

Digital Is Dangerous! “We D.I.D it, so can you!”

Jibbering is an archaic type of shop, having more in common with the grocers and bakers of a 1950s High Street, than the new millennium's vapid shopping experience: people talk to one other in Jibbering. They have conversations. When your Granny tells you that people used to say hello to each other in the old days, it's probably because they did. And they still do – if you know where to look. In sharp contrast to the consumerist pillaging of the Bullring, Jibbering re-invokes shopping as a social experience. The grab, yank and shove of brand buying in TK Max or Selfridges is substituted for a mode of shopping that prioritises interaction, conversation and the importance of direct face to face social relations. Networks are established and continually cultivated through a shared pursuit of what is important: music.

D.I.D were established as an organisation committed to fighting the dangers of digital, specifically the threat encountered by record shops from digital music. Patterns of music consumption have changed in the blink of an avatar's eye. Record shops are no longer a pre-requisite for collecting records if you have access to the Internet. So why does the anachronistically analogue institution of the record shop still exist? Perhaps the survival of such a basic form of technology can offer a challenge to the digital revolution. The D.I.D remit was simple: to grant the record shop a voice in a digitally determined world & to emphasise how the record shop acts as a site of resistance against our increasingly digitally contracted environments.

In adopting a deliberately provocative stance towards digital technologies, D.I.D hoped to generate dialogue around the rapid development and assimilation of digital into every pixel of our lives. Digital is an exhilarating, liberating, incredible force and clearly not dangerous per se - the irony of the website not being lost on some smart Alec's - but its spiralling omnipresence is infrequently questioned. D.I.D sought to redress this perceived imbalance in their manifesto. The D.I.D manifesto was wide ranging and all encompassing; it relied on shock tactics, hollow rhetoric, unsubstantiated promises and sweeping overstatements. It wouldn't be a political manifesto otherwise.

To kick off their residency, D.I.D hosted an afternoon of polemical discussion in the surreptitious surroundings of the Jibbering basement. The Digital is Dangerous Debate saw five invited speakers deliver presentations on (a) the role of digital technology in creative practice (b) the place of vinyl & record shops in the digital age. D.I.D in promoting the event had promised “a wonderful selection of edible digital nipples to keep everyone happy”. Unfortunately, the “digital nipples” didn't materialise, but “digital nibbles” did in the shape of a Space Invader Rice Crispie cake. Highlights included Moseley music mogul Robin Giorno - who runs Friendly Fire Music, a Birmingham based record label - thrilling his awe struck audience on the differences between digital and analogue technology and Robert Grose's specially commissioned paper – Post Digitalism Or Did We Dig(it) at all? A Symptomatic Declaration of a Possible Event.

Robert's talk explored how the digital has impacted upon our social relations. He introduced the term 'Analogue Flaneurism'. The drift and derive of going out record hunting, the physicality and arbitrariness that leads to chance encounters or unusual discoveries, was situated in contrast to the highly mediated digital flaneur. Robert's full talk is available at www.digitalisdangerous.co.uk and its well worth a listen. Please note that 'Analogue Flaneurism' is not to be confused with Flanagan and Allen (ism) (Grose: 2008).

D.I.D concluded proceedings with an impassioned performance lecture on the dangers of digital, realised through an exquisitely constructed cardboard power point presentation. Perhaps the most plausible and attainable proposal that D.I.D outlined, was a plan to

radically alter the British education system: weekly school trips to record shops by 2010, Vinyl Studies GCSE introduced by 2012. The curriculum would be as follows:

Key stage 33: Basic Vinyl Playing, Cartridge Care, Track Pattern Recognition.

Key Stage 45: Beat Matching, Dubplate Theory, Stylus Care, Quality Grading.

Key Stage 78: Vinyl History, Advanced Scratching, Dubplate Cutting, Cover Care, Making Picture Discs, Problems with Decks.

Perhaps the most publicly ludicrous moment of the Digital is Dangerous campaign was an anti-digital pro-vinyl protest rally through Moseley farmers market. In retrospect, 12 noon was a slightly optimistic time for attracting the vinyl loving masses; many having been out the preceding night to Birmingham's number one private members club Peckers and Mr Elephant at The Hare & Hounds. D.I.D would like to give a special big shout out to the bright eyed and bushy tailed Roy Roastbeef of Funkbox for his presence at the rally. Every campaign needs a charismatic spearhead, and D.I.D's was no exception. The march was led by Base6 - a Birmingham based beat boxer - who dressed in a giant cardboard speaker, and reminiscent of a low budget mascot from a football club going through the final stages of liquidation, led the chanting masses through Moseley farmers market. Who needs Che, Martin or Arthur, when you've got a skinny white guy in a cardboard box. Big Up Base6! Whilst vinyl may not be final, vinyl will undoubtedly fight for its survival. The motivation behind the protest was to simply point out that in an increasingly digitally regulated world, analogue continues to thrive. The Record Shop Will Not Stop! Vinyl Matters! Hopefully the protest rally gave the Moseley farmers market goers something to ponder beyond their ostrich burgers and hand pressed quail eggs.

The D.I.D protest took on a more raucous shape at April's Jibbering Sessions at The Hare & Hounds when D.I.D hosted a protest stall to promote the campaign and educate the public on the terrible dangers of digital. D.I.D learnt two important things about the art of protest at this event: (1) protests are remarkably effective when held at midnight in the presence of alcohol; (2) the placard is a natural ally and friend to those under the influence. The DJ's - Mungos Hi Fi - swiftly removed their MP3's and reverted to vinyl when D.I.D placards were haphazardly waved in their direction. Digital is Dangerous, and so are pixilated people with placards.

The Record Shop Will Not Stop!
Vinyl is Final!
Vinyl Survival!
I-pod You Little Sod!
Vinyl Matters!
Digital is Dangerous!

The D.I.D Campaign was supported by an exhibition in Jibbering - Noah was a Record Collector. Noah was the original and ultimate collector, perhaps the only collector to have ever collected everything. D.I.D went to great lengths (nearly all the way to Wales) to acquire an iconic image for the exhibitions flyer - literally Noah as a record collector. D.I.D believed that a flyer for an exhibition in a record shop needed to resemble a piece of record cover art. The flyer was composed with the conceptual rigour of a 1970's Pink Floyd album cover, the fortunate find of Public Enemy's Fight The Power and the need to take a photo quickly: Noah's feet were getting cold and it was going to rain. The exhibition kicked off on May Day with the by now infamous D.I.D performance lecture. Back by popular demand, Digital is Dangerous: The Lecture played to a packed and enthusiastic record shop audience. Proceedings then moved downstairs to the Jibbering basement for the

evenings cultural highlight: the worlds first Dub Quiz (no other hits on google or yahoo). This was hosted by local living legend Pablo Ryder in the style of a 1970s dance hall session and doubled up as a fundraiser for the D.I.D campaign. The final tallies were:

Munchbreak: 36
The Knowfuckalls's: 26.5
Team Newso: 24
Alex, Patrick, Neil 24
Chilli Lemon: 22.5
Today I am Aware 15
Mamma Feel Good: 17
Eggs Benedict: 12.5
No Worries: 10

At this point the organisers of the quiz (D.I.D) feel it is necessary to explain the severity of the questions. Speaking from a secret location, D.I.D said:

'The self-congratulatory pleasure of getting easy questions right was sacrificed for the continued status of Jibbering as a site of musical connoisseurship: you can't have easy questions in a record shop'

The Dub Quiz is to become an annual event on the Jibbering calender. D.I.D have already had unconfirmed reports of Mama Feel Good meeting thrice weekly for swatting sessions. If you would like to organise a Dub Quiz, a quick tip on making the trophy: take a Robinsons squash bottle, fill it with cement, stick a record in the top, cut the bottle off, spray it gold. Beauty and absurdity in the palm of your hand.

Noah was a Record Collector supported the D.I.D campaign; the exhibition sought to engage with the love of vinyl and why some strange souls continue to champion it over digital. Portraiture photography by the indefatigable Matt Wilson decorated the Jibbering walls, whilst several monitors displayed interviews with four record collectors – Robin, Matt, Amy and Cro –connected to Jibbering. The Goldmine Record Grading Game was a contest to find the ultimate vinyl scholar. Collectors battled it out to grade records as accurately as possible in passionate pursuit of yet another lovingly hand crafted trophy. A special shout out to Adrian for his consummate grading skills in winning the trophy.

After the 'Councillor interviewing Record Collectors' plan fell through on ethical grounds, D.I.D asked the four record collectors to dress up as famous collectors. What emerged from these interviews was a genuine ambivalence towards digital technology. Vinyl offers a physicality that digital lacks: finding a rare and under priced 45 at a record fair is a sensory experience that online vinyl hunting can't parallel. But the Internet has changed how the vinyl industry operates. Access to records has never being greater. Collectors are no longer reliant on shops or fairs with the multitude of vinyl trading sites available online. Interestingly, one of the collectors – Cro – offered a more practical reason for preferring digital on occasions. Vinyl is heavy. It's bad back inducing if you're a DJ lugging record boxes around the country. Djing digitally alleviates this problem. Perhaps the most insightful observation of the whole project came from Robin who collects reggae: What do Rasta's say when they stop smoking Ganja? What's this shit music? This has nothing what so ever to do with the digital debate, exhibitions or art, but it's a very good joke so it deserves to be in here. A special mention should also go to Robin / Noah for been the publicly hairy face of the Digital is Dangerous campaign on 5000 flyers around Birmingham. D.I.D believe the three months of beard itchiness were definitely worth it. Ladies just love that biblical look.....

Perhaps it is important to return again to how music is consumed, and Robert Grose's

notion of 'Analogue Flaneurism'. Jibbering represents a social space where people come in perhaps not knowing what they will find, maybe they will have a cup of tea and a conversation, perhaps they will find out something that they would never have known if they had stayed at home and downloaded of I-tunes. Maybe The Record Shop Will Not Stop after all. When the digital music apocalypse comes, consumers tired of virtual music at 79p a pop will re discover record shops as the special spaces they are. Men, women and small children will hug their vinyl in the streets and whisper softly to their 45's lyrics from that all time Jibbering favourite 'Please Forgive Me' by Brian Adams.....

Still feels like our first night together
Feels like the first kiss, its gettin better baby
No one can better this...
Still holdin on, you're still the one
First time our eyes met, same feelin I get
Only feels much stronger, wanna love you longer
You still turn the fire on...
So if you're feeling lonely don't
You're the only one I ever want
I only wanna make it good
So if I love you a little more than I should
Please forgive me, I know not what I do...
...I can't stop loving you
Don't deny me this pain I'm going through...
...if I need you like I do
Please believe me every word I say is true...
...our best times are together...
...touch, still getting closer baby
Can't get close enough...
Still holding on, still number one
I remember the smell of your skin...everything
...all your moves...you, yeah!
...the nights you know I still do...
...one thing I'm sure of is the way we make love
And one thing I depend on is for us to stay strong
With every word and every breath I'm praying
That's why I'm saying...
...never leave me I don't know what I do...

Unfortunately, the DID revolution will not be televised, because television is going digital....

Chris Poolman