

‘‘Rosy, Won’t You Please Come Home:’ Family, Home, and Cultural Identity in the Music of Ray Davies and the Kinks’’

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Introduction

The image of Kinks as ‘the most English of the British Invasion bands was a conscious creation on the part of the Kinks’ management on the one hand, and a result of Ray Davies’s lyrical wit and observation on the other. Formed more or less in 1964 of four young men from London, the Kinks first stormed up the charts with distorted power chords and teenaged angst with ‘You Really Got Me,’ and over the next thirty-two years they drew on their upbringing to create songs about the ordinary and absurd in English life. The image of the Kinks’ Englishness outlasted initial gimmicks. It was reinforced by the band’s pastoral themes and story-telling songs of the mid-1960s combined with the distinctively ‘English’ character of the band itself: their witty homeliness, working-class backgrounds, and defiance of authority whilst maintaining a cheeky respect for respectability.

This chapter addresses particular qualities that make the Kinks an *English* band – from obvious signposts but also nuanced characteristics that make them appeal to both English and non-English audiences. Their appeal as English comes not from flag-waving or tea-drinking, but rather a combination of social observations, self-deprecating humour, and their own obstinate struggles against corporate authority. This chapter considers first the early image of ‘Englishness’ created by the band’s management, and then it looks at the

brief trend in the mid-1960s for rock groups to celebrate old-fashioned English music and This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

character. It examines how the Kinks continued to fashion so-called parochial music even as this novelty amongst mainstream bands wore off, and why their persistence contributed to the band's commercial failure by the end of the decade. The next section considers why the Kinks in fact contribute to a long tradition of 'nostalgia heritage' notable in English music and literature from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through to the present day, and how their output, which includes references to family, home, and working-class solidarity, has created a sense of inclusion between themselves and their fans both in England and overseas. The principle era examined here covers the Kinks' early days of the band's success in 1964 and '65 and the initial look created for them, and then focuses mainly on their pastoral work between 1966 and 1970.

Much has been written on the Kinks in the past twenty years, both popularly and academically. Following the earliest biographies of the band by Savage (1984) and Rogan (1984), the 1990s saw the publication of diverse works on the band including autobiographies of Ray (1994; 2014) and Dave (1995) Davies and a fictionalized story of the band by bassist Peter Quaife (2010; 2014). Kitts published a scholarly study of Ray's life and work 2012; encyclopedic works on the Kinks' output include those of Hinman (1994, 2004) and Rogan (1998). The band's versatility as well as their inextricable working-class character has made them the subject of studies on the influence of music hall in popular music, working class character in popular music (e. g., Baxter-Moore 2006, Gildart 2012, Simonelli 2013); the influence of family, childhood, and growing up in post-war England, and dedicated collections of essays have appear on their output,

character, and associations with English life and leisure (e. g., Gildart 2013, Geldart 2013). This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

2003, Sullivan 2002). This is supplemented by a number of recent popular biographies (e.g., Hasted 2011). Finally there are the myriad interviews, reviews, media articles (print and online), blogs, message boards, fanzines, and internet social networking sites – the Kinks are, in a word, well-documented men.

A common theme running through much of this media is the Kinks as an *English* band – without actually defining what is *meant* by ‘English.’ One should not, however, find fault with this omission: the codification of ‘Englishness’ (or Britishness) has challenged if not confounded for years philosophers, commentators, and politicians ranging from Charles Dickens and Rudyard Kipling, J. B. Priestly and George Orwell, and Kate Fox and Jeremy Paxman through to current (2016) Home Secretary Theresa May and the Conservative government’s determination to introduce codify ‘British values’ via school curriculum and citizenship tests in the wake of mass immigration into the UK. It becomes further complicated as such behaviour smacks of distasteful displays of patriotism – too American at best and too fascist at worst. That said, the English will grudgingly admit they like their country and they like being English – but they’ll reply with understatement; as Bill Bailey noted in his recent show *Limboland* (2015-16), in response to queries on any experience, accomplishment, or health, no matter how good or disastrous, an Englishman will reply, ‘Not bad...given the circumstances.’

Therefore, one must suss out ‘Englishness’ in a roundabout fashion, not unlike trying to get from Portsmouth to Brighton via the A27. English character doesn’t fit a paradigm; it is shaped instead from an evolving particular set of cultural institutions on the one hand. This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

(Clarke 2009: 89-92), and how those cultural institutions are defined against outsiders on the other. The Kinks' music describes a number of the former, which will be discussed below, included family, particular moral values, self-depreciating humour, and an appreciation for the past – without necessarily drowning in nostalgia or desiring to avoid the present by escaping into a rosy-tinted past. Ray Davies has noted on a number of occasions in the past few years (e.g. Simpson 2015) that neither he nor the Kinks are about living in the past, as a lazy interpretation of tracks such as 'Days' or the collection of songs on *Face to Face*, *Something Else*, or *Village Green* might suggest. The Kinks look to the past not for a reconstruction of times lost, but instead for particular emotions that can be brought into the present to cope with current problems (R. Davies 2015b), shaped by common cultural experience. As for the latter, Ray has remarked he's been most aware of his Englishness when he's been away from Britain (R. Davies 2014: 142, 149, 174).

Superficial Signposts of Englishness

The Kinks jumped onto the money-go-round in the wake of rising successful bands such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Their original professional management were a pair of young middle-class men called Grenville Collins and Robert Wace. Collins and Wace not only introduced these scruffy, working-class rhythm and blues enthusiasts to a world of debutantes and Noel Coward, but in early 1964 they secured the band a commercial recording contract with Pye Records, ultimately bringing them under the auspices of several hardened music professionals: Shel Talmy, who initially produced This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

their records, Larry Page ‘The Teenaged Rage’ who managed them along with Wace and Collins, Edward Kassner, who locked them into a draconian publishing contract (R. Davies 1995: 95-97), and Hal Carter, who was charged with improving their image (117-21; 139-43).

The band initially struggled in the face of steep competition amongst all of the wannabes and try-hards of the early ‘60s; their performances could be shambolic, and they scrapped like cats both on and off the stage. Their management sought to improve their image to make them stand out: Page, for example, changed their name from the Ravens to Kinks as an attention-getter (especially as they were usually bottom-of-the-bill) (102-04).

Abandoning the whips and leather that the band had initially draped themselves in, Page shoved them first in matching, stiff green hunting jackets (‘evoking Robin Hood!’ according to a suit in Joe Penhall’s *Sunny Afternoon*; cf. R. Davies 1995:103-04); after Carter smartened them up, they were taken to a theatre costume shop and acquired their famous Edwardian hunting-pink jackets to show off frilled white shirts ruffled at the wrist and throat. As Ray noted, by the summer of 1964, ‘We had started to get a reputation as Dickensian-type characters (120) – a reputation that preceded their first proper chart hit with ‘You Really Got Me.’ What started as an act finally clicked as their scrappy yet impishly insolent behaviour gelled with their performance but especially the new look. They were photographed at iconic London sites such as Tower Bridge or stood with horses in the park, and these original stage clothes left their mark -- even in 2016 Kinks’ media still use images from this photo shoot in their copy. Such expectations

weren’t unique to American audiences; Ray spoke in 2015 of sweltering inside those
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heavy woolen coats in the middle of an Australian summer tour in 1965 (R. Davies 2015a).

The Beatles had primed U. S. Anglomania from late 1963 in anticipation of their February 1964 arrival: American fans adored how different the Fab Four were compared to American pop idols (if not their male classmates) (Perone 2009: 82-83; 84-86; Stark 2006: 20-21; 68; cf. Seago 2000: 123). British bands were irreverent towards adults in a way unlike the sneering American delinquent of *Rebel Without a Cause* or *The Wild One*; instead, they couched their anger against authority with sharp wit rather than grunting hooliganism. British bands also brought to the US exotic aspects of the Old World: European artiness, Mod *ennui*, adult sophistication, and an exotic sexiness lacking in wholesome contemporary American pop and cinema (ibid. 2009: 101-106; 115-117; Gildart 2013: 91-93; Clayston 1995: 177). Not only were the Kinks sexy and dangerous (not necessarily mutually exclusive), but they stood out from the delicately feminine, Pierre-Cardin-besuited Beatles' Euro sophistication or the Stones' sloppy, leering misogyny. Moreover, neither the Beatles nor the Stones – or most of the British Invasion bands – intentionally played up their Englishness in the early days – if anything, they reveled in their love of American blues, rock and roll, and Motown, aping American singers' accents and sound in their performances (cf. Stark 2009: 133-3). The Kinks were just as keen on American blues, but appeared as quaintly English with their romantic if not Dickensian jackets and Chelsea boots (Perone 2009: 144). This look screamed *English* (if not fancy-dress Victoriana) not only to their countrymen, but also fit the picture of what Americans, the key commercial target of the British Invasion, expected of

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a land that they knew mainly from James Bond, *Mary Poppins*, and Roger Miller's 'England Swings.' Ray Davies may have had the same sort of art school background a number of his contemporaries did, but the Kinks' working-class attitude further set them apart for the more Euro-centric Mod bands. Finally, they also had strong London accents – not only did Ray demand that his girl stay by his side all day and all of the night, but he did so dressed like Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* and with a much better Cockney accent than Dick van Dyke's.

In addition to creating the Kinks' initial image as English gentlemen, management also cranked up the 'English whimsy' surrounding the band's publicity. Consider, for example, the evolving ersatz eccentricity on the band's LP sleeve notes. On their first LP *Kinks* (1964), for example, every word with a hard 'c' is spelt with a 'k.' Generic reference to Carnaby Street comes into play with Frank Smyth's notes on *Face to Face* (1966), but by 1967 the *Kinks*' particular Englishness has become singled out as something distinctive: the notes on *Something Else* focus on Ray's imagination specifically: 'Welcome to Daviesland, where all the little kinklings in the magic Kinkdom wear tiny black bowlers, rugby boots, soldier suits, drink half pints of bitter, carry cricket bats and ride in little tube trains... Gulliver-like Ray Davies stoops to pluck a small mortal from his musical world – turns him upside-down to see where he was made – and replaces him gently but firmly in that great class society where all men are equal but some are more equal than others...' The increasing tweeness could be attributed to marketers' desire to latch on to the drug-fuelled dream imagery proliferating the charts in 1967 and 1968 (Faulk 2010: 125), especially as *Something Else* did not sell well, and

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Ray's sardonic title showed that they were not willingly playing ball with the marketing. The Kinks certainly delivered whimsy on their next LP, *Village Green Preservation Society*, but tracks such as 'Wicked Annabella,' 'Animal Farm,' and 'Phenomenal Cat,' owed more to English fairy tales and Kenneth Graham than to lysergic-acid-fuelled dreams, a phenomenon present amongst a number of British bands in the mid-1960s (Grant, 2016).

Just an English Boy on Holiday...

The Kinks may have abandoned the costumes fairly early on (and fought to escape their early image-moulding, as evidenced by 1971's *Muswell Hillbillies*), but this image of them as four stereotypical Victorian Englishmen, however superficial, remained strongly ingrained in American imaginations, especially as the group were banned from touring in or having shown on television filmed performances in the States for four years (from 1965 to 1969). The combination of the ban and subsequent pressure of touring, recording, and composition led Ray to retreat to Torquay in 1965 (the 'English Riviera,' best known to Americans as the setting of *Fawlty Towers*). Ray abandoned the holiday as he was not only recognized by the staff and clientele, but he also felt snubbed and looked down on by everyone involved. He took it as an insult an invitation to a round of golf with several middle-class guests, packed up his family, and returned to London (Kitts 2012: 63 R.

Davies 1995: 264) . He wrote 'Well Respected Man' as one of the consequences of this holiday; the track is significant because here Ray decided to 'embrace his Englishness' in his lyrics (Hinman 2004: 61, 65; Kitts 2012: 63-67) and to stop imitating American artists. This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

in sound and theme. The track itself examines the dreary routine of an apathetic, middle-class man held hostage by routine and appearances of respectability, even as he is infantilised and dependent on his parents' fortune if not control over his life. On the one hand, the chorus points out the foibles of respectability, and on the other pokes fun at middle-class expectations.

'Well Respected Man' was subsequently followed by two albums and a clutch of singles, 1966's *Face to Face* and 1967's *Something Else by the Kinks*, which further illustrate the Kinks' shift in focus to character-driven songs that drew on themes of ordinary English suburban life. Lyrics across these releases focus on rainy weather, shared phone lines, and the joys of owning an allotment; roll-up cigarettes, schoolboy envy, railway commuters; middle-class aspirations, teenaged runaways, and the safety of the home and hearth. Musical lines throughout are punctuated by music hall melodies, football-anthem-like choruses, and flashes of traditional English folk tunes.

The Kinks certainly weren't alone in celebrating being English among rock bands in the 1960s; as the group released songs about Carnaby Street and the fashion chasers, gardening, and tea drinking, so, too, did other groups: for example, The Small Faces' 'Lazy Sunday Afternoon' presents the lament of the young who want to fit into the neighbourhood with the older generation rather than be looked upon with suspicion; their 'Itchycoo Park' turns 'dreaming spires' and duck ponds into a surrealistic trip (figuratively and literally). Even the Beatles, whose early music and look were derivative of American forms and vocals, sloughed off their Fab Four and touring band personas to This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

become Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club band, a nod to Victorian band shells and the music of their grandparents (albeit flavoured with psychedelic imagery and Indian-inspired chants) and took nostalgic trips along Penny Lane and to Strawberry Fields (Green 2005: 261-62). If that didn't baffle their fans, the Fab Four celebrated Christmas 1967 by presenting the nation with a satirical home movie aimed at mocking a stalwart British institution: the mystery coach tour (cf. MacDonald 2005: 253-56). The Beatles considered the old ways the domain of the elderly or retired (for example, 1967's 'When I'm 64') the tracks might be aimed deliberately to please a parents (e. g., Paul McCartney's father with 'Your Mother Should Know' and 1968's 'Honey Pie'), but often use references to suburban life to criticise the pseudo-cool (cf. Ringo's sardonic assessment of the Mahareshi's Rishikesh: 'It's just like Butlins') or to mock the older generation's grasp on material goods over parental love ('She's Leaving Home' 1967). The Kinks, on the other hand, may have twitted English traditions, but didn't dismiss them as demode or a source of further generational conflict, but rather as inextricably co-extant. When they urged people to preserve the old ways, they meant it while at the same time acknowledging the humour or absurdity of such ways.

So much so did Ray and the Kinks 'embrace their Englishness' beyond the mid-'60s fad their management worried on the one hand that they were *too* English to be commercially viable. Trends moved on as blues-inspired and drug-fuelled psychedelica replaced English suburbia. By 1968, the optimism of the Summer of Love was giving way to the increasing horrors in real life – the civil disturbances were endemic around the world in

1968, including protests and violence in the United States, Budapest, Belgrade, and
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Prague, and this unrest was reflected in popular culture. The Kinks, however, continued to produce knees-up songs about English life and infused with traditional English folk-rhythm that, as Ray put it in a recent interview discussing ‘Dedicated Follower of Fashion, deliberately embodies English culture (Gross 2014). Nevertheless, such songs, especially from the release of ‘Autumn Almanac,’ were viewed as a tired gimmick, and fans in England dismissed the band as a novelty singles act. While they lost valuable airplay due to lack of commercial viability, culturally, the band also appeared to be square and rejecting the hardline being adapted by the counterculture to reject the values of the older generation as materialistic and the cause of the West’s current problems. English fans weren’t particularly interested what seemed to be the Kinks’ siding with the older generation, an authority that had been challenged if not thwarted by the younger in the UK beginning with the ‘Angry Young Men’ of 1950s theatre and the satirical movement of the early 1960s; the counter-culture wanted revolution, and not to turn back the clock. Choosing to continue with such parochial themes was arguably a daring thing to do – instead of following the trend-setters and psychedelic experimenters, Ray created music reflective of his parents’ and grandparents’ generation. This was the generation he admired: their stories of making do and coping with the horrors of the Depression and the War impressed him not only for their stalwart attitudes, but also for the camaraderie, joy, and even humour found in the darkest times (qtd. by Gross 2014; Simpson 2015) – exactly the attitude needed to cope with current events rather than destruction or conformity (cf. Clarke on Orwell 2009: 103) -- another English characteristic he saw lost and forgotten in the new ‘classless’ society of the 1960s (Dawbarn 1966, R. Davies 1995: 339-49; Simonelli 2013: 57).

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The Kinks and their Village Green

As a result, the band produced their most parochially English albums in 1968 and 1969: *The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society* and *Arthur: or the Rise and Fall of the British Empire*. *Village Green* is a loose collection of songs with themes of rural gentility and escape ('Village Green,' 'Animal Farm'), fairy-tale settings ('Phenomenal Cat,' 'Wicked Annabella'), wistful nostalgia of childhood memories ('Do You Remember Walter?' 'Picture Book'), and images England 'gone by' that wouldn't have been out of place in an Ealing comedy ('Village Green Preservation Society,' 'Last of the Steam-Powered Trains') (see Miller 2004; Faulk 2010: 115-27). The second, *Arthur: or the Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (1969), not only continued the thematic strand of England, home, and family was inspired in part by Ray's sister Rose who had emigrated to Australia with her family a few years previously. *Arthur*'s tracks are more unified than *Village Green* as the work was commissioned as the soundtrack for a BBC-TV production that never materialised. English nostalgia, especially for the countryside and the lost Empire, is especially strong in the tracks 'Victoria,' 'Yes Sir No Sir,' 'Have a Cup of Tea,' and the sublime 'Shangri-la.' The latter is a sweetly wistful tale of the simple pleasures of owning one's own home and reminds the listener of the English adage that a 'man's home is his castle' – quite the opposite in tone from earlier, more scathing songs about middle-class aspirations ('Mr Pleasant,' 'Most Exclusive Residence for Sale') or class entrapment and its pitfalls ('Sunny Afternoon,' 'Dead End Street') (Green 2005: 259-60).

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It is ingenuous to dismiss the 1960s Kinks as a nostalgic novelty act, however, or as traitors to the cause of the younger generation. The Kinks may have slipped off the commercial music charts and seemed ‘uncool’ commercially, but as champions of preserving particular English values and behaviour the band became part of a narrative that goes back to the eighteenth century. Clarke discusses a phenomenon in English pastoral writing described originally by Priestly as the ‘three Englands’ (2009: 89 *passim*, 103-105) – the idyllic England pre-industrial revolution with knights and battles, a folkloric idealization of a past filled with chivalry and milkmaids and Henry VIII roaring by the fire, e. g., the England of Walter Scott or Thomas Mallory. This aristocratic ideal is followed by a second idyllic England, pastoral settings created from the later nineteenth century in reaction to the scientific and industrial revolutions that saw an influx of rural folk move into urban centres to become factory fodder within a generation or two. Whilst their former agricultural life was a far cry from a fairy-tale, the sudden shift from green spaces to overcrowded, grim urban squalor after centuries of agricultural subsistence inspired literature and poetry that mourned for a lost past that people might not have had in the first place – so England’s green and rural past became romanticised as a means of working-class escapism if not social commentary on urban issues and poverty (cf. Perone 2013: 137-41; Green 2005; 257-60). The ‘third England’ results after World war II: Britain pulled together during the War (at least this is the aspect of British life publicized as part of contemporary morale-boosting and persists in modern memory of the period (Hobswamb’s so-called ‘Golden Age’ 1994; cf. Green 2005: 256-57): it is also

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the era sought during the social and cultural upheaval in the early to mid-‘60s through to the current era whenever there is a social or cultural crisis. The search for the ‘lost England’ and fears for England’s past being lost to modern urbanisation and industrialisation found in the works of such authors as Priestly (especially *English Journey*) and Orwell (Clarke 2009, *passim*) is echoed similarly by the Kinks late ‘60s output and continued in their early 1970s stage shows and concept albums. Whereas tracks such as ‘20th Century Man’ and ‘Acute Paranoia Schizophrenia Blues’ warn against the dangers of the modern technology, materialism, and loss of the old English ways, however, the Kinks never urged anyone to retreat into the past as a means of escape. Instead, such songs are observations if not warnings, of the important qualities and quirky eccentricities of family and individual identity that are imperilled of being lost. As for those who do insist on living in the past or remaining behind in the village, such as *Preservation’s* Johnny Thunder (‘Last of the Survivors) or Daisy in ‘Village Green,’ they are rendered in terms of regret, rather than envy.

There was certainly in the period between 1965 and the early ‘80s much reflection on British heritage: cultural historians such as Bray has noted it was the deaths of T. S. Elliot and especially Winston Churchill in 1965 (Bray 2014: 9) that kicked off the whole thought-exercise of what made one British, as the deaths of these two men in particular seemed to signify more than ever the passing of a definitive era in English or British cultural norms and values. Being *British*, however, especially began to smack of empire, colonialism, and oppression, especially from the 1970s: Ray might sing about Victoria

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and the old days of empire, having grown up with the ghost of the empire hanging over him, but he's by no means wanting it to come back – in 'Victoria' it's the wealthy who enjoy cricket on the village green, and the poor sent off to die for their country.

Sandbrook notes certain contemporary attempts at celebrating the history of imperial Britain have backfired when, in 1972, the BBC showed a documentary about the British Empire, part of a larger cultural phenomenon in British popular arts on heritage nostalgia. The programme had the opposite audience response than was expected – instead of stimulating feelings of pride in the past and heritage, viewers took it as a show of British oppression. (Sandbrook 2013: 82-83). Around the same time, however, the V & A museum's exhibition 'The Destruction of the Country House' became one of their most popular exhibitions (92-93). As Sandbrook notes, nostalgic heritage in the late '60s and especially early '70s, even wrapped up in such cosy accoutrements as James Herriot's novels and sales of Laura Ashley prints was a means of escapism from the harsher political and economic realities dominating contemporary headlines (Sandbrook 2013: 88-93). Being *English* took on a sense of cosy inclusion: even if one isn't English, and the sense of camaraderie, humour in the face of adversity (or expression of anger), and loyalty to authenticity were characteristics not only inclusive of the English themselves, but familiar and universally appealing to outsiders (Lowenthal, 2015:324-332 on the phenomenon of shared memory as shared identity).

The Posh Kids Always Win: Misfits & Solidarity

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The Kinks' inclusiveness and solidarity against all comers extends their appeal of their Englishness by incorporating into their music themes of family and of working-class solidarity: class identity and appreciation for past values are inextricably linked (Clarke 2009: 103). This self-awareness distinguishes the band and makes them more accessible to a wider audience than contemporary British rock-folks groups of the late '60s and into the '70s such as Weather Report or Fairport Convention who focused more on storytelling, imagery of, and association with England's romanticized historical past (Simonelli 2013: 128-34; Green 2005; Burns 2007, 2010; Ramnarine 2004; cf. Marotta 2006 and Baxter-Moore 2006). Not only does family inspire Ray's lyrics, but songs and performance create an inclusive or familiar relationship between the band and their audience, via, for example, music hall another very English aspect permeating Kinks music: family sing-alongs are transformed to the performance hall with rousing, football-chant choruses ('Dead End Street,' 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion,' 'Autumn Almanac'), strengthening the bond between the performers on the stage and the fans in the audience (Sullivan 2002; Fleiner 2011: 337-38; Faulk 2010: 105-2)..

The Kinks' predilection for family and home runs throughout their music, performance, and audience engagement. One cannot understate the presence and importance of family in the Kinks music (Fleiner 2011 and 2017, forthcoming): family had an influences on their musical tastes and styles that were folded into the group's wide-ranging output; family supported their efforts; family lent to them a strong sense of 'us versus them' (Fleiner 2011: 331 and *passim*) which colours their music and affects the relationship between the group and their fans (Fleiner 2017, forthcoming). Ray has remarked that he

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didn't start out deliberately to write about family and English themes to set the Kinks apart, but rather he had to compose songs in a hurry to feed the demands of the marketing machine, and found his own thoughts and experiences too gloomy as inspiration – hence turning to his own family and what it was about them that made him feel happy (R. Davies, 2015b). 'Dead End Street' is a good example: ostensibly about poverty and despair, the song embodies a defiant, uplifting make-do attitude underscored by a cheerful brass section in the songalong, shouted chorus.

Home (and family) as a sanctuary is nevertheless a key theme in the Kinks' output. Ray's cosy home scenes are happiest when making due and about memories of family togetherness and simplicity rather than trying to rise above one's station. 'Have a Cuppa Tea' to solve life's problems; don't worry about debt and loss ('Sunny Afternoon,' 'Low Budget') because one came from nothing and will go back to nothing, so make the best of what one has. Even as one dreams of living on an 'Animal Farm' where the domesticated animals gambol and play outside of his window (shades of the idylls of the mythical England dreamt of by urban factory fodder) or dreams of throwing away all of the trappings of civilization and living like the 'Apeman' (expressed musically by a Caribbean accent, steel drums, and Calypso beat – replacing staid British empire with a different sort of Edenic idyll), he may have to settle for his suburban castle ('Shangri-la') and its allotment ('Autumn Almanac'). This is happiness, however, where everyone knows one another ('Almanac' again), and one finds paradise in the predictable and mundane, even as an anonymous 'Face in the Crowd' in the middle of a commuter crowd in a noisy station ('Waterloo Sunset') where 'innocence [prevails] over adversity' (R. This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

Davies qtd by Dave Simpson 2016) and suburbia becomes a paradise (cf Green 2005: 261-62). Such collective security is in contrast with the scathing tones left to the social climbers of 'Mr Pleasant,' 'Most Exclusive Residence for Sale,' or 'House in the Country' who neglect the world around them as in their desire to rise above their station they become too involved with material good and lose sight of, if not control of, their circumstances. The family disrupted results in unhappiness ('Rosy, Won't You Please Come Home' and 'Big Black Smoke'). Finally, there is Ray's depiction of the quick rise to fame and the brutalities of show business into which he, like so many young performers in that era were thrust: 'Sitting in My Hotel' reflects on the singer's new status as a famous pop star, the feelings of loneliness and isolation, and more important, how his friends from home would mock him for his new appearance and high maintenance lifestyle. Similarly, the narrator in 'All of My Friends Were There' (1968) realises that he might be able to hide a half-arsed, hung-over performance from his fans, but that his friends from the old days will see right through the façade and give him well-deserved mockery.

These diverse tracks also reinforce the Kinks' working-class status, and thus integrity admired in England and abroad (Simonelli 2013: 55-56): music hall was an entertainment venue, but it was also a platform for working-class authenticity (the opposite being selling out and forgetting one's origins). The idea that music hall is simply silly humour and slapstick itself is ingenuous: Music hall comedy could be sharp and cutting-edge; it provided a source of social commentary amongst the lower classes that was more

relevant and respected than editorials found in middle-class broadsheet newspapers

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(Cleese 2014: 257). The humour of the music hall, as well as in the Kinks' output, has anger and substance behind it: as Orwell noted on Dickens, were he simply a comedy gimmick, no one would have ever taken him seriously (Orwell 2009: 109).

The Kinks' working-class humour is prevalent their rebellion against authority: it is an admirable defiance in the face of those more successful and not giving a toss about conforming to commercial pressure. The Kinks not only sang about facing material loss with a shrug and a 'make-do' attitude, but actually lived it: much of their commercial woes were their own doing as they repeatedly knocked heads with management and record labels. While raging against the pop music machine may have cost the Kinks commercially, their persistence has endeared them to both American and to British fans as tenacious underdogs, despite the different cultural responses on opposite sides of the Atlantic to the notion of underdog heroes. Basil Fawlty and Blackadder are popular because they *never* succeed, and the British identify with that sense of stubborn, yet almost optimistic, futility – Americans enjoy the absurd humour, but Britons appreciate the misplaced optimism both characters share: as Bill Bailey recently noted in his recent (2015-16) stage show, there are more convertible-top cars in Britain than any other country in Europe. American underdogs are losers until the bottom of the ninth inning with the bases loaded and two outs – and everyone knows that the uncoordinated kid is going to hit a winning grand slam against the bullies from the posh school. Such last minute reprieve is not the English way: reminds the quizmaster as the *Young Ones* are about to face off against the idiotic but wealthy students of Footlights College,

Oxbridgein 'Bambi,' 'The posh kids always win.' It is the defiant reaction to the loss that This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

makes us cheer as Vyvyan drops a grenade on their rival cohort – or as Ray asks not for toys but rather a machine gun ‘for all the kids on the street’ and for a job for his dad in ‘Father Christmas’ (1977): save the baubles for ‘the little rich boys.’

Conclusions

Julian Barnes satirizes the marriage between heritage and artificially created national identity in his 1998 novel *England England*: in the novel, the protagonists decide that the best way to boost the UK’s economy is to increase tourism, and what better way to do that than to turn the Isle of Wight into a dedicated theme park of all things Britain? Here they will include all of the landmarks that define England, as well as offer tourists the chance to experience ‘the traditions of England’s past.’ As Allen notes in her discussion of the novel, the protagonists realize that this isn’t as straightforward as it may seem; can tourists really experience England and Englishness if the inhabitants themselves wrestle with what marks them out as particularly English (Allen 2008: 74-5; cf Sandbrook on the positive results of the ‘Disneyfication’ of English heritage, 2013: 92-93). Postcards for the tourists aren’t the ‘real England’ – in the song ‘Village Green’ Ray points out the disconnect between the people who grew up to escape the shabbiness of the village and those American tourists who take photographs of the dilapidated houses and comment on the ‘pretty scene.’ Since the 1980s, popular artists have embraced the old ways and English shabbiness as ‘cool’; it is not the landmarks or accessories that make one English, but acknowledging the absurdity beneath the grubby surface. Witness the wild success of Banksy’s 2015 summer exhibition *Dismaland* or the popularity of the website-cum-book *Scarfolk Council*, which pokes affectionate fun at 1970s British urban life, This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

health, and safety. As Ray notes in his ‘Stand-Up Comic’ (2005): ‘Jack the Lad has become Oscar Wilde.’

There is no denying that the Kinks tended to sing about very English topics: ‘Village Green Preservation Society’ makes them appear, superficially, as if they’re ticking boxes: Sherlock Holmes, little shops, and Tudor houses. But even these most *English* things, village greens and restorative cups of tea, have the universal appeal in that they focus the listener’s emotions on traditional values or emotions that ought not to be lost to the past and can be recreated in the present if not preserved for the future. The English identify with the Englishness of the Kinks because they are part of the collective culture that the group present through their music and stage shows. Americans and other non-English are at first drawn to the Kinks’ Englishness partly because of the exotica of ‘the other’ and the cultural tradition of what makes being English ‘cool.’ But beyond the tropes, the Kinks’ English character isn’t necessarily unique to England – the idea of solidarity among a group of followers ‘not like anybody else’ or rebellion against authority or a collective based on a family, however real or artificial, creates a sense of identification among the audience and a connection between them and the group.

The Kinks weren’t from a village or the rural countryside; they were suburban kids, growing up poor: a sense of solidarity with their family and shared experience. Ray was certainly aware of this, and he has recently mused that for him, North London was his village green (Simpson 2016). It may not have been economically viable in the 1960s to sing about love of one’s family and respect for their values, but in the long run, the anti-This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Bloomsbury in *Mad Dogs and Englishness: Popular Music and English Identities*, available online at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mad-dogs-and-englishness-9781501311277/>. It is not the copy of record. Copyright © 2017, Bloomsbury.

family sentiment in late '60s popular music proved to be the anomaly. The Kinks were part of a long narrative tradition that looks back at past sentiment and emotions associated with family and a rural idyll as an era of happiness; they drew on childhood experiences that folded into their shows and output those elements of ordinary events in their lives as sources: fishing with their father, car holidays to the coast, raucous family gatherings that made them the bane of the neighbourhood. By the 1980s and beyond, a number of English acts, comedians and musicians, emphasized similar sentiment into their works (Fleiner 2011:331-332); it continues to thrive at present, if the Keep Calm and Carry On merchandising juggernaut is any indication (this author was bemused to see in early 2016 such merchandise for sale in a Budapest tourist trap otherwise flogging cheap lace and plastic King Stephan crowns). People may still try to recapture that idyll on their holiday breaks these days, but even more so is an industry built up around remembering the past and growing up in a particular period in Britain: the nostalgia industry thrives, and part of its foundation is the sense of inclusion – usually reflected by universal, common experiences that even people of widely diverse ethnic backgrounds are going to share in. Insiders quietly revel in it; outsiders attempt to enjoin with it. The Kinks still disdain the commercialism and potential for the big money: nagged and begged for years to reunite, Ray and Dave at last performed together again in late 2015: not at the O2 in a well-publicised, merchandised-hyped Event, but at Dave's solo show at the Islington Assembly Hall in north London ('My hometown!') where Ray joined him onstage for an encore of 'You Really Got Me' in front of 500 happy if not stunned fans (including this author), looking as if he'd just ambled over to the hall from the pub over the road – because he had. At the end of the day, the Kinks remain firmly a band that

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represents England and Englishness in a way the better known and more commercially successful Beatles and Rolling Stones never have.

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