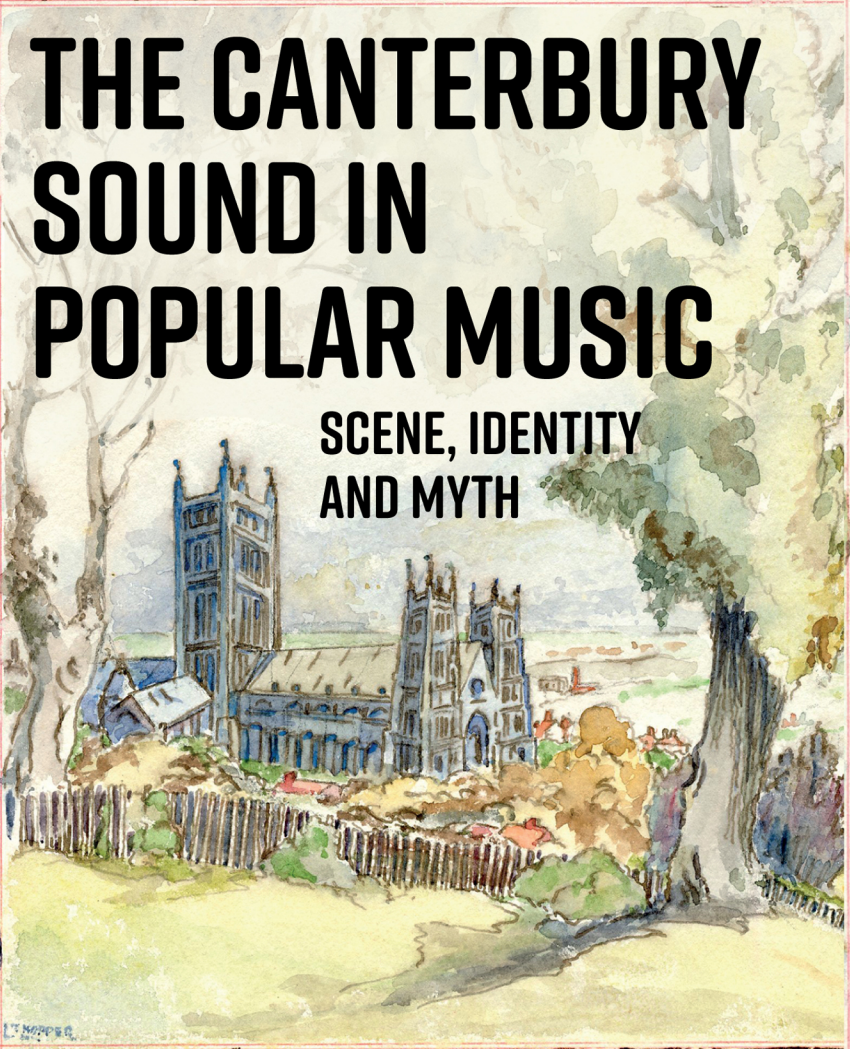


**EMERALD STUDIES IN POPULAR MUSIC AND PLACE**  
SERIES EDITORS: BRETT LASHUA AND STEPHEN WAGG

# THE CANTERBURY SOUND IN POPULAR MUSIC

SCENE, IDENTITY  
AND MYTH



EDITED BY  
**ASYA DRAGANOVA • SHANE BLACKMAN • ANDY BENNETT**

# **The Canterbury Sound in Popular Music**

# EMERALD STUDIES IN POPULAR MUSIC AND PLACE

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# **The Canterbury Sound in Popular Music: Scene, Identity and Myth**

EDITED BY

**ASYA DRAGANOVA, SHANE BLACKMAN  
AND ANDY BENNETT**



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To Canterbury*

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## About the Authors

**Sam Bailey** holds a PhD and is an improvising pianist, composer, teacher, promoter–curator and founder–director of the experimental music and poetry charity Free Range (<http://freerangecanterbury.org/>). His work as a musician includes: playing as a soloist with choir and orchestra in Canterbury Cathedral, as a soloist and conductor with local orchestras, classical recitals, cabaret punk bands, salsa bands, afro-beat bands, jazz bands, folk bands, organising two Summer of Jazz festivals and the Listen and Play Jazz Jam series, co-founding Jack Hues and the Quartet and a year-long project called Piano in the Woods, a three-year project called Eating Sound (in which food was used as a way of connecting with experimental music). He currently teaches at Canterbury Christ Church University, Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys and privately alongside running Free Range and working freelance as a musician and composer.

**Andy Bennett** is Professor of Cultural Sociology in the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University. He has written and edited numerous books including *Popular Music and Youth Culture*, *Music, Style and Aging* and *Music Scenes* (co-edited with Richard A. Peterson). He is a Faculty Fellow of the Yale Centre for Cultural Sociology, an International Research Fellow of the Finnish Youth Research Network and a Founding Member of the Regional Music Research Group. He has published his research on the Canterbury Sound through a series of journal articles and chapters in edited books.

**Shane Blackman** is Professor of Cultural Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University. Before starting his career in sociology and cultural studies, he worked in the music industry as a Manager of an Our Price record store in central London. He has a PhD in Sociology, he gained an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) studentship at the Institute of Education, University of London, where his supervisors were Professor Basil Bernstein and Professor Phil Cohen. His most recent books include, *Chilling Out: The Cultural Politics of Substance Consumption, Youth and Drug Policy* (Open University Press, 2004), *The Subcultural Imagination: Theory, Research and Reflexivity in Contemporary Youth Cultures* (Routledge, 2016, with Michelle Kempson) and *Youth Marginality in Britain: Contemporary Studies of Austerity* (Policy Press, 2017 with Ruth Rogers). He is a Research Fellow of the Danish National Centre for Social Research and a Research Associate at the Sociology Department, Goldsmiths. He is an Editor of the *International Journal of Youth Studies* and also an Editor of *YOUNG: the Nordic Journal of Youth Research*. He is also a Member of the ESRC: Peer Review College.

**Billie Bottle** is a singer, multi-instrumentalist, actor, composer, sound engineer and producer whose projects have ranged from avant-garde jazz cabaret to indie-rock, whimsical psych-folk to Kalevala-inspired prog-rock. She has collaborated with Mike and Kate Westbrook, Dave Sinclair (Caravan), Giffords Circus, choreographer Richard Chappell, soul label Random Records, musical theatre creators Matt Harvey and Thomas Hewitt-Jones and is a long-term supporter of The Dark Mountain Project. In a surreal experiment, she was on BBC's *The Voice* with Martine Waltier and leads The Multiple, who have just realised their second album, *The Other Place*, a new recording of their political multimedia show, based on a pilgrimage from Devon to Westminster to deliver a pint of milk to Parliament on Election Day. She has also released a solo album featuring Canterbury musicians, Dave Sinclair and Jimmy Hastings, plus Unrecorded Beam, settings of transcendentalist nature poet, Henry David Thoreau.

**Adam Brodigan** was the founder and currently continued promoter/programmer/stage runner of *The Crash of Moons Club*; a monthly alternative live music night held at Bramley's Bar down Orange Street in Canterbury. Arriving in Canterbury from nearby Medway in 2004, he has been involved in the founding of prog/funk/jazz band Lapis Lazuli alongside musician Neil Sullivan, now close to a decade in since the original conception and line-up. He was also founder and drummer for the band Delta Sleep (BSM Records) who since relocated without him to Brighton, and now the drummer for the acoustic act Drop the Moon. Originally in the area studying for a year at the art college KIAD, he has since earned a Bachelor of Arts in Commercial Music at Canterbury Christ Church University after completing an initial HND in Music Performance at Canterbury College. He now works with two children, is in the third year of programming *The Crash of Moons Club*, working on the fifth Lapis Lazuli album, formulating the future prospects of Drop the Moon and formulating new networks within the artistic community at large.

**Rick Chafen** was not a musician, but he played a mean cassette. He began broadcasting a weekly radio program called *Her Majesty's Voice* in 1974. A few years later, he promoted concerts and tours. In the early 1990s, he had a brief foray into the record business as *Her Majesty's Voice* evolved into *Voiceprint*, and since 2003, he presented *Obscuropean Fridays* at <http://www.kkfi.org>. Though he grew up a mere hour away and lived in Kansas City nearly 50 years, he was only considered a near-native. Sadly, Rick passed away in October 2020, shortly before the publication of this book. His contribution to the collection is invaluable and captures Rick's dedication to Canterbury music, his humour and passion. He was a highly valued member of the international Canterbury Sound community.

**Richard Dove** previously worked at the BBC and he is now a current affairs journalist and filmmaker. He co-invented and edited the Al Jazeera programme *People & Power* and now makes films around the world for anyone who will commission him. He is a Mansfield Town fan but don't hold that against him.

**Asya Draganova** is a Popular Music Culture Lecturer and leads the MA in Media in Cultural Studies at Birmingham City University. In her research and publications,

she uses an ethnographic approach to explore topics including contemporary East European subcultural scenes, popular music heritage and the relationships between popular music and place. She co-leads the Popular Music Research Cluster at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. She is involved with journals such as *Riffs* and *Metal Music Studies* and also writes music reviews for *The Arts Desk* and the *I* newspaper. She plays the guitar, sings and explores creativity in poetry and visual arts. She is the author of the monograph *Popular Music in Contemporary Bulgaria: At the Crossroads* (2019).

**Brian Hopper** is a saxophonist, guitarist and composer. He was a founder member of The Wilde Flowers and Zobe and also a member of Soft Machine, The Happy Accidents, Soup Songs, among many other excellent bands and music projects linked with the Canterbury Sound. He has made key contributions to documenting and archiving the genesis of the Canterbury Sound through collections such as *Canterburied Sounds* (1998, Vols. 1–4) and his participation in the film *Romantic Warriors III: Canterbury Tales* (directed by Adele Schmidt and José Zegarra Holder, 2015) plus other publications documenting specific aspects and personalities involved in the Canterbury music world.

**Phil Howitt**, originally from Derbyshire, is an Economics/Sociology graduate from Manchester University who started a Canterbury scene fanzine in 1989 (*Facelifit*) which became one of the focal points of the genre for the next 10 years. He worked briefly in mainstream publishing, before moving into education, where he has taught A Level ICT and Computing since 1993. He has written for the *Guardian* and *Record Collector* and produced sleeve-notes for CD re-releases (including Soft Machine, Isotope, Wilde Flowers, and David Bedford). He publishes a regular Canterbury scene blog at [www.canterburyscene.com](http://www.canterburyscene.com). Now living near bohemian Todmorden in West Yorkshire, he lives with his partner and two young children, is heavily involved with local cricket and badminton clubs and for several years ran a small campsite. He is the author of the forthcoming biography of Hugh Hopper *Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening*, to be published by Jazz in Britain in 2021 or 2022.

**Jack Hues** (real name: Jeremy Ryder) studied Composition at Goldsmiths College, London and at the Royal College of Music, London. He went on to have worldwide success with the rock band Wang Chung during the 1980s. His movie credits include the soundtrack *To Live and Die in LA* – directed by William Friedkin (1985) and *Act of Memory* – directed by Jack Ryder (2011). His songs have appeared in numerous movies including *The Breakfast Club* (1986), *The Fighter* (2010) and in TV series including *The Walking Dead* (2010). Worldwide chart successes include *Dance Hall Days* (1984) *Everybody Have Fun Tonight* (1986) and collaborations include Tony Banks (Genesis), Chris Hughes (Tears for Fears) and Eg White (Adele). He founded The Quartet with Sam Bailey in 2005. They recorded two albums, both produced by Chris Hughes for his Helium record label, to wide critical acclaim. A new album by Wang Chung called *Tazer Up!* was released in December 2012, also receiving wide critical acclaim. The year



2016 saw the release of *A Thesis on The Ballad*, a collaboration with The Quartet and Kelvin Corcoran, followed this year by 'ROTE-thru' collaborating with poets Simon Smith and David Herd. 2018 will see the final collaboration project with Canterbury Rock band Syd Arthur released, together with a major Wang Chung retrospective. In 2020, he released his first solo album *Primitif*.

**Mengyao Jiang** completed her PhD research dedicated to subcultural music scenes in contemporary China in 2018 at Canterbury Christ Church University in the UK. She is an early-career Researcher and Adjunct Lecturer in Popular Music Studies and Cultural Studies based at Endicott College, MA, USA. She is also a D.I.Y. musician and pianist, who founded the shoegaze band Holistic Medicine in Canterbury, UK. She is a freelance multimedia journalist working for PearVideo, China and has produced a series of vox pops on Brexit that has received over a million views on Chinese social media site Weibo. Her research interests include youth cultures, Chinese rock music scenes, agricultural metal music and the Canterbury Sound. Her latest publications include a chapter in *Teen Lives Around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO, 2019). She is a peer reviewer of the *Journal of the Youth Studies* and *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*.

**Aymeric Leroy** (b. 1973) is a French music writer, with several books to his credit (on 1970s progressive rock and several of its leading figures, e.g., Pink Floyd, King Crimson, and Yes) in addition to the definitive study of the Canterbury Scene, *L'École de Canterbury*, nearly 20 years in the making and finally published in 2016 in French (by Marseille's Le Mot et le Reste), with an English translation expected in the not-too-distant future. He created Calyx – the Canterbury Music website ([www.calyx-canterbury.fr](http://www.calyx-canterbury.fr)) in 1996 and also co-founded (and still occasionally writes for) the French progressive rock publication Big Bang ([bigbangmag.com](http://bigbangmag.com)) in 1993.

**Marcus O'Dair** is Associate Dean of Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise at University of the Arts London (UAL). His most recent book is *Distributed creativity: how blockchain technology will transform the creative economy* (Palgrave 2019), written as researcher in residence at Digital Catapult. His previous book, *Different every time: the authorised biography of Robert Wyatt* (Serpent's Tail 2014), was shortlisted for the Penderyn book prize and named a Radio 4 book of the week. He has published in edited collections including *Business Transformation Through Blockchain* (Palgrave 2019), *Jazz and Totalitarianism* (Routledge 2017), *Punk Pedagogies* (Routledge 2018), *Life Writing and Celebrity* (Routledge 2019) and in peer-reviewed journals including *Popular Communication*, *Strategic Change*, *Popular Music*, *IASPM@Journal*, *Life Writing*, *the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation* and the *Journal of Risk Finance*. He is also co-editor of *Mute Records: Artists, Business, and History* (Bloomsbury 2019). As a musician, he has released three acclaimed albums and toured Europe as one half of Grasscut. He was previously a session musician with Passenger.

**Neil Saunders** was born in Fulham in 1960 and his early childhood coincided with the emergence of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. From 1967, his elder brother attended concerts at venues such as UFO, the Roundhouse, and Middle Earth, and bought and played records by Pink Floyd, Family and the Nice as well as the self-titled debut albums by Soft Machine and Caravan. From this point onwards, he followed the Canterbury bands and solo ventures, and later – after studying music at University College of North Wales, Bangor, and the University of Nottingham – came to know several of the musicians personally. He has performed live in Japan with Dave Sinclair and contributed musical arrangements and liner-notes to some of Dave’s recent albums. He also spent a memorable, wine-fuelled night with Kevin Ayers at his house in Montolieu, France. He hopes to complete a book on the Canterbury Scene in the near future.

**Dave Sinclair** was born in November 1947 and grew up in and around the city of Canterbury, Kent, England. He attended the Simon Langton School in Canterbury and soon after leaving launched himself into a musical career having discovered at an early age a talent in himself that he later realised had been passed down through both his mother’s and father’s sides of the family. He composed music and played in various bands including Caravan, Matching Mole, Hatfield and the North and Camel. He also ran a piano restoration business near Canterbury in Herne Bay which he closed down in 2005 after 25 years. Eventually, he followed a solo musical career after leaving Caravan in 2002 and three years later relocated to Japan where he at last found the freedom to express his music in more varied ways, continuing to record new albums and performing in live shows. Now, living on an island in the Japanese Inland Sea he has found the perfect place to continue exploring his musical creativity.

**Murray Smith** is Professor of Film and Director of the Aesthetics Research Centre at the University of Kent, and Canterbury Scene US Special Envoy. He is a former President of the Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image (2014–2017) and was a fellow at Princeton University’s Center for Human Values for 2017–2018. He was the prime mover behind the Honorary Degree awarded to Robert Wyatt by the University of Kent in 2014, which in turn led to the University of Kent 50th Anniversary Concert featuring Brian Hopper, Jack Hues and the Quartet and the Boot Lagoon on 4 September 2015, as well as Robert Wyatt’s appearance, accompanied by Soup Songs, in Gavin Esler’s ‘In Conversation’ series at the University on 4 April 2016.

**Alan Stumpenhuson-Payne** recently completed his PhD thesis (University of Kent) based on an extensive research into the Canterbury Sound, its performers, audiences, venues and its relationship with the broader category of progressive rock. Long-time Canterbury resident, he is also a multi-instrumentalist playing regularly with the University of Kent orchestras and Big Band and in local jazz ensembles. A graduate in Drama and former teacher, he has directed a wide variety of theatre and musical productions in the UK, Belgium, France, and Croatia, and published English language and Media Studies teaching materials.

**David Woolgar** started his career as a recording engineer and later a producer working with a variety of artists throughout the 1980s mostly in various London recording studios. During the 1990s, he developed Astra Sound Studios, a recording complex a few miles south of Canterbury. Here, he worked with artists included Caravan, Richard Sinclair, and a selection of ‘Canterbury Sound’ musicians including Pip Pyle, Hugh Hopper, Jimmy Hastings, Dave Sinclair, Tony Coe and Didier Malherbe. He has also worked as a live sound engineer and production manager and toured extensively with many artists including Caravan and Mirage (a ‘prog super group’ containing members of Caravan and Camel) from the Canterbury Sound.

**Robert Wyatt** is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, singer and lyricist who was involved with key perceived-as-‘Canterbury’ acts including The Wilde Flowers, Soft Machine and Matching Mole. He has also had a remarkable career as a solo artist, collaborating with diverse contemporary figures within popular and experimental music including Bjork, David Gilmour, Brian Eno, Paul Weller and Billy Bragg. He has inspired multiple films, dedicated radio shows and books, documenting his distinct cultural contributions to multiple dimensions of musically led artistic and ideological expression.

# **'Trying to Remember the Good Stuff': An Extended Foreword**

*Asya Draganova with Robert Wyatt*

'Thanks for your question. Although I found it difficult to answer', Robert said, as I waved, approaching him and artist Alfreda Benge, Robert's wife, sitting in the sun at a Canterbury High Street café. It felt special, yet natural, to meet someone who is a celebrated 'legend' of the Canterbury Sound and Scene and who has challenged their very existence at the same time, right here, in the heart of the city. Robert left the area in the 1960s but, at the time we met, I had been in Canterbury for several years, and the city had become central to my identity as a Bulgarian in England: a place to call home.

The night before, I had been at University of Kent to attend an In-Conversation style event with Robert and Vice Chancellor Gavin Esler. At the end of the night, I asked a question about the 'real' or 'mythical' character of the Canterbury Sound, and what was its meaning today? Robert's response suggested that if the music referred to as the Canterbury Sound has a legacy, then that is contained in being free to make music the way you like; the timelessness in it is the artistic freedom, and in organic experimentation, he said.

To me, the encounter with Robert and Alfreda on that now distant spring day in 2016 was surreal and dream-like, out-of-time and out-of-sync with everyday reality. 'Like a dream' was also how Robert described returning to Canterbury after so long, everything still familiar, yet new. Sounds like an echo of how I feel now, too, that I have left Canterbury to work full-time in Birmingham: a place to make returns often symbolic, rather than geographically 'real'.

That first, by-chance, personal contact with Robert was the beginning of a conversation which continued over email, in person, on the phone and special occasion postcards until this day. A lot of it is about music and place, about the perception of a world of music, where the characteristics of the local and the treasures of folklore intertwine into 'global' popular and jazz music. I kept in touch with Robert about my work around the Canterbury Sound, though aware of his ambivalent position. The focus on the Canterbury Sound in my research was not a pre-set agenda but emerged naturally from interviews and observations: an ongoing point of reference for local musicians and intermediaries alike, a phenomenon both embraced and critiqued, seen as heritage and contemporary influence. A related music performance and symposium event I co-ordinated with Shane Blackman, Andy

Bennett and the Canterbury Festival at Canterbury Christ Church University in 2017 prompted the beginning of this edited collection on the Canterbury Sound. I asked Robert if he'd like to take part in that event, and the book that was to follow. His reaction came across as negative at first as he said he did not remember much from his (rather short period of) Canterbury days. They were not necessarily happy ones, as he associated them with his involvement with Soft Machine, which came to a painful end with Robert's departure.

### **Subject: 'Trying to Remember the Good Stuff'**

That was the title of Robert's next email to me, sent a few days later. 'Well, the thunder in my head has rolled past, just grumbling now ....' And I suppose this is the purpose of returning to the past: reflection that allows for emotion, and nuance: for attaining new interpretations of ourselves and our own 'eras'. Robert begins with 'I do remember modelling at Canterbury Art College, (may seem unlikely, seeing me now!) after I dropped out from being a student there', travels through Robert's first encounters with Pamela Howard, and arrives at his memories of their son Sam.

While he was still a baby we used to take him with us to Wilde Flowers gigs, in a straw Portuguese basket. If the noise bothered him, he didn't complain, and indeed used to like banging on my drum kit as soon as he could reach it. But the music *HE* liked years later as a teenager was 1980s pop, which I have reluctantly learned to respect by trying to hear it through HIS ears ....

Robert then went on to a 'place-specific observation' of the first incarnations of Soft Machine as a 1969 trio with Hugh Hopper and Mike Ratledge: 'come to think of it', he wrote, 'not just a Canterbury band, but in origin a Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys band'. Later, he added that, after all, being in Canterbury and the area came with a certain sense of creative freedom: 'with movements out in the sticks – or relatively far from the cultural hub of London – there may be some eccentricities that perhaps only develop undisturbed away from the mainstream'.

The exercise of retrieving memory of the 'good stuff', it seems, is inherently bound to the personal. And music – centre stage, or sometimes background – structures lives like a song with key changes, choruses and verses, climaxes and imperfections. Music as core identity, a symbolic space and place that travels with time, is a maker of memory and this book is very much created in this spirit: it hosts memories associated with the Canterbury Sound, reflections and studies where researchers are emotionally and personally invested in the subject. This collection is very much inspired by the experience of the three editors – Shane Blackman, Andy Bennett and I – living in the city of Canterbury and embracing its music life and landscape at different moments of our lives. Yet, this is not a piece only about reflection of the past memory. It is about making sense of it and

the Canterbury Sound as a resource explored in contemporary music practices, local and global.

Time here is interpreted as a trajectory of progressiveness and not nostalgia solely. It is a chance to (re)consider relationships with place, realities, myths, people and allow us to move forward into new sounds, just as distinct. For Canterbury itself, like for other places, its own assigned sound in popular music is not necessarily a cliché but, rather, an alternative to the much-celebrated sites of heritage. As Robert wrote:

From my visit to Canterbury – when we met – although I was a bit disconcerted by the tourist-oriented Disneyfication of the town, I realised that the actual people – well, the ones I met – were lovely and thoughtful – like you – and in that respect it was a much more welcoming place than I remember as a failed schoolboy. Of course, it's comforting to be remembered so kindly ... so good luck with it all. I am, after all, extremely moved by your lively & innocent curiosity. It is a wonderful thing.

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the authors and musicians who have contributed to *The Canterbury Sound in Popular Music* through chapters and interviews: your experiences and interpretations have made this collection diverse, distinct, critical, honest and emotional.

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We also wish that Rick Chafen, who contributed to this collection with a chapter, could get to read the finished book. Sadly, Rick passed away in October 2020. His passion for the Canterbury Sound, his energy and detailed knowledge are very much present in his chapter documenting 'Canterbury's Paths Through the States'. Thank you, Rick, you are appreciated and missed.