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# Post Soul Futurama: African American cultural politics and early Detroit Techno

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**Abstract:**

Techno is a globally successful genre of electronic dance music that can trace its origins to Detroit in the early 1980s, but it has been generally overlooked in academic, historical and critical analyses of 1980s African American music in the United States. This study will consider the cultural context of early Techno, its relationship to European electronic music, the birth of the 'Techno' genre in the UK, the founding myths and histories of Techno, and its potential for helping us understand transformations in African American cultural politics in the 'post-soul' era.

**Keywords:** Detroit, Techno, music, African-American, cultural, identity

## Introduction

In 2003, the Detroit Historical Museum created a new exhibit, *Techno: Detroit's Gift to the World* through which the visitor would '[l]earn the straight story of how Juan Atkins, Eddie Fowlkes, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson, four young men from metro Detroit, created [Techno] and trace its early beginnings from local Detroit clubs to its emergence as a global sensation'.[1]

The 'straight story' of early Techno and its African American originators is well-established.[2] To summarise, this is a story where the 'godfather' of Detroit Techno Juan Atkins, inspired by Detroit DJ Ken Collier and the musical eclecticism of local radio DJ Electrifyin' Mojo, formed the electronic band Cybotron in the early 80s, with Vietnam veteran Rick Davis. Cybotron explored Alvin Toffler's sociological futurist *Third Wave* and *Future Shock* writings[3], created a largely synthesizer and rhythm machine based electronic music, and developed a philosophy that probed the utopian/dystopian dichotomy of science fiction. Meanwhile, Atkins' nurtured and inspired his younger Belleville school friends, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson. With May he formed the Deep Space DJ partnership, undertaking a conceptual exploration of the European electronic music they played. This informed the music of Cybotron, and later the proto-Techno they independently produced. On leaving Cybotron Atkins released tracks on his own label Metroplex, and alongside May's work on his Transmat label, created the musical template for African American Techno music that spoke to the bodies, hearts and minds of European dance audiences in the late 1980s.

This study will consider Detroit Techno's origins, and explore the issues raised when investigating the cultural sources, contexts, politics and identity of this music. A central theme will be the exploration of Atkins and May's intense identification with

the synthesizer sound, and sonic and rhythmic innovations, of European electro-pop/electro-disco (e.g. Kraftwerk, Gary Numan, Depeche Mode, New Order and Giorgio Moroder) in the early 1980s. This is a significant factor in understanding the identity and genesis of Techno. If Techno is African American music that cast it's eyes and ears elsewhere than the urban ghetto, the church and the street for creative inspiration, favoring 'alien', 'white' European sonic futurism, then this music is arguably 'post-soul', and apparently occupies a cultural sphere removed from previous gospel and blues informed black popular musics. So, what is at stake in this relocation of African American musical practices into a new creative and political paradigm?

Surprisingly there has as yet been little sustained analysis of the ethnic dimension and cultural politics of proto-Techno. Yet in Atkins *et al's* observations on the local and international response to Techno in this early period, there is continual reference to racial themes and conflicts. For example, in the disinterest of white Detroit club goers in black underground music,[4] the class segregation within the black club scene, and Techno's enthusiastic reception by predominantly white musicians and audiences in Europe.[5]

Though Techno has been previously identified as a post-soul construct by Cosgrove[6] and Eshun, it has not specifically been addressed in the light of critical work by writers exploring contemporary African American music and identity, the post-soul 'intelligentsia' and the 'post-soul aesthetic'[7]. If Techno is indeed exemplary of the post-soul aesthetic, it now seems important to attempt an analysis of its origins through the filter of such work.

The commercial 'invention' of Techno as a discreet genre by British Northern Soul enthusiast Neil Rushton (in collaboration with Atkins and May), for the 1988 *Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit* British compilation, and the embrace of Techno by European audiences also raises questions around Detroit's 'ownership' of the genre. The Techno exhibit and the city backed annual Detroit Electronic Music festival, has claimed this music (that has little popular or critical attention in the USA) for its 'hometown'. However, in making sense of early Techno it is crucial to move beyond this claim by identifying how musical production in Detroit, and elsewhere, is caught up in the global and trans-Atlantic flows popular culture. In exploring how this transforms notions of the African American and local identity of Techno, we are led onto fundamental issues and debates in the cultural politics of black popular music in the USA.

## Detroit: broken promised land

There is little space here to convincingly attempt to portray the complexities of the industrial, social and cultural decline of Detroit in the post-1945 period. Nevertheless, as it forms the social and cultural backdrop to this study, it is important to at least briefly indicate some of the most relevant aspects of this decline.

Detroit in the early 20th century had been an American and international symbol of modernism and industrial achievement. Perhaps representative of this were Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* murals, created in the 1930s at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The murals celebrated the energy and optimism of industrial Detroit, and the black and white industrial workers as heroes of modernity. The murals portray the optimism of the city's past, suggesting,

> We dream of a world to meet our individual and communal needs, physical and emotional and spiritual, and then we make the tools that

… will help make those dreams real. As the world changes, we invent
new tools … [and] fashion a world closer to our ends, invested with
meanings and purposes of our own creation.[8]

However, by the latter 20th century, Herron portrays Detroit as the by now
clichéd symbol of American urban post-industrial decline stating,

Detroit stands for an America that is over: the America of gas guzzlers
and factories and downtown and department stores and above all the
America where people believed that the good of the country and the good
of General Motors were inextricably linked. That America, and the city that
stood for it, are exhausted so that Motown now seems apropos of nothing so
much as failure.[9]

Detroit from the late 1950s onwards was in a state of decline that not even periods of
US economic recovery could halt.[10] It was the home of the big three of America's
motor industry (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler), but the limited focus of its
economy meant the city was hit hard by a post-1950s downturn. As Herron indicates,
its industrial, commercial and urban infrastructure was decimated in this period. Many
companies and employers left the city after the civil unrest of July 1967[11].
Furthermore, white, and to some extent black, middle-class flight to Detroit's suburbs,
left an impoverished, mainly black inner city population.

Welch et al[12] map and explore the racial aspects of the demographic changes,
stating that from the 60s onwards Detroit became an increasingly majority-black city,
(from 70% white to 80% black)[13] whose schools, police and city government were
dominated by African Americans (though corporate Detroit was still on the whole
white). This seemingly progressive trend was as much a result of population change
as it was of the civil rights reform that was meant to provide new opportunities for the
USA's African American population. In fact, as Smith argues, despite progressive
anti-discrimination legislation, Detroit's black population had to fight long and hard for
its gains due to the 'chronic patterns of racial discrimination' in the city.[14]

The suburbanization of Detroit (and America) was profound in the post-war
period, and by 1992, 48% of US citizens lived in suburban areas, with 29% urban,
and 23% rural. The population shrinkage of Detroit in the 1970s alone was 21.3%[15]
with the population halved from 2 to 1 million by the 1990s. This resulted in an
abandoned downtown area and widely experienced inner city decline.

Herron argues that Detroit's post-industrial collapse meant it took on an
important symbolic role for 20th century America, suggesting 'Detroit ... has been so
thoroughly humiliated by history, so emptied of the content, both material and human,
that used to make this place *mean*, that it becomes questionable whether the city still
exists at all in a practical sense'. He goes on to further contend that

Outside of war, or some sort of national emergency, it's hard to imagine
anything – especially anything domestic and urban – that people could
agree on and get behind, except, perhaps, for the wish to keep "Detroit"
from happening to the place where they live.[16]

Sicko suggests that 'Detroit's symbolic and final straw' was the Motown record label's
relocation to Los Angeles in 1972[17]. He argues that the loss of Motown as a
business, employer and generator of black popular culture was almost as hard to

deal with as the decline of Detroit's car industry. Nelson George goes further in his assertion that the loss of Motown impoverished the regionalism of *all* African-American music, arguing that

> Motown's relocation to Los Angeles had a profound effect on black music. Following Motown's lead, top r&b musicians from Chicago, New York, Memphis, New Orleans, Atlanta, and later Philadelphia, migrated to LA, since that appeared to be where the action in black music was now centered. In the process, much of the regionalism in black music was lost. The "Detroit sound", the "Chicago sound", the "Memphis sound", all became part of the current state-of-the-art studio perfectionism of Los Angeles-based black pop.[18]

Motown's relationship to the African American cultural politics of Detroit are profound, despite the notion that Motown represents an integrated 1960s 'sound of young America' with a cross race, perhaps 'de-raced', identity. Smith argues that Motown's relocation to Hollywood was more than musically 'symbolic'. She argues that Motown was deeply enmeshed in the black civil rights struggle of the 1960s, and as such by leaving Detroit, a cultural political center was lost. More than the 'Detroit Sound' the city lost its internationally recognised 'Detroit Voice'. Smith states that '[t]he Motown Record Company's status as Detroit's most famous cultural producer and eventually the country's most successful black business must ... be understood in political terms regardless of whether or not the company or its artists perceived it as such.[19]

Therefore, in a city that by the 1970s was widely held to be a post-industrial wasteland, and that had lost the main vehicle for it's black cultural 'voice', what new dreams would now meet the needs of a city and people divested of their industry and black cultural center? Moreover, what would be the new "Detroit Sound"?

## 'Enter': Techno Originators

The recent Techno exhibition suggests Atkins et al, like Berry Gordy Jr of Motown, were originators of a globally important African American music. Yet, in the growing number of American publications that have addressed post-industrial and post-soul black musics, Techno is conspicuous by its absence. Hip Hop, due to its American and global success, high visibility and lyrical immediacy is widely discussed and its cultural significance debated.[20] In US writing on black popular music in the 1980s to the present, Hip Hop has stolen the show. With Eminem's success and through the film 'Eight Mile', Detroit itself is now becoming more associated in the popular imagination with Hip Hop. On the other hand, for rock audiences Detroit is mainly synonymous with Iggy Pop, the MC5, and currently the White Stripes and Electric Six. Techno is only one strand of the diverse musical gifts Detroit has given to the world, but arguably it was 'given' to the world as the USA was far from interested.[21]

Atkins *et al* were the key movers in early Techno. Apart from Fowlkes, they lived in Belleville, a mainly white, small town/suburb 30 miles from Detroit. They were relatively affluent and had benefited from the wealth creation of previous generations hard labor in the motor industry and elsewhere. In the wider Detroit area by the late 1970s, the cultural capital most prized by the middle-class segment of the African American post-soul generation, whether in music or fashion, was European. Atkins claims this was a specific attempt by middle-class black youths 'to distance

themselves from the kids that were coming up in the projects, in the ghetto'.[22] They formed exclusive and elitist high-school social clubs, some with European names (Charivari) and others stylistically aspirational (GQ Productions). Sicko maps this scene, highlighting the social antagonism between middle-class 'preps' and working-class 'jits' and the efforts made by party organizers to enforce this divide.[23] Within this milieu, Atkins and May, and later Saunderson and Fowlkes became DJs and musicians.

The music of the Detroit party scene was also crucial to the social segregation of the groups. The local DJ, the Electrifyin' Mojo, had an important part to play in propagating a taste for 'alien' European musics by Numan, Kraftwerk, Alexander Robotnick, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Ultravox, the Human League, Telex, New Order and Depeche Mode.[24] This music was central to early Techno and Atkins and May specifically drew inspiration from it. But how does this link raise questions about race, identity/identification and African-American cultural politics. To analyze these issues, this study will first consider the proto-techno of Cybotron in early 80s Detroit, and the founding 'manifesto' of the genre, Cosgrove's 'Seventh City Techno'.[25]

## Cybotron: early Techno and black science fiction

Cybotron (Atkins and Davis) came to the attention of British audiences as a band caught up in the early Electro milieu. Their appearance on two 1984 British Streetsounds albums[26], *Crucial Electro* with 'Clear' and *Electro 4* with 'Techno City', resulted in the band's association with other beatbox and synthesizer based US 'electro-funk'. Cybotron shared many European and funk influences with New York and Miami based Hispanic and black Electro (Bambaataa, Warp 9, Jonzun Crew, Key-Matic), an obsession with science fiction and futuristic technologies (arcade computer games, Star Wars/Trek) and perhaps a desire that in the future race would no longer be an obstacle to overcome. This futurist desire for equality and freedom was an escapist fantasy based on a very real recent history of arguably ineffectual civil rights reform in a polarised and segregated Detroit, but in Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, it was a communitarian, multi-cultural ideal that was actively promoted.

Cybotron, however, had a different set of creative priorities, and produced a conceptual, 'progressive' music that drew from the futurist postindustrial *Third Wave* theory of Toffler, Davis' interest in Zoharian mysticism (the key book of classical Jewish Kabbalah), funk and the synthesizer oriented European electro-pop of Numan, the Human League and Depeche Mode. Cybotron, unlike much early Electro, did not want to 'escape' through a utopian black space program, but instead looked to the earth-bound urban future and the utopian/dystopian dichotomy of 'Techno City' - a mythical Detroit based on the extreme class segregation of Lang's *Metropolis*. 'Techno City' was an accurate rather than speculative portrayal of class and racial segregation in Detroit, and as Atkins asserts ' [y]ou gotta remember, we were brought up on this racial conflict thing, instilled in us since we were babies ... If you're a kid in Detroit, [you might] never even have to *see* a white person, unless they're on TV. The closest association I had with people outside my race was when I started traveling to Europe'.[27] This was also true of Atkins childhood. Even though he grew up in a predominantly white Belleville, he developed friendships with May and Saunderson partly through a sense of ethnic solidarity in this environment.

For Cybotron, the final frontier was a future post-industrial, cybernetic Detroit rather than a distant galaxy. Atkins suggests the key conceptual aim of Cybotron was supra-human transformation through 'interfacing the spirituality of human beings into the cybernetic matrix'. The band 'conceived of [Detroit's] streets or environment as

being like the Game Grid. And Cybotron was considered a "super-sprite" ... [which] ... had certain powers ... that a regular sprite didn't have'.[28] This transformation was perceived as a radical technological break with past racial and class conflicts, with Cybotron siding with the *us* of the masses against the *them* of technocratic forces of global capitalism, and conservative and reactionary politics. As Sinker suggests, early Techno's conceptual project was perpetrated by 'wharf-rat individuals seizing on the most up-to-date technology, to combat some ever more monolithic, globally interlinked InfoTec state ...', and who were 'Cyberpunk come to life, by turns grindingly bleak (as chroniclers of the present) and deliriously optimistic (as harbingers of the future)'.[29]

Cybotron's music is often teleologically identified as a stepping-stone on the path to Techno. Listening to 'Alleys of Your Mind', 'Industrial Lies', 'The Line' or 'Clear' from the album *Enter* (1983) - later renamed *Clear* (1990) - the music is dominated by hard, heavy, syncopated and four-to-the-floor drum machine beats, funk bass lines, light synthesizer lead lines and stabs, arpeggiated metallic, percussive sounds and an amount of rock rhythm and lead guitar. The vocals are introverted, spoken, shouted and infrequently sung and the lyrics are politically and conceptually grounded. The music indeed has elements of what later became Techno, but when listened to alongside, for example, the Jonzun Crew it has clear continuities with Electro of the period. Electro similarly relied on a heavy use of hard beatbox rhythms and almost purely electronic instrumentation, but one of the key differences was the lack of any discernible conceptualism in the rap oriented vocal performances.

Eshun suggests that the vocals of Cybotron, and later Atkins (Model 500), are derived from white European 'passionless' or soul-less vocal styles, arguing,

> The M500 voice hollows the soul into an affectless, traumatised void.
> The mouth is a hole through which the soul drains away. *No UFOs* has
> the ominous imminence of whiteness synthesized out of Bauhaus, Depeche
> Mode and Gary Numan[30]

He goes on to state '[t]he import accent means singing like an alien in American' and '[to] listen to Cybotron is to hear the Brit voice making Techno's alienation from America audible'.[31] Atkins and Davis imagined driving through the streets of a future cyber-Detroit, but existed in a trans-Atlantic imaginary sphere of dystopian/utopian musical and technological fascination. Kraftwerk's robots, Numan's electric friends and John Foxx/Ultravox's 'I Want to Be A Machine' all parallel Cybotron's intellectual engagement and exploration of the body/technology interface, that exists beyond notions of locality and authenticity in what would shortly become known as cyberspace.

Cybotron's fascination with electro-pop and Euro whiteness can also be found in 'Alleys of Your Mind' (that bears a close resemblance to Ultravox's 'Mr. X'), and 'Industrial Lies' which musically explores territory somewhere between early Ultravox, Pink Floyd, Bowie and Tubeway Army. Through the creation of a black/white electro-funk Cybotron mark a negotiation and subversion of whiteness and black cultural expectations.

In the soul era black musicians were expected to 'look within', to speak from the black African American soul rather than entertain 'white' modernity or the post-human, dislocated, intellectualism of science fiction. However, whether Cybotron's post-soul theoretically informed futurism, Key-Matic's 'Breakin in Space', or Sun Ra

or the Jonzun Crew's 'Space is the Place' there is a tradition of black musicians who have used science fiction fantasy as a strategy to reconsider the past and present through what Eshun calls 'sonic fictions'.[32] Jonker argues that 'Futurism in black music has been about addressing an experience which is alienated, uprooted, decentered but positive; it is a waking to the irretrievability of home', and therefore is embedded in the post-slavery condition of African Americans.[33]

Black musical futurism recognizes the alien-ness of the post-slavery experience of the Black Atlantic while acknowledging the problematic essentialism of the myths and goals of Garveyist and more recent forms of Black Nationalism.[34] In response it produces a positive future oriented perspective – untied from the past, the imagination is set free. Yet in looking to the tropes of science fiction, Jonker argues that paradoxically, Cybotron and other black American musicians recognize and reproduce 'the American racial psyche', when he states that

> The recurring scenarios that dominate sf … themes like alien-ness, colonization and technology as a disciplinary epistemology indicate that sf reflects the American racial psyche. Sf mirrors the silent history of the New World, and the alienation of the black populations forcibly taken there.[35]

## 'Postcard from the Future': Cosgrove's 'Seventh City Techno'

The Detroit club scene (by the mid-80s centred in the city's derelict downtown area), and the music of Atkins and May, came to the attention of British clubbers by 1987 through its association with Chicago House (both artists had Chicago club connections). May's 'Strings of Life' and Atkins' 'Off to Battle' appeared in clubs and on radio shows in northern cities such as Manchester, Sheffield and Nottingham by late 1987. At this point, 'Techno' did not exist. That is, it had yet to be differentiated as a genre. However, Stuart Cosgrove's article 'Seventh City Techno', that gave US Techno a UK originated identity, appeared in *The Face* in May 1988 and contains a set of key early pronouncements on the genre. In the article and related sleeve notes to *Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit*[36], Cosgrove's polemic about Techno's originators and their attitudes to the past have become founding myths that are overdue for analysis. In the sleevenotes, Cosgrove claims that 'The new grandmasters of Detroit Techno hate history' and that Atkins is 'an articulate enemy of Motown's supreme being', Berry Gordy. These claims are backed by interviews for the earlier 'Seventh City Techno' article. This 'anti-Motown' stance relates to one of two key positions sketched out in the Cosgrove article and revisited many times since by Techno historians. The problem is that these historians then fail to explore the broader implications for Techno's position in US black cultural politics. This has resulted in a perhaps too simplistic view of Techno's perceived desire to break with the (African-American) past, and a misinterpretation of the ethnic dynamics at the heart of Techno's US origins.

Firstly, Cosgrove claimed that 'young Techno stars have little time for the golden era of Motown', supporting this argument with Atkins' statement that 'Berry Gordy built the Motown sound on the same principles as the conveyor belt at Ford's. Today they use robots to make their cars and I'm more interested in Ford's robots than Gordy's music".[37] Atkins later angrily refuted the perhaps selective and overly enthusiastic appropriation of this statement. He felt his views were 'not properly documented', and forcefully stated 'Believe me man, I've got top respect for Berry Gordy and Motown and I would never say anything to denigrate what he did. For a

black man in America to achieve what he did in that era was a hell of a feat and I take my hat off to the man'.[38]

Cosgrove, in creating a thesis that emphasizes the innovatory futurism of Techno, rides roughshod over the sensitivities of the black American racial and personal subjectivity of Atkins. This controversial thesis lingered in later writing on Techno, with Sinker stating 'Techno … explicitly and contemptuously refused community with Motown and motorcity gospel [in favour of] Gary 'Me, I Disconnect From You' Numan'.[39] Though there is some evidence to suggest Numan was more important musically to Juan Atkins than Motown, no disrespect was intended to the symbolic achievements of Gordy, and Atkins very specifically acknowledges the key role of electronic and synthesizer experimentation by Bernie Worrell (Funkadelic) and early 1970s Stevie Wonder in his music. Furthermore, to cast European electronic music as an escape route for black musicians from the USA's racially antagonistic environment is to create a comforting story that perhaps helps European writers excise memories of the colonial enslavement of Africans, recasting Europe as a post-industrial sanctuary.

The second founding statement is May's description of Techno; '[t]he music is just like Detroit, a complete mistake. It's like George Clinton and Kraftwerk stuck in an elevator.'[40] This statement has come to be an opaque mantra that is invoked whenever Techno history is told. Shallcross suggests it reduced the complexity of the genesis of techno, resulting in an emphasis on Kraftwerk's cold electronics over local 'funk' influences, when funk itself had always been a forward looking, technologically sophisticated music.[41]

The idea that both Detroit and Techno are mistakes perhaps unwittingly suggests that implicit in Techno is its 'mis-take' of its European influences. Lipsitz argues that '[e]specially in issues of identity … "mistaken" ideas often contain important insights … we must … be open to the kinds of knowing hidden within some "incorrect" perceptions'[42]. The 'mis-take' of Techno was to re-imagine Kraftwerk, but more particularly, the British electro-pop of Numan, Depeche Mode and the Human League with an intellectual seriousness that these artists usually failed to encounter at home. In Britain, Numan particularly suffered at the hands of the tabloid press and rock critics, turned off by his artificiality, sci-fi techno-dystopian imagery, sexual ambiguity, aloof-ness, alien-ness, 'queer-ness', and his 'funkless' whiteness– precisely those qualities that Atkins, Bambaataa and others identified and found fascinating in Numan. The incredulity still met with in Britain when Numan or Depeche Mode are identified as black musical icons emphasizes what was perceived by British music journalists as this 'mis-take'. Of course, it should be noted that the British, through familiarity, might well have 'mis-taken' this music, and that we should not privilege the views of elements of the British public as the only correct 'take'. Still, the appropriation of British synthesizer music in Detroit clearly located it in an interpretive framework unimagined by its creators.

As Neal argues, there is a perceived incongruity in the African American attraction to 'queerness' due to twentieth century Black Nationalism being founded on a heterosexual masculine discourse.[43] This discourse could perhaps be challenged by the 'queering' of black music. This view is implicit in Vincent's disdain for disco oriented versions of funk that 'destroyed the integrity of black music'[44]. But in Italo-disco (Alexander Robotnick) and the British synthesizer bands, Electro and proto-Techno musicians identified with music that in other contexts was central to a gay, and white 'teen-pop' experience. This is also worthy of note due to the relatively 'straight' history of 'hetero-sexual', drug free Detroit Techno which was caught

somewhere between the gay disco-philia of early Chicago House, and the techno-philia of New York Electro that also operated in and around the gay scene. This identification is perhaps symbolic of the deconstruction of received identities in Techno's 'post-soul aesthetic', and has interesting implications in relation to Huey P. Newton's suggestion that 'for some African American men it has been difficult to separate their racial pride from their anxieties about their black masculinity'[45]

As has been noted, Shallcross suggests that the African-American funk roots of Techno need amplifying. Additionally, the European influences (British, Belgian, Italian and German) also need further analysis. Not least because in 1978, prior to May's iconic maxim, Brian Eno in an 'essentialist' but revealing comment on his music suggested that he would like to create a musical marriage of "stiff, totalitarian" rock with the "fluid, sensual quality of black music". Anticipating May, he considered that

> I think it would make a saleable combination if Kraftwerk employed Parliament or the other way round … if you had the Parliament group playing bass, and Kraftwerk playing the drums. There would a cross-cultural hybrid, especially if everybody stuck to their guns.[46]

This would coincidentally work as a founding definition of Techno. It is also important that it comes from Eno as Ultravox, Devo, Numan and John Foxx, key early influences of Techno, were either produced or inspired by him. However, Eno's assumptions are problematic and reproduce what Gilroy identifies as a 'pernicious metaphysical dualism'[47], fundamental to the white mind/black body dichotomy common in popular assumptions and critical analyses of black musics. In a later comment on his earlier statement, May emphasized the duality and antagonism that the elevator scenario would engender saying,

> You can imagine Kraftwerk and George Clinton stuck in an elevator with one keyboard between them … they are both looking at each other … nobody wants to talk, nobody wants to even associate themselves with each other. George is laughing at them and they are looking the other way … when the [elevator] finally opens out comes this sort of funky metal smell … and the keyboard is sort of flipped inside out.[48]

However, the creative, cultural and ethnic antagonism May imagined is not apparent in Kraftwerk's attitudes to black musics. Kraftwerk, like Eno, admired James Brown, Clinton and Parliament/Funkadelic and in 1977 Ralf Hutter argued to *Billboard*, 'Electronics is beyond nations and colours … It speaks a language everyone can understand.'[49] Kraftwerk had always had a multi-ethnic following in the USA, and in 1996 Hutter indicated

> We have always played in different situations, in different countries, different cultures and of course when we were playing … in America, there was always a large part of the audience which was dancing, the black audience, Hispanic, hispano-American　… Electronic music is really a world language, it is the music of the global village.[50]

As such, the antagonisms highlighted by May would seem to be informed by an African-American experience of conflict and segregation that white European

musicians recognized, but felt surmountable due to a long history of white fascination with African American Jazz, Blues, R & B and Soul.

Cosgrove recognized the inherent sense that Techno was an attempt to break past ethnic ties and such older notions of black identity, suggesting

> Techno is probably the first form of contemporary black music which categorically breaks with the old heritage of soul … Detroit refutes the past. It may have a special place for Parliament ... but it prefers tomorrow's technology to yesterday's heroes. Techno is a *post-soul* [my emphasis] sound. It says nothing to the Lord, but speaks volumes on the dancefloor.[51]

Despite Atkins' later refutation of his 'anti-Gordy' statement, Techno was a music that apparently attempted to dislocate and deterritorialise itself, in looking to European electronic music, to new musical forms and technologies and 'western' futurist political theory. However, Techno was not a rejection of African American heritage but an attempt to engage with and consider the 'full meanings of black identity'[52] in a post-industrial, postmodern, post-soul America. Atkins *et al.* grew up in an America that was experienced through day-to-day racial antagonism and they were well aware of calls for black communal unity in the face of white discrimination. However, Atkins in particular adopted and adapted what was viewed by some as the most 'white' of 'white music', in an attempt to creatively reconfigure his 'raced' identity and personal political priorities. Cosgrove seemed more than a little surprised that Visage, Depeche Mode and the Human League could be the inspiration for Techno. The *Village Voice* would have been even more astounded as in 1981 it suggested

> Visage are a fine example of what happens to culture when the government takes a sudden conservative turn, as in Thatcher's Britain or Reagan's America. Decadent, narcissistic, sexist, prurient, ignorant, racist, the New Romantics are all dressed up with nowhere to go but right.[53]

For Atkins', and early Electro, British synthesiser and European electronic music had a discernible soul and funk that was not always immediately apparent to white, liberal American or European audiences. Though Kraftwerk are widely recognized as a key inspiration for Electro and Techno, Numan for one is perhaps unfairly overlooked. Electro pioneer Afrika Bambaataa emphasized this saying

> Gary Numan. Man he was dope. So important to us … When we heard that single, "Are Friends Electric?", it was like the aliens had landed in the Bronx … We were just throwing shapes to this tune, man … More than Kraftwerk, Numan was the inspiration. He's a hero. Without him, there'd be no electro'[54]

In 2001, Atkins provided further evidence for this claim by suggesting that the only artist he is now interested in remixing is Numan.[55]

Arguably, then, Atkins created a progressive future 'post-soul', in which he actively 'de-raced' and deterritorialised his music. Commenting on his post-Cybotron choice of the name Model 500, he suggested 'I wanted to use something that repudiated an ethnic designation …'.[56] Atkins' refuted the constriction of cultural production informed by tradition, the past and racial conflicts that required musicians to look to 'the street' rather than outer space for inspiration, and his anti-essentialist stance continued in his adoption of other pseudo-names (Infiniti, Output and Channel

One). McRobbie suggests 'the logic of anti-essentialism is precisely to look forward to no longer being black … and science fiction futurism provides a fantasy metaphor for the escape from racial categorization'.[57]

But in debates in black cultural politics, such escape is viewed problematically, particularly if the resources deployed are of white and European origin. Atkins however undertook an active process of re-invention not only of himself, but also of his sources and the context that he worked in. The geographically and culturally alien nature of Numan and Kraftwerk was precisely what made their music useful as a tool of alienation, enabling a detached critical and creative process. Lipsitz argues that identification with the alien is a strategy that enables a reconfiguration and re-affirmation of identity, noting that

> Even when listeners and readers have been ignorant of the exact original and local meanings of …[music]… they have often displayed advanced understanding about how they could use resonances of an "unfamiliar" culture to "defamiliarise" their own culture and then "refamiliarise" themselves and others with it on the basis of the new knowledge and critical perspectives made possible by cultural contrast.[58]

Eshun, in discussing the 'Afro-Futurism' of black musicians such as Sun Ra, George Clinton, Drexciya and Cybotron suggests that these artists were not only attempting to detach themselves from traditional and dominant expectations of 'black music', they also wanted to deconstruct the notion of an essentialist black voice, arguing, '[t]he mayday signal of Black Atlantic Futurism is unrecognizability, as either Black or Music. Sonic Futurism doesn't locate you in tradition; instead it dislocates you from origins'.[59] However, though Techno arguably attempts to escape racial designation, there is simultaneously a clear racial dimension to the transformative agenda of the music. It is informed by a *progressive* desire to move beyond essentialized 'blackness'. But this is a political act that encourages *black* cultural expression to break free from what may be regarded as the conservative, self-imposed limitations and closely guarded musical borders of Hip Hop and R&B. The process of ethnic dislocation is central to Techno, but what is at stake in this transformation of black musical identities?

## Techno and the Post-Soul Aesthetic

Techno is designated 'post-soul' by Cosgrove, with Eshun suggesting it developed in a '[p]ostsoul Era ... characterized by an extreme indifference towards the human'.[60] But what are the implications in the identification of this music as the product of a postmodern era *after* the human, Black Nationalist discourse, Civil Rights, the Black Power Movement and notions of a unified black community? If Techno is produced by an African-American 'post-soul generation', what are the implications? George, and more recently Neal, have attempted to map and critique the post-soul moment, with Neal arguing that

> [The post civil rights period] … produces a post-soul intelligentsia, a generation of urban bred black intellectuals born during the waning moments of the Civil Right/Black Power movements, raised on the rhythms and harmonies of 1970s soul but having come to maturity [in the] 1980s and embracing the oppositional possibilities of urban and hip hop aesthetics,

mass media, and popular culture as vehicles for mass social praxis.[61]

Atkins and May can certainly be identified as, in Gramsci's term, *organic* intellectuals who formed a parallel critical path to the post-soul intelligentsia, but were not part of the University educated middle-class grouping Neal specifically identifies (e.g. Rose, George, bell hooks, Greg Tate and Trey Ellis). However, Techno has a tenuous relationship to the 'urban and hip hop aesthetics' invoked by Neal, in that the music being almost purely instrumental has little in the way of overt critical social or cultural commentary. After Cybotron's early Electro futurist manifestos, Techno diverged considerably from Hip Hop by remaining on the whole, vocally silent.

George suggests that the 'post-soul' moment can be mapped in an aesthetic and attitudinal transformation of African-American cultural expression, suggesting

> [In] the last 20 years or so, the tenor of African American culture has changed [from] the we-shall-overcome tradition of noble struggle, soul and gospel music, positive images, and the conventional wisdom that civil rights would translate into racial salvation ... [to] a time of goin'-for-mine materialism, secular beat consciousness, and a more diverse, fragmented, even postmodern black community.[62]

Arguably, Detroit Techno celebrates a counter-hegemonic, collective politics, but also in its solitary musical production (Atkins and May generally created their music alone and released it on their own labels) a creative individualism that does not conform to the conventions of black musical expression. However it is far from clear that this translates into the conspicuous materialism of R & B and Hip Hop artists.

Early Techno, by reaching beyond traditional ideas of black community, did result in a reframing, diversification and fragmentation of notions of 'blackness'. Trey Ellis in 1989 identified the change in the 'tenor of African American culture' as characterized by 'a New Black Aesthetic … that shamelessly borrows or reassembles across both race and class lines'. In the New Black Aesthetic, a fundamental shift in the cultural production of blackness eradicates "old definitions of blackness" that "show us the intricate, uncategorizable folks we had always known ourselves to be".[63] Although Neal and Gilroy[64] agree such a New Black Aesthetic had some evidential credibility among the black middle class intelligentsia, they both argue that Ellis is too ready to celebrate a 'progressive' and narrow field of middle-class success without recognizing the alien nature of this experience for many African Americans. As such, Neal prefers the notion 'post-soul aesthetic' (PSA) to denote a moment where diversity and postmodernity are embraced in black cultural production without suggesting that older discourses of black nationalism/community are redundant. He recognizes the real iniquities in the black American experience and the importance of examining their complex representation in Hip Hop, R & B, soul and neo-soul artists (e.g. Meshell Ndegeocello, Bilal, Jill Scott, Jaguar Wright, R. Kelly). Yet even though he pushes at the boundaries of recent Hip Hop obsessed musical and cultural analysis, in his broad discussion of the sub-genres of black American styles, Techno, which is exemplary of the PSA, fails to be acknowledged in any form.

Neal later goes on to develop the notion of a PSA by invoking Mama Soul's term, 'Newblackness' and explains this is

> a "blackness" that is defined by a radical fluidity [allowing] "conversation" within "blackness" across genders, sexualities, ethnicities, generations,

socio-economic positions, and socially constructed performances of black identity … it is the "language" of a blackness that many black folks had been afraid to embrace for a fear that somehow it was a reduction or erosion of blackness.[65]

Techno musicians in the 1980s seemed to be simultaneously engaged in a locally inflected and trans-Atlantic conversation within and beyond blackness. However, it is difficult to find any evidence that Techno directly questioned patriarchal norms or acknowledged the male dominated assumptions of its music, science fiction discourses or techno-philia. So no matter how far black science fiction cast its speculative eye, as McRobbie[66] suggests, women remained mainly on the dancefloor.

George further suggests that though there has also been a constant and distinct Black Nationalist discourse in African American Hip Hop culture, celebrating a black working class, ghetto life, he finds that

> many young-gifted-and-black post-soulers practice integration without anxiety … many attended predominantly white schools and took their access to mainstream opportunities for granted ...Their experience, especially if it was not informed by [a] romantic ghettocentric identification, makes race consciousness less central to their being.[67]

This characterization to a greater or lesser extent applies to Atkins and the pioneers of Techno. It is clear that whatever their relationship to other urban black musics in the US, they clearly felt 'race consciousness' or an overtly 'raced' identity was largely irrelevant *to their music*, though not necessarily irrelevant *to their lived experience* in the United States. The suburban upbringing of Atkins, May and Saunderson and the demarcated Detroit party scene meant that black communal solidarity was questioned and explicitly dismantled by proto-Techno. Neal could be speaking about Detroit and the first Techno generation when he argues that

> Perhaps no structural development delineates the emergence of the post-soul generation better than the postindustrial transformation of black urban spaces … [that eroded] the already precarious status of the black working class, which, coupled with the incidence of black middle-class flight, provides the impetus for the radical transformation if not demise of the traditional black public sphere … fracturing the post-soul generation…[68]

Indeed, Techno in its early elitist club culture drew away from traditional notions of a unified black community and in this way contributed to a 'fracturing of the post-soul generation'. However, proto-Techno was clearly part of a black middle-class subculture or scene that it was *of* and *in*. It was culturally and historically produced in 1980s Detroit no matter where the futurist conceptualism of Atkins and May took them. To overstate the 'post-human' dimension of early Techno that they conceptually explored is to conflate the intellectual imaginary of the music with the lived 'human' experience of 1980s Detroit. McRobbie argues that

> [Eshun] eschews the outdated conceptual world of a black politics forged in community and 'universal love'. One might legitimately ask, who is the subject

of this music if not part of some (albeit 'post-human') community or collectivity? Is it not the case that dance music has created a 'new community'?[69]

In Detroit and the early Techno scene, the 'subject of this music' was a defined, largely black, sub-community/culture with a developing infrastructure. When Techno traveled elsewhere in the late 1980s, new Techno communities and networks operating beyond US borders and across Europe developed. These were transient communities formed in the 'ecstasy' of the dance moment, through the 'socially experienced perception' of the rave experience that could be described as a 'we-feeling', 'collective corporeality' or 'Uber-Ich' – a perception of shared transcendence.[70] These temporary communities (or what Bey would call 'temporary autonomous zones'[71]) were the generator of new modes of collective perception and action, resulting in an implicit critique of everyday life and explicit political action over governmental attempts to suppress the scenes; most specifically in France and the UK.[72]

However, in the cold light of day, this festive and carnivalesque transformation of life in European Techno rave culture was only fleeting and symbolic; and though the entrepreneurial spirit of early Detroit pioneers perceptibly changed the lives of key participants (May, Atkins, Saunderson and Carl Craig among others later gained global recognition and financial success through homespun Techno production and record releases), it is debatable whether early Techno had any great effect on the lived conditions or cultural political outlook of African-American party goers. That is, the early 1980s Detroit party scene did not result in the same kind of transformational rhetoric common in discussions of 90s rave culture. Detroit's politicized and fiercely independent Underground Resistance (Jeff Mills and Mike Banks) are perhaps the exception that proves the rule.[73] When the Techno scene did develop in the USA in the 1990s, it has a predominantly white identity and did little to breach color lines.

In discussing the black/white dichotomy between early Techno and European electronic music, it is important to acknowledge Tagg's anti-essentialist arguments on the designation of any music as essentially 'black', 'Afro-American' or 'European'.[74] However, we also need to recognize that the 'incorrect' discourses that designate Techno as black, white or otherwise are the means through which participants and audiences made sense of it. For example, Techno is not acknowledged as a black genre by (m)any African-American writers on popular music, demonstrating that the black/white dichotomy firmly remains in African-American cultural discourse.[75] The continual reinforcement of this dichotomy results in elements of the African American 'community' finding it difficult to come to terms with notions of 'difference', hybridity, and integration, and as Techno is clearly produced trans-nationally and inter-culturally, it does not seem to qualify as 'black music'. If a music does not function for African American audiences as black music,[76] and if the labels who release the music of, for example, Atkins, are European (R & S - Belgium, Tresor - Germany), in what sense is this music American or black?

As such it can be also argued that 'black' Techno and 'white' electronic musicians were involved in an 'imagined community'[77] in the 1980s - a dispersed network creating a 'sonic futurscape'[78], working towards similar goals trans-nationally, inter-culturally and beyond any notion of locality – in an imagined futurist de-raced cultural sphere? Taking a global perspective, Stiegler suggests that in opening up and linking ethnic identities, Techno resulted in a 'conquest and loss of territory' and an 'irresistible process of deterritorialisation' which suspended ethnic

differences that were rooted in a territory. [79] This only really applies if we ignore the US context in favor of the European development of Techno culture.

So in what sense can we 're-territorialise' Techno in discussing its history and American identity? Though Detroit was Techno's 'home', how is its identity inflected when we acknowledge that Detroit is traversed by global media, and economic and cultural flows that disturb and subvert notions of territorialisation and cultural/ethnic specificity?

## Detroit Techno? cultural identity in a globalising world

Techno is the perfect travelling music …[80]

To argue that early Techno did not 'belong' to Detroit is not an attempt to claim Techno for Europe or to wrest it from the pioneers of the music. It is an attempt to suggest that theories of the 'information society' and Toffler's 'post-industrial' Third Wave central to Cybotron, Atkins' and May's early conceptualism, and to theories of globalisation, raise questions as to how and where cultural production can be located in a globalizing world. Gilroy acknowledges the importance of reconsidering the origins and routes of culture asking,

How are we to think critically about artistic products and aesthetic codes which, though they may be traceable back to one distinct location, have been changed … by their displacement, relocation, or dissemination through networks of communication and cultural exchange?[81]

In the case of Detroit Techno, we can trace how music 'outside' was adopted, adapted, 'refashioned and given new meaning'[82] within a specific location and historical juncture by Atkins and May. However, we also need to recognize that the sources of the music were both global and local, and that Detroit was obviously not immune to developments in emerging global communications and resultant cultural flows. Furthermore, due to the complexity of these flows it makes little sense to posit Techno as either African American or European. It contains elements of both, and through its influences, has connections to a complex range of musical practices across the fields of popular musical creativity. Therefore it is important to consider Connell and Gibson's argument that

Everywhere music is played and consumed, it contains multiple networks. Cities are nodes in international media scapes – centres of production and retailing – and hosts to multi-cultural communities and their diverse musical texts and spaces.[83]

Due to Techno's hybrid origins, and its complex relationship to issues of race it is difficult to specify its ethnic identity. However, despite the inherent networked complexity of contemporary culture, music has demonstrable points of origin and scenes that clearly develop idiosyncratic identities.[84] Connell and Gibson suggest that although musical production is embedded in 'international media scapes' and global cultural networks it is also simultaneously geographically located. They argue that

Despite globalisation, transnationalisation, international migration and the

commercial underpinning of music, each musical genre, in every place, required at least some local identification, and had its own internal musical structure, its particular technology, performative contexts, and social and political environment.[85]

Considering this, Techno's identity arguably exists somewhere between its Detroit origins and its contemporary global reach. Despite its American origins, it is still is a minority taste in comparison to R&B and Hip Hop. It could be argued that Techno as a widely understood genre came to fruition in the early 1990s in the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany[86] and its musical elaboration in this context further removes it from its original 'performative contexts' and 'social and political environment'. As such, it is easy to understand how American audiences may view Techno as a European music.

In 1997 Atkins argued that African American audiences think of Techno as essentially white and European, and his exasperation with this suspicion of musical forms that do not conform to traditional templates and expectations is marked. In his statement that black American's have 'been brainwashed for so many years that when a change comes up we still act like we've got chains on …',[87] Atkins clearly locates his own artistic struggles within the wider context of the black American experience, suggesting physical shackles have been replaced by intellectual intransigence. This obduracy is the result of a brainwashing process about which Atkins is vague, but the implication is that it is internally adopted by African Americans as much as externally imposed by 'white America'.

## 'Ocean to Ocean': Conclusion

In examining Techno's origins, it is important we move beyond utopian claims for new color-blind social formations or communities that were made in the European rave scene, so that we can analyze more effectively the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the US origins of Techno in Detroit. Arguments that Techno opened up new hybrid, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural identities are barely born out when the cool reception given to Techno by black and white audiences in the USA is taken into account. Techno's futurist theoretical conceptualism cannot escape the lived experience of African-Americans in the USA or that of its pioneers. It is clearly the product of a post-soul moment peculiar to the post-industrial late twentieth century. As such, in considering black science fiction and Techno, we should not be tempted to inflate the transformative potential of its escapist rhetoric. We should acknowledge that wherever Techno's sights were set, it was always an attempt to make sense of the American post-soul and postmodern experience through music. Above all, Techno was embedded in wider debates in black cultural politics in the period, and this tells us a great deal about the continuing racial polarization of American popular culture. Despite the widespread appeal of Hip Hop and R&B for white audiences, the intractable boundaries of these mainstream African American popular musics arguably result in forms closed to the potential of cultural transformation through embracing hybridity, inter-cultural exchange and the fluidity of identity. Techno may be a model of such fluidity that relates to its status as an emerging 'world' music, but it has yet to be widely acknowledged as a potentially radical African-American music in its homeland.

## Footnotes

1. Anon., 'Techno: Detroit's Gift to the World', Exhibition web site publicity text, http://www.detroithistorical.org/promo-techno/index.asp.

2. See Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture,* London: Picador, 1998; Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction,* London: Quartet, 1998; Dan Sicko, *Techno Rebels: The Renegades of Electronic Funk,* New York: Billboard, 1999; Tim Barr, *Techno: the Rough Guide,* London: Rough Guides, 2000.

3. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock,* London: Pan, 1971. and *The Third Wave,* London: Pan, 1981.

4. The nature of the 'raced' environment of early techno is highlighted in May's description of racial antagonism in Detroit clubs - particularly at the Liedernacht club, when trying to introduce 'black underground sounds' to a predominantly white, Anglophile, indie audience. See Stuart Cosgrove, 'Seventh City Techno', *The Face,* Issue 97, May, 1988, p.88.

5. In 1997, Atkins' stated 'It was crazy to see that many white kids dancing to the music I was playing. I thought this could never happen in the US … that thing in itself blew my mind'. Mike Shallcross, 'From Detroit to Deep Space', *The Wire,* Issue 161, July, 1997, p. 21.

6. Cosgrove 1988.

7. See Nelson George, *Buppies, B-Boys, Baps and Bohos: Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture,* New York: Harper Collins, 1992.; Mark Antony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic,* London: Routledge, 2002. and *Songs in the Key of Black Life: A Rhythm and Blues Nation,* London: Routledge, 2003.

8. David Cantwell, "Detroit City': The anatomy of a record', *The Journal of Country Music,* Vol 23.2, 2003, p. 43.

9. Jerry Herron, *AfterCulture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993, p. 203.

10. Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: the Postwar Fate of US Cities*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 230.

11. Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit,* London: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 244.

12. Susan Welch, Lee Sigelman, Timothy Bledsoe, and Michael Combs, *Race and Place: Race Relations in an American City [Detroit]*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

13. Mike Rubin, 'Techno: Days of Future Past' in P. Shapiro (ed.). *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music - Throbbing Words on Sound*, New York: Caipirinha Productions, 2000 p. 112.

14. Smith, p. 10.

15. Beauregard, p. 238.

16. Herron, pp. 14-15.

17. Sicko, p. 60.

18. George 1992, p. 174.

19. Smith, p.11.

20. See Tricia Rose, 'A Style Nobody Can Deal With: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop' in A. Ross and T. Rose (eds.), *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture,* London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 71-88.; Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture,* New York, Basic Civitas, 2002.; Neal 2002 and 2003; George 1992 and *Hip Hop America,* London: Penguin, 1998. The lack of any acknowledgement of Techno in the writing of African-American authors is strong evidence of its cultural marginalization.

21. The lack of success of electronic music in the US market until the emergence of the 'Electronica' genre in the late 1990s is evidence of this ambivalence. UK bands Prodigy, Fatboy Slim, Underworld and the Chemical Brothers were successful in the mid-1990s in the USA. These largely white 'Electronica' artists were influenced by Atkins or May's early Techno releases.

22. Reynolds, p.5.

23. Sicko, pp. 39-42.

24. See Sicko, pp. 87-91; Simon Trask, 'Future Shock: Juan Atkins interview', *Music Technology*, December, 1988. http://www.forcefield.org/mt_ja.html.

25. This was the first article to acknowledge 'Detroit Techno' in the UK, though it had been played in clubs and dance music radio from 1986 onwards, particularly by northern DJs such as Stu Allen in Manchester.

26. The Streetsounds mix albums, released by Morgan Khan, made Electro widely available to black and white British audiences. Their effect on British youth culture has parallels with the import of R&B records into Liverpool in the early 1960s. However, white British soul fans whether 'traditionalists' or 'jazz-funkers', despised Electro. They did not appreciate that Electro drew from street funk, hip hop, Latin music, Jazz fusion and British synthesizer music. Arguably it was closer to previous Afro-American fusions than the seventies disco and soul preferred by sections of the white soul audience.See David Toop, 'The Beatbox Bites Back', *The Face,* Issue 49, May, 1984, pp.45-49.

27. Reynolds, p. 56.

28. Reynolds, pp. 9-10.

29. Mark Sinker, 'Loving the Alien', *The Wire*, Issue 96, February, 1992. http://www.thewire.co.uk/out/0598_1.htm.

30. Eshun, p.109.

31. Eshun, pp. 100-101.

32. See also Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race,* London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2000, pp. 327-356., also indicates that the African-American fascination with science fiction themes and iconography is central to the discourse of the Black Nationalist doctrine of the Nation of Islam and the writings of Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan.

33. Julian Jonker, 'Black Secret Technology (The Whitey on the Moon Dub)', *CTHEORY,* Vol 25, No. 3, Article 117, 2002.

34. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness,* London: Verso, 1993.

35. Jonker 2002.

36. Various Artists, *Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit,* London: Virgin/10 Records, DIXG 75, 1988 (vinyl album)

37. Cosgrove, p. 88.

38. Shallcross, p. 19.

39. Sinker 1992.

40. Cosgrove, p. 86.

41. Shallcross, p. 21.

42. George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place,* London: Verso, 1994, p. 162.

43. Neal 2003, p. 5.

44. Ricky Vincent, *Funk: the Music, the People and the Rhythm of The One,* New York: St. Martins Griffin, 1995, p. 214.

45. Neal 2002, p. 6.

46. Brian Eno qtd. in Eric Tamm, *Brian Eno: His Music and the Vertical Colour of Sound,* New York: Da Capo, 1995, 18-19.

47. Gilroy 1993, p. 97.

48. Sean Bidder, *Pump Up the Volume,* London: Channel 4, 2001, p. 81.

49. Barr, p. 126.

50. Pascal Bussy, *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music,* London: SAF, 2001, p. 115.

51. Cosgrove, p. 88.

52. Neal 2002, pp. 6-7.

53. Village Voice qtd. in James Truman, 'Adam Ant and the Selling of Blitz Culture', *The Face,* Issue 15, July, 1981, p. 6.

54. Afrika Bambaataa qtd in Martin James, *Fatboy Slim: Funk Soul Brother,* London: Sanctuary 2002, p. 62.

55. Taylor 2001.

56. Trask 1988.

57. Angela McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music,* London: Routledge,1999, p.153.

58. Lipsitz, p.161.

59. Eshun, p. 00[-001].

60. Eshun, p. 00[-005].

61. Neal 2002, p. 102.

62. George 1992, p. 1.

63. Trey Ellis qtd. in Neal 2002, p.111.

64. Gilroy 1993, p. 236.

65. Neal 2003, p. 13.

66. McRobbie, pp. 144-148.

67. George 1992, p. 6.

68. Neal 2002, p. 120.

69. McRobbie, p.152.

70. Tim Becker and Raphael Woebs, "Back to the Future': Hearing, rituality and Techno', *World of Music,* 41 (1), 1999, p. 70.

71. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z: the Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism.*New York: Semiotext(e)., 1991.

72. See Michel Gaillot, *Multiple Meaning Techno: An Artistic and Political Laboratory of the Present,* Paris: Dis Voir, 1998.; Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, E., *Discographies: Dance, Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound,* London: Routledge, 1999.

73. Sicko, pp. 141-151.

74. See Philip Tagg, 'Open Letter: 'black music', 'Afro-American music' and 'European music'', *Popular Music,* 8 (3), 1989, pp. 285-298.

75. Vincent, p. 214-215, explicitly claims disco and its appropriation by black musicians made black music 'whiter' and contributed to the widespread late 1970s success of disco as opposed to black funk. George suggested this was 'a retreat from the beauty of blackness' (qtd. in Vincent, p. 210). Vincent says this was to the detriment both of funk and rock music, and therefore arguably supports a segregationist perspective.

76. Portia Maultsby, 'West African influences and Retentions in US Black Music: A sociological study', in I. Jackson (ed.). *More than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians,*Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985, pp. 25-58.

77. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities:Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism,*London: Verso, 1983.

78. Sean Albiez, 'Sounds of Future Past: from Neu! to Numan' in T Phleps and R Von Appen (eds.), *Pop Sounds: Klangtexturen in der Pop und Rockmusik,* Bielefelder, Germany: Transcript-    Verlag, 2003.

79. Stiegler qtd. in Gaillot, p. 40.

80. Jon Savage, 'Machine Soul: A History of Techno', *Village Voice: Rock and Roll Quarterly Supplement,* Summer, 1993. http://www.music.hyperreal.org/library/machine_soul.html.

81. Gilroy 1993, p. 80.

82. Jon Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place,* London: Routledge, 2003, p. 191.

83. Connell and Gibson, p. 160.

84. Tony Mitchell(1996), *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania,* London: Leicester University Press, 1996. and *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA,* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.; Andy Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

85. Connell and Gibson, p. 191.

86. Sicko, pp.171-178.

87. Shallcross, p. 22.

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