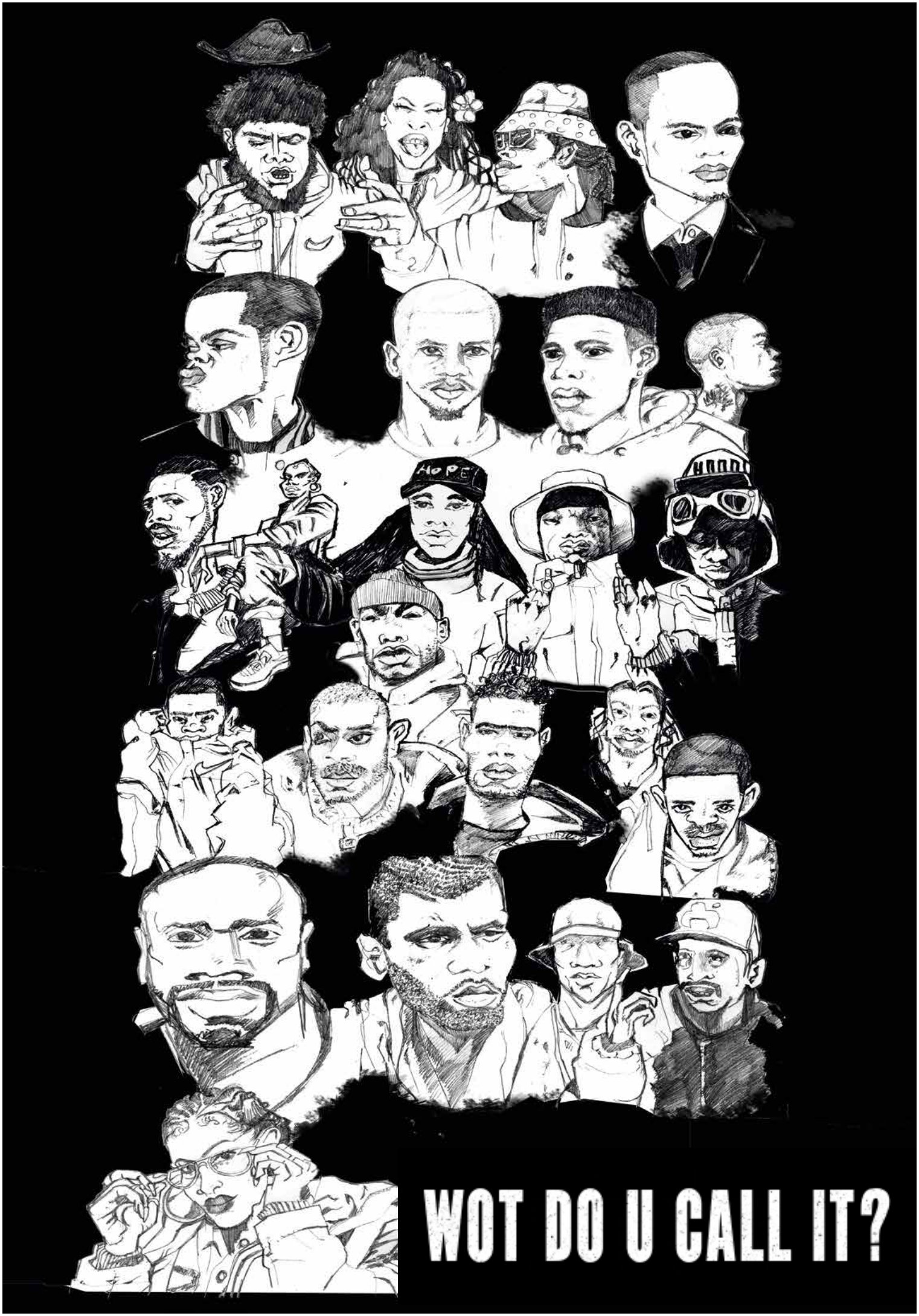
WOT DO U CALL IT?

CONTENTS

WHAT IS GRIME?

A surprisingly difficult question to answer

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

For those of you who have ever read one of my *Felix* Editorials, you'll know two things about me: I leave absolutely everything to the last minute and I've never been very good at writing Editorials. This magazine is no exception.

Every year, *Felix* produces a supplement publication and, in past years, this has taken the form of an arts magazine titled *Phoenix*. This year, we're taking the opportunity to pay homage to Black British music and grime, the explosive genre which has, over the last decade, developed into one of London's most important cultural exports.

There were numerous inspirations which led to the magazine having this focus. Firstly, after spending the last year as Editor-in-Chief of *Felix*, it was refreshing for me to return to writing about topics which more closely align with my interests (i.e. music). Another inspiration for the focus on grime was a conversation I had with Joe El-Kadi, a course mate and friend of mine, when I was in first year studying undergraduate Chemical Engineering at Imperial. Having not grown up in London, he found himself curious about the city's music scene and I found it interesting to consider the juxtaposition of Imperial, sitting adjacent to the Royal Albert Hall in the heart of South Kensington, with the somewhat less polished image of London painted by grime; a version of London which many Imperial students will never experience or have an appreciation for.

With that being said, the purpose of *Wot Do U Call It?* is primarily to show appreciation for grime & modern Black British music and to celebrate their major influences, particularly highlighting genres such as garage, jungle, hip-hop and more. In doing this, we discuss the socio-political genealogy of grime, as well as its citation of other musical genres and, hence, cultures, particularly focusing on the profound influence of Caribbean culture.

We also discuss the current state of Black British music, with the existence of derivative genres, such as the heavily afrobeats-inspired afroswing, and drill - which has caused controversy due to its violent nature, sparking the debate of whether the genre should be censored.

In the UK, where racism remains a prevalent issue, there has been a historic approach to Black art and creative output, with the state typically posing a challenge to Black music and holding a generally negative perception of it and seeing it as troublesome or a threat to civil order. For grime, this challenge has presented itself in Form 696, a regulatory risk assessment measure introduced by the government to ensure safety at live shows. There have been complaints of disproportionate and discriminatory use of the form, which requires the personal data of all promoters, MCs, DJs and artists 14 days in advance of an event, against grime and Black British music shows, compared to its use for other genres. With grime continuing to face such resistance from police and issues, including the bedroom tax, underfunded schools, tuition fee rises, zero-hour contracts, dwindling prospects of owning a home and increased job insecurity, amongst those facing the communities from which grime was born, we take a detailed look at grime's complicated relationship with politics.

Finally, we discuss the future for grime and Black British music, asking the age-old but recurring question: "Is grime dead?"

The grime fanatics amongst you might recognise the title of this magazine from Wiley's classic 2003 single, which attempted to define the genre in its fledgling stages. Surprisingly, I've also struggled to define grime and what it means to me; it wasn't until Stormzy's recent Glastonbury headline performance that inspiration struck. Grime is the creative outlet of disaffected, Black British youth and provides a platform for the voiceless to express their anger at authority and celebrate the rich cultural and social diversity which exists within London and the UK's inner cities. Grime is 140 bpm beats produced on fruity loops in an East London bedroom in 2003. Features writer, Avish Vijayaraghavan, defines grime as follows:

"Ice cold synths that sound like they've come from a dystopian oriental world. But these noises weren't coming out of Beijing, Kyoto, or Seoul, they were coming from the pirate radio stations in Bow, East London. Evolving out of the sound system culture of the English rave scene, grime captured the dissatisfaction of those dealing with the struggles of inner city life as gentrification took its toll. Grime was raw anger - angry kids and young adults coming out of the scene… it's the anger that fills the post-punk void."

Avish is right to compare grime to punk and the genre could still provoke a similarly disruptive cultural transformation in the British music industry. This is because grime is aggressive. Grime is clashing in Jammer's basement. Avish continues: "Grime is war music. The roots in dancehall are obvious - MCs spitting aggressively over beats to get a wheel."

To me, Stormzy's performance embodies the very essence of grime and what it means to me. Grime is young, Black people stepping into spaces that were never intended for them and simply doing their ting. Kanye West's iconic, fiery BRITS performance in 2015 also springs to mind. Bringing the whole grime scene on stage at a predominantly posh awards ceremony is an unapologetic, anti-establishment statement that an awards show should be about artistry, even if that art is uncomfortable for the classist white ethos. This is grime.

Stormzy shouting out 65 Black British artists, old and new, within the grime scene is indicative of the sense of community imbued by grime.

Against all the odds, grime and Black British music have taken a hold of the UK, and artists like Skepta and Stormzy are finally receiving widespread, mainstream recognition. Despite the threat of the music being compromised by its increased mainstream presence, grime continues to reach an increasingly wide and more diverse audience, and the genre continues to transcend cultural boundaries both in the UK and overseas.

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Special shoutout to Ope Oduyeye for his support in interviewing the various artists included in this magazine!

Special thanks to Halima Nashir for her support in producing this magazine!

Tune in to 2 Gs in a Pod Podcast, bringing you vibes and giving a voice to fans of the culture, on SoundCloud, Apple Podcasts, Spotify and YouTube! Season 3 coming soon...

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GRIMELINE

Mapping out the evolution of grime, from pirate radio stations in East London in the early 2000s to the world; including landmark events, essential moments, releases, artists and more

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

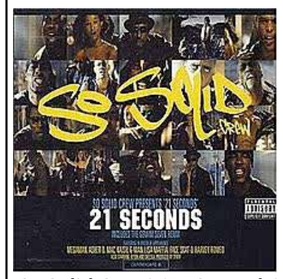
Late 90s:

Birth of digital genres - garage, jungle, etc.

Rinse FM founded as pirate radio station in September 1994 by DJ Geeneus and DJ Slimzee *// Rinse FM*

2001:

Formation of various crews and collectives, most notably More Fire Crew (formed by Lethal Bizzle, Ozzie B and Neeko), Roll Deep (formed by Wiley) and Ruff Sqwad



So Solid Crew's '21 Seconds' *// Wikimedia*

2005:

JME releases first ever single, 'Serious'

Kano releases debut album, *Home Sweet Home*, **with singles including 'Ps & Qs' and 'Typical Me'** *// Wikimedia*

Ofcom disconnects a Rinse FM radio transmitter, DJ Slimzee handed ASBO - believed to be the first of its kind - banning him from every rooftop in Tower Hamlets

Independent North London grime collective & label, Boy Better Know (BBK), founded by JME and Skepta *// Wikimedia*

2007:

Bashy releases what would become his most popular song, 'Black Boys', a tribute to his fellow Black Brits

'Ghetto Kyote' by Kano

Giggs - pioneer of UK rap, with his much slower tempo and style of rapping - drops 'Talkin the Hardest' *// Flickr*

2015:

Section Boyz release *Don't Panic* **- their popularity cements UK trap, which, with its heavy bass, eventually evolves into drill (with influence from the Chicago drill scene too)**

'Shutdown' by Skepta *// Wikimedia*

Kanye West performs at the BRITS - visual co-sign of the UK scene *// Flickr*

Stormzy's 'Shut Up' hits number 8 on UK Christmas charts *// Flickr*

2016:

Drake comes out at Section Boyz show *// Flickr*

Skepta's *Konnichiwa* **wins Mercury Prize** *// Wikimedia*

2017:

"Afroswing"-style music dominates summer

Stormzy's debut album *Gang Signs and Prayer* **goes number 1** *// Wikimedia*

WOT DO U CALL IT?

2002:

Wiley produces 'Eskimo' beat - one of the earliest grime instrumentals

Birth of iconic grime rave, Eskimo Dance

More Fire Crew's 'Oi!' reaches number 7 on UK Singles Chart *// Genius*

2003:

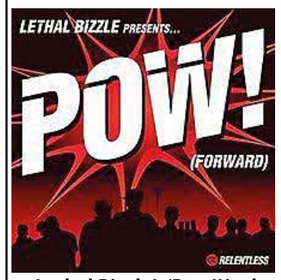
With the release of Wiley's 'Wot Do U Call It?', grime emerges as a distinct sub-genre of garage, etc.

Dizzee Rascal's *Boy in Da Corner*, **featuring classic lead single 'I Luv U', wins the Mercury Prize** *// Wikimedia*

Channel U (later known as Channel AKA) highlights "to the public, the raw and unsigned talent we have in the UK", giving "them a platform from which they could perform" *// Wikimedia*

2004:

***Lord of the Mics I - Wiley vs. Kano* - grime clash recorded in Jammer's basement - released on DVD and is the first in the series**



Lethal Bizzle's 'Pow!' is the first grime single to break the UK top 20 *// Wikimedia*

2009:

Gracious K's 'Migraine Skank' starts popular skanking wave

'Don't Phone me' by Ghetts

Tempa T's 'Next Hype' *// No Hats No Hoods*

2011:

Sneakbo releases '(Jetski) Wave' freestyle on Vybz Kartel's 'Touch ah Button' beat - precursor to African & Caribbean-style influence

'Champion' by Chipmunk, featuring Chris Brown *// Wikimedia*

2013:

African & Caribbean-style influence emerges through artists like Timbo, Sneakbo and more

Krept & Konan's 'Don't Waste My Time', precursor to UK trap *// Genius*

2014:

Skepta wins MOBO for 'That's Not Me' video, which cost "80 British pounds"

Meridian Dan's 'German Whip' - Grime has its resurgance/ renaissance *// Wikimedia*

2018:

Emergence of drill as a major sub-genre

Russ' 'Gun Lean' hits number 9 on the charts *// Genius*

J Hus nominated for British Single, British Album & British Breakthrough Act at BRITS *// Flickr*

2019:

Stormzy headlines Glastonbury *// Flickr*

WOT DO U CALL IT... GARAGE?

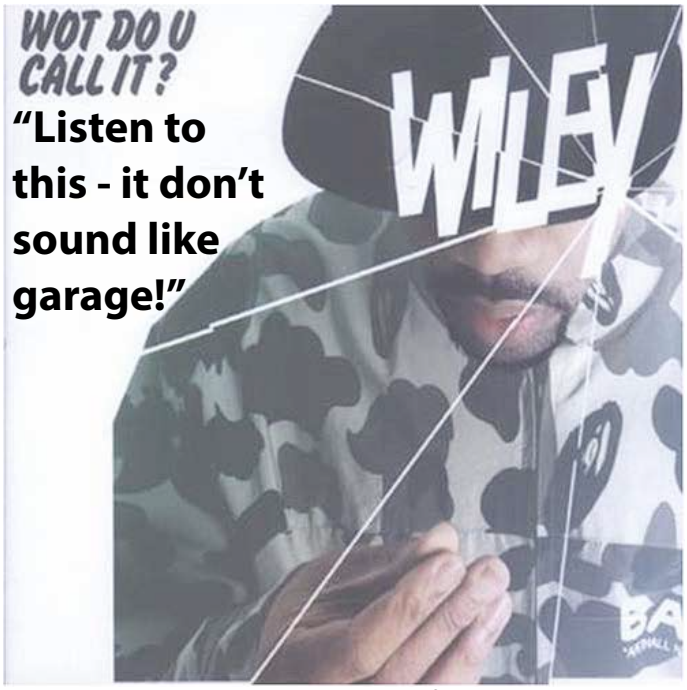
Though garage is widely believed to have birthed grime, the latter has undeniably evolved into its own genre and distinctions between the two can be found in everything from their sound to their politics

Simran Kukran
Features Writer

Preceding grime and following jungle and house music, the UK garage (UKG) scene was one of the most significant genres of music born in London in the 1990s, peaking in popularity in the early 2000s.

The beginnings of garage were closely tied to Ministry of Sound. When the club shut on a Sunday morning at 9am, ravers from acid house nights wanted somewhere to continue their nights. Many found themselves across the road at afterparties in the Elephant and Castle pub. Here, American house music tracks were sped up by DJs to keep the tempo up and keep the party going. Backbeats were added to accelerated four-to-the floor rhythms. MCs would be hosting, but DJs were the star of the show in the Sunday scene. Before long, the music travelled across the city and then across the country, with pirate radio stations as the vehicle. There were clear influences from jungle – not only the backbeats but also the warped basslines. At the time, this was referred to as "speed garage".

The first mega UKG hit came in 1995, when Artful Dodger remixed Tina Moore's 'Never Gonna Let You Go'. This was the beginning of two-step, where jittery broken rhythms no longer conformed to the more standard four-to-the-floor pulse. This was the type of garage to rise to the top of the charts and stay there; 'Rewind' by Artful Dodger ft. Craig David hit number two in the UK charts in 1999, and Craig David's debut album was released two years later.



Wiley expresses his frustrations *// Amazon*

Not only did it dominate the charts in the UK, it also rose to critical acclaim in the US. Around this time, garage parties developed a different flavour, MCs were now very much in the driving seat and performed facing the crowd. Far from its origins of the underground Sunday scene, the new rave nights were lavish and champagne-centric with lyrics to match. David Beckham and other celebrities were among the partygoers, and guest lists became exclusive. Garage was now a mainstay in UK pop. By the time Daniel Bedingfield released 'Gotta Get Thru This' in 2002, garage acts were common on *Top of the Pops* and a garage radio show had been running on Radio 1 for two years.

In these years there was a shift, and a new form of garage was being played on pirate radio stations. MCs started rapping faster, with edgier lyrics. In stark contrast to the lyrics about wealth and success, underground artists addressed darker issues, like gang violence and poverty. These younger MCs had much less glamorous lifestyles than the popular garage musicians but also started to make their way into the charts. In 2001, So Solid Crew made it to number one with '21 Seconds'. The group, made up of more than 20 MCs and producers, became infamous. Violence and shootings at their shows led to them being banned from performing at the majority of London clubs. Tensions within the garage scene started to rise, with older musicians criticising younger ones for glorifying violence. Younger musicians criticised the older ones for selling out and said they were simply expressing their lived experience. There was also a racial aspect to the tensions; the newer, edgier sound had more Black MCs.

The frustration of musicians who did not see themselves as part of the traditional Garage scene was one of the factors that led to the beginnings of grime music. Wiley used Eskiboy as a stage name and dubbed his music eskibeat, both named after their "cold" sound. Wiley's frustrations with the garage scene were expressed in his first single 'Wot Do U Call It' from his debut album. He rapped: "listen to this – it don't sound like garage!"

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Jungle has made its mark on Black British music through its influence on ensuing genres, and its characteristic breakbeats and fast tempos can be found in the culture, energy and sound of grime today

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

Described by some as the most innovative genre to come out of the UK in the early '90s, the jungle scene has had a profound influence on grime as we know it. A cousin of UK funky and garage, and boasting the title of parent genre to a number of subsequent popular sub-genres, including (most notably) drum 'n' bass, jungle was borne out of the combined influence of breakbeat hardcore rave music with dub reggae and Jamaican sound system culture.

Me ah go party hard! *// Annabel Morgan*

Jungle pioneer, Goldie, DJing in London in the 90s *// NAKI*

Jungle's connections to dub reggae culture stretch as far back as the '70s, with popular jungle anthems littered with classic samples, rewinds and relentless patois, and drawing on reggae production tricks, such as reverb and filters. Jungle embodies the sound of Nottig Hill carnival in the mid-90s.

The influence on grime and Black British music can be seen most clearly in jungle's rave culture. Jungle's gritty, hypnotic sound makes for energetic anthems only matched by the energy of a modern day grime rave.

Smoke break during a jungle rave *// Amber Middleton*

AFROBEATS IS A THREAT!

With the emergence of afroswing and the ever-increasing number of collaborations between UK and African artists, afrobeats has had an undeniable influence on the UK scene. We turn our focus overseas to the scene in Africa.

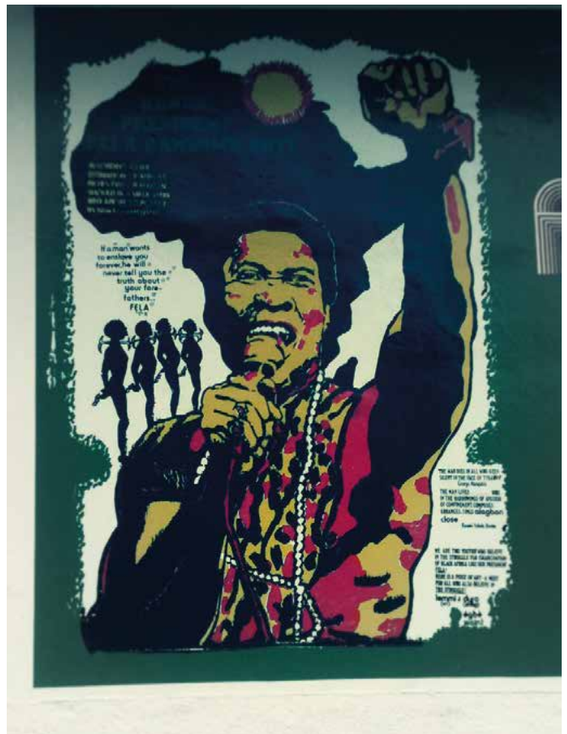
Emem Umoh
Features Writer

Fiyisola Martins
Features Writer

If asked, "what is afrobeats?", what would you say? For most, afrobeats as a genre is easy to identify but difficult to define - and therein lies the problem.

Afrobeats, not to be confused with the popular 'afrobeat' from which it derived and with which it shares musical influences, blends African rhythms with jazz-infused swings and melodies. Despite afrobeats and afrobeat being two distinct styles of music, the issue of 'afrobeat' being used as an umbrella term to encompass everything (and, as such, saying very little) still remains. This is because, as the wider international community has been introduced to the music of artists from African and Caribbean backgrounds, proper education of the cultures from which this music comes has not followed.

It should come as no surprise that a foreign ear would lump it all together, not only conflating afrobeats with afrobeat, but also African music with Caribbean music and UK afrobeats with afrobeats from Africa. To the trained ear, it is easy to distinguis between afrobeats from West Africa and that from the UK, and African and Caribbean music can only be described as being more distant cousins rather than immediate siblings. The slight differences in content, dialect, rhythm and expression evoke different emotions within the listener which cannot be replicated and all contribute to a larger difference which only becomes apparent to those who understand how the music is grounded in its respective culture.



Fela Kuti was the pioneer of the 'afrobeat' genre from which afrobeats, and in turn, genres like UK afrobeats, afroswing, afrobashment and more originated *// Flickr*

To solve this issue, it is important to ensure that any conversation captures the nuances of music from different regions in the world. For example, the most well-known Nigerian acts, Davido and Wizkid, easily carry the torch for mainstream African music ('Naija-Pop' or 'Nigerian Pop music') and, to avoid their music just being seen as some addition to some endless pit of dance songs for an 'afrobeats' playlist, the importance and standing of the songs they create must be acknowledged.

The issue highlighted - that of correctly defining afrobeats as a genre - is merely a symptom of a greater dilemma, the solution to which is education. For mass media to reflect this and affect change, an increasing number of educated voices - artists, podcasts, fans, producers and anyone who cares about their music - must take responsibility for protecting the identity of the music and speak up.

WOT DO U CALL IT?

The emergence of sub-genres of Afrobeats

Afrobeats has gradually evolved to become afropop (although labelling most mainstream songs 'pop' raises the age old debate of whether everything popular is 'pop' music) and most afrobeats songs have this unspoken label. However, sub-genres that are heavily afrobeat-inspired have recently come into existence.

The first noticeable sub-genre to emerge was 'afrohip-hop', a term first coined by Da Grin. It's difficult to say when it first emerged but Da Grin was a pioneer, bringing the genre to mainstream recognition. Rapping in an intriguing blend of English, Yoruba and Pidgin, his artistry was accessible to the masses. His songs spoke on a range of very important contemporary social issues- ethnicity, poverty and tribalism. Sadly, Da Grin passed away at the age of 22 but, in many ways, the baton has been passed to Olamide. Olamide's earliest works consisted of afrohip-hop songs but, as he rose to prominence, he started to move towards conventional afropop. That being said, he still combines his political messages and hip-hop flows on most of his tracks. This is exemplified in his latest single 'Oil & Gas', which represents the views of the poor on the corruption surrounding the oil and gas industry.

Olamide performing at OLIC 2018 *// Premium Times Ng*

Remy Baggins *// Spotify*

Around the same time as this (circa 2010), R&B was becoming popular in the African music scene. Artists like Banky W and Styl-Plus were delivering long lasting hits. The re-emergence of this genre can be seen in new artists like Remy Baggins and Dami Oniru, who are honing in on this new afro R&B sound. Their respective albums and EPs combine old school R&B influences with afro style beats, while speaking in a mixture of English and Yoruba. This new work highlights just how versatile African artists can be.

Finally, the last sub-genre that has stirred controversy is 'alté'. The name, first coined by DRB Lasgidi, has opened the door to many artists, most notably Odunsi (The Engine), Santi, Zamir and others. Alternative music in the west tends to be classified as music without mainstream appeal, which also doesn't fit into a definitive genre. This approach has been adopted in Africa too and alté represents alternative afro-music style. However, the original pioneers of alté say their scope reaches far beyond music and has now become a lifestyle. Many people have challenged this definition, saying that it is exclusive and is not attainable for the majority of Africans. However, Odunsi and Santi are actively trying to reach the mainstream in Africa and beyond, with high profile collaborations with the likes of UK artist Raye.

Odunsi (The Engine)'s *rare.* *// Spotify*

Importantly, sub-genres are able to exist due to the dominance of the parent genre. Afrobeats is rising as a popular genre and has also been recognised as a powerful tool in the corporate realm, which is why it has recently been so well-funded by record labels. As afrobeats continues to grow and reach more people around the world, we will see more sub-genres; it is important not to hold artists to a genre and instead let them shape their art in whatever form they see fit.

LYRICS FOR LYRICS, CALM

From clashing to Jamaican patois, a look at the profound influence of Caribbean culture on grime & Black British music

Isaac Freeling
Features Writer

Jamell Samuels
Features Writer

Avish Vijayaraghavan
Features Writer

The origins of grime as a genre have been debated frequently since its inception in the early 2000s, with many mistakenly regarding it as a sub-genre of US hip-hop. However, speak to the artists themselves or those with strong ties to the scene and the picture painted is entirely different. Grime has deep seated roots in ragga, the roots of which lie in jungle, which, in turn, gets its beginnings from the Jamaican genre of dancehall.

Grime is characterised by its fast-paced 140 BPM (beats per minute) tempo, which is a trait it acquired from its garage and jungle origins. That grime is so intertwined with dancehall should come as no surprise to those who have grown up in London or have some knowledge of the history of the Black British experience. Hailing from the sunny shores of the Caribbean Sea, where the rum is nice and the girls are twice, the people of Jamaica, who migrated to the UK between 1948 and 1971, carried with them a distinct and unique vernacular that opened up new possibilities for rhyme schemes and wordplay within the English language. Jamaican patois has had a profound impact on the linguistics and culture of London. The cumulative experiences of those Jamaicans, alongside what other Black migrants and their descendants would also face, fuelled their creative works, leading to the many genres and sub-genres we see today.

Notting Hill Carnival *// Flickr*

Grime is well known for its clashing culture. but what is less well known is that the tradition of the sound clash has its origins in the Jamaican dancehall scene. A sound clash is when rival crews, called 'Sound Systems', would partake in a battle. Their respective music would be played against each other until a clear winner was announced. Instrumentals, known as 'riddims', would be produced, with some of them going on to become legendary within the scene themselves. In the case where the clash was of importance, a dubplate - a special or one-off recording of a track - would be recorded.

In grime, clashing - competitive back-and-forths between MCs - was borne out of sets. It was a natural progression for the genre - in a room where you have 15 MCs trying to spit over one mic, you have to stand out and show off. Braggodocio is a massive part of grime. Its fast pace led to rappers developing myriad different flows to navigate the various beat rhythms that encapsulate the genre. In a similar way to gangsta rap, artists have to present themselves, their bars and their flow, as the best in the room.

Clashes from sets often spill out into full-on diss tracks (also known as war dubs). Perhaps the most famous of these is Skepta v Devilman: a clash that first took place in Jammer's basement but has continued through tracks over the years. Even though it climaxed with Skepta's 'Nasty' in 2016, the beef still creeps into both MCs' tracks, with lines aimed at each other.

The majority of MCs today will have come up through some form of clashing. Whether it's a radio station in 2006, organised 'Don't Flop' or 'WAW' clashes in 2013, or, occasionally, on a set these days, clashing has always been a way to prove yourself to the crowd. On a larger scale, when the genre starts to lull in popularity, clashes between artists can revive the scene. After Skepta, Stormzy and Meridian Dan had given grime hope of a comeback in the mid 2010's with a series of singles, Chip's back-and-forth with Bugzy Malone, Yungen, and Tinie Tempah reminded the public of how raw grime could be.

Clashing, another element drawn from the Jamaican sound system culture, gives grime an undeniable live energy, transforming it into a sport and ensuring that competition is always preserved within the genre.

STOP TELLING MAN YOU'RE MY COUSIN

A deep dive into the relationship between American hip-hop and UK grime

Asad Raja
Features Writer

You get two types of hip-hop purists these days. There are those who use terms such as "real hip-hop"; they will disregard at least two thirds of hip-hop made after *The Blueprint 3*, especially if it gets radio play, as not being true to the genre. These "old heads" popularised the term "mumble rap" to mock the mainstream trap sound that has developed over the past decade and generally believe hip-hop peaked in the 90s. Then there are those who are more in touch with the fast-developing world of sub-genres that now offers listeners a diverse and nuanced palette to pick and choose from. They attach the hip-hop label to everything within the realm of vaguely rhyming vocals over some description of a beat. With such an open approach, they are open to fresh sounds and deem hip-hop to be the most eclectic genre of music there is. These more agreeable fans tend to comprise the younger generation of hip-hop heads who use the internet to expose and educate themselves on artists old and new, unknown and mainstream. When the conversation comes to grime however, it's these people that generally make the mistake of claiming the genre as a subsection of hip-hop.

Let's get this clear. Grime is not hip-hop. The reason for that goes beyond grime's 140 bpm (beats per minute) cornerstone or the sound's garage foundations that are so far removed from the disco and funk roots of hip-hop. The reason grime is not hip-hop is a matter of culture. Even though hip-hop, in the all-inclusive sense, is a melting pot of so many different regional influences and tropes specific to sub-genre, the genre's longevity and its inherent socio-centric and communal nature have allowed a distinct and recognised culture to emerge from the patchwork. There's a general consensus and spirit to hip-hop which goes beyond the music and, when you take part in it as a creator or consumer, you become part of a community. Grime is certainly similar in that sense but, significantly, it operates on its own terms and is an uncompromising embodiment of underprivileged living, specifically in the UK. Grime culture is inherently more stubborn and abrasive than hip-hop. You might call grime fans "old heads", but that term doesn't even translate because of just how fresh grime still is, having taken its baby steps this side of the millennium.

Signs of mutual recognition between grime and hip-hop emerged as early as 2007, with Dizzee Rascal's 'Where Da G's', featuring hip-hop legend Bun B. By the start of this decade, increasing focus on introducing new sounds to hip-hop and disturbing the established status quo rewarded artists with an ear for foreign influences. Danny Brown is one such artist, a consistently vocal grime fan who credits it as inspiration for his gritty and energetic sound. In reply, he was given the honour of his own 'Fire in the Booth' back in 2014. Of course, Drake is another early co-signer whose obsession with grime and other London-based genres often lands him "beg" status. Arguments for: the accents, the slang. Arguments against: Drake's love of the genre comes from a place of genuine appreciation and respect – as far back as 2011 he was shouting out artists such as Sneakbo for inspiring his music. What's more, the dancehall and soundsystem influence common in grime beats is a legitimate justification for his personal affiliation – his home town of Toronto is full of Jamaican neighbourhoods. Most importantly, with his features and co-signs, he does genuine good for talented up-and-coming UK artists, giving them their breakout hit without having them adjust their artistry.

Things changed in 2015. The trigger was Kanye's legendary performance of 'All Day' at the BRIT awards, featuring a flamethrower and half the grime scene on stage with him. To this day, it is an indescribably iconic moment. The performance was an unapologetic statement that Black artistry will and should upset the elitist white ethos – a statement that, especially given the context, is decidedly grime. The explosion in grime's popularity following Kanye's visit was unprecedented, a fire that was kept ablaze by Chip's stream of viral clashes with the likes of Bugzy Malone and Yungen. A new generation of fans from across the UK and beyond emerged overnight, as well as a new generation of fired-up artists. Still stood on that metaphorical BRIT stage, artists diversified their sound in order to distinguish themselves amongst the black tracksuits of their peers. To refresh and branch out whilst maintaining authenticity is the best thing that could have happened to the genre. If in doubt, just look at Skepta – last year's 'Praise the Lord' (where he undeniably stole the show from A$AP Rocky) went platinum in the US, and the recently released *Ignorance is Bliss* is one of his most focused and inventive albums yet. Clearly, grime is very aware that it can continue to stand on its own two feet should it to choose to.

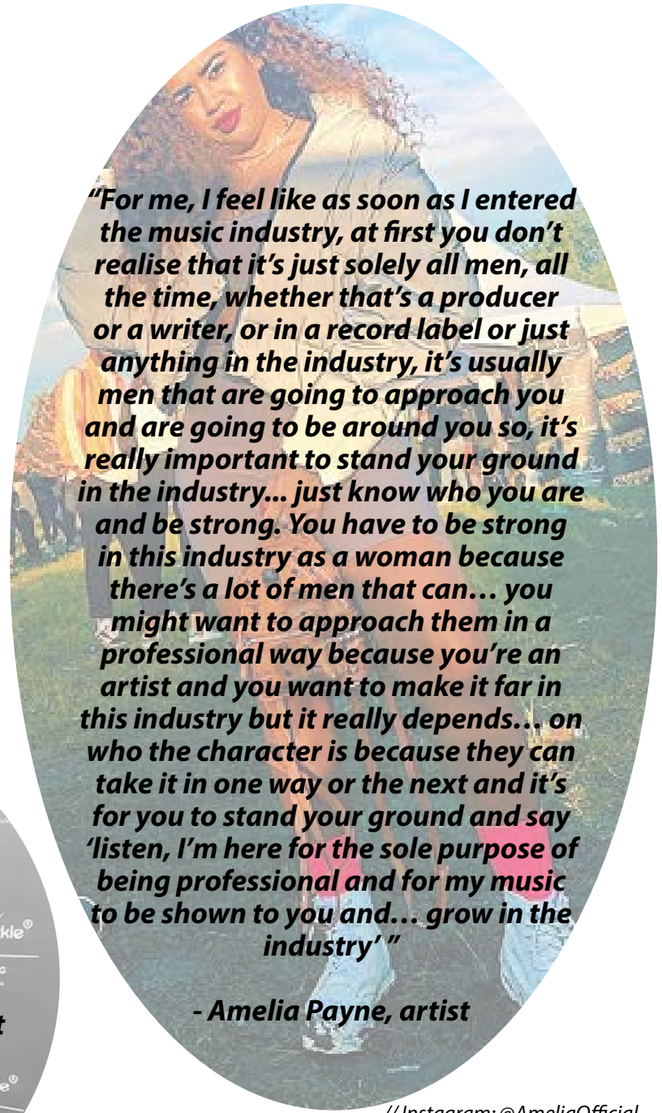
// Reddit

MISS ME WITH THAT!

We caught up with a number of female artists, DJs and personalities at Strawberries & Creem Festival to get their perspectives on operating in an industry which has typically been very male-dominated

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

// Andy Djaba



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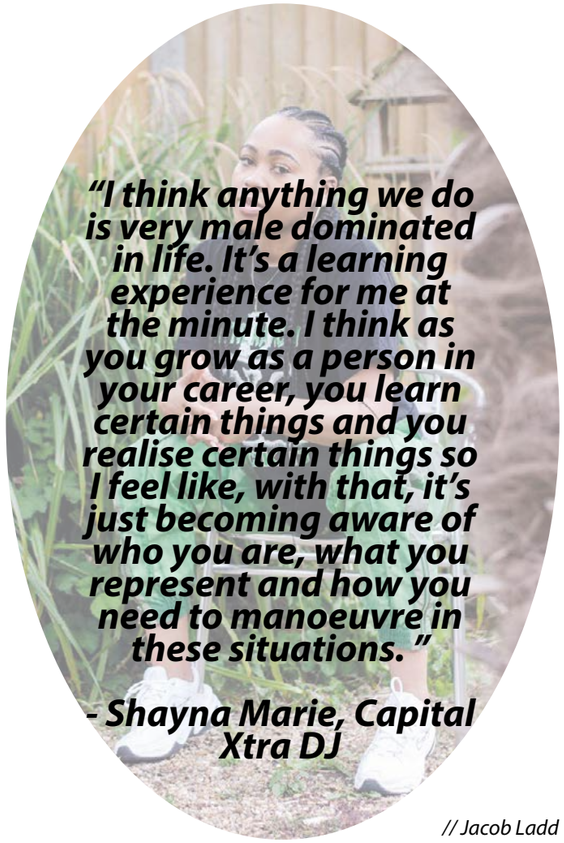

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// Brett D. Cove

HIP-HOP HISTORIAN

A brief history of the political trajectory of hip-hop and its relationship with the Black Power movement

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

60s & 70s:

Although hip-hop as a musical genre only really actualised in the 1970s, it could be argued that its political genealogy can be traced back to the 60s, at the height of the Civil Rights/ Black Power movements, which championed two primary objectives: Black Empowerment (Afrocentrism) and Black Mobilisation.

By the 70s, most of the Black Power social movements had been successfully countered by the state but the seed of Black nationalism had been sewn; people started turning to other forms of expression, namely two characteristically Black art forms: poetry and jazz, which eventually influenced the genesis and evolution of hip-hop

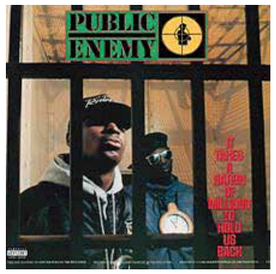
The Black Power Mixtape 1967 - 1975 *// Wikimedia*

80s:

As the genre expanded, political/conscious hip-hop really began to emerge as a distinct sub-genre; largely due to the Reagan administration. Reagan's policies devastated Black communities and saw the channelling of crack cocaine into ghettos, the mandating of mass incarceration, increased police brutality, etc. Whilst these Black communities were facing renewed persecution, hip-hop represented a means to raise awareness and oppose state hegemony.

In 1982, Grandmaster Flash, one of the founding fathers of hip-hop, together with The Furious Five, released 'The Message', which detailed the depressing conditions of ghettos

Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five 's 'The Message' *// Wikimedia*



Public Enemy's 'Party For Your Right To Fight' *// Genius*

In 1986, Public Enemy, which remains one of the most seminal political hip-hop groups, released 'Party For Your Right To Fight', significant in its invocation of 60's Black revolutionary figures

NWA's 'F**k Tha Police', released in 1988, is an important example and even provoked a letter from the FBI in response, claiming their *Straight Outta Compton* album "encourages violence against and disrespect for the law enforcement officer."

N.W.A.'s 'Fk Tha Police'** *// Genius*

WOT DO U CALL IT?

90s:

The golden age of hip-hop. Most of the 80s' most popular artists were still active at this point and other artists came into prominence. These include Nas; Outkast; Tupac, who was massively political ('The Rose That Grew from Concrete' is but one example illustrating this); and Jay Z, who would go on to change the entire landscape of Black corporate ownership.

The message behind Ice-T's 1992 single 'Cop Killer' pertained to police brutality *// Wikimedia*

Artists at the time who were preaching Black empowerment were naturally drawn to the Five-Percent Nation and this became another sub-culture within hip-hop. Affiliated artists include Rza, Rakim, Mos Def, Jay Electronica, Busta Rhymes, Ice Cube, Big Daddy Kane, Raekwon, LL Cool J and countless others.

Also, at this time, gangsta rap was emerging as a distinct subgenre. Whilst it was initially dismissed as a by-product of 'Black rage', it was later realised to actually be very political: it arose from the idea of Black militarism, popularised by the Black Panthers and Nation of Islam. Its main message pertained to police brutality. It was purposely antagonistic to mainstream American values so as to expose its inherent contradictions and prejudices.

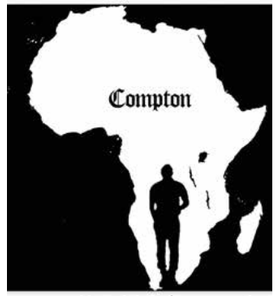
Noughties to Present:

Mumble/trap rap aside, a defining characteristic of modern hip-hop is Afrofuturism, which is essentially a genre that imagines a reclaimed unapologetic Black future (as a means of escaping the dire situations of the present). Artists like Outkast and Nas are early examples of Afrofuturism in the 90s and noughties, particularly Nas' 1994 track 'The World is Yours'.

While political/ socially conscious hip-hop has been driven underground (largely due to lack of ownership), an artist who is massively important right now, not just within Afrofuturism but for hip-hop's mainstream political landscape, is Kendrick Lamar.

Afrofuturism is present in Kendrick's 2011 track 'Hiiiipower', through the invocation of key Black revolutionary figures: "Last time I checked, we was racing with Marcus Garvey on the freeway to Africa" references Marcus Garvey's proposals for African Americans to 'recolonise' Africa.

His 2015 album, *To Pimp A Butterfly* is effectively an homage to Tupac and his political message - at the end of the album Kendrick is seen to assimilate into Tupac's legacy, presenting himself as Tupac's heir.



Kendrick frequently invokes Pan-African iconography as a means to re-historicise the African American experience *// Red Bubble*

'Alright' has largely been accepted as the anthem for the #BlackLivesMatter protests which gained momentum in the summer of 2015.

Many other hip-hop artists are using their influence to effect political change. Recently, a coalition of rappers led by Killer Mike, Meek Mill, 21 Savage, Chance The Rapper, Yo Gotti, Fat Joe and more penned an open letter, described as "a primer on rap music and hip-hop", to the Supreme Court in an attempt to see Pittsburgh rapper Jamal Knox's two year sentence for the content of his track "F**k the Police" overturned.

Relationship between Islam & hip-hop:

It's important to note the emergence of the Five-Percent Nation, a denomination of Islam founded on Black Power/ radicalism in 1964.

RZA's *The Tao of Wu* *// Wikimedia*

Prior to this, its founder Allah the Father (formerly known as Clarence 13X and, before that, Clarence Edward Smith) was a member of the Nation of Islam and was a student of key figures Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad. The Nation of Islam was important because, during Reagan's administration, where drugs were enforced on Black communities, Islam's condemning of drugs acted as an affective point of resistance. Also, Muslims' abstinence from pork heavily tied in with the notion of viewing police as "pigs". Another important pillar of the Nation of Islam was education and the idea of divine knowledge, which presented a means for social mobility for Black communities (as referred to in RZA's book, *The Tao of Wu*). Finally, the Nation of Islam preached Black militarism, which went on to influence gangster rap.

GRIME AS A POLITICAL TOOL

How has the grime community responded to political issues, such as youth violence, police mistreatment, Grenfell and more?

#Grime4Corbyn // *Twitter*

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

Although, on the surface, it would appear that politicians take little notice of grime, the genre has strayed into the political sphere on multiple occasions. Examples which spring to mind are Novelist's 2012 appointment as Deputy Young Mayor of Lewisham and Lethal Bizzle's back-and-forth with then Conservative Party leader David Cameron in 2006, which saw Lethal pen a *Guardian* column titled, "David Cameron is a Donut" following Cameron's criticism of Tim Westwood for playing violent lyrics, to which Cameron responded with a *Mail on Sunday* article titled "You're talking rubbish, Lethal Bizzle". With its subject matter often pertaining to social issues affecting the disenfranchised working class in Britain, grime has an inherent power to politically mobilise its listeners which should not be understated.

Grime's genesis story is similar to that of hip-hop in that both genres are predominantly Black art forms which emerged as an outlet and voice for disaffected Black youths. Grime's roots can be traced back to Bow, East London, an area that was severely hit by government austerity. The inextricable link between race and class also allows grime to focus on class-based oppression in a manner which transcends race. Grime's ability to speak to the commonality in the British working class experience is part of the genre's appeal.

In the UK, diasporic communities are largely able to trace lineage back to their country of origin. Hence the politics of grime differs to that of US hip-hop, which very much centres around African American identity and the erasure of heritage due to slavery. As such, the political personality of grime is largely characterised through its invocation of dissent. Grime's anarchist presentation of itself as anti-establishment, anti-police and anti-government means it is often viewed as apolitical. However, MCs using grime music as an outlet to voice their frustration at the issues affecting their communities is in itself political. Music, and for that matter, art in general, is often seen as a reaction to the circumstances and outrage of the time. However, this should not be the case. It is not always reflective and there exists a symbiotic relationship wherein a song can become an anthemic catalyst to provoke social action. Grime has the potential to become symbolic of a vibrant social movement.

The genre has already begun to do this. Government neglect has always been addressed in grime music and the Grenfell Tower disaster was no exception, with a plethora of MCs speaking out. The image of a topless, rain-soaked Stormzy performing at the BRIT awards, condemning then PM Theresa May on national television over the government's handling of it, has become iconic. Stormzy has also spoken out about the disproportionate persecution of black people over drug related crimes, called Theresa May a "paigon" during his 2017 GQ awards acceptance speech, and proclaimed "fuck the government and fuck Boris" on his recent single, 'Vossi Bop'. Slowthai recently released his debut album, *Nothing Great About Britain*, the rollout of which featured a billboard campaign revealing uncomfortable truths about Britain. Moving away from grime, Mic Righteous' 'Don't it Make You Wonder' and Lowkey's entire *Soundtrack to the Struggle* album are both examples of UK rappers from Muslim backgrounds using their music to voice dissent against the war on terror. With *Game Over*'s 'Question Time', Dave also stepped into the political space. Grime is bleeding out into political spheres beyond just the music too. Akala is now a published author who can be seen regularly debating on national television panel discussions and, during the 2017 General Election, artists like JME and Stormzy openly campaigned for Jeremy Corbyn. After contributing to a 72% voter turnout amongst 18-24 year olds, grime's political power should not be in question.

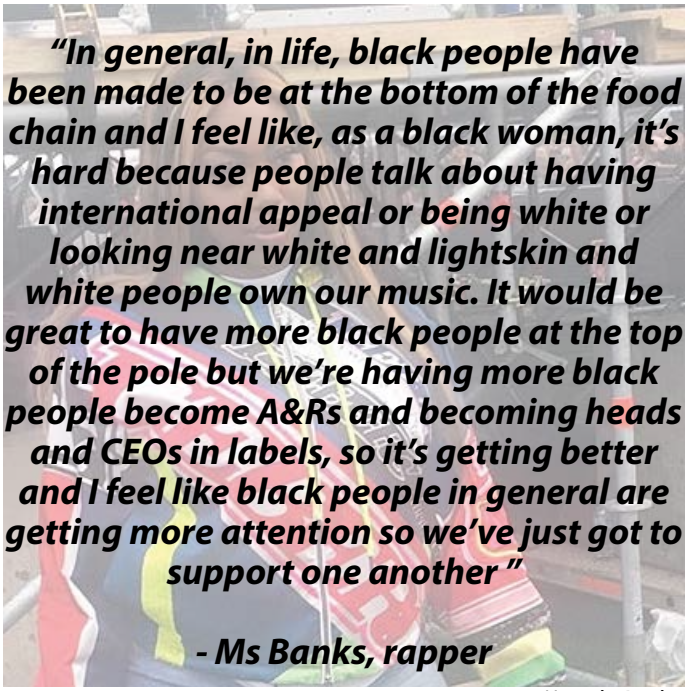
As grime has gained popularity and become trendier, however, it's shied away from political content. The genre finds itself with a wider audience than ever before. An audience for which grime was not originally made and which largely cannot relate to or is not affected by the issues discussed. The relentless spread of gentrification in the UK extends to music. Much like with hip-hop, which began rooted in pro-Black politics, as grime grows, Black and other similarly marginalised communities have increasingly lost ownership of the genre. It is impossible to affect real political change while the mainstream music remains controlled by majority white-owned labels. Until there is true Black ownership in music and other creative spaces and art forms, true political change via these avenues will remain an underground movement.

WOT DO U CALL IT... URBAN?

We caught up with a number of artists, DJs and personalities at Strawberries & Creem Festival to get their perspectives on Black ownership, or lack thereof, in the music industry

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

In what is perhaps the music industry's means of circumventing the unfortunate negative connotations associated with the term 'Black' and appearing more "inclusive", the word 'urban' has been adopted by the media as an umbrella term in reference to grime culture, Black British music and other historically Black genres, such as hip-hop and R&B. With this perception of Black culture as 'cool', coupled with the lack of Black ownership in the music industry, there is a danger that, as grime continues to infiltrate the mainstream, grime will be "whitewashed" and the genre will struggle to stay true to its roots as a creative outlet for disaffected British youth.



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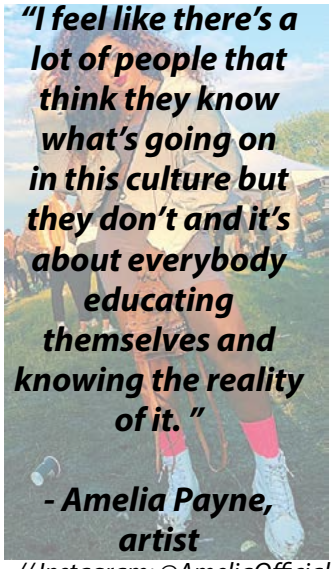


// Instagram: @AmeliaOfficial

// Jacob Ladd

// Instagram: @BomsTheFirst

// Wikimedia

WOT DO U CALL IT?

BATTLE OF THE BOROUGHS

Beyond the M25

Birmingham:
Lady Leshurr, Jaykae, Mist *// Flickr*

Northampton:
Slowthai, Izzy Gibbs *// Wikimedia*

Manchester:
Bugzy Malone, Aitch *// Wikimedia*

Nottingham:
Young T & Bugsey, Mez *// Flickr*

A selection of the best MCs London has to offer, but which area comes out on top?

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

Avish Vijayaraghavan
Features Writer

Isaac Freeling
Features Writer

Wretch 32 - Tottenham:
The soft spoken, wiser older head of UK rap, Wretch's lyrcal and thought-provoking content has made him a fan favourite for many. His 'Fire in the Booth' is arguably the best ever recorded. *// Wikimedia*

Chip - Tottenham:
One of the younger MCs during the first wave of grime. After a stint in pop music, he came back with a new hunger, releasing diss tracks against several popular MCs. He has since continued his wave, staying fresh and demonstrating his versatility by jumping on tracks from dancehall to bashment to trap. *// Wikimedia*

Skepta - Tottenham:
The man who taught how to make a song for the mainstream, radio and roadman all at the same time. The rise of grime owes much to Joseph Junior Adenuga, who has been a key figure throught its history *// Flickr*

JME - Tottenham:
Boy Better Know CEO and a member of the Adenuga family. His most recent effort, *Integrity*, is one of the purer grime releases of the 2010s. *// Wikimedia*

Big Zuu - Ladbroke Grove:
An artist that embodies grime. Alongside his music, he has been pivotal in promoting grime in the media hosting *The Joints Show* on Radar Radio before moving over to BBC in 2018 *// Flickr*

Little Simz - Islington:
Carved out her own niche in UK hip hop with her smooth flow and jazzy beat selection *// Wikimedia*

J Hus - Stratford:
Part of a pioneering wave of new artists that incorporated afrobeats into grime. His debut album, *Common Sense*, has already cemented his place in the UK history books *// Flickr*

Kano - East Ham:
Originally a member of N.A.S.T.Y. Crew, Kano has cemented himself as an extremely influential MC in the scene. His 2005 album, *Home Sweet Home* is a classic and his most recent effort, *Made in the Manor*, received a MOBO for best album. *// Flickr*

WSTRN - West London:
Tropical West London collective with hip-hop and R&B influences. Has seen commercial success since 2015 breakout hit 'In2' *// Flickr*

AJ Tracey - Ladbroke Grove:
Came up doing grime sets on radio. One of the most versatile UK artists today and has branched out to other genres such as drill, afroswing and DnB. *// Flickr*

Wiley - Bow, E3:
The often impulsive, but always entertaining, godfather of grime. His signature style, 'eskibeat', is a form of grime that has skippy drums and relies on heavy use of darker, icy synths. *Treddin' On Thin Ice* one of the scene's foundational albums. *// Flickr*

Ghetts - Plaistow:
A flow that moulds to any beat, wordplay for days and a passion carried over from grime's early days. His debut mixtape, *2000 & Life*, is a perfect example of grime's early aggression. His song 'Black Rose', was nominated for an Ivor Novello this year. *// Flickr*

Krept & Konan - Croydon:
Played a big part in UK rap scene's ascent to popularity over the past decade *// Flickr*

Dizzee Rascal - Bow, E3:
2003 Mercury Prize winner, came up during the rise of grime doing pirate radio sets with Slimzee and Wiley *// Wikimedia*

Giggs - Peckham:
Established the foundations of road rap. 'Talkin The Hardest' is a rap anthem and one of the scene's classic songs. *// Flickr*

Novelist - Lewisham:
The most exciting producer MC to come out of the 2010s. Pushed the faster, darker grime popularised by Dizzee's *Boy in Da Corner*. He released his Mercury-nominated debut album, *Novelist Guy* in 2018 *// Flickr*

Dave - Streatham:
Most promising young artist in the scene. Initially gained support through freestyles on Youtube before releasing two EPs in 2016 and 2017, respectively. After a Drake co-sign on 'Wanna Know (Remix)', he continued to develop his songwriting abilities, culminating in his impressive debut album, *Psychodrama* - a conscious concept album. *// Wikimedia*

Stormzy - Croydon:
Started off with a string of freestyles on SBTV and his own YouTube channel. Released 'Shut Up' in 2015, which further propelled the second resurgence of grime. His 2017 album, *Gang Signs and Prayer*, was nominated for a Mercury Prize *// Flickr*

THE STATE OF THE UK MUSIC SCENE

We caught up with a number of artists, DJs and personalities at Strawberries & Creem Festival to get their perspectives on the state of the UK music scene

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

Fiyisola Martins
Features Writer

// Andy Djaba

// Flickr

// Wikimedia

// Instagram: @SnoochieShy

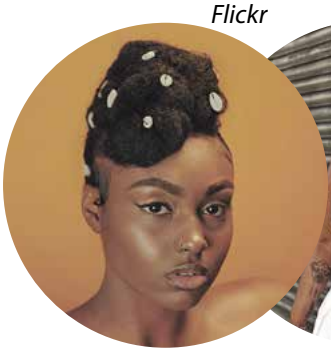
UK R&B

Following the mainstream success of artists like Ella Mai and Jorja Smith, who have broken the US market, there is a new wave of R&B artists emerging in the UK

Nao // *Flickr*

Cleo Sol // *Flickr*

Sinead Harnett // *Flickr*



Tiana Major9 // *SoundCloud*

Hamzaa // *SoundCloud*

Ama Lou // *Genius*

Etta Bond // *Flickr*

Joy Crookes // *Flickr*

Samm Henshaw // *Twitter: @SammHenshaw*

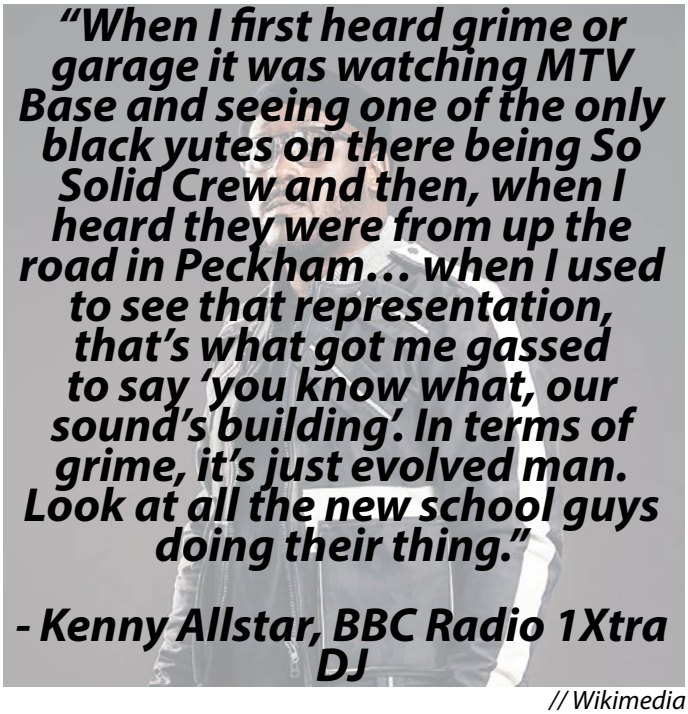
WHAT DOES GRIME MEAN TO YOU?

Discussing the perception of grime culture with artists and fans, who share what it personally means to them

"As someone who lives in the outskirts of London, it's a window into a world that's just down the road but very different to my own. The early stages of grime contain some of the rawest music you'll find across any genre - with its dark futuristic sound, it's almost a snapshot of a time where London was coming into the digital age. As something that evolved predominantly out of garage and jungle with strong influence from the sound system culture of dancehall and ragga, grime is distinctly multicultural - British on the outside but deeply rooted in the Caribbean."

- Avish Vijayaraghavan, Features Writer

// Flickr



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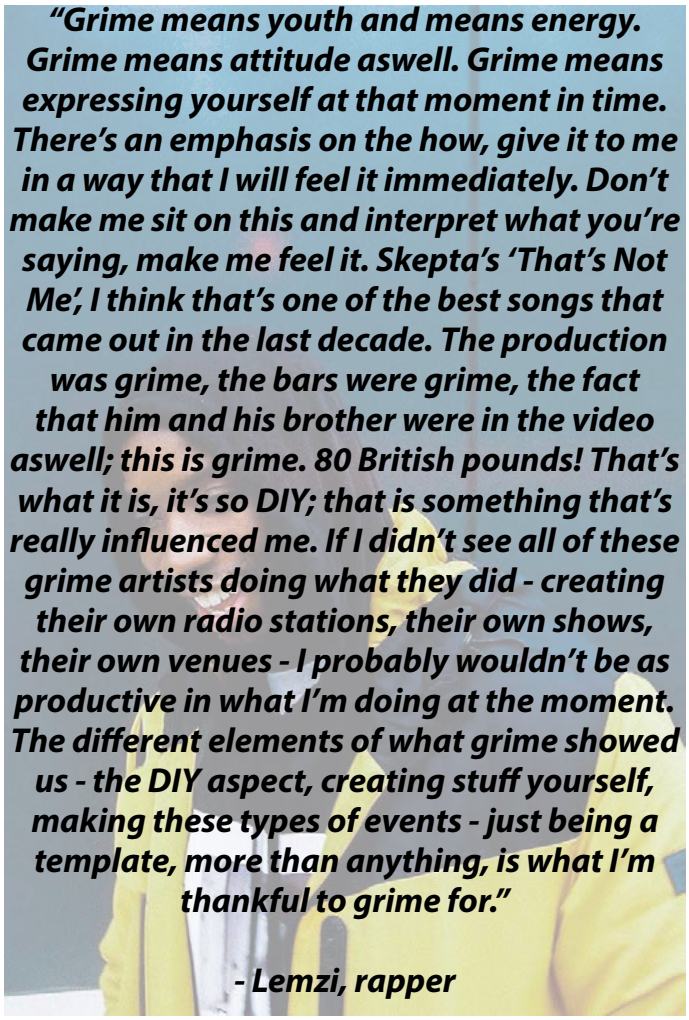
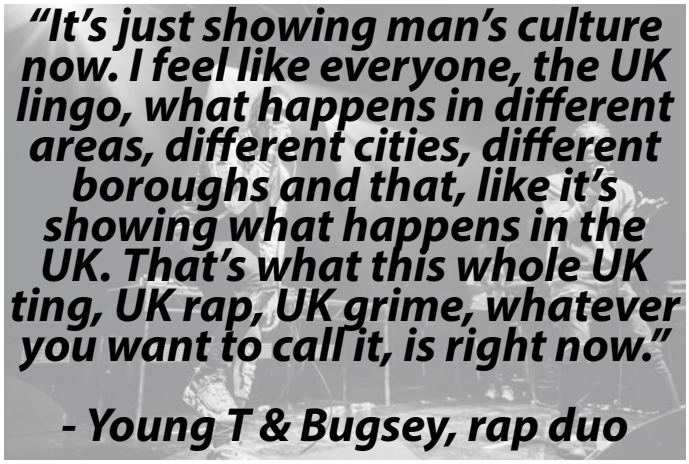


// Samiira Garane



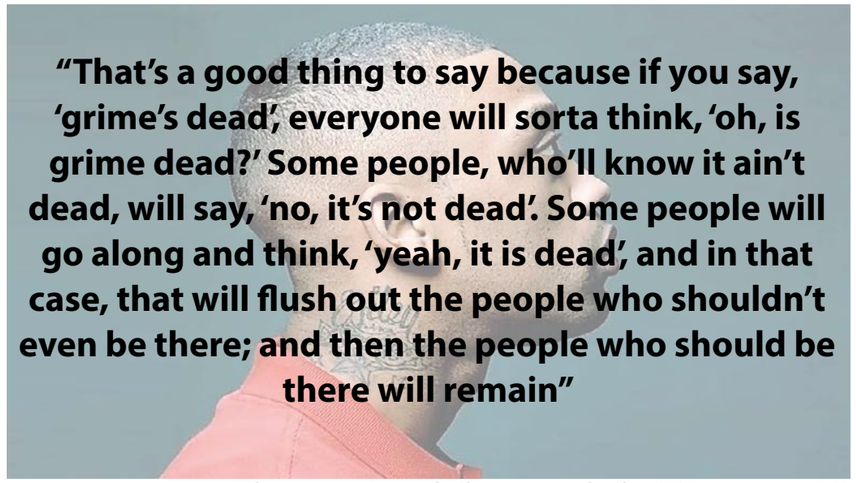
// Flickr

IS GRIME DEAD?

The genre is said to have 'died' once already in its not yet 20 year history and, with drill and afroswing currently dominating the UK singles market, how is grime reconciling the pressure of commercialisation with the effort to retain its musical authenticity?

Andy Djaba
Editor-in-Chief

Avish Vijayaraghavan
Features Writer



Wiley comments on whether grime is dead in 2008 interview *// BBC*

This phrase gets parroted as soon as a genre loses its initial hype but, in the case of grime, with derivative genres, such as drill and afroswing, currently proving more popular and more prevalent, the question is a valid one. The first question that needs to be asked, though, is whether a sound can ever truly die – the discussion here is really whether grime, and its culture, is still thriving. The answer to this is different across the board: for the fringe listener, 'dead' means it doesn't have airtime on the radio or in the charts; for the casual listener, it means artists in the scene aren't really producing albums with any consistency; for the serious grime listener, it means that no artists are releasing or doing sets. For grime purists, who fall into the last bracket, the answer is assuredly no. However, for the other listeners, there's more of an argument for the answer being yes.

It would be wrong to say that grime is buzzing right now. The resurgence the genre experienced in 2014, led by Skepta and Stormzy, had finished by the end of 2016. By then, these artists were experimenting with more sounds and branching out - Skepta had been co-signed by Drake and Kanye West, and Stormzy, the supposed leader of the new school of grime, released a 16-track album that contained only three 'pure' grime songs.

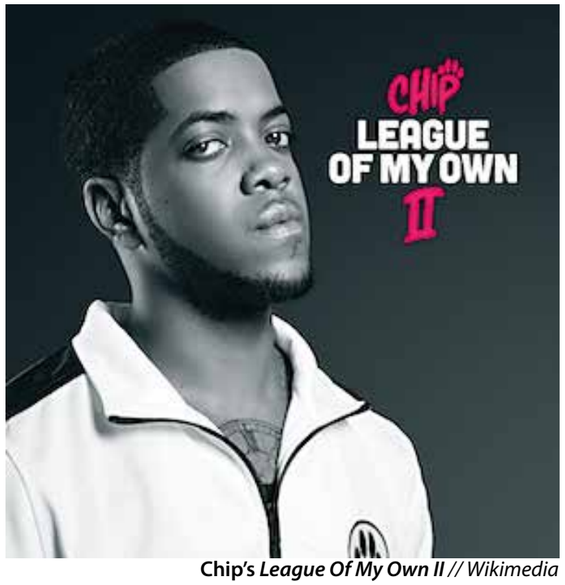
Even the most ardent grime fan would be hard-pressed to deny that a lot of projects these days lack originality. The lyrical content is wider, but the general sound of grime has changed and is much more influenced by elements of trap. The abrasive, lo-fi nature of early grime isn't as prevalent because the attitude towards it is different. Grime was originally a way for disaffected youths in council estates in inner city London to express their emotions but, as the genre achieved a certain level of commercial appeal, many artists grew out of that lifestyle and lost that raw hunger which fuelled their earlier days. Grime, for many artists, was an emotional release that was often hard to recreate - Dizzee Rascal even said he didn't want to create another *Boy in Da Corner* because it reminded him of a dark period in his life.

Luckily, even if the majority don't, enough artists are producing cohesive grime albums that the critics in the UK are forced to take some notice. A grime album has appeared in the nominations for the Mercury Prize each of the past three years, with Skepta's *Konnichiwa* even winning the 2016 award. Novelist's 2018 Mercury-nominated album, *Novelist Guy*, showcases his own, more experimental form of grime that is heavily influenced by early Dizzee Rascal. His album, amongst other efforts this past year from Maxsta, Manga, Mez, and Skepta, prove that cohesive and boundary-pushing grime albums are still being created and recognised in the world of UK music.

Grime definitely isn't dead in the eyes of the media. Two of the biggest producers in the scene, Sir Spyro and Rude Kid, both headline a weekly grime radio show on BBC 1Xtra and Kiss FM, respectively. Many thought that pure grime could never be mainstream because of how rough and aggressive it is, but the support of these two popular radio stations proves that the sound has evolved to capture the ears of people outside of the original scene. The rapid flows and sparse beats may not appeal straight away to the casual music listener, but the ethos of grime draws a lot of parallels with punk, metal, and techno.

It is also important to mention grime's live presence. Very few genres rival grime in terms of energy – an Eskimo Dance, for example, would sit amongst some of the best gigs in any genre. Grime artists, such as P Money, are still selling out shows all over Europe and beyond. The audiences are growing, not dwindling, which suggests that grime is, in fact, thriving.

Grime has become synonymous with Black British music and has been used as an umbrella term for derivative genres, such as drill, afroswing and UK rap/ hip-hop (although this could be described as grime-adjacent). With that being said, it could be argued that grime can never die because, even though 'pure' grime is no longer as prevalent, its influence pervades these popular genres. It's easy to draw parallels with hip-hop.



Chip's *League Of My Own II* *// Wikimedia*

Across the pond, 'mumble rap' has recently had its time in the limelight and, although many hip-hop purists would disagree, it has widely been accepted as almost being a sub-genre of hip-hop and indicative of hip-hop's evolution, rather than its death. In many ways, grime can be seen as the UK's answer to hip-hop and, similarly, the presence and popularity of derivative genres or sub-genres should be seen as an inevitable offshoot of an evolving genre, not a sign that grime is dead.

Alongside its wider appeal, the grime scene has proved its resilience. The scene took a big hit when Radar Radio, a station that pushed authentic UK music: from grime to garage to drill, closed down. Yet, a year later, all the major presenters from that station, have moved on to even larger platforms: Big Zuu and Kenny Allstar have moved to BBC 1Xtra, Snoochie Shy moved to Boiler Room before joining her previous co-stars on 1Xtra, alongside a spot on MTV. Grime has taken many hits and still kept going.

It isn't the first time grime has "died" either. Grime supposedly died in the mid-to-late 2000s before making its comeback in 2014. Suppose it has now "died" again; it's possible that the

DJ Logan Sama sporting 'Grime Is Dead' T-shirt *// Keepinitgrimy*

situation may be different this time since we live in a vastly different musical climate, where streaming services have taken over and singles are valued more than albums. But the era of streaming has also made grime far more accessible than it was before. Grime has spread from council estates in East London to countries that don't even speak English like Russia, Japan and Brazil. The pioneer of grime, Wiley, was given an MBE last year for services to music and received an Ivor Novello Inspiration award this year - a reflection that grime and its culture has truly come full circle.

In conclusion, grime isn't dead. Sure, it's taken a backseat while afroswing and drill have taken over but, if a genre were truly dead, there wouldn't even be cause for debate - there's a reason this article isn't 'Is funky dead?'. The culture is too big now for grime to ever truly die and, if history is anything to go by, pure grime is lying in wait, ready to come back stronger than ever.

WOT DO U CALL IT?

2014:

Red Bull Culture Clash with Boy Better Know, Rebel Sound and A$AP Mob // *Flickr*

2015:

Skepta shuts down Shoreditch car park // *Twitter: @KA*

2016:

Boy Better Know headline Wireless Festival // *Instagram: @WirelessFest*

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT