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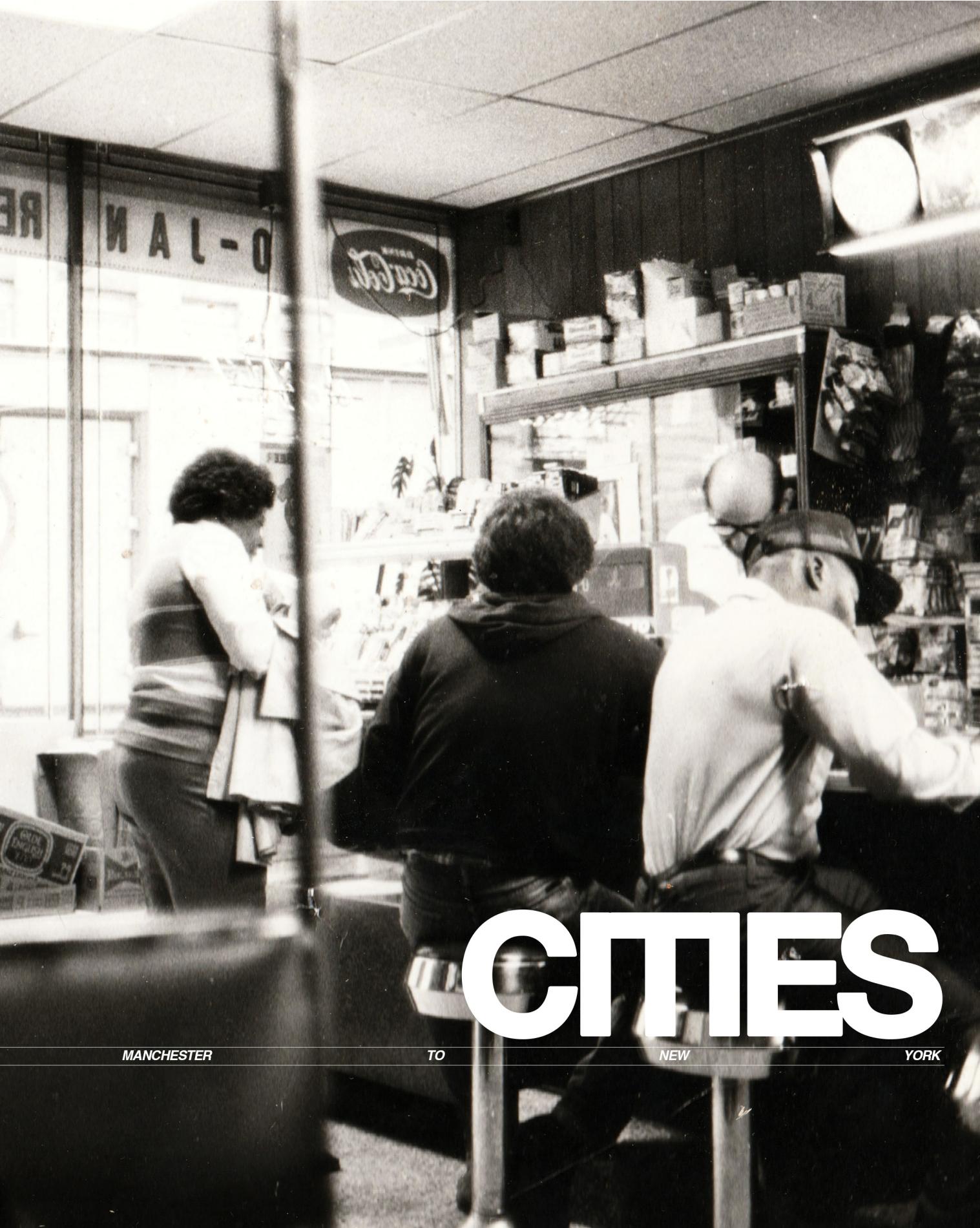
TONY

WILSON

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FACTORY

RECORDS



# CITIES

MANCHESTER

TO

NEW

YORK

## Factory Records founder Tony Wilson's pilgrimages to New York clubland with New Order and A Certain Ratio would have an indelible impact on the music culture in his hometown of Manchester, England—and far beyond.

BY ANDY THOMAS

**O**n a typewritten sheet of A4 paper, the itinerary for Joy Division's planned first North American tour is hauntingly laid bare. Of course, none of it was to be: on May 18, 1980, the night before the Manchester group were to leave for New York, troubled singer Ian Curtis tragically took his life.

The first venue on the list, which we might presume was typed by the late Factory Records co-founder Tony Wilson himself, is the Midtown Manhattan club Hurrah. Just four months later, the remaining members of Joy Division would make one of their first appearances as New Order there, supporting fellow Factory Records act A Certain Ratio. Along with Danceteria, Paradise Garage, and the Fun House, Hurrah was to be a pivotal point in Factory's deepening association with New York. Collectively these spaces, visited during tours by New Order, A Certain Ratio, and Quando Quango, would inspire Tony Wilson and New Order manager Rob Gretton to open the Haçienda, the Manchester nightclub that would help revolutionize British clubbing. The sounds that the Factory acts encountered on New York dancefloors would also inform striking new directions in their own music.

Tony Wilson would later write about his early visits to these fantastical places in *24 Hour Party People: What the Sleeve Notes Never Tell You*, a companion book to the 2002 feature film which starred Steve Coogan as Wilson in his Factory Records and Haçienda years. Describing Hurrah and Danceteria as "venue and disco and style lounge all in one" and "the kind of clubs that David Byrne could go to the toilet in," he mused: "They were cool clubs. If New York had them, then why the fuck didn't Manchester?"



The Joy Division tour note is one of many items in the Tony Wilson Archive, housed at

the University of Manchester's John Rylands Library, which offer a fascinating window into the connections between the city's music scene and New York. (Wilson, who also led a successful career as a journalist and TV presenter, passed away in 2007, at the untimely age of fifty seven).

Alongside the Xerox collages Wilson created for early Manchster events he organized with Alan Erasmus, with whom he co-founded Factory Records in 1978, are maps of Manhattan he drew to pinpoint spots like Hurrah, passport details for Joy Division's planned flight to JFK Airport, and correspondence between Michael Shamberg, who ran Factory Records' New York office, and Wilson's home address in Didsbury.

"My dad had a big thing for cities in both academic and philosophical ways, and New York was number one for him," says Oliver "Oli" Wilson, Tony Wilson's son and archivist. "Back in the late '70s and early '80s, he saw many similarities between New York and Manchester. All those derelict warehouses in Manhattan would have reminded him of [Manchester industrial district] Ancoats, only on a larger scale. New York had a massive pull on my dad, and it formed a big part on him. He would always tell me it was the most magnificent city in the world."

In September 1980, New Order and ACR flew to New York accompanied by their respective managers Gretton and Wilson, alongside maverick producer Martin Hannett. As James Nice wrote in his book *Shadowplayers: The Rise and Fall of Factory Records*, "for everyone involved, the implications of this first Atlantic crossing would prove enormous."

The plan was for the freshly named New Order to support ACR at four U.S. shows, with the middle two occurring at Hurrah and a second Manhattan club, Tier 3, respectively. Time was booked at Eastern Artists Recording Studio—EARS, for short—in nearby East Orange, New Jersey. There,

JOY DIVISION

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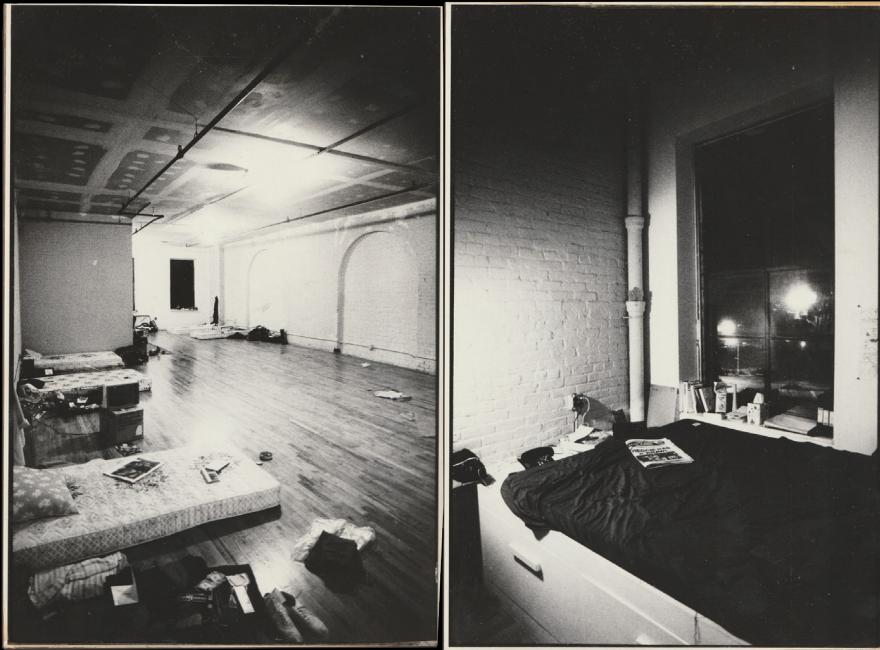
May

19th	Fly In	
20th	Day Off	
21st	<u>New York</u>	Hurrahs
22nd	<u>New York</u>	Hurrahs
23rd	<u>New York</u>	Hurrahs
24th	Day Off	
25th	<u>Toronto</u>	The Edge
26th	Day Off	
27th	<u>Chicago</u>	Tuts
28th	<u>Madison</u>	Merlins
29th	<u>Minneapolis</u>	Duffies
30th	Day Off	
31st	Day Off	

June

1st	<u>New York</u>	Pop Front
2nd	Fly to San Francisco	
3rd	Day Off	
4th	Day Off	
5th	Day Off	
6th	<u>San Francisco</u>	American Indian Hall
7th	<u>San Francisco</u>	
8th	<u>Los Angeles</u>	Flippers?
9th	Day Off	
10th	Fly Home	

(opening spread) Tony Wilson on the payphone at the Spring Street diner that served as his unofficial New York "office."  
(above) The typed itinerary for what was meant to be Joy Division's first North American tour in May and June of 1980.  
Courtesy of the Tony Wilson Archive.



*(top left and right)* The unfurnished Tribeca loft that served as A Certain Ratio's homebase during the band's 1980 stay in New York. Photos courtesy of the Tony Wilson Archive.  
*(bottom)* A Certain Ratio's Donald Johnson (at left) and Martin Moscrop loading their van in Tribeca. Photo courtesy of Donald Johnson.

with Hannett in the producer's chair, New Order would record its first single "Ceremony" b/w "In a Lonely Place," while ACR cut tracks for its 1981 album, *To Each*.

Arriving in New York, the Manchester contingent connected with a woman who would be pivotal to their collective future, Ruth Polsky, an independent promoter who had booked the bands at Hurrah. "She was kind [of] queen of the New York club scene," New Order's Bernard Sumner wrote in his autobiography *Chapter and Verse*. "We'd go into Manhattan every night after being in the studio, and she'd take us to New York's best clubs: Danceteria, the Peppermint Lounge, the Mudd Club...wherever it might be happening that night."

The crash course on New York nightlife would have an immediate and profound impact on New Order's sound. "I remember quite clearly sitting in a club in New York one night around three or four in the morning and thinking how great it would be if we made music, electronic music, that could be played in some of these clubs," Sumner recalled in *Chapter and Verse*.

Encamped in an unfurnished loft Wilson had rented for them on Hudson Street in Tribeca, the members of ACR found themselves exploring the city's counter-cultural landscape in all of its variety. For the five young men of ACR—raised in 1970s industrial Northern England, where sticky-carpeted clubs predominated—design-forward, cross-cultural spaces like Hurrah and Danceteria offered sensory overload.

"Our heads just exploded when we got there," recalls ACR guitarist and trumpeter Martin Moscrop. "U.K. clubs at the time didn't have good sound systems or lighting. It was unheard of to have air conditioning. Then you went to New York and everything was well organized and set up right. They had amazing sound systems, great lighting. Everything was just on a different scale."

Having been inspired by the jazz funk, Latin, and Brazilian music played by DJs Hewan Clarke, Colin Curtis, and John Grant at Manchester venues like Pips, Fever, and Rafters, the members of ACR were ecstatic to find an even more diverse set of sounds in adventurous Manhattan clubs. "The music they were playing was really eclectic," says Moscrop. "This mix of post-punk, electro, hip-hop,

soul, and disco all thrown in together: That was a real inspiration to us."

Hurrah, located at 36 West 62nd Street, had helped introduce New Yorkers to the emerging sounds of British new wave, both with live bands and through DJs that included Anita Sarko, Sean Cassette, Sara Salir, Bill Bahlman, and Bart Dorsey. Videos were projected on monitors suspended above the dancefloor; Merrill Aldighieri coined the term "VJ" at the club to describe her role improvising a flow of film loops, live camera feeds, and other visuals to accompany and interpret the music played by the venue's DJs.

Aldighieri, who recorded over two-hundred hours of performance footage at Hurrah between 1980 and 81, filmed both ACR and New Order's sets there. ACR's Hurrah performance was also captured in *TriBeCa*, a short film shot on 16mm monochrome stock by Baltimore native Michael Shambberg. Wilson and Shambberg struck up a quick friendship, and Shambberg, who would also become New Order's longtime video producer and director, was tasked with opening Factory's U.S. wing, dubbed Of Factory New York, on SoHo's Spring Street in May 1981. "When Factory first went to America, the whole thing was characterized by Michael Shambberg. Very much a kind of art, leftfield take on New York," Factory's art director Peter Saville told James Nice in the liner notes to *Of Factory New York*, a 2014 benefit album for Shambberg, who died that year following a long illness.

Also staffing the office was Anne Lehman, who had met Tony Wilson while working for Rough Trade Records in San Francisco. "He was so incredibly open and I thought he was brilliant," she told Audrey Golden in her book *I Thought I Heard You Speak: Women at Factory Records*. "I was just a kid, twenty-two or something, but I felt really respected by him." This was typical of Wilson's supportive attitude towards young people, whether taking the unruly genius of the Happy Mondays into the Factory fold, or creating the Haçienda for the youth of Manchester.

On arrival from California, Lehman quickly found herself in the eye of the Factory storm.. "The Factory office was in the old Port Authority trucking building. It was gorgeous [but] the office was a mess when I got there," she told Golden.

"I created files for all the stuff because Michael could never find anything...I felt like I might be contributing to something. I was just looking at the Factory stationary that had my name on it. I remember when that happened I felt like, 'Wow, I'm getting some recognition'."

Another presence at the New York office was Miranda Stanton, Michael Shambberg's partner at the time. Along with arranger Carter Burwell, she comprised one half of art-pop duo Thick Pigeon, whose *Too Crazy Cowboys*, recorded in Manchester with Stephen Morris and Gillian Gilbert of New Order producing, would be issued by Factory in 1984. As Stanton Miranda, she also released the 1986 single "Wheels Over Indian Trails" on the label, and provided guest vocals on Durutti Column's *The Guitar and Other Machines*.

Tony Wilson, for his part, chose to do much of his business from a diner on Spring Street. "This was like his unofficial office," says Oli Wilson. "There was a payphone in the corner, and he always used to say, 'All you need is a payphone and a pencil and paper.'"



In addition to playing Hurrah on that first trip in 1980, ACR and New Order performed at a small Tribeca club located a few blocks from the loft that Tony Wilson had rented for ACR. "What I actually remember most about the first trip to New York was playing Tier 3," says Moscrop. "A lot of the clubs were big, but Tier 3 was tiny. The audience was right on top of you and the energy in there was incredible."

The Tier 3 show proved inspirational not only for ACR (who named a track after it on their 2023 album *1982*) but also some of its attendees, which included a teenaged Mike D and Ad-Rock, who recalled the night in 2018's *Beastie Boys Book*, as well as Matt Dike, future co-founder of Delicious Vinyl.

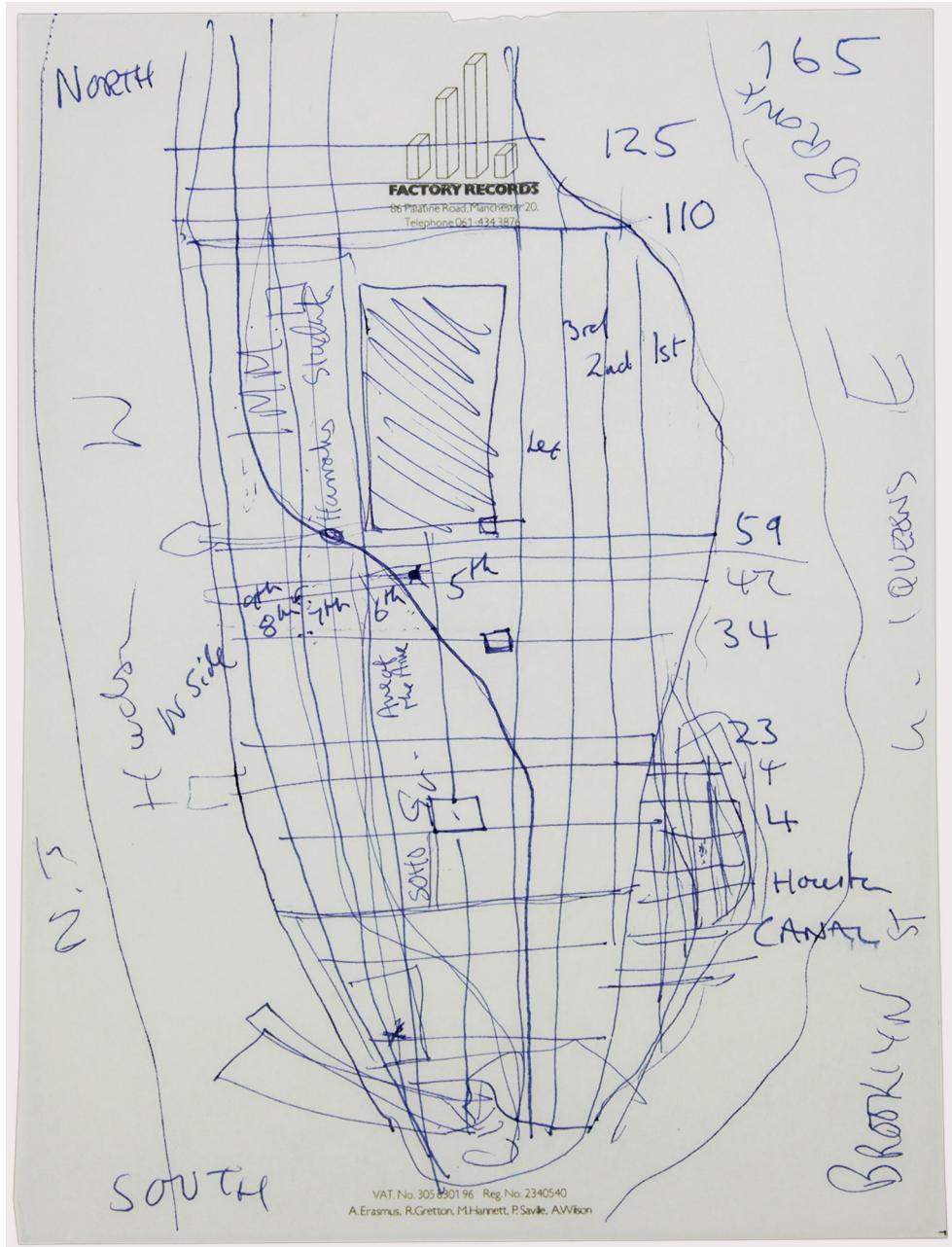
Opened by twenty-three-year-old Hilary Jaeger in Spring 1979, Tier 3 was among the first Manhattan clubs to mix experimental music, film, and art. Although it only lasted until December 1980, its downtown credentials were sealed when Jean-Michel Basquiat painted a mural in the bar

before appearing there as a DJ and with his band, Grey. Staging gigs by Lounge Lizards, Bush Tetras, and DNA, it was an important home for no-wave alongside the better known Mudd Club. And, like Hurrah, it had hosted early U.S. gigs by U.K. post-punk and new-wave outfits, including the Pop Group, the Raincoats, the Slits, and Young Marble Giants.

Of all the clubs they visited on that first trip in 1980, it was Danceteria that would make the deepest impression on Tony Wilson and the Factory entourage. Jim Fouratt, formerly a manager at Hurrah, opened Danceteria with Rudolf Piper on West 37th Street in May 1980; the club relocated two years later to its more successful second location at 30 West 21st Street. "Hurrah was the incubator but, because it had one floor, it was limited to linear movement," Fouratt told Tim Lawrence in 2016's *Life and Death on the New York Dancefloor*. "Having three floors on 37th Street changed everything. The DJs weren't in competition with the bands and the video lounge...the mix of art, live music, video, fashion, staff, and DJing was the formula."

Danceteria offered an immersive, cross-artistic club experience unlike anything the Mancunian contingent had seen. "I think, out of all the clubs, Danceteria was the one that the Haçienda would become based on, and that was a well-designed club on three levels with great sound and lights with lots of different things going on," says Martin Moscrop. ACR would play Danceteria on December 16 and 17, 1982, with support on the first night from a young Madonna.

The club's original DJs were Sean Cassette, from the Mudd Club and Hurrah, and Mark Kamins, who Fouratt had seen spin at Trax on 72nd Street. Joining the dots between post-punk, new wave, mutant disco, dub, and electro, Kamins would have a huge impact on the Factory entourage. A young Mike Pickering, who would go on to DJ at seminal Haçienda club nights Nude and Hot, visited the West 21st Street location on his first visit to New York as a member of the band Quando Quango in 1982. "Mark and I bonded immediately and began a wonderful friendship that lasted until his death [in 2013]," he says.



(above) a crude map of New York City, hand drawn by Tony Wilson, pinpoints the 36th West 62nd Street Location of the influential nightclub, Hurrah. Courtesy of the Tony Wilson Archive.

Ruth Polsky captured the wild diversity of Danceteria in a 1983 interview with Channel 4's *The Tube*. "This is a place where anything goes—from oompah bands to Diamanda Galás [to] the funkiest thing happening on the street. We try to do as much variety as possible and to present music from all over the world." That could be anything from Sun Ra to Tito Puente and all points between and beyond.

As a booker at Hurrah and, later, Danceteria, Polsky was central to the success of the Factory bands in America. She tragically died in 1986 when she was hit by a runaway taxi outside another iconic New York club, the Limelight, but left a lasting legacy. "Ruth Polsky was an integral player in the American success of many bands from England and particularly bands from Manchester," New York journalist Rachel Felder told Audrey Golden in *I Thought I Heard You Speak*. "The fees she was able to pay at the clubs she booked enabled

to record at EARS after ACR finished recording ahead of schedule. "I had no idea who Tony Wilson was," Renee Scroggins recalls. "But he was watching our soundcheck and, afterwards, he came up and said, 'I really like what you are doing, how would you like to make a record?' I didn't take him seriously because we had been bugging [99 Records label head] Ed Bahlman for two years about releasing us. So I will always give credit to Tony Wilson and Factory Records."

The session brought the Scroggins sisters into the studio with the famously mercurial Martin Hannett. "Everyone talks about him and I've seen the movie *24 Hour Party People* but this was not the guy that I met," says Renee. "The guy that I met was calm, respectful. I had no idea he was this big important producer, because he was just a cool guy. He took me in and showed me around the mixing boards and, after we'd record something, he'd ask if I liked it."



those bands to tour America. Even if a band played just one night in a tiny venue in New York City, it reverberated in the U.K. and beyond."

During her time at Hurrah, Polsky had fortuitously booked ACR on the same bill with a group of Bronx sisters who were then building a buzz on the Manhattan club scene. Named after their birthstones—Emerald, Sapphire, and Gold—by a mother who bought instruments to keep her daughters away from the borough's harsh streets, ESG were one of the most influential bands of New York's post-punk no-wave scene, spiritual cousins to their 99 Records labelmates Liquid Liquid. Having soaked up what singer Renee Scroggins called the "savage drive" of beats from their South Bronx surroundings, the band produced a naïve but acutely funky sound all their own.

Tony Wilson was so impressed by the pure and primal sound of ESG that he invited them

The three tracks ESG recorded at EARS—"Moody," "UFO," and "You're No Good"—would become their signature tunes, brilliant slabs of ominous, minimal funk, later heavily sampled in hip-hop. It was a sound Wilson described as "PiL meets Motown on the wrong side of the Triboro Bridge." The EARS recordings, released on seven-inch as FAC 41 in April 1981, were the first by a New York act to be issued on Factory Records.

After completing their sessions, meanwhile, the members of ACR soaked up the Latin scene in the city. "Going to Central Park and hearing all the Cuban rumba players jamming was a real eye opener," says Martin Moscrop. "We went to see a gig by Dave Valentin with him coming out of the dressing room with his band, snaking through the audience playing Latin percussion. That blew us away."

The sounds of Latin music weren't new to

ACR but to hear it at its source added an exciting new dimension. “To go to New York and [be] around that culture, that fused into everything we did and just set us off in a new direction,” adds drummer Donald Johnson. Near the studio in New Jersey was the home of Latin Percussion, renowned makers of congas, timbales, and the like; a fruitful visit to its shop with Tony Wilson would be another gamechanger for the band. “In Manchester, we couldn’t even find a [Latin Percussion] section in a music shop,” Johnson says.



While ACR’s sound, which reached its percussion-driven zenith on their 1982 Factory album *Sextet*, was building on the Latin sounds of the streets, New Order’s future musical direction came from deep on the dancefloor. “Spending a lot of time in New York clubs, I heard this very strong rhythmic

rhythmic punctuation [we] picked up in the New York clubs.”

Taking inspiration from Giorgio Moroder’s production on Donna Summer’s “Our Love,” “Blue Monday” also drew on Italo disco and, in particular, the arrangement of Klein & MBO’s 1982 single “Dirty Talk.” It was a song the group had heard at Paradise Garage, another regular hangout for the Factory entourage on their New York trips.

Opened in 1978 at 84 King Street in SoHo, Paradise Garage attracted a following of largely gay, Black and Latino dancers, lured at least in part by its Richard Long & Associates-built sound system, a work of wonder known for its remarkable depth of clarity and massive bass capabilities. “The Garage had that quality sound which engulfed you with the sub bass and tweeters that no other club gave you,” recalls dancer Louis “Loose” Kee. “It was ear shattering and soul hitting.”



music and I thought, we could do that with the new electronic sequencers that are coming out now,” Bernard Sumner told James Nice in *Shadowplayers*. The first of their tracks to use this new technology was the 1981 12-inch “Everything’s Gone Green.” Tony Wilson, also speaking to James Nice, would rather provocatively claim this as “the most important single in the history of techno.”

New Order’s embrace of electronic music fully crystallized with “Blue Monday,” in 1983. “We had new gear, a shiny new digital drum machine, and a sequencer nobody could understand. We had an Emulator which was the first sampling keyboard we got,” drummer Stephen Morris told James Nice in *Shadowplayers*. Bernard Sumner picked up the story in *Chapter and Verse*: “Steve and I made some slight shifts in the rhythm...After that we interspersed it with the kind of drum stops we’d been hearing in American dance music, the

The system was tailor made for resident DJ Larry Levan, who revelled in mixing everything from Italo disco and new wave to dub, gospel, and obscure soul B-sides. “I loved the fact Larry [Levan] and Mark [Kamins] couldn’t care less about genres and where a record came from,” says Mike Pickering. “It was dance-floor reaction that mattered.” Visits to King Street would further solidify Gretton and Wilson’s ambition to open an inclusive Manchester club like those they had experienced in New York.



Back in Manchester, Gretton and Wilson selected a former steel warehouse turned yacht showroom on Whitworth Street as the site of their nightlife experiment. “The location was rundown and seemed to reflect the desolate atmosphere of the

areas in New York where clubs like Danceteria and Paradise Garage were set, the collision of art, genre-splicing music and culture they dreamt of recreating,” wrote Paul Morley in *From Manchester With Love: The Life and Opinions of Tony Wilson*.

To convert the industrial interior into a venue that met the standards of the New York clubs they admired, Factory’s art director Peter Saville called in Ben Kelly, a frequent designer of album sleeves for the label who’d worked with Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood on their Seditionaries storefront in London. When it opened on May 21, 1982, tagged with the Factory Records catalog number “FAC51,” the Haçienda was unlike anything Manchester, or all of England, had seen. Kelly’s functional design made bold but practical use of the warehouse’s floor-to-ceiling columns, draping them in zigzag hazard stripes. For Tony Wilson, the venue’s look was a natural evolution of the Factory Records aesthetic. “Our record sleeves were incredibly beautifully designed, so to have an incredibly beautifully designed club seemed entirely natural,” he told James Nice in 2005.

Asked about his motivation on the BBC program *Riverside* in 1983, Wilson replied: “It’s necessary for every period to build its cathedrals, it’s necessary for any youth culture to have a sense of place...It’s important for a city like Manchester, which is an important city and has been an important city to music, to have the facilities that New York has.”

Dave Haslam, author of *We the Youth: Keith Haring’s New York Nightlife* and a DJ who played the Haçienda over four hundred times, witnessed the transformation of Manchester nightlife: “Tony Wilson used the phrase ‘a style lounge.’ We still had no idea what he was talking about, but we could tell Factory’s vision for the Haçienda was very different to what we were used to. Danceteria had a video room on the third floor. The Haçienda plans put video high on the list of priorities, installing two huge screens, describing the venue as a ‘video tech.’”

The original Haçienda DJ was Hewan Clarke, a veteran of Manchester clubs Rafters and the Gallery, where he’d played the jazz funk and fusion sounds that had so influenced ACR. Tony Wilson

was introduced to Clarke when ACR booked him as their tour DJ, bonding with him over their shared affinity for New York radio personality Frankie Crocker.

Mike Pickering was employed as the Haçienda’s lead booker, providing creative direction and bringing in an eclectic mix of bands. In homage to the club’s inspirations, he tapped ESG to perform on opening night. “They brought us over specifically for that gig,” remembers Renee Scroggins. “The club wasn’t even ready. There was sawdust everywhere.”

Pickering’s connections to New York deepened when Quando Quango performed at Paradise Garage twice in 1983 during an East Coast tour organized by Ruth Polsky. “The first time was [opening for] Chaka Khan. Larry [Levan] had asked us, which was an honor,” says Pickering. A second gig that summer would find the band supporting labelmates New Order.

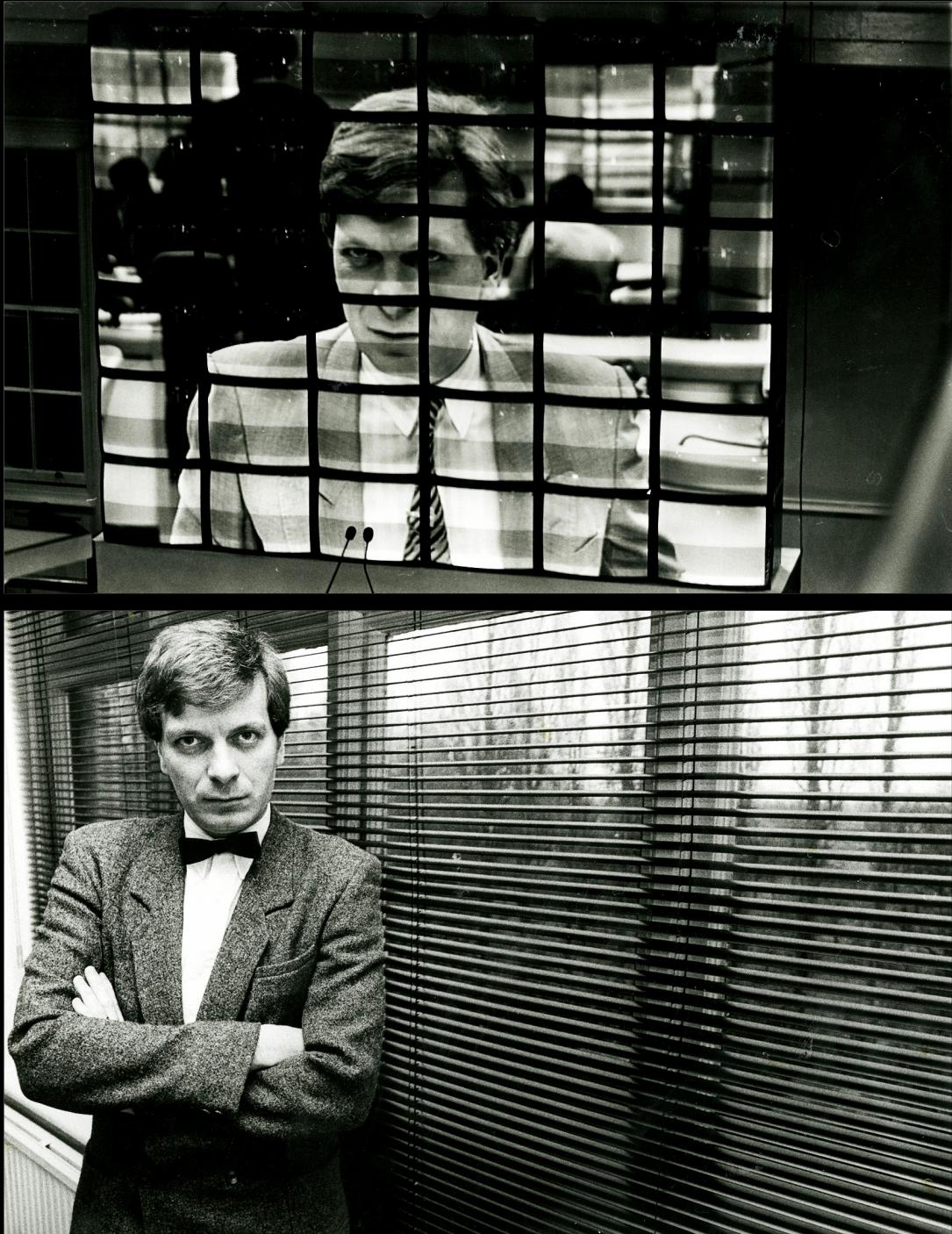
Formed between Manchester and Rotterdam by Pickering and Hillegonda “Gonnie” Rietveld, with her brother Reinier on drums and ACR’s Simon Topping on percussion, Quando Quango had debuted in October 1982 with the Factory 12-inch “Go Exciting” b/w “Tingle.” A killer slab of Latin-infused mutant disco, it sounds as revolutionary today as it did in the New York clubs of the early ’80s. Sharing a similar thrust for dancefloor disruption as New York artists Arthur Russell and Konk, Quando Quango’s music made perfect sense in the city’s genre-colliding downtown scene.

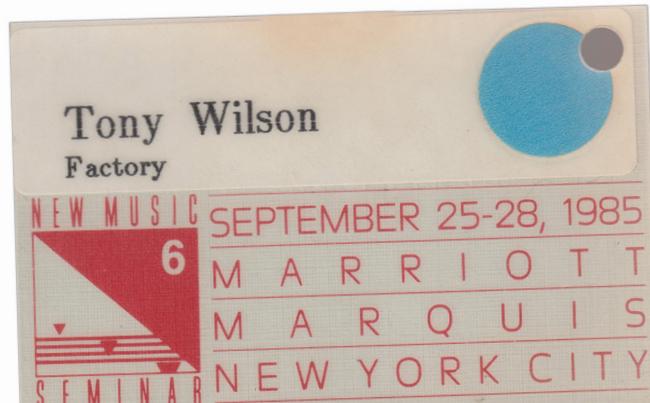
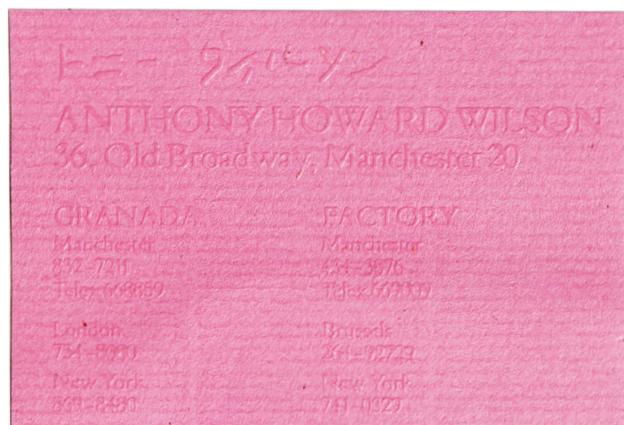


By the time Quando Quango played the Garage, Larry Levan had turned their follow-up single “Love Tempo” into a leftfield favorite, slotting it between Eddy Grant’s “Time Warp” and Dinosaur L’s “Go Bang.” Released on Factory and its affiliate Factory Benelux in 1983, “Love Tempo” was produced by Be Music—Bernard Sumner of New Order—and DoJo—ACR’s Donald Johnson—and came with mixes by Mark Kamins, fresh off producing his then-girlfriend Madonna’s first single “Everybody” in 1982. “Danceteria was the first [place] where I heard Mark playing ‘Love



(above) Stills from New Order's "Confusion" music video, directed by Charles Sturridge.





Tempo' and it sounded even better on that system," Pickering recalls. "Hearing my records [played] on the wonderful sound systems [at] Danceteria and the Garage was amazing. Most clubs in the U.K. had terrible systems."

In December 1984, Pickering invited Kamins to DJ alongside Hewan Clarke at a night entitled Danceteria Comes to the Haçienda. It would be followed the year after by Danceteria Meets the Haçienda, an event organized by Ruth Polsky, with Factory signees James appearing alongside New York band Certain General.

Mike Pickering's admiration for Kamins led to the New York DJ/producer mixing Quando Quango's "Genius" and "Atom Rock" singles, as well as their 1985 album *Pigs + Battleships*. "We got him to produce our album over in Manchester and the results were just what we wanted," Pickering says. "In those days, you would record lots of passes and mixes and then get the Latin Rascals to edit a mix from them. They were brilliant at it, and focused solely on that task, with incredible results."

A handful of other electronic Factory singles reached New York clubs between 1983 and 1985, including Section 25's "Looking From a Hilltop," 52nd Street's "Cool as Ice," and the Mark Kamins-mixed "Reach for Love" by Marcel King. Each was produced by Bernard Sumner and Donald Johnson, under their respective Be Music and DoJo monikers.

Another New York-based Factory associate was Boston-raised producer and Streetwise label owner Arthur Baker, who was introduced to New

Order by Michael Shamberg in 1983. "Shamberg was a new friend who convinced me and the band to collaborate," says Baker. "I didn't know much about them but obviously had heard 'Love Will Tear Us Apart.' And they knew me from [Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force's] 'Planet Rock' and 'Walking on Sunshine' [by Rockers Revenge]. Anyone I knew who knew them said they could be dour but somehow Shamberg convinced me. The fact they agreed that we would co-write together was another reason I ended up doing the project."

This arrangement was formalized in a typically unorthodox Factory Records manner. "I remember being in a diner around the corner from my Streetwise offices on West 43rd Street with Tony [Wilson] and Rob [Gretton] and signing a contract on a napkin," Baker recalls.

Having earned his legendary status through the TR-808 future shock of "Planet Rock," created with co-writer, producer, and engineer John Robie one year earlier, Baker was, in his own words, "hot in demand and out of control" when New Order arrived in New York for a three-week stay. "I put the band out in Brooklyn at [producer] Fred Zarr's home studio where I had earlier put Freeez for their writing process," he recalls.

Baker, who had landed yet another 808-anchored hit with Freeez's "I.O.U" that summer, would put the machine to use once more with New Order. "I'd go out to Brooklyn to check on the band but I think most of the writing was done at Unique [Recording] Studio[s] on

(top left) Tony Wilson's multi-use business card.  
(top right) A press badge for the 1985 New Music Seminar.  
Courtesy of the Tony Wilson Archive.

the fly,” Baker recalls. “I came up [with] the title ‘Confusion’ and the ‘Rat-ta-ta-ta’ stuff, while the group and Rob Gretton wrote the verses...As well as the 808, I used the Juno 30 and a [Sequential Circuits] Pro-One, which I think I purchased on their recommendations.”

Released in August 1983, “Confusion” was immortalized with a classic video by Charles Sturridge. It was filmed on the streets of Manhattan and at the Fun House, the New York home of electro, where DJ John “Jellybean” Benitez worked his magic from inside the mouth of a huge grinning clown for a street crowd of largely Puerto Rican and Italian-American teenagers.

Jellybean’s eclectic sets were rooted as much in the block parties of the South Bronx as the underground discos of Manhattan, employing a hip-hop mentality where leftfield selections like Babe Ruth’s “The Mexican” and “Disco Circus” by Martin Circus aligned perfectly. “I was from the Bronx, of course, and had seen DJ Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash play in the parks and block parties,” Jellybean told me in a 2013 Red Bull Music Academy feature on the Fun House. “I was learning from the street with hip-hop and the beats, and then at the same time I was hearing what Larry [Levan] and David [Mancuso] were doing, what Walter Gibbons was doing.”

The Fun House was ground zero for the hard-edged electro sound, with the emerging genre’s futuristic signals booming out of big woofers strategically positioned around the room. “[The Fun House] started to go towards things the kids were more into,” New York DJ Danny Krivit told me in the same RBMA article. “And there weren’t that many clubs that focused on that around Manhattan.”

Beneath the grinning clown where Jellybean spun, acrobatic dancers known as *buggas* watched themselves kick dancing in the mirrored pillars that circled the floor. It was a scene gloriously captured in the “Confusion” video, which shows Baker in the studio working on his mix of the track, before passing the demo tapes to Jellybean in the DJ booth, while New Order enter the club like excited teenagers. “‘Confusion’ was made specifically as a Fun House track and we continually brought rough mixes there to check

for the sound and crowd reaction,” says Baker. “I knew the crowd, and I was aiming my records for them. I knew what parts they’d respond to already but watching them enabled me to push boundaries and go more extreme on each mix. They were very open to lots of different music being played by Jellybean, who was an amazing DJ.”

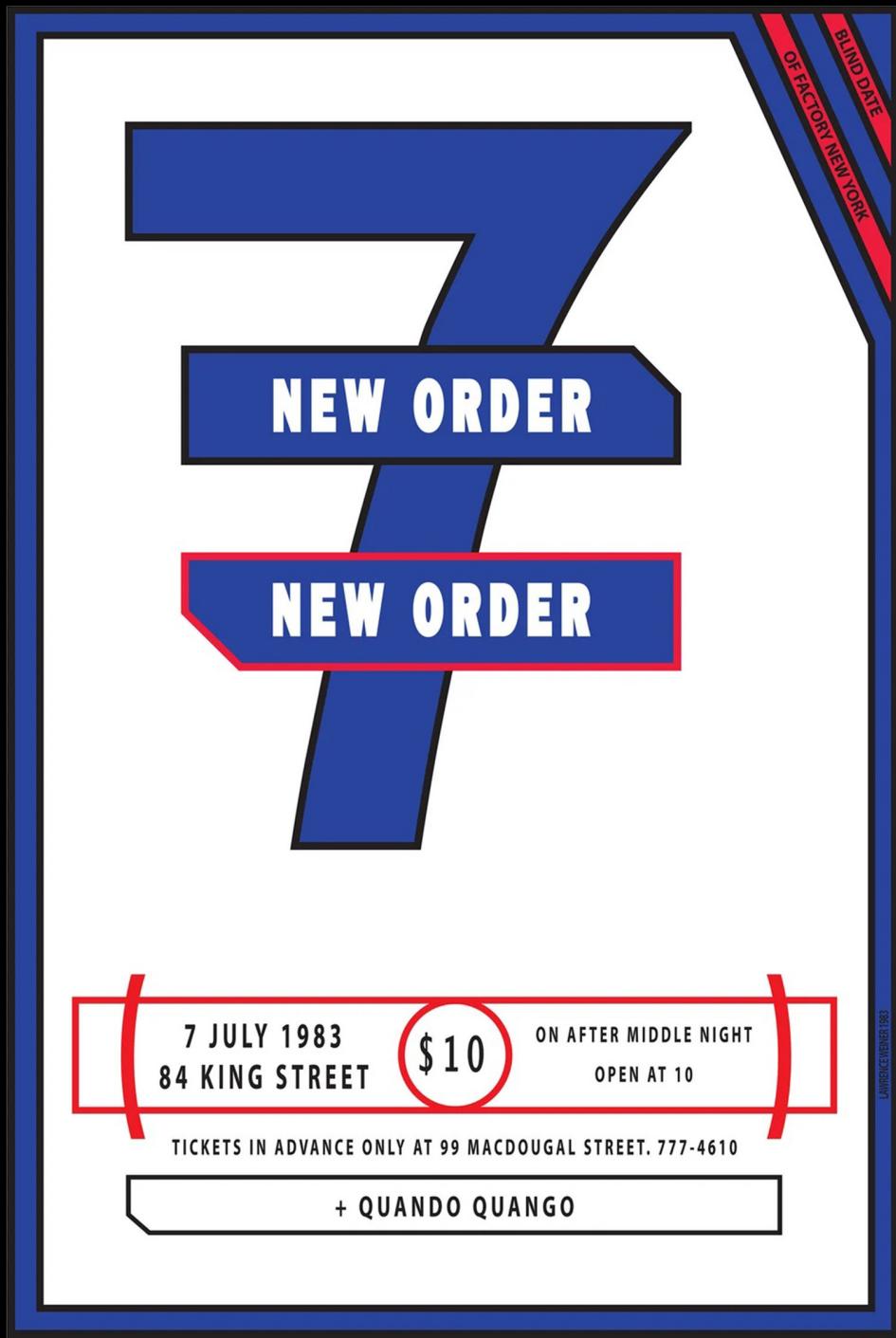
Along with mixing New Order’s “Confusion” with Arthur Baker, Jellybean remixed 52nd Street’s Paradise Garage favorite “Cool as Ice”—a track Mike Pickering played sax on—specifically with the Fun House dancers in mind.

Back in Manchester, Pickering, alongside Martin “MP2” Prendergast, launched his Nude night at Haçienda in 1984, playing a New York-inspired mix of hip-hop, electro, soul, funk, reggae, and jazz on Friday nights. “I loved Mark Kamins’s eclectic taste and his DJ skills and based a lot of my career on his style,” says Pickering.

Two years later, as house music from Chicago took hold in the North of England, setting the stage for the coming acid house explosion, a golden age of New York nightlife was coming to an end. The Fun House closed in 1985, followed a year later by Danceteria. Paradise Garage held its closing-night party, with a live performance from ESG, in September 1987. But the music, design, and culture of these clubs had left an indelible mark on Manchester nightlife, with the Haçienda having a profound influence on global rave culture.

“All our inspiration came from New York and, to a lesser extent, Chicago,” Mike Pickering says. “It was our regular trans-Atlantic visits that gave us all our inspiration.” •

*Wax Poetics and the Tony Wilson Archive are teaming on a forthcoming Wax Poetics Collection, including a merchandise collab with Manchester design studio DR.ME. Stay tuned to Waxpoetics.com for details. To support the Tony Wilson Archive’s mission to share art and memorabilia from Wilson’s personal archive with the public and contribute to their Kickstarter, visit Tonywilsonarchive.com.*



(above) A poster design for New Order's July 7, 1983 show at Paradise Garage, with openers Quando Quango, by Lawrence Weiner. The New York-based conceptual artist worked closely with Michael Shambberg at Of Factory New York, designing high-concept promotional items for Factory acts. For New Order's 1983 Paradise Garage show, Weiner also designed a custom ticket stub utilizing a black and white version of the same motif.