

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Popular Music Analysis

by

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ABSTRACT

Interest in the relevance of popular music study to musicology began in the early twentieth century with Theodore Adorno's seminal article "On Popular Music" of 1941. Since then, a postmodern idealism of the twentieth century makes possible the study of popular music. In ways similar to the analysis of composers like Cage or Boulez, a postmodern approach allows for the consideration of extra-musical elements like timbre or cultural influences that play a larger role in popular music than in art music. Given the plurality of musics that are extant, ethnomusicological practices such as cultural studies combined with musical analysis transfers easily to the study of popular music. As structuralist and formalist boundaries became more fluid, musicologists branched out into areas that were once outside the scope of traditional musicology.

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To my friend and mentor Victor, more than I can say

And to Neil, for listening

DEDICATION

For Joshua and Caitlin

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a commonly held misconception that popular culture largely consists of art, music, and literature that is of an inferior quality when compared to the “classical” ideals established by the great artists, composers, and authors of the past. In fact, a kind of “lowest common denominator” mentality seems to exist among those who create and manufacture popular culture. What this means is that success in the popular culture world comes from a debasing of traditional classical art forms to an extent that any intellectual aspect has been circumscribed in favour of the unimaginative, trite, and juvenile. While in some instances this may be true, painting popular culture with such a wide brush ignores true creative output and unfairly dismisses those artists whose contribution is indeed significant.

Classical figures of the past, such as Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Beethoven, have traditionally held a position of permanence in the academy, though outside the academy their standing has been challenged if not increasingly eroded by mass media and popular culture. At the same time, the study of popular culture is now a valid academic pursuit, and it has been validated through means that are identical to those that helped canonize “greatness” in the classical fields, namely analysis. This thesis will critically examine various methods of popular music analysis. Chapter One will review the literature devoted to popular music analysis including musicological, cultural, and sociological studies. An overview of the many facets of study will be presented with critical arguments within the fields being examined. Chapter Two will look at the issue of scores and transcriptions with regard to popular music in general and analysis in

particular. As well, trade magazines will be examined with regard to transcriptions.

Finally, Chapter Three presents several case studies.

* * *

Popular music is not a phenomenon limited to the twentieth century. In Europe during the nineteenth century, the burgeoning “middle class” of society showed an increased interest in music of all types. Transcriptions of orchestral works, instrumentals, and songs were readily available for the consumer and attained “popular” status, at the same time, these works rapidly became canonized as “great” and worthy. Nineteenth-century analysis of popular music, such as certain art songs, *Volkslieder*, and transcriptions of arias and orchestral music that were available for the public, became a determining factor in what constituted “good” in the public aesthetic and the creativity and quality of both the composer and the composition. In other words, if a musical work was deemed to be worthy of study at the academic level and could withstand the biopsy of analysis, then it followed that the work must have some element of credibility or quality. Nevertheless, the “lowest common denominator” phenomenon existed then as well, and it was with dismay that composer, critic, and musicologist Robert Schumann looked upon the works of many of his contemporaries and the collective aesthetic of the consuming public.¹ He formed an informal group of like-minded friends and acquaintances who could discuss and critique the music that they deemed worthy both of study and performance. His journal, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* combined a personal aesthetic with scholarly criticism that has endured to the present day.

Transcriptions or instrument-specific works continued their reign as the primary musical commodity available for the public until the early twentieth century. Up to this

time, the music that was heard may have been considered popular, but the overall size of the audience was proportionately and considerably smaller. In North America, early twentieth-century technological advances such as wireless broadcasting and the advent of recording equipment enabled popular music to reach a larger demographic and consuming base, and popular music became a lucrative business for publishers, recording studios, record labels, and radio stations. The Tin-Pan Alley songs of composers like Hoagy Carmichael, Irving Berlin, Fats Waller, along with jazz and an almost unending well of folk songs, both traditional and newly composed, rapidly subsumed art music as the *a priori* choice for the consumer. As the recording and broadcasting industries evolved technologically, popular music became more defined by what was heard on the radio and at the same time played by the musicians. The idea of the “hit song” was born, and many musicians and songwriters gained notoriety and fame solely on the success of their work as it was broadcasted or sold through recordings and transcriptions.

Adorno and Popular Music Study

In 1941, Theodore Adorno published an essay titled “On Popular Music.” Possibly the first serious study devoted specifically to popular music, Adorno began the scholarly excursion into the world of popular culture that has continued to the present. Considered a seminal article in popular music study, Adorno’s essay has often been cited in the writings of many contemporary musicologists and others who deal primarily with popular culture and music. The disparity between art music or “serious” and that which is deemed “popular” is defined by Adorno as existing in two spheres of music. In other words, art music exists in its own realm with particular conventions and techniques, and

¹ See: Leon Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976).

popular music inhabits a similar but decidedly different one. According to Adorno, this division occurred in Europe long before the twentieth-century idea of American popular music arose.² The definition and delineation of popular music even in Adorno's day was one of derision and neglect by the academic community.

It is Adorno's contention that the relation of popular music to serious music can only be arrived at by strict attention to the fundamental characteristic of popular music: standardization. The whole structure of popular music is standardized, from the structurally defining forms like the 12-bar blues or 32-bar AABA pop song; to the range, generally no more than a ninth; and the harmonic vocabulary, lyric content, and song "characters." This guarantees that regardless of what aberrations occur, the hit will lead back to the familiar and nothing novel will be introduced.³ Structural standardization occurs in art music as well, though the parameters of style are much more flexible than popular music. Sonata principle, the primary "serious" compositional device for two hundred years, allows for flexibility and evolution. The recurrence of themes along with variation is an integral rhetorical component of classical composition. For example, Beethoven's late string quartets expand the boundaries and strategies of form in a manner dissimilar to popular music.

The details of popular music are also standardized and have their own unique vocabulary of descriptive terms such as *lick*, *riff*, and *hook*.⁴ The standardization of detail differs from the structural framework in that it is not overt like the latter but hidden beneath a veneer of "effects" that are handled and visible only by the experts, however

² Theodore Adorno, "On Popular Music," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Random House, 1990): 301.

³ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁴ See the glossary for a definition of these terms and others.

open this secret may be to musicians generally.⁵ These “effects” amount to an intangibility in successful popular songs that is regarded as the *Gestalt* of the work: a sometimes mysterious ability of songwriters and producers to create a piece of music that appeals on a universal scale often across racial, gender, and cultural boundaries. In some ways, the popular music of Adorno’s time, jazz, Tin-Pan Alley, and big-band music, may offer more variation of “effects” on a harmonic level than contemporary popular music. As recording technology evolved, it dictated a shift from purely musical or harmonic “effects” to techniques applied during the recording process, which constitute “effects” in the strictest sense. Appearing concurrently, the harmonic vocabulary coupled with the technological elements, along with the intangible element creates the popular music of the present day.

It is also Adorno’s contention that the contrasting character of standardization on the whole and the part provides a preliminary setting for the listener. The primary effect of this relation between the framework and the detail is that the listener becomes prone to evince stronger reactions to the part than to the whole.⁶ In other words, specific fragments of the song become the focal point for the listener. Rather than necessitating a knowledge of sonata principle so that returning themes are recognized and expected, the miniscule becomes more important. The hook attains primacy over other elements in popular song and thereby focuses the listener’s attention and forms the aesthetic choice. Despite the fact that Adorno’s essay deals with the popular music of the early twentieth century, he

⁵ The use of the term “effects” should not be confused with technological devices employed by popular musicians or recording studios, rather it refers to those harmonic, melodic, and affective devices present in popular music. Similarly, these “effects” are available to all songwriters and musicians, but some have the innate ability to create memorable works widely disseminated to the public while others languish in relative obscurity or limited geographical popularity.

⁶ Ibid.

laid the groundwork for the definition and validation of popular music study that remains a part of any scholarly examination of popular music and culture.

Validating Popular Music Analysis

Notwithstanding the intellectual study of popular music, much of what is deemed “popular” is still regarded as inferior by the “serious music” community. It has taken well over fifty years for popular music genres such as rock, blues, rhythm and blues, and country to be accepted as valid for study. Many of the artists who attained immense popularity through the latter half of the twentieth century, like the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix, have since been lauded as pioneers and great influences, and have had their artistic merit validated simply by the passage of time. Classical music long ago ceded economic primacy to pop; but for the first time in a century, it has lost its symbolic or ritualistic power to define hierarchies of taste with the larger culture.⁷

Using traditional musicological analytical techniques to study popular music can be problematic at best. While it is true that the common link between classical and popular music is the musical language, removing popular music from its cultural place distorts the inherent meaning and affect that provides both the genesis for composition and the aesthetic element. Because popular music exists on a different plane than classical, namely in a recorded medium rather than manuscript or score, the cultural aspect cannot be ignored in the same manner as a Josquin motet or Vivaldi concerto. Popular music is inextricably tied to culture and any divorcing of the two yields a skewed vision of what the actual meaning and purpose of the music is. For example, cultural aspects of the late 1960s such as the Vietnam war, civil liberty demonstrations, and

women's rights provided the impetus for many popular music compositions of the time, and any attempt at analysis that does not take into account those cultural values would result in an unsatisfactory revealing of the music's affect or purpose.

Popular music analysis can take many forms and it is with this in mind that an exploration of the various methods and techniques being used can illuminate the validity of the music and its cultural and historical purpose. The canon of popular music performance is becoming intertwined with the canon of analysis, one serving to feed the other, and through this convergence the value, credibility, and aesthetic of popular music becomes both a critical choice for the analyst and validation for the listener.

⁷ Robert Fink, "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon," *American Music* 16/2 (1998): 139.

CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

Writing about music is like dancing about architecture

Elvis Costello¹

Elvis Costello's statement is as much an expression of analytical fear as a clever quip, a repetition of that age-old musician's axiom, "It means what ever it means." In the end this is a philosophical cop-out. Perhaps he does not want his music pigeon-holed into an analytic box that might not reflect exactly what he intended. Or is he saying writing about music is difficult, as difficult as dancing about architecture? Whatever his meaning, he manages to diminish at once the discipline of musical analysis, and what Costello's statement ignores as well, is the rising number of popular music analyses that are now common in the disciplines of musicology, sociology, cultural studies, and history. Can the same be said for architectural dancing?

The study of popular music is practiced with differing analytical methods all aiming for the same thing: an accurate verbal explanation of the intrinsic and inherent musical and cultural affects. These explanations take various forms and result from popular music study being an interdisciplinary affair. Initially, musicology lagged behind other disciplines when the analysis of popular music first became a concern in the academic arena. Given the relatively simple harmonic progressions found in most popular music and its cultivation by teens, musicologists and theorists chose not to explain, in conventional musicological and theoretical methodologies, the "hows," "whats," and "whys" of popular music's affective purpose. There is not a lot to be said, harmonically

¹ Quoted in Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): vii.

speaking, of a song like Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower:" three chords, Am-G-F, continuously cycle until all five strophes have been sung. The harmonic simplicity results in the primary affective component lying outside the parameters of the musicologist's primary focus—the music itself.

Inevitably, musicology had to draw on other disciplines in order to keep the popular music analysis boat afloat. The musicologist is thus at a simultaneous advantage and disadvantage. The advantage is that sociological research can be drawn upon; the disadvantage is that musicological "content analysis" in the field of popular music is still an underdeveloped area and, as Philip Tagg notes, "something of a missing link."² Somewhere the analytical bones of the missing link will reveal, to musicologists' relief, what they had been searching for.

Beginnings

It should not be assumed that musicological analysis of popular music is something either rarefied or different from traditional musicology. Popular music analysis is part of the "new musicology" that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and is enjoined with other musicological studies that focus on gender, sexuality, and culture. New musicology is part of a decade-long general disciplinary crisis within the academic study of music.³ As noted by Fink: "A New Musicologist looks at institutionalized musicology from the *inside* the way popular music scholars have always looked at it from the *outside*: with a certain ideological suspicion."⁴ Furthermore, this rift

² Philip Tagg, "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method, and Practice," in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. by Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 74.

³ Robert Fink, "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon," *American Music* 16/2 (1998): 137.

⁴ *Ibid.*

between traditional music
and the field of rock. As
the older generation could not
the music of the Beat
ideology of the disc only
aware of the particular
its affective purpose. The
was he, his exclusive
that requires a specific
vocabulary (the text)
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readers as "unintelligible"

though the pop
music is
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Malcolm and M.

analysis as far as music there
in traditional musical methods:
The Beatles by Perrow
Meller, who first discusses
about the Beatles. In the

between traditional musicology and new musicology is a result of a generational split, and the field of rock analysis is actually quite revealing of the musicological “crisis.” As the older generation of scholars retires and are replaced by a younger generation raised on the music of the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin, a change in the basic ideologies of the discipline of musicology was inevitable. New musicologists are keenly aware of the ancillary aspects of popular music that blend with the music itself to create its affective purpose. In a sense, it is musicology’s attempt to reclaim territory that once was held as its exclusive domain. Popular music’s quixotic existence as both an object that requires a specific vocabulary for analysis (the music) and a more generalized vocabulary (the text) puts analysis squarely between the two. At the risk of alienating those who do not understand the intricacies of music harmony, the musicologist must somehow wrap his or her analysis in language that can be understood by both “educated” readers and “uneducated” ones. As noted by Robert Walser and Susan McClary:

Though the point has often been made, it is still easy to forget that music is an especially resistant medium to write or speak about. While it does share with speech both sound and a mode of producing meaning that unfolds through time, most other aspects of music differ considerably from the patterns of verbal language.⁵

Walser and McClary were writing a decade ago and since then popular music analysis, as far as musicology is concerned, has been trying to find a “home” somewhere in traditional musicology. Beginning in the 1970s, Wilfred Mellers’ *Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect* (1973) employed traditional techniques for analysis, and Mellers felt that these methods contributed and were necessary for a serious discussion about the Beatles. In the introduction Mellers recognizes the need for discourse about the

music: "... for there is no valid way of talking about the experiential 'effects' of music except by starting from an account of what actually happens in musical technique, the terminology for which has been evolved by professional musicians over some centuries."⁶ Mellers goes on to examine the music of the Beatles using the traditional musicological tool of harmonic analysis, albeit without any reference to other elements such as timbre. But by saying, "It follows that my commentary can be fully intelligible only in relationship to the sound of the music; the book should be a 'companion' to the playing of the discs,"⁷ Mellers recognizes the difficulties in transmitting, in written form, the aural elements of the music.

Perhaps even more than art music, popular music is dependent upon timbre as a definitive aspect of the music's affective ability. Meller's analyses then become, as he states, a "companion" to the playing of the discs. Because Mellers' background is rooted in the traditions and conventions of art music, he attempts to express characteristics in the Beatles' music as though he were speaking of a Beethoven sonata or a Mozart symphony. He describes one component of "A Hard Day's Night" as a mutually exclusive relationship between freedom and experience that: "... is incarnate in the music: which begins apparently in C major, though the opening sustained chord is arrestingly a dominant ninth of F, and the C major triads at the beginning of the tune sound more like dominants in F than tonics in C."⁸ Mellers' analyses are about the music and he qualifies this focus by stating: "This has been a book about Beatle songs—verse and music: about

⁵ Robert Walser and Susan McClary, "Start Making Sense!: Musicology Wrestles With Rock," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Random House, 1990): 278.

⁶ Wilfred Mellers, *Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973): 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

which little has been written. About the Beatles as a social phenomenon many thousands of words have been uttered, and I don't propose to add many to them."⁹ It is clear from Mellers' statement that popular music was being examined from a sociological view long before musicology had begun to study popular music and Mellers saw no reason to include sociological aspects in his analyses because the work had already been done. However, to Mellers' credit, he saw the need to deal with the music as music and not some cultural phenomenon or experience.

Despite the subject of his analyses, Mellers' book is indebted to the traditional musicological view of the "great composer" who in turn is responsible for the "great music" that has become an integral part of the academic canon. Even before one word is uttered about the music, Mellers deifies the Beatles with the Wagnerian title: *Twilight of the Gods: The Beatles in Retrospect*. This would suggest that the Beatles, like Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, are in some way "great masters" of their compositional milieu, and coming from Mellers, who is more well known for his classical music analysis and criticism, a degree of seriousness or credibility becomes attached to the music. But his exclusive use of traditional musicology has since been criticized. John Shepard notes: "The musical terminology to which Mellers refers, ... has been evolved by music theorists with the specific aim of analysing functional tonal music It has not been evolved for the purpose of analysing popular music in terms of categories immanent to the music itself."¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 183.

¹⁰ John Shepard, "A Theoretical Model for the Sociomusicological Analysis of Popular Musics," in *Popular Music 2: Theory and Method*, ed. by Richard Middleton and David Horn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 147.

For Shepard, the “categories immanent to the music itself” play no part in telegraphing the “whys” of popular music’s affect. On the other hand, they do explain the “hows,” albeit speculatively. And they can be myopic, ignoring the aspects of the music that the “uneducated” listener finds most appealing. Clearly, exclusively employing analytical tools that were designed for “serious” music poses some difficulties for some scholars. Indeed, the ubiquity of popular music presents more facets to analysis than can be explained by harmonic function alone, but stating, as Shepard does, that “it has not evolved for the purpose of analysing popular music” strips the musicologist of an analytical component that *is integral* to the object of analysis, the music itself. At a basic harmonic level, both popular and art music share a common musical vocabulary that lends itself to analysis by harmonic function. Moreover, songs are arranged formally using structural methods that have been in place for centuries. The use of a verse/chorus model predates popular music and is used by most songwriters. For example, folk revivalists like Gordon Lightfoot employ a ballad structure that is purely strophic, as evidenced in “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.”¹¹

Along with form, codified harmonic practices that have remained virtually unchanged through music’s various evolutionary cycles combine to contribute to meaning. A multi-level existence requires an analytical methodology that can adequately accommodate the various parameters. There is, of course, differing stratum with regard to meaning, and analysis should reflect this. To disregard the basic music element, however simplistic it may be, or dismiss its importance, leaves the music without a framework or some kind of identifying factor beyond formal, cultural, timbral, or historical boundaries.

¹¹ The term “folk revival” has been used to differentiate the folk singers of the 1960s from those of the 1930s and 1940s. Woody Guthrie is viewed as a folk singer while Gordon Lightfoot, Bob Dylan, and Phil

At the onset, popular music analysis, musicologically speaking, revealed the intrinsic musical elements, despite the opportunities for ancillary information. But as popular music evolved, the musicology of popular music analysis evolved as well, and different levels of meaning were slowly folded into traditional analytical methodologies.

Timbre

Timbral aspects of popular music place a large importance on the analytical value of the recording. The popular music “document” exists with the timbre revealed, unlike art music where timbre is indicated, expected, or assumed. For Shepard and Wicke, as far as analysis is concerned, musical meaning in popular music lies outside the parameters of harmonic analysis, and within those of timbre. In addition, purely textual analyses from the disciplines of sociology and communication result in the “sounds of music itself going unexplained.”¹² Even when both approaches are used, as in Robert Walser’s heavy metal analyses or Allan Moore’s *Rock: The Primary Text*, Shepard and Wicke take issue with the fact that timbre is largely ignored. Cultural and sociological aspects aside, Moore’s book is chastised for using “methods and vocabularies derived from the analysis of European art-music by the disciplines of music theory and music analysis.”¹³ Walser is similarly taken to task, referring to his approach of a combination of harmonic analysis coupled with social and cultural elements: “... they themselves cannot lead to analyses which are socially and culturally sensitive.”¹⁴ Shepard and Wicke’s assertion that the experiential effects of timbre are primary over the intrinsic musical elements posits the analytical method in confined quarters. Their assertion that musical meaning lies outside

Ochs are seen as folk revivalists.

¹² John Shepard and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Malden: Blackwell Publisher, 1997): 9.

¹³ Ibid.

the parameters of harmonic analysis results in a singular perspective, one that leaves the “hows” of popular music’s affective nature ignored, and in its place, a subjectivity that poses more questions than it answers. On the other hand, a focus on the detail of a particular piece of music, something that harmonic analysis does quite well, can reveal how a particular timbral aspect is achieved. And if that aspect results in some kind of affect, as experienced by the listener, then surely a coherent line can be drawn between harmonic element, timbral result, and musical meaning.

Traditional musicology

The similarity between the harmonic vocabulary of popular and art music leaves the musicologist no choice but to use analytical methodology previously reserved for classical music. Robert Walser notes: “... I have learned from and taken issue with the arguments of sociologists, musicologists, rock critics, and cultural theorists because I have found such interdisciplinary inquiry the only adequate approach to the study of something as complex as popular music.”¹⁵ By interdisciplinary inquiry, Walser is referring to a multi-faceted approach to analysis, something that would include various levels of meaning. While culture, sociology, and text all matter, for Walser the *Urtext* remains the music. Walser analyses and discusses heavy metal music drawing comparisons between Baroque musical conventions and heavy metal guitar figuration, citing parallels between the virtuosity of Romanticists like Liszt and heavy metal guitarists such as Eddie Van Halen. His methodology owes much to Mellers, in that traditional musicological analytical tools and vocabulary are used. The methods differ,

¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

¹⁵ Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993): xviii.

however, as musicological analyses are combined with aspects of sociology, culture, and the media. His analysis of Eddie Van Halen's opening guitar riff from "Eruption" (1978) combines traditional musical terminology with descriptive vocabulary: "Van Halen moves the first section from blues-based pentatonic licks in A, through a couple of flashy patterns of less clear provenance, to collapse finally back to a low A, which he 'wows' with the whammy bar."¹⁶ Despite the somewhat esoteric description of the opening guitar figuration, Walser's analysis of the song is firmly grounded in harmonic analysis.

It seems obvious that the harmonic language of art music and popular music share a similar, if not exact, vocabulary that is the basis for any kind of musical representation or lyrical underpinning required for the song. The musical materials are manipulated differently, but the basic nature of chord progressions remains relatively constant. Elements such as chordal or root movement by fifth, secondary dominants, modulations, and a degree of word-painting are common to both to art music and popular music.

Walter Everett, a proponent of tonal analysis, says this:

Just as an appreciation of the voice leading in a "free" Beethoven scherzo is impossible without a command of the contrapuntal techniques behind a "strict" Palestrina motet, so the entire pitch and rhythm worlds of "anarchic" tonal rock music are based upon, or relate to, principles that underlie the "legitimate" classics. (And how much music on the 40,000 charting singles and albums of the rock era is atonal or arrhythmic?)¹⁷

Everett recognizes the need for an analytical methodology that reflects the basic nature of the music and, like Mellers and Walser, chooses to use tonal analysis to study popular music. Rock music did not come from "outer space," as Everett contends, and tonal compositional conventions extend from the tradition of art music through to the popular

¹⁶ Ibid., 69.

music of today.¹⁸ Another point of consideration for the validity of tonal analysis versus some other methodology, lies in the manner that pop musicians create their craft. Whether they are schooled in the conservatory and possess a working understanding of the rules of harmony or self-taught with a rudimentary knowledge of harmonic function and a good set of “ears,” every musical action lives in the world of tonality. Fan magazines devoted to specific instruments such as *Guitar Player*, *Bass Player*, *Keyboard Player*, *Guitar World*, and *Guitar for the Practising Musician* all feature columns and articles that deal specifically with musical elements that are presented to the reader using the vocabulary of tonal analysis. Chords are designated by Roman numerals and harmonic function is described. If popular music is taught and disseminated using terminology and conventions that are “exclusive to art music,” then an analysis should reflect both the musical nature and the compositional process. Avoiding tonal analysis for popular music discourse is putting the analytical cart before the horse.

Schenker or not?

The tonal nature of popular music results in a universal agreement that tonality provides the genesis for its composition. Even though tonal analysis is rejected by scholars like Shepard and Wicke, they would be hard-pressed to argue convincingly that formal structures and harmonic patterns play no part in any of the levels of meaning. Acceptance of tonality and the resulting analytical methods open doors for analysis that would otherwise be closed. As a result, many tonal analysts employ the reductive analysis of German theorist Heinrich Schenker. Using a methodology such as Schenker’s

¹⁷ Walter Everett, “Confessions From Blueberry Hell, or, Pitch Can Be a Sticky Substance,” in *Expression in Pop Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 270.

immediately puts the analyst at the mercy of those who decry the method for classical music let alone popular music, and it fosters argument. Lori Burns defends the use of Schenkerian reduction, with some qualification:

Used strictly, Schenkerian analysis is not entirely effective for the analysis of many popular songs. But in modified form, reductive analysis can yield important analytic results; it is a valuable tool for illustrating the voice-leading and harmonic features of a particular song, as well as the unique manipulations of harmonic convention that might be peculiar to the narrative of the individual song or to the stylistic practices of the artist.¹⁹

While not expressly advocating Schenkerian analyses in the strictest sense, Burns does advocate a modified form of the methodology that she feels aptly suits certain forms of popular music. Along with Burns, Walter Everett employs and defends Schenkerian analysis: “My work with this technique does not aim to deify any composer ... but to explore a finished work ... And, despite the fact that many view the Schenkerian approach as a “formalist” one, I ... do not.”²⁰ Part of the difficulty with Schenker’s methodology is that it is sometimes viewed as “ethnocentric” and “elitist,” and the paradigm of reductive analysis means repertory decisions can be made on the basis of the pieces that are likely to work best under that paradigm.²¹ Under Burns’ view, however, this would not be a problem because it reinforces her point that Schenkerian analysis “is not entirely effective for the analysis of many popular songs.”

Critics of the Schenkerian method for popular music analysis include Robert Walser, Allan Moore, and John Covach. These scholars assume that Schenkerian analysis

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Lori Burns, “Analytic Methodologies for Rock Music: Harmonic and Voice-Leading Strategies in Tori Amos’ “Crucify,” in *Expression in Pop Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 217.

²⁰ Everett, “Confessions,” 304.

is presumed by its advocates to be useful for any kind of popular music—something the Schenker advocates deny. Voice-leading is an important element in reduction theory and critics also point out that while internal voice-leading is of importance in classical composition, popular music does not possess the same types of voice-leading elements. Schenker's advocates insist on illuminating voice-leading in popular music, whether it exists or not and the pieces chosen for analysis are the ones that most closely fit with the Schenkerian analytical paradigm.²² Allan Moore feels that Schenkerian analysis does not necessarily fit with the analytical model: "It is hard to argue that "surface" and "background" are inappropriate concepts for popular musics, but it cannot be unquestioningly assumed that those procedures ... that are normative in tonal concert music will necessarily apply to these musics."²³ Though Moore chastises Everett for employing Schenkerian reduction for analysis of Beatles' songs, it would seem by his statement, that he is not entirely dismissing the idea of Schenkerian theory. The terminology "surface" and "background," while being primarily the domain of the Schenkerians, also applies to recorded music when describing how particular musical events are placed within the stereo spectrum when a recording is mixed down.²⁴ There

²¹ Johan Covach, "We Won't Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis," in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinary, Culture*, ed. by David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian, and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997): 79.

²² Both Walter Everett and Lori Burns have published essays that deal specifically with voice-leading in popular music. See: Walter Everett, "Voice Leading and Harmony as Expressive Devices in the Early Music of the Beatles: "She Loves You," *College Music Symposium* 32/1 (1992): 19-35, and Lori Burns, "Analytic Methodologies for Rock Music: Harmonic and Voice-Leading Strategies in Tori Amos' "Crucify," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 213-246. See also: Timothy Koozin, "Fumbling Towards Ecstasy: Voice Leading, Tonal Structure, and the Theme of Self-Realization in the Music of Sarah McLachlan" in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 247-266.

²³ Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993): 12.

²⁴ There is also background music (Muzak), or the music played in shopping malls, dentist's offices, elevators, and while on hold on the telephone. Clearly, Moore is not referring to this type of background music either.

can be no real connection between these two disparate meanings for the same terms, but Moore's usage indicates that he is using them to mean the same thing that the Schenkerians do. Moreover, Moore does adopt Schenkerian graphs for his analyses of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, which, in his view, is totally appropriate for his needs, despite his criticism of Everett doing exactly the same thing.²⁵

Music and culture

The split between academic contemplation and popular understanding is a function of interpretive ideologies. Too many analysts of popular music assume that traditional musicological methods are simply appropriate for the art music repertory and that popular music does not warrant such an analysis.²⁶ Robert Walser notes: "Rock songs, like all discourse, do have meanings that can be discovered through analysis of their form and structure, but such analysis is useful only if it is grounded culturally and historically and if it acknowledges its interests forthrightly."²⁷ It is recognized that culture and history play an important part in the analysis of popular music, and when the music is discussed exclusively, eschewing cultural or social parameters, it is viewed as lacking or elitist. On the other hand, sociological studies of popular music usually ignore discourse about the music per se, because the authors are not trained in the intricacies of music theory and analysis nor do they necessarily agree with the approach. In a sense, it is a one-way street as far as musicologists are concerned, who are taken to task for avoiding or limiting sociological and cultural aspects, but the same derision is not directed at non-musicological studies that avoid discussing specific or pertinent musical elements.

²⁵ Moore's change of heart is explored in Chapter Three.

²⁶ Walser, 30

²⁷ Ibid., 31.

To achieve a more complete analysis, parameters other than those of the music must be incorporated where necessary and possible. Along with the acceptance of popular music in a tonal world, musicologists are rapidly adopting new facets of analysis to augment analytical components that deal with musical elements. This means that analysis lives in a multi-levelled world in which all levels synchronistically exist and at the same time coalesce to disseminate affect or meaning. Jean-Jacques Nattiez advocates the paradigm of a tripartite division of analysis that would accommodate a multi-faceted approach. Nattiez' model separates analysis into three components: the *poietic*, or composer's intent; the *neutral*, or manner in which the musical document exists; and the *esthesis*, or listener response.²⁸ These three levels are not mutually exclusive, but rather the parameters of each are fluid and all three work together to create affect and meaning. Nattiez makes an important point regarding an analysis of the neutral level: "This is a level of analysis at which one does not decide *a priori* whether the results generated by a specific analytical proceeding are relevant from the *esthesis* or *poietic* point of view."²⁹ In other words, while being the primary vehicle of transmission for affect and meaning, the music should not be assumed to possess these factors singularly. Because the parameters of this tripartite paradigm are fluid, the analytical process becomes more active than passive. For example, a musical document (here existing as score, recording, or performance) is the result of a complex process of creation, or *poietic* process that has to do with the form as well as the content of the work.³⁰ Concomitantly, the document is

²⁸ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 10-12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. (See Chapter Three)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

also a point of departure for a complex process of reception, or *esthetic* process that reconstructs a message.³¹

The work done by sociologists and cultural historians becomes invaluable for the musicologist, who can draw on aspects of culture, sociology, and history to augment the musical analysis. From a sociological perspective, the danger emerges of an analysis that is rooted in ideological effects but lacks a subjective valuing of meaning by reference to beauty, spectacle, or craft. Cultural value is assessed according to measures of true and false consciousness, the politics of excitement are subordinated to the necessities of interpretation or demystification.³² To avoid this Simon Frith suggests that subjective elements of “good” and “bad” should be incorporated into a sociological or cultural analysis of popular music. Because of the music’s unique existence within society, many times value judgments are placed on the object, not only by the listener but the analyst as well. These judgments should not be overlooked, according to Frith, and to gloss over the continuous exercise of taste by the pop cultural audience is, in effect, to do their discriminating for them, while refusing to engage in the arguments which produce cultural values in the first place.³³

History and more

Popular music, specifically rock, country, blues, and rhythm and blues, embraces a host of performance styles, but most have some basis in African American popular music, are rooted in song, and paradigmatically exist as recordings.³⁴ In this manner of

³¹ Ibid.

³² Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996): 14.

³³ Ibid., 16.

³⁴ Gracyk, 7.

existence, popular music poses similar problems for both sociological and musicological analysis. The sociologist might have the tendency to eschew subjective valuation from their analysis, while the musicologist could illuminate the subjective but miss the sociological response. With regard to sociological analysis, some subjectivity can be found in the plethora of popular music studies that exist within this discipline. Martha Bayles' *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (1994), purports to expose the declining lack of value in popular music, a decline that has slowly manifested itself in the last twenty or so years. It is Bayles' contention that the creeping absence of African American elements and influence has diluted popular music to such an extent as to render it lifeless. Clearly, she has made a subjective opinion about the state of popular music itself and its existence within societal boundaries. Her choice of vocabulary for the title offhandedly dismisses popular music, labelling it valueless and without, in her words, beauty and meaning.

An overwhelming number of subsidiary factors contribute to sociological or cultural analyses that can obfuscate the music and its affect and meaning. Such elements as youth culture, the media, commercialization, the market, and economic variables all contribute to a sociological perspective that can overlook the musical meaning in favour of the sociological response. This is partly due to the fact that sociologists along with cultural historians and anthropologists do not possess the necessary analytical tools or vocabulary to adequately deal with musical issues per se. As a result, there are no sociological, cultural, or historical studies extant that deal specifically with the music. Popular music is always examined in conjunction with ancillary factors and affects that contribute more to listener response (or societal response) than either the process of

creation or object of transmission. This is not to say that by this omission, sociological analyses are invalid for a musicological discussion, rather the musicologist can inject the missing element, namely an analysis of the music, or incorporate the sociological aspects into his or her own analysis. In other words, a musicologist can explain the “hows” and “whys” of affect to clarify a sociological study or incorporate the same study into a musicological discourse that illuminates these aspects and the “whos” and “whats” as well.

Popular music’s existence in the last fifty years means that artists popular in the infancy of genres like rock, country, and blues have become historically important by default. The historical value of artists like Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Johnny Cash, Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Janis Joplin, Gram Parsons, and Neil Young to name few is well known and universally accepted. The music of these artists and others is often described as being “classic” and “influential.” Normative performance practice elements and compositional techniques have resulted in the creation of genres and styles that can be realized by musicological or sociological analysis and these genres and styles are quickly identified by a particular audience or group of listeners at large. Popular music has taken its place in historical studies that trace its evolution and development from the inception of recorded mediums to the present day. In universities and secondary schools everywhere, the history of popular music is taught to students eager to learn about the roots of their favourite music. This means that a standardized historical evolution has been created and the music that accompanies the history becomes the canon of example in a fashion not unlike art music. In some ways, the Beatles have attained the same status as Beethoven, being a primary and exemplary

representation of compositional technique and historical importance.³⁵ The danger here as well is that lesser artists are ignored and their place in history or musical importance becomes a footnote to the larger significance of those artists canonized by the textbook. Again, this is a situation not that far removed from the state of the historical representation of art music.

Conclusion

There is a vast difference in both the quantity and the chronological existence between art music and popular music, and the history of art music considers “lesser” artists in addition to those who exhibit primary historical or musical importance. In the popular music world, however, lesser artists run the risk of being “left behind” as popular music history is being written almost as quickly as it is being created. In other words, due to popular music’s existence as an organic entity—something that evolves over time, has an accepted historical trajectory, and possesses identifiable musical, cultural, and historical elements that distinguish it from other musics—the rush to establish historical points of reference can result in the creation of the “great artist” syndrome.

Unfortunately, this occurs at the expense of a significant number of artists who are subject to the whims of popular taste that transfers to historical importance. This is an unavoidable ramification that can be destabilized by musicological or sociological analysis. The musicologist can illuminate the importance of other artists by exposing unique or stylistically descriptive elements in the music that can contribute to an evolving history. For example, in the history of progressive rock, usual artists hold court over stylistic and historical studies. The music of Yes, King Crimson, Gentle Giant, and

³⁵ At the risk of deifying both the Beatles and Beethoven, the Rolling Stones and Mozart can be examples.

Emerson, Lake and Palmer is often cited as being constitutive of progressive rock style and history, however, the music of Rush, a Canadian band that arguably holds as much stylistic as historical importance, is virtually ignored.³⁶

Popular music's ubiquitous existence as cultural marker, commodity, art form, document, and performance breeds the multi-tentacled monster of analysis that tugs this way and that as various disciplines lay claim to the field. The amazing resilience of the music resists pedantic classification and it can happily coexist in the realm of musicology, sociology, culture, or history. Each facet of analysis becomes a constituent and contributing part of the whole, refusing mutual exclusivity in favour of coexistence. In some ways, this reflects popular music's basic nature. The music that existed as the voice of the youth generation is used to sell automobiles and computers to that same generation now middle-aged. The radical voice that permeated much of the popular music of the 1960s has been silenced and now represents SUVs and laptops. Popular music's pliability allows different analytical approaches to run concurrent with the evolutionary usage and meaning of the music.

³⁶ The music of Rush is being studied by Durrell Bowman of the University of California – Los Angeles.

CHAPTER TWO: Scores and transcriptions

Score: A manuscript copy which shows in ordered form the parts allotted to the various performers.¹

The Oxford Dictionary of Music

In the art music tradition the written score is accepted as representing compositional authority and responsible for the music's local and historical transmission. In other words, performances are almost entirely dependent on scores (even when those performances, like opera, are memorized), and scores are responsible for the spread of music within its own time and across the centuries. Ultimately, scores are documents that sustain the bond between the music and its composer.

With regard to analysis, the score is the only way art music can be studied, to understand harmonic function, voice-leading, and, of course, affect and meaning. Because the score is the definitive version of a particular piece of art music and the singular way the music of the past can be transmitted to a contemporary audience, the intrinsic musical characteristics of harmonic verticality and structures of form become the primary analytical foci. Elements like timbre are usually ignored when analysing classical music, though timbre is a subject for certain types of analysis in contemporary and early music, and in cognitive studies.

But the concept of scores is foreign, or at least relatively new, in the world of rock music. To begin with, the music is not transmitted in score; rather it exists as a recording—the performance frozen in time. In this way, timbral aspects are forefronted, the composer or songwriter's intent is clear, and the meaning of the entire performance

¹ Michael Kennedy, ed., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); s.v. "Score," 658.

can be culled from the aural representation remaining on the vinyl, tape, or CD. Many times as well, the live performance is similar, if not exact, to the recorded performance. Since the pop music industry has always been driven by audiences rather than the musicians, most popular music artists do not deviate from the recorded version of their music that is already familiar to their audiences. An added or lengthened solo can sometimes be as blasphemous as rewriting the notes of a Chopin prelude.

When pop-rock musicians “learn” or familiarize themselves with a song, it is usually from an existing recording, either commercially purchased, or as a demo tape. The recorded songs are *gained* through the specifically defined event of imitating a recording by playing along with it and repeating parts of it over and over again using the ease of playback facilities.² What determines these musicians’ music, however, is not a body of knowledge—a theory of music—but the aural experience of the recording. Varying interpretations of what is “right” can be derived from various ways of listening.³ The lack of formal theoretical training can result in different hearings of harmonic passages. What sounds like an A minor chord to one player may sound like a C major chord with an A bass note to another, the subtleties of the concept of harmonic minor being overlooked by both.⁴

Recording and improvisation

New songs, or songs to be recorded for commercial release, are either composed by one, two, or all members of a pop-rock group, or in the case of some solo performers,

² H. Stith Bennett, “The Realities of Practice,” in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Random House, 1990): 224.

³ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴ This phenomenon is examined in an unpublished paper by Gordon Ross, “One-Two-Three-Four-Meet You at the End Boys: Free-lance Pop Musicians and Their Understanding of Music” (2000).

by an outside songwriter. The song mills of the Tin-Pan Alley days no longer exist; instead groups are recorded for their peculiar sound. When the Beatles were first recorded by George Martin, the mould of the song mill was broken. Here was a band of four individual musicians, ignorant of the mechanics of music theory, yet able to compose and perform their own music—music that spoke to an audience ranging from teenage girls to established musicians like musicologist Wilfred Mellers and composer Leonard Bernstein. For the first time, pop-rock musicians were recorded and recognized *because* of the way they sounded. Composing one's own material became the yardstick of success for pop-rock groups, although professional songwriters do contribute to a large number of recordings.

On the other hand written versions of songs are available, and not all pop-rock musicians rely solely on the recording to learn the music they play. In Nashville, for example, studio musicians are extremely adept at providing whatever timbral, rhythmic, or musical variable the producer requires, and usually some form of score or chart is used. This is because studio musicians generally play on the recording session and not the live performance. Studio musicians often record two or more sessions a day, and these can include different genres and artists. In order to minimize the danger of mistakes and having to repeat a recording, charts are used to guide the musician through the structure of the song—a kind of musical road map rather than score per se. The Nashville Number System was developed for studio recordings, and is an altered version of the Roman numeral system employed by musicologists and theorists. The concept is the same. The tonic chord is referred to as 1, the dominant as 5. If a chord is minor, then a dash appears after the number: 2-. Time signatures are notated and keys are denoted either by Arabic

letters; “A,” or a key signature. Bar lines are used and rhythmic variables are indicated under the chords if required for syncopation. If a chord is inverted or a bass note other than the tonic is required, a slash chord is used: C/E. The chart is laid out in the order of the various components of the song, in the same manner as a printed score for classical musicians. Verses, choruses, and bridges are identified as such and the musician is well aware of the structural elements of the song.

The Nashville Number System is not isolated to the recording studios of Nashville or other centres. Most pop-rock musicians, especially those who play blues, country, or jazz, are familiar with some form of numerical identification for chords, even though they do not think of their large-scale function. A large percentage of pop-rock musicians are ignorant of music theory concepts like chord function, however they do understand that chords “go together.” For example, a pop-rock musician might recognize the standard chord progression of B minor to E to A, but not the harmonic function of ii – V – I. As well, chord progressions that “sound good” would be preferred and chosen over ones that followed the rules of functional harmony. In this way, many analysts are confounded when trying to determine the tonal centre of a particular song, the question, “what are they trying to do?” suddenly becomes a search for a theoretical answer. An open-ended progression that could be interpreted in two different tonal areas might mean the difference between a successful analysis and one that purports to find elements that do not exist, yet seem to because of the harmony.

It should be noted that the introductory riffs, fills, and solo sections that comprise popular music recordings are all created or composed on the spot. The session musician must “invent” the instrumental hook and improvise the solo section, often creating

several versions until the producer is satisfied with the take. The act of improvisation was at one time a necessary skill for classical musicians. Most composers improvised: Bach at the organ, Mozart at the harpsichord, and Schumann would improvise at the piano during chamber recitals. This skill has largely been lost or overlooked, and presently the majority of classical musicians do not improvise. Even the cadenza section of a concerto, long being held as an indication of the musicality and virtuosity of the performer as he improvised a cadenza based on the material presented during the movement, is now written out and most solo performers play the same cadenza as others. The individuality of performance has been supplanted by convention and homogeneity. In the popular music world improvisation is needed and required, the skill of the performer being measured in a similar manner as Bach, Mozart, and Schumann. Most guitarists learn or “woodshed” their favourite solo from a recording to learn new vocabulary for their improvising and to imitate the styles of other guitarists.⁵ Timbral qualities of instrument tone, the type of distortion or overdrive, and the kind of amplifier used are imitated by guitarists in a personal pedagogical manner. Musical influences are absorbed and internalized and the guitarist gains an improvisatory rhetoric that is blended into personal performance style.

Sheet music and tablature

The popular music industry moves at a rapid pace as new songs, artists, and albums are released daily. The printed scores of the same music, on the other hand, appear on the market several months after the song has become a success. A full

⁵ In the case of young guitarists, this activity is the primary way in which electric guitar is learned. The riffs and solos of hit songs become the textbooks for the novice. Thousands of fledging guitar players have dutifully spent hours with a record player or cassette recorder learning the guitar parts to songs like “Stairway to Heaven,” “Jumpin’ Jack Flash,” and “Sunshine of Your Love.”

manuscript version of a recording is rare. It is almost impossible to find a score that shows guitar, keyboard, bass, drums, and vocal parts simultaneously, instead the printed version is usually a transcription of the entire ensemble reduced to a piano part (which may include the actual bass line) and chord diagrams (but not usually replicating the voicings or tessitura of the chords in the recorded version) to accompany the melody. These transcriptions are known as sheet music or PVG (piano, vocal, guitar) versions. Anthologies of sheet music, for either a particular artist or album, or a collection of hits from a specific decade or genre, are available as well. Again, piano transcriptions with guitar chords and melody are the primary manner in which these exist.

Instrument-specific transcriptions can be found in anthologies, pedagogical books, and periodicals. *Guitar for the Practising Musician*, now one of the most widely read guitarists' magazines, began publication in 1983, attracting readers with transcriptions and analyses of guitar-based popular music. Its professional guitarist-transcribers developed a sophisticated set of special notations for representing the nuances of performance, rather like the elaborate ornament tables of Baroque music.⁶

Tablature notation, whose history stretches back to the earliest publications for lute by Petrucci, is used extensively for guitar transcriptions, since most electric guitarists are ignorant of standard music notation.⁷ Additionally, electric guitar playing involves single and double-stop string bends that may or may not be in tune, whammy bar

⁶ Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993):90-91.

⁷ Indeed, Petrucci's preface to his lute books of 1507 and 1508 announced that the works were presented in tablature "per chi non sanno cantare" (for those who do not know to sing [i.e. read from mensural notation]). While some view tablature as a "poor man's notation," it is, in fact, a viable and useful alternative method of communicating compositional intent, or for simply a "cheat sheet" that musicians, either rock or Renaissance, use. One of the clearest advantages of tablature over standard notation is that it shows exact finger position.

techniques, and other performance practice elements that are entirely unique to the electric guitar. This has resulted in new notational symbols being created to explain and illustrate the songwriter's or guitarist's intention. A rather complex vocabulary of terminology coupled with graphic representations of quarter-tone bends, palm mutes, slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs, artificial harmonics, pick slides, and other timbral qualities that only the electric guitar can create has been adopted as standard, normative, and usual in pedagogical publications, anthologies, and transcriptions. (Ex. 2.1)

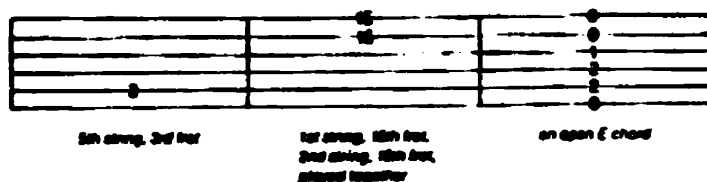
In some ways, the development of notation for particular electric guitar techniques parallels that of notation developed by twentieth-century composers like John Cage, Pierre Boulez, and Anton Webern. These composers found themselves having to “invent” new notation symbols and systems to transmit their intent. Chord clusters, prepared piano, and other aspects created communicative problems between the composer and the musician in much the same way as electric guitar techniques that are obvious to hear but difficult to reproduce.

One of the problems that have always confronted the musicologist when he or she is examining an edition of works by a classical composer, is the accuracy of what is represented on the page. Music publishing editors would often take liberties with harmony, making corrections they deemed fit, or doing a kind of second-guess work if the original was obscured or questionable. The production of contemporary sheet music and anthologies fares no better, and often editions or folios are being published that are riddled with errors. If, for example, a particular song was transcribed by a pianist, any guitar parts that might be included run the risk of being written in positions that are unplayable on the guitar, simply because the transcriber is not familiar with fingerings or

Ex. 2.1: Tablature Explanation and Definitions for Special Guitar Notation⁸

TABLATURE EXPLANATION

TABLATURE A six-line staff that graphically represents the guitar fingerboard. By placing a number on the appropriate line, the string and fret of any note can be indicated. For example:



Definitions for Special Guitar Notation (For both traditional and tablature guitar lines)

	BEND: Bend the note and hold up to 1/4 step (one fret).		SLIDE: The first note is struck and then the second finger of the fret hand moves up the string to the location of the second note. The original note is not struck.		TREMULO PICKING: The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.
	BEND: Bend the note and hold up to a whole step (two frets).		SLIDE: Same as above, except the second note is struck.		NATURAL HARMONIC: The fret hand lightly touches the string over the fret indicated, then it is struck. A chime-like sound is produced.
	LEGATO BEND AND RELEASE: Bend the note (bend up to 1/4 step) while still then release the hand back to the original note. All three notes are held, only the first note is struck.		SLIDE: Slide up to the note indicated then a new note follows.		ARTIFICIAL HARMONIC: The fret hand fingers the note indicated. The pick hand produces the harmonic by using a finger to lightly touch the string at the fret indicated on previous fret and plucking with another finger.
	SHARP BEND: Bend the note up to (or whole) step, then snap it.		SLIDE: Bend the note and snap up an indefinite number of frets, releasing finger pressure at the end of the slide.		ARTIFICIAL 'THICK' HARMONIC: The note is played normally and a harmonic is produced by adding the edge of the thumb or the tip of the index finger of the pick hand to the normal pick attack. High volume or distortion will often give for a greater variety of harmonics.
	SHARP BEND AND RELEASE: Bend the note up to (or whole) step. Snap it and release the hand back to the original note.		PICK SLIDE: The edge of the pick is rubbed down the length of the string. A scratchy sound is produced.		TREMULO BAR: The pitch of a note or chord is dropped a specified number of steps, then returned to the original pitch.
	UNISON BEND: The lower note is struck slightly before the higher it is then bent to the pitch of the higher note. They are an octave apart.		HAMMER-ON: Struck the first (lower) note, then sound the higher note with another finger by tapping it without picking.		PULL-OFF: Both fingers are closely placed on the string in an ascending fashion. Struck the first (higher) note, then sound the lower note by pulling the finger off the higher note while keeping the lower note held.
	VIBRATO: The string is vibrated by rapidly bending and releasing a note with the fret hand or tremolo bar.		FRETBOARD TAPPING: Hammer ("tap") onto the fretboard with the index or middle finger of the pick hand and pull off to the note indicated by the fret hand ("T" indicates "tapped" notes).		PALM MUTE (P.M.): The note is partially muted by the pick hand lightly touching the strings just before the bridge.
	SHAKE OR EXAGGERATED VIBRATO: The pitch is varied to a greater degree by vibrating with the fret hand or tremolo bar.		MUFFLED STRINGS: A percussive sound is produced by using the fret hand across the strings without depressing them to the fretboard and striking them with the pick hand.		

⁸ Anon., "Tablature Explanation and Definitions for Special Guitar Notation," *Guitar* 14/5 (1997): 81.

the range of the instrument. A triad is voiced quite differently on the piano than on the guitar. For popular music analysis, unlike art music, the score or transcription is usually eschewed in favour of a personal interpretation of harmony or repeated listenings. More complex musical events, like a rapid-fire guitar solo that would be too difficult for the analyst to transcribe, would perhaps require some kind of transcription to assist the study. The versions presented in the magazines devoted to specific instruments are usually of better quality and more accurate than those printed in anthologies or folios and therefore are of better use to the musicologist.

Periodicals

Beginning around the mid-1970s, magazines specifically designed for popular music guitarists, bass players, drummers, and keyboard players began to appear. *Guitar Player* is one of the oldest guitar periodicals and has a long history of technically revealing interviews, pedagogical information, how-to columns, and reviews of equipment, instruments, recordings, and books. Since its inception, almost every prominent guitarist has been featured and the magazine produces ancillary publications of guitar history, books on lutherie, and pedagogical texts. Other publications abound including *Guitar World*, *Guitar for the Practising Musician*, *Bass Player*, *Modern Drummer*, and *Keyboard Player*, all featuring a format similar to that offered in *Guitar Player*. In these magazines, how-to columns or “lessons,” along with transcriptions of songs and solos employ standard musical vocabulary often referring many times to scales, modes, chord function, and harmony. Roman numerals are used to describe chord progressions and bio-historical information is given to educate the reader about the music and the artist.

The level of knowledge presumed by these periodicals requires a minimal understanding of harmony, but for those with no background at all, columns by prominent musicians explain the intricacies of music theory. In the January, 2000 issue of *Guitar Player*, Andy Ellis combines an interview with pedagogical information in an article titled, “Beyond the I-IV-V: How Duke Robillard Makes 12-Bar Blues Jump and Swing.” Immediately there is a presumption that the reader understands both the concept of I-IV-V, and what the numerals mean, and the twelve-bar blues form that encompasses the majority of Robillard’s music. In effect, Ellis analyses the music while at the same time presenting examples of harmonic substitutions and chord changes all with a running commentary by Robillard. The musical taxonomy in this article borrows heavily from traditional music theory and explains harmonic function in normative terms. Robillard explains his chord choices with conventional terminology: “If I were playing this part on an acoustic archtop, I might work down to the A7#5 by way of Bb7:” (Ex. 2.2)

Ex. 2.2: Passing-chord example⁹

bar 8 C7 Bb7 A7#5

3 4 3

0 7 6

8 6 5

8 6 5

⁹ Andy Ellis, “Beyond the I-IV-V: How Duke Robillard Makes 12-Bar Blues Jump and Swing,” *Guitar Player* 34/1 (2000): 80.

This is immediately explained by Ellis:

In this instance, our ears are tricked into hearing two melody lines: E, D, E#, and E, D, C#. This happens because our first two chords (C7 and Bb7) are three-note voicings, yet the destination chord comprises four notes. Essentially the melody forks – simultaneously ascending and descending into A7#5.¹⁰

Ellis maintains harmonic correctness by referring to the last note of the first “melody” as E# instead of F. It constitutes the augmented dominant of the A7 chord and is rightly identified as “sharp five.” For the novice guitarist lacking in music theory, this might seem problematic as he or she might envision the note as F not E#, but the presumption of knowledge supersedes the lack. Additionally, a harmonic event usually associated with art music is brought to attention, even though it is not defined as such. Ellis discusses voice-leading by drawing attention to the two melody lines ascending and descending, a feature that speaks more of classical than popular music. Throughout the article, musical examples are given using standard notation combined with tablature. Chord diagrams illustrate chord voicings and the entire twelve-bar model is shown with Robillard’s substitutions: (Ex. 2.3)

Ex. 2.3: Chord substitutions in the twelve-bar model¹¹

The musical notation for Ex. 2.3 consists of two rows of guitar tablature, each preceded by a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first row contains six measures with the following chords and fingerings: C7 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3), F7 (VII, 2 3 4 5, 5 3 1 2), C7 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3), C13 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3 4 5), C7#5 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3 4 5), and F9 (VII, 2 3 4 5, 5 3 1 2). The second row contains seven measures with the following chords and fingerings: C7 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3), A7#5 (V, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3 4 5), Dm7 (IX, 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3), G7 (IX, 2 3 4 5, 5 3 1 2), C7 (VIII, 1 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3), F7 (VII, 2 3 4 5, 5 3 1 2), Dm11 (VIII, 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3 4 5), and G13 (VIII, 2 3 4 5, R 1 2 3 4 5).

¹⁰ Ibid., 80-81.

¹¹ Ibid., 80.

Prior to the introduction of magazines like *Guitar Player*, the student guitarist was forced to learn through repeated listenings and “playing along,” a process that is more instinctual than musical (many trained musicians, for example, find this method of learning difficult), leaving many aspiring players without a systematic methodology. In lieu of proper lessons, beginning guitarists turned to the periodicals for instruction. Recognizing this, *Guitar One* is primarily a pedagogical publication that provides transcriptions, lessons similar to those in the Robillard article, so-called “Riff boxes,” and equipment reviews. The slogan “The Magazine You Can Play” is boldly printed across the top of the cover, designed to attract the young guitarist by printing their favourite song in a notated, transcribed form.

In the August, 2000 issue, Pink Floyd’s “Money,” from their landmark album *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) is transcribed by Adam Perlmutter and analysed pedagogically by Tom Kolb. A small amount of history is included to ensure the reader understands the importance of Pink Floyd, the single, and the album. *Dark Side of the Moon* was on the *Billboard* charts for an unprecedented 741 weeks, selling more than 25 million copies in the process, an achievement unequalled since. It is perhaps their most mainstream album, in spite of the music usually classed as progressive rock, owing to the lengthy compositions, psychedelic references, complexity of form, and concept albums unified by an extra-musical idea.

“Money” is a progressive rock single that acts both conventionally and unconventionally from other rock songs of the period. Conventionally, the harmony follows a minor rock progression of i-v-iv over twelve bars for the strophes. The solo section is a prolonged twelve-bar form again with the minor harmony of i-iv-v, as Kolb

notes: “The solo is played over a 24-bar minor blues progression”¹² In fact at no time during the song is the dominant chord played as major, it remains minor throughout. This puts the song squarely in B natural minor owing to the minor dominant, and is somewhat unusual harmonically speaking for rock songs of the time. Unconventionality is also found in the song’s meter. Predominately in 7/4 time with the odd measure of 6/4 and the solo section in 4/4, Kolb assists the reader by indicating methods of “feeling” compound meter: “The common approach to playing odd meters is to ‘subdivide’ the measures, breaking them up into smaller, more recognizable groups.”¹³ He suggests breaking the measure of six into 4 + 2, and the 7/4 measures into 4 + 3.¹⁴ (Ex. 2.4) Each of the guitar riffs is broken down and explained harmonically along with timbral suggestions in order to mimic the guitar style and sound of Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour:

A simple but ultra-cool B minor pentatonic (B-D-E-F#-A) line in 7/4 time, [it] fuels the intro, and is the launching pad for the verses and the saxophone solo. Use your bridge pickup, dial in a slightly distorted tone, add right-hand palm muting, and don’t forget to give the D note a quarter-tone bend.¹⁵

Kolb defines, teaches, and analyses at the same time. The labelling of the B minor pentatonic as “ultra-cool”—analogous perhaps to a nineteenth-century tempo marking, denoting both pulse and feel (e.g. *andante moderato molto fresco*)—is given to an otherwise conventional scale and he describes the riff in language that refers to power and speed, “fueling the intro” and “the launching pad for the verses,” despite the moderate rock tempo of the song. Because the song is transcribed in a guitar magazine,

¹² Tom Kolb, “What’s Between the Lines: ‘Money,’” *Guitar One* 3/8 (2000): 120.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

sorts is completed by the reader or student who desires to learn how to play the song. By careful reading of the transcribed score, the learning guitarist absorbs at once the harmonic characteristics, form, timbral aspects, fingering, and text. Because of the prominence of the electric guitar in popular music, the majority of pedagogical or

Ex. 2.5: Tablature notation of Pink Floyd's "Money"¹⁷

MONEY
As Recorded by Pink Floyd
(From the Capitol Recording DARK SIDE OF THE MOON)

Transcribed by Adam Perlmutter Words and Music by Roger Waters

Intro
Moderate Rock ♩ = 120 (♩-♩-♩)

1. Hu.
2. Riff A
3. Car 1 (electric guitar)

End Riff A

Capo = 12 fret

mf PM

142

143

Car 1 w/ Riff A (bass)

Car 2 (sightless)

mf

Car 3 (sightless)

mf w/ tremolo eff.

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¹⁷ Ibid., 121.

instrument-specific magazines favour guitar over other instruments. Moreover, the fluidity of discussion enables guitarists to draw upon many influences and consequently the guitar magazines cater simultaneously to very different groups of guitarists, contributing to the interchange of styles.¹⁸

In the growing field of popular musicology, some form of notation is used in order to explain musical events, however obvious they might be. Musical fragments are often written out in either in conventional notation, reductive analysis, or some other manner. Occasionally an entire transcription is present if the author requires it, but like traditional musicology, excerpts from the score serve a better purpose. In order to adequately discuss the inherent elements that contribute to affect and meaning, attention must be drawn to specific musical elements as being representative or discursive. And many times the clearest method of accomplishing this is with musical examples. But does this put the sociologist or the cultural historian at a disadvantage when it comes to analysing popular music? A sociological study is concerned with different levels of meaning, the music being somewhat secondary to other aspects like cultural placement or image. By the same token, the musicologist is disadvantaged if he or she is not familiar with, or does not take into account, the levels of meaning that are relevant for sociological understanding. In actual fact, the musicologist can probably more readily adopt the socio-cultural than the other way around.

Listening

Any analysis of popular music begins with the same activity. The music must be heard in order to be understood. In this way, sociologists employ a score whether they

¹⁸ Walser, 92.

realize it or not. Since the recording has supplanted the written score for the storage of music, when a sociologist listens to a recording, a musical event occurs. The song is “performed,” albeit the same way every time, and the listener absorbs the sounds, rhythms, and text, constructing with the imagination a personal understanding of form and structure. While perhaps lacking the verbal skills to explain what is heard in musico-theoretical terms, a form of analysis does take place even if on a non-technical level. Even if the comprehending listener must have internalized, through repeated listenings, certain facts of musical structuring in order to follow a piece aurally, this does not mean that the listener has encoded such facts linguistically, or has facts in a linguistic mode, even after careful derivation.¹⁹ But this task is made even more difficult by the fact that the music of one’s own culture often seems completely transparent. Music appears to create its effects directly, without any sort of mediation whatsoever.²⁰ Music’s ability to conceal its processes and to communicate nothing/everything “directly” is largely responsible for its peculiar power and prestige in society.²¹ On the other hand, it may be said that traditional formal analysis, aimed at delineating musical shape, was always meant primarily as a description of the musical object, or perhaps of what comprehending listeners heard on a subconscious level, rather than being promoted as a requirement for or avenue to musical appreciation.²²

The act of listening provides continuity between all popular music analyses. The one element that remains constant is the music itself. Because of its continuous existence

¹⁹ Jerrold Levinson, *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997): x.

²⁰ Robert Walser and Susan McClary, “Start Making Sense!: Musicology Wrestles With Rock,” in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Random House, 1990): 278.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Levinson, x.

in a recorded form, it can be referred to time and time again, with each listening either reinforcing or revealing musical elements that can contribute to the analysis. This does not differ from art music because the manuscript can be referred to repeatedly, however, the definitive performance for a piece of art music does not exist in the same manner as popular music does and an analyst studying sociological facets would not refer to the score in the same way he or she refers to the recording. The act of listening produces diverse results depending on the discipline of the analyst. For the sociologist, listening to the Sex Pistols would not reveal the intrinsic musical elements, however scarce they may be; instead the timbral and aural qualities provide information that would serve to explain the cultural movement known as punk. The music provides an aural representation of an entire sub-culture and not just an ill-mannered, vulgar rock band. In order for a non-musicological study to be successful, musical activity actually plays a bigger role than the sociologists will admit. But at this level, the music becomes opaque and the musicologist is asked to reconstruct those levels of mediation that have always seemed so transparent. And these levels of mediation cannot easily be explained in words that mean anything to the listener, sociologist or otherwise.²³

Videos and listening

Contemporary popular music is available in various forms, some permanent and some not. Video channels like Canada's MuchMusic and MTV in the United States basically serve music in the same manner as AM radio stations of the 1950s and 1960s. There is a hit parade, artist features, golden oldies, and new releases. They now play the most important part in the marketing of popular music, especially to the youth market.

²³ Walser and McClary, 278.

The DJ (disc jockey) of old, an anonymous voice, has been replaced by the VJ (video jockey), a personality that is visually representative of the music/videos they “play.” Getting a video played on the video channels is as important to the career of popular music artists as getting the record played on the radio. Both feats must be accomplished if the song or artist is to be successful. But the imagination of listening becomes secondary where videos are concerned. The meaning of the text has already been decided and presented to the viewer as definitive by virtue of the playing of the video itself. No longer does the listener have to imagine what the song is about, now the images are presented in full screen and stereo. The intimacy of the listening experience has become a social event shared simultaneously in different locations by different people all watching the channel at the same time.

If the recording can be considered a score, then videos also could be conceived of as a score or a visual representation of textual meaning along with the performance. But unlike recordings, videos are not really permanent. Unless the video of a particular artist is taped at home, or purchased in a collective form, the performance is lost once the video is over.²⁴ So how relevant then, is the video for a musical analysis? Certainly if the focus of the analysis is on performative qualities of gesture, image, and personality— as we find increasingly in the study of opera, for example—the video would take precedence over the recording, but if the focus is primarily musical, the video can only provide additional information that augments that of the recording. But does the video skew the musical analysis and is it really relevant if it is not permanent? If affect, meaning, and

²⁴ Collections of videos by specific artists are available as are DVD copies of performances. Compared to the number of videos shown on MuchMusic or MTV, the commercial collections are few and far between. Only certain artists have their videos available in this manner and most times it is only five or six videos compared to a CD of twelve to thirteen songs.

understanding are the desired results from a musical analysis, then the musicologist's work is done. The meaning is presented visually in the video, but is it meaning that can be related to the music on terms other than visual? The video producer has a large role in the creation of the video and, as a result, the ensuing images of meaning. Again, the producer, like the opera stage director performs a musical act when deciding what images, camera angles, and edits would best serve the song by first listening to it. And then interpretation is packaged neatly and presented to the public without requiring any thought, a kind of Cole's Notes of musical affect. The listener does not project his or her images onto the music, instead it projects images onto the listener.

The immediacy of the video experience places a higher importance on watching, rather than listening. Fiction and reality coalesce into "simulacra," where the celebration of the look—the surfaces, textures, and the self as commodity— threatens to reduce everything to the image/representation.²⁵ On the other hand, because video and sound are linked, the musical experience becomes internalized in the same manner as intimate listening, usually without the listener/watcher being aware. Dan Rubey asserts that unpacking the various codes of music videos is complex because of their densely allusive construction.²⁶ On one hand they resemble television shows and films, yet on the other these familiar markers are condensed into rapid-fire imagery and the larger textual meaning they refer to with this fast-forward narrative becomes somewhat problematic. And since videos move at such a rapid speed, they have to resort to iconic themes and images to avoid degeneration into random incoherence.²⁷ The larger textuality of videos

²⁵ Dan Rubey, "Voguing at the Carnival: Desire and Pleasure on MTV," in *Present Tense: Rock and Roll and Culture*, ed. by Anthony DeCurtis (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992): 236.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 242-43.

can contribute to the smaller text reading of musical analysis, but their impermanence delivers fleeting glimpses of meaning.

Conclusion

The analysis of a score or transcription is one of the tools available to the musicologist studying popular music. The validity of the rock transcription is as much a concern as the validity of a Renaissance transcription. Both versions rely on someone else's ears. Because popular music exists as a recorded medium, the transcription in some ways becomes moot. And then, for the musicologist, it is not a question of accuracy, rather one of usefulness. How much transcribed information is enough versus one that is instrument-specific or none at all? For an analysis of a rock song, the analyst unfamiliar with the nuances of electric guitar style would not recognize the "sound" emanating from the recording. A guitar transcription could include performance elements like the type of distortion device or something peculiar as "shake pickup selector rapidly."²⁸ Unlike art music, the transcription becomes secondary in the analytical process. The score, on the other hand, be it recording, video, or performance takes priority over a subjective element like a transcription. The transcription becomes useful in the analysis only for the information it can bring and should not be relied on as the definitive reading of the song.

Popular music's existence and prestige in contemporary culture is reflective of socio-cultural aspects that are communicated directly through the discursiveness of the music itself. It remains permanent in recorded form, thereby replacing the manuscript of old. It flashes through our lives on the television screen bombarding us with images and

²⁸ By sustaining a chord or note on the electric guitar, the guitarist can alter the tone of the sustained note by rapidly shaking the pickup selector switch through its various settings. This performance note can be found in the transcription of Randy Rhoads' "Suicide Solution." This is similar to performance indications like "bang piano lid" on the scores of twentieth-century composers.

sounds simultaneously. Popular music artists are deified by their fans, abhorred by others, and ignored by many. Most times the music exists at the same time as its creator does, and it is considered representative of a cultural segment of society, a disenfranchised youth, or a return to traditionalism. The aural immediacy it possesses and the ability to repeat that same immediacy again and again is unique among art forms and it is portable—something others are not.

CHAPTER THREE: Analytical Case Studies

I am a rock musician, a mirror.

Pete Townshend¹

The varying methods of popular music analysis enable differing approaches, and as a result, methods that were traditionally reserved for art music have become modified to suit the new subject. Musicological analysis of popular music now includes ethnomusicological practices of considering cultural elements and discovering how music interacts with a particular society, along with some sort of traditional analysis of harmony. Some critics assert that traditional theoretical methods of analysis are formalist in nature and inappropriate, others contend the methods work just fine. Regardless of the opinion, an examination of the varying methodologies is needed to unpack the ways of unpacking meaning.

Linear Analysis

Ever since musicologists have undertaken the study popular music, the question of methodology has been an issue for debate. The unique analytical tools possessed by musicologists and theorists alike, the ability to analyse the inherent musical characteristics, an understanding of large-scale forms, and the verbal means to express these factors have resulted in various camps of analytical methods. One group proclaims the usefulness of linear analysis or Schenkerian reductive analysis, another eschews Schenker in favour of a more traditional harmonic analysis coupled with sociological aspects. It should be noted that most Schenkerian analyses of popular music do not

include sociological or cultural aspects per se. Rather, the methodology is used to show how certain structural or key points in the music contribute or create those aspects. Also, much of the criticism aimed at proponents of Schenker's system claim that only the music that fits the parameters of the methodology is examined. One of the main arguments, as noted in Chapter One, is that historical musicological methods were designed for art music rather than popular music. Despite the fact that on a very basic level, chords are chords whether they are in a symphony by Haydn or a song by Deep Purple, many scholars feel that some other kind of analysis should be used for popular music. Of the methodologies currently practiced, Schenkerian analysis fits the paradigm of "being for art music only" more so than any other. It was Schenker's theory, the truth of which he made it his life's work to demonstrate, that *all* music, or at least all great music, which for him meant Western art music from Bach to Brahms, could and should be understood this way.²

Those who employ a Schenkerian model for the analysis of popular music, must rely on one of the basic tenets of his methodology. In order for Schenkerian reduction to function correctly, voice-leading aspects must be underscored as important with regard to affect and meaning. If the methodology is applied as it was originally intended—in other words, for art music from Bach to Brahms—voice-leading would be a critical element in the analysis. In spite of the fact that popular music does not rely on voice-leading to the same extent as art music,³ theorists like Walter Everett advocate the study of voice-

¹ Quoted in Dave Marsh and Kevin Stein, *The Book of Rock Lists* (Dell Publishing, 1981): 6.

² Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 95.

³ This is not to say that the music of the Beatles or any other popular music artist is devoid of voice-leading elements, rather any voice-leading is present on a level that is internalized to an extent that it is rendered almost non-existent. In such a guitar-based style, inner parts (especially) do not obey conventional voice-leading rules. See Allan F. Moore, *The Beatles: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 27.

leading as an expressive element in popular music and employ Schenkerian reduction to illustrate its application in perhaps the most famous song by the most famous group: "She Loves You" by The Beatles.⁴

The strictest definition of voice-leading is that aspect of music concerned with the simultaneous motion of two or more parts. The unit of harmony is the chord; the unit of voice-leading is the melodic line.⁵ Of course, the simultaneous motion of several melodic lines can create chords. And it is hard to conceive a progression of chords without the explicit or implicit presence of melodic lines. In practice, therefore, the two principles interact and influence each other.⁶ There is, in fact, some semblance of voice-leading within the individual instruments of the rock ensemble. Drums and bass guitar usually provide a rhythmic and harmonic underpinning for chordal instruments like guitar and keyboards, and therefore do not possess any overt sort of voice-leading elements. In a medium-tempo country song, the bass guitar normally plays the root and fifth of the chord, usually at the rhythmic level of a quarter note. Simple root/five bass lines are not melodic; rather they provide the harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the progression, and at the same time, serve as an identifiable musical characteristic that defines both the genre and the type of song. There is, in fact, some semblance of voice-leading within the individual instruments of the ensemble. Drums and bass guitar usually provide a rhythmic and harmonic base for chordal instruments like guitar and keyboards, and therefore do not possess any overt sort of voice-leading elements. The guitar and keyboard, on the other hand, have voice-leading elements contained within the movement

⁴ Walter Everett, "Voice-leading and Harmony as Expressive Devices in the Early Music of the Beatles: 'She Loves You,'" *College Music Symposium* 32/1 (1992): 20.

⁵ Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, second edition (Fort Worth, et. al.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989): 60.

of chords on the instrument. As the song progresses and the chords change accordingly, miniature voice-leading lines occur naturally from chord to chord, albeit without any intent on the part of Lennon and McCartney, especially with regard to the guitar. In other words, there is no alto, tenor, or soprano voice, nor do the instruments of the popular music ensemble work like the instruments of a string quartet or orchestra.

Everett also contends that “the tonal mechanism in a fair amount of rock music is based on counterpoint, not only at the surface, but also at structural levels.”⁷ Here, his use of the term “counterpoint” seems misdirected with regard to a composition as basic as the Beatles’ “She Loves You.” If counterpoint is agreed to be the simultaneous motion of several melodic lines, which intertwine and coalesce now and then to create chords, or at the very least a chordal texture, then counterpoint in the strictest sense does not exist in Everett’s example. More importantly, the drums play a much larger role in popular music than art music, and therefore, are considered a “part.” And for a rock and roll song like “She Loves You,” or any other popular music song for that matter, drums do not act in a voice-leading manner, nor do they act contrapuntally, strictly speaking. If the separate instruments and individual parts are examined, something resembling counterpoint can be found. Each instrument in the ensemble has a specific part to play and works symbiotically with the others to create a coherent whole that is recognized as “She Loves You.” In this way, the two guitars, bass guitar, lead vocal, harmony vocals, and drums could be considered as creating a contrapuntal texture, even though, as Everett notes, “neither John Lennon nor Paul McCartney were trained in species counterpoint.”⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

If Lennon and McCartney were ignorant of the rules of species counterpoint when they wrote “She Loves You,” what can be gained then by identifying such elements in their compositions? In addition to counterpoint, Everett also contends that certain vocal effects or timbral qualities exhibit, exist as, and contribute to, structural points of importance: “In ‘She Loves You,’ expressive registral placement is married to thematic [and structural] design.”⁹ This claim cannot be accepted uncritically, but it is one that Everett adopts and attempts to prove with reductive analysis. Another tenet of Schenkerian reduction is the existence of foreground, middle ground, and background levels of activity, and it is at the foreground or surface level that Everett finds a feature that represents, for him, the point of greatest tension. The famous falsetto “oohs” that Lennon and McCartney often used (along with a shake of their haircuts that led to surges of audience hysteria), are singled out by Everett as points of greatest tension. The “oohs” occur over a dominant chord and before the chorus, “She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.” Everett places much importance on this moment, elevating a simple vocalization used to elicit a response from the female audience to that of harmonic significance: (Ex. 3.1)

The surface feature that represents the greatest tension, however, is the two-part falsetto “ooh” McCartney’s ecstatic ascent to the next octave ... takes this inner-voice thought to its highest level of consciousness, while that fifth scale degree simultaneously doubles the physically secure low D in the bass, intensifying harmonic tension.¹⁰

But even after recognizing the “oohs” as an effect to educe female response (he elaborates this in a footnote), he contends that: “The analysis of voice-leading, with

⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰ Ibid.,.

emphasis on harmony, register, and thematic design, ... can also get to the heart of colourful musical expression, even that based in geniality, exuberance, and joy.”¹¹

Ex. 3.1: Voice-leading example in “She Loves You”¹²

The image displays a musical score for the song "She Loves You". It consists of three systems of music, each featuring a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The first system includes time signatures 0:01, 0:04, and 0:07. The second system includes time signatures 0:26, 0:31, and 0:39. The third system includes time signatures 1:02, 1:40, and 1:47. The lyrics "bad" and "glad" are written under the vocal line in the second system, and "oath" is written under the vocal line in the third system. The piano accompaniment includes various chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with 'a' and 'b'.

If, as Everett asserts, such a technique does indeed occupy such significance, then it would follow that the removal of said technique would result in some kind of harmonic or structural alteration. As well, the importance of the technique would be underscored in other transcriptions of the song, just as all of the chords are notated and not missing. PVG

¹¹ Ibid., 35.

¹² Ibid., 21.

transcriptions usually illuminate important elements and if Everett's contention is valid, the PVG reading would ensure that the transcription reflected the importance. However, the PVG transcription puts the "oohs" in the right hand of the piano, not the melody, and missing the note B that forms the primary component of Everett's tension: (Ex. 3.2)

Ex. 3.2: PVG transcription of "She Loves You"¹³

It is the nature of PVG transcriptions to make certain that salient harmonic, rhythmic, and structural elements are included. Because of the lack of the complete "ooh" harmony, the importance of such a part as a structural or tension-building element is not clearly nor adequately represented. Moreover, its lack of delineation in the PVG transcription belies the importance Everett places on it. Tension can be found in the notes that Lennon and McCartney sing for the "oohs": the dyad B and D is sung in falsetto over a D major chord, creating a D6 instead of D. But if the song is played without using the "oohs," in other words, without the "trick" to coax hysterical responses from the female audience, the song still works and nothing is lost either harmonically or structurally, and this is shown with the PVG transcription as a single note in the vocal part.

¹³ The Beatles, "She Loves You," *The Complete Beatles: Piano, Vocal, Guitar*, arr. Todd Lowry (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing, 1988): 236.

Proponents of linear analysis feel that the methodology is appropriate for all genres of popular music. In addition to the Beatles, the music of neo-folk artists Sarah McLachlan and Tori Amos has been scrutinized using linear analysis. For example, Timothy Koozin suggests that the simple chord progression of Bm-G-D-A found in the verse of McLachlan's, "Building a Mystery" is not "entirely simple to describe from the standpoint of functional tonality."¹⁴ Koozin states: "The tonal polarity of D major is diffused through the competing modal/linear pattern around B minor."¹⁵ (Ex. 3.3)

Ex. 3.3: Harmonic patterns in "Building a Mystery"¹⁶

a) Harmonic Patterns

VERSE BRIDGE CHORUS

Bm G D A E G A Bm G D A

"You come out at night..." "so careful when I'm in your arms" "'cause you're working... building a mystery"

(D:I ← 'VII VI 'VII → I ← 'VII)

Bm: VI cycle of fourths stepwise patterning

Such unresolved chord progressions occur frequently in popular music, and even though the modal/linear pattern Koozin identifies may be explained as such, often progressions like this are created by accident. This is not to say that McLachlan somehow "stumbled" upon a progression that alludes to both a major tonal centre and, as Koozin describes, a modal/linear pattern, but rather the progression was used because it sounded good to the composer.¹⁷ Most pop-rock musicians are not trained in the conventions of harmonic

¹⁴ Timothy Koozin, "Fumbling Towards Ecstasy: Voice-leading, Tonal Structure, and the Theme of Self-realization in the Music of Sarah McLachlan," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 248.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 249.

¹⁷ McLachlan does have formal musical training and it is possible that she "knew what she was doing." But like untrained songwriters, even trained ones opt for the progression that sounds the best and at the same time suits the harmonic need of the melody and lyrics.

theory. Retrograde progressions, unresolved dominants, and seemingly odd chordal patterns all result not from clever usage of the rules of harmony, but rather from what aurally pleases the songwriter.

Like Everett, Timothy Koozin's suggestion of voice-leading in McLachlan's music alludes to harmonic conventions of art music that are problematic to identify in popular music. Koozin states:

A hierarchical approach in the analysis shows how linear/modal chord patterns nested within larger tonal frameworks form open musical structures that become artistic statements themselves.... A hierarchical analysis provides a means to acknowledge the dual role of the A chord. At a local level, it can be interpreted as a linear/modal chord elaborating B minor.... At a higher level... its prolongational role as functional dominant becomes clear.¹⁸

Accompanying the verbal explanation, the familiar Schenkerian reduction graph underscores his point (Ex. 3.4):

Ex. 3.4: Voice-leading in "Building a Mystery"¹⁹

b) Linear Reduction

VERSE 3 2 BRIDGE 2 CHORUS 3 2

D: I V V/V V I V

Koozin's analysis of the unique modal/major relationship that exists in "Building a Mystery" illustrates the harmonic language that McLachlan employs, but an examination of the chord progression alone would reveal the same thing that the hierarchical approach

¹⁸ Koozin, 247.

¹⁹ Ibid., 249.

is purported to illuminate—linear analysis notwithstanding. Like Everett’s analysis, the voice-leading elements that are shown in the graph are internal and not aurally obvious, so the importance becomes diminished by virtue of inaudibility and on a larger level voice-leading then becomes obfuscated and irrelevant. As well, he places voice-leading elements that would occur in the chord changes at the foreground level and given the shrouding of internal voice-leading by other musical factors, placing these elements at another level perhaps would have more relevance.

For theorists, some explanation is both required and necessary for an understanding of harmonic use and style in both popular and art music. And while linear analysis can be useful for the latter, it is not always effective nor necessary for the former. One criticism by non-Schenkerians is that the method is formalist and the music chosen for analysis most closely fits with the Schenkerian model to begin with, or at the very least, it is easy to pour the pop tune into the Schenker mold. Everett denies the formalism of his Schenkerian reductions,²⁰ but his parcelling of musical activity to the three stringent levels fundamental to Schenkerian analysis seems to say otherwise. This is not to say that the methods that Everett and Koozin use are ineffective, but rather hierarchy, structural components, and voice-leading do not always make for the most informative analysis. Everett’s analysis of “She Loves You” correctly illuminates those parts of the song that contribute to the overall affect, but importance is placed on other parts that may not be quite as significant as Everett would have his readers believe. Koozin’s analysis, on the other hand, shows the modal/major mixing that is present in the

²⁰ Walter Everett, “Confessions From Blueberry Hell, or, Pitch Can Be a Sticky Substance,” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, edited by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 304.

harmonic progression of “Building a Mystery,” but again, reductive analysis is not necessarily required to expose such elements.

Musicologists have generally avoided theoretical analytical models like Schenkerian analysis—that domain is reserved for the theorists. But just as a vocabulary is needed by musicologists to adequately explain affect and meaning (without alienating the “uneducated” listener), reductive analysis provides another form of communication to assist in describing unique harmonic qualities or elements of a particular song. Linear analysis may not be effective for every piece of popular music, or for any piece of popular music for that matter, and it should not be relied upon to expose characteristics, inherent or otherwise, as being *a priori*. Most popular music analyses are largely speculative and the analytical methodology being used to augment or prove the hypothesis of meaning runs the danger of becoming skewed to suit the object of study or to expose elements that may or may not be present.

Harmonic analysis

The traditional process of analysing chords using Roman numerals is a fundamental methodological practice employed by both musicologists and theorists. The musical language that makes popular music and serious music possible is that of tonality, which is not a massive, immobile system but a living, gradually changing language from its beginning.²¹ Tonality is a hierarchical arrangement of the triads based on the natural harmonics or overtones of a note.²² In order to determine chord function, certain

²¹ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, expanded edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997): 23.

²² *Ibid.* It should be noted that the hierarchy mentioned with regard to the tonal system is not the same as Schenker’s hierarchy of fore, middle, and background. Tonal hierarchy refers to chord function, with the hierarchical arrangement beginning with the tonic chord.

attributes are prescribed for the chords that encompass the harmonic vocabulary of the major/minor tonal system. Terminology identifies the structuring of chord function, such as tonic, dominant, sub-dominant, and so on. The two primary instruments used by most popular music songwriters are the piano and guitar. As such, the harmonic accompaniment to pop melodies consists of fairly conventional chord progressions that can be identical to other songs, or harmony that could be considered “new.” The similarity of chord progressions stretches across all genres of popular music and jazz as well. Conventional progressions such as the twelve-bar blues, thirty-two bar song form, and the ubiquitous “ice-cream change” of I-vi-IV-V largely determines the harmonic vocabulary of many genres of popular music.

Because of popular music’s unique existence as both a commodity and an art form, a level of understanding must be attributed to the audience that presupposes the acceptance of a particular song or album. Harmonic progressions that sound unusual, or require more intellectual activity on the part of the listener than is usually needed, often result in a limited audience for the genre, like blues and jazz, or, to an extent, progressive rock. Those songs that “hit” or are successful by virtue of sales and chart positions, are easily accessible by the majority of the consuming public and, generally, feature harmony that is relatively simple along with instrumental and melodic hooks. It seems painfully clear that when record sales of the various pop music genres are compared, that the simpler the song, the more popular it becomes. This is not to diminish those songs that become “number one” or sell millions of albums; rather, it is a testament to the ability of the songwriter to craft a composition that, in four minutes or less, captures the collective imagination of the listening public.

Harmonic analysis cannot by itself constitute the sole method by which we analyze popular music, and the same can be said for linear analysis. Owing to the harmonic simplicity of popular songs, harmonic analysis can only reveal musical characteristics that are overtly present or exist at the level of harmony. Lynryd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" (1974), while being harmonically facile, carries its meaning in the lyrics in a manner similar to the songs of Bob Dylan. Repetitive chord progressions that cycle continuously through all presentations of the verses, choruses, and improvised solo sections as well, do nothing more than underscore the lyrical content which holds the majority of the meaning. In the case of "Sweet Home Alabama," meaning lies in the "south's gonna rise again" attitude of both the band and the lyrics:

Big wheels keep on turning
 Carry me home to see my kin
 Singing songs about the southland
 I miss old "Bamy" once again
 And I think it's a sin²³

Interestingly, the harmony of "Sweet Home Alabama" consists of three chords that allude to both G major and, at the same time, D Mixolydian. The song begins with a D major chord and the rest of the progression is immediately presented establishing the harmonic motion and rhythm. A harmonic analysis reveals that the three chords of the song, D-C-G, live either in G major as V-IV-I, or in D Mixolydian as I-VII-IV. Indeed, neither the melody nor the guitar improvisations confirm either tonal or modal centre. Depending on the "mood" of the guitarist, the harmonic sense can be swayed toward G major or D Mixolydian simply by emphasizing a "G-ness" or a "D-ness."

²³ Lynryd Skynyrd, "Sweet Home Alabama" *Gold and Platinum* MCA2-11008 (Duchess Music Corporation and Hustler's Inc., 1974). Written by Ronnie Van Zant and Gary Rossington.

Harmonic analysis is by far the most commonly used method by musicologists and theorists. It gives the analyst a sense of the harmonic nature of the song and posits the meaning on top of the harmony. This means that genre and, indeed, meaning are dependent upon musical elements that cannot be changed without altering the affect that is inherent in the music. Like linear analysis, harmonic analysis without other ancillary elements can leave the analysis shallow and devoid of meaning. Because of the simplicity of the harmony, sociological and cultural aspects play a much larger part in an analysis of popular music than one of serious or art music. Unlike linear analysis, most harmonic analyses are coupled with socio-cultural aspects and these extra-musical characteristics are recognized as being part of and necessary for a meaningful interpretation. It is of primary concern to the analyst to incorporate extra-musical factors because of the closeness between popular music and society. In particular, rock music has posed its own distinct threats: arising in a time of social upheaval, it has reflected, accompanied, enabled, and at times even constituted the rumblings of that upheaval.²⁴

Harmonic conventions in popular music, and rock music in particular, that on the surface seem “abnormal” or an aesthetically significant departure from standard practice are actually quite common. For example, in rock music from about the mid-1960s the use of the flatted seventh scale degree constitutes standard practice and creates a stylistic variable that becomes normative by virtue of common usage by rock musicians. In addition, modality becomes a determining factor in the compositional process. The flatted seventh places a particular song in an apparent Mixolydian mode. Other modal suggestions are found in rock music that have become compositional and stylistic

²⁴ John Covach, “Preface,” in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. by John Covach and Graeme M. Boone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): v.

conventions. Neil Young's "Cinnamon Girl" exists in a Dorian world and other examples can be found ranging from Phrygian in the music of Metallica, to Lydian in Joe Satriani's music.²⁵

The use of harmonic analysis becomes not just a study of the chord progression, but a determination of the tonal centre of the song. Despite the fact that on the surface some rock songs seem to be in one mode or another, often alterations are made by the musician, not usually consciously, to create a harmonic progression that involves all major triads. Most rock musicians are self-taught and lack the harmonic vocabulary or knowledge that composers of art music possess. Instead, it is very much about what "sounds good," or, at a very base level, "easy to play." For electric guitar, power chords are the primary chordal sound and because of the lack of a quality-defining third, it is a simple task to play over a minor-sounding bass line and suggest a "major" sound.²⁶ This duality of existence, both major and minor, is the essence of the rock music "sound," and harmonic analysis can serve to illuminate this in a language that can be intellectualized and understood, and in turn, directed toward the socio-cultural elements that coincide with the musical.

Rock and its Classical Borrowings

Rock is an extremely malleable genre, easily absorbing influences from jazz, reggae, country, folk, gospel, and art music. John Covach explores the ways in which Yes, a landmark group in the progressive rock movement, fuses aspects of Western art

²⁵ For a discussion of rock music harmonic conventions see: Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text* (1993), Everett, "Confessions From Blueberry Hell, ... (2000).

²⁶ Power chords are essential for rock music. They are a dyad constructed of a root and its fifth. Often signal processing devices such as distortion pedals are used, along with the slight muting of the strings by

music and early '70s rock.²⁷ His analysis of the music of Yes draws on cultural aspects regarding the evolution of progressive rock, historiography of the band, and analysis of harmony, text, and form. Standard notation is used to illustrate points of interest in the music such as polymetric schema between instruments and non-metrical alignment:

(Ex. 3.5)

Ex. 3.5: Polymetric scheme and non metrical alignment in "Close to the Edge"²⁸

[4:01]

vocals
A sea-sored witch could call you from the depths of your dis-grace
e. guitar
e. bass

Polymetric scheme between parts in A-section verse

[6:04]

e. guitar
e. bass

Nonaligned meters between parts in A'-section verse

Progressive rock's stylistic normative practice of fusing so-called "classical" music conventions with those of rock, results in Covach's reliance on traditional musicological methodology to underscore his analysis and, correspondingly, the music of Yes. Stylistic melding alludes to the classical model and Covach notes that the fugato section of "Close

the palm which creates the "crunch" that so much rock possesses. Power chords are designated in transcriptions by a super-script 5 along with the root note: G⁵, C⁵.

²⁷ Covach, "Preface," viii.

²⁸ Covach, "Progressive rock..." 13.

to the Edge” is a key component in creating both stylistic and structural reference to classical music:²⁹ (Ex. 3.6)

Ex. 3.6: “Close to the Edge” fugato³⁰

Covach labels this particular segment of the song with an art music term and explains it thus:

... the sitar and electric bass begin a pseudobaroque figure in C major and are joined by the pipe organ playing three statements of a melodic figure ... The initial statement of the organ figure is imitated at the octave and at the fifteenth as these three statements of the figure ascend registrally.³¹

Whether or not this constitutes a true fugato is immaterial., and on the surface Covach appears to be guilty of the same misappropriation of classical terminology as the reductive analysts. The difference lies in the fact that Covach uses a classical music term that adequately serves the example. What he is not doing, is trying to allude to some fugal aspect, whether it exists or not, that is the major transmitter of meaning for the *entire* song. What is important is that Covach needed some way to explain this segment. He

²⁹ John Covach, “Progressive Rock, ‘Close to the Edge,’ and the Boundaries of Style,” in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. by John Covach and Graeme M. Boone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 11.

³⁰ Ibid.

asserts: “There is nothing problematical about employing standard analytical techniques to such a passage,”³² and he considers the harmonic progression and voice-leading to be stereotypically “classical.” The language and terminology he uses comes from the domain of music theory, and at face value, the musical passage most closely resembles the Baroque ideal of a fugato. It may not be a fugato, strictly speaking, but the terminology and referencing suggests that it is in order to help explain and understand the musical moment in the best way possible.

Despite the stylistic melding, there is an apparent deviation from standard harmonic practice, through the alteration or borrowing of chords that rock music readily adopts as “usual.” Covach points out that a progression such as A minor – G major – A minor – B minor, as found in “Close to the Edge,” and the general lack of a structurally significant leading-tone G# would be considered deviations from the tonal norm. But if the more conventional progression $i - V - i - ii^o$ were to occur, for rock music it would constitute stylistic deviation.³³

Covach notes that within the developing progressive-rock style, many groups incorporated aspects of art-music practice. Yes and Jethro Tull created pieces of extended length, Genesis used operatic aspects in their song texts, and Gentle Giant incorporated traditional contrapuntal writing, while King Crimson explored complex metrical schemes, atonality, and free-form improvisation.³⁴ It could be argued that the use of traditional musicological methods to analyse progressive rock would be fitting because of the similarity of conventions to serious music. And a similar argument could be made

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 10.

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

with regard to Robert Walser's analyses in *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993), in which Walser points out (sometimes superficially) the stylistic similarities between motivic and harmonic sequences in heavy metal music and the music of the Baroque period. Given that both of these analyses serve to illuminate and justify somewhat the merging of art music practice with that of rock, it would seem that traditional musicological analysis would be appropriate for these genres of popular music. If art music conventions exist, something Covach and Walser assert emphatically, then analytical methodology "reserved" for art music is both proper and necessary to unpack the affect and meaning of heavy metal and progressive rock. However, this position runs the risk of segregating only those forms of popular music that conform to art music conventions as being "worthy" of study by traditional musicological means.

Walser, like Covach, uses harmonic analysis coupled with socio-cultural aspects and literary theory to define, describe, and analyse heavy metal music, and he illuminates the cross-genre pollination that is omnipresent in the music. To compare heavy metal with culturally more prestigious music is entirely appropriate, for the musicians who compose, perform, and teach this music have tapped the modern classical canon for musical techniques and procedures that they fuse with a blues-based rock sensibility.³⁵ Walser focuses on four heavy metal guitarists; Ritchie Blackmore, Eddie Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, and Yngwie Malmsteen, their influences and style, along with analyses of Van Halen's "Running With the Devil," and "Eruption," both from the debut album *Van Halen* (1978). What sets Walser's analyses apart from those of Covach is that, owing to

³⁵ Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993): 59.

the dominance of the electric guitar in heavy metal, Walser relies on transcriptions that emphasize the guitar parts:³⁶ (Ex. 3.7)

Ex. 3.7: Cadenza from Ozzy Osbourne's "Suicide Solution"³⁷

Walser labels this section a cadenza and analyses it in a manner similar to that of Covach:

Like Bach's cadenza, Rhoads's invokes the toccata... In both, an impressive array of virtuosic figuration is explored, until a disorienting meltdown leads to a long drive toward a cadence. In Rhoads's solo, the harmonic confusion precedes a lengthly tapped section, which itself melts down.³⁸

³⁶ This is not to say that guitar parts are the only ones available, rather it is rare to find a "score" that contains all the instruments of a particular ensemble and the individual parts played. Drum notation is virtually unheard of in the rock music world, but transcriptions for bass guitar are prevalent along with PVG (piano, vocal, guitar) transcriptions of popular rock tunes.

³⁷ Walser, 85

³⁸ Ibid., 81.

Walser is comparing the live guitar solo by Randy Rhoads, former member of Ozzy Osbourne's band, in "Suicide Solution," from Osbourne's double-live album *Tribute* (1987) to Bach's extraordinary harpsichord cadenza for the first movement of his *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*.

Classical terminology like toccata, cadenza, and cadence are evidently adequate for Walser and he uses it liberally to describe the music of Rhoads, in spite of the vast difference aurally and aesthetically between Bach and Ozzy Osbourne. The influence of classical music is evident in heavy metal and Walser incorporates aspects of Baroque performance practice and harmony into his analyses. One of the primary electric guitar performance practice techniques for heavy metal music involves "tapping," or the fretting of notes with the picking hand. Few guitarists had used tapping, but Edward Van Halen pushed the technique to a level that astonished other guitarists and, at the same time, created a new expansion of the instrument's capabilities, the most important technical innovation since Jimi Hendrix.³⁹

To describe the musical rhetoric Van Halen had single-handedly elevated to an art form, Walser again uses the example of J.S. Bach: "Edward Van Halen's development of two-handed techniques for the guitar is comparable to J.S. Bach's innovations in keyboard fingerings."⁴⁰ Bach's use of the thumb for harpsichord playing, previously unheard of or little practiced, is compared to Van Halen's appropriation and mastering of the two-handed tapping technique.⁴¹ Additionally, Vivaldi becomes the template for guitar figuration in the solo of "Eruption:"

³⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The final section of “Eruption” is wholly tapped. Here the pitches are formed into arpeggios outlining triads. Van Halen’s rhythmic torrent of sextuplets energizes a relatively slow rate of harmonic change, a strategy learned from Vivaldi.⁴²

Certainly, the comparisons between classical masters and heavy metal virtuosos testify not only to a cross-pollination of genres, but common analytical techniques as well. For Walser, appropriating classical music terminology assists in the positing of heavy metal virtuosos alongside those of the classical realm: “Engaging the listener with the conventions of tonal progress and then wilfully manipulating his audience’s expectations, Van Halen reiterates Vivaldi’s celebration of the rhetoric of the virtuoso.”⁴³ Walser, in some ways, elevates the subjects of his analysis to that of the classical masters. By comparing Edward Van Halen to Liszt for example, the music of Van Halen is historically and academically validated. For the reader without formal musical training (which would include most rock musicians themselves) much of Walser’s writing will be impenetrable and overstated, but for those who understand the musical taxonomy, the analyses describe very musical events.

Walser’s book reflects the new manner in which popular music is being examined. Like art music, popular music and rock in particular has developed a descriptive language that is very much isolated to the domain. Instrument-specific terminology like whammy bar, pickup, and distortion become normalized by virtue of common practice by musicians in the same manner as instrument terminology for violins, oboes, bassoons, and brass. Motive and phrase become lick and riff. Because rock music as a community has adopted its new performance practices as being normative, involving analytical techniques that underscore and describe these same elements is necessary and

⁴² Ibid.

viable for an analysis of music like heavy metal. It should not be assumed that tablature transcriptions or the inclusion of traditional musicological methodologies is unique or proprietary for heavy metal and progressive rock analysis. On the contrary, harmonic analysis of other forms of popular music can also be found that use similar, if not the same, methods as Walser and Covach.

It would seem that harmonic analysis like linear analysis is best served when the musical characteristics of affect and meaning are brought to the fore. The difference lies in the communicative power of both methods. Linear analysis is a specialized methodology that only a privileged few within the halls of academia are able to understand. It means nothing to those who cannot follow the reduction graphs. On the other hand, traditional musicology gives more opportunity for dissemination because the analyst can use as little or as much musical terminology and notation as he or she desires. Instead of being slaved to a reduction graph to illustrate the point, harmonic analysis can reveal the same point and allow the amount of musical terminology to be dictated by the harmonic complexity of the music itself.

Allan Moore's analyses of the Beatles' pivotal 1967 album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, goes so far as to combine elements of harmonic analysis and linear analysis. Moore addresses the question of linear analysis in his book *Rock: The Primary Text* (1993) and states:

It is hard to argue that 'surface' and 'background' are inappropriate concepts for popular musics, but it cannot be unquestioningly assumed that those procedures for generating a surface from a middleground that are normative in tonal concert music will necessarily apply to these musics.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴ Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 12.

Moore appears to be eschewing linear analysis, however, a modified version serves his purpose in the *Sgt. Pepper* analyses. Moore points out that the attentive reader will notice the graphic vocabulary employed is borrowed from Schenkerian theory, however, he asserts that the graphic diagrams are not intended to function as Schenkerian analyses of the songs.⁴⁵ The melody of the Beatles' "With a Little Help From My Friends" is shown to be static yet hiding a structural descent of a third nested among ascending thirds:

(Ex. 3.8)

Ex. 3.8: Voice-leading in "With a Little Help From My Friends"⁴⁶

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the song "With a Little Help From My Friends". Each system consists of a vocal melody line and a bass line. The first system is labeled "verse 1 and 2" and "refrain". The second system is labeled "bridge", "verse 3", and "final gesture". Above the vocal lines, there are annotations indicating structural levels: "3" for the first system and "8 7 6" for the second system. Below the bass lines, there are annotations indicating structural levels: "9" and "43" for the first system, and "1'14" and "1'31" for the second system. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, and the overall layout is designed to illustrate the voice-leading and structural descent of a third nested among ascending thirds.

⁴⁵ Moore, *The Beatles*, 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 31

Moore's so-called modification of Schenkerian reductive graphs still seem to place importance, or at least draw significant attention to, voice-leading as an integral component of the compositional and communicative processes.

Unlike Covach and Everett, who both employ art music terminology, Moore's analytical vocabulary avoids terms like "cadenza" and "toccata," instead he invokes the taxonomy of rock music and the recording studio:

He [Ringo] is placed fractionally to the left in the stereo image, balanced by the bass fractionally right ... , while the constant backing supports him dead centre.⁴⁷

Moore attaches a musical significance to the act of recording production. By including the stereo placement of the voices and instruments, the mixing phase of a recording's creation attains the same importance as the musical elements. Moore asserts that the placement of the lead vocal alludes to the persona of the singer.⁴⁸ Stereo placement becomes as important in character representation as a musically defining gesture does.

Moore's flip-flop regarding reductive analysis presents a new possibility, one of a combined methodology that incorporates both linear and harmonic analysis. As was stated previously, linear analysis provides an additional tool that may or may not be appropriate for all styles or genres of popular music. Moore takes the idea of Schenkerian analysis and tailors it to suit his needs, and despite his earlier criticism of the method, he finds the concept useful.

Form

Formal analysis, a central issue in both traditional musicology and theory, play an important role in the communicative and analytical processes. David Headlam explores

⁴⁷ Ibid., 32.

Cream's assimilation and transformation of blues songs and styles that is part of the widespread influence of American popular music—jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll—on the development of British rock music in the late 1950s and 1960s. Headlam discusses aspects of the model twelve-bar form that encompasses the majority of blues songs. The standard twelve-bar form is as follows:

Fig. 3.1 Chord: I I (IV) I I IV IV I I V IV (V) I I (V) :||
 Bar: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

There is room for variation built in to the twelve-bar form. The second, tenth, and twelfth bars have alternate harmony choices that, while existing as a normative factor, provide variation and difference, the use of which is determined by the songwriter.

Headlam then undertakes a comparison of Robert Johnson's original recording of "Cross Road Blues" with Cream's version from their album *Wheels of Fire* (1968). Both songs, he notes, maintain the twelve-bar model, though Johnson's deviates slightly by incorporating varying numbers of bars and beats.⁴⁹ (Ex. 3.9)

Ex. 3.9: 12-bar blues model compared with Robert Johnson's "Cross Road Blues"⁵⁰

Model	A		A		B	
Text	I		IV I		V (IV) I	
Harmonies	I		IV I		V (IV) I	
4-beat bars (intro)	1	2 3 4	5	6 7 8	9	10 11 12
<hr/>						
Johnson						
Verse 1 (*1 *2 3 4)	1	2 *3 4 5 6	7 8	*9 10 11	12	13 14 15
Verse 2	1	2 3 +4 5	6 7	8 9 +10	11	12 13 14
Verse 3	1	2 3 4 5	6 7	8 9 10	11	*12 13 14
Verse 4	1	2 3 4 5	6 7	8 9 10	*11	*12 13 14

(* = bar with three beats, + = bar with five beats)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ David Headlam, "Blues Transformations in the Music of Cream," in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. by John Covach and Graeme M. Boone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 64.

This elastic sense of phrasing results from Johnson performing by himself and having no need to adhere to the rigidity of form. Instead phrase-length becomes a component he can manipulate rhetorically.⁵¹ On the other hand, Cream obeys the conventions of form much more stringently than Johnson, and standard notation shows the variations and comparisons between the two versions of “Cross Road Blues:” (Ex. 3.10)

Ex. 3.10: Motivic comparison between Robert Johnson and Cream⁵²



The disparity of form contributes to the affect and meaning inherent in the song and despite the fact both versions are “the same song,” the fluidity of the twelve-bar model allows for different interpretations based on the formal disparity. Headlam asserts that the irregularity of rhythms and variation in Johnson’s recording suggest a personal, idiosyncratic vision in contrast with Cream’s purist version, which while being driving and powerful, suggests the communal, overdriven state of society that surrounded the band in the 1960s.⁵³

Headlam’s comparison reveals the incongruency between Johnson’s recording and Cream’s and in addition, he derives a conclusion that could be understood by simply

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁵¹ Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000): 51.

⁵² Headlam, 71.

⁵³ Ibid., 72.

listening to both recordings. Moreover, a careful listening would undoubtedly reveal the rhythmic idiosyncrasies his notation so clearly points out. This is not to diminish Headlam's analysis in any way, rather the points he illuminates are obvious and his vocabulary and musical examples successfully convey both the inherent meaning in each of the versions of "Cross Road Blues," and the sociological consequence. As was previously stated in Chapter Two, the key issue here is that analysis of any kind must begin first with the most basic of activities—listening, what the French call "la forme sonore." Given that listening and interpretation can be subjective—in other words, different meanings for different people—if an analyst chooses to isolate particular musical elements that may or may not be heard equally by everyone, it does not serve the same purpose as a larger view with attention drawn to segments that enhance the structural and affective characteristics. In other words, isolating the larger elements that are aurally evident would serve the analytical purpose better than a microscopic rendering of questionable aural or musical characteristics.

But characteristics of timbre do not create meanings or states in the sense that they determine their character. Nonetheless they cannot help but call forth a response that is affective, and affective to a degree and manner related to the unique characteristics of the sound.⁵⁴ The material character of sound in music speaks directly and concretely to the individual's awareness and sense of self that is pervasively social and discursive in its mediation and nature.⁵⁵ Timbre combined with the formal and harmonic variables coalesce to create the musical object that communicates affect and meaning largely dependent on the individual's (analyst and audience) experience and aesthetic sense.

⁵⁴ John Shepard and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997): 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

Considerations of gender

In the latter half of the twentieth century, feminist criticism emerged in literary studies and art history. At the time there were formidable obstacles to bring those same questions to the field of musicology, but during the late-1980s and 1990s feminist musicology appeared with the work of scholars like Susan McClary. While not dealing specifically with popular music, McClary does explore the music of Madonna and the blues. “Gender-bending” pop artists like Prince and k.d. lang are also examined from a socio-sexual aspect that attempts to find semiotic indicators in the music and text.⁵⁶ Referring to Prince’s stylish blues-funk song “Kiss,” McClary notes the following: “‘Kiss’ sets up a world in which unpredictable titillations, moans, and caresses occupy the foreground, while the chords that guarantee coherence hover as an almost expendable backdrop.”⁵⁷ In McClary’s view the musical accompaniment becomes subservient to the erotic nature of Prince’s vocal delivery and the suggestiveness of the lyrics. The prolonged twelve-bar form of the song becomes a vehicle that allows the affect and meaning to be piggy-backed on an austere instrumental groove. Yet despite the slow rate of harmonic motion, the rhythmic activity is never still, with the majority occurring on a more local level than that of the harmonic changes.⁵⁸ Simplicity of harmony results in meaning lying elsewhere. Prince’s sometimes-androgynous image is reinforced and cultivated in his music and videos, and McClary illuminates much of this from her feminist standpoint.

⁵⁶ Some may note that Prince has changed his name to a symbol and prefers to be known as “The Artist Formerly Known as Prince,” but he has since returned to his original moniker.

⁵⁷ McClary, *Conventional Wisdom*, 155.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

In the male-dominated music industry, according to McClary, Madonna represents the epitome of feminine control. McClary asserts that throughout musical history, women have been located in the discourse in a position of desire and dread—as that which must reveal male control or which must be purged as intolerable.⁵⁹ Madonna's persona at once invokes the body and feminine sexuality, like Carmen or Lulu; but unlike them, she refuses to be framed by a structure that will force her into submission or annihilation.⁶⁰ It is also McClary's assertion that Madonna's counter-narratives of female hetero-sexual desires are remarkable and challenge the established masculine parameters for female rock musicians.⁶¹ The overt sexuality of Madonna's music, which McClary calls a "refusal of definition," enables girls to see that the meanings of feminine sexuality can be in their control and their subjectivities are not necessarily totally determined by the dominant patriarchy.⁶²

McClary envisions rock as a genre that is slavishly masculine. As a result, the limited number of female performers is because of a patriarchy or "boys club." "The options available to a woman musician in rock music are especially constrictive, for this musical discourse is typically characterized by its phallic back beat."⁶³ Such sexual analogies are common in McClary's writing and she has been criticized for deriding male musicians, specifically rock musicians, simply because of their gender—something a true feminist would not do.⁶⁴ The verisimilitude of McClary's view is a result of cultural and social norms that were in place when the recording industry and technological

⁵⁹ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 152.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 154.

advancements in musical instrument development were in their infancy. It is true that the majority of achievements musically and technologically during the seventy years or so the recording industry has been around, have been by males, but asserting that the lack of women in rock is due to the phallic nature of the music diminishes the achievements of female artists like Joni Mitchell, Suzi Quatro, Heart, the Runaways, and the Go-Gos to name a few, not to mention the dozens of R&B female musicians who recorded for Motown and Atlantic in the 1960s.

Cultural Analysis

Popular music's unique existence as commodity, art form, leisure activity, and profession means that elements other than the music can affect the manner in which the music is consumed and perceived. The recording industry or market plays the largest role in the dissemination of popular music with actual performance being secondary, usually relegated to pump up album sales. Once it was a performing art, with the focus on the performance, now it is a mere show— fully rehearsed and with no room for artistic spontaneity.⁶⁴ Throughout history music has been created for money, but the rewards for the creation of popular music have far exceeded anything a Renaissance composer might have received. The elusive goal of all popular music artists is the coveted number one chart position. This means that the majority of the consuming public identifies with and has made an aesthetic decision regarding the piece of music. The mass acclamation is translated into album sales and chart positions and this becomes a driving factor in the

⁶⁴ At the risk of sparking a debate about feminism – feminist philosophy dictates equality for all persons regardless of gender, race, sexual preference, or religion. See: Eve Browning Cole, *Philosophy and Feminist Criticism: An Introduction* (New York: Paragon House, 1993).

⁶⁵ Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996): 177.

creation of future compositions and artistic direction. Many times a debut album by an artist will sell millions, yet the sophomore release fails miserably, often yielding disappointing sales figures. The careers of Meatloaf, Boston, and Alanis Morissette rode heavily on their debut albums, and subsequent releases went virtually unnoticed even if they sold well.⁶⁶

The charge that rock, or popular music, is corrupted by money is frequently made in the community itself, with some justification. Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones were all models of the shotgun wedding between manager and artist. And it seems fair to say that young musicians participate in their own exploitation in exchange for a manager's expertise,⁶⁷ "The price of an education," as Keith Richards has stated.⁶⁸ Popular music flourishes because it sells, and it sells because it flourishes. There is an unholy alliance between the music industry, the record companies and managers, and the artists and their own personal "musical morality." The distance between artistic integrity and success generates a tension that consistently confuses attempts to grasp popular music as a form of musical expression.⁶⁹ Rock music in particular, has been hailed as a manifestation of Romanticism, the aesthetic movement that elevates the artist's originality, emotion, spontaneity, and invention as the measure of aesthetic success.⁷⁰ But

⁶⁶ Some may note that Alanis' release of *Jagged Little Pill* (1995) was in fact her third album. She had a successful career as a teen pop singer in Canada. Her stylistic change into angst-ridden female singer came after a hiatus from the music business. As such, *Jagged Little Pill* stands as a debut album for a much-matured and grown up Alanis Morissette. Also, "going unnoticed" for Alanis is a difference of twenty million albums sold between *Jagged Little Pill* and the follow-up release *Supposed Infatuation Junkie* (1998).

⁶⁷ Gracyk, 177.

⁶⁸ Rolling Stones, *25 x 5: The Continuing Adventures of the Rolling Stones*, video produced by Lorne Michaels (1989).

⁶⁹ Gracyk, 180.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 175.

this success is not realized in some altruistic manner by the artist, but rather by the bottom line.

For sociologists, the phenomenon of popular music contains markers that illuminate affect and meaning that exist outside the music per se. The inherent musical characteristics are of virtually no interest to the sociologist studying popular music. Unless the sociologist has had some musical training, elements like form, harmony, and, to an extent, rhythm, play little or no role in their analysis. Cultural manifestations of musical “movements,” like punk rock, folk rock, grunge, rap, and psychedelia, are linked inextricably more to the “sounds” of the music and the meaning of the text, rather than the music itself.

When popular music is viewed as a cultural or sociological phenomenon, most scholars avoid discussing specific songs or artists. The overall effect on society by rock musicians is of more interest than the harmonic movement through the guitar solo. Musical affect and meaning exist as something ephemeral for the sociologist; instead these issues are found in the music’s value. Despite value being an aesthetic element, and subjective in the same manner as listening, it is a facet of popular music that can be examined by sociologists. Just the spectacle of album sales places value at a level that impacts aesthetic choices by the audience, performers, distributors, and critics. Simon Frith observes that value is determined by the music industry:

But then record companies don’t just produce cultural commodities and lay them out in the marketplace. They also try to persuade people to buy them, and this means telling the potential customer why the product is valuable.⁷¹

⁷¹ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 61.

Another factor determining value in popular music comes from the manner in which the music is disseminated. Popular music is mediated, in other words, available, through various forms of media, and reaches us through recordings, film, and television; the artists reach us through magazines, newspapers, and video.⁷² All along the creation process, the song has been validated and valued as being “hit material,” or “radio-friendly.” From demo tape to record store, a particular song has passed through various stages of value consideration. On a musical level, stylistic, textual, or formal changes are designed to ensure, or at the very least hope, the song “hits.” It first attains value when the songwriter decides it should be performed, either live or recorded. The next test of muster comes at the desk of a record company’s Artist and Repertory department where the song is either accepted or rejected, usually based on a cursory hearing of about thirty to forty-five seconds. If the song passes the test, it is then recorded and marketed to an awaiting public with the prerequisite amount of industry hype that surrounds “the next big thing.” Euphemisms like “the best,” and “the greatest” are passed around like key fobs at a plumbing convention, all designed to bolster interest and sales. This does not guarantee immediate success, however, for the song still has to pass through the program managers of radio stations and video television channels where value is determined by the demographic of the listening or viewing audience.

The points raised by cultural and sociological studies can benefit musicological analysis by studying factors like mass appeal and market acceptance. These factors, in turn, must be stirred into the musicological analysis to increase its analytical range. While in live musical experiences the musicians and their audiences are joined by the

⁷² Ibid.

immediacy of sound, in recorded music they are linked by an elaborate industry.⁷³ And this industry and the genre of rock, according to Frith, has its meaning as a mass medium dependent on its relationship to youth culture.⁷⁴ Frith made this observation during the period when rock and popular music were being created primarily by “young” artists for the youth culture. Presently, rock is still being created for the same demographic, but the young artists of the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s are now adults and, as such, their music is aimed at a middle-aged audience that has since grown up. The division between serious or art music and popular music is a concern that is not exclusive to debates regarding musical analysis, but also to studies of popular culture. Theodore Gracyk notes:

Either we try to validate rock by focusing on the small amount of it that lives up to traditional fine art values, or we fall prey to the prejudice that it has its own virtues, but is then a lesser music. Either way we surrender to the hegemony of aesthetics.⁷⁵

Gracyk is not attempting to diminish rock’s value as an art form, but instead he recognizes the aesthetic and cultural difference between art music and popular music. Whereas art music is created typically by an individual, popular music is most often collaborative, and whereas art music takes its own status as its primary content, as a commodity, popular music is more like pulp fiction.⁷⁶ The intellectual level of the audience demands an investment of cultural capital. Art music, unlike popular music, reinforces social distinctions and class barriers by encoding messages that alienate, confuse, or bore a less-educated audience.⁷⁷ Where Gracyk errs however, is in his assertion that bourgeois art is by “isolated individuals reading a book or viewing a

⁷³ Simon Frith, *The Sociology of Rock* (London: Constable and Company, 1978): 10.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁵ Gracyk, 212.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

painting.” Gracyk forgets, or does not know, that much “serious music” that makes up the current canon also had popular roots. “Early rock and roll was often heard from a jukebox, and much of the audience still uses the music for dancing or for other social gatherings,” he writes.⁷⁸ This is not a phenomenon exclusive to popular music, for art music was largely created for similar activities. The difference is the propinquity of popular music between creator and audience as it is delivered through mass media versus the distance between creators of art music and its audience despite the immediacy of its delivery in live performance.

Musicological study of popular music usually includes some semblance of cultural placement, reception, and use. But the paucity of critical discourse on this front, sociological and cultural studies aside, presents challenges and opportunities for the musicologist.⁷⁹ For Nadine Hubbs, the challenges arise insofar as the existing methods of music analysis, principally under the aegis of music theory, are originally designed for Western art music, however the opportunities enable a pop-rock criticism that treats the significant role of the music itself.⁸⁰ Hubbs asserts that a close reading of musical works can proceed from the constant intersection of sound, structure, social structure, lyrics and visual images, and dramatic and psychological meaning.⁸¹ This view is not that far removed from the foci of sociological and cultural analyses, the added component being the analysis of the music itself. The schism between musicological and sociological study is largely founded on the particular language that musicologists and theorists employ.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Nadine Hubbs, “The Imagination of Pop-Rock Criticism,” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. by Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000): 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Music-specific terminology isolates those analysts who use it and the readers who understand. As Simon Frith notes:

One reason for the sharp difference in discourse is ignorance. Most rock musicians lack formal musical training, and so do almost all rock commentators. They lack the vocabulary and techniques of musical analysis, and even the descriptive words that critics and fans do use—harmony, melody, riff, beat—are only loosely understood and applied.⁸²

Frith is unapologetic for his ignorance of music analysis and he freely admits he does not “contribute anything to the musicology of rock.”⁸³

The other side of the coin would have musicologists questioning whether they can contribute anything to the sociology of rock. John Covach believes that adopting a singular sociological orientation is unnecessary. Instead, popular music should be studied because it is interesting in that as a repertory it challenges some of our assumptions about what music is, how it can work, and how we experience it.⁸⁴ Rising to the challenge means that sociology works hand-in-hand with musicological analysis to reveal how popular music works, what it is, and how it is experienced.

History and Cultural Case-studies

The history of analyzing musical style has itself a long history dating back centuries and coming to fruition with the musicological writings of nineteenth-century scholars like E.T.A. Hoffman and Robert Schumann. Popular music history, on the other hand, is a relatively new discipline owing to the “infancy” of the music. If contemporary

⁸² Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable and Co., 1983): 13.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ John Covach, “We Won’t Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis,” in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinary, Culture*, ed. by David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian, and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997): 85.

popular music is considered as having its genesis in the early twentieth century, then most pop music stars are less than fifty years old. This is a considerable amount of time however, and sitting at the beginning of the twenty-first century the accomplishments of artists like Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and the countless other popular music groups and artists are now being viewed from an historical perspective that can trace genesis, development, influence, and evolution

The infusion of black rhythms and style has been widely accepted as one of the creative forces behind the evolution of contemporary popular music. Martha Bayles in her book, *Hole in Our Soul: The Decline of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (1994), contends that the black influence has been lost and instead replaced by shock and sonic abuse. Bayles gives an account of the history of popular music citing black artists and influences along the way, culminating in an examination of current artists, exposing, in her view, a lack of substance in the music and the loss of black influence. In this case, history is used to shore up a hypothesis that many would view as faulty. Rather than a “loss,” popular music is well on its way to becoming homogeneous in a manner that is rich with influences. The stylistic lines between genres are rapidly becoming diffused as musicians adopt other rhythms, melodies, and genres, readily folding new elements into their own musical individuality.

Timothy Scheurer examines the recurring “myth of America” in his book, *Born in the U.S.A.: The Myth of America in Popular Music From Colonial Times to the Present* (1991). A history of popular music is presented that coincides with Scheurer’s unveiling of the recurring “myth of America,” which is, according to Scheurer:

... presented in popular song: America is a vast, rugged, and plentiful land, whose destiny is providentially guided by the hand of God, and where, because of the noble sacrifices of pilgrims and patriots in the cause of liberty and freedom, we enjoy unlimited opportunity, equality, and freedom.⁸⁵

The myth is traced through the introduction of British *broadside* ballads during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the music of contemporary artists like Bruce Springsteen and John Mellencamp. Scheurer sees popular music as important and historically connected: "It is through popular song—and the other popular arts as well—that our world (our country) is made articulate, intelligent, and significant."⁸⁶ The convergence of history, both political and musical, provides corroboration for Scheurer as he reveals America's "myth." Popular music history is not segregated to American music only. The history of Canadian popular music is documented in Greg Potter's *Hand Me Down World: The Canadian Pop-Rock Paradox* (1999). Potter is a rock journalist and as such, the writing style is informal. He traces the development of the Canadian music industry and attempts to uncover the paradox: "... in quest to win international celebrity, Canadian musical artists have gradually and unwittingly lost their Canadian identity."⁸⁷ Potter's paradox makes for interesting reading, but like Bayles, his hypothesis would be regarded as flawed by many. The Canadian music industry is younger than the American, and the seemingly un-nationalistic actions taken by some Canadian artists is a direct result of the lack of media support and musical infrastructure in their native country and not some desire to shun Canada. During the 1950s and 1960s, if a Canadian artist wanted to succeed in the music business, a move to the United States was necessary. Canada had

⁸⁵ Timothy Scheurer, *Born in the U.S.A.: The Myth of America in Popular Music From Colonial Times to the Present* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991): 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

no recording studios, major record labels or managers, and in order for any kind of success to be attained, the Canadian popular music artists of the mid-twentieth century were forced to relocate to America. It was not until the 1970s, after the international success of the Guess Who, that a Canadian music industry was born, albeit with government assistance in the form of the Canadian Content Regulations.

In addition to histories of popular music in general, genre-specific histories have been written. The development of the blues is well documented in Giles Oakley's *The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues* (1997) and country music history is represented by Bill Malone, Joli Jensen, Richard Petersen, and Robert Oermann.⁸⁸ As well, biographies of popular music artists and encyclopedias of country and rock music abound, mainly written for the average music lover rather than for academic interest. The information contained within these books and others contributes to an overall understanding of popular music, its performers, and audience. History cannot be written without some consideration of culture, whether the history is about art music or popular music. Music history is intertwined with cultural and political history in a manner that at times seems seamless. Major musical events can be linked to corresponding historical events that changed the course of society and the lives of people. These books are by no means the only historiographies of popular music, there are countless others and only serve as an example. In all cases though, authors avoid any discourse regarding the music itself. Artists and songs are mentioned, but specific musical elements are avoided. The musical

⁸⁷ Greg Potter, *Hand Me Down World: The Canadian Pop-Rock Paradox* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1999): 3.

⁸⁸ For the history of country music see: Bill Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Joli Jensen, *The Nashville Sound: Authenticity, Commercialization, and Country Music* (Nashville and London: The Country Music Foundation Press and Vanderbilt University Press, 1998); Richard Petersen, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago

materials that are of interest to a musicological analysis are ignored largely due to the fact that the authors lack the necessary vocabulary and skills to adequately analysis the music, historical, cultural, and social boundaries aside.

Other considerations

Semiotic and textual analyses are additional components of popular music analysis that have received attention from scholars. Again, affect and meaning are attributed to outside forces beyond and including the music itself. If music must be granted its own irreducible (though never pure) discursive moment, the correspondences, equivalences, and parallels that its sound-patterns suggest lie often not in the sphere of language but in that of gesture, somatic process, and tactile sensation.⁸⁹ For Middleton, music's discursiveness can be attributed to the physicality of the delivery and the reception. He posits the notion that confusion exists over whether music belongs with the mind or body—a confusion deeply written into Western popular culture.⁹⁰ Popular music criticism often divides attention in this area into the “groove” on the one hand, located in the music's danceability which is associated with its “bodily” power, and discourses of sexuality and gender on the other, situated in lyrics, singing style, and—especially in most video analysis—visual gesture and image.⁹¹

These elements contribute greatly to the global understanding of popular music criticism and analysis. While there has been no definitive model accepted by musicologists, theorists, sociologists, and critics, the differing methodologies all

Press, 1997); and Robert Oermann, *America's Music: The Roots of Country* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1996).

⁸⁹ Richard Middleton, “Introduction: Locating the Popular Music Text,” in *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music*, ed. by Richard Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000):11.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

contribute unique elements, questions, and ideas that can be drawn upon, ignored, or modified to underscore and reveal affect and meaning. Jean-Jacques Nattiez' concept of the tripartite analytical system, in which three levels of musical creation and delivery are all concurrently examined as being equal facets of the music's affective power, allows for musicological analysis, cultural study, and considerations of audience response. Nattiez' semiotic "program" has three "objects:" music existing in a *poietic* realm, or the world of the songwriter/composer and the performer; a *trace* or neutral level, where the music exists either as score, recording, performance, or all three; and an *esthetic* level, in which the receptor's response (body and mind) is blended into the previous two elements.⁹² For Nattiez, an analysis of the neutral level is one where the analyst does not decide aprioristically whether the results generated by a specific analytical proceeding are relevant from the *esthetic* or *poietic* point of view.⁹³

In other words, Nattiez accepts music as music first and, like Wilfred Mellers, considers it autonomous to a certain extent. By not assuming *a priori* relevance over the *poietic* and *esthetic* elements, the music can be deconstructed if the analyst chooses, and then the affective nature or musical inherence of meaning can be subscribed or unsubscribed to the other levels. The generally accepted schema of the transmission or communication of meaning is as follows:⁹⁴

"Producer" → Trace → Receiver

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² For a full explanation of the tripartite analytical system see Nattiez' *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiotics of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). The italicized terms are Nattiez' and as a result, the spelling is his.

⁹³ Nattiez, 13.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

For this traditional schema the following diagram should be substituted:

“Producer” → Trace ← Receiver

The traditional thinking implies that affect and meaning are created by the “producer” which is transferred to the musical object and, by virtue of listening or performance, in turn, to the receiver. Nattiez, on the other hand, sees the “producer” and receiver both contributing to the affect and meaning of the musical object.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Music, then, can have inherent characteristics that contribute to meaning, but those characteristics are influenced by both the creator and the receptor. In some cases, the meaning is veiled under musical elements or concealed within the text, but nonetheless, when the receptor or audience is thrown into the mix, those elements that were assumed to be loaded with meaning could appear nondescript or jump to the fore depending on the receptor’s response.

The varying methods of analysis present a musicological conundrum that leaves many analysts wondering in which direction to turn. Indeed, popular music analysis seems, at face value, a more daunting task than analysing a Beethoven piano sonata. At least with Beethoven, the music can be explored autonomously, culture notwithstanding. Popular music exists in whatever form the analyst chooses to examine: as a hit single, a component of an album, a video, a representation of artistic creativity, cultural marker, advertising jingle, film soundtrack, personal mantra, and pure enjoyment.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Listening to music, like understanding language, is not a passive activity but an everyday act of creative imagination so commonplace that its mechanism is taken for granted.¹ Meaning is the constructive assignment of a web of interpretants to a particular form, and there is no guarantee that the webs of interpretants will be the same for each and every person involved in the listening process.² Together these two concepts comprise the human elements that constitute the analytical process. For musicologists and theorists, listening to music is a necessary action that is undertaken to discover “musical” elements that contribute to affect and meaning. An understanding of harmony, by traditional musicological means or some other way, is required and applied to the information gathered by listening. Because of popular music’s unique existence, meaning is found in many disparate areas ranging from the socio-cultural to the purely harmonic, and at heart here is the question of aesthetics.

There is some belief that analysis cannot or does not appeal to the aesthetics of the musical object. Indeed, is it the task of the musicologist to impart value, in an aesthetic sense, along with affect and meaning? The original masters of analysis left no doubt for them that analysis was an essential adjunct to a fully articulated aesthetic value system.³ Joseph Kerman’s well-known essay on classical music analysis, “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” is at heart an objection to musical-discursive inequality. Kerman’s criticism of theory and analysis’ failure to confront the work of art in its proper aesthetic terms and its failure to open access between the artist and the

¹ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995): 1.

² Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiotics of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 11.

audience, charges a misguided effort to achieve the objective status and, hence, the authority of scientific inquiry.⁴ New analyses, in Kerman's view, are conducted at different levels of sophistication and insight, and while they come up with fascinating and undoubtedly relevant data, one always has a sinking feeling that something is missing.⁵ Accompanying aesthetical value is the notion of context. Kerman urges musicologists to consider the fluid model of culture and music's relation to the socio-cultural matrix.⁶

Can aesthetics be revealed by analysis? If Kerman's assertion that the analytical discipline is a "misguided effort to achieve the authority of scientific inquiry" is to be believed, then formalist methodologies, like reductive analysis, can do nothing but isolate the music into a structural and hierarchical framework devoid of aesthetical value. Frith notes: "High art critics often write as if their terms of evaluation were purely aesthetic, but mass culture critics can't escape the fact that the bases for cultural evaluation are always social: and what is at issue is the effect of a cultural product."⁷ If aesthetics is not revealed by analysis, nonetheless analysis equals criticism which equals aesthetics. And the effect of a cultural product, the sociologist's point of departure, is intertwined in the unwitting aestheticism of the analytical methodology. For inasmuch as popular music is inextricably linked to that of aesthetics, the musicological analyses of pop-rock subjects unveil value, either musical or cultural. The value of popular music has always been, however, the anachronistic belief that music is somehow the product of personal sincerity

³ Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," in *Write All These Down: Essays on Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994): 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985): 171.

⁷ Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Culture, and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable and Company, 1983): 55.

rather than industry acumen, or some altruistic creative vision instead of sales and chart positions.⁸

Peter Wicke locates the aesthetics of popular music on different assumptions than those that are seen as permissible in the traditional view of art. The aim of popular music, and rock in particular, was from the start directed not at the experience of individuality but at the experience of collectivity.⁹ Despite the ability of the listener to assume an intimate relationship with the music, the personal experience is connected to the collective by an aesthetical choice made by thousands of people toward the same musical object. In other words, collective aestheticism in the form of marketing and demographics dictates the choices and rejections of the mass culture.

The antagonism between individual aesthetics and collective aesthetics leaves many analysts scratching their heads. The natural assumption that mass sales reflect value, or at the very least the collective aesthetics of “low art,” corrals those musical subjects that speak an unspoken meaning, and thus because of a value judgment that is in direct opposition to the aesthetics of the masses. Yet aesthetic value is placed on the object when it is avoided *because* of its mass appeal. Inasmuch as the music of the Monkees, the Partridge Family, and other so-called bubblegum acts is dismissed by virtue of the lack of aesthetic value on any front other than that of easy-to-digest popular music, the current flock of teen-pop stars reflect a bias that locates aesthetics back in the late 1960s. Britney Spears, the Backstreet Boys, and ‘NSync are the current “bubblegum” acts that receive constant accolades and derision at the same time from fans and critics.

⁸ Nicolas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 9.

⁹ Peter Wicke, “Rock Music: A Musical-Aesthetic Study,” in *Popular Music 2: Theory and Method*, ed. by Richard Middleton and David Horn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 228.

A lack of substance is the most frequent criticism hurled at contemporary teen acts. Manufactured “mass-teria,” a socio-cultural element of popular music that began with the Beatles, and continues with each new “big thing,” puts popular music and analysis in a precarious position. The fickleness of the audience, largely reflective of the amount of hype involved, determines that the fan base never remains static. The public’s taste regularly shifts from one artist to another and leapfrogs genres as well. The popular music marketplace appears to be shifting toward some homogeneous spot where success is rated and granted based on the amount of time a record can maintain its Top Ten status.

The record industry builds in competition by continuously offering up new choices, new artists, and new genres that only can serve to compete with previous releases. A uniformity of hype surrounds the release of an album that is, in the minds of the record company, speaking to its demographic which guarantees a return on the investment. Popular music is an organic entity that constantly evolves depending on the collective taste of the audience. The market is steered toward those artists that are seen as worthy of the attention, the individuality of “my music” being clouded within the collectivity of “their music.”

Popular music analysis cannot be defined by one particular discipline or approach. The process of analysis is like a wheel. The musical object is the hub with the various methods of analysis radiating outward like spokes, affect and meaning conjoining with response circling the hub assuming the destination point for all the methods: (Fig. 4.1)

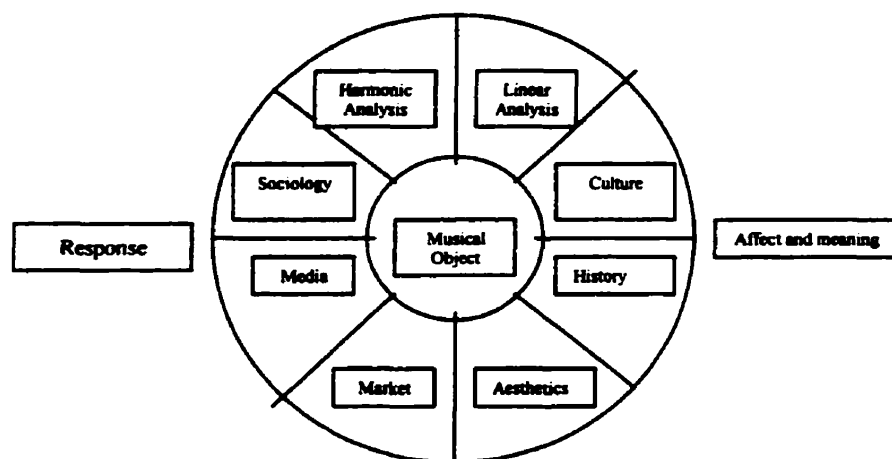


Fig. 4.1: Analysis wheel

Noticeably absent from the analysis wheel paradigm is the composer, which could also include producer and musician. The centrality of the musical object ties the composer/producer/musician to the creation in a fragmented manner, for there is no final definitive rendition of the music until it has been manufactured. The musical object is organic, growing from the genesis of the songwriter through the modifications of the producer culminating with the performance of the musician, the sum of the parts being greater. This supposes music as music with composition linked to end result, in this way, intent and meaning become twin sons of different mothers.

The aesthetics of popular music determines its use in society, while the academic community wrestles with ideologies. The music's primary existence as entertainment flies in the face of traditional musicology. Classical music is, or was, never designated purely as entertainment, the possible exception being opera, and if it should be, it is dismissed outright. Conversely, popular music's reflective moniker suggests that the music is somehow connected to a collective mindset that deems it popular. This label delineates the music of mass culture from that of high culture, but by no means does it

diminish the value or importance of the music. On the other hand, the hypocrisy of criticism from the high-art community derides the successful pop-rock artist based solely on the success of the music, while at the same time they look on with envy and wish for a piece of the collective aesthetic pie.

After careful consideration of all methods of popular music analysis, it is clear that the fluidity of the analytical process is indeed reflective of the organic and malleable nature of the music. At the onset of musicological popular music study, the chameleon-like existence of the music presented analytical possibilities that were not initially realized. Mellers studied the music in a way he thought was effective, and that was to treat the music as music, deferring sociological analysis to its own domain. As the various disciplines laid claim to the field, popular music analyses grew exponentially along with the genre itself. The ever-presence of the music dictated analysis on its own merit. The music became commoditized to an extent that its mediation was realized by different modes of transmission and at the same time, analytical methodologies. Suddenly affect and meaning came from other sources, but it was always the music speaking.

The prognosis for popular music analysis is good. There are now journals devoted to the discipline such as *Popular Music and Society* and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music provides a venue for popular music scholars worldwide. Nevertheless, debate still rages over the usefulness of musicological and theoretical methods like reductive analysis, but the streams are slowly converging. Musicological analyses are more cognisant of socio-cultural aspects and now they resemble ethnomusicological studies more than anything else. Socio-cultural analyses still lack the musical vocabulary to explain specific musical elements, but unless music theory is

known, these elements will always be avoided. The major consequence of popular music analysis is the validation of the music and artists. As was previously noted, an assumed value is placed on the musical object merely by analysis. The musical, historical, and cultural importance of many artists has been intimated, argued, and proven through analysis of their music in particular, and in the genre of popular music at large.

Popular music analysis, in all its forms, provides insight and understanding into the cultural phenomenon that is the object of study. It should be remembered, however, that the object is a musical one, and its use, discursive nature, and characteristics are the basis for any kind of analytical focus. Music lives with everyone and has that ephemeral power to evoke emotive, physical, and intellectual responses. It is fiercely personal and private, it elicits responses based on value judgment, and it operates on a collective level that unifies the audience and the artist.

GLOSSARY

- Analog:** A recording or signal processing device that does not rely on digital information. Recording studios that use tape to record are known as analog studios. Conversely, a studio employing digital methods would be a digital studio.
- Artificial Harmonics:** On the guitar or other stringed instrument, the fret hand fingers the note and the pick hand plucks the string at a desired interval with the index finger of the pick hand lightly touching the string producing the harmonic.
- Bend:** Electric guitar technique in which a note on a string is bent up usually a half or whole step, sometimes with. Bends can be single note, double-stop or two notes, and triple-stop or three notes.
- Bottleneck:** See slide.
- Chart:** A transcribed score or hit parade list, ie: *Billboard* Top 100.
- Delay:** An artificial echo device either analog tape or digital. Creates an echo effect that can be altered by the user.
- Digital:** Information coded for computing devices or sound processing units.
- Distortion:** See Overdrive.
- Fill:** A small motive that “fills” the space after a vocal line or at a cadential point. Can be used synonymously with lick.
- Hammer-on:** On the guitar, sounding a note and then sounding a higher note by fretting it without picking.
- Kick drum:** The bass drum of a trap or drum set. Played by stepping on a pedal connected to a mallet that impacts the drum head.
- Les Paul:** Both a guitar and guitarist. Les Paul invented the guitar of the same name and it is manufactured by Gibson. The Les Paul is a solid body, single cut-away, dual pickup design that is popular with rock, blues, and some country musicians. Guitarists of note that play a Les Paul: Duane Allman, Peter Frampton, and Slash.
- Lick:** A short melodic motive usually comprised two or more notes and generally played after a vocal phrase or at a structural point such as a cadence. Can be used synonymously with fill.

- Overdrive:** The distorted sound that is created when an amplifier is overloaded by signal. A desired sound, overdrive can be created by a signal processing device or overdrive pedal.
- Palm mute:** On the guitar, the note or chord is dampened by the pick hand lightly touching the strings just before the bridge.
- Pass:** See take.
- Pick slide:** On the guitar, running the edge of the pick or plectrum down the lowest string creating a rasping sound.
- Pickup:** An electromagnetic device that is situated under the strings of an electric guitar. The disturbance of the electromagnetic field surrounding the strings is translated into sound waves by the amplifier. Pickups are available as single coil or humbucking. Because of the electromagnetic properties of pickups, they are subject to interference from outside electrical sources like fluorescent lights and as a result, single coil pickups have a tendency to “buzz.” The humbucking pickup was developed to mask the interference.
- Pull-off:** On the guitar, both fingers are initially placed on the notes to be sounded. The higher note is struck then the lower note is sounded by pulling the finger off the higher note.
- Riff:** A musical motive that identifies the song. Longer than a lick, riffs are usually the instrumental hook of a particular song. The guitar introductions to “Smoke on the Water,” and “Satisfaction” are riffs.
- Session:** The recording of a song or album.
- Slide:** On the guitar, a note is sounded and the finger slides up or down to the next desired note. As well, a circular piece of glass or metal placed on one finger of the fretting hand and slid across the strings to produce the notes, also called “bottleneck,” because early slide guitarists used the neck of a wine bottle cut to size for a slide.
- Stratocaster:** Electric guitar model designed and manufactured by Leo Fender. The “Strat” is a solid body, double-cut away, three pickup design that is extremely popular with a large percentage of rock, blues, and country musicians. Guitarists of note that play Stratocasters: Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, and Keith Richards.

- Take:** A recording event. A take can be the entire song, and designated as "Take One," or it can be improvised solo sections, the recording of the vocals, and other parts.
- Telecaster:** Electric guitar model designed and manufactured by Leo Fender. The "Tele" is a solid body, single cut-away, dual pickup design that is played primarily by country and blues musicians. Guitarists of note that play Telecasters: James Burton, Steve Cropper, and Albert King.
- Tremolo bar:** See Whammy bar.
- Wah-wah:** An electronic tone shaping device in pedal form. The guitarist steps on the pedal creating a sweep through the tone spectrum adding additional treble or bass depending on the position of the pedal. Famous wah-wah sounds: Isaac Hayes' "Theme From Shaft."
- Whammy bar:** A mechanical device that alters the height of the bridge of an electric guitar to change the pitch of the strings for effect. Also known as a tremolo bar.

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