DOI: 10.1111/jpms.12209

WILEY

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Songs about fucking: John Loder's southern studios and the construction of a subversive sonic signature

Samantha Bennett

School of Music, The Australian National University

Abstract

This article posits North London's Southern Studios and its late founding recordist John Loder as responsible for the construction of a sonically discernible production aesthetics befitting a subversive music. Blending phonomusicological work on the recording workplace and recordists, original ethnographic work, as well as tech-processual analyses of two key recordings, Crass' "Do They Owe Us A Living?" and Big Black's "The Power of Independent Trucking," this article elucidates the Southern Sonic Signature before tracing the production aesthetic in a continuum of alternative music.

> Yes Sir, I Will. *I mean, what record producer or studio owner in their right mind endorses something like that?—Steve Ignorant (2016)*

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent times, phonomusicological studies, such as those by Mark Cunningham (1998), Albin Zak (2001), and Greg Milner (2009), have made significant progress in filling the scholarly void existing between performance and reception. The impact of the recordist, the recording workplace, and recording technologies on popular music production has been critically asserted in myriad ways, in particular, by those contributing to The *Art of Record Production* forum. Within this emergent discourse, sociocultural and analytical works on music recording and production have reinforced a "recordist canon" of sorts—scholarly work is dominated by 1950s and 1960s recordists, such as George Martin, Phil Spector, Brian Wilson, and Joe Meek, who feature heavily in scholarly and general interest works on recordists and the recording industry. So far, little acknowledgment has been afforded to the work of later recordists, particularly those working outside of the commercial mainstream.

Using two of the cornerstones of phonomusicological study, those being the impact of the recordist and recording workplace on sound recordings as a critical framework, this article considers the place of Southern Studios and the agency of its founding recordist, the late John Loder. I use the term "recordist," as used in Albin Zak's *The Poetics of Rock*, throughout. Via two case study analyses, Crass' "Do They Owe Us A Living?" and Big Black's "The Power of

Independent Trucking," the foregrounding of Southern Studios' discernible, *subversive* sonic signature is elucidated. In the following discussion, a continuum of sonic aesthetics is traceable long into the 1990s. The article also posits Big Black's album *Songs About Fucking* (1987) (on which "The Power of Independent Trucking" features as the opening track) as an important sonic nexus in a continuum of alternative and *subversive* musics: one that links the establishment of John Loder's sonically identifiable production aesthetics with its transatlantic proliferation into the commercial mainstream by the turn of the 1990s. The title of the article, therefore, refers to Big Black's album as exemplifying its central thesis: the elucidation of Southern Studios' sonically identifiable, subversive production aesthetics. In this article, I use the word "subversive" in its more widely understood sense, as a noun from the verb "subvert" meaning to "undermine the power and authority of an established system of institution" (Oxford English Dictionary). In this case, the commercial mainstream music industry is considered the established system/institution; Loder's working practices and recording facility a site of both musical and production subversion.

In the 1980s, Southern Studios and John Loder became the go-to alternative studio and recordist for a generation of alternative and independent musicians. The names "Southern" and "Loder" soon caught on, not just among UK independent punk, hardcore, post-hardcore, and noisecore scenes, but also among parallel genres in the United States, as Crass founder Penny Rimbaud (2005) stated, "Crass Records became the label that every aspiring punk band looked to, Southern Studios their destination, and John [Loder] their engineer of choice."

There is certainly no shortage of academic scholarship on Crass, with key works by George Mackay (1996), Brian Cogan (2007), and Stacy Thompson (2004) all considering the influence of the band, their music, politics, and iconography from sociological and political perspectives. Yet in covering the sociohistorical impact of Crass—and in Mackay and Thompson's cases, also dealing with musical and sonic attributes of the band's music—Southern Studios and John Loder are surprisingly absent.

For all the alternative, underground artists and musics Loder associated with, his tools and techniques were almost entirely orthodox; indicative of what I have called the "traditionalist," "performance capture" method in previous papers. Loder was, as Rimbaud (2014) described him, "musically illiterate." Loder's life before the inception of Southern Studios is undocumented, but discussions with interviewees revealed his background as a trained electronics engineer. From the mid-1980s onwards, Loder would create software accounting programs specifically to monitor the financial aspects of Southern Records. Yet for all Loder's technical prowess, the studio and recording technology was kept simple and stripped back, which reflected in his production style. Two significant practical factors governed this approach: first, Loder's lack of funds confined his technological acquisitions to essentials, including his 8-track tape recorder; and second, the studio location, which was situated in his house and outside garage.

By the early 1980s, Southern Studios was synonymous with independent artists, many of whom brought with them subversive, alternative, and anarchist politics (Cross, 2014), including The Subhumans, Rudimentry Peni, Poison Girls, and Babes in Toyland, and classic recordings: Ministry's *The Land of Rape and Honey* (1988), The Jesus and Mary Chain's *Psychocandy* (1985) and Therapy?'s *Nurse* (1992) are just three notable albums recorded in their entirety or in part at Southern Studios. Yet aside from a couple of obituaries, there is no dedicated book, article, chapter nor journalism dedicated to Loder or his studio. This article deals with this omission by highlighting the sonically discernible influence of John Loder and Southern Studios on two key recordings before discussing the influence and continuum of this important sonic signature. In doing so, this article contributes: new understandings of the impact of sound recording, a significant recordist, and studio as well as a key turning point in the overall sonic construction of noncommercial music(s) to popular music studies. Additionally, this article specifically contributes to an emergent punk studies in its exclusive focus on a production aesthetics that has until now been overlooked. The recent establishment of the Punk Scholars Network in the UK, as well as the journal *Punk and Post Punk* (Intellect) and the international forum KISMIF, based in Porto, Portugal, all point to an emergent, yet rapidly growing network of academics working specifically in the scholarly realm of punk. Furthermore, studies on cultural significance, identity and imagery dominate punk discourse; focusing on phonomusicological aspects of the genre therefore broadens and goes some way in balancing the field.

Methodologically, this article blends ethnographic work including primary interview material with Penny Rimbaud and Loder's assistant engineer from 1985, Harvey Birrell. This material is consolidated with contextual information

gathered from a range of secondary sources including academic scholarship in sociology, politics and culture, musicological works, relevant sound recordings, and journalism. Finally, since the article is focused on illuminating the impact of recording technology, workplace and recordist, it implements a tech-processual mode of analysis as featured in many previous works (Bennett 2015a; 2015b; 2016). Ultimately, this article elucidates the "Southern Sonic Signature" at its inception, traces its embodiment in subversive musics, articulates its trajectory, and clearly identifies its presence in a subsequent sonic continuum.

2 | SOUTHERN STUDIOS

In his 2012 article "What Studios Do," Eliot Bates stated, "Studios are unique…they have a vibe… a transformative effect even on those who never professionally use the studios. Some studios' effects have been so profound that those studios are regarded as synonymous with the 'sound' of a city…." This recording workplace vibe—or *aura* as I have described in previous work—is often articulated as an inexplicable, possibly supernatural, potentially *divine* force with the power to permeate music performed in the same space. For example, Cogan and Clark's (2003) book on US recording studios is entitled *Temples of Sound*, where they also describe the studio generally as a "magical space." On the topic of aura, Walter Benjamin (2008) noted the importance of history attached to an original artwork. While Benjamin's essay referred to works of art and the aura of an original carried by a copy, his ideas are relevant—and widely applied—to sound recordings. Since a recording studio is the site of creation of artworks (recordings), the aura is intangibly imbued in it (Bennett, 2016). Additionally, surprisingly little scholarship focuses on the architectural aspects of recording studio design and acoustical properties, yet the intangible studio vibe or aura is largely attributable to these factors, as well as the history of recordings made within it; Gibson (2005) notes that studios are "…important for physical qualities and impacts upon recorded sound, and have been the source of much mythology…" (p. 192). Such mythological yet common depictions of recording workplaces in popular music historiography and cultural commentary likely stems from the historically private nature of their operations and concomitant lack of public access, as Thompson and Lashua (2014, p. 746) have noted as well as the concealment of working practices implemented by recordists working inside, as described by Alan Williams (2007, p. 166). As the commercial recording studio sector has declined, a canonization of recording studios has emerged (Leyshon, 2009). Extensive works on British recording studios (Massey, 2015) and US recording houses (Cogan & Clark, 2003) detail the histories of commercially successful recording workplaces with anecdotes from recording personnel and photographs. The recording studio canon appears to be inextricably linked with the rock canon, as the multitude of works on Abbey Road Studios suggest (see Kehew & Ryan, 2006; Southall, 2002). While recent focus on the recording workplace is beneficial to the extent that it reveals the impact of performance environment on recorded music, as with all canons the same limitations arise in that there is ultimately less focus on what is excluded. This is one justification for this article's focus on Southern Studios—a recording studio built into a suburban, semidetached house in Middleton Road, Wood Green, London.

Southern Studios was certainly unique in terms of its unorthodox layout. The control room was built into an outside garage with a brick and corrugated metal structure. Originally, the interior was treated with heavy drapes and material fixed to the brickwork, however this was later removed. The black drapes are evident in many pictures of John Loder recording in Southern Studios in the early 1980s but a photograph taken in 2012 of Harvey Birrell recording Chelsea Wolfe at Southern Studios shows the black drapes removed and corrugated metal interior exposed. As producer Adrian Sherwood recalled:

> *… I did like John a lot, and he held together a most unusual place, because he had his two buildings next to each other, two three-story houses. He lived in one, and on the top floor he could walk from his office into his own house where he'd knocked the wall down from one building to another. Underneath that was the whole Southern organization, and on the ground floor was the live area and the kitchen where all the musicians—you know, we'd hang out there, seriously, with KUKL, (who became the Sugarcubes and then became Bjork), Lee Perry,*

> *Bim Sherman, African Head Charge, with Crass, with the Exploited, with the Subhumans, with Big Black… Minor Threat, the Washington lot—it was a mad place, and you'd queue up to get in the studio (Hall, 2016).*

Dominated by the 24-track analogue mixing console—a Raindirk Mark III—the control room also featured a Studer A-800 24-Track analogue tape recorder (the main studio recording device) a further Studer 1/4 inch analogue tape machine for the creation of tape loops, an EMT Plate reverb and what Harvey Birrell called "a standard" collection of microphones: Shure SM57s, AKG 414s, and Neumann U87s. In addition to the EMT, the main studio reverb was an AMS RMX-16 reverberator. Other outboard effects included two AMS delays and DBX gates and compressors linked via what Penny Rimbaud (2014) called an "idiosyncratic" patchbay. For monitoring, Southern was equipped with Yamaha NS10s and Tannoy Golds powered by Quad 405 power amplifiers. According to Harvey Birrell, Loder's assistant engineer and studio manager between 1998 and 2012, the setup was largely unchanged in the 20 years between 1979 and 1998 (Birrell, 2014).

In *Divide and Conquer: Power, Role Formation and Conflict in Recording Studio Architecture*, Alan Williams traces the characteristics of studio design and the relationship between the separation of musicians and technicians and power dynamics. Williams points out that whilst recording rooms began with musicians and recordist(s) in the same space, separation of this space into specific musician and recordist domains was evident by the turn of the 20th century. As he stated:

> *…the very design of recording studio control rooms, with their glass observation windows looking out on the inhabitants of the recording room, enables technicians to exercise power over the musicians involved in the recording process. Ostensibly built to enable two-way visual communication, most control room windows consist of at least two panes of glass angled to minimize direct reflection of sounds.*

Indeed such architecture is one of the most common and reproduced features of recording workplaces to this day. Significantly, Southern Studios was *not* built to such standardizations. The live room or "studio floor" was not adjacent to the control room; instead, it was situated in the front lounge room of the residential property. Since the control room was situated in the outside garage, it was linked to the live room via a fixed talkback microphone. With no direct line of sight between recordist and musicians, this was an unorthodox set up making for difficult recording processes, as Penny Rimbaud (2014) recalled in the recording of Crass albums, "It was always difficult to record. There was a lot of time taken doing complicated negotiations over a mic because we were always in different rooms."

Yet Harvey Birrell (2014) commented on the benefits of the studio layout as he suggested, "I got used to not seeing the bands play. If you can't see them, all you're doing is listening." Here, Birrell alludes to minimized communication between himself and the musicians, which is key to understanding working practices inside Southern Studios. In the absence of a control room window, visual communication—body language of both recordist and musicians, nonverbalized responses including physical responses such as shrugs or gesticulations and facial expressions to include smiles or frowns—was absent. Recordist and performer spaces are commonly separated in contemporary recording workplaces, yet at Southern these spaces—and the personnel working within them—were further detached by the absence of glass. Penny Rimbaud (2014) described the "studio vibe" further, as he said,

> *John never attempted to make it comfortable. It was almost hostile and it wasn't a nice place to work. It was not a good live room and there was no drum or vocal booth. No attempt to create atmosphere or presence. The massive plate reverb was a blessing.*

There is, however, a natural synergy between the hostile recording environment Rimbaud describes and the musical, lyrical, and stylistic attributes of the artists that recorded at Southern Studios. A good example of this is US industrial band Ministry, whose lead singer Al Jourgensen temporarily relocated to the United Kingdom in 1988, specifically to complete work on *The Land of Rape of Honey* (1988) at Southern Studios, as well as run a European branch of Wax Trax! records from Southern's wider label and distribution arms. Consider the track "Abortive" from the aforementioned album: this track features all the hallmarks of cyberpunk, what Novotny (1997) referred to as "…reminiscent of the amorphous and decaying urban wastelands of the postindustrial and deindustrialized present… reflect[ing] the

dystopian context of postindustrial, technological culture" (p. 103). In other words, the stylistic attributes of a band like Ministry could be considered an opposing, yet *parallel* alternative to the technological utopianism embodied in the era's popular music of the commercial mainstream (Bennett, 2009); such musical and political aesthetics, therefore, a perfect match for Southern Studios.

Interviewees also generally commented that the control room featured no sofa or chairs—aside from that used by Loder—for many years, forcing musicians and visitors to stand. Additionally, interviewees reported a lack of studio "ambience," that the live performance room in the residential house was "dead," unresponsive with no tangible sonic aesthetics (Birrell, 2014; Ignorant, 2016; Rimbaud, 2014). Before analyzing how this studio aura contributed to Southern's subversive sonic signature, let us first consider the notion of recordist agency.

3 | RECORDIST AGENCY

> *Recording has always been a means of social control, a stake in politics, regardless of the available technologies.—Jacques Attali (1985, p. 87)*

The role of the recordist in the production of music has been considered from a range of angles in both scholarly discourse and in cultural commentary (see Kealy, 1979; Moorefield, 2005; Muikku, 1990; Zak, 2001. For general interest and cultural commentary, see Cunningham, 1998; Massey, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2009). It is fair to say that who Alan Williams (2010) referred to as "the man behind the curtain" (p. 166) has garnered such attention due to the historically private nature of their working practice, the guild nature of their skillsets and, until the 1990s, wider perception of their recording techniques and processes as attributable to "wizardry" (Gracyk, 1996, p. 85; Hoffman, 2005, p. 726) or "alchemy" (Howard, 2004; Moorefield, 2005, p. 105; Young, 2006, p. 14).

Albin Zak (2001) suggested that recording engineers "…are the participants in the process who best understand the technological tools in terms of their potential for realizing musical aims" (p. 165). This is certainly true of John Loder, although his skillset extended far beyond the realm of recording. In a previous paper, I conceptualized John Loder's recording work as representative of a musical "underworld" (Bennett, 2014). The counterculture-affiliated acts with whom he worked and his avant-garde recording influences conflated to represent the antithesis of 1970s–1990s commercial music releases. John Loder had been a friend of Crass founding member and drummer Penny Rimbaud since their collaboration with Gee Vaucher in early 1970s, avant-garde, self-proclaimed *anti-music* collective, Exit. With no ambition, direction, or connection to mainstream music culture, Exit's anarchic, guerrilla tactics involved turning up to venues to play uninvited gigs and, as Rimbaud recalls, being generally "antisocial" (cited in Capper, 2010). In the liner notes to Exit's *The Mystic Trumpeter* (2013), Penny Rimbaud described Loder thus, "John Loder had been recording our works on an ancient Grundig tape deck. With no playback facilities, he had to transcribe the tapes onto cassette so that we could then file outside to listen to the results on his in-car stereo." This regular documenting Exit's guerilla performance posits Loder as a musical subversive, long before the establishment of Southern Studios.

During his time with Exit, Loder also worked as a taxi driver (Rimbaud, 2005) and, according to Gee Vaucher, "…in electronics…" (cited in Berger, 2006, p. 29). After Loder's ambition to set up a recording studio in south London stalled, he located the facility in a garage in the garden of a house in Middleton Road, Wood Green (Southern, 2013). Loder and members of Exit lost touch in the mid-1970s and, as Rimbaud recalls, reconnected at a critical time—at the inception of Rimbaud's next project, Crass, "I got in touch with John Loder and said, 'How about us doing a demo?' and he said, 'Well, I'll get an 8-track'" (cited in Capper, 2010). Loder's subsequent recording of Crass' *Feeding of the Five Thousand* (1978) was his first at Southern Studios. By the turn of the 1980s, Loder had recorded a further two albums for Crass—*Stations of the Crass* (1979) and *Penis Envy* (1981)—as well as two albums for anarchic punk group Poison Girls—*Hex* (1979) and *Chappaquiddick Bridge* (1980). John Loder was committed to recording and subversive artists who carried

strong political messages in their music and lyrics. Also dedicated to DIY aesthetics, Loder's support for the artists extended far beyond his role as recordist, as Mike Stand noted in *The Face*:

> *After rigorous reassessment they [Crass] decided to try again, this time riding an extraordinary gesture of confidence by John Loder, who put up his Southern Studios as collateral for £10,000 loan facility for the band. In fact they only ever drew £2,000 and the resulting* Stations Of The Crass *double LP for £3 has kept Crass Records going ever since, marking up well over 60,000 of the label's quarter-million gross sales.*

This proved a fruitful investment. The success of Crass' first few albums enabled Loder to further develop the record label and distribution arms of Southern, which by the mid-1980s had turned from a garage recording studio into a highly sought after brand; a means of authentication for aspiring alternative artists (Rimbaud, 2005). This underground empire over which Loder presided elucidates Attali's theorizing of recording as "social control" (1985, p. 87); Loder's stake in anarchist politics ensured he created an encouraging and supportive environment for whom Becker termed "outsiders" (1963, p. 1) while simultaneously creating a structured organization for recording sessions, vinyl pressings and distribution. In his seminal 1963 sociological study of deviance, Howard Becker uses the term "outsiders" to describe "rule breakers." He also suggests that an outsider, or rule breaker, may see those who impose rules as outsiders themselves, thus the term has a "double-barrelled" meaning. The business structure of Southern Records, to which Crass Records, Dischord Records, Corpus Christi Records, and Small Wonder Records and distribution were affiliated, was managed entirely by Loder until the late 1980s, as Penny Rimbaud stated:

> *John ran a very successful business. He had many labels under the one umbrella. If a band signed a manager, John would cut ties. He liked one-to-one relationships, would never delegate and certainly did not want anyone looking at the files. He could be utterly brutal in an unbrutal way. Southern Records could not have got any bigger without involving others (Rimbaud, 2014).*

Managing the business arms of Southern did not detract Loder from his main role as Southern's recordist. After further successful recordings including Crass' *Yes Sir, I Will* (1983), Rudimentry Peni's *Death Church* (1983) and Subhumans' *From the Cradle to the Grave* (1984), John Loder's reputation for capturing the uncompromising sounds of the UK anarchist punk movement caught on with indie and proto-grunge artists in both the United Kingdom and United States. In 1985, Loder recorded arguably his most commercially successful and critically acclaimed record yet: The Jesus and Mary Chain's *Psychocandy*. The band's lead singer Jim Reid explained the reasoning behind the band's choice to record the album at Southern Studios with Loder:

> *Southern Studios… was just fabulous because John Loder was there. He was the opposite of those other engineers; he was actually egging us on to go further. His attitude was to set the desk up and then go away. He was essential purely because he let us get on with it. We had the sound in our heads and he tried to find a way to get that on tape. He did everything he could to help us get that sound (Jim Reid, cited in Marszalek, 2011).*

By "other engineers," Reid refers to a series of failed attempts to record The Jesus and Mary Chain in a number of other London studios at the time. Here, Reid acknowledges the importance of synergy between an artist and their concomitant musical direction and production aesthetics. Reid's experiences were quite probably of recordists working in the commercial mainstream; those more likely to be involved in "shaping" an artists' direction under instructions from a producer, A&R manager or both. On the contrary, Loder's processes extracted a true representation of artistic intention, as opposed to one compromised by requirements of the commercial music industry. Loder's established, *alternative* production aesthetics coupled with no affiliation to the commercial mainstream, set him apart from other recordists of the era. However, the synergy between such sonically subversive artists and John Loder is evident throughout Loder's recording career. The position of Loder as recordist and disseminator of such challenging music resulted in many repeated recording sessions, particularly in the cases of Poison Girls, Crass, Rudimentry Peni and The Cravats—on their 1982 single "Rub Me Out" the latter band affectionately credited Loder as "Pope John (You'll Find Something Extra in Your Wage Packet) Loder" (see The Cravats, 1982).

Mirroring the musical outsiders he worked with, Loder operated as a lone enterprise for many years. Penny Rimbaud described Loder as someone who was "…a DIY champion who didn't play the game" (2005) yet the equipment present in Southern Studios is indicative of a then-standard recording set up: nothing in Loder's technological tool box stands out as being unusual for the era. Additionally, most of Loder's recordings exemplify a true-to-live performance aesthetic. As previously described, with no glass and therefore no direct line of sight between musicians and recordist—as well as a talkback system described by interviewees as an "unreliable intercom"—recordist/ musician communication was clearly not a priority at Southern Studios nor, it seems, for John Loder. Rather, Loder captured the performances of his artists with apparently minimal technological, processual, or communicative intervention. In other words, Loder did not compromise, shape, or otherwise intervene with input on song structures or arrangements, neither did he reframe musical aesthetics with heavy or inappropriate production elements. Rather, a band was set up to perform in the live space inside the house and after positioning microphones, Loder would record them performing live. It was precisely this commitment to an artist's natural live sound that positioned Loder as an alternative recordist in the context of wider 1980s recording, which was dominated by large-format mixing, MIDI, digital synthesis and programming, as well as bold applications of dynamics and time-based signal processing (Bennett, 2016). I argue that bands recorded with Loder, not because he added something to their recordings, but because he never attempted to take anything away.

In the following section I analyze this production aesthetic is now analyzed through two of Loder's recordings. Following the analysis, both recordings are critically contrasted in a discussion, which further elucidates Loder's subversive sonic signature.

4 | "DO THEY OWE US A LIVING?"

On October 29, 1978, Crass recorded their debut album, *The Feeding of the 5000*, in one day at Southern Studios, returning for one further day's mixing. Described as one of Crass' most accessible songs, (Thompson, p. 312), "Do They Owe Us A Living?" is, at 1m24s, also one of its shortest. Stacy Thompson recognizes the "…traditional punk rock instrumentation, rapid tempo, rhythm section devoted solely to laying down a hard, rapid, steady beat with little variation, and predictable guitar chord progressions…" (p. 312) present in "Do They Owe….," but the track is significant for its production as well as musicality. After an introductory count of four, the song's form follows a straightforward verse/chorus progression with little bar variation and repeats four times. Drums and electric bass, electric guitar, vocals and also a güiro, a hand percussion instrument originating from Latin America, are the featured instruments.

Despite the simple instrumentation and song arrangement, the song features notable production. "Do They Owe…" has been performed live with all instruments recorded together in the same room at the same point in time, although the vocals appear to have been overdubbed, recorded separately to the instruments. This is discernible due to the vocal's clarity and comparatively dry sound. Southern Studios did not have a vocal booth, which prevented vocals from being isolated from other instruments when recording a full band live.

Drums and bass are centered in the stereo field and the vocals are positioned to the front of the mix in relation to the rhythm section. The electric guitar is positioned to the center right in the stereo field and the güiro, which plays staccato sixteenths throughout, follows both the vocal rhythm and musical accent in the verse pauses and is positioned to the center left of the stereo field. The stereo positioning of the heavily distorted, fuzzy guitar and güiro envelopes the vocal with sharp, percussive, mid-, and high-frequency dominant instrumentation, thus exaggerating Steve Ignorant's acerbic vocal by staging it in an equally abrasive musical setting. The mix is "fixed" in that instruments do not move around the stereo field, nor are they adjusted in volume through the duration of the song. Another noticeable facet of the production is the absence of any ambience, reverb, or other time-based effects processing, which lends "Do They Owe…" a harsh, confronting sound. Penny Rimbaud described this intended sonic characteristic as "Rawness. We [John and I] developed that sound together. The key instruction on *Feeding of the 5000* was 'no reverb'. We're punks—we don't have fucking reverb!" (2014).

Significantly, Steve Ignorant's vocals are positioned quite low in the mix, enveloped by the guitar and güiro and backed by Rimbaud's own relentless snare rolls. Rimbaud (2014) described the mixing of vocals as intentional:

> *At the time, the "under mixing" of vocals was a statement. We are not stars. If you want the words, read the book. He went on to say, "there was a spirit about Southern Studios that had nothing to do with the equipment. We created a very dodgy sound, but it was seminal to an entire generation."*

Seminal it was: after further re-releases, Crass' *Feeding of the 5000*, a conflation of the Christian "miracle" and the number of copies the band could afford to press, went on to sell tens of thousands of copies. Like many 1970s UK punk tracks, "Do They Owe Us A Living?" is a commentary on entrenched class structures and deals with the lack of opportunity and undereducation of the lower working classes and, as Cogan (2007) points out, "…challenged the economic policies and rightward shift in Britain at the end of the 1970s" (p. 82). There are sonic correlations to be drawn between the dominant, right-wing politics of the era and Ignorant's working class voice: Ignorant's vocals are obscured by the percussive, distorted instrumentation and their position in the mix. Ignorant shouts, spits, and projects his anger at working class unemployment via a strong message of working class undereducation and unemployment, yet his vocal—and the concomitant lyrics—are deliberately placed *beneath* the instrumentation in the mix, mirroring the low position of unemployed working class youth in wider society. The lack of reverb present on many Crass recordings exposes a brittle, confrontational, sonically hostile aesthetic commensurate with Rimbaud's description of the "dead" front room recording space. Sonically, the "burying" of words and lyrics became an essential component of Southern and Loder's subversive production aesthetics, as is discussed below.

5 | "THE POWER OF INDEPENDENT TRUCKING"

John Loder's subversive production aesthetics manifests in Chicago noisecore band Big Black's *Songs About Fucking* perhaps more so than in any other record he made, hence the foregrounding of the album's title in this article's heading. Featuring guitarist and vocalist Steve Albini, bassist Dave Riley, guitarist Santiago Durango and a Roland TR-606 Drumatix drum machine, Big Black recorded tracks one through six (Side one) of their second album *Songs About Fucking* at Southern Studios in 1986 and finalized the record (Side two—tracks seven through thirteen) at Albini's home studio in Chicago. At the time, Big Black were signed to Touch and Go records, an independent label that in 1986 was distributing internationally through Southern in the United Kingdom. As Albini explained, "All of us were fans of the records John [Loder] had recorded: the roughness of Crass and the Small Wonder label's singles" (Crane, 2012).

The instrumentation on "The Power of Independent Trucking," the first song on *Songs About Fucking*, is vocals, two electric guitars, bass guitar and a Roland TR-606 Drumatix drum machine. The programmed drums were a signature element of Big Black's sound and the TR 606 was often affectionately credited as "Roland" in the band's album liner notes. The drum machine is credited as "Roland" on *Bulldozer* (1983) and *Atomizer* (1986); as "mach v roland" on *Racer X* (1984); and as "Roland being Roland again" on *The Hammer Party* (1986). Despite being featured throughout *Songs About Fucking*, Roland does not receive a credit.

At 1m27s, "The Power…" is one of the shortest songs on the album. The TR-606 is the loudest instrument in the overall mix and is centered in the stereo field. One guitar is placed just off center to the right of the stereo field, with the second guitar positioned just off to the center left. This is most noticeable in the break at 0.49 when both guitars drop out of the mix, then feedback appears at 0.53 and 0.54, respectively. Again positioned to the center of the stereo field is the bass guitar with the heavily distorted vocals also centered, yet the quietest instrument in the mix. A key sonic characteristic of this record is the prominent distortion, applied to vocals, guitars, and bass guitar. Against the programmed TR-606 drums, the instruments are sharp, noise-laden, abrasive, and, like Crass, taut and "up front." Harvey Birrell, Loder's assistant engineer from 1985 onwards, recalled Loder's love of distortion, both on electric guitar sounds and "driving" of signals hard into analogue tape machines, "He pushed stuff to the edge. He knew distortion well. Knew how to use it well. He liked testing to see how far you could take things" (Birrell, 2014).

On "The Power…," the vocals are not just under mixed, but the application of distortion and bandpass filtering EQ effects "buries" them further still among the distorted bass and guitar elements. The production is fully realized in the harsh, industrial noise-core aesthetics of combined programmed and performed instruments. This combination of the drum machine featuring reduced low-end frequencies, along with fuzzy, high-frequency dominant vocal and guitar distortions that are so similar they almost merge, was integral to Big Black's sonically identifiable dystopian, dehumanized aesthetic.

Albini's extreme satirical lyrics, often taken literally as racist, homophobic and misogynistic, were largely drawn from local, real-life reports of murder, suicide, rape, and pedophilia. Big Black faced much criticism for their lyrical content, notably in Eddy (1987) who called Songs About Fucking "…a fucking hodgepodge, and most of it is trash done better before" and DeRogatis (1992), who noted it as "…heavy on misogynistic role playing…" Such extreme material was designed to confront listeners with real-life horrors of suburbia, to reflect bigotry and social exclusion and to mediate the extremities of human behavior via equally confronting music (Azerrad, 2001; Reynolds, 1992). The buried, distorted vocals positioned far beneath the instrumentation in tracks like "The Power of Independent Trucking" mirror its lyrical thematics drawn from atrocities of the criminal underworld and abuses among the suburban social underclass.

Furthermore, Albini used *Songs About Fucking* as a statement against tech-utopian discourse surrounding new digital technologies and carriers. *Songs About Fucking* was antimainstream, not simply in its lyrical and musical aesthetics, but right down to the very format carrier embraced by the 1980s commercial record industry at the time—the CD. Inspired by Loder's loyalty to analogue equipment, Albini inscribed the statement, "The future belongs to the analogue loyalists—fuck digital" in *Songs About Fucking's* liner notes. Furthermore, Albini had printed on the CD releases:

> *This compact disc is made from analog masters recorded without noise reduction. Half the tracks, in fact, were recorded in a dismal, cheap basement eight-track studio with puddles of water on the floor. Digital technology will now faithfully reproduce those noisy, lo-fi, unprofessional masters for you at great expense. Feel stupid yet? (Big Black, 1987).*

As asserted in previous work, the CD was one symbol of 1980s technological utopianism in the commercial music industry. Albini's suspicion of—and clear reluctance to buy into—digital production aesthetics is one aspect of his allegiance to subversive musics.

6 | DISCUSSION

> *It's funny to think that that little suburban house, there in Middleton Road in North London, was actually the melting pot—there was a proper revolution going on, and no one recognises it.—Steve Ignorant (2016)*

Ignorant is right in that the contribution made by Southern—its recording studio, recordist, and wider business operations—is missing from punk historiography and, surprisingly, extensive works on Crass. Loder, Southern, and Crass are inextricable and certainly Crass' music and wider political messages could not have been disseminated to the same degree without the backing of Loder and Southern. This is not to position Loder as an auteur; there is little evidence that Loder was involved in A&R, nor did he have any contribution to songwriting or arranging, musical performance or lyric writing. "The producer as auteur" is a topic of much discussion in phonomusicology. This concept likens the role of a producer to a film director. Gillett (1977) first posited the thought in "The Producer as Artist" (p. 51). Eisenberg advocates auteurism in *The Recording Angel* (2005, pp. 94–95), as does Moorefield in *The Producer as Composer* (2005, p. 111). The notion has, however, been criticized, mainly because the process of recording and production is almost always a collaborative effort, thus problematic to attribute to one individual alone.

This article's analysis of two of Loder's recordings elucidates a sonic identity, which I argue is a wholly subversive one, commensurate with the artists' musical aesthetics. Rich Cross (2014) noted a "signature" of sorts in Crass' music:

> *Their early recordings and live performances saw the band develop a signature sound that was unlike that of any other punk band (but which would itself be repeatedly revisited and revised during the course of the*

> *group's lifetime). Underpinned by the drive of militaristic snare-drum rhythms and prominent bass lines, were layers of overdriven guitar, and the impassioned vocals of a collection of different male and female singers (p. 5).*

Here, Cross focuses on instrument characteristics, but Crass' early recordings honed Loder's prototype sonic signature: the production aesthetics embodied in songs like "Do They Owe Us A Living?" can be traced not only through Loder's work with dozens of other artists, but through an entire generation of alternative and subversive musics. Bob Davis suggests the identification of tech-processual imprints in recorded music is a form of "musicological forensics" (2009). Davis goes on to argue a "sonic signature" as "…the *potential* for a sound to carry the *identity* of an individual." Considering both "Do They Owe Us A Living" and "The Power of Independent Trucking," there are clear sonic commonalities to both:

> *The position of vocals is low in the mix comparative to other instruments.*

- In both mixes, the "undermixed" vocals are "enveloped": in "Do They Owe…," by the off-center spatial position of distorted guitar and güiro; and, in "The Power…," by the off-center spatial position of two distorted guitars.
- There is a distinct lack of overall low-end frequencies present in both tracks.
- There is little to no audible time-based processing (reverb, echo, or delay) present on any of the instruments in either mix, which lends both an upfront, direct, and sonically confronting aesthetic.
- All instruments are "fixed" in their stereo field position throughout; no manual panning is audible in either mix.
- There are no apparent volume automations in either mix; the position of instruments in terms of their relative volume remains fixed throughout.
- In both tracks, the drums are positioned louder than other instruments in the mix.
- The vocal production is "percussive" in both mixes: in "Do They Owe…," Ignorant's acerbic performance is exaggerated by the absence of time-based processing, the enveloping of güiro and distorted guitar and little low-end frequency presence; and, in "The Power…" Albini's vocal features no time-based processing, has been treated with a bandpass filter (thus removing low-end frequencies present) and distortion and is enveloped by further distorted instruments.

Critically, Loder's signature is constructed not only by what is present in these recordings but also by what is *absent*. In *Echo and Reverb*, Peter Doyle (2005) suggested "…[instruments] played in a furnished, domestic space will tend to produce a relatively "mellow" sound… Played in a bathroom or a hallway, however, the same instrument will produce a dramatically louder, more strident sound (p. 76).

The "mellow" sound Doyle refers to is *precisely* what is missing from "Do They Owe…" and "The Power…" which is due to two factors: first, the acoustically "dead" recording environment at Southern and second, the choice made by Loder *not* to fabricate ambience, presence, or space with time-based processors. In both mixes, therefore, the sonic identity of both workplace and recordist is present: the absence of any ambient or atmospheric aesthetics leaves Loder's recordings sonically cold and arguably, an uncomfortable listen. This abrasive sound reflects Loder's intention to capture, as Harvey Birrell put it, the musician's "…terrifying noise on record" (2014). To that end, the recordings are not indicative of the era in which they were made: like the majority of Loder's discography, *The Feeding of the 5000* and *Songs About Fucking* do not feature any tech-processual qualities commensurate with 1980s mainstream or independent popular music. Rather, Southern's subversive sonic signature played an important role in shaping the zeitgeist of 1980s alternative musics. This is further corroborated by semantic classifications of popular music timbral descriptors. In Ferrer and Eerola's work on semantic structures of timbre, they ascribed "representative tags" to 400 music samples before categorizing them into clusters. In this study, the closest set resembling the sonic aesthetics of Southern Studios was that of cluster 8: "hard, angry, aggressive," which Ferrer and Eerola correlated to the music of metal bands. As

established by the sonic commonalities present in both "Do they Owe…" and "The Power…," Southern's sonic signature can, therefore, be heard to subvert even the hardest, most aggressive sounds present in popular, rock and metal genre.

In *Noise* (1985), Jacques Atalli noted that "a subversive strain of music has always managed to survive" (p. 13). The sonic signature elucidated here is not only devoid of timbres commensurate with the commercial mainstream, but also epitomizes sounds that deliberately undermine it: the burying of reverb-less vocal performances is sonically opposed to the foregrounding of reverberant vocals in then-current commercial record production; the true-to-live recording approach an anachronism in the context of commercial music production of the era, which often featured meticulous multitracking and overdubbing techniques (Bennett, 2009); and, critically, the foregrounding of *noise*, so intrinsic to Southern's sonic signature, yet precisely what digital audio—the most significant technological development that proliferated in 1980s commercial record production—sought to eliminate. For these reasons, Southern's sonic signature is, ultimately, a subversive one.

Undoubtedly, *Songs About Fucking* was a pivotal record. Not only does it embody Southern's subversive sonic signature, but it also signified a turning point in Steve Albini's career; at this point, Albini was moving away from performing and toward a career in recording. Through his work with Nirvana, Pixies, PJ Harvey, and The Breeders, Steve Albini has come to be understood as a pioneer of alternative rock and one of the most sought after recordists in independent music. Yet Albini's tech-processual practice, as depicted in scholarship (Bennett, 2009; O'Hare, 2007; Shepherd, 2011), rock historiography (Azerrad, 2001) and on film ("Chicago," *Sonic Highways*, 2014) was heavily influenced by—if not entirely derived from—Southern's subversive sonic signature, as inscribed on *Songs About Fucking*. Albini's work as a recordist also centers around the notion of analogue loyalty, which again mirrors Loder's practice, as Albini pointed out:

> *[John Loder is] a very wise engineer. He runs a studio; a record label and a distribution company in England called Southern Studios. He was involved in one of the very first experiments in digitized audio. And he understands digital audio better than just about anybody. And as a result his studio is—and has remained—staunchly analog (Cited in Fremer, 2005).*

What is evident in alternative music at the turn of the 1990s and beyond is a sonic continuum that extends far beyond Loder's work. We hear the sonic tropes as listed earlier in the discussion embodied in the production of so many of Steve Albini and Harvey Birrell's recordings, as well as those of other recordists, some with connections to Southern and many without. To that end, I argue *Songs About Fucking*—featuring the work of both Loder and Albini—as an important nexus between the established, subversive sonic signature present across many recordings made at Southern Studios and its transatlantic proliferation beyond subversive musics and toward the commercial mainstream. For example, the "undermixed" vocals staged among distorted instrumentation is integral to Pixies' "Something Against You," taken from one of Albini's most famous recordings, *Surfer Rosa* (1988). The production of prominent drum machine programming and low-mixed, distorted, bandpass filtered vocals was adopted by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails and is particularly noticeable on tracks like the Adrian Sherwood-produced "Down In It," taken from the album *Pretty Hate Machine* (1989). Loder's assistant engineer Harvey Birrell continued to record with a Southern Studios motif: the prominent drums, bandpass filtered and distorted vocals and fixed mix can be heard in tracks like Therapy?'s "Teethgrinder" from the Birrell-recorded *Nurse* (1992). Such aesthetics were undoubtedly borrowed by inspired US bands and recordists; a distinctly Southern sonic signature is heard in the Butch Vig-produced "Territorial Pissings" on Nirvana's seminal album *Nevermind* (1991).

Here, the continuum of the Southern sonic signature is illuminated: the "rawness" Penny Rimbaud described as developing with Loder was integral to Crass' overall musical and political aesthetic and part of what Loder then "bottled" and liberally applied to other artists. Yet Loder's reputation as a controlled and meticulous recordist comes through in the way that such abrasive musical elements are brought under control in the mixes. Loder's recordings are taught, contained, exposing the true "rawness" of his artists with minimal technological and processual intervention.

7 | SUMMARY

While only two of Southern's vast, musically subversive recording catalogue have been considered here, the influence of Southern Studios and John Loder on the sonic aesthetics of subversive musics is indisputable. As Rich Cross identified in Crass' music, part of this sonic signature is attributable to commonalities in instrumentation, vocal delivery, and lyrical matter, as well as the subversive politics and culture of the musicians Loder recorded (Cross, 2010). However, the Southern sonic signature is imbued in the technological and processual construction of the mixes, thus are an extension beyond musical and stylistic motifs. Both Harvey Birrell and Penny Rimbaud commented that Southern Studios was an uncomfortable place to work. That studio aesthetic reflected in Loder's recordings, much of which portrays that very lack of comfort experienced in the recording sessions: Southern was the perfect, uncomfortable environment for recording the most uncomfortable music.

The aesthetics of Southern manifested not just in Loder's recording signature, but in the way he operated Southern Records as a whole business model: the absence of contractual negotiation between artist and label, his opposition to censorship, his willingness to record artists with challenging anarchist, gender, and sexual politics and his commitment to analogue recording aesthetics during the advent of the digital age. Here, the influence of Southern and John Loder on Steve Albini—one of the world's most sought after alternative music recordists since the turn of the 1990s—and his studio, Electrical Audio, is clearly evident: Albini's working practices mirror those of Loder's almost identically. To that end, *Songs About Fucking* is a lynchpin in the continuum of Southern's subversive sonic signature: the record that embodied both its established production aesthetics, as well as solidifying its legacy via recordist Steve Albini.

Penny Rimbaud summed up Loder's legacy thus: "Our (John Loder and Crass) legacy was shared. He created an independent label, studio and distribution. We proved it was possible to put together a powerful economic and artistic business. It hasn't ever been mirrored—in business or attitude" (2014). Rimbaud's quote points to at least two future lines of enquiry. Although this article has focused on production, there is still plenty of work to be done on the economics, politics, dissemination, and reception of subversive musics. I am currently continuing with work on Southern Studios, its historical place in wider punk music and a broader examination of its discography between 1977 and 2012.

WORKS CITED

Attali, J. (1985). *Noise: The political economy of music*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Azerrad, M. (2001). *Our band could be your life: Scenes from the American Rock Underground 1981–1991*. Boston; London: Little Brown.

Babes in Toyland. *To Mother*. ©1990 Southern Records 18506-2 Compact Disc.

Bates, E. (2012). What studios do? *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, *7*. Retrieved from http://arpjournal.com/what-studios-do/

Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders; studies in the sociology of deviance*. London: Free Press of Glencoe.

Benjamin, W. (2008). *The work of art in the mechanical age of reproduction*. London: Penguin Books.

Bennett, S. (2009). Revolution sacrilege! Examining the technological divide among record producers of the late 1980s. *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, 4.

Bennett, S. (2014). *Recording the musical underworld: John Loder's southern sonic style*. Paper presented at IASPM UK and Ireland Biennial Conference, Worlds of Popular Music, University College, Cork.

Bennett, S. (2015a). Never mind the bollocks…A tech-processual analysis. *Popular Music and Society*, *38*, 466–486.

Bennett, S. (2015b). Gus Dudgeon's super sonic signature. In H. Johnson, & I. Chapman (Eds.), *Global Glam and Popular Music: Style and Spectacle from the 1970s to the 2000s*. New York: Routledge.

Bennett, S. (2016). Behind the magical mystery door: History, mythology and the aura of Abbey Road studios. *Popular Music*, *35*, 396–417.

Berger, G. (2006). *The story of crass*. London: Omnibus.

Big Black. *Songs About Fucking*. ©1987 Touch and Go T&GLP#24CD Compact Disc.

Birrell, H. (2014). Personal Interview.

Capper, A. (2010, August 1). Anarchy and peace, litigated: A brief history of the idealistic punk icons, Crass, and why in 2010 they are going to court over some total bullshit. *Vice*. Retrieve from http://www.vice.com/read/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8

Cogan, B. (2007). "Do they owe us a living? Of course they do!" Crass, throbbing gristle, and anarchy and radicalism in early English punk rock. *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, *1*(2), 77–90.

Cogan, J., & Clark, W. (2003). *Temples of sound: Inside the great recording studios*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle [London: Hi Marketing, distributor].

Crane, L. (2012). Steve Albini: Nirvana, Pixies, Stooges, PJ Harvey. *Tape Op*. Retrieved from http://tapeop.com/interviews/87/steve-albini-Nirvana-Pixies-Stooges-PJ-Harvey/

Crass. *The Feeding of the 5000*. ©1979 Small Wonder Records WEENY 2. Vinyl Record.

Crass. *Penis Envy*. ©1981 Crass Records. 321984/1. Vinyl Record.

Crass. *Yes Sir, I Will*. ©1983 Crass Records. 121984/2. Vinyl Record.

Cross, R. (2010). "There is no authority but yourself": The individual and the collective in British Anarcho-Punk. *Music & Politics*, *IV*(2). Retrieved from http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0004.203/--there-is-no-authority-but-yourself-the-individual?rgn=main;view=fulltext

Cross, R. (2014). 'Take the toys from the boys': Gender, generation and anarchist intent in the work of Poison Girls. *Punk & Post Punk*, *3*(2), 117–145.

Cunningham, M. (1998). *Good vibrations*. London: Sanctuary Music Publishing.

Davis, B. (2009). Creative ownership and the case of the sonic signature, or 'I'm listening to this record and wondering who dunnit? *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, *4*. Retrieved from http://arpjournal.com/creative-ownership-and-the-case-of-the-sonic-signature-or-%e2%80%98i%e2%80%99m-listening-to-this-record-and-wondering-whodunit%e2%80%99/

Doyle, P. (2005). *Echo and reverb: Fabricating space in popular music, 1900–1960*. Music/Culture. (1st ed.). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Eisenberg, E. (2005). *The recording angel: Music, records and culture from Aristotle to Zappa*. (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press.

Exit. *The Mystic Trumpeter: Live at the Roundhouse 1972*. ©2013 Exitstencil Music. EXM02. Compact Disc.

Ferrer, R., & Eerola, T. (2011). Semantic structures of timbre emerging from social and acoustic descriptions of music. *EURASIP Journal on Audio, Speech, and Music Processing*. Retrieved from https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/51004/ferrersemanticstructures.pdf?sequence=1

Gibson, C. (2005). Recording studios: Relational spaces of creativity in the city. *Built Environment*, *31*(3), 192–207.

Gillett, C. (1977). The producer as artist. In H. W. Hitchcock (Ed.), *The phonograph and our musical life, ISAM monograph* (Vol. *14*, pp. 51–56). New York: City University.

Gracyk, T. (1996). *Rhythm and noise: An aesthetics of rock*. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press.

Hall, O. (2016). Dub visionary Adrian Sherwood talks about his legendary career in music. *Dangerous Minds*. Retrieved from http://dangerousminds.net/comments/dub_visionary_adrian_sherwood_talks_about_his_legendary_career_in_music

Hoffman, F. (2005). *Encyclopedia of recorded sound*. New York: Routledge.

Howard, D. (2004). *Sonic Alchemy—Visionary music producers and their maverick recordings*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard.

Ignorant, S. (2016). Personal Interview.

Kealy, E. R. (1979). From craft to art: The case of sound mixers and popular music. *Sociology of Work and Occupations*, *6*(1), 3–29.

Kehew, B., & Ryan, K. (2006). *Recording the Beatles*. USA: Curvebender Publishing.

Leyshon, A. (2009). The software slump? Digital music, the democratisation of technology, and the decline of the recording studio sector within the musical economy. *Environment and Planning A*, *41*, 1309–1331.

Mackay, G. (1996). *Senseless acts of beauty: Cultures of resistance since the sixties*. London; New York: Verso.

Marszalek, J. (2011). Brown acid black leather: The story of the Jesus and Mary Chain's psychocandy. *The Quietus*. Retrieved from http://thequietus.com/articles/07301-jesus-and-mary-chain-psychocandy

Massey, H. (2000). *Behind the glass: Top record producers tell how they craft the hits*. Milwaukee, WI; Great Britain: Backbeat Books.

Massey, H. (2009). *Behind the glass: Top record producers tell how they craft the hits* (Vol. *II*). New York: Backbeat Books.

Massey, H. (2015). *The Great British recording studios*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard.

Milner, G. (2009). *Perfecting sound forever: An aural history of recorded music* (1st ed.). New York: Faber and Faber.

Ministry. *The Land of Rape and Honey*. ©1988 Sire. 9 25799-2. Compact Disc.

Moorefield, V. (2005). *The producer as composer: Shaping the sounds of popular music*. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT.

Muikku, J. (1990). On the role and tasks of a record producer. *Popular Music and Society*, *14*(1), 25–33.

Nine Inch Nails. *Pretty Hate Machine*. ©1989 TVT Records. INTD-91834. Compact Disc.

Nirvana. (1991). *Nevermind* [CD]. Geffen.

Novotny, P. (1997). "No future!" Cyberpunk, industrial music and the aesthetics of postmodern disintegration. In D. M. Hassler & C. Wilcox, (Eds.), *Political science fiction* (pp. 99–123). Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

O'Hare, P. (2007). Steve Albini 'in Utero's' ultra-sound guy. *The Art of Record Production*. Conference Presentation. Retrieved from: http://www.artofrecordproduction.com/content/view/110/95/

Poison Girls. *Hex*. ©1979 Small Wonder Records. WEENY 4. Vinyl Record.

Poison Girls. *Chappaquiddick Bridge*. ©1980 Crass Records. 421984/2PG. Vinyl Record.

Reynolds, S. (1992). Steve Albini: Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em. *Melody Maker*. Retrieved from https://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/steve-albini-smoke-em-if-you-got-em?pfv=True

Rimbaud, P. (2005). John Loder: Sound engineer who founded the legendary southern studios. *The Guardian*.

Rimbaud, P. (2014). Personal Interview.

Rudimentry Peni. *Death Church*. ©1983 Corpus Christi Records. CHRIST IT'S 6. Vinyl Record.

Shepherd, R. (2011). The collaborative recordist. *Musicology Australia*, *33*(2), 255–264.

Silva, J., Skolnek, G., Cutliffe, J., & Welsh, K. (Producers). (2014). *Foo Fighters Sonic Highways Episode 1: Chicago* [Television]. US: HBO.

Southall, B., Vince, P., & Rouse, A. (1982). *Abbey Road: The story of the world's most famous recording studios*. London: Omnibus Press.

Stand, M. (1981). The aesthetics of anarchy: A report from the house of crass. *The Face*. Retrieved from https://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/the-aesthetics-of-anarchy-a-report-from-the-house-of-crass

Subhumans. *From the Cradle to the Grave*. ©1984 Bluurg Records. fish 8. Vinyl Record.

The Cravats. "Rub Me Out" Crass Records. 221984/4. Vinyl Record.

The Jesus and Mary Chain. *Psychocandy*. ©1985 Blanco Y Negro. BYN 7. Vinyl Record.

Therapy? *Nurse*. ©1992 A&M Records. 540 044-2. Compact Disc.

Thompson, S. (2004). Crass commodities. *Popular Music and Society*, *27*(3), 307–322.

Thompson, P., & Lashua, B. (2014). Getting it on record: Issues and strategies for ethnographic practice in recording studios. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *43*(6), 746–769.

Williams, A. (2007). Divide and conquer: Power, role formation and conflict in recording studio architechture. *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, *1*. Retrieved from http://arpjournal.com/divide-and-conquer-power-role-formation-and-conflict-in-recording-studio-architecture/.

Williams, A. (2010). Pay some attention to the man behind the curtain: Unsung heroes and the canonization of process in the classic album documentary series. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *22*(2), 166–175.

Young, R. (2006). *Rough trade*. London: Black Dog.

Zak, A. (2001). *The poetics of rock: Cutting tracks, making records*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

How to cite this article: Bennett S. Songs about fucking: John Loder's southern studios and the construction of a subversive sonic signature. *J. Pop. Music Stud.* 2017;29:e12209. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12209