

WARNING: THIS VIDEO CONTAINS FLASHING IMAGES

Sound System was more than a musical genre. It was a radical and transformative counterculture that celebrated the resilience of working-class immigrants in particular, and made their voices heard during one of the most openly hostile eras in this country's history. Jamaican in origin, yet able to redefine what it meant to be British for all ethnicities and show us how to fight for it.

This is a video about the positive social impact that Sound System culture had in Hillfields – the working class neighbourhood of Coventry where I grew up. It is a representation of my memories of the time and aims to capture the vibe of those times. These outdoor performances took place outside the (now demolished) tower block Unity House, which was located very close to my home during the summers in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

Dubbed the 'Hillfields Happening Carnivals' or 'Vine Street Carnivals', these events were completely unlicensed and always extremely loud. The energy the music generated was always incredibly uplifting.

At a time when violent crime was a regular occurrence in the area, this music brought messages of peace that reinvigorated our vulnerable community. It welcomed everyone, regardless of age, gender, background, or beliefs. And best of all, it made you wanna dance!!!

I distinctly remember feeling a sense of belonging during the carnivals. One that is hard to define but that I still long for.

As such, I want this work to counteract the commonly-held negative views of Hillfields; even those found in my own previous works that focus on the darker sides of life there. It will be colourful, vibrant, and celebratory; reflective of the carnival atmosphere that I was so fortunate to have witnessed at that time and that I've never forgotten.

The work is a video and audio collage of actual recordings from the time. Special thanks to Tony McCook aka Black Crusader for permission to use these. The full video is available to view online here: [Black Crusader Sound @ Hillfields Carnival, Coventry, UK - 1991 - YouTube](#)