ABSTRACT

The working practices of organisations involved in the creation and circulation of music are constantly overshadowed by images of chaos and disorder. Questions of formality and consistency have remained unanswered and rarely are the workings of the recording industry allied to principles of organisational theory. Structural arrangements are designed to maintain efficient and effective performance through co-ordination and control (Dawson. 1996). However, the true functioning of an organisation is shaped by the values and beliefs of its members and by combining a cultural awareness with aspects of structure, a genuine understanding of operation is gained (Ranson et al.. 1980). This paper investigates through in-depth interviews the discrete and combined significance of organisational structure and culture in processes of contemporary music production. The purpose of this is to provide a basis for achieving coherent and effectual patterns of operation, as structural arrangements have been inextricably linked to performance (Fincham and Rhodes. 1992). By integrating structural and cultural concepts, an embryonic taxonomy of the recording industry's independent sector was created. From the disparities in working practice of a group of organisations three design archetypes emerged, the *Unified Fraternity. Closed Colony* and *Nuclear Family.* These empirically constructed classifications infer that independent record companies operate either as an all-inclusive unit, in a community with other labels or under the control of a parent corporation. Exposing the symbiotic relationship between structure and culture in the record industry provides new understandings of the effects organisational phenomena has on the creation and amelioration of music.

INTRODUCTION

For several decades the British music industry has been at the forefront of European music markets and some consider it to be the music capital of the world (Reilly, 1997). According to figures from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI, 1998), spending on music in Britain rose to £1.75 billion in 1997 which meant that expenditure per head had become greater than anywhere else in the world. In an industry that revolves around the production and sale of phonograms (i.e. records, cassettes and compact discs) the United Kingdom has certainly made its mark. However, despite the music industry's importance to the UK's economic welfare, it has received relatively little academic interest and, consequently, there are gaps in our understanding of its workings (Burnett, 1996).

After undertaking a longitudinal study of the international music industry, Robert Burnett (1996) wrote of many highly structured processes that have been established to maximise profits and minimise risks. Whilst at the same time, one of the few studies that have been conducted into national music industries suggested that structure is rarely present, concluding that operations normally rest upon informally organised cultures of music related activity (Straw, 1993). Accordingly, there is divided opinion upon whether the activities of organisations operative in the music industry manifest any order of true structure.

James Riordan (1988) expressed that because the music business deals with creativity and is still relatively young, it changes at a much faster rate than other industries. Music experiences unpredictable demand due to the strong influence of relatively few trend setters in the market and audiences tend to rely on the creation of fashion. Furthermore, the aesthetic qualities of music cause it to be considered as a much more ephemeral commodity than, say, televisions or cars (Bjorkegren, 1996). Thus, uncertainty in the industry is high and the characteristic working practices of music organisations are likely to exist to combat this concern.

The way in which operations are structured in different industries is not an area unaccustomed to study and many of the patterns and theories used to characterise organisations today, emerged several decades ago. Still, these concepts experience continual research and their significance has been emphasised by developments in organisational theory over the past 10 years (Hinings et al. 1996). Today, an exhaustive number of studies and resulting theories exist (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Ranson et al. 1980; Miller & Friesen 1980; Gregory 1983; Greenwood & Hinings 1988; Hinings et al. 1996). Yet very little investigation has been focused upon organisations operating in the music industry.

Greenwood and Hinings are responsible for much of the academic attention that has surrounded the workings of organisations in recent years and, in their writings with Ranson (1980:1). They referred to the structure of an organisation in terms of *"a configuration of activities that is characteristically enduring and persistent".* From this definition, it would seem that organisations that embrace little or no continuity in their activities operate without structure. Still, before such judgements can be unequivocally inferred the working practices of an organisation need to be analysed from a number of perspectives.

In formulating a framework of organisational assessment, Van de Ven (1976) originated the idea that complexity, formalisation and centralisation are central concepts in defining the structure of an organisation. Today, these three dimensions are commonly used for this purpose and the understanding that surrounds them has been advanced by many academics (Slack 1997; Miller & Droge, 1986; Hall, 1982; Ranson et al.. 1980). Slack (1997), in his application of organisation theory to sport, iterated the use of these three conceptual dimensions in drawing attention to the levels of differentiation, co-ordination and delegation that permeate a company's working. Complexity, formalisation and centralisation form salient concepts within this study and will receive further contemplation in order to instil a framework of analysis bearing fundamental properties of structure.

Another consideration in the assessment of a company's workings is the way in which its characteristic functioning has come about. Organisations operate with a limited number of configurations of structure and design. However, not always are these practices prescribed. Often a framework of operation is left to emerge from the typical working practices of a company. Nevertheless, many organisations insist on the implementation, rather than accumulation, of an operational structure, as they see this exercise as prerequisite to their efficient and effective performance. This conviction is disregarded by Meyer and Rowan (1977:340) who, in discussing the myth of formal structure, asserted that *"conformity to institutionalized rules often conflicts sharply with efficiency criteria".* It is a misconception to believe that effectiveness is achieved by simply establishing a degree of structure in an organisation's working practices. Hinings et al. (1996) maintain that there is an important relationship between values and structure, and it is a similar credence that has provoked the development of cultural theory.

THE VALUE OF CULTURE.

A true understanding of organisational structure can only be achieved by examining the informal nature in which people perform operations (Ranson et al. 1980). Whilst organisation structures only prescribe ways of working, organisation cultures actually describe the manner in which activities are performed and the attitudes that surround their completion. Pettinger (1996:392) referred to an amalgam comprehending the climate or atmosphere surrounding the organisation, prevailing attitudes within it, standards, morale, strength of feelings towards it and the general levels of goodwill present.

These understandings suggest that it is invalid to infer the type of working practice that prevails within an organisation strictly from its structure, as it is only by considering rudiments of culture that bona fide judgements can be made about the way in which it operates. This argument is advanced by Hinings and Greenwood (1988:13). Stating the pattern or orientation of a composition of structures and systems is provided by the set of ideas and values embodied within them.

Therefore, the adoption of a highly formalised framework within an organisation will procure little or no effect unless a culture is sustained that supports this. These two organisational phenomena have a mutual influence upon one another and their symbiotic relationship wields a large degree of importance in organisational theory.

The purpose of this research is to empirically examine the prominence of organisational structure within the music business and investigate the extent to which working practices are shaped by sediments of culture. Findings will be used to conceptualise a number of theoretical models based upon structural and cultural attributes of music organisations.

FRAMEWORK OF INVESTIGATION.

Within an industry, commonly occurring features, such as properties of organisational structure and culture, can be identified and used to classify organisations into

configurations, known as *"design types"* (Slack 1997:68). Utilising a diagnostic approach to uncover such affinities constitutes the formation of a taxonomy, described by Slack (1997:71) as an *"empirically constructed classification".* The creation of a typology is a similar process, but involves the mental generation of design types before investigation actually begins (Chell and Haworth, 1996). One of the most valuable outcomes of this process is provided by Mintzberg (1979). Who identified both an organisation's various parts and methods of co-ordination and by combining these properties, produced five design types: the simple structure, the machine bureaucracy, the professional bureaucracy, the divisionalized form and the adhocracy. These designs provide a means of categorising organisations and it is the intention of this study to provide a similar, but ultimately less compound, system of classification based upon the working practices present in the music industry.

Nonetheless, in discussing the myth of formal structure, Meyer and Rowan (1977) emphasised the importance of institutionalised rules in shaping an organisation's true functioning. The values and beliefs of organisational members shape the way in which operations are performed and, ultimately, determine structural type (Ranson et a!.. 1980). Many other theorists have also implied that the assessment of structure requires cultural awareness (Deal and Kennedy 1982: Hinings et al. 1996) and although this interconnection is not fully understood. Its importance is accorded within this study.

From their understanding of organisation structure and culture, Hinings and Greenwood (1988) expanded the notion of archetypes. Similar to design types, the concept of archetypes can be used to classify organisations and it has been said that they shape prevailing conceptions of what an organization should be doing, of how it should be doing it and how it should be judged, combined with structures and processes that serve to implement and reinforce those ideas (Hinings and Greenwood 1988:295)

Focused investigation into a small group of music organisations will facilitate the identification of various design archetypes, allowing working practices in the music industry to be categorised.

The purpose of this study is to discover new knowledge in regard to record company operation that not only provides a basis for achieving co-ordination and control, but can be used to formulate strategy and change. A close relationship between strategy and organisational components has been acknowledged by many writers (Kilmann et al. 1985; Sathe. 1985; Hinings et al. 1996). Thus, investigation into structure and culture can help record companies identify where alternative patterns of music creation are potentially beneficial.

Furthermore, organisational structure is inextricably linked with performance and this concept was the fundamental basis for the development of contingency theory (Dawson 1996). The classifications that emerge from empirical investigation in this study will therefore have some value in directing efficient practice. This paper shall provide insight and guidance for record company managers to aid the formulation of strategy capable of combating the uncertainty that surrounds music creation.

INDUSTRY FOCUS.

Today's music industry abounds with record companies of various shapes and sizes, and it is these, that arguably play the most instrumental role in the sector's thriving. From a sociological perspective, it has been expressed that "the creation, circulation and consumption of popular music is shaped by record companies and their corporate owners" (Negus. 1999:p.3).

Past examinations of industry structure have instituted a distinction between those organisations that form part of the *'core'* and part of the *'periphery"* (Slack 1997; Pettinger 1996; Handy 1992). In regard to the phonogram industry, this structural division is seen in terms of two strategic groupings: major and minor record labels (Burnett 1996). The major organisations are the industry leaders that dominate the marketplace by gaining a large degree of control over the production and distribution of music, whereas the minor organisations are the various independent firms that form the periphery of the phonogram industry. Although the concept of independence has become misleading, a distinction between major and minor labels can still be made. In writing about the links that are forged between large corporate companies and small independent record labels, Negus (1992) recalled the differentiation that already existed between these two sets of companies. The industry's array of minor labels is made up of small firms and entrepreneurs and these tend to be somewhat more heterogeneous than the majors (Burnett. 1996). As will be discussed later, the organisations that are most involved in the production of music today are these independent record labels and consequently, they take the focus of this study.

The remainder of this paper empirically examines the prominence of organisational structure and culture within independent record labels and, in doing so, attempts to contrive new theories around an industry wielding idiosyncrasy. Using a combination of the ideas intrinsic to archetypes with those embedded within the concept of design types, a number of classifications are formed around the explored workings of independent record labels. Performing this embryonic taxonomy of record industry practice advances understandings of modern music production in terms of structure and culture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

History of the Music Industry

Music is just one of many parts that help form an international entertainment business, vet its significance and contribution have been argued as being the most extensive (Bjorkegren 1996; Negus 1999). Music crosses boundaries like no other form of communication and so when being commodified, its treatment is unique. The music industry performs the essential role of binding all the different sectors of the global entertainment industry and, as a result, the complexity of its workings are diverse (Burnett 1996). In a comprehensive study of the international music industry. Burnett (1996:2) stated the dominance held by a small number of multinational corporations in the entertainment sector and referred to these organisations as *"Trans-nationals".* His views on the effects of this concentration are elaborated in relation to the music industry.

Penetration of the world market by the predominantly trans-national industry has generated changes in policy and structure worldwide, changes that have important implications for the production, content and marketing of popular music.

Burnett (1996) also identified three key areas of change in the entertainment business: integration, concentration and internationalisation. This trend has transpired throughout the music industry and is best illustrated by the high number of mergers and take-overs that now prevail. These happenings have also been well documented by Negus (1996 & 1999), Bjorkegren (1996) and Eliot (1993), who all stated that the outcome has been to further establish the oligopolistic practices that first emerged in the music sector during the 1930s. According to both Frith (1988) and Burnett (1996), a few large record companies have always had great dominance in the market and this conjuncture continues to give the record industry its contemporary structure.

Power and control within world music markets has become highly concentrated and is regularly blamed for the standardisation of music (Beadle, 1993: Burnett, 1996; Eliot. 1993; Frith.. 1988; Goodman, 1997; Schuker, 1994; Strinati, 1995: Swiss, Sloop & Herman, 1998). A fear of mass production was first written about in 1944 by Adorno & Horkheimer (1979) and today there is growing concern that concentration of music production will result in low levels of diversification (Schuker, 1994; Strinati. 1995). Hamelink (1983) and Schiller (1976) both discussed this process of commodification in terms of cultural homogenization and cultural synchronisation. However, these contemporary writings suggested a far more capitalist approach than the day-to-day workings of the music business reflect. The majority of literature has been written within the context of a particular music genre, predominantly 'pop, and this is where theories relating to the negative affects of standardisation on musical creativity are most allusive. Contention arises in the generalisation of these suppositions upon the industry as a whole, as some believe that greater concentration of ownership does not provoke cultural homogenization across the board. According to Collins (1989), there is no evidence to support claims that culture is produced in a standardised and centralised fashion. Although there is dispute over the degree of negative effect processes such as integration and globalisation cause~ there is no denying that in recent years the music industry practices have become concentrated within the hands of fewer large organisations.

The record industry is dissimilar to other industries in many ways due to the commercial and creative properties music holds. Consequently, the structures and cultures within music organisations are affected. While in a commercial sense the industry needs to be understood as a "business driven by the pursuit of profit", it also exists as 'a site of creative human activity' (Negus 1996:36). Unlike the undertakings in other sectors of the music industry, such as merchandising, the operations congenital to the actual production of music cannot be performed on a highly commercial platform. This is mainly due to the fact that the creation of music involves many artists and musicians who are not willing to be fed into a corporate machine, thus record companies cannot function unconsciously. Chapple and Garafalo (1977) pointed out that the expression of popular music can be severely restricted by corporations seeking to exert their control and, in supporting their argument; they elaborated upon the music industry's exploitative treatment of black performers. Previous research has also drawn attention to the commodifying effects of corporate control felt by Latino artists (Manuel 1991).

Generally, artists want to be able to express their music without the imposition of commercial constraint and, thus, record companies must acknowledge this desire in the manner in which they structure their operations. Bjorkegren (1996: p.3) stated that "the business of an arts-related organization is multinational in the sense that it is governed by aesthetic as we/l as commercial considerations". There is always a thin line between too much and too little control which record companies attempt to trace for each of their artists.

MUSIC INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS.

When discerning the sectors of an industry it is general practice to subdivide organisations in terms of the scale of their operations. Hence, applying classifications such as local, national or international. However, size is not the only factor used to differentiate record companies. In fact a more common distinction is based upon the degree of control they possess over their operations (Burnett, 1996).

In the contemporary music industry, record labels have come to be referred to as either major or minor organisations and this separation embodies both factors of size and restraint. In defining major record labels, Burnett (1996: p.4.9) referred to a group of "vertically integrated multinationals" that dominate the production and distribution of music. In contrast, the minor league of the industry sector is made up of a huge number of small companies wielding independence. It has been contended that the working practices of these self-contained labels are less structured but more democratic than those of the majors (Hesmondhalgh. 1998; Mabry. 1990; Burnett, 1996).

Nonetheless, the conception of independence is not pronounced, a fact which is acknowledged by Negus (1999: p.35), who referred to "the blurring of 'indie-major' organizational distinctions and belief systems". As small firms have managed to commandeer considerable reserve on the production of music, major organisations have elected to form licensing agreements to manufacture and distribute their records. This relationship is believed to be a source of "symbiotic mutualism" (Burnett, 1996: p.104) and, in a sense, minor organisations act as a proving ground for major labels' new product.

The structures and practices of organisations performing their activities in the music business are, undeniably, affected by the levels of concentration and integration that subsist in the industry as a whole. However, further examination of these *macro* relations is not necessary for the focus of this study, as a more detailed and concentrated understanding of the record business shall be achieved by addressing its workings on a *micro* level. Investigation is directed towards the structures and cultures that prevail within individual record companies, rather than the framework of the industry as a whole.

For most organisations, functioning in the contemporary record business involves the continual pursuit of high risk ventures. As a result, the structures and cultures of independent record labels will foreseeably reflect this fact. Music-related activities are positioned within a wide range of institutional and social spaces, by people who are themselves the providers of the resources and training they need to function (Straw, 1993). Even though past research has led to the recognition of the record industry's

unique workings. Few empirical studies have been carried out to provide a true understanding of how music organisations perform their operations. Straw (1993), in his research into the Canadian recording industry, highlighted the lack of scholarly literature addressing basic questions having to do with record companies and the processes by which they take shape. He elaborated by asserting that the existence of record companies and the processes from which they emerge are frequently taken as a point of departure in studies of the international recording industry.

In his recent book 'The Culture Business: Management Strategies for the Arts-Related Business~ Bjorkegren (1996:43) stated,

> The business strategies of arts-producing organizations tend to be 'emergent' rather than deliberate, an outcome of interaction with the environment rather than the result of internally generated business plans.

This conviction can be translated into an argument contending that the operations of record companies are unformed and any consistency that does pervade their workings is not the yield of careful planning. Support for such reasoning is provided by Jacques Attali (1985), who noted that although the music business appears to be like other consumer industries from the outside, it is "a strange industry" full of unpredictability.

Some of the most extensive literature regarding the operations of music organisations is provided by Negus (1992:vi), who declared,

> The music industry is an untidy place where working practices frequently do not fit easily into the sharp distinctions and clear-cut boundaries of organizational theory and systems analysis.

It is only when the industry is looked at from the inside that the true nature of its workings can be seen to be like no other. Negus (1996: p.36) stressed that the work of individuals in the industry could never be made to resemble automated cogs in a machine, yet he also implied that the trans-national corporations they work for, operate in a manner that has provoked the use of "non-human metaphors". In his most recent examination of the workings of the global music industry, he acknowledged the way that modern companies organise their operations and strategies

> Corporate strategy aims to control and order the unpredictable social processes and diversity of human behaviours which are condensed into notions of production and consumption and riddle the music business with uncertainties. (Negus. 1999:31)

Therefore, it would seem that although the recording industry may be the most unpredictable of its kind, there is no empirical evidence upon which to assume organisational structures do not exist. In fact many writers (Frith. 1988: Schuker. 1994: Strinati. 1995: Bennet et a!. 1993) have compared the workings of record companies to that of a production line, often referring to a constant manufacture of homogenous music product for consumption by the masses. These sentiments imply that a degree of uniformity surrounds the operations of such organisations and, thus, contradicts the belief of others that the industry remains unstructured.

Still, it remains that very little academic attention has focused upon the structure of organisations involved in the production of music and as a result, there is a scarcity of interpretations theorising the way in which record companies function. The purpose of this study is to perform an embryonic taxonomy of operations in this industry, thus, presenting new understandings of record company structure. The rationale for emerging a set of empirically constructed classifications is predominantly for self-assessment, as Slack (1997) conveyed the structural design of an organisation is the mechanism by which boundaries are set for achieving and maintaining efficient performance (Slack, 1997). Furthermore, the combination of structural and cultural awareness that forms the basis of categorisation in this paper allows the research findings to have further avail.

> The concept of culture extends ideas about resistance to change to include awareness that structures and systems embody deep-seated values that may work against change. (Hinings et al. 1996:886)

Hence, structural and cultural theories are significant in understanding an organisation's resistance to change and accordingly, may have relevance in the formation of strategy.

DESIGN ARCHETYPES.

Patterns of operation are in practice more complex than just levels of hierarchy and spans of control (Fincham and Rhodes. 1992). Organisational configurations convey the need to match detailed structures with the context in which operations are performed (Johnson & Scholes. 1993) and according to Mintzberg & Quinn (1998), undertaking this classification process helps to explain what is observed in organisations.

Slack (1997: p.68) conveyed that organisational configurations are also termed "design types" and certified their use in the generation of hypotheses and theories. An integral example of this is provided by Mintzberg's (1979) identification of five design types based on the parts of an organisation and the methods of co-ordination utilised within. These configurations have formed the basis of much discussion and supposition in more recent years (Miller & Friesen. 1980: Greenwood & Hinings. 1988; Johnson & Scholes. 1993: Slack, 1997; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998).

In contrast to the conceptually-based approach practised by Mintzberg (1979), the identification and classification of organisations can ensue from empirical analysis and this is a process more suited to the identification of groupings within the music industry. Utilising a transcendental approach to conceptualise the workings of independent record labels would be wrong, as it would limit the number of structural frameworks that could emerge.

Counterpart to the identification of design types, is the classification of music organisations into "archetypes" based on the relationship between values and structure that characterise their operation. According to Hinings and Greenwood (1988: p.8), an

archetype is "a particular composition of ideas, beliefs, and values connected to structures and systems".

The underlying principles encompassed within the apprehensions of design types and archetypes are comparable and in several instances Greenwood & Hinings (1988) suggested that the terms are interchangeable. In fact, Greenwood and Hinings (1988:297) referred to the concept of "design archetypes" which they implied is founded upon "the combination of structural coherence and underpinning interpretive schemes". By entailing an integrated investigation into the structures and cultures of music organisations it is within the fundamental nature of this study to identify a number of design archetypes. Still, in order to conduct this classification process, a detailed understanding of structural and cultural concepts is imperative.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE.

In affirming the importance of organisational design Miller (1987:7) conveyed that a company's structure "channels collaboration, specifies modes of coordination, allocates power and responsibility, and prescribes levels of formality and complexity". Thus, in determining the structure of independent record labels, it is important that all these components are effectively measured. Consideration must be given to the way in which tasks and duties are broken down and apportioned to employees, the communication networks and reporting relationships between role holders, and the co-ordinating mechanisms that prevail within an organisation.

The complexity of a record label relates to the delegation of control that pervades its day-to-day working and governs the way operations are performed. Slack (1997) expressed that this framework of authority can be identified by considering three forms of differentiation: the departmentalisation and breakdown of tasks (horizontal differentiation), the number of hierarchical levels (vertical differentiation) and the physical separation of an organisation's operations (spatial differentiation). Beneath the external identity of every record label there must lay a degree of complexity that identifies the divisional roles and responsibilities within the company.

Proclaimed within the majority of literature is a general discrimination between tall and flat structures (Handy. 1992; Marcouse and Stefanou, 1994: Pettinger. 1996: Slack. 1997). According to Pettinger (1996), the former classification is used to describe organisations wielding many hierarchical levels and small spans of control, whilst the latter refers to the opposite existence of relatively large stretches of command and few planes of authority.

The second dimension used to identify an organisation's structure is formalisation which refers to the written and unwritten mechanisms of control that govern individuals' behaviour in performing their function. In the words of Slack (1997),

> Formalization in organizations works to control the amount of discretion individuals or groups are allowed to exercise when performing their job.

Typically, record companies are believed to operate in a relaxed manner, thus evidencing low levels of formality (Straw, 1993; Negus, 1996); however, this notion can

only be appraised by considering the extent to which rules and regulations, policies and procedures and job descriptions, conventionalise their functioning.

The last dimension warranting consideration for the purpose of defining organisational structures within the recording industry, is centralisation.

> Centralization is generally an authority relationship between those in overall control of the organisation and the rest of its staff (Pettinger 1996:442)

Hence, the degree of concentricity within a record company rests upon the extent to which decision making authority is passed down from the top of the organisation to the staff members operating in various departments. In their writings, Marcouse & Stefanou (1994) stated that where the majority of decisions are made at the top of an organisation, a centralised management structure exists. Conversely, where decision making responsibility is delegated to the various divisions within a company, a decentralised management structure is inhered. Further understanding is provided by Mintzberg (1989) who defined the delegation of formal power down the hierarchy of an organisation as vertical decentralisation and the spread of formal and informal power along these levels of authority as horizontal decentralisation. A basic distinction is made between a pyramid structure, where a clear chain of command exists and orders tend to move downwards, and a matrix structure, where decision making authority is delegated and subordinates experience greater autonomy in performing their work (Marcouse & Stefanou, 1994; Ivancevich & Matteson 1993; Mullins, 1993).

The degree of centralisation that subsists within an organisation has also been directly related to the style of management that is practised within (Marcouse & Stefanou 1994). *Autocratic* managers maintain a great deal of authority and expect their orders to be implemented without question, whereas democratic managers delegate responsibilities and encourage employees to participate in the decision making process (Marcouse & Stefanou, 1994: p.101). A third type of leadership that allows employees to carry out their activities freely within a set of broad constraints has also been identified and this approach is termed "laissez-faire" (Hall. Jones & Raffo. 1993: p.4.16). These three distinct styles of management directly relate to the amount of autonomy individuals working in an organisation are afforded and can be used to help depict the structure of a record company.

The chains of command and divisions of responsibility that guide the manner in which roles are performed within an organisation are both components of structural type. Johnson and Scholes (1993) liken these structures to skeletons, due to the fact that they facilitate certain activities while restricting others, and provide an organisation with its general shape. Burns and Stalker (1968) fathered the distinction between organic and mechanistic organisational structures and this separation has since received much attention (Bennet, 1996. Mintzberg. 1989: Pettinger. 1996: Ivancevich & Matteson. 1993: Johnson and Scholes. 1993). According to Pettinger (1996), an organic structure is characterised by few divisions, low differentiation decentralised decision making and informal patterns of operation. Whilst an organisation bearing a mechanistic structure endures specialised divisions, operational differentiation of tasks centralised decision making and a strict chain of command. The two forms of structure are not mutually exclusive; rather they lie at either end of a scale. Torkildsen (1994:100) stated,

The organisation structures used in the delivery of leisure services fill along a continuum between a mechanistic model which is rigidly structured at one extreme, to an organic model which is flexibly structured at the other.

The notion that an individual organisation can embrace both forms of structure was upheld by the findings of Burns and Stalker (1968), and it is now recognised that separate departments within an organisation may exploit distinctive operating structures (De Wit and Meyer. 1994). Such phenomena is best understood by regarding the structure of each division as an accomplishment of its members, rather than a prescribed set of instructions handed down from above. Ranson et al. (1980) manifested their support for this ideology by stating that a structural framework is not just an abstract chart, but one of the crucial mechanisms by which individuals perpetuate their power and control. Based upon this conviction, it would follow that the greater an organisation's membership, the higher the abundance of opinions relating to the way it should function. Hence, the scale of operations being performed in a company places natural pressures upon the way it can be structured.

Accordingly, one of the most influential factors upon an organisation's functional arrangements is its size. The first piece of research to identify this relationship was carried out by the Aston group (Pugh et a!., 1969) and provides conclusive evidence that the degree of specialisation formalisation and standardisation *within* an organisation increases with size. The convictions of Mintzberg (1989:106) run parallel with these findings, as he stated.

The larger an organization, the more elaborate its structure: that is, the more specialized its jobs and units and the more developed its administrative components.

The number of levels of hierarchy in an organisation, along with the extent to which it is horizontally differentiated, has also been related to the magnitude of its operations (Slack 1997). Thus, the distribution of authority is affected by size. This was confirmed by Carlisle (1974:15) who identified the scale of an organisation's operations as one of the 13 factors of importance when "determining the need for a centralized or decentralized structure". From these understandings it can be conceived that most small businesses utilise a low level of complexity and formalisation, while embracing a high degree of centralisation. Thus if these patterns of circumstance are reflected throughout the music industry, independent record labels will procure a much less sophisticated and less formal way of working than the major organisations.

Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the real workings of a record company are apprehensible merely from the framework of authority prescribed by its principals. Only by examining the "informal structure" or the "substructure" of what people actually do, can a fundamental understanding of organisational structure be gained (Ranson et al. 1980:2).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE.

During a detailed study into the formation of organisational structures, Ranson et al (1980) found that "prescribed frameworks stand in a rather superficial relationship to the

day-to-day work of an organization". The nature of their findings was advanced by the assertion that structural arrangements are only given coherence by the values and beliefs that underpin organisational culture and this view is shared (Tushman & Romanelli 1985; Kilmann. Saxton & Serpa. 1985: Pettigrew, 1985).

According to Deal & Kennedy (1988), the basis of an organisation's culture is the set of values that guide the day-to-day behaviour of its employees. Parallel to this is Greenwood and Hinings' (1988:295) representation of structures as *"reflexive* expressions of intentions aspirations and meanings". By adopting these convictions, it can be conceived that an organisation's working practices reflect the shared understandings of its members. Thus, the structural framework a record company displays is only effectual if supported by an adhering culture. It is this interrelationship between structure and culture that validates examination of the shared beliefs that are held within an independent record label.

Before a record company's culture can be inferred, the manner in which values and meanings are manifested within organisations must be understood. This is perhaps best explained in the work of Deal & Kennedy (1988) who originated a list of *'The Elements of Culture',* which included rites and rituals, values and heroes. The writers further advance understanding by describing organisations that enjoy a strong culture as,

> Companies that have cultivated their individual identities by shaping values, making heroes, spelling out rites and rituals, and acknowledging the cultural network...(1988:15)

The classification of an organisation's culture as strong or weak affiliates directly with a distinction of thick or thin. In discussing the importance of shared values within sport organisations, Slack (1997:276) remarked.

> A thick culture helps hold an organization together, by making frequent use of stories, rituals, slogans, and so on. Also, employees will be recruited into the organization because they are seen to fit with the culture that exists.

Although there is vet to be exhaustive examination of the internal workings of music organisations, the corporate cultures of several major record labels have undergone investigation. Negus' (1999:20) recent study of corporate cultures in the music industry concluded that the working practices of record companies should not be regarded as being governed by structure and instead he claimed,

> ..the activities involved in producing popular music should be thought of as meaningful practices which are interpreted and understood in different ways (often within the same office) and given various meanings in specific social situations.

Nonetheless, he proceeded by questioning the existence of strong cultures within the music business and expressed that rather than being guided by *"coherent and rigid belief systems"* the activities of record company staff are more likely to derive from their customary behaviour (1992:70). Even after conducting the most extensive research of its kind, Negus remains unconfounded in his view that shared objectives are not

commonplace in the industry. Still, the enquires of Ryan and Peterson (1982) provide support for the prevalence of culture in the record industry by identifying a set of product guided objectives, which facilitate the synerlogical harmonisation of operations.

So, it would seem that similar uncertainty surrounds the question of culture, as pervades the issue of structure within the industry. Therefore, not only is investigation focused upon the frameworks of operation within independent record labels, but the shared values and understandings of its members as well. It seems inapt that, despite knowing of their importance so little attention has been drawn to structures and cultures of this group of music organisations. The structure of record companies especially those operating independently appears to be an area that is deprived of adequate study, in contrast to the extensive research carried out into the aesthetics of popular music (Frith, 1988: Beadle. 1993, Schuker. 1994; Swiss, Sloop & Herman, 1998). Thus, it is the objective of this paper to develop a new understanding of music organisations, by uncovering the structures and cultures that pervade their workings, thus, helping to define contemporary processes of music production.

METHOD.

Rather than endeavouring to discover new knowledge pertaining to the music industry as a whole the objective of this study was to gain a *holistic* overview of a single sector of its operations. Due to the significance of the role they play in music creation and the fact that their workings have been a point of departure in the majority of academic studies, independent record companies procured the focus of this paper.

Research Paradigm

The purpose of investigation, more definitively, was to examine the significance of structure and culture in the music industry, by exploring the working practices of a group of independent record labels. From these findings, the goal was to develop a number of design archetypes and perform the initial stages of taxonomy of the independent sector.

Traditionally, a quantitative approach is taken to create taxonomies of structure, but since this was being aligned with an understanding of culture, a qualitative research paradigm was most suited to this study. In comprehending the shared values and meanings that shape an organisation's culture, it is imperative to gather data relating to people's feelings and perceptions within the context in which they are experienced. Accordingly, a *naturalistic* approach was adopted, which Wilcott (1982) pronounced is characteristic of the qualitative paradigm and many of the philosophical underpinnings of *phenomenology* were adhered.

The requirement to embrace a phenomenological position was also exacted by the nature of the study, as the number and form of design archetypes within a set of organisations can be ascertained only through close attention to the meanings which organisational actors give to their situation (Zucker 1984). Hence, in order to analytically conceptualize the patterns of operation in a group of independent record companies, the subjective and multiple realities of organisational members must be respected.

The term "interpretive-descriptive research" has been used to refer to this type of exploratory study, where people's words and meanings form the basis for analysis (Belenkv 1992): however, expressions of an evaluative nature also arose within the emergent research design that was espoused in this study.

Sampling

Demonstrating the variation in structural design and culture that depicts the independent sector of the record industry as a whole, requires the working practices of every organisation type to be considered. Although it was outside the scope of investigation to collect empirical data for a multivariate analysis of this size, a similar methodology was feasible on a smaller scale.

Rather than attempting to analyse the workings of an unmanageable number of organisations, a narrow representative of seven independent record labels was used to provide a more pronounced foundation of understanding. Due to the emergent research design employed in this study, the composition of this sample was not entirely prescribed; rather it evolved over the course of investigation. Nonetheless, an initial set of independent labels were contacted to begin the stages of analysis.

A group of fifteen organisations were selected from a comprehensive directory of record company addresses compiled by Retail Entertainment Data Publishing Limited (1996). The criteria upon which these were elected, was the independent nature of their channels of distribution which in other words, meant that none of the major record companies in the industry had been appointed to circulate their records. In constructing the sample, any entrepreneurial record companies operated and owned by one individual alone, were carefully avoided, as these would provide little scope for analysis in terms of organisational structure and culture. Hence, due to the limited number of participants suitable for exploration, non probability judgement sampling was used to form an initial sample of independent labels.

Additionally, a boundary had to be set around the area of accessibility feasible for investigation due the time and money constraints placed upon this study. This was held to be a seventy mile radius around the city of Milton Keynes and, consequently, the type of sampling used to select this group of potential participants can be deemed to have accommodated to a limited degree, facets of convenience.

According to their ability to provide the information that was sought, a full-time professional member of staff from within each label was forwarded a letter asking for their assistance in compiling this research. After the period of a week, a telephone call was made to each of these subjects to determine their willingness to help. From the original sample, two organisations agreed to provide information relating to the structural and cultural aspects of their working and these labels were duly researched.

Following these initial stages of data collection, it became clearer which independent record labels could be researched to provide a more valid representation of industry practice. Once again, purposive sampling ensued to assemble a set of organisations suitable for analysis and, accordingly, letters were sent to potential respondents within

each of these establishments. As before, the whole sample did not respond positively, but further data location was made possible in two of the independent labels.

The remainder of the sample was formed for the purpose of gaining maximum variation and, accordingly, three organisations were selected due to their perceived disparity. This approach of purposefully selecting organisations and people, acknowledges the complexity that characterises human and social phenomena (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As the aim of this qualitative research was not generalisability, maximum variation sampling could he used to provide a fuller understanding of working practices in the independent sector.

Data Collection

The sources of primary information in this paper were the elected members of staff in each of the seven independent record labels. In order to gain a full understanding of the meaning of what would be said, in-depth interviews were the chosen method of data collection. Bogdan and Bikien (1982) suggested that this technique is of particular importance in gaining "participant perspectives", hence, providing justification for its use in this study. Accordingly an interview was carried out in each of the seven representative organisations and these lasted an average of seventy five minutes.

In formulating a typology of business owners and their growth Chell and Haworth (1996: p.98) explained that "the sufficiency of the evidence to enable the categorisation process to take place will always be a matter of judgement". However, to reduce the selective nature of this process the framework of investigation that was implemented in this study was developed around the structural and cultural understandings of many organisation theorists (Slack, 1997: Hinings et al 1996: Miller & Friesen, 1980; Ranson et al., 1980; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Van de Ven, 1976). Principally, the concepts of complexity, formalisation and centralisation were enquired to capture the structural arrangements in each organisation and, similarly, evidence of philosophies, role models, objectives and routines to gather an understanding of culture.

Nonetheless, the data collection method employed in this study was not entirely structured. Great importance was placed upon gathering unplanned and unprompted responses as ultimately, this would be the context within which informants would express true meaning. Rather than following a strict line of questioning, an informal conversation was initiated to allow respondents room to manoeuvre and convey their understandings within the context in which they were felt. Mishler (1986:vii) expressed that within the context of qualitative research, the purpose of interviewing is to inaugurate discussion.

> At its heart is the proposition that an interview is a form of discourse. Its particular features reflect the distinctive structure and aims of interviewing, namely that it is discourse shaped and organized by asking and answering questions. An interview is a joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other.

As a solution to the problem of fragmented data collection that can arise from having a large number of research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the interviews were based around the key topics that formulated the study's conceptual framework. Within

each of these areas a set of broad sub questions was devised, supported by a series of directional prompts. This framework of investigation, referred to as an "interview guide" (Patton, 1990), is shown in Appendix A. Although question ordering was not a significant factor in this study, a degree of reasoning supported the grouping of interview topics, used to guide enquiry.

Initially, respondents were asked about their profession, as this would allow them to relax and get used to the idea of being interviewed. Subsequently, investigation was divided into two subject areas relating to structural and cultural parameters. Due to its factual nature, it was most appropriate that structure be the first interview topic to be addressed and the more subjective responses demanded by the section on culture, left until the later stages of enquiry. Still, the process of data accumulation remained semi-structured, as questions were only asked if they related to a topic that had not already been covered and, in the same manner direction was only accorded where a specific issue had been neglected. It should be noted that after the first interview was conducted further matters of interest arose and, consequently, a number of sub questions were added to the interview schedule, to ensure these matters were explored within the remainder sample. These supplementary enquires are denoted in *Appendix A* by the use of italics.

It has already been expressed that social phenomena, such as organisational culture, can only be appraised by comprehending people's experience within the environment in which it was felt. Therefore, in line with the sentiments of Maykut and Morehouse (1994: p.45), who stated "Personal meaning is tied to context", data collection took place in each of the respondent's natural settings.

Due to the qualitative nature of research, each interview was audio-taped and, subsequently transcribed on computer into eighty one pages of typed rich text. Simultaneously, a limited amount of data relating to the expressions, gestures and actions of informants was accumulated in the form of field notes and would be used to ensure respondent's comments were not taken out of context during analysis. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality in exchange for their co-operation and, accordingly, their identity and the name of the organisation for which they worked, were altered in transcription of the data.

Constraints

The greatest constraint faced within this study was having to utilise a combined data collection process for investigating structural and cultural phenomena. In an investigation into values and organisational structure, Hinings et al (1996) practiced two independent accumulation procedures which allowed them to gather information relating to the structure and culture of a sample of organisations separately. Due to the strict constraints on time and money that surrounded the data collection stages of this paper, a similar methodology could not be exploited and information relating to the structure and culture of independent record labels was, therefore, gathered simultaneously.

Similar restrictions on financial resources and the projects duration also meant that only a single method of data collection could be utilised within this study. Although the interviewing process that was incurred unveiled adequate structural and cultural data,

additional methodologies, such as participant observation, could have been employed to compliment the findings and, thus, allow triangulation to occur.

Further constraint upon investigation was also felt in the accumulation of a valid sample. It became clear that due to the tightness of operations and their desire to avoid examination, many record company staff members did not have the time or inclination to assist with this study. A prolonged period of label selection was sustained as a result.

Data Analysis

As design archetypes would emerge from empirical investigation, great significance was placed upon the inductive stages of analysis. It was determined that the framework for qualitative data analysis provided by Miles and Huberman (1994:4), referred to as "transcendental realism", would be most appropriate to this study, due to the need to expose connections in social phenomena. Accordingly, this meant that the stages of data reduction and data display were interlinked with data collection hence analysis would begin at an early stage.

The first activity to be performed was an introductory phase of data reduction. From the study's conceptual framework, a provisional list of first-order codes were contrived for the purpose of segmenting an initial collection of data. The labels were structure, culture and organisation and these were used for attaching meanings to this first interview transcript. However, due to the emergent design and context-sensitive nature of investigation, this early anal sis caused new areas of interest to arise and, as a consequence, the predefined system of coding was revised to include additional tags of industry and majors. Accordingly, when the remainder of the data was collected it was summarised using this extended framework of coding. It should be noted that not every section of text was coded, as some had no relevance to the research focus.

From the first-level coding that had been performed, two new bodies of text were compiled for each organisation, using computer retrieval. Classifications were to be evolved on the basis of structural and cultural evidence, thus, it was convenient to separate data for further analysis. Still, many paragraphs in the interview transcripts were a candidate for more than one code and, appropriately, they were included in both pieces of text.

As the salient concepts relating to structure and culture had been identified and clearly assembled a higher level of abstraction could be applied to the data. From the stages of analysis that had already occurred, a framework of higher-order coding naturally emerged. Patterns in the structural data were coded complexity, formalisation or centralisation and, in a like manner, for cultural data modes of operation, cultural carriers, nature of people and environmental relationship. Simultaneous to this second-level coding, the operation of memoing was performed, which Glaser (1978:83) stated is "the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding". Notes were made within the margins of each text to mark any theoretical concepts that emerged.

The many propositional statements and ideas that were induced through a combination of data reduction and data display had to be rigorously and systematically brought together to establish a number of design archetypes that would reflect the structural

and cultural aspects of operation within the sample of independent record labels. Although interpretation and conceptualisation took place throughout analysis, the classifications formed were not verified until the data collection and analysis stages were complete.

Though no specific program designed for the analysis of qualitative data was utilized in this study, many benefits were gained from the use of computer software in the transcription of interviews. Tesch (1989) pointed out that computer-aided analysis can reduce the overall analysis time, by allowing refinement and revision through each stage of examination and facilitating the verification of conclusions. That was the case in this research, as computer use aided the data reduction process and allowed different forms of data display to occur without having to retype information.

DISCUSSION.

The purpose of investigation was to develop a new understanding of contemporary processes of music production. By performing an embryonic taxonomy of the record industry's independent sector, an empirically constructed system of classification would emerge.

The working practices of organisations functioning in the music industry are seldom related to the concepts and principles of organisation theory. Few empirical studies have been conducted into record company practice and, consequently, there is a lack of scholarly literature addressing basic questions of music production (Straw, 1993). However, Hinings et al (1996) suggested an organisation's true nature of working can be depicted through aspects of structure and an awareness of culture. The classification of working practices along these lines is referred to as the concept of "design archetypes" (Hinings and Greenwood 1988:297) and by analysing the operations of a group of independent record labels, a number of these could be derived.

As organisational structure and culture facilitate the achievement of objectives and strategy (Dawson 1996), the inauguration of a number of classifications could be useful in determining limitations upon performance. In fact, most contingency research findings identify a link between structure and performance and, accordingly, these concepts are assumed to have causality (Dawson 1996). By developing a number of design archetypes to mark the structural and cultural affections of record company practice, the reasons why some organisations function more effectively than others can begin to be understood. Thus, the findings of this paper help managers in the expanding music industry understand structural and cultural arrangements, which can help identify constraints on performance.

AN EMBRYONIC TAXONOMY OF THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR.

By emulating the initial stages of the formation of a taxonomy, three design archetypes have been contrived based on the structural and cultural attributes of a group of independent record labels. These are the Unified Fraternity, Closed Colony and the

Nuclear Family. The generic profile of each of these design archetypes is outlined in Table 1.1 and thus, provides a useful means of comparison.

	UNIFIED FRATERNITY	CLOSED COLONY	NUCLEAR FAMILY
STRUCTURAL PARAMETERS			
Complexity	Low	Moderate	High
Vertical Differentiation	Low	Moderate	High
Horizontal Differentiation	Low	Moderate	High
Spatial Differentiation	Low	Moderate	High
Formalisation	Low	Moderate	High
Centralisation	Low	Moderate	High
Vertical Decentralisation	High	Moderate	Low
Horizontal Decentralisation	High	Moderate	Moderate
Leadership	Laissez-faire	Democratic	Autocratic
CULTURAL PARAMETERS			
Status	Singular	Singular & Multiple	Multiple
Manifestation	Constant	Frequent	Intermittent
Values	Shared	Adopted	Fragmented
Beliefs	Free	Conditioned	Controlled
Measure of Success	Long-term objectives	Medium-term objectives	Short-term objectives
Focus	Organisational	Divisional	Individual

Table 1.1
An Embryonic Taxonomy of Independent Record Labels

The first division of the following discussion embodies a discrete exposition of these three frames of classification and presents the contrasting structural and cultural attributes that characterise their working. A visual aid to each model is provided at the end of there analysis. As a logical progression, the second section compares and contrasts the fundamental affections of these groupings and considers their value in categorising music organisations in general.

DESIGN ARCHETYPES OF INDEPENDENT RECORD LABELS

The Unified Fraternity

Within the independent sector of the record industry, there are a number of labels that function with little or no prescribed structure. Rather than being devised, a coherent system of operation naturally emerges as a result of the strong culture that exists within the organisation. This archetypal form is labelled The Unified Fraternity.

As its name suggests, the most evident quality of this cultural design type is the uniformity and companionship that exists between its members. Accordingly a prescribed framework of operation is neither exacted or embraced within such labels,

as the shared understandings of the workforce spontaneously enfold decrees of structure. For example, rather than being an afterthought, the organisational philosophy of a unified fraternity becomes its fundamental preoccupation and the set of values this contains provide a sense of guidance and direction for all members of the organisation.

The characteristics of a unified fraternity were exhibited by a small independent record label called Beta Records. The dominant application is the running of a singles club, which involves the release of a record once a month to a far-reaching body of subscribers. In talking to one of the members of staff about the ethos at Beta Records, they remarked,

> There is quite a strong philosophy behind the singles club. We did actually think about trying to write something at the beginning of this year and it might sound a bit poncey but devise like a mission statement just to kind of get across the idea of the singles club. The idea of the label really is that it is a singles club. You know, even if a band's only got a couple of songs we'll put it out, 'cause it's trying to reinvent the idea of the single. Team Member, Beta Records

This system of belief is universally adopted within the label, as everyone testifies to the notion that releasing commendable music is far more important than commercial success and re-establishing the 'single' as a credible format is an aspiration that is commonly shared. This aligned perseverance towards an ultimate goal is one of the distinguishing qualities of the unified fraternity and, more often than not, this collective pursuit centres around creative liberty. Everybody within the organisation carries the same belief that what they are doing is far more than just a job rather an entire way of life, and it is this culture that spawns the existence of such a concerted effort.

> The reason I'm here is because Beta Records is really exciting and still growing, it's like its something to be part of.. We all share the same thoughts and feelings and that helps in working towards a goal. Team Member, Beta Records

Individuals are proud to be a part of an organisation which they regard as something special and as a result, there is a great sense of loyalty and devotion to the common good.

The congenial nature of the unified fraternity is also reflected throughout its day-to-day workings, as there is a tendency for the entire work force to operate as a team. Specialisation and standardisation are not commonly associated with effective performance instead a system of highly integrated functions is conceived, as the respondent at Beta Records expressed,

> We look at each project individually. For example, for certain bands it might be better for Chloe to deal with them rather than Mack because of any relationships or whatever that will be there. We kind of concentrate our view on a project by project basis. It's a bit complicated because although we have all got separate jobs, we all kind of work together. Team Member, Beta Records

Similar sentiments were echoed in Delta Records, a second independent record label displaying the features of a unified fraternity,

> Everybody in the office has got a specific thing that they do everyday but we can chop and change and you basically do what needs to be done. So there is no real specifics. Staff Member, Delta Records

Hence, the structures of organisations within this design archetype are characterised by low levels of compartmentalisation and, although task differentiation may be engaged to a lesser extent positional roles shift according to a project's requirements. The best way to describe this method of operation is as a 'resource pool' where individuals combine their proficiencies to create an open and expanded source of functions. A diagrammatic representation of this structure is shown in Figure 1.1. Each member of the team has specific skills upon which others rely however their activities are not confined to this area of expertise as additional roles are performed according to what is demanded. It should be noted that each individual's core function appears in the resource pool because they are not always the performer of this role. Hence any specialisation that does occur has not been planned as one team member disclosed,

> It's kind of evolved and basically everyone has kind of fallen into categories that they're best at and that they like doing. Jobs become sort of separated out according to what people are good at and people's individual skills. Team Member, Beta Records

In the same way that functions are performed as a team with very little horizontal differentiation, everybody in the organisation is jointly involved in the decision making process. Accordingly, those labels that fall into the unified fraternity archetype display highly decentralised structures in which power and responsibility is shared. Individual roles are performed with great autonomy and discretion, nonetheless the whole organisation can still be seen to work as one. Objectives are set in a consensual manner as everybody respects the opinions of each other and it is this egalitarian culture that, characteristically, shapes the organisation's structure. One member of a unified fraternity revealed,

> There's a managerial level in the fact that two people basically own the label. So therefore, they're the bosses and everybody else is underneath them, but even within that they don't act like bosses. They don't treat us like kids; you just get on with it. If I want to do it, I can do it. Obviously, I need to get the backing of everybody in the office, but if I totally believe in something then they trust my judgement to be able to do it. Staff Member Delta Records

Managerial levels are rare, but where in existence are extremely blurred. Within these structures coherence is achieved through socialisation as opposed to formal policies and procedures, and jobholders experience only unobtrusive, or cultural, forms of control (Dawson, 1996). Everybody is there because they love what they do and it is commonplace for corporate objectives to be translated into personal ambitions and vice-versa. Hence formalisation has never been an issue as a relaxed atmosphere is sustained without lacking co-ordination. The resolution of conflict also lacks protocol, but because relationships are based upon friendship and coalition synthesis is achieved naturally through the label's cultural network. Therefore, it follows that only those individuals enfolding the same set of values and meaning are ever considered to be a part of the unified fraternity.

> The people we'd employ would have to share our philosophy. We wouldn't take on someone that wants to work for a label fill stop, it would have to be someone that wanted to work for Beta Records and someone who'd be interested in or skilled in an area. Team Member. Beta Records

The selection of staff is one way in which the organisation's culture is maintained and, from a rudimentary perspective, could be perceived as a mechanism of co-ordination and control.

Figure 1.1
The Operational Pattern of the United Fraternity
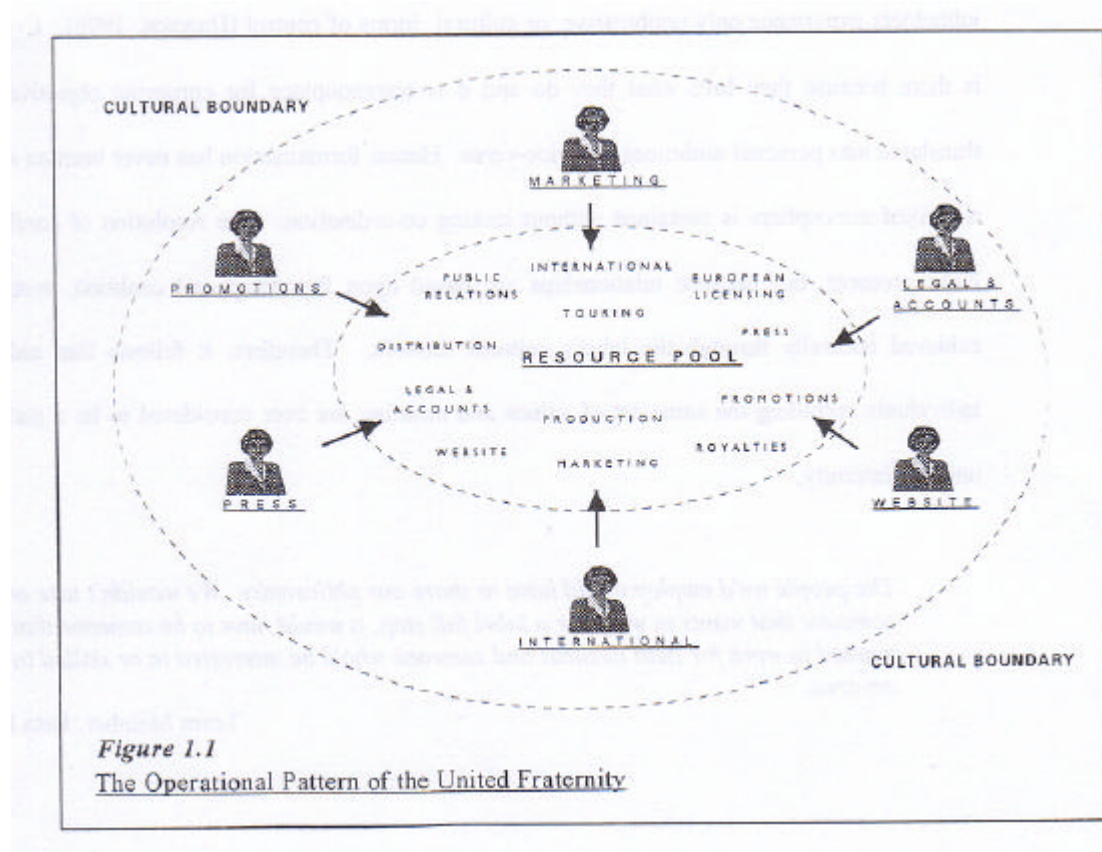
The working practices of this archetypal form are marked by low levels of complexity formalisation and centralisation and as such exhibit many of the features of an organic structure (Burns and Stalker, 1968). Similarly, the nuclear family archetype can be related in many ways to Minzberg's (1979) adhocracy. However, record company operations are not easily described in terms of an operating core, middle line, strategic apex, techno structure and support staff and. therefore, this design type is difficult to relate. Unlike previous classifications, the unified fraternity archetype combines concepts of structure with organisational values and accordingly, it is predominantly due to the existence of thick culture that many independent record labels can function in this way.

The Closed Colony

As its name suggests, *The Closed Colony* classification is used to categorise groups of independent record labels that function as one. Two of the seven organisations under investigation. Exodus Records and Ginger Records, both separately form part of a larger independent music organisation and rather than functioning alone, operate as a

division of this order. Traditionally, the definition of a colony is "persons of one nationality or occupation etc. forming community" (Swaimell 1986:102). Hence, the phenomenon of independent record labels operating together to form a more significant music identity is analogous with this representation.

Every division within the colony (i.e. each label) procures a separate identity and to a large degree is able to oversee the performance of its own operations. Still, the purpose of forming community is to share resources, both financial and human, and so a number of central functions are combined. The Label Manger at Exodus Records, accordingly spoke of a divisionalised structure.

> So, we have, I suppose, what you'd call a sort of central group resource of Promotions. Marketing and Production people and they work sometimes for Exodus Records. When they've got their Exodus Records hats on but other times they work for the other labels in the network. Label Manger. Exodus Records

So, each division tends to act separately of one another although there may be times when collaboration is implemented for mutual gain. Individual labels within the group may be characterised by different forms of structure and leadership, but what they have in common is that they all rely on a number of colonised operations. This central group of resources can be termed the *community chest* and divisions will borrow from it functions that they themselves do not have the manpower to perform. At this stage, the closed colony archetype can be seen to mimic many of the structural features of Mintzberg's Divisionalized Form (1999). However, where it differs from combine forces to achieve greater status in just one area of operation.

The degree of heterogeneity that characterises the closed colony's structure is also evident within its culture, as each label has a natural tendency to cultivate a set of values and meanings around which its staff function. It was expressed that this meant great importance had to be placed upon the communication channels linking divisions otherwise dissonance would result.

> There can be friction between the Promotions and Marketing people and the .4 & R staff So, I think the answer, and what we've recently decided to implement, is a situation where you have regular company meetings in which the A & R department and the Marketing and Promotions departments come together and discuss what they expect' to achieve on a release. Label Manager. Ginger Records

> At the end of the week we have what's called a 'promo' meeting where we all sit down with the people who do the radio and TV the press and the marketing and increasing/v the Internet stuff and we talk about what we've achieved. That's how we kind of if you like, keep tabs on what people are doing.... The flow of information is real important. It's really important to make sure that people know what's going on, otherwise they can't do their jobs. Label Manager. Exodus Records

Nevertheless, as in any community, the behaviour of its members becomes conditioned and although it may not be the intention of colony leaders to create a set of

homogenous divisions, communal values will inevitably appear. One division leader declared.

> We hope to share an ethos to a certain extent, that independence is, per Se, a good thing and the best way to make creative music is to do it without having corporate paymasters breathing down your neck and looking at the balance sheets all the time. Label Manager. Exodus Records

There is never any great value diversity within these groups of labels because those members with alternative agendas will ultimately leave the colony. Hence, to a certain degree there are habitual patterns that must be recognised and adopted by colonists in order to be accepted. Once again, the idea of a community chest can be used to depict the way in which divisions avail only certain aspects of communal culture.

One manifestation of culture that pervades the workings of every closed colony is the great admiration and respect that is held for its leaders. Within each group of independent record labels there is customarily one individual that keeps a paternal and avuncular eye over colonial functions and because of their intelligence and success, they become a role model within the organisation. In talking about the Chairman of the Exodus Group of Labels, the manager of Exodus Records said,

> He's an incredibly intelligent and successful man and that's why he's been doing it for twenty five years and will no doubt be doing it for another twenty or whatever. We're all happy to take advice from him and he's happy to offer it whenever we think we might need it.

The respondent reveals the closeness of relationships between the group and it's leader and suggests that although some centralisation takes place, operations are performed informally. Despite the existence of a small number of hierarchical levels, democracy is still enacted and. befittingly, this characterises every group of labels within the closed colony archetype. At the same time as operating collectively, the community is separated to aid the release of entrepreneurial flare. It was attested that those who show little ambition or drive within a closed colony, may not always be received.

The Nuclear Family

It is increasingly the case that many independent record labels are performing their operations under the watchful eye of a parent organisation. Although a great majority of these may argue that their operations are very much a separate entity, typically such arrangements involve the provision of human resources and funding. Hence, the Nuclear Family, like the Closed Colony is an archetypal form that describes an organisation to which an independent record label forms a part rather than the company itself. This may contradict Burnett's (1996) notions of independence, but based on the channels of distribution that are exploited the classification still applies according to others (Negus. 1996).

In comparison to others in the industry, the structural frameworks of those independent record labels forming part of a nuclear family are complex. Moderately high levels of horizontal and vertical differentiation provide such companies with a network of

hierarchical levels and spans of control. Typically, these managerial grades are a representation of the length of time individuals have stayed with the organisation and thus often portray a chain of descending wisdom. Nevertheless, the formal channels of communication inferred by these structures are not the only form of communion. Like in any ménage, individuals have contact with members of alternative generations though within the nuclear family this tends not to be constant.

Befitting with the analogy of a family, organisations displaying this form consist of a number of sister corporations which frequently operate in diversified markets, obviously one being music. There is constant flux in terms of its structure, as operations shrink and grow according to the prosperity of each family member. For instance, where the activities of an independent label are largely accruing, a new division may be spawned to cope with this expansion and the organisation's structure of a nuclear family is naturally arising. It was revealed that the propagation of some independent record labels is contrived by a parent organisation

> I mean, the other thing is, when the company was set up it was to be on one level a small 'indie', vibe, enthusiastic company, but also a company that had a structure and, on a financial level, was properly run and had that infrastructure behind it. Rather than being a little vibey company that actually, from a business sense, isn't together or a big company that's a huge business but maybe losses a bit of its creative edge. So, the idea is that hopefully it's the best of both worlds. You have to be careful though because sometimes it can become the worst of both worlds. General Manager. Foxtrot Records

Here, the respondent suggests that the clear plans that were formed around the operation of Foxtrot Records can be an aid and hindrance at different times.

Characteristically, the structure of a nuclear family is prescribed, a process which can be termed family planning. Still, it is often the case that a label's expansion or reduction is shaped by necessity, rather than a calculated programme of manoeuvre, as the General Manager at Foxtrot Records went on to convey,

> I mean, at this company we had twice as many people here, probably, two years ago and so a lot of it has come out of necessity. If you 'ye got less people you've got to look at new solutions and so there are now people that share a function. General Manager. Foxtrot Records
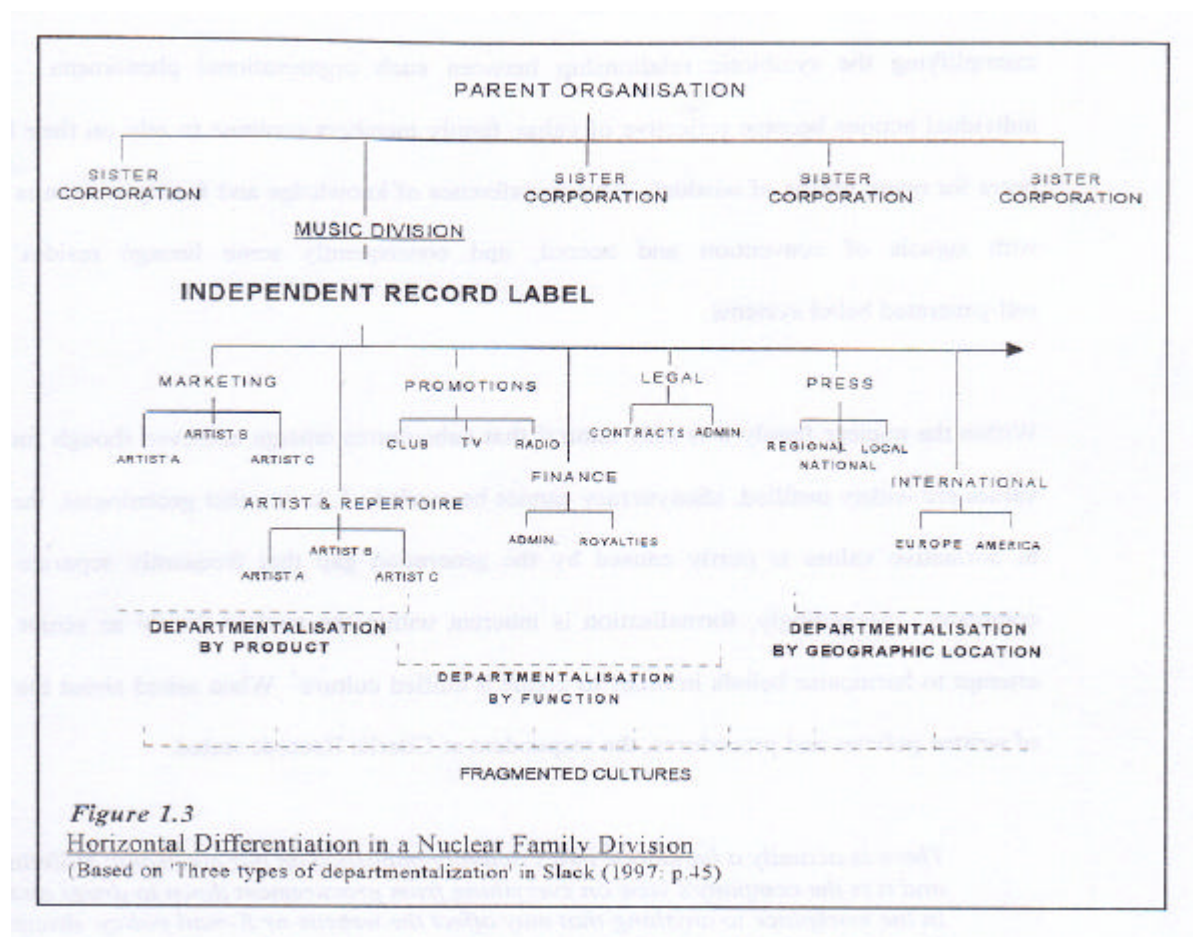
Complexity is also increased by the spatial differentiation caused by the array of corporations genetically linked to the label, i.e. extended family, and the finer these are diffused, the greater the intricacy of the entire organisation (Hall et al., 1977). According to Slack (1997), this physical separation often carries problems of communication, co-ordination and control.

One of the most distinguishing features of any label performing its functions as a family member is the alternative structures found within its departments. It was recognised by De Wit and Meyer (1994) that separate areas of application within an organisation may exhibit distinctive methods of operation and this notion is upheld by the characteristics of companies within the nuclear family. Although a label's activities are horizontally differentiated by its managers, the level of functional specialisation that pervades is a

decision that is made by the head of each department. As the Office Manager at Charlie Records expressed, this can result in many patterns of operation.

> When an artist has been signed they will he given a specific Product Manager in Marketing who will specifically work with that act. On the International side of things they will also then be assigned a Product Manager, who'll then work their product abroad. Then, you've got people like the Promotions team who obviously just then work the whole lot, because all our Promotions people, with the exception of one guy. Are actually all out in the regions. So, they work TJ" and radio in regions and then we have the Wand radio promotions for central London based out of this office.

Figure 1.3 shows the three types of departmentalisation that are commonplace within the workings of independent record labels operating within this context. Furthermore, although it has been simplified, this table of hierarchy goes some way to showing the distinctive tall structure of the nuclear family.

Figure 1.3
Horizontal Differentiation in a Nuclear Family Division
(Based on 'Three types of departmentalization' in Slack (1997: p.45)

Just as department heads determine the amount of horizontal and vertical differentiation that pervades their operations, so too do they decide the level of discretion that is afforded to their staff. Consequently whether the functioning of the label as a whole is centralised or decentralised is greatly influenced by the form of leadership that these managers choose to adopt. However, the most resounding impact is felt from above as one respondent conveyed,

> They do actually pass down quite a lot of tablets in stone from above and because they are involved with things like people's mortgages and pensions, things are very grown up. Office Manager. Charlie Records

The nuclear family is marked by variant forms of control at alternative hierarchical levels. At the very top of the organisation a fundamentally bureaucratic regime is exercised while nearer the bottom, especially within its record label, working practices are more democratised. Evidently, the operations of independent record companies surrounded by such structure remain naturally relaxed but still it is quintessential of their parent organisation to display many features of a mechanistic structure (Bums and Stalker 1968).

Disparity between administrative levels is not confined to structure, as organisations that fall within this design archetype exhibit multiple and fragmented cultures. Hence, it can be minded that the structural and cultural parameters of the nuclear family are one and the same. Subcultures emerge as a consequence of family members acting independently and these like-minded groups of staff begin to originate their own understandings and systems of belief. Distinctively, this cultural fragmentation traces the departmentalisation that composes the organisation's structure thus exemplifying the symbiotic relationship between such organisational phenomena. Although individual actions become reflective of value, family members continue to rely on their hereditary peers for many tokens of wisdom. This transference of knowledge and family custom is ingrained with signals of convention and accord, and consequently some lineage resides in these self-generated belief systems.

Within the nuclear family it is only natural that subcultures emerge and even though fundamental values are widely instilled, idiosyncrasy cannot be evaded. Like in other genealogies, the variation in normative values is partly caused by the generation gap that frequently separate levels of command. Accordingly, formalisation is inherent within the nuclear family as senior members attempt to harmonise beliefs in order to create a unified culture. When asked about the existence of written policies and procedures, the respondent at Charlie Records stated.

> There is actually a handbook that's actually published on our electronic bulletin board and it is the company's view on everything from procurement down to drugs and smoking in the workplace to anything that may affect the website or E-mail policy, discipline and how its carried out, holiday, sickness, everything. Its about the day-to-day life. Office Manager. Charlie Records

This abundance of formality exists to combat the philosophical divide naturally engendered within a fragmented culture. However, Feldman (1986) attested that differences may exist between the way in which separate parts of an organisation react to a culture of control and, consequently rather than closing the situational gap between subcultures, the formalisation within a nuclear family may cause this to be advanced.

Rules and procedures are not the only way in which an organisation's separated divisions are mindfully brought together. People from all subcultures unite as one at times of celebration, such as Christmas and Birthdays or when an artist reaches a certain level of success. It is at times like these that shared values are most prevailing and it is commonplace for senior family members to try and influence the paths of their

relatives while they are together. Still when the revelry is over individuals return to their secluded functions and, notably, perform operations in line with their own system of belief, rather than those of others.

The nuclear family archetype is a unique classification in that it simultaneously depicts structural and cultural arrangements. The structure of those organisations that fall within this category may be compared to the divisionalised form (Mintzberg, 1979) nonetheless, the concepts of this design type do not entirely converge. Dawson (1996) acknowledged that an intrinsic feature of Mintzberg's structural configuration is that control is largely exercised through the standardisation of output, but for the nuclear family this not the case. Independent record labels are constantly needing to adapt to changes in the market and, therefore music cannot be produced in a systematic fashion (Riordan. 1988). Accordingly, the nuclear family archetype characterises independent record labels that form part of a structurally complex and culturally fragmented organisation significantly co-ordinated by formalisation.

COMPARISON AND GENERALISATION.

The unified fraternity, closed colony and nuclear family each exhibit a separate set of structural and cultural qualities. These radiated from the group of independent record labels that were studied and allowed their working practices to undergo classification. Clearly the most complex of the archetypes is the nuclear family and accordingly its culture is the most diluted. In contrast, the closed colony operate in a less conventional manner, though a degree of concentricity similarly underpins its structure. The unified fraternity displays the least prescribed structure of the three and as a result, has the greatest flexibility to adapt. Although this is advantageous in many respects the laissez-faire type of leadership that ensues can sometimes result in poor productivity and lack of motivation (Hall, Jones & Raffo, 1993).

Operating as a unified fraternity is commonplace in small independent record companies that yield an identity more influential than that of the artists it has signed. Accordingly, its records are purchased as a result of the quality of music associated with the label, rather than the individual merits of each release. In contrast, the closed colony and nuclear family archetypes comprise those organisations more inclined to work with acts that can sell records based upon their own identity. These record labels tend to be of a larger size, not always in terms of workforce but definitely in terms of financial vigour. It is not uncommon for such organisations to have started life as a unified fraternity, but when operations expanded an alternative structure was adopted. The General Manager of Foxtrot Records stated.

> Things were fairly tight for a long time, but when we received Japanese the whole organisation changed. The range of activities we provide now is much greater than a couple of year's back, which without that investment wouldn't be the case, and the structure of the company has had to adapt.

This implies that in practice, functioning as a unified fraternity is only practical on a relatively small scale. Hence, the conviction of Pugh et al. (1969) Carlisle (1974) and Mintzberg (1989) that an organisation's structure is greatly influenced by its size, are upheld within this study.

The three design archetypes that have been devised to classify the working practices of a specific group of organisations may, to a limited degree, be generalised to the industry sector as a whole. Though developing a comprehensive taxonomy of independent record labels was beyond the scope of investigation, many of the ideas intrinsic to the unified fraternity, closed colony and nuclear family archetypes are applicable to organisations outside this study. However, one factor that affects the validity of generalisation is the partial representation of independent record labels that was used for analysis. It could be argued that the set of organisations that underwent research naturally emerged to have a certain culture, as not all those that were contacted within the industry were forthcoming in providing an interview. Still, it remains that many of the concepts formulated around the workings of this group of independent record labels such as the 'resource pool' and 'community chest', may have some pertinence in classifying the functioning of organisations in the remainder of the industry sector.

Nonetheless, one of the organisations that experienced investigation invariably exposed a non-archetypal form. The working practices of Alpha Records exhibited the structural characteristics of a nuclear family while at the same time displayed the cultural attributes of a unified fraternity. Separately the General Manager of the London-based office communicated this fact,

> The big problem that we've got in the UK is that we are not masters of our destiny. We don't have any of our own product and we are being given it from somewhere in America or Germany, or wherever in the organisation. We are basically having to make do with what we have got. We can't lead, we can only follow.

People stay for a long time and really care and really give a shit about the company you know, regardless of the high and lows and successes and failures that happen. They feel an intense loyalty, as if its their label. Its not just a job. Everybody works really really hard and do their jobs really, really well. Its not being somebody who can say I did this or I achieved that, it's more of we did this.

Evidently, the label's functioning lies between two classifications and as such, was considered to be structurally and culturally intermediate. The significance of this is to suggest that other archetypal forms could be unfolded, hence the embryonic taxonomy that has been performed is by no means comprehensive. In the case of Alpha Records, the development of a Unified Family archetype may be most appropriate in categorising the organisation according to internal workings. The perceived boundaries between the three empirically constructed classifications are not absolute and by combining their properties, new classifications could be formed, such as The Nuclear Fraternity and The Unified Colony. Archetypes had to be established using structural and cultural data from only one source within each independent label and consequently, there was scope for natural flaws to arise.

Firstly, by relying upon the account of a single member of staff the precise workings of an organisation may not have been sufficiently understood. In practice the way in which one person describes the structural and cultural atmosphere may differ from another. Still, it was the purpose of this study to gain a true understanding of the organisational

surrounding in which individuals functioned, in order to discover some of the varying processes of contemporary music production. Thus, the genuine weakness in conceptualisation resides in the verification of data, which was limited by the project's constraints.

Secondly, it is conceivable that some respondents may have had hidden agendas, although they were not made fully aware of the purpose of research. Despite specific measures being taken in the collection of data, such as confidentiality and anonymity, those interviewees that chose to answer questions according to what they perceived to be right, rather than what was fundamentally true, could not be avoided. However, no indication of this was evidenced during the stages of data collection.

It remains that an empirically constructed classification of independent record labels based upon structural and cultural attributes of their working, has been formed and, consequently, the uncertainty that surrounds processes of music production has in many ways been resolved. The following section briefly discusses this matter and reviews the significance of findings in terms of the independent sector in general.

PROPERTIES OF THE INDEPENDENT.

Although the prominence of organisational structure may not be as strong in the music industry as it is in areas of strict commercial practice, elements of continuity and coherence were found to pervade the workings of each independent record label under investigation. For example,

> All the reporting that we do, whether it's on sales or financial policies, it's all done directly to Holland. It has all become a lot more centralised as time has gone on. General Manager. Alpha Records

> There's always like this chain of events, band talking to manager, manager talking to its, us talking to the band, us talking to the manager. Staff Member. Delta Records

Based on the previously acknowledged understandings of Ranson et al (1980), these marks of continuity infer the presence of form in the operations of independent record labels and, thus, contest the structure less facade of the music industry. In fact, the outcomes of analysis suggest that Bjorkegren's (1996) notion of unshaped and unplanned functioning in record companies is little more than a gross generalisation of working practices in the industry. However, it can be understood why these ideas have emerged, as several of the organisations under investigation displayed strong signs of informality'. For instance,

> I guess what we want is everyone to do their jobs but we don't have a very, kind of hierarchical system in terms of reporting and stuff like that. We operate informally because that's the point about being an independent record label. Label Manager. Exodus Records

> We don't have a list of rules and regulations. I don't sit down and say 'You can do this, but you can't do that' it's just not that kind of thing. General Manger. Alpha Records

In relation to the functioning of independent record companies themselves, the importance of shared values and understandings was distinctively high. Though many labels form part of a larger organisation in which value diversity exists, in terms of their discrete operation, culture is one. The following sentiments evidence that within the independent organisations cultural networks provide a foundation of control,

> We share the same thoughts and feelings. Working practices vary obviously, because we do different things and we're different people so we all kind of work in our own way but it all ties together. Team Member. Beta Records

Generally, the need for formal policies and procedures in the independent sector was removed by the overwhelming presence of harmonised culture. Rather than relying upon the presence of structure to co-ordinate functions greater emphasis was placed upon the shared understandings within independent record labels, as a means of direction.

Since conceptions of inconsistency within the industry have been rejected, it seems logical to consider the alternative perspective of reducing the workings of record companies to that of a production line. In complete contrast to the sentiments of an unstructured industry, many writers (Strinati. 1995: Schuker, 1994) have suggested the existence of highly controlled systems of music production. However, as several respondents commented, the operations of independent record labels cannot be thought to model this assertion,

> It's not factory production line with a conveyor belt that stops at five and you can go home. When you come in you don't actually know what you are going to be doing that day. What happens, happens and you've got to deal with it. There are certain things you cannot leave until tomorrow, they have to be done that night. General Manger. Alpha Records

> It's not a production line. You have to have flexibility to interact and it's the chaos that works. Head of A & R. Ginger Records

Similar connotes were delivered by the remainder of the sample. hence rather than displaying affections of mechanised structure, the functional behaviours of independent record labels offer support for Negus (1996) perception of unconventional practice within the music industry. Still misconceptions arise due to the large area of deliberation that exists between perceptions of rigid control and sheer disorder. The working practices of independent record labels are characterised by neither one of these descriptors, however, certain commonalities in their workings have been marked by the emergence of three design archetypes in this study.

The fundamental purpose of investigation was to provide a rudimentary understanding of the way in which music organisations function in the independent sector of the industry. While many observers mark the functioning of record companies as regulated and systematic (Strinati. 199:5; Schuker, 1994), others have spoken of volatile and

inconsistent practice (Bjorkegren. 1996: Attali, 1985). Hence, there is divided opinion upon the true nature of music production and few empirical studies have been focused upon record company practice to help resolve this contention (Straw 1993).

Concentrated exploration into the working practices of a group of independent record labels facilitated the identification of three design archetypes the Unified Fraternity, Closed Colony and Nuclear Family, and these classifications were formulated upon the structural and cultural qualities evidenced within. Labels were marked as functioning either as a completely self-sufficient unit, as part of a like minded group of companies or under the watchful eye of a parent organisation, respectively, however, not every organisation that met with investigation was found to be of archetypal form. Still, the configurations that were formed present an insight into the structural and cultural aspects of record company practice.

In general, the research findings suggest that manifestations of culture provide independent record companies with a natural source of coherence. This is evidenced predominantly, by the unified fraternity, which maintains coherent operation through a system of shared beliefs. Still, cultural persuasions also pervade the workings of the closed colony and nuclear family archetypes and are relied upon to link divisionalised and fragmented operation. Hence, the value of culture in shaping structural arrangements appeared to be characteristically high, but whether this is distinctive of all operations in the independent sector, cannot adequately be inferred. Due to the aesthetic qualities that music holds and the informal nature of most who produce it, these observations may be pertinent to the record industry as a whole.

Still, what was undoubtedly attested by the precipitates of research was that the symbiotic relationship linking structure and culture, referred to in much organisational theory was found to be effective in an important group of music organisations. While completing a comprehensive taxonomy was beyond the scope of this study, the empirically constructed classifications that have been formed present new understandings of record company function. In response to mans' conflicting opinions, the findings conclude that organisational structure and culture are not extraneous factors in contemporary processes of music production.

The concepts that have been formed around the workings of a small sample of record companies are likely to have some application in defining the operations of independent labels in general. At present, the only commonplace distinction in the industry is between major and independent organisations however, the classifications that have been developed in this study, provide a more detailed basis upon which companies can be understood. Furthermore, as structure and culture have been inextricably linked to performance (Dawson, 1996). This embryonic taxonomy can help identify limitations upon an organisation's effective and efficient practice.

A logical progression from the understandings provided by this research, is to perform a detailed taxonomy of the record industry's independent sector. This can be accomplished through investigating a more extensive range of structural and cultural parameters, which, undeniably, will lead to an extended system of classification, useful for contrast and comparison. While structural and cultural phenomena are fundamental to the analysis of organisational function, there are many other factors that are equally essential in determining a company's operation. The workings of independent record

labels can also be described in terms of their strategy, technology and the environment in which they function (Negus, 1999), however, the boundaries that were set around investigation, meant that these issues were not considered. Accordingly, the classifications that have been contrived could be more accurately defined if the interrelationship with these factors was regarded.

Additionally, continued exploration of the independent sector would answer more fully the question of structure and affirm or refute the value of culture that has been attested within this paper. The three design archetypes that have emerged from analysis rightly portray the internal complexities of a group of independent record labels and as such, tolerate a degree of comparison. However, by following a similar methodology to that actuated in this study, the functioning of major record labels could also be investigated. Comparing these new findings with the unified fraternity, closed colony and nuclear family archetypes would allow a finer understanding of contemporary music production to be developed.

Within this research it was identified that many independent record labels form part of a closed colony or nuclear family archetype. The former of these classifications is characterised by a series of divisionalised belief systems and, similarly, the latter embodies a framework of multiple and fragmented cultures. Therefore, future investigation could demonstrate the extent to which value diversity negatively, or even positively, impacts the operations of such labels. Investigation could be conducted in a more focused manner upon the functioning of a single organisation and a detailed understanding be gained of why certain organisational phenomena occur.

The scope of this research would also be extended by relating the operations of independent record labels to the concepts of institutional theory. Many academics have stated that societal and sectoral values constrain the way in which organisations function (I-linings et al. 1996: Meyer & Rowan. 1977), therefore, a more detailed understanding of the emergence and translation of structure in the music industry can be gained by exploring the effects of externalities upon record company practice. Combining such findings with the outcomes of this paper could emerge a theoretical model for initiating change.

Still, it remains that the findings of this study have legitimate business application in the fluctuating industry of music production. The classifications that have been derived and their subsequent examination and comparison provide managers of independent record labels with a source of operational guidance. The integration of structural and cultural concepts in this paper have originated a platform of analysis upon which the functioning of independent music organisations can be appraised and related to the fundamental principles of organisational theory.

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