Massive Attack's first album was a "record of rebellion, its chin smugly forward; its noncommittal cross-racial dynamic a thumbed nose at the British popular culture that still retained the trace of racial and social cultural divisions."

Wheaton, R.J. (2011) *DUMMY*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 219.

Why is *Blue Lines* such a culturally important record?

There is an irony not to be overlooked in the fact that whilst *Blue Lines* was celebrated as the dance album of the 90s its creators exploded all boundaries and stylistic paradigms attached to the very genre of dance music. As Grant Marshall, aka Daddy G, explained in an interview with NME: "we're outside of categories and that's because where we come from."[1] The sensory beauty of this record relates to the authenticity in which Massive Attack reflect the cultural, social, racial, economic, political and geographic circumstances of their own backgrounds. As I will outline, this masterpiece is connected to its geographic location; its sonic texture and expressions not to be understood without knowing the relevant historic context of urban life in the 80s and early 90s of England; Thatcher's neoliberalism, emerging social and political struggles as well as the impact of punk and hip-hop and their associated rebellious attitudes.

[1] Kessler, 1998, *THIS is THE STORY OF THE BLUES, NME*, London: IPC Specialist Group, Issue April 11th, p. 33

Blue Lines, amongst other things, is a sonic answer to the history of its birthplace, the city of Bristol. As one of the biggest British perpetrators and profiteers of the slave trade consequently inherited a racist atmosphere to a city with a huge African-Caribbean population.

I will frame the reasons why this album is still referred to as a landmark and a "signpost to the future" (Robb, 2012) as it opened the door for new artists and music to come through and show how all the important 'ingredients' that came together when Massive Attack emerged with their seminal work are interconnected to reflective, politically conscious musicians. I argue that, while there are aspects that confirm some of Theodor W. Adorno's critical theory, *Blue Lines* is everything but "trash served up for the ostensible or real needs of the masses" (2001, p. 44) and does not represent a compatible blue print for Adorno's critique of the Culture Industry. Expanding on Marx's analysis of material relationships inherent to capitalism, Adorno dismantled popular music, dependent on commercial prospect, as superficial art. The culture industry, so Adorno, works on the "pretence of individualism which necessarily increases in proportion to the liquidation of the individual" (2001, p. 44).

Bristol's involvement in slavery as a port city, located on Britain's west coast with sea access via river Avon, weighs ever-present in the city's infrastructure. Its history is intertwined heavily with the social background from which the band evolved as well as with two of the three founding Massive Attack

members, Andrew Vowels and Grant Marshall, family history (Johnson, 1996, p. 90).

Between 1698 and 1807 merchant owned shipping companies like the Royal African Company were "involved in a triangular slave trade" (Whiteley, Bennett, Hawkins, 2004, p.71) between Africa, the Caribbean and Bristol to trade goods for slaves and then trade these into money in turn.

Bristol was, according to Dresser's findings, for a certain period "the nation's number one slaving port" (2007, p. 28); deeply involved in crimes against humanity which resulted in an estimated seven to ten million African slaves who were forcibly carried across the Atlantic (Johnson, 1996, p. 35). Many of the streets, squares and buildings, still to this day, bare traces of the past by wearing names of slave traders and profiteers (Johnson, 1996, p. 33) whose financial wealth transformed the city's importance within the country as well as its architectural landscape.

The story of *Blue Lines* begins with Bristol's St Pauls district, a "Shanty Town", which "for those stable law-abiding West Indians who still live there…is regarded as a low-status area to be moved out of as quickly as possible" (Pryce, 1986, p. 25). Jamaican academic Pryce's social study, poignantly titled Endless Pressure, paints a gloomy picture of a segregated community increasingly politically influenced by Rastafarianism and militant reggae which attracted teenagers in "their psychic disorientation and confusion in the face of hostility and rejection and their growing alienation from white society" (1986, p. 136).

On April 2nd 1980, in reaction to police raiding the 'Black and White Café' (Johnson, 1996, p. 41) in search for drugs and illegal alcohol, St Pauls exploded into a full scale riot that lasted into the night, saw 25 police vehicles trashed and burned, fifty police personal injured, buildings burnt and damaged and an estimated half a million Pounds of damage costs counted in the aftermath (Johnson, 1996, p. 42). "A notable feature", as Johnson (1996, p. 40) describes, "was that a number of white people were involved, many of them punks" as well as some of the people who were later part of the DJ and hip-hop scene that would become the stepping stone from which Massive would rise.

Asked about the riot in an interview with CRACK magazine (Frost, et al. 2012) Robert Del Naja's answer gave insight as to how this incident shaped their perspective: "I was only young and it was like this mythological moment. Growing up in punk and *White Riot* and The Clash, the idea of chucking bricks and breaking things seemed the way forward." Del Naja, aka 3D, captured the atmosphere, one which would consequently spread from Bristol's St Pauls to spark a whole series of race riots in Brixton, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool. Defamed by press and government (Joshua, Wallace, Booth, 1983, p. 111), these revolts were as much a response to daily racism with police forces by African-Caribbean communities in 1980s England, as a class conflict to Thatcherism and untamed capitalism in times of high unemployment, poor housing and recession (Joshua, Wallace, Booth, 1983, p. 111/188).

In Bristol, to pacify any further resistance, schemes like art programs were made available to St Pauls' youth, which allowed them to learn new skills. Named *Freedom City*, it was an opportunity to meet up with people and was "certainly crucial in the city's musical infrastructure" (Robb, 1999, p. 171).

Fronted by bands such as the Pop Group, Rip Rig and Panic and Pigbag, the music scene at this time included a variety of styles such as punk, new wave, lovers' rock, jazz-funk, two tone, reggae and dub. In order to stay on top of it all, one had to frequent the Clifton based club, the 'Dug Out.' This location with its ethnic mix of "Rastas, African-Caribbeans, Clifton-Trendies, Punks, Soul Boys and Girls" (Whiteley, Bennett, Hawkins, 2004, p. 72) played a significant role for what was to become known as the Bristol sound. Whilst it was not a place where social boundaries were dissolved (Johnson, 1996, p. 53), it was a place where people were not omitted because of their origin, race or gender identity and functioned as a melting pot for all styles of music that were relevant.

Del Naja recalls impressions of his time there as a young punk: "almost dangerous and exotic", this was the "sort of club you'd go to Monday to Saturday" (Johnson, 1996, p. 51).

Punk was a big thing in Bristol at the start of the eighties. Combined with the roots-reggae of the West-Indian community, this was Bob Marley's "punky reggae party" and "The Clash's Westway dream come true" as Robb describes (1999, p. 168). The impact of bands such as "Crass, Flux of Pink Indians, The Subhumans, and Conflict" (Whiteley, Bennett and Hawkins, 2005,

p. 71) was felt in the development and formation of squatting and social movements. From Anarchist politics to housing co-operatives, from vegetarian and vegan groups, Hunt Saboteurs and the Animal Liberation Front, - the soundtracks of a revolutionary ethos caught the ears of Tricky and Dave McDonald and others, who were to become members of Massive Attack, Portishead or Smith and Mighty (Whiteley, Bennett, Hawkins, 2004, p. 74).

But a new, exciting style of music characterized by its impetus of breakbeats found its way across the Atlantic and made a speedy entry to the Bristol music scene and clubs. Tricia Rose assembles hip-hop as "a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity and community" (1994, p. 21).

Adorno's critique would, assumedly, taking into consideration he wrote theories pre-dating the emergence of hip-hop, elaborate on what he said in relation to jazz. In jazz "the break can be nothing other than a disguised cadence" (Adorno, Simpson 1941, p. 25), referring to a cult of the machine "that cannot but take root in the form of a fluctuating uneasiness somewhere in the personality of the obedient" (Adorno, Simpson, 1941, p. 41).

From Adorno's position the Culture Industry (2001, pp. 98-106) is a separate unit purposefully turning cultural expressions, categorized as high and low art, into standardized commodities within capitalist systems. Hip-hop, with its

machine-imitating programmed beats could be, following Adorno's line of thought, suitably aligned to his analysis, as it is, like all popular music, identifiable by its exchangeable parts, pseudo-individualism[2] and non-confrontational, easy digestible – and therefore easy forgettable – musical properties. Consequently this music is not even serving as a promise of happiness, but merely as light entertainment and relief (Bernstein, Adorno, 2001, p.7), one that "is sought as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again" (Adorno, Horkheimer, 1999, p. 137).

However, as Rose (1994, pp. 71-72) argues, "repetition cannot be reduced to a repressive, industrial force" or sufficiently understood by locating it "solely as a by-product of the needs of industrialization." Therefor "Adorno's massive misreading of the jazz break" (Rose, 1994, pp. 71-72) invites a mischaracterization of hip-hop. And whilst Rose does not suggest "that black culture supersedes the effects of commodification", she stresses "all-too-frequent readings of repetition that apply and naturalize dominant cultural principles and consequently colonize and silence black approaches..." (1994, pp. 71-72).

Picking up "the most diverse music" he had heard through the open window of a passing car on Bristol's streets, 3D, as interviewed by mixmag, remembers the profound experience that instigated an immediate visit to a record shop

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[2] Adorno, Simpson, 1941. *On Popular Music*. [pdf] Available at: http://audio.uni-lueneburg.de/seminarwebseiten/adorno/material/On%20Popular%20Music.pdf pp. 24-25

called Revolver that led to the creation of *Blue Lines*.[3] Approaching this "big, intimidating sort of guy…behind the counter", Del Naja asked to be served this "mad music" of which he "didn't even know what it was called", he described his adrenalin flow about these "mad beats" (Petridis, 1998, pp. 80-83).

This introduction to Daddy G, the guy working behind the counter, led to 3D becoming a part of the Wild Bunch crew in which Marshall was involved.

The Wild Bunch formed in 1982 around the scene that had developed at the Dug Out. Its members comprised Miles Johnson, Nellee Hooper, Grant Marshall, Robert Del Naja, Claude Williams and Andrew Vowels (Mushroom). Marshall was already established as a regular DJ at the Dug Out. As Johnson describes, the Wild Bunch was "Bristol's first New York-style sound system crew" (1996, p.80).

Performing at illegal parties in abandoned warehouses, not only brought the Wild Bunch posse into contact with the police, but earned them a constant following plus a legendary status which returned recognition in the shape of booked gigs, for example at the St Pauls carnival (Johnson, 1996, p. 80). Johnson argues the importance of the cultural geographic context by highlighting that what "began as the loose affiliation…had connections which substantially pre-dated the emergence of hip-hop, and their sound system reflected this, mixing reggae, funk and electro together quite naturally" (1996, p. 58).

[3] Petridis, 1998. from dusk til dawn. *mixmag*, issue 83, 04/98, pp. 80-83

The culture of sound systems, decoded by Les Back (1996, cited in Hesmondhalg and Melville, 2002, p. 88), derived from "the rejection of black migrant workers by white working-class leisure institutions" which "fostered the creation of autonomous black cultural spaces." Originating in Jamaica and used as entertainment at "all manner of Caribbean community events from weddings and christening to "sound clashes"", the "massive hi-fi" places a strong emphasis on "the production of booming, powerful, syncopated bass runs…"[4]

Turning the streets and other public spaces into locations for their performances, the Wild Bunch exemplified hip-hop's "ability to proclaim impromptu communal gatherings" and by doing so - "in atmospheric space that in centuries past was militarized" – "in the face of official authority, of municipal legislation" communicated its radicalism (Wheaton, 2011, p.64).

Part of the growing reputation, Bristol's main hip-hop crew of the 1980s earned up and down the country, was their memorable visual presentation which made Del Naja, already a "noted graffiti artist", a vital asset (Johnson, 1996, p. 80).

In 1986 the Dug Out would lose its licence. As Del Naja reasons (Johnson, 1996, p. 51), the Dug Out posed a threat to traders and police because it "brought black people out of St Pauls into Clifton."

[4] Hesmondhalgh and Melville, 2002. *Urban Breakbeat Culture – Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom*. In: Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA. pp. 88-89

A year later, during a tour to Japan going wrong, the Wild Bunch's ties were starting to tear and neither releasing a couple of singles, most notably "The Look of Love", nor signing a deal with Island records could prevent the inevitable break up.[5] During the summer of 1988 Daddy G released 'Any Love', a "simple, effective and typically Bristol reading of an old Rufus song" (Farsides, 2002); for the first time the name Massive Attack appeared.

As the decade came to a close *Blue Lines'* time was almost nigh. Its future collective of creators not only took the experience of years of honing their skills as DJs and rappers, but also the attitudes and ethos of their punk roots forward.

The beginning of the new decade was marked by another explosion of anger directed at Thatcher's latest round of attacks on the "deceitful, inferior and bloody-minded" (Jones, 2012, p.47) working class by introducing the Poll Tax. Unlike 10 years before, where the rioting migrant communities could be marginalised and isolated from class solidarity, this time the Iron Lady miscalculated the power of a unified people; the riot in London, a nation's response to unbearable economic pressure finally boiling over during a 200.000 plus demonstration on March 30th 1990, signified the start of Thatcher's downfall.[6]

Musically Britain was under the spell of bands like the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays, while Primal Scream released *Screamadelica* and The Clash's

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[5] Farsides, 2002. *THE WILD BUNCH – Story Of A Sound System / Mixed by DJ Milo*, Sleevenote, London: Strut

[6] Burns, 1992. *poll tax rebellion*. Stirling: AK Press. pp. 20/87/173

"Should I Stay or Should I Go" climbed up the charts, the rise of Britpop still had to wait for a few years – it was Massive Attack's time!

"Daydreaming", the first single released as a band in 1990, featured "Shara Nelson on vocals and newcomer Tricky's rapping" and was, as Robb illustrates (1999, p. 173), an introduction to "some of the key faces on to the nineties battlefield." Whilst 3D and Tricky "drift on a stream of consciousness, quoting from Fiddler on the Roof and the Beatles", they are, interprets Reynolds (1998, p. 321), "floating "like helium" above the hyperactive "trouble and strife" of everyday life."

Gathering from the rubble after the Wild Bunch collapsed; it was Nenneh Cherry's husband McVey, that Del Naja, Marshall and Vowels signed as their manager and a contract with Virgin that allowed them to get started (Jonson, 1996, p. 80).

Cherry, successful singer and friend of the group, can be seen as the instigator and driving force behind the release of their debut album. Daddy G's remarks, recovered from a *Blue Lines* review in the Observer (Thompson, 2004), give insight into the circumstances surrounding the recording of the album:

> "We were lazy Bristol twats. It was Nenneh Cherry who kicked our arses and got us in the studio. We recorded a lot at her house, in her baby's room."

Blue Lines' magic, as Johnson (1996, p.11) summarizes poignantly, works because it envelopes:

> "Dance music that you can actually listen to; hip-hop beats whose customary urgency is deconstructed into dreamy, erotic soundscapes; machine-made rhythms chock full of body, heart and soul; lyrics that transcend tired genre conventions to respond playfully to language by shooting the breeze, passing the buck, taking the piss."

The album opener "Safe From Harm", its bass line and riff sampled from Jazz drummer Billy Cobham's fusion album *Stratus*, is a perfect example of Massive Attack's ingenuity and individuality. Spreading unease, Del Naja's rapping "I was lookin' back to see if you were lookin' back at me to see me lookin' back at you" intertwined with "Shara Nelson's Aretha Franklin Motown-stained voice" (Robb, 1999, p. 173) offering retreat in the face of an urban night time scenario that sees "gunmen", "maniacs" and "terrorists infectious and dangerous" (Crispin, 2003, pp. 89-95) , the track crosses genre boundaries and not only puts up a front to dance music's "party-minded functionalism" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 321) but also contradicts Adorno's framing.

"Safe From Harm" does not encourage listeners to go out partying; its lyrical content refuses to serve up easy-listening cliché in that its assertive self-constraint vibe juxtaposes association to dance genres like acid house.

One of the album's most obvious characteristics is its slow tempo, also referred to as downbeat. Daddy G's analysis of a "dance music for the head

instead of the feet" places Massive Attack's music in opposition to Adorno's critique whereby "the standardized meter of dance music" demands a collective response in which listeners "immediately express their desire to obey" (Adorno, Simpson, 1941, p.40).

Blue Lines' amalgamation of varied styles with a heavy draw on dub reggae reflects what was relevant in the city's nightclubs, such as the former Dug Out, where "no one danced very much and the dominant mode of listening was a reflective one, an ear cocked to the speakers of the sound system" (Johnson, 1996, p. 197). Johnson concurs that this bass heavy music provided "a rhythm to live by rather than dance to, a pulse that could be internalized by the listener and attended…through nodding heads and tapping feet", thus it was natural, he argues, that the first productions of "the Bristol sound" were adapting a slower pace (1996, p. 197).

Reggae's part on the album was augmented by the involvement of legendary Jamaican singer Horace Andy whose voice has ever since been a trademark for Massive Attack's sound. Andy contributes a heartfelt warm vocal texture that is a perfect embellishment for the space left within the music, exemplified best by "Hymn Of The Big Wheel".

Another reference to Jamaica's musical heritage was "Five Man Army", whose bass line was sampled from a reggae song with the same title. Here though, the band's emphasis shifted as it was used as template to rap over. Del Naja remembers the experimental recording process with "Five Man

Army" being "a total system echo", "here's the instrumental, here's the bass line, everyone take it in turns" (Johnson, 1996, p. 116).

"Five Man Army" was a jam, "introducing what is to be the highest point of British rap thus far" (Johnson, 1996, p. 11), placing Bristol's west coast accent firmly on the map of hip-hop. All of the founding band members' vocals are rhythmically melting with the voices of Tricky and Claude "Willie Wee" Williams whilst Andy reminds the listener on the song's underlying reggae foundation.[7]

The utilization of space for the music's core to project atmosphere signifies another *Blue Lines* idiosyncrasy. As Wheaton (2011, p. 38) rounds up, Massive Attack's drum sample on "Five Man Army" takes the "start of Al Green's "I'm Glad You're Mine" and allies it to a dub bassline, a transformative contrast to the hip-hop context in which the break is usually used" and highlights again the band's ability to seemingly dissolve genre limitations.

One track which stands out above all though, whilst epitomizing *Blue Lines'* extraordinary sound aesthetic best, is "Unfinished Symphony." Shara Nelson excels in a soundscape of "epic soul", "the string orchestra sawing away" against her "impassioned singing of 'a soul without a mind, with a body without a heart', before rising into a wonderfully overblown crescendo and then dying away again into pure sound" (Johnson, 1996, p. 11).

Here again Del Naja offers a glimpse on the procedure:

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[7] EMI records, 2009. *Massive Attack.* [online] Available at: http://massiveattack.com/wiki/index.php/Blue_Lines [Accessed 25 March 13]

> "Mushroom would be on the turntables cutting some crazy beat and Shara just started singing this song which she called 'Kiss and Tell' (which became 'Unfinished Symphony'), which was not really happening..." (Johnson, 1996, p. 116).

He refers to it as matter of "piecing it together like a jigsaw" and then "it's like you take the bits apart, find the accidents in it and then deliberate with them" (Johnson, 1996, p. 116).

Blue Lines, to a large part, is an album whose production relied on the technique of sampling sounds, bass lines, and beats. Sampling, so argues Wheaton (2011, p. 138),

> "is so radical in its removal of materials from their original contexts, that the vinyl crackles and artefacts are necessary to remind us that it does come from an identifiable timeline."

Whilst Wheaton (2011, p. 139) accepts that "aesthetic dislocation is now the norm", a postmodern perspective would support Alan Lomax's view, cited by Weisethaunet and Lindberg (2010, p. 469), that "our western mass-production and communication systems are inadvertently destroying the languages, traditions…and creative styles that once gave every people and every locality a distinctive character…"

In light of this, *Blue Lines'* techniques can be synchronized to Adorno's (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 125) hypothesis whereby the details in popular music

are deciphered as “cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types” who only seem to change.

However, this application is inadequate to categorize the remaining sonic layers of *Blue Lines*. The experimental, DIY- style production combined with the playful, improvised rapping in addition to 3D’s cryptic, fragmented lyricism - “I find myself writing lyrics…without even an idea how the melody of the song might work with it, and it’s all abstracted” (Johnson, 1996, p. 118) - do not reinforce Adorno’s claim (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 125) of “ready-made clichés to be slotted in anywhere.”

Another deviation from normative genre abiding transcript is the way Massive Attack introduced whispering into the context of hip-hop, a tradition defined by “an act of resistance…that can be heard from the margins where groups and individuals are removed from power” (Whiteley, Bennett, Hawkins, 2004, p. 9). The quiet voices, led by Del Naja, are audible on tracks like “Safe From Harm”, “Blue Lines”, “Five Man Army” and “Daydreaming.”

Whilst *Blue Lines’* lyrical content does not offer much clues to their ethos and political views, Massive Attack’s off-record activities do speak loud and clear. From actively participating in the CND’s campaign against the war in Iraq[8] to critiquing capitalism and supporting the Occupy movement, from criticising Bristol’s ‘Festival of the Sea’ for the city’s refusal to “acknowledge its slave heritage” (Johnson, 1996, p. 25) to publicly boycotting Bristol’s biggest music

[8] EMI records, 2009. *No War On Iraq 2002*. [online] Available at: http://massiveattack.com/wiki/index.php/No_War_On_Iraq_2002

venue, Colston Hall, for still paying, by virtue of its name, tribute to a slave trader (Whiteley, Bennett, Hawkins, 2005, p. 71). This is a band that differentiates itself from most of their counterparts by displaying a collective conscious that has been informed by their personal socio-geographic and ethnic backgrounds.

3D's graffiti skills, named as an influence on his own work by Banksy, have long been used by Massive Attack to communicate their politics: the album sleeve of their 2010 release *Heligoland*, for example, displays art, as well as knowledge of history, referencing Minstrelsy and slave ship plans[9]; the use of a big multi-media screen displaying facts and figures of the situation of Palestinians after 2008's Gaza war during benefit gigs for the Hoping Foundation (as witnessed by myself)…

Blue Lines' success, described as "the first album of the 21st century that arrived a decade early" (Robb, 2012) for the intelligent use of sampling – whilst Massive lent ideas they did not cover - and its accurate reflection of early nineties urban social and economic conditions in the UK, made by a band of untrained musicians, owes itself foremost to its distinct identity.

Blue Lines' critical acclaim includes an Award for Best British Dance Act in 1996 and saw voter polls, conducted by a number of music and TV related media in 1997, celebrating it as "the 21st "greatest album of all time.""[10] Guardian and NME reviews join in a multitude of accolades rating *Blue Lines*

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[9] EMI records, 2009. *Heligoland.* [online] Available at: http://massiveattack.com/wiki/index.php/Heligoland
[10] EMI, 2009. *Blue Lines*. [online] Available at: http://massiveattack.com/wiki/index.php/Blue_Lines

as “perhaps the greatest British soul record ever made” (Petridis, 2012) whilst “Unfinished Symphony” had been nominated for a BRIT Award as best single in 1991.

Wheaton (2011, p. 179) stresses that “it is next to impossible detangle the varied influences of the stronger formative downtempo artists” like Massive Attack, Portishead and Tricky had on others, but that a strong influence is felt “upon a generation of producers including Blockhead, RJD2 and Danger Mouse.” The band’s impact can also be evaluated by references in the form of Tina Turner’s cover of “Unfinished Symphony” or the list of musicians cuing to have their albums re-mixed such as Madonna, U2 and Garbage (Robb, 1999, p. 174). The rise and success (Johnson, 1996, p. 14) of Portishead’s debut *Dummy* and Tricky’s *Maxinquaye*, as well as their respective careers, are directly linked to the emergence of *Blue Lines.*

In the wake of these albums the phrase of the ‘Bristol sound’ was coined which resulted in legions of music industry personal, A&R and journalists alike, swarming Bristol. Their search to identify “the happening scene that must have given rise to the music” (Johnson, 1996, p. 27) culminated in the birth of a new genre dubbed ‘trip-hop.’

The musicians associated with this term, designed by the industry, though refused the enforced labelling of their sound. The substantial creation of music, mostly void of meaning or expression, trying to profit in the slipstream of *Blue Lines*’ success by “advancing trip-hop armies” (Johnson, 1996, p. 17) led to another genre term, ‘chill out’ music.

Here is where Adorno's critique of commodification applies, as both industry and music confirm "the assembly-line character of the culture industry, the synthetic, planned method of turning out its products…suited to advertising" (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 163).

In stark contrast stays *Blue Lines*, a decade defining record, which, as Wheaton (2011, p. 38) sums up, "retains an edge and a charm entirely of its own", an eclectic piece of music that survives its imitators and reaches into the future because it's authentic articulation.

With their debut Massive Attack elevated African-Caribbean cultural expression, one which denies to be silenced in its affront of Bristol's and Britain's post-colonial heritage in the face of institutionalised racism.

It is difficult to appraise Adorno's evaluation of *Blue Lines*. Watson's (2011, p. 21) interpretation that "Adorno defined 'the predominance of an abstractly maintained pulse, the strong beat, and its negative retention in syncopation' as a derivative of tonality, and therefore another paradigm that must be exploded" helps here. I imagine that he would view it as another example of the culture industry. Adorno's critique would point out that "distinctions are emphasized and extended" but that the overall is just a particle of a mass consumption system where "something is provided for all so that no one may escape."

Whilst I agree with Bernstein (Adorno, 1991, p. 27) that some of Adorno's "most pessimistic predictions have come to pass makes his writings on the

culture industry uncomfortably timely", I object that *Blue Lines'* identity affirms his critical theory, as its approach, in my opinion, is too rigid to frame all popular music under the umbrella of sameness.

I conclude by concurring with Johnson's (1996, p. 14) summary of *Blue Lines* as "one of the greatest sequences in all of popular music, bar none" and stand by my original claim that Massive Attack created music that, as Watson (2011, p. 29) reads Adorno, shows "the real – which is social, interactive, specific and poignant."

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