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# Changing the Record? The (re)Making of Rock ‘n’ Roll, ‘Race’ and Teenage Leisure in 1950s Cleveland

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## Abstract

This paper aims to explore, and reframe, the relations between rock ‘n’ roll, leisure, ‘race’ and youth in Cleveland, Ohio in the 1950s, utilizing archival research to question the heritagization of the city’s popular music histories. Specifically drawing upon accounts of radio broadcasting and vinyl records, we offer an archival study of Cleveland, Ohio, a city that claims to be the “birthplace of rock ‘n’ roll” and (since 1986) is the site of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. After contextualizing the 1950s, we conceptualize the recent archival (re)turn in socio-cultural research. Through this methodological lens we overview the special collections, documents and artefacts explored in fieldwork at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s Library and Archives. Then, three counter-stories are presented toward decentring and demythologizing the canonical history of rock ‘n’ roll in Cleveland. Against this canonization, we “change the record” of histories of local radio broadcasting, record stores and eyewitness accounts from Cleveland’s black teenage audiences often absent from many authorized heritage discourses of early rock ‘n’ roll. In deconstructing myths of Cleveland’s musical past, the paper frames archival research as a critical, if under-utilized resource, in leisure research.

**Keywords** Archives · Rock ‘n’ roll · Racialisation · Leisure · Teenagers · Myths

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## 1 Introduction

This paper aims to explore, and reframe, the relations between rock ‘n’ roll, leisure, ‘race’ and youth in Cleveland, Ohio in the 1950s, utilizing archival research to question the heritagization of the city’s popular music histories. A growing body of scholarship has explored what makes a “music city” (Baker, 2019; Ballico & Watson, 2020; Blackwood & Manning, 1989; Gibson & Connell, 2007; Lashua, 2019a). Most recognized “music cities” rely on famous hometown artists, iconic performance venues, or fabled recording studios where significant records were made as their claims to fame (Gibson & Connell, 2007): the Beatles in Liverpool, the Ryman Theater in Nashville, and Sun Studios in Memphis provide a few well-known examples. Although it has produced many notable artists, had a few beloved venues and several respected recording studios, Cleveland, Ohio is not remarkably “great” for any of these reasons. It was therefore something of a surprise, even to the residents who lived there, when it was announced in 1986 as the future site for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum (Rosen, 1986), beating the competing and arguably better-established “music cities” of New York City, Philadelphia, Memphis, Chicago, Nashville and San Francisco. For several decades (1960–1990 s), particularly in view of its economic and population decline, Cleveland had been considered as something of a cultural backwater: a regional metropolis characteristic of everything that had gone wrong in American cities (Encyclopedia of Cleveland, 2018). So, what was it that gave Cleveland a claim to being a “great” music city worthy of a major popular music museum?

In seeking to answer why Cleveland was selected to become the site of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, this paper presents a micro-historical study (Lashua, 2019a) and explores contested cultural heritage discourses (Burgoyne, 2003; Roberts & Cohen, 2014; Smith, 2006) to unpack Cleveland’s assertions of being “the place where rock began to roll” (Lashua, 2019b, p. 77) during the 1950s. For some cultural historians, the 1960s was the decade that became a metaphor for personal liberation and popular cultural expression (e.g., Stephens, 1998), yet arguably the 1950s was the decade when many important developments in youth leisure and culture occurred – perhaps none more notable than the rise of the consumption of rock ‘n’ roll music, vinyl records, and the new marketing category of “the teenager” (Peterson, 1990). Shifting the emphasis to the early 1950s, especially the years 1951–1952 in Cleveland, we also change the focus from iconic musical artists to an analysis of radio broadcasting and record-buying audiences in Cleveland. This allows us to uncover a different “record” that spotlights everyday leisure, youth culture and media consumption of radio and vinyl records in the 1950s. In a sense, after presenting the myths that have been established of Cleveland as “the birthplace of rock ‘n’ roll”, this paper *changes the record* to take into account some of the multiple, alternate, and complex histories (Lipsitz, 2007). Such accounts aim to decentre mainstream or normative histories through (but not limited to) cultural histories, feminist histories, diasporic and decolonial histories, histories-from-below, and counter-stories (Richardson, 1997; Mowatt, 2021). In doing so, we unpack the myth of rock ‘n’ roll as the “creation” of two white men: radio DJ Alan Freed, and to a lesser extent, record store owner Leo Mintz. Instead, we locate it as already present among the city’s

black teenagers, as concertgoers and record buyers, at the time. In this way, important racial contestations and social transformations that were taking place at the time can be acknowledged. Moreover, popular music, especially the new genre purportedly dubbed rock 'n' roll by Freed, provides an important site to read these changes in leisure and youth culture.

Fittingly, this paper is structured in two “sides,” like the two sides of a vinyl record. On side one, after briefly contextualizing Cleveland in the 1950s, we conceptualize the recent “archival turn” in cultural arts and social science research (Baker et al., 2018; Ketelaar, 2017; Power, 2018). Through this methodological lens we overview and consider the special collections, documents and artefacts explored in Brett’s fieldwork at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives, in Cleveland. This “side” of the record also establishes what is seen as the official, authorised version of the city’s cultural heritage. Then, in what we consider side two of the paper, our analysis presents a critical re-appraisal of the dominant historiographical narratives in Cleveland’s popular music heritage. Here we focus on accounts of one record store in downtown Cleveland, Record Rendezvous (and its owner Leo Mintz), as well as one radio DJ, Alan Freed. Not only did Mintz and Freed later claim to have invented the phrase “rock ‘n’ roll”, they also co-organized (and Freed hosted) the “Moon-dog Coronation Ball” concert on March 21, 1952. This calamitous event quickly descended into what was described as a “race riot” and was later mythologized as the “first” rock ‘n’ roll concert (Gillett, 1970) in becoming part of the bedrock of Cleveland’s popular music heritage. Against this canonization, we locate radio broadcasting and record stores within debates about overlooked or hidden leisure histories of African Americans (Lee & Dieser, 2020; Mowatt, 2019; Samdahl, 2011), especially Cleveland’s black teenagers and radio DJs during the 1950s, who are largely absent from official or “authorized” heritage discourses (AHD; see Smith, 2006) of early rock ‘n’ roll in Cleveland. Indeed, as Kamin (1978, p. 150) argued, “in the published history of rock n’ roll, very little is stated, but a great deal implied, about its listeners. Most of the rock historians, having grown up with the music, take the audience for granted.” In sum, this paper shares critical archival research to explore how media (radio and records) shaped youth leisure in the 1950s, and in doing so, also presents counter-stories to help demythologize and decentre the canonical history of rock ‘n’ roll (Maultsby, 2016).

### 1.1 Side 1: Contextualizing the Archive

Before locating Cleveland, we use “side 1”, conceptually, to locate popular music in Cleveland within the scholarship on music heritage and music museums. The paper then positions Cleveland geographically, historically, economically and socially, before moving into a discussion of the construction of its cultural heritage discourses. This side of the paper concludes with methodological framing and considerations of methods within the recent “archival turn” in popular music and leisure studies (Baker et al., 2018; Tully & Carr, 2021).

### 1.1.1 Music Heritage and Music Museums

As noted above, cities such as Memphis, Detroit and New Orleans (in the USA), as well as Stockholm (Sweden), and Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham (in the UK) have been made efforts to memorialise and celebrate their musical pasts (Lashua et al., 2014). In some instances, these efforts have involved specifically curated music exhibitions, such as “The Beat Goes On” (2008) the first major museum exhibition of Liverpool’s popular music heritage (Leonard & Strachan, 2010). In other instances, such as Stockholm, the “heritagisation” of popular music has involved the construction of entire museums, such as the ABBA museum in Stockholm (see Bolderman & Reijnders, 2017). This is also the case with Cleveland (Lashua, 2019a) and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

A growing amount of scholarship on popular music heritage has centralised music museums and how they curate and exhibit popular music (Ross & Thompson, 2023; Baker et al., 2016a, b, 2020; Cortez, 2015, 2016; Fairchild, 2017; Knifton, 2012; Leonard & Knifton, 2015; Leonard, 2007, 2010, 2014, Mortensen & Madsen, 2015; Van der Hoeven & Brandellero, 2015). Museums arguably play a central role in institutionalising popular music heritage, displaying specific versions of popular music histories through “temporary exhibitions, permanent displays and dedicated visitor experiences” that have “actively mobilised sounds, images and objects’ to capture the diversity of popular music’s material past (Leonard, 2014, p. 357). In a survey of popular music museum collections, Leonard and Knifton (2017) found that museums are increasingly taking the subject seriously; however, the growing number of popular music exhibitions raises questions about “the museumification of popular music heritage” and how it has become “now well established in both scholarship and practice’ (Baker et al., 2020, p. 435). Here it is important to acknowledge the production of cultural heritage discourses.

The mobilisation of cultural heritage has been discussed by Smith (2006, p. 1), who wrote:

heritage wasn’t only about the past – though it was that too – it also wasn’t just about material things – though it was that as well – heritage was a process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present.

In this, heritage becomes an active process: *to heritage*. As Smith (2006, p. 4) additionally notes, heritage has fluidity and changeability; it is as much about preserving the past as “reworking the meanings of the past as the cultural, social, and political needs of the present change and develop.” Cultural heritage provides a bank of resources to negotiate or contest cultural meanings, values and identity constructions (Smith, 2006). Heritage, viewed through this lens, is a discourse – a set of ideas and practices loaded with social and political power. This perspective enables the reconsideration the making of “music cities” such as Cleveland through specific sets of heritage discourses.

### 1.1.2 Cleveland – A Music City?

Situated at the confluence of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie, Cleveland was once a centre of manufacturing. However, by the 1980s the city had instead become a symbol of industrial degeneration, economic difficulties and social decline. The Cuyahoga River was so badly polluted that it had caught fire on numerous occasions, including a blaze in 1969 that inspired the Randy Newman song “Burn on” (1972). Its population peaked in 1950 at around 1 million residents, but soon went into a long period of decline as the city was beset with the gradual closure of its heavy industries, growing civic financial difficulties, a population shift to its suburbs, and increasing inner-city poverty. By 1965, local newspapers were reporting that Cleveland’s central neighbourhoods were in crisis and, unsurprisingly, unrest (or “riots”) followed in 1966 as residents protested deteriorating urban conditions, racial segregation, rising unemployment, and social inequalities (particularly in housing and education). From the 1960s, Cleveland entered a period of decline that extended into the 1990s (Encyclopedia of Cleveland, 2018). With the highest rate of unemployment (13.8%) in the US during the 1980s, the city’s population had halved from its peak in 1950. Along with other midwestern American cities facing similar struggles, Cleveland was perhaps the de facto capital of the swath of the US that became known as the “Rust Belt” for its shuttered industries and decaying infrastructure. It is at this juncture that Cleveland engaged in efforts to redefine its urban core through cultural regeneration initiatives that included new sports stadia (Schimmel, 1997), a science centre, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum (awarded to the city in 1986), which finally opened in 1995 (Santelli, 1997).

But in 1950, the city was booming, following an influx of industrial workers into its wartime industries. This urban influx was part of wider patterns of movement of African Americans called the “Great Migration” (Jackson, 1991; Theriault & Mowatt, 2020). This mass movement dramatically altered the demographics of many American cities, where “before World War II, most of America’s blacks were concentrated in the rural South, with only isolated pockets of significant numbers of blacks in eastern and Midwestern cities” (Jackson, 1991, p. 39). During World War 2, many workers, particularly African Americans, had moved into regional industrial cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.

This migration, like that during and after World War 1 that had spread jazz from the South, contributed to the transmission of “new” genres of music, such as rhythm and blues (Halasa, 1990; Jackson, 1991). In an interview with Halasa (1990, p. 9), Cleveland record promoter and DJ Chuck Young recalled of the early 1950s:

Because of the war, a lot of black people had come to work in the industrial factories of the North, so the music atmosphere changed. A lot of kids who were listening to big band started listening to blues music. It was a very exciting time. [...] This was the era that started Cleveland being the rock and roll capital [...] It was a fast area to get a record started. They could get a feel of how big a record would be by the growth in the Cleveland area. Everyone was watching what would happen here because the disc jockeys were adaptive to playing new things.

As Young intimates, in the 1950s Cleveland was viewed as a breakout city for new music (Jackson, 1991); if a record was popular in Cleveland, it would likely sell well elsewhere too. Local radio stations also competed to “break” a new record by playing it on the air for the first time. In cities such as Cleveland, local radio stations recognized the “growing importance of appealing to black listeners” and capitalizing on the “forgotten 15 million black consumers in America” (Jackson, 1991, pp. 40, 41). Until being rebranded as “rhythm and blues” (R&B), the “blues” style had been grouped, along with spirituals and gospel music, in the essentialized catchall category of “race records” (Kloosterman & Quispel, 1990; Roy, 2004). In shifting away from this racial category during the late 1940s, some radio stations began acknowledging the growing popularity of R&B music as an economic and social force.

Yet, while the movements into northern and Midwestern American cities also created new media markets for African American communities, radio broadcasting remained deeply segregated (Roy, 2004). While, nationally, a handful of radio DJs were playing R&B “race records” on a few stations, Alan Freed (1921–1965) has been celebrated as “the first white radio man to do so on the North Coast” in Cleveland (Adams, 2002, p. 5). After gaining broadcasting experience in nearby Akron, Freed had moved to Cleveland in 1950. He began broadcasting on local station WJW in July 1951, hosting a classical music program in the early evenings followed by a late-night slot from 11:15 p.m. to 2 a.m. Due to these moonlit hours, Freed called his late program “The Moondog Show.” The Moondog Show was sponsored, not coincidentally, by Leo Mintz’s store Record Rendezvous, and R&B records were its foundation. Although arguably done in imitation of local black DJs, Freed often howled along to the records and pounded on the broadcasting desk, whipping up enthusiasm from his audience as he introduced them to R&B records performed by black artists (rather than cover versions of those songs performed by white artists). Freed’s raucous show was an instant hit with its young, presumably white, listeners.

As Freed’s show and Mintz’s record store gained local popularity, they looked for additional ways to capitalize on their success including plans to host a series of concerts. After a smaller event at Myers Lake Park three days prior, on March 21, 1952, Freed hosted the event which has been acclaimed as one of the most significant dates in rock ‘n’ roll history (Gillett, 1970; Jackson, 1991). That night they staged the “Moondog Coronation Ball” (at which Freed would be crowned the “King of the Moondoggers”). Although it ended after just one song and devolved into what was sensationalized by local and national media as a race riot, this event was later hailed as the “first” rock ‘n’ roll concert (Gillett, 1970). Reviewing Gillett’s (1970) groundbreaking book *Sounds of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, one local Cleveland journalist expressed some surprise: “Remember Alan Freed, the King of the Moondogs? Brace yourself for this: He may have been a significant figure in American musical history” (McGunagle, 1971, p. 3). In addition to being credited for hosting the “first” rock ‘n’ roll concert, Freed and Mintz also later claimed to have “invented” the phrase “rock ‘n’ roll.” Using this new phrase to avoid the “racial stigma” of Rhythm and Blues, they were later celebrated for delivering what was then seen as “black music” (i.e., “race records”) to a new audience of white teenagers. Yet, as discussed later in our analysis of the archival data and contemporary accounts of the Moondog Coronation Ball, this “invention”, as well as the supposed boundary-cross-

ing of racialised colour lines in radio and popular music, are largely myths unsupported by historical records.

Despite now being the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, little academic attention has been given to the hidden or underground leisure histories in Cleveland and their importance in popular music heritage scholarship (Blake, 2021). In one exception, Nowak and Baker (2018) highlighted Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum as one of several case studies of popular music halls of fame. They noted that most of the literature about Cleveland's Rock Hall presents either "celebratory accounts" (p. 285) written by people closely associated with the Rock Hall (e.g., Santelli, 1997), or academic attention from "critics" who focused on the museum's displays and questions of cultural (mis)representation and sanitization (see Bergengren, 1999; Juchartz & Rishoi, 1997). This latter scholarship is well-attuned to questions of what it is that music museums and halls of fame "do", e.g., in the production of official or "Authorized Heritage Discourses" (Smith, 2006). Smith (2006) defined Authorised Heritage Discourses (AHD) as comprised of tangible, monumental, grand, and ideologically designated "good" heritage. For Smith (2006), AHD operate "to naturalize a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage" (p. 4) through formal eligibility criteria and selection processes via established, institutional peer (i.e., "expert") decision-making (e.g., selection to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). As such, AHD produce an aura of inevitability in specific heritage narratives (e.g., Freed and Mintz's "invention" of rock 'n' roll) at the expense of other stories and cultural meanings that become less visible or remain unremarked. This is where archival research can be used to help deconstruct AHD and popular music myths (Lashua & Thompson, 2021). Accordingly, the next section concludes side one of the paper by introducing the methodological approach and the methods used within this study.

### 1.1.3 Methodology and Methods: (Re)Turning to the Archives

Although there has been some attention to archival approaches, Tully and Carr (2021) argued that archives are "an under-utilised strategy in leisure scholarship" and add: "Only a few scholars have used archival strategies across leisure scholarship and related fields to date" (p. 2). Nasab, Carr and Walters (2022, p. 1) further noted that archival approaches are valuable because of their "potential to enable us to understand historical problems, unfold important events, understand people's lives, and narrate stories." Bradley (1999, p. 107) described archival research practices "can take many forms but all are marked by a connective sequence: archive, memory, the past, narrative." This section of the paper aims to trace this connective sequence in the research methodology and method.

Brett's research about Cleveland and the 1950s at the Rock Hall of Fame and Museum aligns within what has been described, methodologically, as the "archival turn" in popular music studies (Baker et al., 2018). These turns provide new angles or shifts in scholarly attention (e.g., a "narrative turn" in leisure studies – see Glover, 2003), involving "revolutions" of critical scholarship toward emerging and pressing areas of academic inquiry. Some considerations are a "re-turn" – archival research is not new in and of itself – that bring renewed critical attention to longstanding prob-



lems. For example, Steedman (1998) and Mowatt, Floyd and Hylton (2018) discussed renewed or revisionist attention as the “remaking” of patriarchal and racialized histories through archival research. In popular music scholarship, Waksman (2018, p. 55) also described the archival turn as part of “a growing impetus toward archive-based scholarship that is often linked to a strongly revisionist impulse.” This impetus:

has not been motivated by a desire simply to better document aspects of popular music history, but by an effort to challenge received narratives concerning that history, and so to expand our working understanding of how popular music has evolved over time.

Waksman raises important epistemological questions about archives and knowledge production, what (or who) contributes to an archive, and how (and by whom) archives are read and employed (Gale & Featherstone, 2011). In another example, Eichhorn (2013) brought a critical feminist lens to popular music archival research, railing against the inattention to women in archives and collections, through a specific focus on Riot Grrrl, underground, Do-It-Yourself (DIY), punk-feminist fanzines. Here, for Eichhorn, the archival turn represents opportunities for a “renewal of discourse” about the contents (i.e., “evidence”) and *interpretation* of archives, documents, and collections. Further critical feminist analyses (e.g., Reitsamer, 2018), particularly at intersections with “race” and class (e.g., Zuberi, 2018), have marked the increasing and exemplary work within the archival turn.

Challenges to canonical knowledge construction through archives have also brought reconsiderations and refutations of the authority of official archives. Instead, some scholarship has championed Do-It-Yourself (DIY) or Do-It-Together (DIT), and public collections where they provide resources from ignored, invisible, hidden, marginalized or socially excluded groups (e.g., racial and ethnic minority groups, queer communities, etc.). DIY and DIT collections often contest official archives and consequently aid the construction of unofficial “self-authorized”, or more radical “unauthorized” heritages (Roberts & Cohen, 2014). Engagements with the archival turn require that transformative or resistant heritage discourses involve re-reading and crafting new interpretations of archival materials. As such, even “official” archives such as at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame can provide resources for a re-interpretation of the past. In this Denscombe (2014) argues that archival research goes “beyond the straightforward collection of facts from documents” and also “involves interpreting that document as well” (p. 256).

In this regard, Zuberi (2018, p. 42) wrote of a “thickening” of the past around certain artifacts, moments, or memories, where “the past acquires more cultural weight as a greater volume of artifacts, texts and paratexts accrues around particular historical moments, periods, objects and places.” Such archival thickening is very much in evidence in Cleveland’s rock ‘n’ roll history, specifically in relation to official accounts of Alan Freed and the March 21, 1952 Moondog Coronation Ball. In this “thickening” of attention, narrative myths become entrenched and concretized as an “official” history, or AHD. Official histories are often exclusive and written (or represented) from the perspectives of dominant or hegemonic groups. For example, Zuberi (2018) identifies where “African-American idioms like the blues and rhythm and

blues” have been mythologized in museums but only “as ‘roots’ or ‘primitive’ forms that evolved into the apparently more mature rock music performed by white men” (p. 39). King (2006) noted that “the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, USA, draws on the popular ‘blues myths’ of ‘purity, simplicity, and primitiveness’ that appeal to tourists in search of an ‘authentic’ blues experience” (p. 237). This presents not only an essentialized notion of place, but also of “race.”

In sum, and against myths such as these, the archival turn can be seen as a move to create more diverse and equitable representations of the “usable past” (Flinn, 2011; Reitsamer, 2018). Here, Waksman (2018) further offered that one of the most useful aspects of the archival turn “is to combat the tendency to erase or forget the practices of subordinate populations” (p. 63). Waksman added:

[t]he push to better document popular music history also requires that we continually expand our definition of what *counts* as history, our sense of where we should go to find it, and our understanding of by whom it may be written. (2018, p. 64, original emphasis)

While in many respects the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives may be viewed as an official resource, in Brett’s experience of working with it, and its archivists, presented a diverse set of collections that ranged from official civic documents such as those related to the city’s public campaign to host the Rock Hall, to individual collections much in the spirit of DIY, such as the archive of *Cleveland Scene* weekly entertainment magazines gathered and donated by local record collector Steve Petryszyn. In this latter regard, Laing and Strong (2018) celebrated “the value of contemporaneous periodical publications for the popular music researcher” (p. 88). Similar materials exemplified this mixture of local and personal, civic, and official documents. In another example, the personal papers of rock historian and DJ Norm N. Nite consisted of local newspaper clippings related to Rock Hall developments in the 1980s as well as official documentation such as minutes from meetings of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation committee. From these materials, we began the “deeper” task of attempting to interpret them (Denscombe, 2014) as a means of navigating through the historical layers of the city’s popular music past.

## 1.2 Side 2: Changing the Record

For this second “side” of the paper, we provide our analyses of the archival materials encountered during Brett’s fieldwork in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives. We present three sections related to contesting the myths in Cleveland’s heritage discourses of popular music and leisure: (1) changing the station, (2) changing the tune, and (3) changing the story.

### 1.2.1 Changing the Station: Radio Broadcasting and the Rise of R&B

Research conducted at the archives helped to showcase the interwoven narratives of radio broadcasting and record stores in the early 1950s and highlighted, or presented a counter-position to, the relations between Cleveland’s black teenagers along with

broader questions of popular music as leisure at the time. This analysis de-centered the better-known, and largely mythologized AHD built around key figures, sites and events in Cleveland's popular music heritage by exploring first-hand accounts of black teenagers who attended the Moondog Coronation Ball and the importance of radio broadcasting within this context. Radio for example developed into the *mass media* during the 1920s (Lashua, 2005), along with the rise of consumer culture, leisure and culture industries (Kellner, 2014). Although the national music markets remained deeply segregated (Roy, 2004), during the early 1950s Clevelanders – especially those within its 130,000-strong African American communities – had noted the rising popularity of rhythm and blues (R&B). As noted above, this was part of wider social changes that were transforming post-war America. Radio broadcasters – and specifically disc jockeys – were part of this economic and social transformation. In this, Alan Freed was among a number of DJs crossing supposed “color lines” in broadcasting. Jackson (1991) recounts several DJs who were early promoters of R&B music, including Gene “Daddy” Nobles and “John R” Richbourg at WLAC, in Nashville, with its mighty 50,000-watt transmitter. WLAC's broadcasts reached across the American South and as far north as Canada. For Jackson, this made WLAC a “key station” in spreading R&B via radio in the early 1950s.

While radio markets remained racially segregated, Alan Freed was not the first or the only white DJ to broadcast R&B to primarily African American audiences. Jackson (1991) highlights Bill Gordon on WMPS, and Dewey Phillips on WHBQ – both in Memphis – for playing R&B around 1950. There were even earlier advocates; Hunter Hancock at KFVD in Los Angeles, as Jackson (1991) notes, claimed to be “the first announcer, black or white, to specialize in what later became known as rhythm and blues” (p. 41) from around 1943. Also broadcasting in Los Angeles, Dick “Huggie Boy” Hugg was also spinning R&B by 1951 and referred to himself as “the West Coast Alan Freed” (Jackson, 1991, p. 41). Recounting the early years of R&B on the radio, Jackson (1991) mapped numerous on-air characters who were playing R&B by the early 1950s including: Zena “Daddy” Sears (Atlanta), Clarence “Poppa Stoppa” Hayman (New Orleans), Danny “Cat Man” Stiles (Newark), George “Hound Dog” Lorenz (Buffalo), and Tom “Big Daddy” Donahue (Washington, D.C.), to list just a few. This array of DJs and cities illustrates that Freed was not unique to Cleveland, but rather was indicative of a much wider and growing movement in radio broadcasts and markets.

Further, Freed was not the only “star” radio personality in Cleveland. Many local DJs were influential in the shaping, and later remaking, of Cleveland as a “music city.” The amount of attention given to Freed has overshadowed the successes of other Cleveland DJs, such as Bill Randle and Tommy Edwards at station WERE. Randle, in particular, has been recognized for his involvement in early Elvis Presley concerts in the city, including a 1955 performance at a local high school, seen as crucial in helping to “break” Elvis to a new audience outside the American South (Olszewski, 2003). Wolff (2006) also includes Bobby Darin, Tony Bennett, and Johnnie Ray as artists Randle also “broke” to wider acclaim. For Chuck Young, Cleveland radio DJs were the key to making the city's popular music legacy:

I can't tell you how many records that Bill Randle at WERE and Joe Finan, Big Wilson and myself at KYW broke in a 10-year period between the '50s and the '60s that made Cleveland the Rock 'n' Roll Capital. We were so big that people in the music business knew if it was played here it would spread all over the country. (Halasa, 1990, p. 9)

Yet, Wolff also draws important attention to the racial lines that divided the city's airwaves into "white stations" and "race stations"; with the latter playing R&B in the early 1950s, and so-called "white stations" featuring artists such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Johnnie Ray – the crooners of the pre-rock 'n' roll era. This segregation of popular media was deeply entrenched and long-lived: Station executive John Gorman noted that Cleveland's WMMS was still very much seen as a "white" station as late as 1974 (Gorman & Feran, 2007).

One important but largely unheralded Cleveland radio personality was "Walkin' Talkin'" Bill Hawkins, "the first black DJ in town" (Wolff, 2006, p. 7). Wolff relates that Hawkins broadcast on station WJMO-AM "out of a window on 105th Street from Hawkins Music Shop [...] part of a thriving scene" in one of Cleveland's historically black neighbourhoods. Wolff highlighted that Hawkins competed with Freed for the ear of the city's African American teenagers by playing R&B. The Jimmy Baynes Collection at the Rock Hall Archives adds this description of Hawkins:

In 1948 Bill Hawkins, a former Pullman Porter, became Cleveland's first black disc jockey introducing rhythm and blues, gospel, jazz, and rock and roll. Broadcasting live from the window of his record shop on 105th and Cedar, Walkin' Talkin' Bill Hawkins became a local celebrity. Over the next decade, Hawkins was heard on WJS, WHK, WDOK and WSRS – sometimes all in the same day. He was widely imitated and influenced a generation of DJs – including "Moondog" Alan Freed. (*Jimmy Baynes Collection*, n.d., ARC-0161, Box 2, Folder 7)

Hawkins' legacy has been overshadowed almost entirely by Freed's, even where Freed is said to have "adopted what the black jocks [Hawkins] did, he'd talk right through the records, he'd urge the singers on" as WIXY's Norman Wain put it (Wolff, 2006, p. 8). Yet, beyond this there is scant attention to Hawkins and other black DJs for their contributions to the popularization of R&B – soon rebranded as rock 'n' roll – even (initially) in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum itself. Writing of his opening day visit to the Rock Hall in 1995, Bergengren (1999) argued "the museum is not conceived from a Black perspective; there is nothing about white co-optation of Black culture or talent" (p. 547).

The analysis of the archival records illustrated that although radio markets in Cleveland were deeply racialized, the city had a vibrant radio culture in the 1950s and '60s that extended beyond the scope and notoriety of Alan Freed. Radio has played a crucial part in the ways that cities are imagined and shaped by leisure practices: radio, to an extent, is what helped most to define Cleveland as a "great" music city. Another key piece of this characterization was vinyl records.

### 1.2.2 Changing the Tune: Record Rendezvous and the Invention of Rock ‘n’ Roll

Central to the archival narratives about the significance of vinyl records in the “invention” of the phrase rock ‘n’ roll in Cleveland is one Cleveland record shop; Record Rendezvous. Founded by Leo Mintz in 1938, Record Rendezvous was initially located at 214 Prospect Avenue, offering used jukebox records Mintz bought wholesale. The shop relocated a couple of doors east, to 300 Prospect Avenue, in 1945, where it traded until closing in 1987 as the fortunes of downtown Cleveland declined. In the 1940s and 1950s, Prospect Avenue was a central, prospering retail district in the city’s downtown. Record Rendezvous was well served by public transportation, located (between East 2nd and East 4th Street) where many buses turned around to head back out of downtown. This mode of transport was particularly important for the city’s young people, and Record Rendezvous was ideally positioned. What Petkovic (2017) lamented as an unregenerated corner of Cleveland’s downtown core was once one of its prime locations.

Record Rendezvous was ground-breaking and innovative – reputedly the “first self-serve record store” (Halasa, 1988, p. 5), putting records on the shop floor for customers to handle directly, instead of keeping them behind the counter. Mintz is also said to have installed “the first listening booths in the nation” for customers to try records before buying them (Halasa, 1988, p. 5). Mintz was also visionary in his methods to advertise and promote his merchandise; he advertised records on local radio stations, for example, by creating “Record Rendezvous’ Spotlight Record” to promote “the week’s top hit” (Halasa, 1988, p. 5). Record Rendezvous was also suitably named; it was a social space for young people to meet up (e.g., particularly teenagers during lunch or after school) to listen to new music. In the late 1940s, Mintz reportedly noticed a growing trend for younger, teenage customers shifting from jazz to R&B. According to Jackson (1991), Record Rendezvous was popular with Cleveland’s African American teenagers and sold a steady supply of R&B “race” records. Mintz also encouraged radio DJs to play new releases. Halasa (1988, p. 5) suggests that Mintz wanted to create a new “gimmick” to “ease the crossover of this race music to the white public.” Here, Mintz is said to have influenced and relied upon Alan Freed.

For Jackson (1991), a significant part of the mythic invention of rock ‘n’ roll is that “Freed’s introduction to rhythm and blues” (p. 33) occurred during a visit to Record Rendezvous. Freed is said to have visited when Mintz reported “noticing a growing number of white teenagers frequenting his store, browsing through the rhythm and blues record section, listening to black stars” (p. 33). Freed was apparently “taken aback by the ‘unusual’ sight of white youths perusing the heretofore all-black section” of the shop (p. 33). Here, the story assumes legendary status along racial lines, as Jackson (1991) continues: “the myth took shape with Freed saying he was ‘amazed’ at the sight before his eyes with [presumably white] teenagers ‘enthusiastically listening to a type of music I presumed alien to their culture.’” (pp. 33–34). Jackson repudiates this story: photographs of Freed’s early concerts (1952–1953) clearly show overwhelmingly African American audiences. Not until Freed moved to New York City did the racial composition of his concert audiences become predominantly white. In January 1955, four months after moving to New York, Freed put on

two “dances” (concerts) at the St Nicholas Arena (an ice rink that also hosted boxing matches, like the Cleveland Arena). Fredericks (1958, p. 89) commented it was during these events that rock ‘n’ roll audiences first visibly became primarily white:

In Cleveland, Freed’s radio audience had been mainly Negro, and the crowds that jammed his Moondog balls were largely Negro, although as time went on the ratio of whites to Negroes increased. When the two-day stand at St Nick was over, after drawing 7,000 each night into a place that has a capacity of 4,000, Freed found that the audience was 70% white and 30 per cent Negro. In effect, this meant that Rock and Roll had moved out of the limited “race” classification into big business.

Scott (1982, p. 11D) noted that Cleveland’s local press reported the audience at the Moondog Coronation Ball was “only about 1%” white. That is, if white teenagers were listening to Freed’s Moondog show, they were not at the concert on March 21, 1952.

Although Jackson (1991) dismissed the idea that at that time white teenagers were increasingly appearing in Mintz’s store to buy R&B records, Freed and Mintz later claimed that white teenagers were *already* buying R&B discs at Record Rendezvous, *before* Freed began his “Moondog show” in 1951:

Leo Mintz, owner of Record Rendezvous, offered to sponsor his show if Alan would play nothing but rhythm and blues records. Alan was flabbergasted. “Are you crazy?” he demanded. “No one would listen. Those are race records.” “Not any more they aren’t,” said Mintz. “I’ve been watching my customers. I know who buys them.” (Bolstead, 1958, p. 70).

Such mythic accounts are variously reiterated in the promotional materials for Freed’s 1954–1959 concerts in New York City, which included biographies for the musicians on the playbill and – first and foremost – for Freed too.

These concert programs are worth further consideration, as “records” of claims regarding the “invention” of rock ‘n’ roll. The program for “Alan Freed’s Summer Festival” (1957) frames the story of rock’s invention this way:

One day in 1951, he was approached by his friend, Leo Mintz, owner of Cleveland’s largest record shop. Mintz had noticed that so-called “race” records – rhythm and blues – seemed to be getting more and more popular. If Alan would do a special show with them, Mintz would sponsor it. At first Freed was reluctant but Mintz persuaded him to go along.

What could they call the show? The racial “stigma” of rhythm and blues, hitherto only aimed at the Negro market, had to be somehow avoided if a wider audience was to be reached. So Freed and Mintz sat around playing records, searching for a name. As he listened, tapping his feet and rocking to the heavy back beat, Freed diffidently suggested: ‘How about this – The Rock and Roll Party?’

This myth is echoed, with minor changes, later that year in the program book for the “Alan Freed Christmas Jubilee” (1957):

Freed returned to radio on WJW in Cleveland, at the urging of Leo Mintz, owner of Cleveland’s largest record shop, who noticed that “race” records – rhythm and blues – were beginning to get popular and believed that a R&B craze might be imminent. Freed played only R&B on his show, although he christened the style Rock and Roll to avoid the racial stigma of the old classification.

Yet, by 1952 the phrase “rock ‘n’ roll” had been in circulation for decades (Johnstone, 2007; Peterson, 1990), not least as a euphemism for sex. Jackson (1991) concludes that the tales of Freed and Mintz creating this new phrase are myths. They did not “invent” rock ‘n’ roll; they rebranded R&B and marketed it as rock ‘n’ roll. As this relabelled genre “caught on with the growing white audience that enjoyed the luxury of money to burn and time to kill, Freed quickly realized he was positioned to become rock & roll’s first prominent spokesperson” (Jackson, 1991, p. 1). The shifting stories on show in the archival materials reveal such mythmaking as plain to see.

### 1.2.3 Changing the Story: Eyewitness Accounts of the Moondog Coronation Ball

Jackson’s (1991) biography of Alan Freed starts with an epigraph that declares: “If Rock had any particular beginning, it was on March 21, 1952” (p. 1). With the increasingly popular radio program (The Moondog Show) and the growing interest in R&B – rebranded as “rock ‘n’ roll” – Freed and Mintz planned what was later described as the first rock ‘n’ roll concert, the Moondog Coronation Ball, on March 21, 1952 (Adams, 2002; Gillett, 1970; Jackson, 1991). Building on Freed’s radio popularity, the Moondog Coronation Ball was conceived to celebrate rock ‘n’ roll music and crown Freed the “King of the Moondoggers.” The concert line-up featured all African American R&B bands including Paul Williams and the Hucklebuckers, Tiny Grimes & the Rockin’ Highlanders, The Dominoes, Varetta Dillard, Danny Cobb, and others. The concert was planned for the 9,000-seat Cleveland Arena, a minor league sports venue used primarily for boxing and ice hockey, on Euclid Avenue.

However, events did not unfold for the concert as planned. The first calamity was that an estimated 16,000 people turned up; later guesses inflated this to as many as 25,000 or 30,000 teenagers. In the absence of central ticketing, some accounts claim too many tickets had been printed and sold. Then, as soon as the music started, those still outside the venue rushed the doors to try to get in; stewards accustomed to older, calmer sports crowds were quickly overwhelmed. The only photographer present, Peter Hastings, took one (or two) pictures and hastily left the arena, in fear. The police and fire departments were quickly called in to disperse the youthful and largely African American crowds, and rather than a concert, the event was characterized as a “riot”. Indeed, the text on an Ohio Historical Marker that stands directly across the street from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame reads: “the oversold show was beset by a riot during the first set”; in other words, a “race riot” (Adams, 2002; Burgoyne, 2003; Gillett, 1970; Jackson, 1991).

The first – and only – band on stage that night was Paul Williams and the Huck-lebuckers. In an interview on the 40th anniversary of the concert, Williams recalled:

When we first got on stage, it wasn't bad. It was calm. But the minute we hit the music, the people outside got restless, and they wanted to get in... bad. While we were playing we noticed the doors were 'breathing'. That did it. By the time we finished the song, they had broken the doors and were all in. So we played only one number. (Halasa, 1992, p. 13)

Thus this event, celebrated as the "first" rock concert upon which Cleveland later based much of its claim to become the host city of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, lasted for just one song. From onstage, Williams remembered the scene:

We could see what was going on, because the house lights were still on, they never went down. The audience was fighting up in the balcony and all over the place. [...] Everyone was just trying to get out of there. We started packing right away. [...] We just kept packing because there wasn't any shooting, just fighting out in the audience. By then the police were there. They were having a hard time clearing the place. You know, we were a hot band then. We played a lot of big halls and places where fights would break out a lot of the time. But, it was the first time we saw something like that. They were just destroying the place. (Halasa, 1992, p. 13)

This characterization does not seem the sort of "first" that would become a centrepiece of Cleveland's popular music heritage (and Williams also notes that the band was performing widely at the time). In its aftermath, the concert was sensationalized in the press and local newspapers ran headlines such as "Moon Dog Madness" (Scott, 1982, p. 11D); foreshadowing later moral panics that exemplified media responses to youth music subcultures (Cohen, 1972).

In Cleveland's own African American community newspapers, such as the conservative *Call & Post*, such was the already disreputable status of R&B that the music was blamed for the breakdown of the event, rather than the organisation and security provided. "Garbage, trash, a shocking display of gutbucket blues and lowdown rhythms" (*Call & Post* newspaper, 1952, quoted in Scott, 1982, p. 1-D). Women's editor Valena Minor Williams echoed these complaints but shifted blame from the young teenagers to the wider, local African American community itself: "the shame of the situation lies not in the frustrated crowd that rushed the Arena, but in a community which allows a program like this to continue and to exploit the Negro teen-sters." The *Call & Post* ran a three-part series titled "Teen-Agers or Moon-Doggers" in which the concert was lambasted as "Low-brow, cheap 'entertainment,' frequently obscene" (Richardson, *Call & Post* newspaper, 1952, quoted in Scott, 1982, p. 11D). The press "gave the incident front page coverage and the wire service spread the story around the world. Suddenly, the press was talking about rock 'n' roll and its evils" (Halasa, 2009, para. 5). This mediatization can be more accurately seen as the birth of rock 'n' roll, rather than the event in Cleveland itself.



Finally, it is the stories of the audience members – the young and primarily black teenagers – who attended the event that rarely appear in accounts of Cleveland’s rock ‘n’ roll heritage or in the archives. One exception found in the archive however was Cleveland’s *The Plain Dealer* newspaper (Snook, 1989, March 19) that shared a handful of retrospective narrative accounts from the city’s black teenagers. This feature was based on a direct call for “eyewitness” memories of the Moondog Coronation Ball some 37 years later. Snook’s story, entitled “Rock night that shook a city”, once again establishes radio DJs (primarily the story of Freed) and vinyl records (primarily those purchased at Leo Mintz’s Record Rendezvous). Yet, these mythic narratives are also contrasted, crucially, with accounts of Cleveland’s black teenagers who listened to Freed, bought records at Record Rendezvous and attended the Moondog concert.

“Never had we had the chance to see these folks [i.e., black musicians] perform and dance along with them at the same time” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H) remembered Shirley Hayes, who bought tickets (\$1.50 in advance) for the concert. Another teenager, Ruby Johnson, recalled the anticipation ahead of the concert: “everyone from school would be there and this would be the event of the year” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H). One young man recalled that he was “really dressed to kill” wearing his “light cream blue suit and my blue suede shoes, along with my blue top coat and light blue hat, which I still have” (Snook, 1989, p. 1-H); wide-shouldered “zoot suits” popularized in the late 1940s were still largely in vogue (and mention of “blue suede shoes”, worn in 1952, precedes Carl 1955) and Elvis Presley’s (1956) recorded songs of that title). Another young woman, Sandra Johnson, shared that there was apprehension about the event. Although she was 18 at the time, she still had to ask for permission to attend: “My grandmother really didn’t want me to go, and my date had to really beg for me to go. After a while she gave in with instructions that if anything happened, for him to bring me home right away” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H).

The concert was described as a “teen heaven” – “we arrived early that night so we were able to get right up to the front of the stage”, recalled Ruby Johnson; “we had so much fun at first, dancing and listening to the music” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H). Hayes remembered “we were enchanted, thrilled into giddiness. We slopped, wrung and twisted. We hopped” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H). Soon, the growing crowd pressed in upon the young dancers: “we found our hops turned into in-place shuffles. [...] we were practically squashed together. Tempers began to flare, ‘get off me.’ ‘You kicked me’, etc.” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H). Hayes, whose grandmother had warned her of trouble, moved to a side of the venue, “suddenly there were screams and yells. In a flash, a throng was stampeding in my direction.” (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H). Ruby Johnson remembered the tense atmosphere near the stage:

At first we thought someone had started fighting, but then a tearful Alan Freed took to the stage and begged people to calm down. Then it was announced that the affair was over by order of the fire marshal. The crowd was infuriated, and the pushing and shoving became even worse. My friends and I were literally carried to the door by the crowd. (Snook, 1989, p. 7-H)

Though he was accused of purposely overselling the event and endangering the audience, it was Freed, as the public face of the event, who went on to greater fame and later infamy, following the 1959 “payola” conviction. The black teenagers, and the music they listened to, were blamed in the media for events getting out of control.

After moving to New York City in 1953 and appearing on radio, TV shows and films, Freed continued organizing concerts, most notably at the city’s Fox and Paramount theatres. These concerts were remarkable not only for promoting the new sounds of rock ‘n’ roll but also for propagating Freed’s own legacy. Reading through the archives of concert programs and promotional materials, 1954–1959, various accounts of the Moondog Coronation Ball appear as a key part of Freed’s biography. One example, the program from the “Alan Freed Christmas Jubilee” (1957), reads typically:

In March 1952, Freed decided to cash in on the success of Rock and Roll by staging a Moondog Ball in the Cleveland Arena, which has a capacity of 10,000. About 9,000 tickets were sold in advance, and the night of the ball 30,000 persons showed up, crashing the doors down and bowling over the outnumbered cops. The show had to be called off, but it wasn’t a financial loss. Everybody had such a grand time breaking into the arena that they didn’t ask for their money back.

Other publications about Freed offer comparably exaggerated versions of the Moondog Coronation Ball. A November 1958 feature in *TV Radio Mirror* describes Freed’s tenure as “the Moondog”:

Alan launched the show and shortly thereafter stumbled into evidence of the explosive power of rhythm and blues. In October [sic.], 1952, he thought it would be nice to get his listeners together for a dance. He rented the 10,000 capacity Cleveland Arena and worried whether he could draw a crowd large enough to pay expenses. “Then,” he says, “the lid blew off.” An estimated 30,000 fans aimed for the hall. Caught completely by surprise, the police fought to break up the traffic jam and control the crowd. The dance had to be called off and much civic commotion followed. In some circles, he was rated akin to a public enemy, but to the kids, he was like a new hero who shared the music they liked. (Bolstead, 1958, p. 70)

Along with being a new kind of musical “hero,” Freed was also being credited as the inventor of the term “rock ‘n’ roll”. A 1957 *Pageant* magazine cover story from the archive extolled: “Rock ‘n’ roll – madness or fun? – read what its inventor – Alan Freed – has to say” (Irwin, 1957, p. 56). Freed declared a simple love of the music and its “big beat” (Bolstead, 1958, p. 25), and rather than its “inventor” or “creator”, Jackson (1991, p. 1) contended that Freed had only “appended the phrase ‘rock & roll’ to black rhythm and blues.” For Jackson (1991, p. 7):

That Moondog Freed was not the first white disc jockey to play rhythm and blues on the air is inconsequential. What is significant is that he proved to be a

deft communicator, one able to move popular audiences. Using only a microphone, a stack of rhythm and blues records, and his charisma, Alan Freed was able to rally 20,000 blacks to an innocuous dance at a seedy minor-league ice hockey arena.

While Jackson demythologizes Freed to an extent, this narrative nevertheless continues to centralize him and his role in events.

Against this, one our main contentions is that the reification of this myth has overlooked the 20,000 black teenagers who attended the Moondog concert. Burke (1989) noted how myths, such as Freed's, have "a symbolic meaning made up of stereotyped incidents and involving characters who are larger than life, whether they be heroes or villains" (p. 103). It is the de-contextualisation, or ahistorical *fuzziness* of myths that allow them to flourish. Barthes (1972) described myths as "constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made" (p. 142). Through archival research, we have sought to re-engage with the "historical quality" of "the story" of rock 'n' roll in Cleveland, and begin to redress the invisibility of Cleveland's black teenagers (and radio DJs) in it. This omission has been carried along parallel lines into the Rock Hall itself, where Bergengren (1999) lamented that the Rock Hall of Fame "is not conceived from a Black perspective; there is nothing about white co-optation of Black culture or talent" (p. 547). Critically, there is even less noted there about the young black listeners and teenage consumers who made the pleasures and rebelliousness of youth leisure synonymous with rock 'n' roll.

## 2 Conclusion: Flipping the Record, Changing the Station, Song and the Story?

This paper explored questions of why and how Cleveland was selected to become the site of a major popular music museum. In doing so, we have analysed the cultural heritage discourses that surrounded its selection (Burgoyne, 2003; Roberts & Cohen, 2014; Smith, 2006), and unpacked Cleveland's mythologised claims of being "the place where rock began to roll" (Lashua, 2019b, p. 77). We have shown how archival research allowed us to revisit varying accounts, primarily myths, and we have attempted to foreground the heritage of youth musical leisure and rock 'n' roll in Cleveland. In other words, by exploring, and critiquing established histories (i.e. Lee & Dieser, 2020; Mowatt, 2021) and amplifying unheard voices, the context was set to change the record.

Side1 of the paper contextualized the case of Cleveland as a "music city" (Ballico & Watson, 2020). We (re)framed the context and claims that were made of Cleveland as a city that was worthy of being the site of a major popular music museum. The archival fieldwork methods at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archive were presented, and located within the recent archival turn in arts, cultural and social science research to contest and challenge received knowledge, and work toward more diverse and equitable representations of the "usable past" (Flinn, 2011; Reitsamer, 2018).

On Side 2 of the paper, we sought to decentre and demythologize the authorized heritage discourses (AHD) of Cleveland's claims to fame through analysis and (re) presentation of three central themes – radio broadcasting, vinyl records, and the “first” rock ‘n’ roll concert. Here, archival media accounts showed more complex and diverse narratives that contributed to the established and mythologised accounts of DJ Alan Freed, record store owner Leo Mintz, and the March 21, 1952 Moondog Coronation Ball concert at the Cleveland Arena. Finally, while this archival research was focused on a micro-historical study of Cleveland, it has wider resonances, both within the archival turn, as well as in critical excavations of leisure histories and heritage. In this view we question the politics of knowledge production, and the representation of the past in archives and in museums. We hope it contributes to work toward social justice for unheralded or under-recognised communities, in order to share more diverse cultural histories. In this wider view, popular music affords a useful, critical lens through which to view and disrupt leisure histories and heritage and *change the record*.

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## Declarations

**Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate** Not applicable. No human subjects were involved in this archival research. A research ethics application was submitted and approved by Leeds Beckett University prior to the fieldwork commencing.

**Consent for Publication** Not applicable.

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