Ah-ha!
PLA: Ah-ha!

'Here We Go' Cadence

Here we go again
Same old stuff again
Marching down the avenue
Few more days and we'll be through
I won't have to look at you
So, I'll be glad and so will you

wait for it

you remain the future in our present like an accent pause that gramsci had to measure. living better now that double tap stop till then till that is your time we're in love with waiting. we can't so we can surprise so we can

attend and take urgent care. the erotic cure, which shows up as, which gives us, so that it ought to give us,

pause is our propulsion. who do what's been done can't wait for it and can't walk off. who recognize the

future don't wait on us, but because they don't know about service, about what it is to be an instrument,

decide they just ain't gon' wait. they miss something, they missing something, our liveness in reverb, this re:

that we refer to something, that we regard something, that we in regard to something else. they tell us what they think they know and we wait till they understand. I'm tired of waiting till they understand. see you later.

Presented by Stiftelsen 3,14, PARABOL situates an adjacent ambience and mode of address in dialogue with the gallery's exhibitions.

Organised by Johnny Herbert