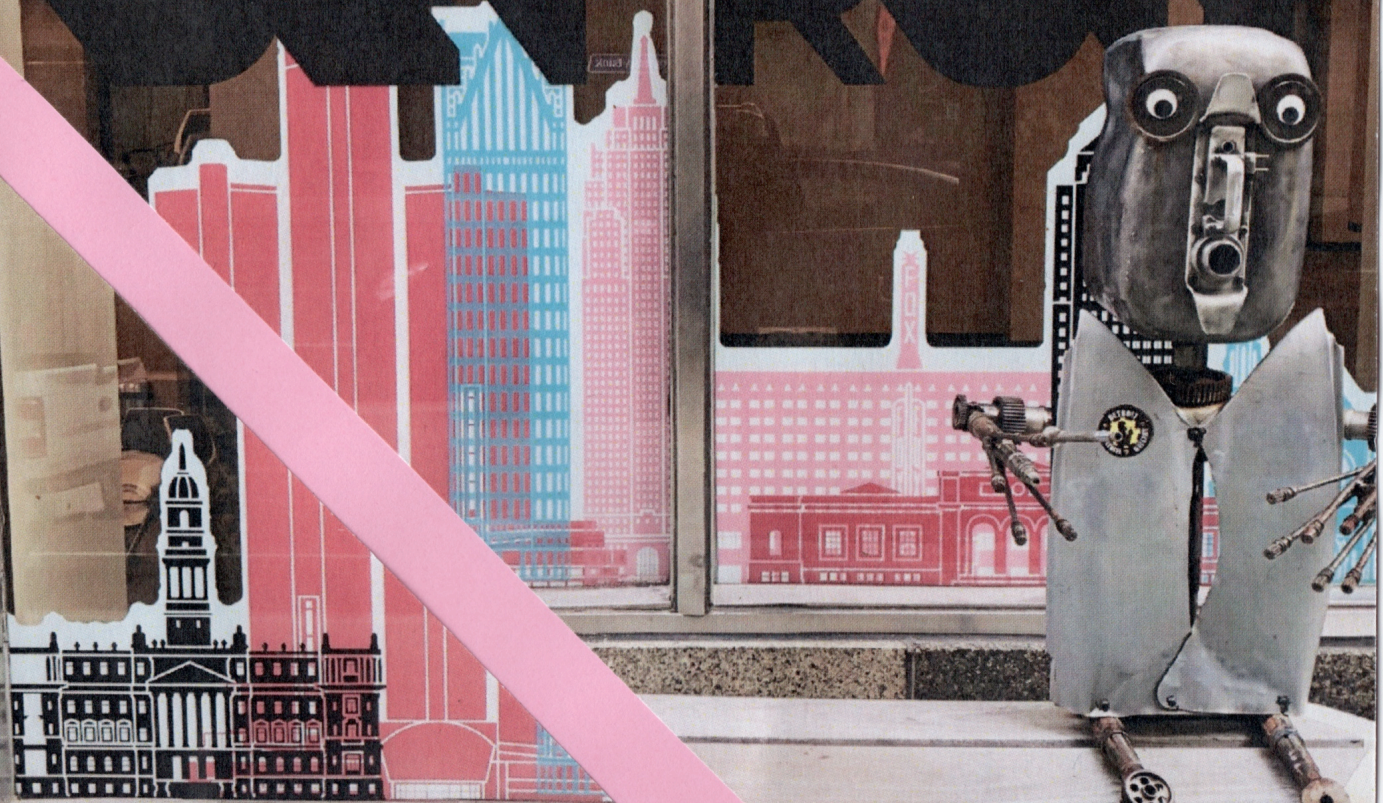


#SOUNDS OF OUR TOWN

THE DETROIT EDITION

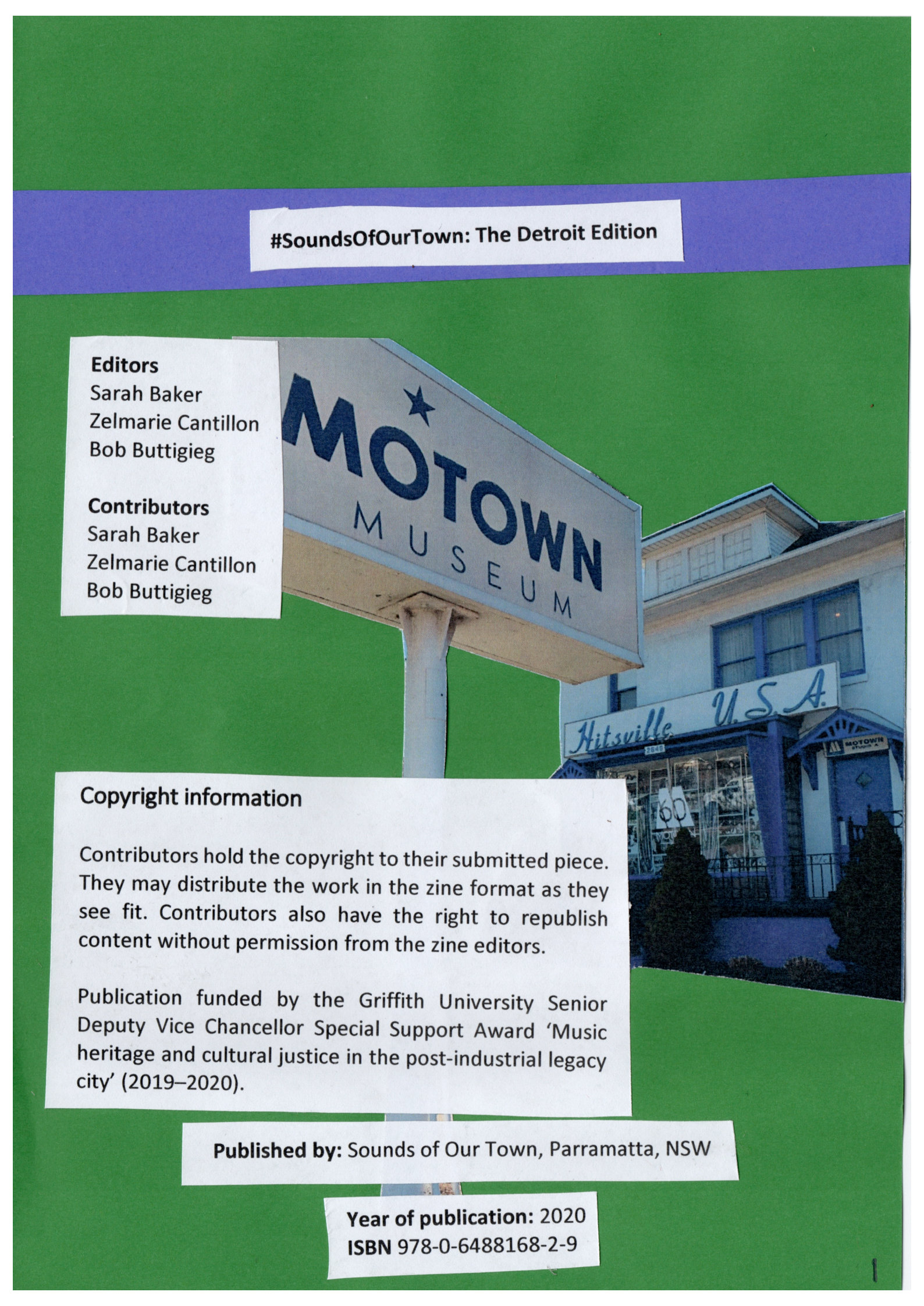
Welcome to

DETROIT



Edited by

Sarah Baker
Zelmarie Cantillon
Bob Buttigieg

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Motown Museum. In the foreground, a large white sign on a post reads "MOTOWN MUSEUM" in blue letters, with a blue star above the "O" in "MOTOWN". Behind the sign is a two-story brick building with a sign that says "Hitsville U.S.A." in blue cursive. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

#SoundsOfOurTown: The Detroit Edition

Editors

Sarah Baker
Zelmarie Cantillon
Bob Buttigieg

Contributors

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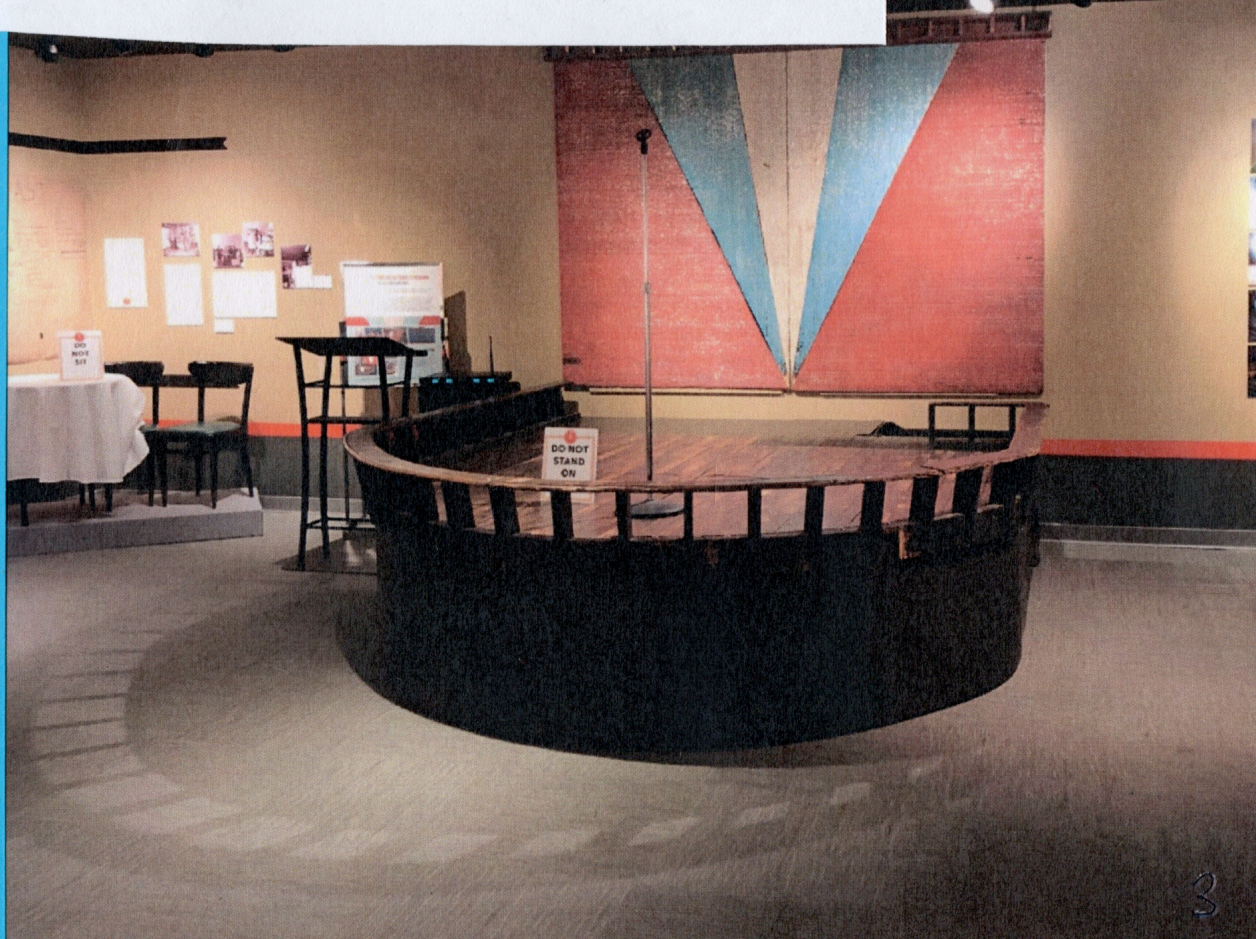
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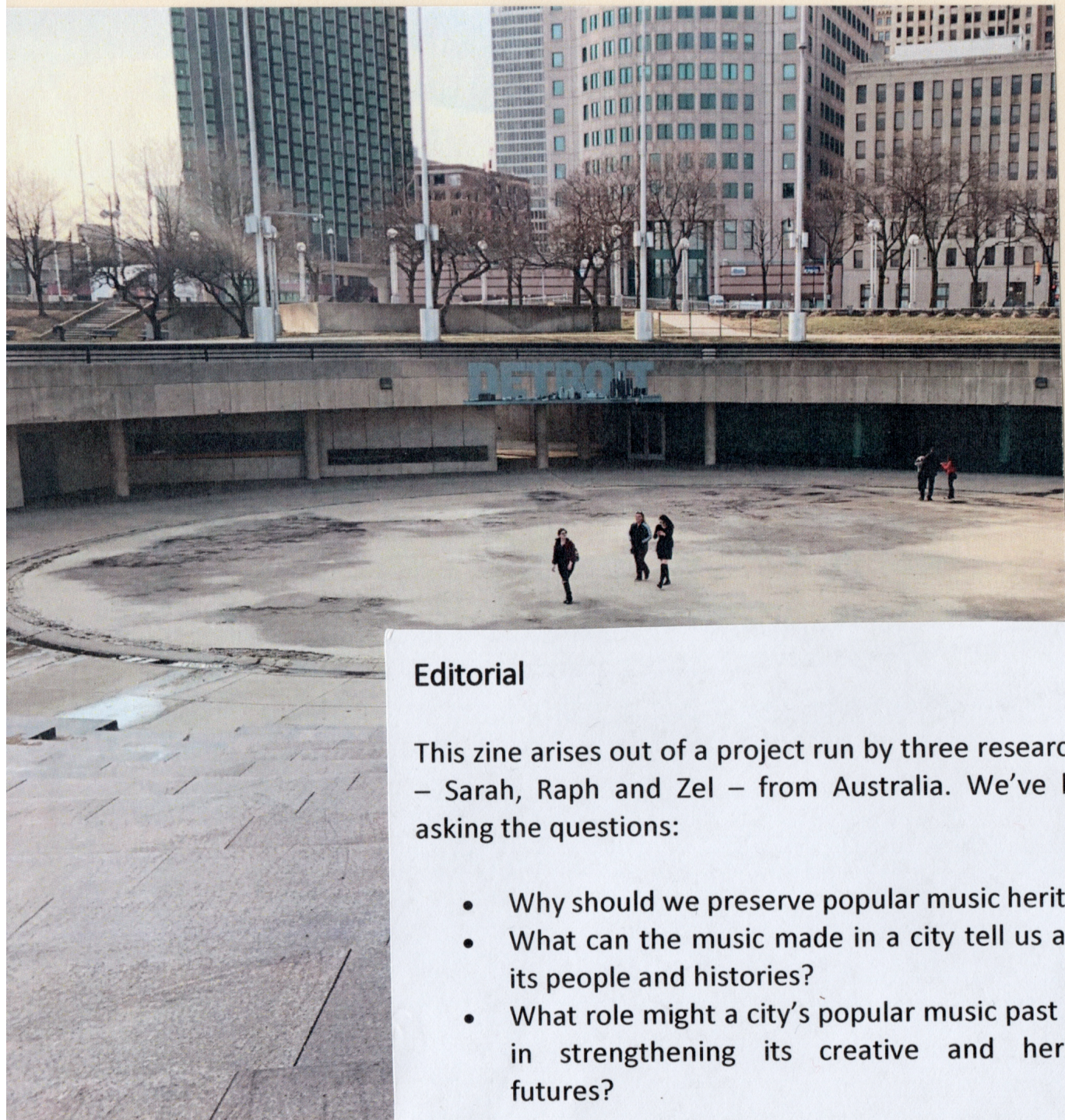
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Cantillon, Z, Baker, S & Nowak, R 2020, 'A cultural justice approach to popular music heritage in deindustrialising cities', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1768579>

Thanks to Carleton Gholz, founder of the Detroit Sound Conservancy, for helping to facilitate our fieldwork in Detroit and for participating in our research in Wollongong. Finally, thank you to everyone who participated in the project, giving their time to be interviewed and sharing their insights with us.





Editorial

This zine arises out of a project run by three researchers – Sarah, Raph and Zel – from Australia. We've been asking the questions:

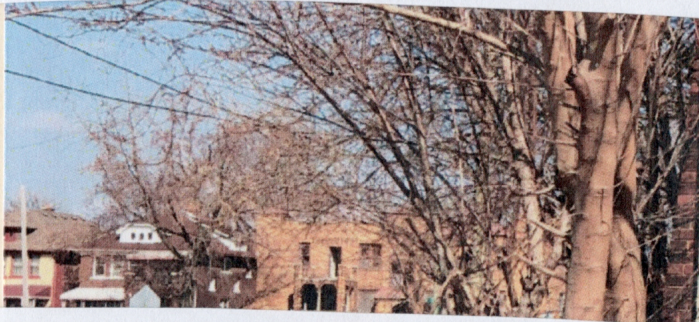
- Why should we preserve popular music heritage?
- What can the music made in a city tell us about its people and histories?
- What role might a city's popular music past have in strengthening its creative and heritage futures?

Back in 2018, we received a small grant from Griffith to support research into popular music heritage initiatives in places that have experienced industrial decline. We started out with a focus on Wollongong, a deindustrialising city in Australia which had made various efforts to document and celebrate its rich music history. One of the key insights we took away from our visits to Wollongong was the importance of passionate, committed individuals in the community who were taking a grassroots, do-it-yourself, do-it-together approach to telling stories about popular music's past.

We also wanted to know what was happening with popular music heritage in deindustrialising cities overseas. In 2019, after receiving a more substantial pot of funding from Griffith, we expanded the scope of our research to include Detroit, USA and Birmingham, UK. Like Wollongong, Birmingham and Detroit drew our interest because they're deindustrialising cities with rich music histories and heritage initiatives that serve to reflect on those histories. We were interested in what parallels could be drawn between these places, but also what aspects made them unique.

In April 2019, Zel travelled to Detroit to connect with and learn from Carleton Gholz, founder of the Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC), a non-profit organisation devoted to preserving the city's music heritage. While in Detroit, Zel spoke to several key people interested in popular music's history and engaged with a range of interesting heritage initiatives, including the Motown Museum, Exhibit 3000 techno museum, DSC's *Salvaging Sound* exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum, and a music heritage tour with Carleton. The research highlighted a vibrant cluster of popular music heritage activities in Detroit. This fieldwork also showed that despite the city's dramatic industrial decline and urban decay, it is now in a process of regeneration – a contested process with both significant benefits and drawbacks.

We wanted our research outcomes to reach a wide audience, not just be confined to scholarly books and journals. Taking a cultural justice approach, we set out to participate in various public engagement activities. In Wollongong, we held a public event at a local art gallery which brought together music heritage practitioners from Australia, Norway, the UK and the USA. Detroit was represented on the panel by Carleton, who shared with the people of Wollongong insights into his – and the Detroit Sound Conservancy's – ongoing work to remember and foster pride in the music history of the city. The panel discussion, reflections from panellists, and the transcript of a radio interview, were gathered together in a zine – *Sounds of Our Town: The Wollongong Edition* – which was made available to download on our project website: www.soundsofourtown.com



Sounds of Our Town: The Detroit Edition is another zine that aims to make our research more publicly accessible. The purpose of this zine is to document and share our experiences and reflections on what we found in Detroit. The zine opens with a collection of photos and vignettes by Zel that provide some context about Detroit's deindustrialisation, racial injustices and cultural initiatives that exist to reflect on these aspects of the city's past and present. At the heart of the zine is an article by Zel, Sarah and Bob which outlines the role of popular music heritage for achieving cultural justice in deindustrialising cities. This article draws on work Zel, Sarah and Raph recently published in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* and provides an explanation of 'cultural justice' and deindustrialisation, some background on Detroit, and examples of different popular music heritage activities in the city.



Sarah Baker, Zelmarie Cantillon and Bob Buttigieg
(editorial team)

Reflections on deindustrialisation and injustice in Detroit

By Zelmarie Cantillon

Detroit's story is often imagined in terms of its growth, decline, decay and regeneration. Cultural institutions (museums, libraries, galleries) and other creative projects throughout the city reflect on this story. These initiatives, while not focused specifically on music, provide the context for understanding Detroit's music heritage projects and their relationship to fighting against long-standing, deep-seated inequalities and injustices within the city.

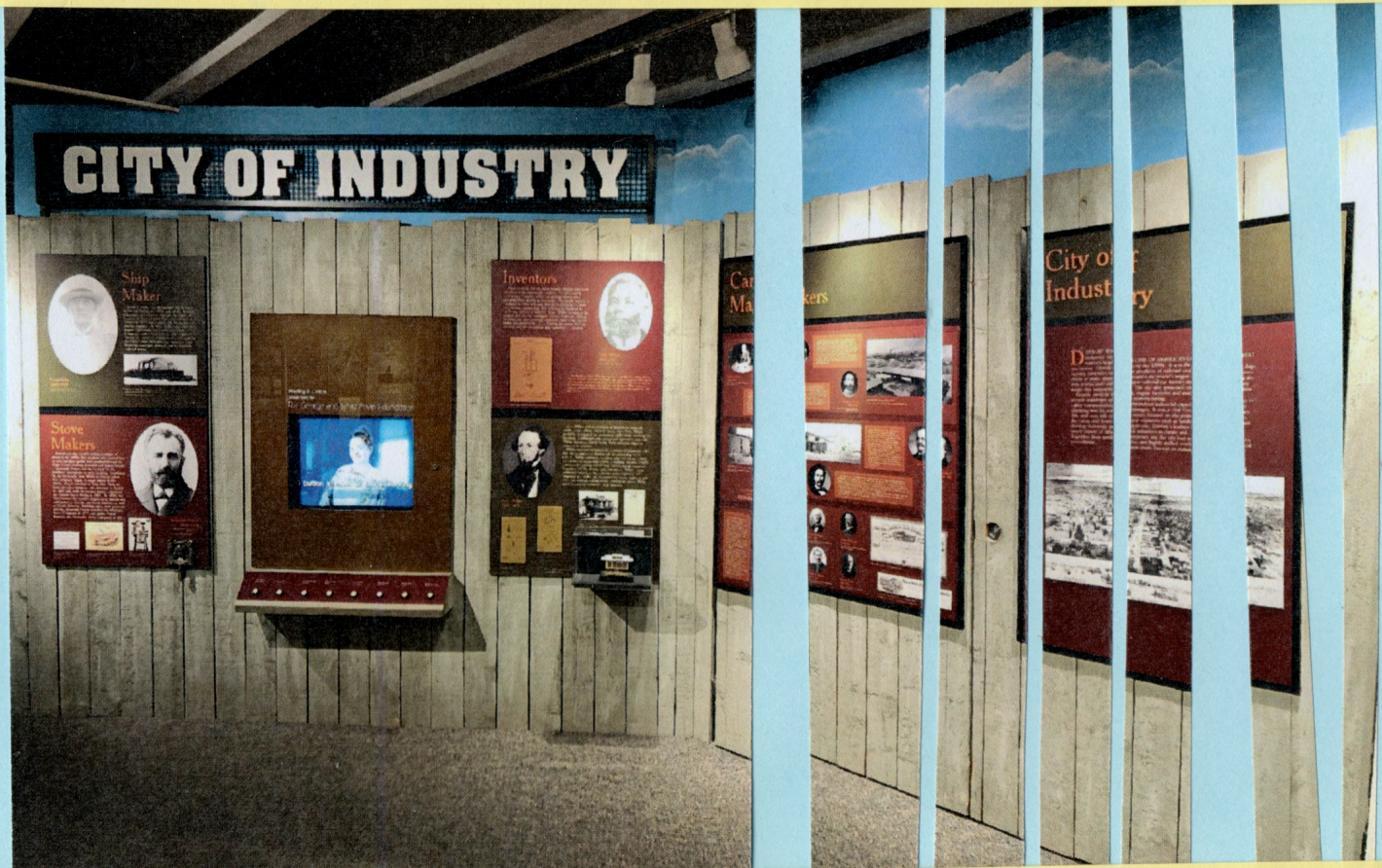
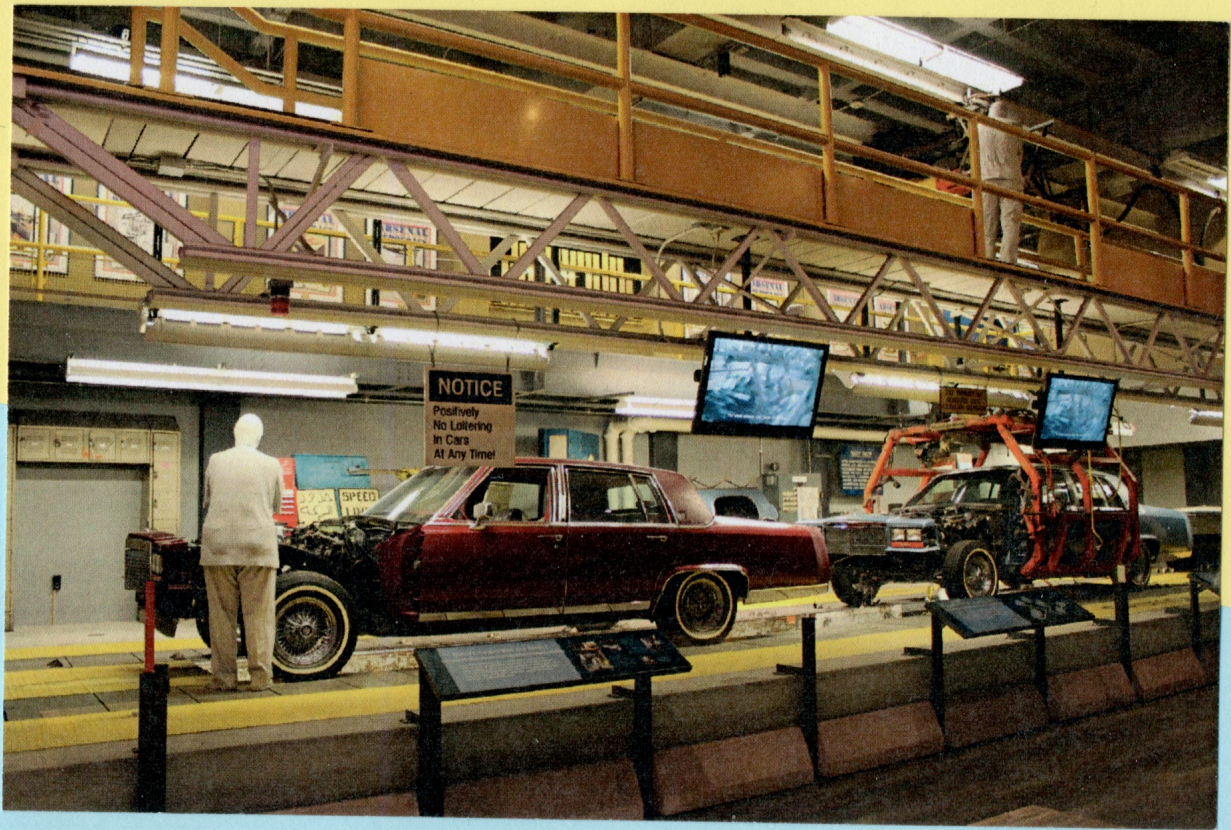
Motor city

Known as the 'Motor City', Detroit's prosperity was spurred by a booming automobile manufacturing industry. At the Detroit Institute of Arts, Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry Murals* (1932–1933) pays tribute to the significance of the city's manufacturing industry at its peak. The Detroit Historical Museum also features numerous exhibits that document the city's industrial economy.

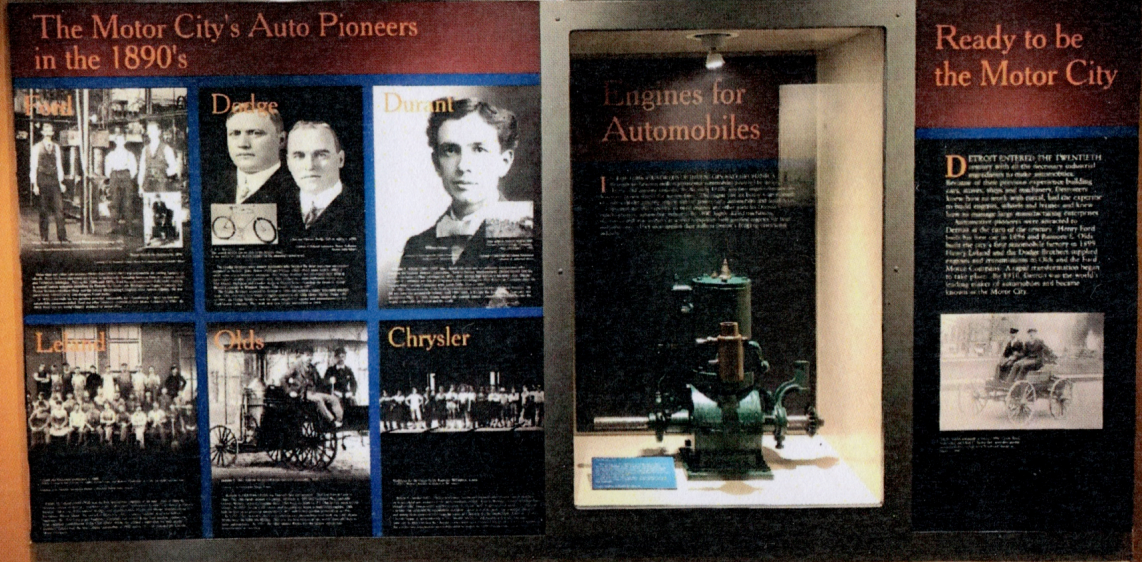


Throughout the early twentieth century, Detroit's population expanded rapidly, due in part to the Great Migration – the period when many African Americans left the Jim Crow South for less restrictive lives in northern states – along with the availability of good jobs in manufacturing. The twentieth century also saw changes that led to steep population decline in Detroit, including the relocation of manufacturing activities away from the city centre and into the wider metropolitan area, and large numbers of white people moving out to the suburbs. Both shifts were enabled by car ownership and growing motorway connections that carved up the city and further disadvantaged those who lived in segregated neighbourhoods, couldn't move closer to work or didn't own a car. Detroit's massive population loss left behind countless unoccupied residences and businesses, only worsened by the recent foreclosure crisis.





Ready to be the Motor City



Black Bottom Street View

The *Black Bottom Street View* exhibit at Detroit Public Library used archival images to 'resurrect' the Black Bottom neighbourhood. As one of the few places where black people were permitted to live in the city in the early twentieth century, Black Bottom became the heart of Detroit's black community. Its business district, Paradise Valley, holds an important place in the city's music history, with local nightlife spots hosting jazz and blues musicians like Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington. Black Bottom was razed in the 1960s as part of an 'urban renewal' strategy – destroying homes, businesses, venues and churches to make way for the Chrysler Freeway. Residents were forced to disperse, and 12th Street became the new hub for the black community's commercial activity. *Black Bottom Street View* was a form of cultural justice, commemorating the importance of this neighbourhood to the city's history and drawing attention to the purposeful, systemic erasure of black culture and heritage.





1967 rebellion



The *Detroit 67: Perspectives* exhibit at Detroit Historical Museum remembers the 1967 civil unrest in Detroit, which saw the black community's uprising against institutionalised racism. Although sparked by a police raid of an unlicensed bar on 12th Street, the violent clash was a culmination of decades of police brutality, segregation and inequality within the city and beyond. *Detroit 67* uses oral histories and archival material to shed light on experiences of this period, but also documents the events leading up to it – including previous race riots, the destruction of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley, and the impacts of industrial decline on the black community – and issues that persist today. The exhibit is part of a larger project, 'Looking Back to Move Forward', that uses the 50-year anniversary of the event 'as a catalyst to engage, reflect and provide opportunities to take the collective action that can help move our community forward' (<https://detroit1967.org/about/>). *Detroit 67* aims to do justice through heritage by highlighting the connections between the past and ongoing racial injustices.

Education Encumbered
 Disproportionate loss within the city hindered success in both public and private schools. Falling tax revenues and environmental cut funding for teaching resources, infrastructure, and salaries. A controversial skidline housing program, designed to desegregate schools, heightened tensions and promoted divisive court cases and racial confrontations.
 The system of parochial schools which served a significant portion of Detroit children collapsed as paragon departed for the suburbs. Within a few years, Detroit public schools were almost exclusively African American. They developed poorly in similar urban districts, but were the only option available.

Neglected Neighborhoods
 Neighborhood decline began prior to 1967 as industries, stores, and people moved out of Detroit. The civil disturbance accelerated "white flight," accounting for a loss of over 170,000 people by 1970. African Americans joined the outward flow, and eventually tens of thousands of homes were left vacant. Without customers, small businesses that served the neighborhood closed. Grocery chains abandoned the city, creating food deserts for those who remained. Empty houses, offices, and factories fostered Detroit's pervasive image of urban decay.

Downtown Decline
 The conveniences associated with the suburban lifestyle made venturing downtown largely unnecessary. Suburban shopping centers and office towers drew customers and tenants from the downtown core and skyscrapers. Federally subsidized mortgages, not available in the city, funded new housing developments on cheap land in the suburbs. Downtown anchor stores like Hudson's and Cabel's were gone by 1963, and with them were able shops like Walkermans, Handbach's and Grinnell. Brothers Music, Additionally, the Detroit Lions moved to the Pontiac Silverdome in 1974, followed by the Detroit Pistons in 1978.

Downtown Revitalization
 Even as downtown stores and offices closed, Detroit was reimaging itself, starting with its skyline. The Renaissance Center complex was completed in 1977, sparking renewed interest in Detroit's international waterfront. Mall Plaza opened two years later. The once Bankers Trust District saw new life with projects that refurbished the Cafe and Fox Theater and the surrounding area. Dedicated fans saved Orchestra Hall, and the Music Center for the Performing Arts, and launched a new Detroit Opera House. Greenbelt's Trappers Alley got an extensive facelift.

A Rustbelt Reputation
 In the eyes of the world, Detroit was far from a neutral crisis – a decaying blue-collar town offering little attraction for tourists or capital investment. Detroit or race, the city was dubbed the murder capital of America, while suburbs remained relatively crime-free. Despite high-profile interventions in the inner-city and Hazlewood, the city suffered continued depopulation and declining revenues. Even Motown Records left for Los Angeles in 1972. Bad publicity beamed with the seven o'clock on the night before Halloween – Detroit's Night. Generally targeting empty homes, the spectacle became national news in 1984 when the fire department responded to over 600 alarms in three days.

Dogged Determination
 Detroit's negative image was countered with humor and hope. A satirical downtown checklist, Emily Gail, launched a "Say Nice Things About Detroit" campaign and sponsored "Tall Tents." Casson Marks was proclaimed as a determination. Cobo Center was reimagined in 2005. Ethel's, Swains called and the region's cultural diversity. Many returning residents were encouraged when African Americans attained senior positions in government, media and corporations, affecting demographic realities and expectations. Increased opportunities for education and career training opened to minorities, even as regional jobs remained elusive.

ZE EV CHAFETS
DEVILS NIGHT
 A poster for the film 'Devils Night' showing a fire scene.

say nice things about DETROIT
 A poster for the 'Say Nice Things About Detroit' campaign featuring a man's face.

The Heidelberg Project

Urban blight across Detroit is emblematic of the complicated, intersecting challenges the city has faced: industrial decline, racism, poverty, population loss, low tax revenue, bankruptcy. Although Downtown Detroit has been revitalising in recent years, its surrounding neighbourhoods are still filled with foreclosed homes, abandoned streets, empty lots and derelict factories. Under the Detroit Demolition Program, many such properties have been razed with many more likely to be demolished in the future. This is a contentious project, particularly considering the city's history with razing black neighbourhoods in the name of progress and renewal.



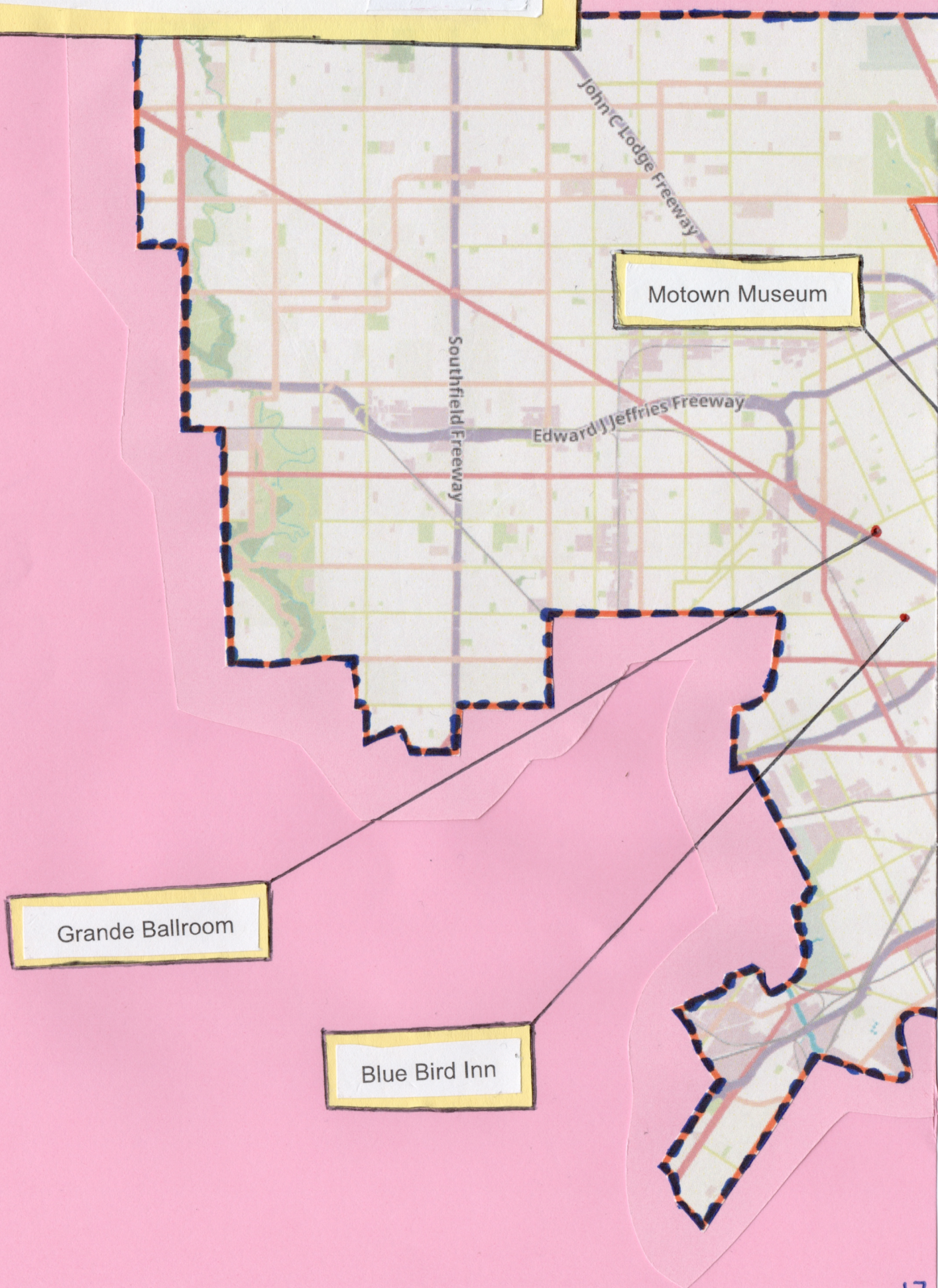


In the McDougall-Hunt neighbourhood, just north of the former site of Black Bottom, artist Tyree Gunton's Heidelberg Project is a public art initiative that makes us question how we see urban 'blight' and 'derelict' neighbourhoods. The Heidelberg Project is a street transformed into an art gallery – paintings on houses, footpaths and roads, and vacant lots filled with art constructed from found objects that might otherwise be discarded and unappreciated. Initiated in 1988, the Project is informed by the idea that 'a community can re-develop and sustain itself, from the inside out, by embracing its diverse cultures and artistic attributes as the essential building blocks for a fulfilling and economically viable way of life' (<https://www.heidelberg.org/mission-vision>). Located in an area hit hard by Detroit's decline, especially following the closure of the nearby Packard Automotive Plant, the Heidelberg Project seeks justice through cultural means – shifting the narrative from despair to hope, promoting a sense of pride in place, and bringing art to residents who might not visit more formal cultural institutions in Downtown (see <https://www.heidelberg.org/history>).



An Incomplete Map of Detroit's Popular Music Heritage

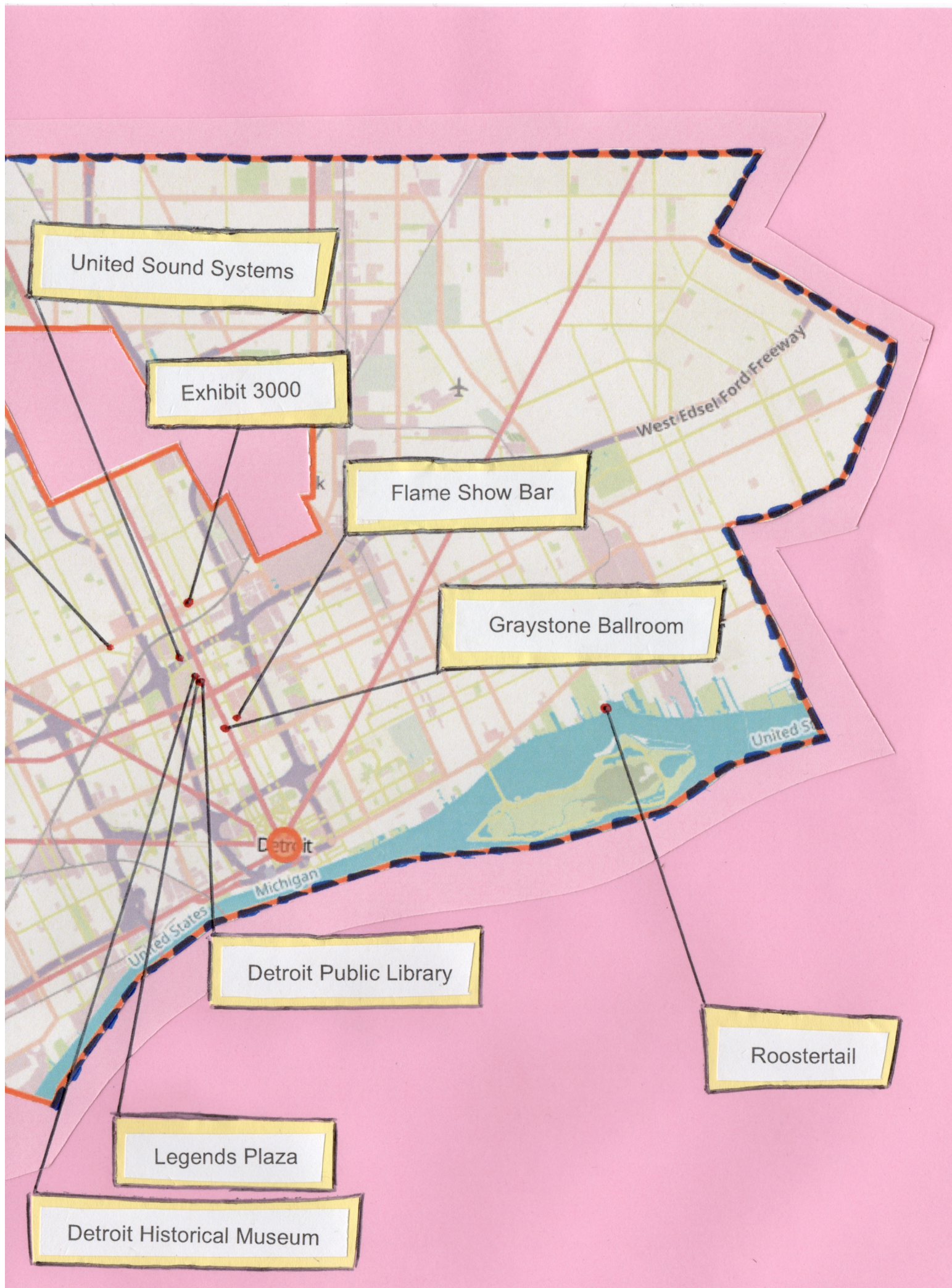
Bob Buttigieg



Motown Museum

Grande Ballroom

Blue Bird Inn



United Sound Systems

Exhibit 3000

Flame Show Bar

Graystone Ballroom

Detroit Public Library

Legends Plaza

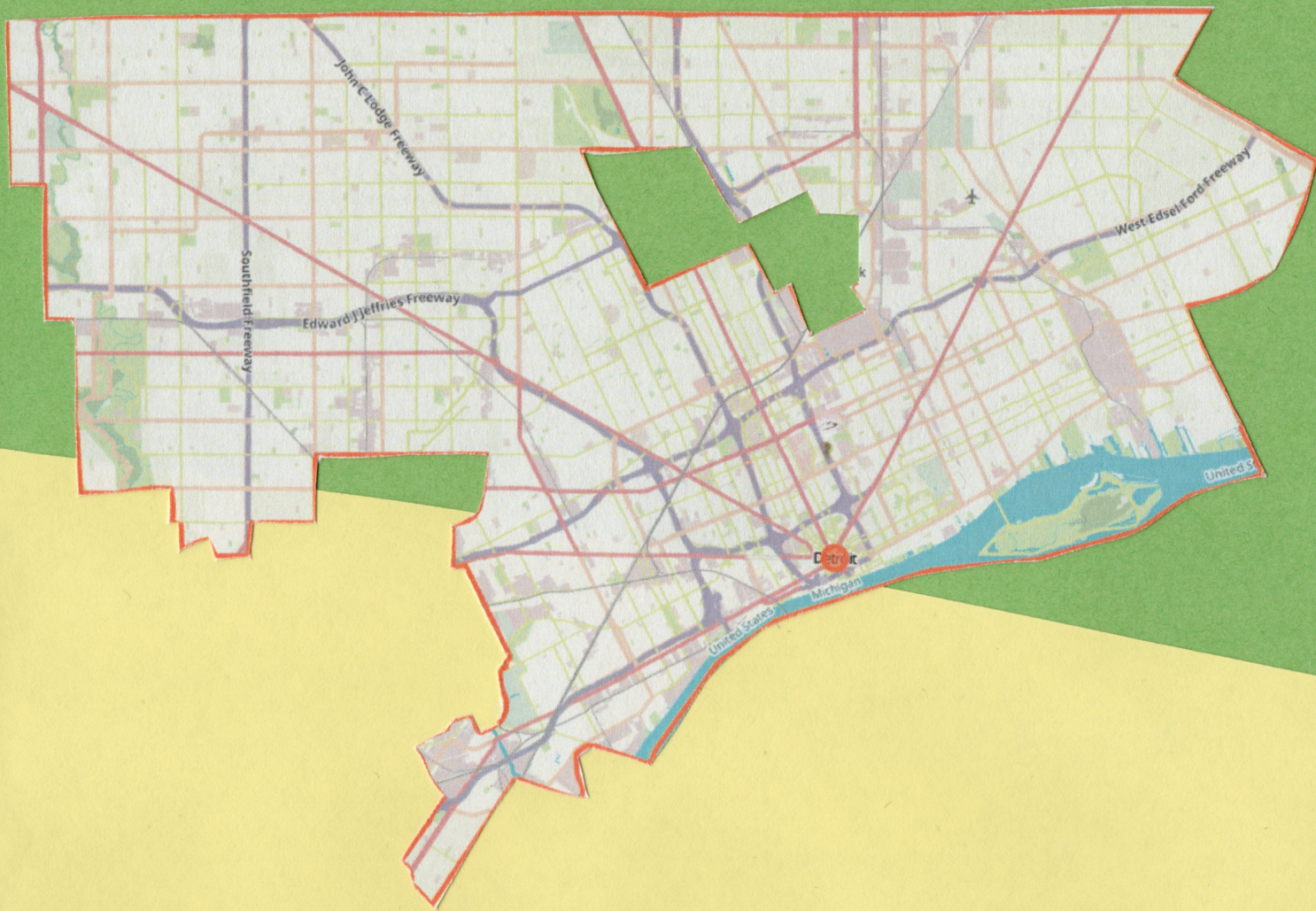
Detroit Historical Museum

Roostertail

Cultural justice for Detroit! Critical approaches to popular music heritage in a deindustrialising city

By Zelmarie Cantillon, Sarah Baker and Bob Buttigieg

Over the past several decades, industrial decline in Western countries has contributed to significant economic, social, cultural and material transformations for local communities. This phenomenon, often referred to as 'deindustrialisation' and 'post-industrialism', has been accompanied by rising unemployment, poverty and urban decay. In the wake of deindustrialisation, many cities have increasingly recognised that arts, culture and heritage can be important for their rejuvenation and the diversification of their economies. Local governments have turned to 'creative city' strategies as a form of renewal, aiming to invest in creative industries, strengthen their service economy and expand their cultural offer. For example, Detroit has been a UNESCO Creative City of Design since 2015 and now has an 'Action Plan' to drive growth in inclusive design practice through to 2025.¹ Other strategies that cities have adopted include a greater emphasis on popular music, with places branding themselves as 'music cities' in an effort to revitalise their image and bolster a music tourism industry. This trend encompasses promoting contemporary live music scenes as well as looking to the past through popular music heritage initiatives. These efforts, in the United States and elsewhere, have manifested as both government-led, large-scale projects and more grassroots, do-it-yourself initiatives.



The effects of industrial decline are often measured and discussed in relation to economic and social factors: the closure of factories, job losses, reduced quality of living conditions, population decline, increasing inequalities, and legacies of trauma. For Detroit, the conversations tend to be focused on multiple complex and interconnecting factors, including the downsizing of industry, racial inequalities, suburbanisation and 'white flight', and, more recently, the foreclosure of homes and deteriorating economic conditions following the 2007/2008 global financial crisis. However, deindustrialisation also has significant *cultural* effects. These effects can be described as what Nancy Fraser calls 'cultural injustices', which manifest as 'cultural domination', 'nonrecognition' and 'disrespect'.² How can Detroit's popular music past be used to help resist these injustices? And how might popular music heritage initiatives in Detroit produce cultural justice outcomes?

What is 'cultural justice'?

Cultural justice can be described as a form of social justice, which is an approach to addressing the structural inequalities underpinning societies that lead to injustices. Because heritage is a cultural product (and process) that seeks to represent cultural identities, expressions, practices, symbols and materialities, by focusing on the cultural we can centre the discursive and material processes and actions through which injustices are resisted, subverted and challenged. That is, we use the term 'cultural justice' rather than 'social justice' because it offers us a more precise lens to examine the cultural dimensions of injustice.

This means that to understand cultural justice, we first need to understand cultural *injustice*. While injustice, colloquially, is about a lack of fairness, cultural injustice is about the unfair treatment of a people by way of their products and processes. This includes their creative works, their modes of communication, as well as how they are represented by others (for example, in writing and film, but also in *ideas*).

When different people with different cultures come into contact with one another – through any number of historical and contemporary means, from travel and trade to invasion, occupation and subjugation – how their products and processes are treated is a matter of justice, because it is also a matter of power. When one group of people has more power than another, they are in a position to assert dominance over them, to ignore or exclude them, and to treat them poorly. The same treatment can be extended to their products and their processes. Artworks and music can be banned, destroyed, or denigrated. Inherited skills, techniques and 'ways of doing' can be suppressed, seen as inferior, and ridiculed. These kinds of intercultural dealings are manifestations of cultural injustice – the unfair treatment of one group and their products and processes by another.



In thinking about heritage, cultural justice can be considered both as an outcome – the absence of cultural injustice – *and* as a process – the way that injustices, like ‘cultural domination’, ‘nonrecognition’ and ‘disrespect’³ are countered. But cultural justice itself does not sit outside of culture – in addition to its focus on cultural products and processes, it is itself cultural because it is carried out through the discursive and material practices *of* a culture. This also means that cultural justice as a process can be carried out through discursive and material practices *other* than those given by the dominant culture.

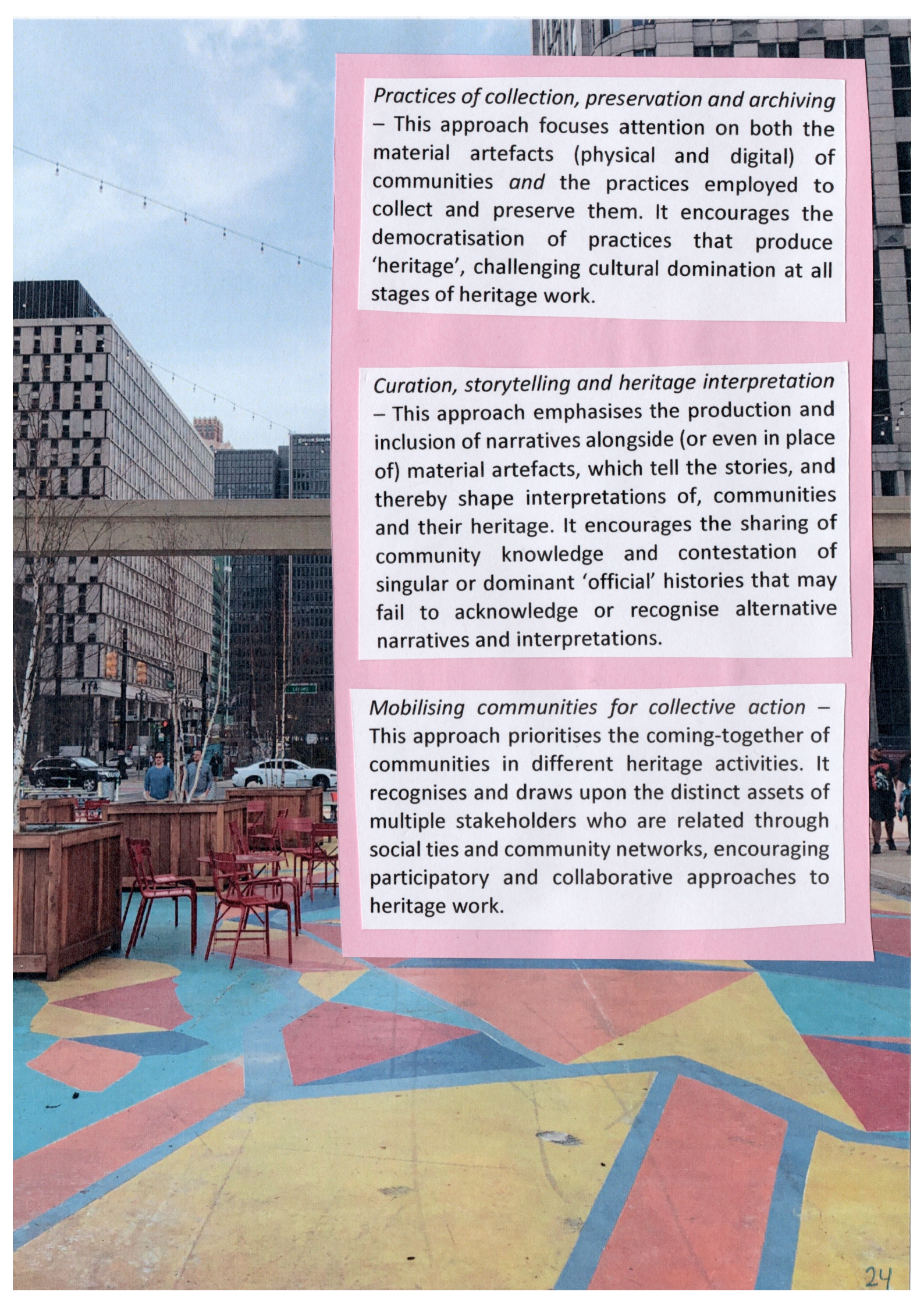
If heritage work is about how we select what is to be preserved and valued from the past and how it is made available into the future as a resource for our society, then cultural justice is precisely about this making-available. It is not enough to collect, store and protect the products and processes of different cultures if everything but those of the dominant culture are relegated to history and forgotten in archives. Cultural justice in the heritage profession means fostering an approach that recognises and values cultural objects, cultural institutions and cultural work, as well as problematising issues of power, participation, access and representation.

What might a cultural justice toolkit look like?

When seeking cultural justice outcomes, we suggest that heritage practitioners embrace multiple, intersectional – and sometimes conflicting – narratives surrounding the expressions, people and places they aim to document, and remain attentive to the contestations, uncertainties and tensions that constitute the communities they aim to represent. We also encourage a *critical* approach to cultural justice that seeks to reveal and address heritage approaches that are harmful or problematic, while drawing attention to the productive contributions of heritage work.

Inspired by the work of Damayanti Banerjee and Sheila Steinberg on environmental justice movements,⁴ we have adopted and refined their 'cultural tools of protest' to construct a cultural justice toolkit for heritage work. The three critical approaches to cultural justice in this toolkit can be drawn on to navigate and resist injustices, or to 'construct strategies of action and influence collective mobilization'.⁵

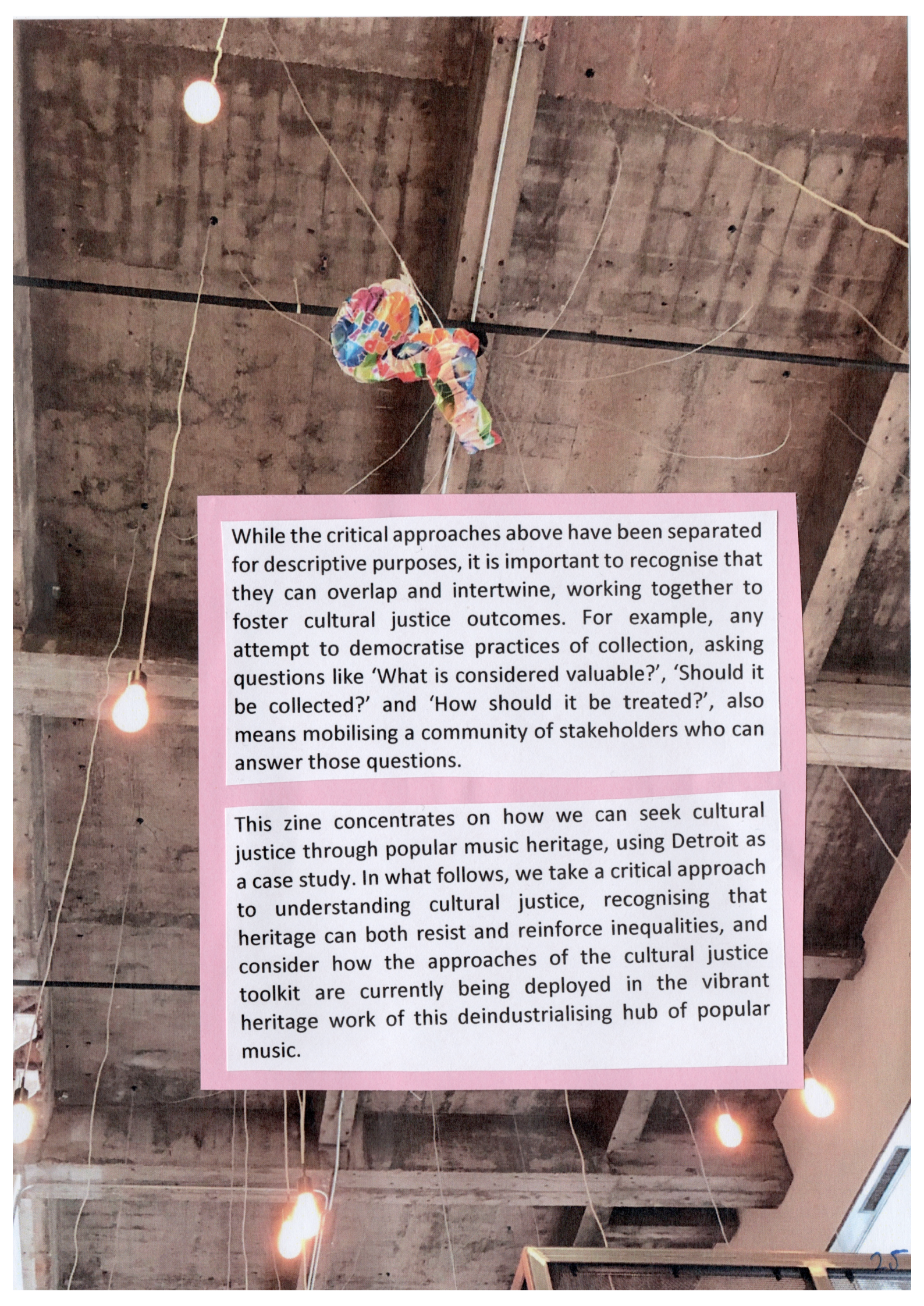




Practices of collection, preservation and archiving
– This approach focuses attention on both the material artefacts (physical and digital) of communities *and* the practices employed to collect and preserve them. It encourages the democratisation of practices that produce ‘heritage’, challenging cultural domination at all stages of heritage work.

Curation, storytelling and heritage interpretation
– This approach emphasises the production and inclusion of narratives alongside (or even in place of) material artefacts, which tell the stories, and thereby shape interpretations of, communities and their heritage. It encourages the sharing of community knowledge and contestation of singular or dominant ‘official’ histories that may fail to acknowledge or recognise alternative narratives and interpretations.

Mobilising communities for collective action –
This approach prioritises the coming-together of communities in different heritage activities. It recognises and draws upon the distinct assets of multiple stakeholders who are related through social ties and community networks, encouraging participatory and collaborative approaches to heritage work.



While the critical approaches above have been separated for descriptive purposes, it is important to recognise that they can overlap and intertwine, working together to foster cultural justice outcomes. For example, any attempt to democratise practices of collection, asking questions like 'What is considered valuable?', 'Should it be collected?' and 'How should it be treated?', also means mobilising a community of stakeholders who can answer those questions.

This zine concentrates on how we can seek cultural justice through popular music heritage, using Detroit as a case study. In what follows, we take a critical approach to understanding cultural justice, recognising that heritage can both resist and reinforce inequalities, and consider how the approaches of the cultural justice toolkit are currently being deployed in the vibrant heritage work of this deindustrialising hub of popular music.

Why the interest in Detroit?

For readers who aren't familiar with Detroit, it is a major city located in southeast Michigan near the Canada–United States Border. Detroit is perhaps the most iconic example of a post-industrial city. The ruins of Detroit's manufacturing plants are representative of the sheer scale of decline that has been unfolding since the 1950s. In the early twentieth century, Detroit grew rapidly along with its thriving automobile manufacturing industry, becoming known as the 'Motor City'. Detroit's population peaked at 1.8 million in 1950,⁶ and has been declining ever since, with a current population of half that at about 672,000.⁷ The city's population loss has been due to multiple complex factors, including the downsizing of industry, job losses, racial inequalities, suburbanisation and 'white flight', and, more recently, the foreclosure of many homes and deteriorating economic conditions in the wake of the 2007/2008 global financial crisis.⁸ There has seen significant increases in crime and poverty and decreases in property values and tax revenue,⁹ becoming infamous for its abandoned, decaying buildings and neighbourhoods. The unemployment rate in Detroit peaked at more than 28.9% in 2009¹⁰ and the city filed for bankruptcy in 2013.



In recent years the city has been in a process of regeneration, attracting 'large-scale redevelopment, ruin tourism and entrepreneurialism' that has led to the renovation or demolition of many urban ruins, but also the displacement of marginalised residents and the erasure of their heritage.¹¹ Billionaire Dan Gilbert is often said to have led this development boom. Gilbert moved the headquarters of his mortgage-lending business Quicken Loans to Detroit, and his real estate company Bedrock has purchased upwards of 100 properties in or near the downtown area – an investment of US\$5.6 billion.¹² It is reported that his 'family of companies employs 17,000 people and is the largest employer and taxpayer in Detroit'.¹³ The unemployment rate in Detroit is now 5.3%, with key sectors of employment being professional and business services; trade, transportation, and utilities; education and health services; and, to a lesser extent, manufacturing and leisure and hospitality.¹⁴



What does the cultural justice approach to popular music heritage look like in Detroit?

Cultural expressions and economic circumstances are deeply interconnected. Deindustrialisation has shaped cultural identities and practices and has also played a role in creating, reinforcing and challenging cultural injustices. Communities in deindustrialising cities face a number of injustices: job losses, reduced access to public infrastructure and services, high levels of poverty, crime, and urban decay. These injustices have disproportionately affected non-white, migrant and working-class people.

Popular music has provided an important mode of cultural expression for these marginalised groups and the wider community. Detroit has a rich musical history, known for blues, gospel, jazz, pop, soul, rock, techno, hip hop and Motown. This history highlights how creativity can flourish despite immense hardship. Rather than only imagining Detroit in terms of ruin and despair, looking to its rich musical past and present can provide alternative narratives that acknowledge and celebrate its cultural vibrancy. On the other hand, looking to the past can also provide opportunities to acknowledge 'difficult heritage',¹⁵ doing justice to experiences of trauma, loss and oppression that might usually be silenced or minimised.

In Detroit, we came across a range of popular music heritage initiatives that aim to document, preserve and commemorate popular music's past and present. Below, we outline some of these examples in relation to the three critical approaches of cultural justice: practices of collection, preservation and archiving; curation, storytelling and heritage interpretation; and mobilising communities for collective action.

How is the music heritage of Detroit being collected and preserved?

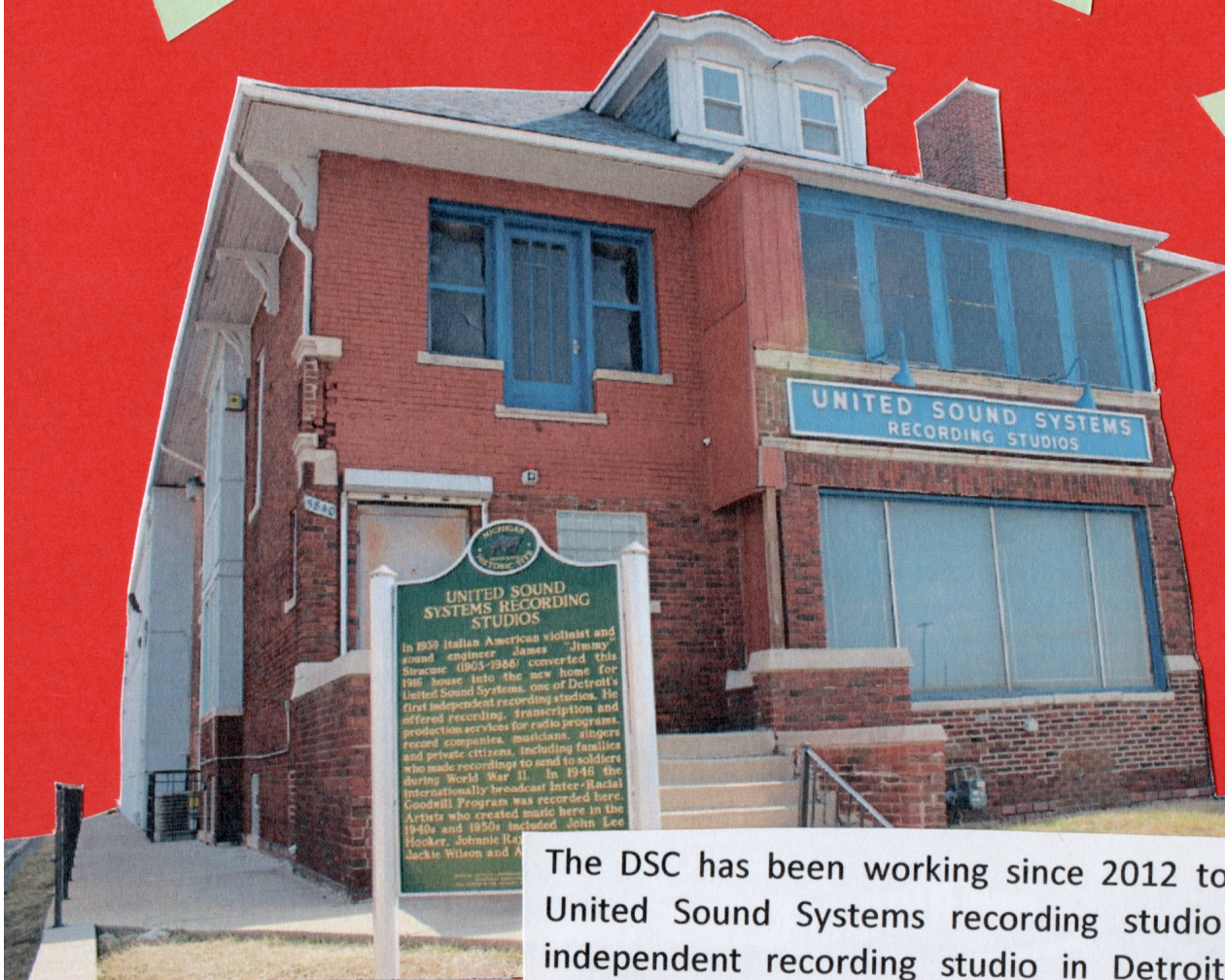
A range of different institutions and groups in Detroit work to collect and preserve Detroit's music heritage, both tangible (e.g. buildings, objects) and intangible (e.g. memories, historical narratives).

One of the city's most iconic tourism sites is the Motown Museum, also known as Hitsville USA, located in the first headquarters for the famous Motown label. Accessible only through guided tours, the museum features clothing, instruments, photographs and other material relating to musicians like Marvin Gaye and Michael Jackson as well as the record label's founder, Berry Gordy Jr. Detroit is also home to smaller establishments like Exhibit 3000, an appointment-only techno museum located in the building that houses the Submerge record label. Beyond these institutions that are devoted to archiving popular music's past specifically, there are others that include some music heritage as part of their broader collections. For example, the Detroit Public Library houses the E Azalia Hackley Collection of African Americans in the Performing Arts, while the Charles H Wright Museum of African American History features the *Detroit Performs!* exhibit.



The key organisation working to protect Detroit's popular music heritage is the Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC), founded in 2012 by Carleton Gholz. Although the DSC does not yet have a physical space to display their collections like the institutions mentioned above, they have been involved in numerous vital collection and preservation activities in Detroit.





The DSC has been working since 2012 to protect the United Sound Systems recording studio – the first independent recording studio in Detroit, which has hosted the likes of Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Lee Hooker, Aretha Franklin and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Since 2013, the site has been under threat of demolition for a highway expansion. The DSC and its partners applied for the studio's designation as a historic district in 2015 and fundraised for a Michigan Historic Marker installed in 2017. The Michigan Department of Transportation purchased the building in 2019 and announced it would not be demolished, but it would be relocated and auctioned off. In this case, cultural justice is activated in the process of fighting for the preservation of a cultural landmark in the face of development, which is significant considering Detroit's current tendency to prioritise urban renewal.

In 2019, the DSC purchased a long-closed, much-loved jazz club in Detroit, the Blue Bird Inn. The DSC plans to restore the site and re-open it as a music archive and live music venue. Decaying since its closure in the early 2000s, the venue requires substantial renovations including an urgent replacement of its roof. In the meantime, the DSC has worked to restore and tour the Blue Bird's iconic stage, which is 'an exceptional example of African American mid-century vernacular art and design as well as a launchpad for sonic and social rebellion during the Civil Rights movement in Detroit'.¹⁶





At its peak in the 1940s, the Blue Bird was 'a black-owned, working-class bar in the heart of the West Side black community' – a gathering space for neighbourhood locals, particularly factory workers,¹⁷ as well as an important space for black musicians to practice and perform. The venue's location on Tireman Avenue is also significant given it was a dividing line that segregated the black community to the south from the white community to the north.¹⁸ Carleton Gholz, founder of DSC, noted 'this is definitely not a nostalgic project for us', but rather is driven by concerns including: 'how do we leverage things that we still remember, that are in our hearts, to keep our neighbourhoods?'.¹⁹

In relation to cultural justice, efforts to restore the site pay respect to its musical and historical legacy and enable expressions of civic pride within the neighbourhood in the present. Preserving the Blue Bird Inn also opens up potentials for important stories to be told that do justice to past and present social, cultural, political and economic struggles within the local community, including those relating to race and industrial decline. For Gholz, the Blue Bird will act as 'an inconvenient reminder of a hundred-year history [of the African-American West Side] that hopefully can't be removed anytime soon'.²⁰

What kinds of storytelling are involved?

Storytelling is used to give context to tangible and intangible heritage. Stories can be told through curated exhibitions, museums, books, documentaries, maps, tours, and 'interpretive tools' located in city spaces, like plaques and signs.

Museums mentioned above – including Exhibit 3000, Motown Museum and the Detroit Historical Museum – draw on their collections to select particular items for display and tell certain stories. At the Detroit Historical Museum, the Kid Rock Music Lab (named to acknowledge funding from the Kid Rock Foundation) is a space dedicated to some of the most significant acts in Detroit's music history. It highlights the diversity of music produced in Detroit, with recognition of genres including rock, gospel, Motown, jazz, blues, punk rock, heavy metal, R&B, hip hop and techno; prominent venues such as DTE Music Energy Theatre, The Roostertail, Graystone Ballroom and Flame Show Bar; and artists with connections to Detroit and Michigan, such as Aretha Franklin, The White Stripes, Madonna, Ted Nugent, The Supremes, Eminem, Iggy Pop and, of course, Kid Rock.



THE SOUNDTRACKS OF OUR LIVES

1967

TOP VOCH GROUPS

- 1. The Supremes
- 2. The Four Tops
- 3. The Temptations
- 4. The Miracles
- 5. The Isley Brothers
- 6. The O'Jays
- 7. The Stylistics
- 8. The Undiscovered Country
- 9. The Undiscovered Country
- 10. The Undiscovered Country

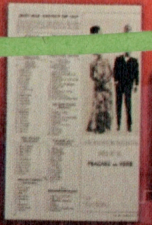
WHAT'S GOING ON
Inspired by the civil unrest surrounding the Vietnam War and the protests against it, James Brown and the funk band released an album that was a response to the times. The album was a success, and it was one of the best-selling albums of the year.



RESPECT
Originally recorded in 1965 as a duet by Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin, the song was later covered by Aretha Franklin in 1967. It became one of her most successful songs and is a classic of soul music.



DANCING IN THE STREET
Originally conceived as a disco party song, 'Dancing in the Street' by Martha and the Vandellas became an anthem of the civil rights movement. It was one of the most popular songs of the 1960s and is still a favorite of many people.



In addition to engaging visitors with interactive music trivia and a song mixing station, the Lab uses storytelling to educate visitors about how Detroit's music heritage connects to other important moments in history. For example, one wall features a panel on 'Dancing in the Street' by Martha and the Vandellas and how it became a civil rights anthem during a period of significant social change and resistance movements in the 1960s in Detroit and throughout the USA.

Just outside the Detroit Historical Museum also lies Legends Plaza, a small public space that features cement plaques with the handprints and signatures of some of Detroit's most famous residents. Several of these belong to key figures in Detroit's musical history: techno pioneers Juan Atkins, Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson, Jeff Mills and Carl Craig; soul singer-songwriter Bettye LaVette; Motown legends Mary Wilson and Martha Reeves; rock musician Alice Cooper; and radio DJ The Electrifying Mojo.

LEGENDS PLAZA

Legends Plaza

Detroit's rich heritage lies with the men and women who've always called Detroit "home," even as they went on to help shape our nation's cultural landscape.

We cheered their accomplishments on the field, welcomed them into our lives through television and radio and were thrilled to see them perform on stage. Their championships became our championships and their hit songs formed the soundtracks of our lives.

In 2011, the Detroit Historical Society began memorializing the handprints of some of these living legends for the creation of a new outdoor experience at the Detroit Historical Museum. The Museum will continue adding legends to the Plaza indefinitely.


The Legends

Throughout Legends Plaza are the handprints and signatures of some of the men and women who've helped shape the culture of our region, state, and nation, including:

Juan Atkins, Techno Music Pioneer
 Dave Bing, NBA Hall of Fame Inductee
 Bill Bonds, Emmy Award Winning Broadcaster
 Alice Cooper, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee
 Carl Craig, Techno Music Artist
 Jor Dumars, NBA Hall of Fame Inductee
 Eddie Fowlkes, Techno Music Pioneer
 Carmen Harlan, Emmy Award Winning Broadcaster
 Thomas Hearns, Boxing Champion
 Willie Horton, Detroit Tiger World Champion
 Gordie Howe, NHL Hall of Fame Inductee
 Mike and Marian Bitch, Cultural Entrepreneurs
 Al Kaline, MLB Hall of Fame Inductee
 Elmore Leonard, Award Winning Author
 Diana Lewis, Award Winning Broadcaster
 Ted Lindsay, NHL Hall of Fame Inductee
 Derrick May, Techno Music Pioneer
 Jeff Mills, Techno Music Artist
 Dick Purtan, National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame Inductee
 Sam Raimi, Noted Hollywood Director
 Martha Reeves, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee
 Barry Sanders, NFL Hall of Fame Inductee
 Kevin Saunderson, Techno Music Pioneer
 Devin Scillian, Award Winning Broadcaster
 Paul W. Smith, Award Winning Talk Radio Host
 Lily Tomlin, Emmy and Tony Award Winning Actress
 Allee Willis, Grammy Award Winning Songwriter
 Mary Wilson, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee



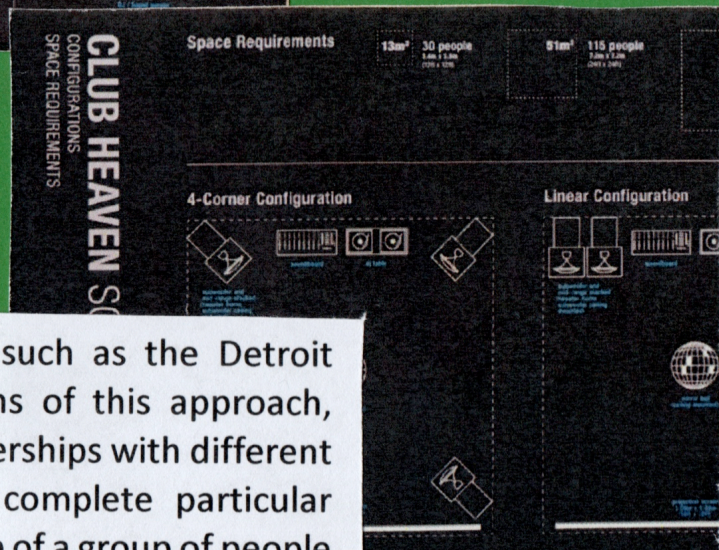
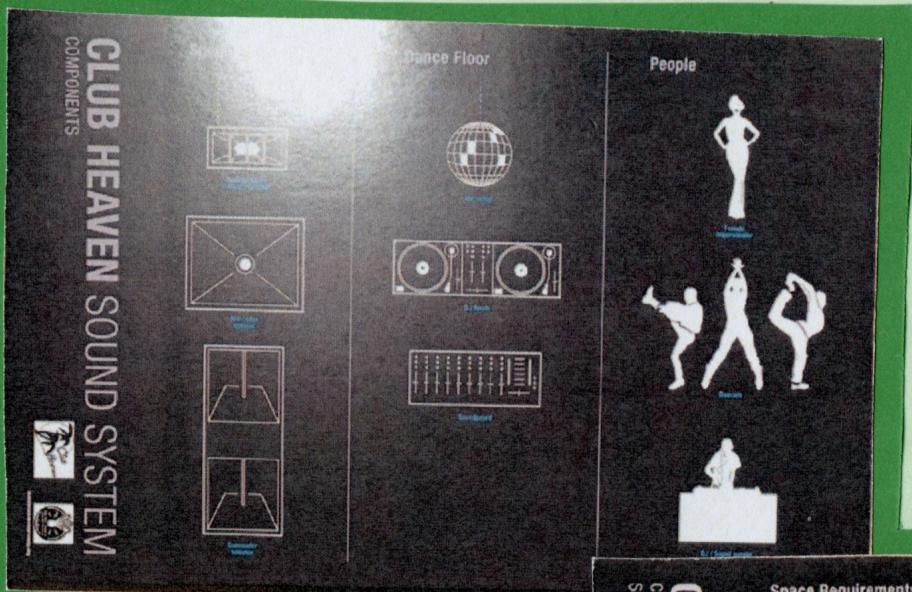
In 2019, the Detroit Historical Museum also hosted *Salvaging Sound*, a temporary exhibition put together by the DSC. This exhibit highlighted the wide variety of preservation projects and activism being undertaken by the DSC and its partners. Providing a different kind of storytelling experience, Carleton Gholz also ran a 'Sound Tour' to accompany the exhibit. Driving around Detroit on a minibus, Carleton guided attendees through some of the key sites relating to the city's sonic history. The stops included buildings that are still standing and easily identifiable – e.g. United Sound Systems, Blue Bird Inn, Grande Ballroom and the Motown headquarters – as well as those that have since been destroyed – e.g. Club Heaven at 7 Mile and Woodward, where a fast food restaurant now stands. Going past the Club Heaven site, Carleton explained that Club Heaven was both a significant nightlife venue for queer people in Detroit from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s as well as a key site for the emergence of house and techno music in the city.

A photograph of the Detroit Historical Museum building. The building is a large, multi-story structure with a prominent entrance featuring a glass facade. The words "DETROIT HISTORICAL MUSEUM" are written in large, red, capital letters across the front of the building. In front of the building is a paved plaza with several trees and a small sign that reads "NO SKATEBOARDING OR OTHER BOARDING ON THIS SURFACE". The sky is overcast.

DETROIT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

How is the community being mobilised around popular music heritage?

Popular music heritage can bring the community together for activism, protest, fundraisers, meetings and workshops focused on pooling resources, sharing knowledge and strategising for change.



Grassroots heritage organisations such as the Detroit Sound Conservancy are expressions of this approach, bringing together and forging partnerships with different groups to achieve their aims or complete particular projects. The DSC's board is made up of a group of people with diverse backgrounds – musicians, archivists, writers, sound engineers, community workers, historians – who all share a passion for the organisation's mission. For several years, the DSC hosted an annual conference that brought together musicians, academics, artists, community workers and other interested parties to discuss the past, present and future of music in Detroit. The DSC also works with numerous advisers and community partners. For example, the DSC partnered with the nonprofit organisation LGBT Detroit to restore the sound system from Club Heaven. These partnerships reflect a collaborative, 'do-it-together'²¹ approach to heritage.





Since grassroots heritage initiatives typically have limited resources – time, money, volunteers – working with others in the community can be crucial for achieving their objectives. This can be particularly important for fundraising campaigns. The DSC has held a number of fundraisers, including a Kickstarter campaign to fund the collection of oral histories (raising more than US\$8,500), and another geared at supporting the restoration of Club Heaven’s sound system (raising more than US\$16,600).

The organisation Friends of the Grande Ballroom, founded by local historian Leo Early, has also initiated several fundraising campaigns through GoFundMe aimed at preserving the venue. The Grande Ballroom was one of Detroit’s most iconic rock music venues throughout the 1960s, hosting the Stooges, Led Zeppelin, Velvet Underground and Pink Floyd. The venue is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, due in part to efforts by Early’s group, but is still deteriorating. The Ballroom’s current owners, the Chapel Hill Missionary Baptist Church, have partnered with the Friends of the Grande Ballroom to maintain the site. A fundraising campaign in 2017 raised money for an official assessment of the building’s viability, while a 2019 campaign focused on raising money for emergency roof renovations. In the 2019 case, almost US\$7,000 was raised by 96 donors. This example shows how the ‘do-it-together’ approach is integral for cultural justice – preservation and storytelling is supported by heritage enthusiasts working with others in the local community.

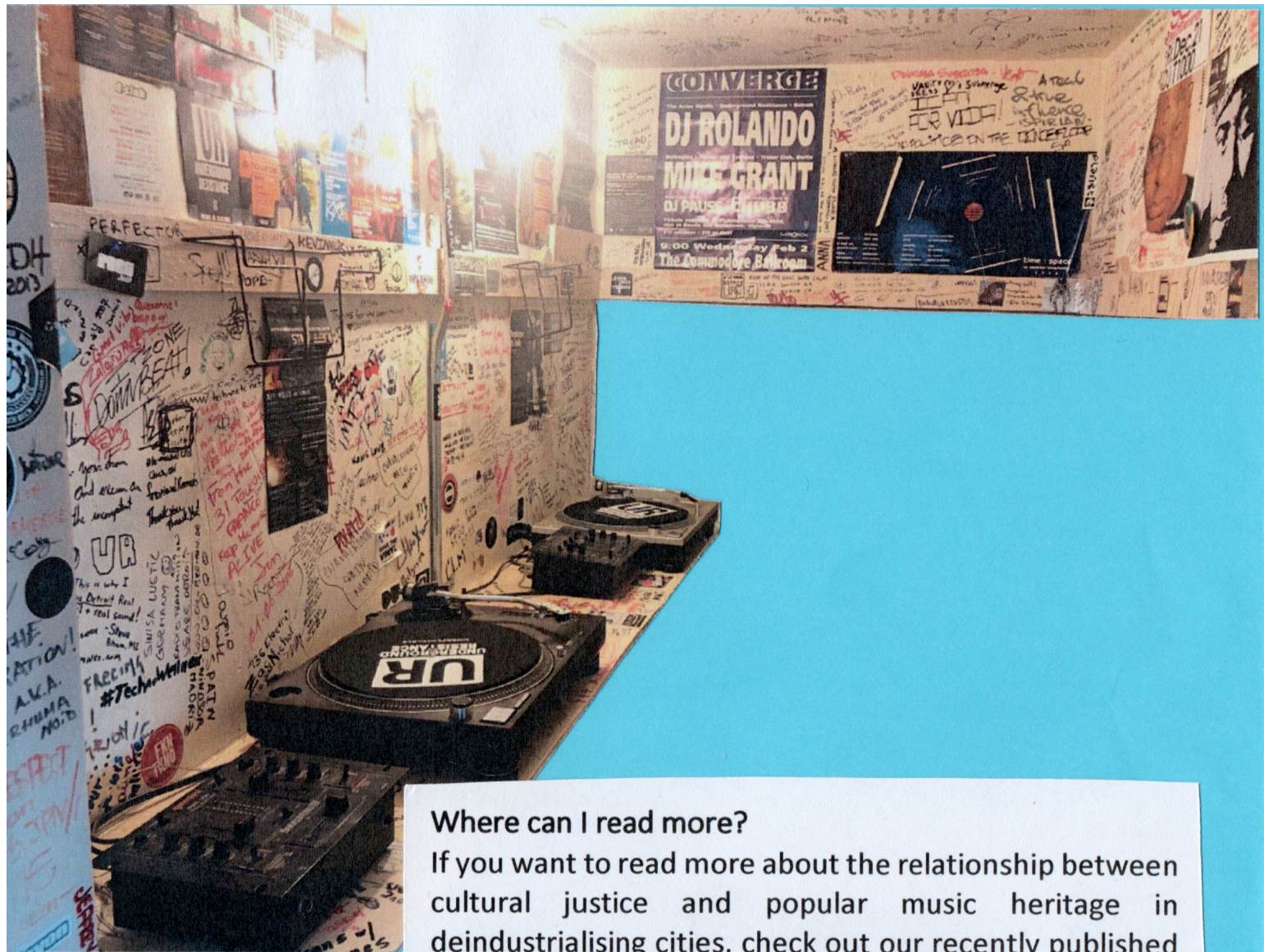




How can I get involved in cultural justice for Detroit?
If you want to get involved with heritage initiatives and the promotion of cultural justice in Detroit, you can start by contacting one of these organisations:

- **Detroit Sound Conservancy:**
<http://detroitssound.org/getinvolved/>
- **Friends of the Grande Ballroom:**
<http://thegrandeballroom.com/friends-of-the-grande/>
- **Detroit Historical Society:**
<https://detroithistorical.org/ways-give/donate-now>
- **Motown Museum:**
<https://www.motownmuseum.org/support/>

But this is just a starting point – the benefit of grassroots, do-it-yourself and do-it-together heritage initiatives is that it starts with you, your local community, and your unique skillset.



Where can I read more?

If you want to read more about the relationship between cultural justice and popular music heritage in deindustrialising cities, check out our recently published article in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* which looks at different practices at work in Detroit, Wollongong and Birmingham.

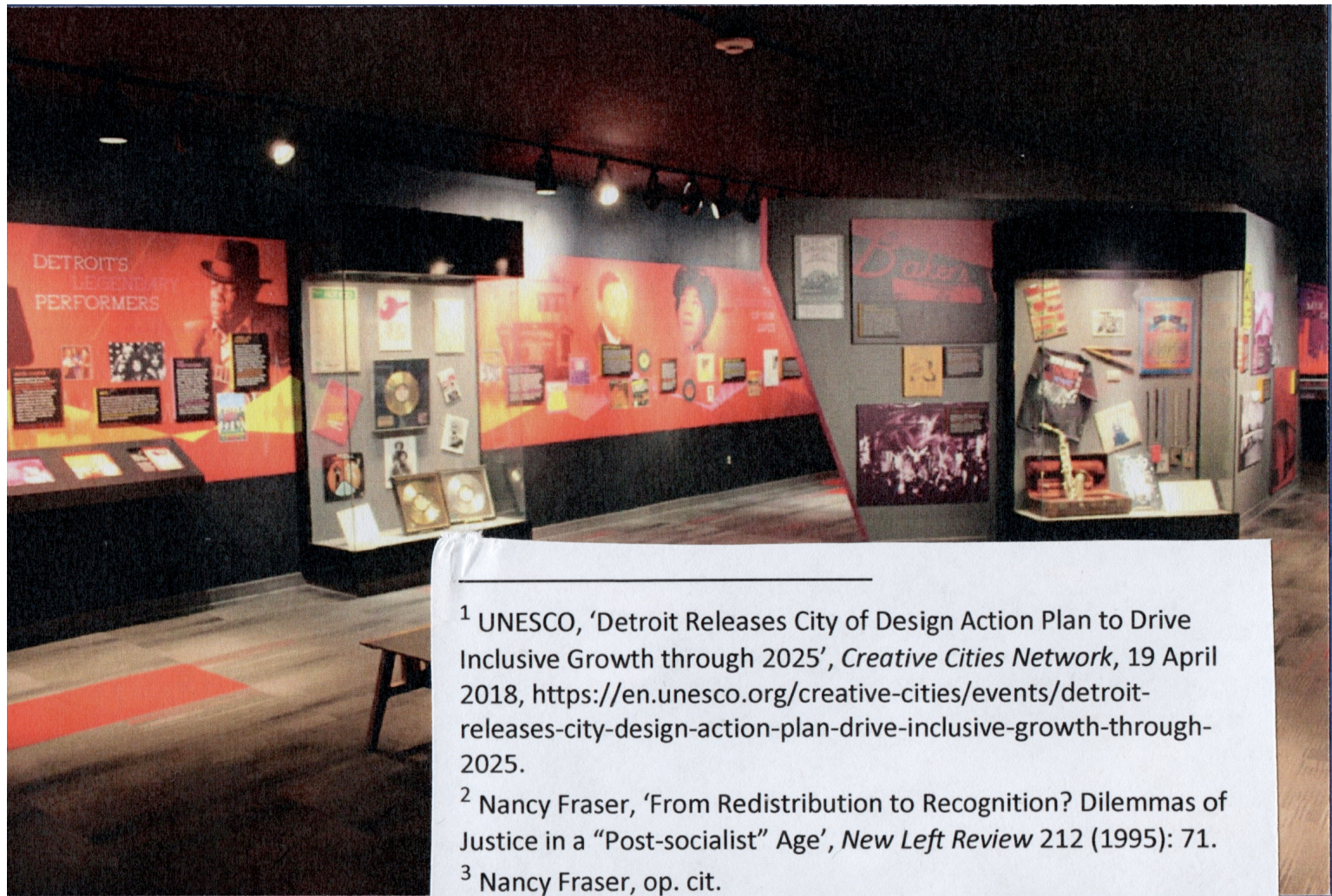
The article is open access and available here:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13527258.2020.1768579>

In writing 'Cultural justice for Detroit!' we have drawn on material from that article, while also expanding our focus on Detroit to capture more of the heritage initiatives at work in the city. You might also be interested in exploring our earlier zine which includes contributions from Carleton Gholz, founder and executive director of the Detroit Sound Conservancy.

Check it out here:

<https://www.soundsofourtown.com/deindustrialising-cities>



¹ UNESCO, 'Detroit Releases City of Design Action Plan to Drive Inclusive Growth through 2025', *Creative Cities Network*, 19 April 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/events/detroit-releases-city-design-action-plan-drive-inclusive-growth-through-2025>.

² Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-socialist" Age', *New Left Review* 212 (1995): 71.

³ Nancy Fraser, op. cit.

⁴ Damayanti Banerjee and Sheila Steinberg, 'Exploring Spatial and Cultural Discourses in Environmental Justice Movements', *Journal of Rural Studies* 39 (2015): 41.

⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁶ Doug V Shaw, 'The Post-industrial City', in *Handbook of Urban Studies*, ed. Ronan Paddison (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 284–95.

⁷ United States Census Bureau, 'QuickFacts: Detroit City, Michigan', accessed 4 October 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/detroitcitymichigan/PST045218>.

⁸ Shaw; Thomas C Pedroni, 'Urban Shrinkage as a Performance of Whiteness: Neoliberal Urban Restructuring, Education, and Racial Containment in the Post-industrial, Global Niche City', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32, no. 2 (2011): 203–15; Sara Safransky, 'Greening the Urban Frontier: Race, Property, and Resettlement in Detroit', *Geoforum* 56 (2014): 237–48.

⁹ Thomas J Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Cater A Wilson, 'Restructuring and the Growth of Concentrated Poverty in Detroit', *Urban Affairs Review* 28, no. 2 (1992): 187–205.

¹⁰ Ian Thibodeau and Breana Noble, 'Most Detroiters in a Decade Worked in September', *The Detroit News*, 8 November 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/2018/11/08/labor-statistics-unemployment-rate-detroit-lower/1932604002/>.

¹¹ Emma Fraser, 'Unbecoming Place: Urban Imaginaries in Transition in Detroit', *Cultural Geographies* 25, no. 3 (2018): 443.

¹² Quinn Klinefelter, 2018. 'Detroit's Big Comeback: Out of Bankruptcy, A Rebirth', *NPR*, 28 December 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/28/680629749/out-of-bankruptcy-detroit-reaches-financial-milestone>

¹³ Richard Feloni, 'Billionaire Dan Gilbert has already bet \$5.6 billion on Detroit's future, but money can't solve his biggest challenge', *Business Insider Australia*, 17 August 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/quicken-loans-dan-gilbert-detroit-2018-8?r=US&IR=T>.

¹⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Detroit Area Economic Summary*, accessed 4 October 2019, https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/summary/blssummary_detroit.pdf.

¹⁵ Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁶ Detroit Sound Conservancy, *Blue Bird Stage: Curating 2018–Present*, accessed 29 May 2020, <http://detroitssound.org/blue-bird/>.

¹⁷ Anthony Macías, "'Detroit Was Heavy": Modern Jazz, Bebop, and African American Expressive Culture', *The Journal of African American History* 95, no. 1 (2010): 49.

¹⁸ Jeffrey D Gonda, *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

¹⁹ Cited in Sarah Baker, Zelmari Cantillon and Raphaël Nowak, *Sounds of Our Town: The Wollongong Edition*, accessed 29 May 2020, https://acf72f70-710a-40b9-92db-5b7934011262.filesusr.com/ugd/8a61d6_ad6e94c88a4847dd8d003004a36224ae.pdf, 12.

²⁰ Cited in Baker, Cantillon and Nowak, 22.

²¹ Jez Collins, 'Doing-It-Together: Public History Making and Activist Archivism in Online Popular Music Archives', in *Preserving Popular Music Heritage*, ed. Sarah Baker (New York: Routledge, 2015), 77–90.



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Compiled by Bob Buttigieg

Thank you for reading!

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