



I Sing The Body (In)Corporate: Identity, Displacement And The Radical Priority Of Reception

Stream 21: Music at Work

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"The aural logo is certainly getting bigger, there'll be a time when you don't think of the company without thinking of its anthem."

Pad Bray, Brand Director Bluewave plc.

Prelude

Although etymologists tell us that the word 'organisation' means 'to endow with organs', the history of management and organisation studies reveals an obsession with but one human sense organ: we work under the epistemological regime of the eye. This paper gently calls upon researchers to give an ear to the sound of organisational practice. For, as Jacques Attali (1985) argues,

"more than colours and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men... Any music, any organisation of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality." (p.6)

For Attali, music is a source of identity, a shared symbol of collectivity, and a means of generating and maintaining social conformity. Music has psychological potency, power as an economic commodity, and significant social and symbolic value. Indeed, Attali goes so far as to argue that the very mobility of music raises issues of how place is created; how power is exercised and mediated.

More specifically, and in far less grandiose terms, Nissley, Taylor and Butler et al (2001) argue that "organizations may be sung; and, indeed we may learn something about the organization if we listen to the songs that are sung in organizations." This paper attempts to contribute to an understanding of organisational identity formation, maintenance, and change through a critical examination of organisational songs.

The Sound of Organisational Identity

Interest in the concept of *organisational identity* can be traced back to at least the 1950s (Balmer, 1994), at a time when design consultancies became fashionable in the United States. Subsequent research on organisational identity took two paths. The first explored the issue of corporate identity or brand, and is populated primarily by wandering marketing scholars (e.g. Ind, 1997; Melewar and Harrold, 2000). The second path – more popular with organisation theorists – took a more reflexive, analytical route (e.g. Cheney, 1991; Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000).

Put simply, the first path leads towards an understanding of identity as a design tool (managing the company image or brand). This may be termed the *projected*

identity of the organisation (Soenen and Moingeon, 2002) and refers to the elements an organisation uses, in more or less controlled ways, to present itself to specific audiences. The second path leads towards an understanding of identity as a collective representation or description of the organisation. This refers to what organisational members actually experience, more or less consciously, with regard to their organisation. Soenen and Moingeon (ibid) call this an organisation's *experienced identity*.

Now, whilst almost all writers on the topic seek diversion in pointing out the essential differences and similarities between these two paths, they do seem to agree on one thing: that identity is primarily something you can see – whether it be staff appearance and behaviour, architecture, interior building design and decor, symbols and logos, products, brochures, or reports and advertisements in print or on screen. Far less attention has been paid to what organisations sound like and how this reflects and/or reinforces projected and experienced organisational identities.

Organisational songs fall into two categories. The first is an element of projected organisational identity: the *company song*. This is a song commissioned by business corporations, often recorded by professional musicians, and then communicated to employees and other corporate stakeholders to facilitate subsequent collective performance within the organisation. The second category of organisational song is an element of experienced organisational identity: the *work song* (or industrial folk song) performed by particular organisational sub-groups, such as coalminers, sailors, or factory workers. Unlike company songs, work songs are “vernacular songs made by workers themselves directly out of their own experiences, and expressing their own interests and aspirations” (Lloyd, 1967: 317).

But who writes these songs and what space and place are created in their enactment? More fundamentally, in endowing music with the form of a lyrical song, what non-musical forces are being deployed?

PROJECTING ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE COMPANY SONG

Company songs are difficult to research. After all, songs are peculiar ‘things’ compared, say, to company logos or office furniture. They are temporary, fleeting phenomena which disappear once the resonance of the final note ceases to be audible. Indeed, I have come across precious few research monographs on the company song.

Popular wisdom has it that the company song began life in Japan. The story goes that after the national humiliation of defeat in World War 2, Japanese business management, eager to re-build the economy, were faced with a

demotivated, demoralised and ultimately poorly performing labour force. Their solution was to rekindle the embers of national pride through employee identification with the business corporation. For example, President Takeshi Mitarai of the camera company, Canon, took steps immediately after the war to establish a corporate culture expressing the San-Ji Spirit (“spontaneity, autonomy and self-awareness”). A company song was commissioned to project this cultural identity to all employees. The lyrics of the second verse read (in translation):

The flower of spontaneity opens autonomously
 Self-awareness scents the garden of co-operation
 Canon Camera commits to the San-Ji spirit
 We meet together in the spirit of San-Ji

Interestingly, as the company’s strategy changed in the ensuing years, so too did the order of the three concepts of San-Ji within the company song. Thus, in 1962, the order was changed to spontaneity, self-awareness and autonomy. On the occasion of the company’s 50th anniversary in 1988, the lyrical order was changed again to read self-awareness, spontaneity and autonomy¹ (Canon.com, 2003).

The Canon company song is a typical example of the genre in the sense that it is (doh) commissioned by an executive manager; (ray) played or sung collectively in particular places, and at particular times, as specified by management; and (so) explicitly designed to ‘say something’ about the company.

Here is an example of another company song from Japan, commissioned in 1990, entitled “Ahh, Fujitsu”.²

Let's run out now, to greener fields, where shines a splendid Sun.
 We have a dream, a wondrous dream, that gets the best things done.
 A wide blue sky is in our heart now, open-ness in our soul.
 We'll run together going onwards now, on towards our goal.
 Ahh, Fujitsu, oh tomorrow is our goal.

Lets join our hands, with everyone, and smile at each new hour.
 We have a dream, an endless dream, of youthful love and power.
 We want to use all our skill now, all the strengths unfurled,
 We plan uniting all our new techniques, over all the world.
 Ahh, Fujitsu, forges links all over the world.

Let's make a bond, from heart to heart, throughout the human race.

¹ The song was sung every morning in the Canon offices and factories in Japan until 1988 when the company replaced San-Ji with a philosophy of Kyosei (world and inter-personal harmony). I have been unable to find out if a new song was commissioned to replace the original.

² The song was originally written in Japanese, with music by T. Hirosawa, and lyrics by M. Nakamura. Harry B. Guest is credited with the English translation on the sheet music.

An unseen power, now in our grasp, can even conquer space.
We want to find a new harmony, both in work and play.
We'll share the fresh things we discover now, building a new day.
Ahh, Fujitsu, gives a joy with every new day!

This song is sung at the annual Fujitsu corporation anniversary picnic on 15th June. From the lyrics you would be hard pressed to know what business the company is in. The emphasis is on harmony, team work, working towards an endless future dream, and yet there is the threat of global conquest and invisible power. There are green fields and blue skies, and yet the tune is predominantly in a minor key with a soulful, melancholic trumpet refrain and full orchestral backing supporting the voices of one of Japan's most highly regarded jazz singers, Martha Miyake. The song is an anthem, designed to be uplifting and to engender pride in the corporation.

Now, compare this to the company song of a rival computer manufacturer (dating from 1958) which projects quite a different organisational identity:

There's a thrill in store for all, for we're about to toast the corporation that we represent.
We're here to cheer each pioneer and also proudly boast
of that man of men, our friend and guiding hand.
The name of T.J. Watson means a courage none can stem
and we feel honoured to be here to toast the IBM.

Ever onward! Ever onward! That's the spirit that has brought us fame.
We're big but bigger we will be. We can't fail for all can see
that to serve humanity has been our aim.
Our products now are known in every zone, our reputation sparkles like a gem.
We've fought our way through and new fields we're sure to conquer, too,
for the ever onward IBM!

Ever onward! Ever onward! We're bound for the top to never fall.
Right here and now we thankfully pledge sincerest loyalty to the corporation that's the best of all.
Our leaders we revere and, while we're here, let's show the world just what we think of them!
So let us sing men - sing men once or twice, then sing again for the ever onward IBM!

Again we hear reference to the future but this is tempered by a veneration of the founding father, Thomas Watson Snr (aka Terrible Tommy). The song stresses employee loyalty to, and pride in, the company. Like Fujitsu, IBM look toward the future but, in IBM's case, the metaphors are not of green fields and a newer, brighter sunshine, but of fighting through, staying on top, and conquest. The music style of the song supports this. The accompaniment contains a trumpet, but the style of playing is in a more upbeat, major key. The song is set to a quick march time signature, and bears all the hallmarks of the morale boosting fighting songs sung by US university marching bands. Such songs thrived in the older US universities throughout the twentieth century, and today every self-respecting US college football team has a range of fighting songs. They are a commemoration, a collective celebration of the here-and-now with a sentimental reference to past achievements.

Compare the IBM song to the Brown University fighting song, commissioned in 1903, and hugely popular at the time (and remains so). Incidentally, Thomas Watson Jnr. was a student there in the class of '37:

Our boys are out there fighting, like they've never fought before.
They're crashing and they're smashing to roll up a glorious score.
Let's give our ev'ry effort and we'll help them go to town.
And we will all be happy with a victory for Brown.

Let's give a cheer for dear old Brown, and her team of valiant men.
We'll raise our voices to the sky, for we will win again.
We'll back our team with all our might, just to raise a winning score.
Because it's fight, fight for Brown boys, and for Brown forevermore.

The IBM and the Brown University songs share a similar beat, time signature, and lyrical structure. Indeed, these two songs and most US College fighting songs have more than a passing resemblance to the 1940s popular song "Its a Long Way to Tipperary".

But what of more recent times? General Electric has a lot in common with IBM. American, old, big, and with a history of extremely aggressive management practice – particularly under the presidency of Jack Welch from 1981 to 2001. Yet, its company song, which takes its title from the post-Welch 2001 corporate catch-phrase "We Bring Good Things to Life", offers no hint of the college fighting song lyric or quick march time signature. On the contrary, the song is a simple sentimental ballad in a style and arrangement which would not be out of place in the Eurovision song contest. It is more panegyric than commemorative.

We fill your days with song, we send a summer breeze.
We turn your dark to light, we capture memories
We make you pretty, we make you smile. G E !
We bring good things to living, we bring good things to life!
We bring you closer to the ones you love! G E !

Three years ago, GE made an unsuccessful hostile takeover bid for Honeywell. Here is the Honeywell company song, commissioned at the height of this activity. Again, the tune and arrangement are slow, sentimental, almost evangelical: the antithesis of a fighting song.

Working toward tomorrow the future is ours to hold
A history we're proud of - inventions new and bold
With excellence our hallmark, integrity in our name,
At Honeywell, we're family, throughout the world the same!

Showing pride and confidence with customers every day,
a partnership in business builds trust along the way.
Working all together in everything we do,
The future of our company depends on me and you

Our people at Portfolio are really the best
 With the focus on the customer, we'll outshine the rest
 We're bigger and we're better and soon you will see
 That we'll be number one in the industry!
 (Industry! Industry!)

Weeeeeeee're gearing up
 HP Services is better than ever (HP's got the power!)
 Weeeeeeee're gearing up
 HP Services has got it together

Here is part of the AT&T company song (from 1995) based on a re-working of the Sister Sledge million selling single 'We are Family')

Call 'round the world - at the touch of a button, we're CSG.
 We'll bring you together it's smooth like cotton, AT&T. (AT&T!)
 Look for the switching that brings it together, we're NSG.
 Siemens and Northern just can't take the weather, AT&T.

*We're AT&T, one big happy family.
 We're AT&T, all the Business Units and me.
 We're AT&T, everything you want it to be.
 We are family, the one and only AT&T.*

Definity call centres won't make you stall, it's MPG.
 Whatever your business we'll make you tall, AT&T. (AT&T!)
 Systems and global solutions and software - technology.
 We get it, we move it, we use it, we share - AT&T.

*We're AT&T, one big happy family.
 We're AT&T, all the Business Units and me.
 We're AT&T, everything you want it to be.
 We are family, the one and only AT&T.*

Hip Pop company songs such as these stress youthful exuberance, the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and the ability to respond to customer 'needs'. They are the far more up-tempo than other categories of company song, but share some of the lyrical content of the Marching song – the closely knit winning team proclaiming superiority over the competition.

THE PROVENANCE OF COMPANY SONGS

In all cases I have come across so far, the person responsible for commissioning the company song has been a member of the Board. In the case of AT&T (and later NCR) the commissioning Board member – Pers Aloof - actually performed and recorded the song himself, but more usually the song is initially performed and recorded by professional musicians. But what is the purpose of a company song?

Music plays a powerful role in “the cultural placing of the individual in the social” (Frith, 1987: 139). When listening to a piece of music or singing a song, a person’s sense of location is continuously defined and redefined. This process of locating is crucially bound up with the constitution of identity – whether personal, social, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, or political. You get a sense of who you are and where you are – a sense of *belonging* (Shephard, 1991). But paradoxically, this sense of belonging is accompanied by a *displacement*. The act of listening or singing creates a sense of place which may be far removed from the place where the sound is physically located. For example, as I write this sentence on a rainy May afternoon in England, I am listening to music which transports me effortlessly to Goa. Clearly, then, the meaning of a song is crucially mediated by social and commercial processes that shape a person’s musical desire and experience.

It may well be the case that the intentions of the songwriter tell us little about the meaning of a piece of music. What is interesting about company songs is that the belonging-dislocation dynamic is seemingly under a far tighter degree of control than a rock band could ever dream of exercising over the playing of their music (with the exception of concerts). Company songs are intended to be performed at specific times and in particular places. And, much like the singing of the public school song, there is a element of compulsion in the performance. The physical location of the company song performance is often predetermined and this clearly will influence the spatial sense of belonging. Your position in the organisational hierarchy will also define where you are located within this space.

As Ian Watson (1983) notes, it is precisely because of the power of song to foster a strong sense of identity, that very few organisations since the very beginnings of industrialisation have permitted the performance of any song other than the “official” company song (if indeed there was one) by employees. Watson argues that “the bloody-minded ban on songs in many factories was a conscious ideological attempt, first, to establish authority and dominance on the part of the mill-owners and, second, to kill old pre-industrial habits and work rhythms which could interfere with the strictly regulated and highly co-ordinated pace of factory production” (1983: 12).

We now turn our attention to the three types of company song. Why were they commissioned and how, if at all, do they elicit feelings of belonging and displacement? Interviews with company personnel involved in the commissioning process are quite revealing and demonstrate a surprisingly sophisticated understanding of the application of the social psychology of music to the concept of organisational identity.

The Marching Song

Wal Mart and IBM are the only two examples of this song type I could find. Both Sam Walton and Thomas Watson Snr. were keen to instill a strong sense of company identity in their employees and both regarded the uplifting sing-along as an excellent means to such an end. Both men believed that a worker could be made to feel happy and more valued if given the opportunity to sing a Marching song.

The inspiration for Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton came from a visit to a tennis ball factory in Korea, where the workers did a company cheer and calisthenics together every morning. He liked the idea and couldn't wait to get back home to try it with his associates. He said, "My feeling is that just because we work so hard, we don't have to go around with long faces all the time - while we're doing all of this work, we like to have a good time. It's sort of a 'whistle while you work' philosophy, and we not only have a heck of a good time with it, we work better because of it." (Walton, 1992).

Whilst the research on music and singing does not bear out Walton's belief in a direct link between singing and productivity, it does support the notion that music played or sung in a quick March tempo coupled with a flowing rhythm, consonant harmony and a simple, repetitive vocal melody line tends to induce feelings of happiness in the singer/listener (Bruner, 1990). People do seem to enjoy singing a simple song together. Indeed, the lyrics are often secondary to the melody. In the case of the Marching company song it is the simple march-time melody which tends to prime the singer or listeners' affective state within a network of associations linked by shared mood connections (Sundberg, 1982). The association is one of nostalgia (Music Hall, old films, school, grandparents, etc.) and, as Baumgartner (1992) has discovered, people readily associate pieces and styles of music to specific times and places. Nostalgic memories triggered by song are rarely negative in affect. Even wartime songs tend to trigger more positive than negative affective reactions.

According to reversal theory (e.g. Apter, 1984), the positive affect associated with a collective sing-along stems from the fact that those concerned are in a paratelic state (i.e. the activity of singing is enjoyed for what it is rather because actants seek to achieve a particular goal). The habituation of the company song into everyday practice (for example the Wal Mart chant begins the day for many employees) helps activate this paratelic state – employees are never told the purpose of singing other than it is 'a good fun way to start the day'. Indeed, interviews with Wal-Mart employees (shelf stackers and check out operatives in Springfield, Massachusetts) confirm that the brief singing of the Wal Mart song is enjoyed by those who participate. None of the interviewees regarded the activity as motivated by anything other than by a sense of fun. In the UK, Asda (now owned by Wal-Mart) have introduced the Wal Mart song but participation in the sing-along is voluntary. The manager of an Asda store in Leamington Spa explained: "Chanting puts fires in bellies and unites the workforce. But we can't

force employees to do it. Actually we don't need to anyway – we all have such fun singing together.”

The Marching company song, then, successfully combines management's 'power to' shape employees' sense of belonging to and identification with the company, with their 'power over' employee behaviour. The “good old fashioned singsong” (as a Wal-Mart employee put it) mobilises positive emotional responses from employees which are easily managed and, through the use of appropriate lyrics, easily channeled into management's definition of 'good behaviour'. The Wal Mart chant, for instance, stresses the paramount importance of the customer. Employees, through singing, are reminding themselves how to behave. This is an example of what Barker (1999) terms 'generative discipline' – a method for teaching employees how to do good work. The Marching song does this rather well it would seem.

The Anthem

Philip Scarborough, programme manager for the software company Asera, is very clear about why the company has an anthem.

“On one level the tune is there to bring people together, happily working under one flag. On another, it's about slotting in with the 360 degree branding strategy of the company”

Pad Bray, group brand director for the IT systems compliance company Bluewave, also stresses the idea of brand:]

“Audio identity is a part of corporate representation. Few things in the world can equal the power of music. It can inspire and corral. Lyrically, Bluewave wanted something that conveyed our brand, and our brand is tied in with the aquatic environment. Hence, *Dive Right In* [the company song]. The lyrics should fit the metaphor.”

The rationale behind the writing of the corporate anthem is similar to that behind the company Marching song – identification with the company and an emotionally positive displacement and re-placement. However, a slow tempo song relies heavily on the lyric to increase affective arousal and requires the singers to be in a telic – goal-directed – state. In other words, both the song and the singing of the song should have a purpose (Apter, 1984).

As we have heard, the lyrics of the corporate anthem stress global harmony and togetherness and offer little or no guidance to the corporate neophyte on how to behave. This is because the Anthem is not written to motivate the employee but to sell the company image or brand. It is the perfect example of projected corporate identity. And here is a perfect example.

In 1992, Yasuhiri Hashimoto, President of the Japanese construction company, Taisei, commissioned a company anthem – a six minute slow ballad - as part of a ‘visual identity programme’ designed to soften the construction industry’s ‘three k’ image : kiken (dangerous), kitanai (dirty), and kitsui (difficult). 13,000 CDs of the song were distributed to the company workers and the song was played twice a day inside the offices. The song begins with the line: “We will sail over the waves to the land of dreams in a white yacht” (Terazono, 1992).

Whereas Company Marching songs are designed to be sung without musical accompaniment, corporate anthems are rarely sung by employees and all have comparatively lavish musical arrangements. In other words, the anthem is designed to communicate information about the company brand through a far more precarious and un-manageable dialectic of belonging and displacement. A brand can be defined as a promise of standard which engenders a positive affective response from stakeholders. However, in sonic branding, the relationship between the promise and its sonic medium is crucially important (Jackson, 2003). This is why the corporate anthem is always professionally recorded and why few companies dare let their employees’ loose to perform them.⁴

What follows is a fairly lengthy explanation of how the company SonicBrand prepared an anthem for the firm Vizzavi. The emphasis is entirely on the appropriate sonic media and textures.

“After listening to many instrumental solos, we defined the strings section of an orchestra (chiefly violins and violas) as being both full of heritage and timeless. The fullness and richness of the sound of a collection of string instruments was preferred to the solo instrument because it immediately conveyed a sense of sharing and collectiveness that was in keeping with the belief behind the brand.”

“Even so, it was felt that a strings section on its own could be a little too conservative for the brand and the modernity of the offering needed to be conveyed. The solution was to add some synthesized pad sounds (synthesized musical textures) to the strings section. These added an electronic edge and an extra, unexpected level of interest to the strings section.”

“To reflect the optimistic joie de vivre that the brand wanted, we put together a value moodboard that had groups of people making joyous sounds from

⁴ There is in fact a long tradition of US corporations commissioning large scale musical works to be performed by professional orchestras. Thomas Watson ordered an ‘IBM Symphony’ in 1936; Eisner commissioned a ‘Millenium Symphony’ for Disney in 2000; and Rank Xerox hired the Broadway composer William Stone to write a company musical to commemorate the 1963 launch of the 813 Photocopier.

clapping and stamping their feet to banging drums and giving praise. After much discussion, it was felt that the sound of a gospel choir in full voice was the most powerful way for Vizzavi to show its human energy and demonstrate the social approach at the same time. Added to this moodboard were some sounds of vocal percussion, a little like the sounds Bobby McFerrin made famous on his hit 'Don't Worry Be Happy'. These unusual sounds created an extra level of distinctiveness to the potentially generic gospel sound. "

"Finally, we created a moodboard for the overall belief of the brand, which was about freedom. The expression of freedom that was chosen to fit within the context of everything else we had created was a single male voice calling out the words 'Oh Yes'. This very simple device seemed to sum up everyone's feelings for the brand and became adopted as the icon of the brand" (Jackson, 2003).

So much for the composer's intentions. But it is naive to believe that an anthem song can dictate the reactions of the listener and even more naive to believe that the anthem will always be sung or played in the right context.

The Fujitsu company anthem is a case in point. The intention of the writer of *Ahh Fujitsu* was to encapsulate the company's values and to foster a sense of harmony and belonging. However, attempts to widen the practice of the company sing-along to subsidiary companies outside of Japan met with very limited success. At the US subsidiary, Fujitsu Network Communications, for example, an employee sing-song using written sheet music, and a PowerPoint presentation of the lyrics, proved embarrassingly unsuccessful in 1991. As an employee explained:

"We (the entire company, several hundred people at the time) were given Xerox copies of the sheet music to the anthem, and asked to sing it together. Not many of the employees could read sheet music (even if they *could* sing). It was a humorous thing to experience, but we were never asked to perform it again. I guess the well-intentioned Japanese who instigated the event were not too impressed with the result" (Fujitsu, 2003).

A similar fate has befallen many company songs – but, interestingly, it would seem that it is the gospel anthems, such as *Ahh Fujitsu*, which inspire the most dysfunctional displacement amongst employees.

First it was KPMG employees, and then, by 2001, a number of senior executives within KPMG found their corporate anthem an embarrassment. Employees made mp3 copies of the anthem and circulated them widely. One particular aficionado, Chris Raettig, had launched a website in 2000 (corporateanthems.raettig.org) featuring a top ten list of recorded company songs. KPMG's anthemic *Vision of Global Strategy* proved extremely popular and KPMG demanded that the song, and the link to their own website (kpmg.com), be removed in an attempt to

“protect the KPMG trademark and brand” (Smith, 2001). Needless to say, Raettig has not obliged. And perhaps, inevitably, KPMG’s interest in the site increased the number of hits to such a level that the website moved to a larger internet service provider. The Raettig website is now a popular portal for downloading recordings of company songs. Freed from the hierarchical control of the commissioning company, this collection can be freely interpreted in ways quite unintended by the commissioning executive or songwriter.

The corporate anthem is most closely associated these days with a corporate spectacle – an anniversary or merger – and a video. This facilitates management control over the listener/viewer’s affect and interpretation of the meaning of the company brand through a process of priming (see, for example, the research of Hansen and Krygowski, 1994). Research on the psychology of audio-visual communication is highly sophisticated. And one thing is clear - without control over the placement, timing, and interpretation of such communication, organisations run the risk of ridicule and embarrassment. Anthems quickly become *schizophonic* in the sense that not only the source of the music (usually a CD) is divorced from its source (the studio), but the intention and the reception of the sound become disjoined. As Mowitt (1987) argues: “the social analysis of musical experience has to take account of the radical priority of reception, and thus it must shift its focus away from the notion of agency that, by privileging the moment of production, preserves the autonomy of the subject” (p.176).

The Hip Pop Song

The hip pop song is the most recent of the three company song types and is the most influenced by the radical priority of reception. Companies decide to plunder the popular music charts for a catchy tune or riff and add their own lyrics. The power of such plunderphonics resides in the realm of non-rational musical aesthetics. As Nissley et al (2001) argue, the strength of a song is enhanced by playing on any positive felt meaning associated with the original song. Pop music is particularly popular amongst 14-25 year olds and research reveals just how important such songs are in the formation and shaping of social identity amongst this population (Savary, 1967; Epstein, 1994). Companies commissioning hip pop songs are keen to tap into the belonging-displacement dynamic of this age group in an effort to differentiate themselves and/or their products as youthful, ever-changing, energetic, slightly “against the grain”. Not surprisingly it is in the comparatively youthful business of information and communication technologies (ICT) that such songs flourish.

Hip pop company songs are not intended to sell the company brand image but to celebrate the launch of a new product or service line, or, occasionally, to commemorate the arrival of a new CEO. They are certainly intended to arouse a positive affective response in the listener / singer. Certainly the original song was written with such a reception very much in mind. But how well received are

AT&T's re-working of the Sister Sledge smash hit *We Are Family*, NCR's re-hashing of the Beatles' *Back in the USSR*, Hewlett Packard's rendition of *Get the Party Started*, or GIBO Groep's version of the Dutch number one hit *15 Miljoen Mensen?* From the discussions on Chris Raettig's website it would seem that cynicism reigns supreme. Is there anything sadder than an ageing company attempting to gain youthful respectability by linking itself to a million-selling pop song? It is certainly risky. Although Orange do not have a company song, its executives are aware of the dangers facing corporations attempting to assimilate youthful identity. Orange's short-lived sponsorship of the Glastonbury Festival was greeted with derision by many festival goers and all the company logos, liberally sprinkled around the festival, were playfully defaced with rotten fruit. The fact that the company cannot control the antics of the original pop star may also prove embarrassing as Pepsi Cola discovered to their cost when they plundered the Madonna songbook for a global advertising campaign immediately prior to the release of the controversial promotional video for her song *Like A Prayer*. In the furor that followed, the company were forced to break the contract with Madonna to protect their brand image.

Strictly speaking, hip pop songs are not company songs at all, as they rarely if ever actually sung by employees. Indeed, my four examples have only been heard (at loud volume) by employees at particular celebratory company events. What is interesting is that the lyrics to all four songs were written by members of the organisation, and in the case of AT&T and NCR performed by a band comprising employees at least one of whom was a Board member.

TABLE ABOUT HERE

However, one fascinating spin-off from this 'do-it-yourself' ethos has been the creation of company protest songs. Apparently, these are quite common within ICT firms but I have had great difficulty accessing them. They even more evanescent than company songs. The one example I have been able to record comes from Hewlett Packard.

In 1995, Hewlett Packard launched an email programme called OpenMail. The programme was developed in the UK by a team led by Richi Jennings. However, in 2000 the company decided to use Microsoft's Exchange programme instead and scrapped OpenMail. Richi Jennings and his team were devastated and composed and performed a protest song at the company farewell party. One of HP's customers, Samsung, bought the rights to the programme (now called Samsung Contact) that same year and Richi Jennings and his entire development team 'jumped ship' to Samsung. The song is sung in the style of a traditional *work song* or industrial folk song. The tune is reminiscent of an Irish lament.

Years ago we had a vision to change the email scene.
Communication without limits unlike anything you've seen

Moved to Pinewood, started coding for Sleepy Hollow, a new dawn
One year later, yes, one year later, one year later -- without fanfare! -- OpenMail was born.

Time went by, we added features, things you've never seen before.
You want clients, well we've got 'em! You really couldn't ask for more.
In early days, we had big sales, we thought eternity.
But what was coming, oh what was coming, what was coming
was the evil empire and dark forces in HP.

(mournful accordion solo)

We did our best, we had success, but this didn't satisfy HP
Our customers were the biggest, profits there for all to see
Tried to close us -- Carly hates us!⁵ It don't fit in the new HP.
Tried to sell us -- yeah, they tried to sell us!
They tried to sell us but they messed up as OpenMail has ceased to be.

The song bears all the hallmarks of the industrial folk song (see Lloyd, 1967). It is a lyrical statement of the emotional and practical problems of the singer(s). It praises the skills of a particular occupational group and laments the injustices meted out by higher management. The belonging/displacement dynamic is much closer than that associated with a company song as the lyric calls upon the listener to identify with a skilled professional employee whose work is undervalued by executive management.

AUTHORS NOTE (or groveling apology)

Owing to work pressure combined with unforeseen personal circumstances, this paper remains unfinished and undecided. The issues which rise to the surface on re-reading seem to be to centre around executive management's naive desire to engineer corporate culture through all means at their disposal. Of course the distant sound of resistance can always be heard when such control is attempted, and this is due in no small part to the schizophonia enabled by the proliferation of electronic means of music reproduction. It is only when the reproduction of the company song (its location, timing, performance, etc.) is firmly in management hands then the listener's sense of belonging/displacement becomes manageable. However, the choice of song type is of paramount importance. If anyone is interested in pursuing some of the issues raised in this draft with a view to the writing of a joint effort, please get in touch.

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⁵ Carly Fiorina, Hewlett Packard's CEO, was responsible for pulling the plug on OpenMail.

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	Marching Song	Anthem	Hip Pop
Company	IBM Wal-Mart	Fujitsu General Electric Deutschebank KPMG Ernst and Young	AT&T Hewlett Packard NCR GIBO Groep
Musical roots	College fighting song	Gospel music	Contemporary 'pop' dance music
Tempo	Medium 90 – 100 bpm	Slow 70 – 80 bpm	Fast 110-140 bpm
Key	Major	Minor	Major/minor
Lyrical metaphor	World domination	Global harmony	Nuclear family
Focus	Unity around the company name	Unity around the company brand	Unity around a new product, service, or CEO
Longevity	Long (> 10 years)	Medium (2 – 5 years)	Short (< 2 years)
Intended affective response	Childlike fun Veneration of the father	Adoration of the company	Youthful energy & Enthusiasm
Actual affective response	Nostalgic fun	Embarrassment	Cynicism

Table: A comparison of three basic types of company song