Hitting the right note? the New Deal for musicians

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Hitting the Right Note?
The New Deal for Musicians

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ABSTRACT This article examines the introduction of a unique vocational training programme: the New Deal For Musicians (NDFM). It traces the development of the scheme by examining the increasingly close relationship between the music industry and the British political establishment. It is argued that only by understanding the development of this relationship can the NDFM be explained. The article explains how popular music, an art form which is frequently portrayed as above all a commercial, free market form has come to rely on state support from a Labour government that has elsewhere eschewed the interventionist approach of its predecessors. The conclusion offers some explanations for this apparently paradoxical situation.

Introduction

On 1 May 1997 Britain elected a Labour Government for the first time in 23 years. But this was New Labour, a party freed of the old dogma of nationalisation and public ownership, one that had abandoned its historic commitment to the public control of the commanding heights of the economy, and was now committed to enterprise and the market. It was also committed to reshaping the relationship between the individual and the state in the provision of welfare. Under the slogan ‘from welfare to work’, Labour pledged to end dependency culture and move towards the state providing help only as a last resort for those absolutely unable to work.

During the election campaign Labour proclaimed that its three main priorities were ‘education, education, education’. In power Labour has promoted Lifelong Learning [Department for Employment and Education (DfEE), 1998a; Scottish Office, 1998], one strand of which was an attempt to move the central responsibility for adult education away from the state and towards the individual. In this sense, the government is moving more
towards the free market, which was so enthusiastically embraced by the Conservatives between 1979 and 1997. However, the impact of this change has been mixed as the government has acted in a almost schizophrenic manner by, for example, abolishing grants and introducing tuition fees for undergraduate students on the one hand, while at the same time pledging in its commitment to Lifelong Learning on the other.

In the economic field New Labour is seen as less interventionist than its forebears and sees the role of the state as not being to produce jobs, but to provide limited support in terms of emergency (Finn, 1997). However, the music industry stands out as an exception to this general trend inasmuch as the government has become far more interventionist than any of its predecessors (Jones, 1999). This is somewhat ironic for an industry that is often portrayed as the bastion of the free market. As *Music Week*, the industry’s in-house journal noted, the music industry has been ‘instinctively suspicious of government intervention’ (*Music Week*, 27 September 1997, p. 8).

This article looks at one particular government initiative concerning popular music under New Labour – the New Deal For Musicians – and attempts to explain how a government committed to free enterprise came to use the state to help popular music. First, however, some contextualisation is necessary.

**Defending the Music Industry**

In the run up to the 1997 general election the British music industry made a number of efforts to ingratiate itself with politicians, a development that I have noted elsewhere (Cloonan & Street, 1998). The roots of this campaign can most easily be traced to the need for the industry to improve its image following a House of Commons National Heritage Committee investigation of CD prices in the UK in 1993, which followed claims of profiteering. This led to a Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) investigation and report. Although the industry was cleared of over-pricing (MMC, 1994), it was clear that it had a major image-building job to do.

The subsequent defence and promotion of the industry took a number of forms, including the commissioning of a report published as *The Overseas Earnings of The Music Industry* (British Invisibles, 1995). This report was launched by the then Trade and Technology Minister, Ian Taylor who committed the Government to helping the industry combat illegal CD manufacturers in China and elsewhere. He also expressed the firmly held Tory belief that the state should not help in the production of popular music as this would simply result in music that is boring. This, said Taylor, would be in marked contrast to the current industry which was ‘unpredictable’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ (*Guardian*, 10 February, 1995, p. 17). This belief that pop and the free market were inextricably linked
formed a key part of the Conservatives’ attitude towards the music industry. The report Taylor helped launch showed that the music industry created a surplus of £571 million a year.\[1\] thus making the economic case for the industry.

Further moves to promote the industry amongst politicians included courting and lobbying them at industry events, such as the annual Brit Awards. Thus, as leader of the opposition Tony Blair addressed the industry’s umbrella organisation, the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) in July 1995 and promised stricter copyright laws *(Daily Telegraph, 20 July 1995, p. 12)*. He had been preceded in previous years by Tory Chancellors and Ministers for Culture/National Heritage *(Observer, 30 December 1996)*.

One result of the interaction between the industry and politicians was the launch of an employee exchange scheme between record companies and government departments. This was part of attempts by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to understand the creative industries, and especially the music industry, better. The DTI also established a Music Industries Unit whose remit was to deal with all aspects of creating and marketing music. Progress was such that by 1998 the BPI was able to report that since the 1993 report on CD prices the industry ‘has encountered much greater understanding of the industry in Whitehall’ *(British Phonographic Industry (BPI), 1998, p. 8)* and that the new Labour Government was acknowledging ‘Britain’s role as a world leader in music’ *(BPI, 1998, p. 1)*.

**Rock the Vote and Election 1997**

The new understanding between politicians and the industry seemed to be further cemented in the run up to the election when an organisation called Rock the Vote was set up. Modelled on an American organisation of the same name, its avowed intention was to increase the amount of young people voting. Significantly, in contradistinction to previous political popular music movements such as Rock Against Racism and Live Aid, which were set up by musicians, Rock the Vote was set up by the music industry. Its main instigator was John Preston, chair of the BPI, who had previously been heavily involved in defending the industry’s CD prices *(Independent, 15 May 1993)*. Although Rock the Vote got the support of all the major political parties and was avowedly non-political, its formation was widely perceived as aiding Labour who were seen as more likely to attract younger voters. In fact, for all its apparently liberal pretensions, Rock the Vote can also be seen as simply another attempt by the music industry to lobby politicians at a politically important time *(Cloonan & Street, 1998)*.


**Cool Britannia**

Following the Labour victory, the music business publicly seemed to further align itself with the Party in an era dubbed ‘Cool Britannia’ by the press. The short-lived honeymoon period reached a symbolic peak with the visit of Oasis’ Noel Gallagher, an acknowledged Labour supporter,[2] to a reception at 10 Downing Street. However, it was also reflected in the Party’s links with London’s Ministry of Sound nightclub, where some leading figures helped the Party’s election campaign (Collin, 1998, p. 314; Taylor, 1998). In return, soon after the election the importance of the industry was also stressed in newspaper articles by the Prime Minister (Blair, 1997)[3] and as Jones (1999, p. 22) notes, an ‘almost unthinkable bond between British government and British Popular Music seemed to have been sealed’.

In fact, not all within the industry were happy with New Labour and an almost inevitable backlash amongst musicians soon came. This centred on youth issues, such as the introduction of tuition fees for undergraduate students, the lack of debate on drugs policy, the imposing of curfews on young people in some areas, and, vitally, the Government’s ‘Welfare to Work’ employment policies. There were also protests by musicians about the Government’s plans to exclude under 21s from its proposals for a minimum wage (Ward, 1998a). In February 1998, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott had a bucket of water thrown over him at the Brit Awards by Danbert Nobacon of the anarchist band, Chumbawamba, in protest at government policy. The following month, after only 10 months of New Labour government, one of Britain’s leading rock magazines, the *NME*, was on the attack. Under the heading of ‘Rock and Roll takes on the government’ it asked its readers if they were feeling cheated and printed remarks critical of the Government made by a number of popular musicians (*NME*, 14 March 1998). This anti-New Labour strand has continued with, for example, Pulp and the Manic Street Preachers, both acts seen politically as left of centre, recording anti-Labour tracks.[4]

However, behind the scenes, the industry, as opposed to the musicians around which it is based, have continued to liaise with the government. Thus, the music industry was consulted during the setting up of a Creative Industries Task Force in July 1997, just 2 months after Labour’s election. Subsequently, the industry got two representatives on the Task Force, Alan McGee of Creation Records and Richard Branson of V2. No other creative industry got such representation (Jones, 1999, p. 22). The Task Force got a positive welcome from *Music Week* (Jones, 1999) and produced a Mapping Exercise report in November 1998. This estimated that the Creative Industries produce goods and services worth around $7.5 billion per annum (Department For Culture, Media and Sport press release 6 November 1998) equivalent to 7% of GDP (Fletcher, 1998,
p. 24). Significantly, the report named a major concern of the music industry, protection of copyright, as its main priority. An important aspect of copyright is that it needs nation states to enforce it. It is an area where the industry is very keen for the state to intervene and the major issue that the industry has lobbied politicians about.

However, there was also a recognition that jobs were involved. Indeed, Frith (1999b, p. 3) notes that here culture is treated solely as an economic force. For example, the Mapping Exercise hoped that the Creative Industries would create 50,000 new jobs in the next three years. Culture Secretary Chris Smith explained that: ‘The creative industries are not a fringe benefit for Britain’s economy, they are right at the heart of it’ (Frith, 1999b).[5] Thus, while it was under attack from some musicians, New Labour in power sought to continue to cultivate the music industry. Politicians could see the economic importance of the industry, while the industry saw government as a protector of its interests and possible benefactor. An almost symbiotic relationship was emerging.

**The Music Industries Forum**

This new relationship was further strengthened by the setting up of the Music Industries Forum by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in January 1998. Its formation was said in the press to ‘cement the already strong ties between the Blair administration and an industry that has often complained of political neglect, in spite of its huge success’ (Beavis, 1998). It seems to have been a direct result of the secondment to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport of Sara John, formerly the head of legal affairs at the BPI. It also appears to have been a spontaneous creation, with no reference made to organisational models outside of the UK. Reaction within the industry to the Forum’s launch was favourable with, for example, EMI welcoming it. Again, copyright was stressed as an issue that needed addressing, this time in the context of Britain’s 6-month Presidency of the European Union (Beavis, 1998).

Membership of the Forum includes former Beatles’ producer George Martin, Mick Hucknall, Alan McGee and Rob Dickens, chair of the BPI. Including Chris Smith as chair, 15 of the 16 members of the Forum are men. It has no budget and, other than the cost of getting officials to follow up ideas, no resources devoted to it. Its role is as a means of communication between government and the industry. Amongst the issues that are known to have been discussed thus far are copyright protection and piracy, support for UK exports, support for the ‘indie sector’, live music, and education and training within the industry. It also set up a Young Producers scheme, which offers bursaries to young musicians and was launched in October 1998 (Frith, 1999b, p. 8). A meeting in June 1999, reviewed progress thus far, and how the Department of Culture, Media and Sport could best help the industry.
Reaction to the Forum has been mixed. The *Guardian* newspaper supported it in an editorial (11 January 1999) and the *Observer* praised its vision of ‘cultural democracy’ (Spencer, 1999). However, the Forum was attacked by John Harris, editor of *Select*, who pursued the line that pop needs a free market. Harris claimed that any subsidised pop culture would be ‘rubbish’ and that, while he was not an advocate of the free market, ‘one of the few places where a free market works is pop music' (Radio Four *Front Row* interview, 11 January 1999).[6] The Forum, he believed, smacked of Blairite authoritarianism. He was supported by former T. Rex and Wham! manager, Simon Napier-Bell, who argued that if the government subsidises pop then it will no longer be feared by the establishment and will lead to blandness, rather than to the righteous anger of the young, which characterises pop at its best (Napier-Bell, 1999).

These criticisms echo the Conservative apprehension about the state subsidising popular culture, articulated by Ian Taylor. Thus, there is a sense in which the Forum’s very existence shows that for all its commitment to enterprise culture, New Labour is more willing to be interventionist in ways that its Conservative predecessor would not countenance. This is reflected in an initiative that was sanctioned by the Forum at its third meeting in June 1998.

**The New Deal for Musicians**

Labour’s programme of ‘Welfare to Work’ was a major election commitment. It involved raising finance by a one-off ‘windfall’ tax on the privatised public utilities in order to pay for the plans. The flagship policy here is the New Deal, which has been developed by drawing on American ‘workfare’ experience (Deacon, 1997). It was authorised in July 1997, just 2 months after Labour came to power and aimed at young people (18-24) who had been claiming unemployment benefit (renamed and made more stringent as the Jobseekers’ Allowance [JSA] by the Conservatives in October 1996) for more than 6 months. The programme is mandatory for such young people and, in many ways, is a successor to a number of youth employment/training initiatives undertaken since the early 1980s (Sutherland, 1998, p. 572). For example, it is delivered by local partnerships in order to take account of local labour market conditions, mirroring earlier attempts to do this via Youth Training (Sutherland, 1998, p. 574). The initial aim of the New Deal was to place 100,000 young people into work, but by March 1999 247,000 young people had actually been placed (DfEE press release, 25 March 1999). For those over 25 the new Deal becomes mandatory after 2 years of claiming JSA, although as yet (October 1999) there are no plans to extend the New Deal For Musicians to over-25s.
Those on the New Deal are interviewed when they join the programme and then enter a ‘Gateway’ period lasting up to 4 months. This is described as ‘a period of intensive help, advice and counselling’ (DfEE, 1999c, p. 1) and is meant to focus on individual needs (Fairley, 1998, p. 92). The Gateway period examines issues of employability and if a job is not found by the end of it there are four options:

- full time education;
- training (for up to a year);
- subsidised employment work in the voluntary sector;
- work as part of an environmental task force.

(All for up to 6 months.)

Compulsion is a key part of the programme as those who refuse to participate lose their entitlement to state benefits and, as noted earlier, once on the JSA for 6 months, young people have to join the New Deal. The compulsion element of the New Deal has attracted a lot of criticism (Holtham et al, 1998) especially as it is apparent that all four options will not be available in more remote areas (Fairley, 1998, p. 96). Experience with previous schemes suggests that compulsion will result in significant numbers of young people boycotting the scheme, despite loss of benefits (Sutherland, 1998, p. 572). In relation to music, it has been argued that forcing young people onto the New Deal would stifle creativity, in that it would not allow musicians who had previously refined their art via extended periods on unemployment benefit to pursue this route (O’Rorke, 1998; NME, 14 March 1999, pp. 34-35), although this picture has rightly been criticised as romanticising a life on the dole (Jones, 1999, p. 28). However, in response to criticisms of stifling artistic creativity at a time when the economic worth of such industries was being highlighted and with the new relationship with the music industry as a backdrop, the Government announced a New Deal For Musicians in June 1998.[7]

**Introducing the NDFM**

The New Deal For Musicians (NDFM) was introduced by the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE) following consultation with the Department for Media, Culture and Sport, and the backing of the Music Industry Forum. It came into force during August and September 1999, and was officially launched at separate events in England and Scotland on 26 October 1999.

For a government committed to ‘tough love’ in welfare policy, the special provisions for musicians were politically difficult and open to accusations of having gone soft. The Government was highly aware of this, and in an attempt to counter potential criticism its press release stressed that the New Deal For Musicians was ‘not an easy option’ and that ‘obvious time wasters’ would be weeded out (DfEE press release 15
Nevertheless, one right wing commentator saw fit to comment that: ‘So great is the fear of offending rock artists, they are to be exempted from the new welfare-to work requirements’ (Philips, 1998).

This is not true. The provisions for musicians build upon the existing New Deal and have the same terms, with three added elements: access to specialist Music Industry Consultants (MICs), a full time education and training route for musicians and an open learning route (DfEE, 1999a, p. 1). The Government says that the scheme is ‘a genuine attempt to help young musicians pursue careers within the music industry, and to respect their work’ (DfEE, 1999a). All types of musicians are eligible to apply, ‘including vocalists, composers and DJs’ (DfEE, 1999a). While it does not extend to allied trades, such as technicians, road crew and management, because it is recognised that many young musicians will end up in such trades, much of the open learning materials includes skills that are transferable to those professions. This is important because while most jobs within the music industry are for non-musicians (International Managers’ Forum/Leeds Metropolitan University, 1998, p. 5), most young people are not interested in jobs in the industry outside of being a musician (International Managers’ Forum/Leeds Metropolitan University, 1998, p. 25). In this sense, the New Deal For Musicians chimes with other aspects of the Government’s Lifelong Learning agenda, which stress the need to be flexible in career choices.

In order to run the scheme the Government asked the Employment Service to recruit Music Industry Consultants (MICs) and Music Open Learning Providers (MOLPs). The MICs are experienced professionals from the industry recruited at regional level following a tendering process. The MOLPs will use open learning materials developed by the City College, Manchester, based on guidelines set out by the Music Industry Steering Group, which advises the Employment Service. They are based on generic knowledge with the aim of improving employability. The materials come in nine workbooks, which individuals can pick and choose from on the basis of being expected to complete a book every 1 or 2 months. The materials do not lead to a qualification, but their content is meant to be able to lead into other qualifications such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), which are based on portfolios. After a tendering process, 10 organisations were appointed to co-ordinates MICs and 15 to be MOLPs. It remains to be seen whether the materials meet Jones’ (1999, p. 30) call for ‘imaginative training courses for creative producers’.

Suitable candidates for the scheme are identified by their New Deal Personal Advisers (NDPAs). They first go to the Gateway stage. Here, they have to draw up a Career Plan with their New Deal Personal Adviser and their MIC. The MICs have to meet with the musician at times subject to the musician’s discretion. During the initial Gateway period a musician can decide to take the self-employed option; try to get a subsidised job in
the industry; or failing this, take one of the other four New Deal options. This decision is made after consultation between the musician and their Adviser, and advice from the MIC. The MIC is meant to offer realistic advice about the candidate’s future prospects within the industry. The Government says that at this stage:

*Some indicators which might suggest that this (the New Deal for Musicians) is the best route for the young person will include the fact that the young person is already an active musician, holding an instrumental or other music related qualifications, work history within the industry, meeting with their MIC regularly and certainly without coercion, lack of existing music related provision in the area. (DfEE, 1999a, p. 2).*

There is no selection on grounds of prowess as at no stage are a musician’s musical skills judged. Indeed, it is explicitly stated that: ‘There will be no attempt to assess the young musician’s level of musical skill or to make a judgement on talent in Gateway’ (DfEE, 1999d, p. 16). While various advisers will offer advice about a candidate’s chance of success within the industry, it is explicitly stated that this advice should be ‘non-judgmental’ (DfEE, 1999d, p. 19) and that ‘MICs are not expected to assess or comment on the talent or ability of the young musician’ (DfEE 1999b, p. 2). However, their suitability will also be judged via the first workbook, *Introduction and Assessment*, and will help MOLPs determine a candidate’s suitability for the NDFM.

Although some musicians may find employment in the subsidised Employment or Voluntary Sector Options following the Gateway period, it is expected that most will take one of two options: full-time education and training (FTET) or self-employment or a combination of the two (DfEE, 1999d, p. 1).

**FTET**

The Full Time Education and Training Option has two options: either a structured course leading to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or one incorporating open learning materials. These cover ‘a wide range of information about the practical aspects of building a career within the industry and about self-employment, as well as vocational topics’ (DfEE, 1999c, p. 1). Young musicians on the Open Learning option will be expected to develop an Individual Training Plan (ITP) with their Adviser and then undertake a range of activities such as projects, research, marketing or rehearsing (DfEE, 1999c, p. 2). They will have to keep a weekly diary of their activities, such as rehearsing, writing songs, etc. (DfEE press release, 15 June 1998b), which might help towards a vocational qualification. The diary is also meant to help candidates track their progress in employability, which will be checked in meetings with
the MOLP, who will also monitor progress through the Open Learning Materials.

The open learning option is available for up to 12 months and is said to be particularly suitable for areas where local provision of training is not available, for individuals who prefer independent study and for those ‘who because of their chosen career path, would find regular time-tabled attendance difficult’ (DfEE, 1999a, p. 2). Indeed, it is clear that such provisions show a realisation that the impact of the NDFM is likely to be subject to a number of regional mediations. Another option is to try immediately for a music-based vocational qualification. The materials include aspects of self-employment, which is the second option available.

**Self-employment**

The self-employment route is available for 6 months and allows musicians to test the waters for this period, by such means as trying to get gigs and or a record deal. Those pursuing this option receive their usual JSA, plus the other state benefits to which they may be entitled, such as Housing Benefit, and £15.38 a week. They are encouraged to take one-off pieces of work such as gigs. This can also be pursued after the FTET route, for up to 9 months (DfEE, 1999a, p. 4) and those choosing the self-employed route will have access to the Open Learning materials. It is expected that most musicians will follow the self-employment route, (DfEE press release, 15 June 1998b), partly because of the nature of the music industry. They must also undertake the equivalent of a day’s training per week. On both schemes New Dealers are meant to spend at least 30 hours a week on their New Deal related work (DfEE, 1999d, p. 14).

However, the heavy hand of bureaucracy is notable here as the documentation around the programme notes that where any performance work is paid this ‘may affect the allowance and any other passported benefits’ (DfEE, 1999a, p. 4). Those on the self-employed route who are members of professional bands have their share of the earnings ‘held in a special account until they have completed test-trading under the option’ (DfEE, 1999a). It seems unlikely that such restrictions will hold much appeal to musicians whose employment opportunities are often both sporadic and subject to the whims of the black economy.

Those ending their entitlement to remain on the New Deal move to the Follow Through stage, which involves intensive help and the discussion of where to go next, including outside the music industry. This lasts for at least 4 months and can be extended. As with all of the New Deal, options are meant to be flexible so as to fit the local labour market.
Money for Nothing?

It should be noted that the scheme seems to be particularly bureaucratic as it involves not only a New Deal Personal Adviser, but also a Music Industry Consultant and a Music Open Learning Provider. Quite how creativity is meant to flourish under such close supervision is not clear. It also raises the question of how effective the scheme will prove to be, especially as the Government has also refused to estimate how many people were meant to be attracted to the New Deal For Musicians, on the grounds that such figures would be an under-estimate of the true amount of musicians affected by the New Deal, but going through other routes (DfEE, 1999d, pp. 7/8). It is known that in Scotland some 200 Open Learning kits have been ordered. If this trend is followed UK-wide, it means that around 2000 musicians will go on to this route, but many more are expected to follow the other routes, possibly as many as 5000 across the UK. However, such figures are somewhat speculative at present (October 1999). It seems that, as with previous schemes, the impact of the NDFM for musicians will be mediated by the state of the youth labour market (Sutherland, 1998, pp.572). At best previous schemes have achieved only partial success (Sutherland, 1998, p. 574) and may not attract young people when previous schemes have shown that; ‘The benefits from participation were neither automatic nor great’ (Sutherland, 1998, p. 576).

Some commentators are optimistic. Alan McGee of Creation Records has welcomed the scheme and highlighted the fact that musicians only have to meet their MOLP six times a year (NME, 27 June 1999, p. 6) and the NME (27 June 1998) has also supported the scheme and claimed credit for a government rethink. Simon Frith (1999a) has noted that musicians will use anything to help them pursue their art, a fact highlighted by the way in which some musicians in the UK used the Enterprise Allowance Scheme to finance themselves in the 1980s.[8] At this stage no evidence is available, so analysis must be restricted to speculation about the reasons for the setting up of the NDFM.

Start Making Sense

A number of interpretations of the origins of Labour’s music industry policies suggest themselves. First, it is clear that at one level the actions of the Labour government can be seen as part of its realignment with international capital. For example, the way in which both copyright and piracy have become a major political issue cannot be divorced from the reshaping of capital that has taken place following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the liberalisation of the Chinese economy. International capital still needs nation state co-operation to enforce the rules of the
Martin Cloonan

game, and so New Labour has joined in efforts to enforce copyright and prevent piracy across the globe.

However, it should be emphasised that both the New Deal For Musicians and the Music Industries Forum are something new in Britain in that they are national projects. The schemes thus stand out in contrast to previous popular music initiatives in the UK that have predominately been local government-led (Frith, 1993), in contrast to nationally led initiatives in countries such as Holland, Denmark, Finland, France and Australia (Frith, 1993). Indeed, the New Deal has been seen as part of New Labour’s centralising tendencies (Fairley, 1998, pp. 104-106).

They also mark a different attitude to the free-market approach of the previous Conservative government. This government is intervening in pop in ways that are anathema to free marketeers. This sort of market intervention is mirrored elsewhere in attempts to give employees more protection. This partly reflects the fact that, in its years in opposition, Labour used popular music (and other cultural industries) at a local level to provide employment (Street, 1997, pp. 99-116). It did this via local councils in a way that no Conservative Council tried. Chris Smith is part of this tradition, which has its roots in the days of the Greater London Council under Ken Livingstone (Frith, 1999b, p. 4). This legacy is now being brought to bear on a national stage.

One result is that, despite the fact the pop is often seen as being a commercial product (Frith, 1993, p. 14), it can and does receive state assistance in a way that New Labour is at home with, but which its Conservative predecessors would have scorned. In a previous article (Cloonan, 1999), I argued that state treatment of popular music falls into three overlapping groups: the authoritarian, the benign and the promotional. In the case of the Labour government we can see a move from benign/laissez faire to promotional.

Such schemes do mark the increasingly close relationship between the popular music industry and the Government. They show that the industry, if not always those within it, is gaining respectability primarily through recognition of its economic worth. However, this has drawn criticism from those who see New Labour as obsessed with only trendy art forms and not the traditional arts (Hall, 1998). Certainly, the music industry is not now the subject of the opprobrium that it was with raves in the late 1980s. It is firmly allied to the political establishment.

This is partly because the industry has realised that it needs the nation state as much as the state needs creative industries, but there are many tensions here. The international music industry centres on five multinationals, Sony, BMG, EMI, Polygram and Warners, only one of which, EMI, is British-owned. Thus, most of the money it earns will end up outside the UK. Moreover, while the music industry appears on the surface to be the sort of flexible industry that New Labour endorses, closer examination reveals its propensity for wasting artistic talent.
(Jones, 1999, p. 24). This has important implications for young musicians hoping for a break via the NDFM. Jones (Jones, 1999, p. 23) says that popular music involves four creative phases:

- writing new music;
- getting signed to a record company;
- selling the product;
- consuming it.

Labour has allied itself to the music business and one danger of its popular music initiatives, including the NDFM, is that they favour the industry over the creators. It remains to be seen whether the NDFM can provide more help for the creators than it does for the owners of artistic creators.

Economically, the New Deal For Musicians fits the Government’s idea of Lifelong Learning in that an economic imperative is given a liberal gloss. Musicians on the New Deal will be expected to think about other careers, in the same way that all workers are now being told that Lifelong Learning is tied in with the end of a job for life. However, the innovatory aspects of the scheme should be acknowledged. I am unaware of similar schemes elsewhere and it could be seen as somewhat ironic that it is taking place after consultation with the music industry, which has itself been subject to criticism for acting as a barrier to learning (International Managers’ Forum/Leeds Metropolitan University, 1997, p. 24).

It is possible that the growth of Popular Music Studies has contributed to this burgeoning respectability. Popular Music is now taught in colleges and universities across the UK and the National Music Council (1996, pp. 61-71) and British Invisibles (1995, p. 20) reports recognised the economic importance of this. The University of Liverpool started an MBA in the Music Industries in September 1999 in an attempt to cement the relationship between the industry and academe. However, this seems far removed from the idea of Popular Music Studies as a form of public knowledge that Keith Negus (1996, p. 214) has called for. In one respect, the Music Industry Forum and the New Deal For Musicians highlight the fact that both education and music are now seen as ripe for commercial exploitation.[9] It is thus easy to sympathise with those such as Napier-Bell (1999), who see all these government schemes as the end of an era for rebellious rock.

However, the NDFM, and other Labour popular music initiatives, actually highlight the fact that this Labour Government is more interventionist than is often credited. In the case of music, it has moved to overt sponsorship after years of the benefits system covertly funding pop (O’Rorke, 1998, p. 11). Both the Music Industries Forum and the New Deal for Musicians are evidence of this new interventionism, and further evidence of the state’s continuing capacity to shape the fate of popular music. Perhaps the greatest irony is that New Labour is undertaking
much of this activity at the behest of the music industry, which has realised that it cannot operate successfully unless states help it harmonise copyright and combat piracy. Once again, the doyen of the free market is relying on the state to lend it support. The NDFM is the result of this relationship. It is to be hoped that it is those at the bottom of the economic pile who will benefit most from it.

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Notes

[7] The second Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) announcement on the New Deal For Musicians came at the music industry-sponsored Sound City event in October 1998, where Chris Smith declared that the music industry was ‘vital to our economy’.
[8] I am grateful to Mark Meiklejohn for this point.
[9] The added value of music training within Higher Education in the UK has been calculated as £18 million (National Music Council, 1996, p. 68).

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*Music Week*, 27 September 1997, p. 8

Martin Cloonan


