UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Sounds on Recordings, Notes on Paper:

Transcribing Popular Music in the Rock Era

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Musicology

by

Alexander James Hallenbeck

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sounds on Recordings, Notes on Paper:

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Alexander James Hallenbeck

Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology

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Professor Robert Fink, Co-Chair

Professor Mitchell Morris, Co-Chair

Though popular music in the twentieth century was often disseminated aurally through recordings, transcribers have reified these sounds into musical notation to aid in analysis and re-performance. Today, musicians use myriad types of transcriptions—online tabs, lead sheets, and note-for-note sheet music—to help them understand and learn their favorite songs. This dissertation narrates the emergence of these transcriptions among different genres during the Rock Era, a period stretching from the late 1950s through the late 1970s. Detailed transcriptions were far less common then than now: some were created to secure copyright protection, while others helped musicians gain competency in a certain performance style. By the 1980s, however, many transcriptions started being published as exquisitely crafted musical works that could stand

in for their model—the recording. I argue that these documents are most often influenced by classical music aesthetics, as transcribers borrow from this tradition to legitimize popular music at a time when it remained outside the purview of the musical academy.

In Chapter 1, I explore the ontology of musical transcriptions, focusing particularly on the relationship between transcriptions and musical works in the genres I study in subsequent chapters: jazz, the blues, and rock. Chapter 2 studies Gunther Schuller's transcriptions of Ornette Coleman's free jazz; one example translates Coleman's improvisation into a "coherent" musical artifact, elevating him to Western art music standards and problematically occluding other musical inheritances. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the different varieties of guitar transcriptions in this era; I profile key blues guitar pedagogues and transcribers, Happy Traum and Stefan Grossman, and then scrutinize various publications of Jimi Hendrix's guitar music. I examine *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book* in Chapter 4, a collection of exceptionally detailed (and *overly* complex) transcriptions of Zappa's guitar improvisations undertaken by young Steve Vai that serve to impart a sheen of legitimacy on Zappa's music, aligning his improvised compositions with his written ones. My conclusion explains the proliferation of note-for-note transcriptions at the end of the 1980s, a trend that stems from the popularity of neoclassical metal and the emerging treatment of canonic rock music as "generational objects."

The dissertation of Alexander James Hallenbeck is approved.

Tracy McMullen

Raymond Knapp

Robert Fink, Committee Co-Chair

Mitchell Morris, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

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Funding for this project was made possible through UCLA's Graduate Division, particularly the Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (2017 & 2019) and the Dissertation Year Fellowship (2023). Chapter 2's origins are found in Phil Ford's class on "Music After 1960," which I had the pleasure of taking at Indiana University in 2015, and it was Phil who put Gunther Schuller and Ornette Coleman in dialogue with one another (indeed, it was in this class that I was first introduced to the ontological study of music, a topic that Mitchell Morris would continue to cultivate with me upon my relocation to UCLA, forming the basis for this entire dissertation). The material that would later become Chapter 2 was further developed in Shana Redmond's "Blues Epistemology" seminar in 2017, and it benefited greatly from her feedback.

Much of this work has been enhanced through participation in academic conferences. Earlier iterations of Chapter 2 were presented at numerous conferences in the US and Europe:

Rethinking Musical Transcription and Arrangement (2018), the annual meeting of the Society for American Music (2019), and Documenting Jazz (2019). I want to thank Mark Everist and Matthew Butterfield for their useful comments at these venues. A much earlier version of Chapter 4 was presented at the 2018 meeting for the International Association for the Study of Popular Music-Canada, and I want to thank Judith Peraino and David Brackett for their thoughts. Ray Knapp was also enormously helpful in assisting me with the early development of this chapter.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

2021	Graduate Certificate in Writing Pedagogy, UCLA
2016	M.A. in Musicology, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
2013	B.A. in Music, Cornell University

Teaching Experience

2023	Writing Tutor, El Camino Community College
2020-23	Teaching Fellow, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2021-22	Teaching Fellow, Department of English, Clusters Program, UCLA
2018-19	Teaching Associate, Department of English, Clusters Program, UCLA
2018	Teaching Associate, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2017-18	Teaching Assistant, Department of Musicology, UCLA

Academic Awards, Fellowships, and Service

2023	Dean's Medal, UCLA
2022-23	Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
2022	Herman and Celia Wise Best Dissertation Chapter Award, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2019-21	Managing Editor, *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal*, UCLA
2019	Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2019, 2016	Diebold Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
2019, 2016	Mellon Fellowship of Distinction, UCLA Graduate Division
2018	Selection committee member, Ingolf Dahl Award in Musicology Committee, American Musicological Society Northern California and Pacific Southwest Chapters
2017-18	Editorial Board and Program Committee, *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal*, UCLA
2017-18	Distinguished Lecture Series Coordinator, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2017	Finalist, Ingolf Dahl Award in Musicology, American Musicological Society Northern California and Pacific Southwest Chapters
2017	Friends of Musicology Award for Best Seminar Paper, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2017	Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, Department of Musicology, UCLA
2014-15	Dean's Scholarship and Graduate Tuition Award, Graduate Division, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

Publications

2019	Alexander Hallenbeck, review of *Constructing Urban Space with Sounds and Music*, by Ricciarda Belgiojoso, *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal* 15, no. 1 (2019).

Conference Presentations

2023	"Notational Complexity and the Construction of Legitimacy: Steve Vai Transcribes Frank Zappa Note-for-Note," American Musicological Society Joint Annual Meeting (Denver, CO)
2019	"'A Song For Mommy'": Performing Failure in the Abject Unconscious of *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*," Music and the Moving Image (New York, NY)
2019	"Ornette Coleman's Cry of Jazz: Music, Meaning, and the Ethics of Transcription," Society for American Music (New Orleans, LA) and Documenting Jazz (Dublin, Ireland)
2018	"Frank Zappa's Lament: Musical Meaning and Mystique in 'Watermelon in Easter Hay,'" IASPM-Canada (Regina, SK)
2018	"Ornette Coleman's Cry of Jazz: Music, Meaning, and the Ethics of Transcription," Rethinking Musical Transcription and Arrangement (Cambridge, England)
2017	"'Richy Wagner is a Soft-Bodied Sensualist=Pussy': The Masculine Protest of Charles Ives." American Musicological Society, Joint Meeting of Northern California and Pacific Southwest Chapters (Los Angeles, CA)

Research and Editorial Experience

2023	Assistant Editor, *Musica Judaica Online Reviews*
2018-23	Graduate Student Researcher, Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology, UCLA
2021	Author and Research Compiler, "A Research Guide to Dave Brubeck's *The Gates of Justice*" and "*Gates of Justice* Performance Chronology" published by the Milken Archive of Jewish Music

Introduction: Transcribing Popular Music, Transcribing Ideology

As a classically trained violinist and violist, I first encountered transcriptions in Western art music, a tradition in which they function as a copy of a "musical work" that has its layout or "notation" altered. (The scare quotes in the preceding sentence index the contested nature of both terms, which will require repeated redefinition in the pages that follow.) I much preferred the intimacy of chamber music to the anonymity of the orchestra, and I recall many long Friday afternoons rehearsing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's String Quartet, K. 405, which comprises five transcribed fugues from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Defining "transcription" in the most authoritative dictionary of musical terms, Ter Ellingson points out that transcriptions in this musical idiom are a modification of one written text into another: in this case, Bach's keyboard manuscripts were meted out by Mozart into four separate string parts.[1]

Whether performing an original composition or a transcription on my violin, as a child I quickly learned from teachers the value of the "musical work" (again, a contested term) and by proxy, German idealism, a philosophical movement that had profound effects on musical practice in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I was taught at a young age that a score is an objectified expression of the composer's will and that my primary goal as a performer was to follow the composer's intentions, clearly laid out for all to see in the notated music I was reading.[2] Whose intentions I was following in the case of a Mozart string quartet made up of

[1] Ter Ellingson, "Transcription (i)," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, last accessed July 27, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28268.

[2] This key principle of German idealism, "*Werktreue*," (being true to the work) originated in E.T.A. Hoffman's writings in the early nineteenth century and strongly influenced Western art music aesthetics; see Lydia Goehr, "Being True to the Work," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 55-67.

transcribed Bach fugues was never made clear to me, though I assume I thought I was following Mozart's, since it was his name on the score.

As a classical musician, I was merely a cog in the machine that instantiates a musical work. Ambient music pioneer Brian Eno provides a useful heuristic for thinking about the performer's role in producing Western art music in the classical tradition: the composer (1) starts with an idea, (2) translates it into score notation, and then (3) performers attempt to transmit the composer's original idea to the audience. If the performance is faithful enough, the musical work is realized in sound.[3] Though this is certainly not the only model for the way classical music works are produced, it describes my experiences as a developing classical violinist quite accurately.[4] I often felt that I was merely following an algorithm, albeit one that, since I was not a computer, could never be perfectly executed. Having to perform a work correctly during a live concert where I only had one chance to get it right caused me a great deal of anxiety—after all, a poor performance would mean facing the disappointment of my teacher afterwards, or, even worse, humiliating myself *in real time* in front of an audience.

I did not yet know the term, but this was my introduction to musical *ontology*, the set of problems in analytic philosophy that examines the existence of objects, their nature of being, and how they are related to other objects. My experiences performing classical music were informed by a specific ontological perspective on music heavily influenced by nineteenth-century German

[3] See Brian Eno, "The Studio as a Compositional Tool," *Down Beat* 50, no. 7 (July 1983): 56-57, and 50, no. 8 (August 1983): 50-52. He provides this model as a direct contrast to the way that popular music is produced in the recording studio after the advent of magnetic tape; here, the recording—as an assemblage of sounds—represents "the work."

[4] Lydia Goehr provides four general types of analytic theories that have been employed to address the nature of the musical work in classical music. Eno's would most likely be her fourth type, an "idealist view," wherein "works are now identified with ideas formed in the mind of composers. These ideas, once formed, find objectified expression through score-copies or performances and are, thereby, made publicly accessible"; see *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music, Revised Edition* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18-19. Various theorizations of the musical work, including Goehr's, are detailed at length in my Chapter 1.

philosophical idealism, for which William Weber coined the term "musical idealism."[5] Others have described the aesthetic trends that transformed the production and reception of Western art music in this period, such as the rise of the public concert that further separated the audience from the performer, and the emergence of "abstract" instrumental music, venerated because it referred only to its own organic structure rather than any exterior phenomena.[6] Like many other budding classical musicians, I was so steeped in this ideology that I did not know that any other conception of music was even possible.

As a teenager, I found that learning to play and improvise rock music on the electric guitar suited me much better than performing classical music. Without the pressure of detailed written instructions my performance anxiety dissipated, especially as I became more comfortable with modal improvisation over chord changes. But while I had successfully escaped the frightening violin instructors of my past, I could not avoid the influence of musical idealism in performance: learning to perform rock, I now treated exemplary *recordings* as ontologically stable works that I needed to imitate as closely as possible to be successful. Nor did I leave transcriptions behind, as I became intimately familiar with an altogether different mode of

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[5] Weber originally used this term in his "Wagner, Wagnerism, and Musical Idealism," in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large and William Weber (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 28-71, though I find it best summarized it in his book, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 85-88. The differences between "philosophical idealism" and "musical idealism" are detailed on pp. 92-101; as Weber writes, "philosophical idealism influenced musical thinking significantly," but "journalists developed their own vocabulary for 'higher' musical values, linked to taste for classical music" (92). Raymond Knapp provides a rich study of musical idealism's influence on musical practice in this era in the first chapter of his book, "Idealizing Music," in *Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 3-50, which I cover in greater detail throughout this introduction.

[6] Knapp writes about this separation of audience and performer in *Making Light*, 7-9. For more on the rise of instrumental music in this context see Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 148-75. Carl Dahlhaus similarly explores how the work concept separated instrumental music from opera in the nineteenth century through a comparison of the music of Ludwig van Beethoven and Gioachino Rossini; see *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 8-15. For another take on the value of instrumental music in this period see Mark Evan Bonds, "Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 2-3 (Summer-Autumn, 1997): 387-420.

transcription, one that aims not to translate one written text into another, but to capture the sounds on the record in writing. Because of my earlier training, Western notation was a second language to me, and I spent hours in my childhood bedroom transcribing complex guitar solos from important recordings so I could harness dexterity and stylistic knowledge to replay them as accurately as possible, starting in on a path trod by countless players learning how to improvise in rock and jazz.

Although I had left classical music behind, I could not break free from its ontological grip. I toiled on these transcriptions until they felt like musical works themselves, like classical scores I could perform without the need for the source recording as a reference. Given my background, it is not surprising that I mostly listened to progressive rock, where artists flaunted their knowledge of tonal theory and the classical canon as markers of cultural capital. Frank Zappa's music was a particular obsession, and because much of his music was (and remains) too complex for me to transcribe with my own ears, I relied on the amazing skills of professionals like Steve Vai, whose Zappa transcriptions jumpstarted his own musical career, and Kasper Sloots, who painstakingly transcribed hundreds of segments from Zappa's massive oeuvre to better understand his wildly eclectic musical language.[7]

This musical habitus, straddling the line between classical and popular music, is quite common among those who transcribe popular music. In fact, popular music transcribers often use their sizable musical and notational knowledge to capture recorded performances, just like I did. Rock and classical transcriptions are quite different from one another, however: where a classical transcription turns one written text into another, in popular music a transcription translates something *heard* to something *seen*, enabling methodical study and (re)performance.

[7] See Kasper Sloots, *Frank Zappa's Musical Language*, 5th ed. (Utrecht: Kasper Sloots, 2020), www.zappa-analysis.com. Vai's Zappa transcriptions are described at length in my Chapter 4.

In this dissertation, I present an investigation into the art of popular music transcription, offering a typology of transcriptions and exploring the ways that musical idealism informs their creation and reception. At the most basic level, a musical transcription can be any kind of "writing" that captures sound; considered as a mechanical transcription, a recording of a live performance inscribes a mass of analog sound information onto the surface of a plastic disc. (Indeed, the first "long play" acetate records that captured American radio programs for rebroadcast were called "transcription disks.")[8] Before this technology matured in the twentieth century, however, Western musical notation had long been employed to inscribe a composer's ideas on a piece of paper as notes to be performed on a given instrument. Taken together, these instructions function as musical scores—as we will see, the score itself is not considered to *be* the musical work, but it does *prescribe* the performance of it.

This dissertation examines transcriptions—whether of scores or recordings—and the ontological tug of war that occurs between a musical original and its transcribed, and thus derivative, copy. It will be necessary to theorize this translation from one medium to the other explicitly, something I will accomplish by treating popular music transcription as a technology that emerges in tandem with musical recording. As written, transcriptions can never copy their source material exactly; transcriptions are inherently mediated, and it is precisely in this transfer of medium that ideology is imparted to the resulting document. The ideology is often derivative of musical idealism, particularly in what I will call the "Rock Era," stretching from the late 1950s through the end of the 1970s. In this period, we will survey the many ways that

[8] "Transcription disks" are familiar to devotees of classic country, since they capture pioneering groups like the Carter Family performing illegally on south-of-the-border radio in the 1930s; to jazz historians, these disks were used by the US military to transmit swinging entertainment to its far-flung troops during WWII. See Ed Kahn, "The Carter Family on Border Radio," *American Music* 14, no. 2 (1996): 205-217.

transcription preserves and anthologizes folk music, and how it is used to legitimate and canonize other styles of popular music, particularly progressive rock and jazz.

A close analysis of transcriptions of popular music in this era reveals that there are, broadly, three types of transcriptions that differ ontologically by the primary object being transcribed:

1. Transcriptions of *works*
2. Transcriptions of *performances*
3. Transcriptions of musical *pedagogy*

Most existing literature on transcriptions focuses on notated transcriptions in Western art music, where a classical *work* already notated in score is re-written for different performing forces. Rock music, however, provides consumers with musical works in the form of studio recordings; in an ideal listening situation over high-fidelity speakers, such a recording fixes all the sonic details constitutive of the work's identity. A *written* transcription of a rock recording that aims to capture this ontology would thus have to be very complex, translating recorded sound into a notational artifact that could conceivably be executed by performers like the score of a classical music work. In what follows, I will show how such transcriptions only started to develop in the latter half of the 1970s and, like the classical scores whose ontology they extend, proliferate most widely after the heyday of the musical styles they capture.

A transcription of a *work*, then, aims to capture the ontological essence of a source, whether classical score or rock recording, in written notation. But there are also transcriptions of *performances*, which capture a specific interpretation of a work, or the nuances of a performance of a non-work, such as an improvisation. Because the Western art music tradition encompasses both musical works and performances of them, transcriptions in this tradition can be of either type, though they are usually transcriptions of works, as it is much easier to transcribe a physical

score or manuscript than a lengthy performance that takes place in real time by potentially dozens of musicians. However, certain genres of popular music, like jazz, emphasize live performances of non-notated material, particularly solo or group improvisations, some of which are recorded. Transcriptions of a live or recorded improvised performance are thus common in jazz, where they *describe* a sonic event for study or emulation, rather than *prescribe* a work for future performance.[9] In this tradition, recordings and live performances are frequently transcribed *note for note,* where notation is meant to visually match what is heard as closely as possible.

What we have, then, is complicated web of interconnections between performances, scores, recordings, and musical works; my goal will be to explore how transcriptions fit into this matrix. Scores and recordings have very different trajectories and methods, of course, but they can both be treated as forms of writing in that they aim to fix some musical features as constants. Each one has a slightly different relation to concrete performances, and each form of writing constitutes "the work" in somewhat divergent ways, though they both produce things that can be placed under that rubric (these topics are explored further in my Chapter 1).

Recordings in the Western art music tradition have no special ontological status, as they merely capture a given performance of a musical work through the score. However, in popular music, and particularly rock music, recordings themselves can be musical works: the Beatles' "A Day in the Life," for instance, is mostly an electronic work that is merely instantiated during

[9] In using the terms "prescriptive" and "descriptive" to assess the function of transcriptions I am drawing on the thoughts of ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger, specifically his "Prescriptive and Descriptive Music-Writing," *The Musical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (April 1958): 184-95. Technically, Seeger would treat any document written in Western notation to be "prescriptive" because it requires prerequisite knowledge to understand or perform the notation. On the other hand, Seeger would consider computer-generated transcriptions as "descriptive," as the graphs created would be totally unique to each performance depending on the parameters used. Though my usage of these terms is a bit broader than Seeger's own, I find it useful to think of transcriptions through this lens to consider what their primary use might be. I want to thank Matthew Butterfield for suggesting that I conceptualize transcriptions in such a way.

playback, no actual performance necessary.[10] That said, rock music most often traffics in recorded *performances*; indeed, consumers talk about rock in terms of song performance and relish the experience of seeing this music played in a live setting—even if what is performed frequently stems from a recording first created in the studio.[11] Scores do not function the same way in rock as they do in classical music, if they exist at all; however, in the project that follows, I am particularly interested in the ways that transcriptions bring musical notation and scores back into this ontological discussion.

In fact, copyright laws in this era privilege notation over recording: both types of written transcription (those of works and those of performances) often distill popular music into a legal essence, into an *illocutionary lead sheet* that notates only those elements necessary to secure copyright, a song's lyrics and melody. (While not strictly required for such purposes, references to a song's harmony can also be included in a transcription for copyright or in mass market sheet music, usually in the form of chord letters.) These lead sheets can then be resold for profit, even if they hardly represent the song in question. A tune's musical accompaniment, on the other hand, is often outside the purview of both transcriptions of works and transcriptions of performances in the Rock Era, something partially informed by these copyright laws. *Pedagogical* transcriptions aim to fill this gap. Such documents do not aim to capture any one thing, like a performance or a work, but instead reify into notation a lesson (or series of lessons) that gives a student general knowledge of how to perform in a given musical style and gain competency on their chosen instrument. While there were surprisingly few pedagogical materials available to rock guitarists until the 1980s, folk guitar instructors in the 1960s found they could

[10] As found on The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Capitol Records SMAS 2653, 1967, LP.
[11] For more on this see Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 31 and Andrew Kania, "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 401-414.

make a living by using notation to transcribe instruction that they themselves had received from surviving performers of the country blues.[12]

For a transcriber, this typology significantly alters our understanding of the resulting notated text. Let me provide an example: putting together a notated collection of Jimi Hendrix's guitar playing, a transcriber must work directly with recordings, as Hendrix's music was created and disseminated without the intervention of notation. This brings up some interesting problems for the transcriber: take, for instance, Hendrix's guitar solo in the track "Are You Experienced?" from his eponymous 1967 album: he originally recorded his part on magnetic tape, a tape which was mechanically reversed and rerecorded as part of the finished album that a consumer hears.[13] The transcriber must decide how to notate a guitar solo like this: do they notate the *performance* (what Hendrix actually played in the studio), or the *work* (the sound of the final recording)? A transcriber could also choose to avoid both options, using notation instead just to outline the basics of Hendrix's improvisational language, teaching a student some basic building blocks so they can play *like* Hendrix without copying him verbatim. Transcribers constantly address issues like these: what happens when a performer hits a supposedly "wrong" note during a solo, or when an open string is sounded unintentionally during fevered strumming? While these "mistakes" might be extraneous to a live performance, if such mistakes end up on the master recording, they might well be considered an intrinsic part of the musical work.

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[12] It is interesting to speculate about the existence of pedagogical transcriptions in classical music. Take, for instance, the collection of études in Charles-Louis Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist*, first published in 1873 (Boulogne-sur-Mer, France: C.L. Hanon), and still widely used by piano instructors today (as *The Virtuoso Pianist: In Sixty Exercises for the Piano* [New York, NY: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1986]). While the notated exercises provided in this book are not transcriptions or arrangements of extant music, neither are they scores that prescribe a work—we don't imagine Hanon sitting down at a desk to "compose" them, and it goes without saying that a pianist would never perform *The Virtuoso Pianist* in a concert setting as if it were a musical work. Yet, like a score, these notated exercises are meant to be performed with complete accuracy, in this case to improve a pianist's dexterity and finger strength. Neither do Hanon's études transmit techniques from some esteemed performer he studied with—in this case, *the performer was him.*

[13] The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Are You Experienced,* Reprise Records 6261, 1967, LP.

In the rest of this introduction, I first expand on the mediating effects of transcriptions, along with the ways that recordings themselves are inherently mediated. I find the work of Bruno Latour particularly useful, his actor-network theory illuminating a potential framework for thinking about how transcriptions distort information when translating a primary object. I then turn toward defining the Rock Era, during which transcriptions in myriad genres of popular music begin to proliferate, and I conclude by outlining which genres I will be examining in the following chapters, along with my reasoning for centering them.

The Mediating Effects of Transcription

In his best-known aphorism, "the medium is the message," media theorist Marshall McLuhan remaps the cultural cause and effect. He laments the fact that so much interpretative inquiry has historically focused on what a certain artistic statement *means (to us)* and less on the medium itself and what it *does (to us)*. McLuhan argues that the content of any medium is another medium nested within it. For instance, the *telegraph* is a "technology" (a word he uses synonymously with "medium") that contains the *printed word*; the content of the printed word is *writing*, which contains the *alphabet*, itself containing *speech*. It is here, with speech, that this nested chain of technologies ends, because *thought*—contained in speech—is, for McLuhan, unmediated. Simply, then, the message of any media is the newfangled ratio of sensations that it introduces into our lives.[14] McLuhan's theory is notably anthropocentric; he defines all media as extensions of ourselves and our senses. While new technologies extend some of our senses in new directions, they also deemphasize others. This is why visual media are historically important to McLuhan: a centerpiece of his media theory is that the development from speech to the written

[14] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley, CA: Gingo Press, 2003 [1964]), 19-20.

alphabet "amputated" man's aural senses and prioritized the visual, forming the basis for—and the visual bias of—Western culture ever since.[15]

Popular music transcriptions can be seen as a technology in McLuhan's sense, part of a historical continuum of new musical media that constantly eclipse each other, leaving some isolated and others fused into novel combinations. While such transcriptions often do not displace what we hear (whether live performances or recordings), they complicate our relationships to other musical media. Musical idealism similarly privileges notation and the visual sense, whether in the spectacle of the public concert or through the importance given to scores. Though McLuhan does not write about the Western musical score in his book one could imagine him analyzing the way music printing in the late fifteenth century, when for the first time a score could be created uniformly and disseminated beyond a small professional caste, influenced our developing consciousness of the musical "work" as a fixed object. (The work defining word "opus," the Latin term for "work," was tied during the print era to *publication*, not simply writing, after all).[16]

With the advent of sound recording technology, the domineering role of visuality was complicated and often displaced. David Brackett points out that early recordings "conveyed the particularity of a performance and the corporeal traces of the humans who produced it" without the image of a performer.[17] Recorded popular music evolved to deal with the lack of

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[15] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 30. Note that McLuhan habitually used "man" as a synonym for "humans."
[16] This is why musicologists can talk about Beethoven's *WoO* listings: these are the minor works he wrote out, but never gave an opus number to (*Werke ohne Opuszahl*), because he never aspired to publish them. It is also worth pointing out here that "reading" music is not roughly equivalent to reading prose—at least for most of us. Evan Eisenberg puts it nicely: "Even for a musician, silently reading a score does not provide the full aesthetic experience of a work, the way silently reading a novel does for littérateur and layman both"; see *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa, Second Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). Most prose is not read aloud, but music remains orally based in this respect; at the very least it would take longer for one to process silently a score than it would prose.
[17] David Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 44-45.

visuality: one key example can be found in so-called "concept" albums, common in rock music of the late 1960s and 1970s. Concept albums like the Beatles' hugely influential *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* were packaged with custom-designed visual elements supporting thematic elements in the music, from cover art and liner notes to album inserts such as stickers and posters. Indeed, the term "album" itself is associated with the visual: consumers were encouraged to collect their individually purchased 78 RPM records in elaborate bound books resembling nothing so much as a family photo album. Later, when collections of 78 RPM sides were sold as a group, the "album" became a visual marketing tool, with attractive cover art and perhaps a small bound booklet of notes. Transcriptions can also be seen as a turn to the visual in reaction to the rise of recordings: they *look like* scores (and thus like musical works), but are not intended to replace recordings, merely to supplement them as a type of visual advertisement for sound.

McLuhan's notion of mediation is proudly idiosyncratic, but I find his ideas generally useful because they center the historical trajectory of recording technologies and their affordances. After all, if popular music transcriptions are entangled in a web of other media such as recordings and performances, then a historically minded approach to studying this topic requires a detailed examination of the varied relationships between these different media.

Accordingly, let us briefly examine the cultural effects of recording technology. This is a rich area of scholarly inquiry, but only recently have the *mediating* effects of sound reproduction been closely scrutinized. As musicologist Mark Katz argues in *Capturing Sound: How Technology Changed Music*, there has long been a tendency among music industry executives, musicians, and scholars to consider sound recording as a "mirror of sonic reality," a transparent snapshot of a musical performance. His study pivots to considering the dichotomy of live and

recorded music through what he terms the "phonograph effect," which is "any observable manifestation of recording's influence."[18] Other scholars who write about the aesthetics of recorded music have similarly pushed back on this recording-as-mirror metaphor.[19]

A popular music transcription complicates this chain of musical transmission even further; we must also account for the many alterations needed when notating the sounds on a recording, which itself only imperfectly captures a performance. There are two layers of mediation in this process: from *performance* to *recording*, and from *recording* to *transcription*. One might also consider another level in that musicians themselves might be performing from some notated materials, materials that certainly differ from a newly created transcription.

Such a process creates two very different musical objects: a recording—itself a mediated transcription of a sonic event—and a notated transcription of it. To address the connection between these two, I will adopt an ontological approach to transcription. In this, I follow Stephen Davies, whose writings I have found enormously helpful in examining the nature of recorded artifacts and their relationships.[20] Because aesthetic stances underlie ontology, I will argue throughout this project that musical idealism is the most common grounding for popular music transcriptions. That is, both recordings and transcriptions are commonly *treated* as musical works: stable, autonomous objects with their own organic structure. At a methodological level, then, I find it necessary to construe these objects as non-human agents that are interrelated but are not cross-media "mirrors" of one another.

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[18] Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Changed Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 1-2 and 4.

[19] Theodore Gracyk, for instance, theorizes an aesthetics of rock music and shows how certain musical practices, especially those predating rock, value the notion of realism. For this reason, recordings in genres such as jazz and folk are *treated* as unmediated performances even if they technically are not; see "Chapter 2: I'll Be Your Mirror: Recording and Representing" in Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 37-68. I discuss this book further in the following chapter.

[20] His most comprehensive study on musical ontology is Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*; transcriptions are discussed on pp. 130-34. This book, and Davies' other writings on this topic are unpacked in my first chapter.

I have found Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) particularly useful for examining the social connections between actors, some of which—like the musical work—are not necessarily human.[21] Viewed through ANT, a transcription is *not* what Latour would call an "intermediary," which transports meaning without transforming or distorting it. Instead, this object is a clear example of what he terms a "mediator," as the output (the transcription in my case) does *not* equal the input (the recording or score), but instead translates and distorts meaning.[22] Though Latour primarily employs ANT to argue for a paradigm shift in his home discipline of sociology, it has been immensely influential for humanistic disciplines, including musicology; Benjamin Piekut, for instance, has applied Latour's thoughts to music historiography.[23] Because musical works are created and influenced by a wide array of human and non-human actors, Piekut follows Latour in exploring how music is enfolded into networks where these varied actors come together to create musical sound and allow it to endure through space and time. ANT can thus be used to "provide an empirically justified description of historical events" that does not foreground people but all types of resources that might normally escape such a narrative: archival materials, oral histories, curricula, and so forth.[24] Georgina

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[21] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York, NY: Oxford, 2005), 5.

[22] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 39.

[23] Latour explains that the previous sociological model, the "sociology of the social," has the theorist set up a framework and a single frame of reference that traces associations amongst human actors. ANT, on the other hand, allows the actors themselves to "define and order the social" (ibid., 23). An "actor" in this new approach to sociological study advocated by Latour is "not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it" (46). For examples of Piekut's scholarship that uses ANT see *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limit* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2011), and Benjamin Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques," *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 191-215. For another use of Latour's work in musicology see Robert Fink, Zachary Wallmark, and Melinda Latour, eds., *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), as discussed in the editors' introduction, "Introduction—Chasing the Dragon: In Search of Tone in Popular Music," 1-17.

[24] Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 193. I am also inspired by David Brackett's use of actor-network theory in his aforementioned book *Categorizing Sound*, a methodology he uses to study the historical interplay of musical categories between audiences and music industry charts, writing that "because readers respond to the charts rather than to the humans who compile then, the charts assume a sort of autonomy" (28).

Born has also used the idea of mediation to explore the complexities of music's ontology, distributed across a large assemblage of musical objects.[25] A transcription is *one* form in which music exists, and is directly related to others, such as scores, recordings, performances, and music lessons.

What I offer in this dissertation is an interdisciplinary study that uses these methods and ideas to guide my thoughts; though I write about individual musical genres such as jazz, for example, and draw on the writings of many scholars working in jazz studies, my allegiance is to no specific subdiscipline; instead, the following chapters are each an amalgam of the various documents and discourses uncovered through the pathways I trace. I examine transcriptions *as objects*, imbued with agency by their creators—sometimes inadvertently—and dispersed through various musical networks; such an approach to musical mediation also allows me to further interrogate the historical production of subjects that create these objects in the first place.

The project that follows is a necessarily messy historical account. My analytic method will be similarly eclectic, as I am aiming to produce formal descriptions that are comparative in nature and am thus less concerned with using traditional musical-analytical methods that foreground "covert" and "casual" values such as "unity" and "cohesiveness."[26] On the level of historical discourse, however, such principles are commonly valorized as key aspects of musical idealism and will be noted as such.

Though I do aim for "empirical justification," I am limited to the documents readily available to me. Much of this dissertation was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so I

[25] See Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology, and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 7-36, and Georgina Born, "Music: Ontology, Agency, Creativity," in *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell*, ed. Liana Chua and Mark Elliott (New York, NY and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 130-54.
[26] See Janet M. Levy, "Covert and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 5, no. 1 (1987): 3-27.

have relied primarily on secondary literature and the transcriptions themselves, particularly those that I was able to access through my home library. The transcriptions I examine are also limited to those widely published, as such documents participate in the musical economy in a similar (though admittedly more limited) fashion as do the recordings they derive from; the realities of ownership and profit help to form my interpretations in a way that would not be possible in a study of unpublished amateur transcriptions.

Defining the Rock Era

Without some parameters in studying the musical networks transcriptions participate in, they can be traced in limitless directions. Two interrelated boundaries are particularly important, time period and musical genre, and I spend the rest of this introduction defining these in turn. Though I am studying transcriptions of music that primarily circulate in recorded form, there is a much longer history of transcribing folk music out of oral tradition. The practice stretches back to at least the eighteenth century, when folk music was first collected to preserve and document culture, often in service to a nationalist cause. In fact, such a project would form part of the foundation of German idealism. Take, for instance, the work of German philologist Johann Gottfried von Herder, known for collecting folk poetry at the end of the eighteenth century.[27] Though often described as a German nationalist, Herder was concerned with how *various* ethnic groups use language (and folksong) to become politically distinct. As such, Herder was actively involved in "documenting cultures" by collecting translations of oral poetry, such as that created

[27] Herder's writings and collections are summarized in Michael Forster, "Johann Gottfried von Herder," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2019 Edition), last accessed March 28, 2022, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/herder/.

by people living in Latvia.[28] (Note, however, that like most folklorists of his generation, Herder only transcribed the texts of songs and not the songs themselves). As Raymond Knapp describes in a recent monograph, once music became treated as "transcendent" by German idealists, folk music was more effective than any other type of art in "establishing a link between the individual and such an imagined larger spirit."[29] Indeed, Knapp's book is particularly concerned with how Franz Joseph Haydn's music (like Bach's before him) was "made over" in the nineteenth century to fit the prevailing paradigm of musical idealism.[30]

Collecting music to advance German nationalist causes was not confined to the world of folklore, either. Though J.S. Bach's music was composed in an earlier period, the *Bach-Gesellschaft* (Bach Society) was created in 1850 to collect and publish his complete works without any editorial additions. So, while Bach's original compositions were not originally "musical works" in a historical sense, when the *Gesellschaft* published an authoritative edition of his oeuvre, they were, in essence, turning Bach's working papers into musical works, reflecting the new aesthetic imperatives of German intellectuals. The reception of Bach's music has certainly changed over time, but as Markus Rathey surveys it, he sees Bach's "Germanness" as a consistent theme. Starting with the publication of Nikolaus Forkel's biography in 1802, Bach has been commonly used in German literature as a "symbol of German national identity."[31] Whether turning Bach's manuscripts into an authoritative set of printed scores or writing down folk lyrics from the German-speaking (*deutschsprachige*) lands, the process of transcription always has

[28] See, for instance, "Johann Gottfried von Herder's Collection of Latvian Folksongs," as part of the Enlightenment Project hosted on the Digital Archives of Latvian Folklore from The Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, last accessed March 28, 2022, http://garamantas.lv/en/collection/887947?File-sort=transcriptionExists.
[29] Knapp, *Making Light*, 25; Herder is also further discussed in the context of German idealism on pp. 13-14.
[30] See ibid., 28-29.
[31] Markus Rathey, "A Divid Country—A Divided Bach: The Cantor-Kapellmeister Controversy and the Cold War," *Bach* 47, no. 2 (2016): 1.

ideological implications. Through assembling a canon of Germanic works, transcription validated the music, reflecting the dominant stature of Germany and its "great" accomplishments.

Though a relatively young discipline, musicology's nineteenth-century genesis was in assessing and justifying the very musical practices endemic to German high culture. With the advent of the phonograph, comparative musicologists Carl Stumpf and Erich M. von Hornbostel were able to transcribe folk music from around the world starting in 1901, collecting and classifying it as a point of comparison to the high-status corpus of Western art music. Transcribing these wax-cylinder recordings into notation, Stumpf and Hornbostel saw themselves as creators of unmediated, "faithful transcriptions," which they treated as transparent texts that did not need interpretation.[32] More broadly, musicology as an academic discipline is fundamentally based in pedagogical transcription: a key skill for historical musicologists has always been the ability to transcribe obsolete forms of musical writing into modern scores suitable for modern performance.

Ethnomusicologists at the beginning of the twentieth century also used transcription to collect and classify non-Western music.[33] Like Stumpf and Hornbostel, some early transcribers similarly saw this process as "faithful to" the source material, but others were quick to point out that the way the musicologist hears and then transcribes recordings is inherently subjective. Béla Bartók's folk music transcriptions, for instance, might better be called "arrangements," since he

[32] See Carl Stumpf, "Tonsystem und Musik Der Siamesen," *Beitrage zur Akustik und Musikwissenschaft* 3 (1901): 69-138 and Abraham Otto and Erich M. Von Hornbostel, "Vorschlage fur die Transkription exotischer Melodien," *Sammelbande der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 11 (1909): 1-25, both of which are translated and unpacked in Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann, "From the Innocent to the Exploring Eye: Transcription on the Defensive," *The World of Music* 47, no. 2 (2005): 75-76.

[33] Marin Marian-Bălaşa, "Who Actually Needs Transcription? Notes on the Modern Rise of a Method and the Postmodern Fall of an Ideology," *The World of Music* 47, no. 2 (2005): 16-17.

would purposely re-compose the source recording, "preserving" the aspects he considered most significant and imposing "on his transcriptions his own authority."[34]

By the twenty-first century, what Bartók had long ago suggested was the dominant perspective among poststructuralists working in ethnomusicology; these scholars clearly state that transcriptions do not merely translate musical sounds from one medium to another, as they are all necessarily tied up with ideology. Marin Marian-Bălaşa, for example, suggests that by the twenty-first century such concerns over translation were widespread enough that transcriptions were commonly replaced (or at least supplemented) with the recordings themselves.[35] As I have suggested, the ideology most drawn on over the history of transcribing practices is one closely aligned with German idealism. But it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that popular music fully aligned with musical idealism, in the period I term the Rock Era.

To me, this era can be characterized by the interrelation between technological changes, particularly the rise of the LP records and magnetic tape, and new aesthetic trends in popular music that materialized with rock. Rock was a new game because it quickly realized the possibilities of emerging technologies, and it was unique in the history of popular music because it was the first to be "dependent on recording technology for [its] inception and dissemination."[36] While the Rock Era could be defined in many different ways, I will conceive it as starting in 1954, when rock 'n' roll went mainstream, thanks to the success of Bill Haley & His Comets and the meteoric rise of Elvis Presley. At this point, rock's recorded sounds themselves became "as relevant as any other aspect of the interpretation" of the music; Elvis would perform live what

[34] Marian-Bălaşa, "Who Actually Needs Transcription?," 18.
[35] Ibid., 17. More recent studies of how ethnomusicologists use transcription push back on Marian-Bălaşa's claims; see, for instance, Jason Stanyek et al., "Forum on Transcription," *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 1 (2014): 101-161, where it is pointed out that by tracing the use of published transcriptions in ethnomusicological and popular music journals one can see that they are almost as common in the 2010s as they were in the 1960s.
[36] Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 14.

had *already* been created in the recording studio.[37] Indeed, many rock recordings during this era did not rely on notated music at all, supplanting the hegemony of the Tin Pan Alley songwriting tradition; as popular music consumers began to treat recordings as the "primary text" of rock in the 1950s sheet music sales also decreased substantially.[38] Federal music copyright laws, however, were designed around notated music until the early 1970s, necessitating what we will call the *illocutionary transcription* of recorded music.

My period ends in the early 1980s, when the landscape of popular music shifts once again. Jazz had become ensconced in the university, and the hegemony of rock was overtaken by new types of popular music that emphasized drum machines and digital sampling.[39] Unfamiliar copyright issues emerged to address the multiplicity caused by digital sampling, a practice that led to a dramatic shift in the ontology of popular music.[40] In the two sections that follow, I examine the intersection of technology, aesthetics, notation, and copyright laws in the Rock Era, beginning with a brief overview of some of the affordances of recording as a medium. These

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[37] Ibid., 13. Elvis's 1954-55 recordings for Sun Records in Memphis demonstrate the primacy given to the sound of his early recordings; they are discussed in detail in Albin Zak, *I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2013). Though I group the two genres together, it is worth noting the differences between "rock" and "rock and roll," something written about in Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 6-13.

[38] See Russel Sanjek and David Sanjek, *American Popular Music Business in the 20th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 138 and 159. I borrow the notion that rock's "primary text" are the sounds on the recording from Alan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2001 [1993]).

[39] Sanjek and Sanjek point out that rock was programmed much less frequently on Top 40 radio after 1980 (*American Popular Music Business in the 20th Century*, 249). Though they do not discuss this, part of the reason for this reshuffling of genre at this point is due to the proliferation of specialized FM radio stations through the 1970s, especially through album-oriented rock (AOR). David Brackett discusses AOR in the context of Black musical formats and the emergence of MTV in *Categorizing Sound*, 297-301. For a succinct historical overview of how jazz turned into a "type of fetishized object" beginning in the 1970s and carrying through the 1990s, see Tracy McMullen, "Approaching the Jazz Past: MOPDTK's *Blue* and Jason Moran's 'In My Mind: Monk at Town Hall, 1959,'" *The Journal of Jazz Studies* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 11-14, something I further unpack in Chapter 2. The key text on how jazz became America's classical music is William "Billy" Taylor's "Jazz: America's Classical Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, no. 1 (1986): 21-25. See also Wynton Marsalis, "The Neoclassical Agenda," in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 334-39.

[40] This is the primary topic of Joanna Demers' book, *Steal This Music: How Intellectual Property Law Affects Musical Creativity* (Athens, GA and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

new affordances allowed for the creation of pop music albums to be legitimized through comparisons to Western art music, thus showcasing the ways that rock and jazz, particularly, remained aligned with musical idealism.

Musical Idealism in the Rock Era

Figures such as Herder transcribed the lyrics of German folk music to claim a unique status for the German nation. Similar, less overtly nationalist projects were later undertaken in the United States as a means of documenting the country's unique landscape of vernacular music, particularly the contributions of African Americans to the blues. W.C. Handy, for instance, published some of the first notated blues in 1926, but the tunes were re-arranged, typically for voice and piano, from his memory of multiple performances, not from singular recordings.[41]

The torrent of music recording in the following decades, however, allowed the blues and other varieties of American folk music to be transcribed with greater accuracy than had previously been possible. Folklorist John Lomax, for example, made music transcriptions in the 1930s from recordings as well as from live performances, many of which were published in 1934's *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, with his son, Alan Lomax, listed as co-author.[42] This collection of folk music would be republished in the 1960s, a decade in which these pre-war blues styles would be re-discovered, catalyzing newfound academic scrutiny and a market for dedicated adherents who wanted to learn how to play this music themselves. Guitarists became particularly interested in learning to play the same blues licks they heard on reissued records

[41] W.C. Handy, ed., *Blues: An Anthology* (New York, NY: Albert and Charles Boni, 1926), 22 and 33.
[42] See John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1962 [1934]), xxxvii. As Lomax and Lomax write, some of the music in this volume was also re-printed from extant publications.

from the 1930s, creating a demand for knowledgeable instructors. For such teachers, listening to recordings, especially the guitar accompaniment parts, was a key part of learning the musical language of the blues; instead of transcribing the original recorded performances, instructors used specialized notation as a replacement for in-person lessons, creating *pedagogical transcriptions*.

Like von Herder, John Lomax had patriotic reasons for documenting folk music, writing that "folk-song production is more active in America than in any other country that is preserving this form of literature" (xxv).[43] Recordings of this music allow for an inside view of the "literature of the people" unmediated by "books or newspapers or telephone or radio" (xxvii). Song lyrics are of documentary interest to Lomax, as they reveal the "customs, dramas and dreams" of isolated rural communities, along with their "daily habits of speech" (xxviii). The lyrics to folk songs were of primary importance to Lomax when creating transcriptions, though he does acknowledge that "the music is more vital for the total effect than the words" (xxxvii-xxxviii).

Figure 1 is a representative example of the blues as transcribed in the Lomax collection: a short vocal melody is provided to a verse, with the rest of the tune's lyrics provided afterwards. There are some things worth noticing about this transcription. First, there is no single performer or source recording referenced to which one can compare the transcription. Considering the absence of any copyright information, one can assume that the transcription in *Figure 1* was done from one of Lomax's own recordings that captured a single performance of a malleable

[43] Folk songs are referred to "literature" throughout this introduction in Lomax and Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, xxv-xxxix.

song that was slightly different every time it was performed.[44] Indeed, the lyric transcriptions provided in this publication are most often "composites" taken from what Lomax decided were the "best stanzas." He is thus creating not documentary transcriptions, but synthetic "arrangements" of the blues (xxviii-xxix).[45] Lomax felt that providing words and a basic vocal melody would be more useful than any harmonies would be, given that different scholars would choose distinct chords "even if transcribing the same record" (xxxviii); Lomax also notes a general difficulty in transcribing Afrodiasporic music into Western notation (xxxviii-xxxix), something I examine in greater detail in Chapter 2.



Figure 1: Notated verse and a portion of the lyrics for "Dink's Song," in Lomax and Lomax, American Ballads and Folk Songs, *195.*

[44] Lomax makes it clear that this is the ontology he ascribes to folk music, writing that "by the time the collection was brought together and published, a revision would immediately be necessary. New songs spring up, and almost every version of a current song shows interesting changes"; see ibid., xxvii.
[45] Ibid., xxviii-xxix. I further pursue the differences between "arrangements" and "transcriptions" in Chapter 1.

While the ability to record folk music allowed more thorough transcription, recording technology also paved the way for the formation of a new aesthetic object in popular music: the record album, specifically the album of long-playing records, or LPs. The LP was first marketed in 1948, and it allowed for much more music to fit on each side of a phonograph disc than a 78 RPM could, affording artists additional tools they could use to create unified listening experiences of over twenty minutes per side; the audio quality was also better. Though transcriptions of folk music and jazz certainly predate the LP, detailed transcriptions relied on the ubiquity of the phonograph and the ability to purchase recordings. With the widespread accessibility of LPs in post-war society, trained musicians could transcribe complex musical passages into Western notation, and amateurs could translate them into tablature. The advent of the LP also turned every new turntable into a potential transcribing aid: it became possible to play old 78 RPM records at 33.3 RPM, slowing the music down to capture every fleeting detail; most moderately priced record players also had a 16 RPM speed for spoken word records, where sonic fidelity was not as important, which meant transcribers could slow down their LPs, too. By the 1960s, serious transcribers would then record slowed-down passages onto tape cassettes, designed for consumer recording, which made the repetition of musical phrases easier, since the transcriber could rewind and fast-forward to isolate tricky spots instead of repeatedly dropping the needle on an LP.[46] Such technology was crucial for the necessarily repetitive transcription of guitar solos; though rare in the rock era, elaborate, note-for-note transcriptions of virtuoso guitar

[46] It is worth noting that before the invention of the cassette tape player, some jazz connoisseurs would transcribe solos from reel-to-reel tapes rather than LPs due to the ease of slowing down playback to half-speed, which would drop the original pitch by an octave. I have not seen any references to this playback technology among scholarly sources on popular music transcription, but there are accounts of this on personal blogs, such as Bobby Stern, "Jazz Improvisation—Transcription: How High the Giant Steps—'Satellite,'" *B Natural*, December 19, 2012, https://bobbysternjazz.com/blog-b-natural/transcription-how-high-the-giant-steps-satellite, where he writes about putting John Coltrane's "Satellite" from *Coltrane's Sound* (1964) on to a reel-to-reel tape deck for transcriptional purposes in the late 1970s.

solos became common in the 1980s, a decade in which a knowledge of music theory was a prerequisite for heavy metal guitarists.[47]

As Keir Keightley illustrates, the rise of the LP in the early 1950s catalyzed a process of pop music legitimization that predates the emergence of rock.[48] He notes the stark divide between the market for LPs and 45 RPM singles in this decade; albums were marketed towards adults in store displays and print advertisements, while singles were aimed at teenage buyers via radio airplay and jukeboxes.[49] The LP format was more financially lucrative, and so "grown-up" popular music albums were grouped with other high-status genres that existed primarily on LP such as jazz, musical theater, and classical music, thus increasing the "prestige" and "symbolic capital" of LP-based popular music in the early part of my period.[50]

Before this convergence of LP formats, the two prominent strains of American popular music—musical theater and minstrelsy—opposed the seriousness of high art through a "shared spirit of rebellion."[51] In the Rock Era, however, popular music was legitimized through an alignment with musical idealism, a topic discussed by Knapp in *Making Light*.[52] Here, Knapp discusses how certain aesthetic criteria, such as "authenticity," "sincerity," and "serious intention" together align genres like rock and jazz with European art music; specifically, he suggests that "underwriting all of these ascribed attributes . . . is the notion that art vitally expresses the artist, perhaps even intrinsically, and that compelling aesthetic value emerges from

[47] See Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), esp. 57-107, which is further discussed in my conclusion.
[48] See Keir Keightley, "Long Play: Adult-Oriented Popular Music and the Temporal Logics of the Post-War Sound Recording Industry in the USA," *Media, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 3 (2004): 375-91, esp. 376.
[49] Keightley, "Long Play," 377.
[50] Ibid., 380. By the mid-1960s, rock started to use the affordances of the LP to create unified "concept albums" that were based on a central theme or narrative, a history I briefly cover in the following chapter.
[51] Knapp, *Making Light*, 138.
[52] See ibid., 221.

that expression."[53] "Authenticity" thus becomes a crucial value in popular music discourse in the 1950s and beyond.[54] Indeed, as more and more rock bands started to write and perform their own music in the 1960s, the LP, originally imagined as a way to reproduce classical music of the past, became a vessel for contemporary self-expression.[55]

Rock music on LP was authenticated through overt comparisons to canonized German art music. In his magisterial history of Western music, Richard Taruskin notes the work of William Mann, who had a career as a classical music critic and was the chief reviewer for *The Times* of London; in 1963 Mann made direct and overtly legitimating comparisons between the songs of Lennon and McCartney and the canonical German *Lied* from Schubert to Mahler.[56] Musicologists who study progressive rock tend to focus on formal similarities between album oriented popular music and canonic classical music; Edward Macan argues for three main "formal structures" that can be found in both nineteenth-century art music and progressive rock: the song cycle, programmatic multi-movement suite, and the symphonic poem.[57]

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[53] Ibid., 222; definitions of these three terms are provided on 235-36. Such values certainly depreciate collaborative art forms such as musical theater.

[54] As Knapp points out, political aspects of popular music in the 1960s—whether folk, rock, or jazz—also helped imbue it with authenticity; see ibid., 224.

[55] The Beatles' music comes to mind as exemplifying this shift. In their 1963 debut album *Please, Please Me*, just over half of the songs were written by members of the group; however, *A Hard Day's Night*, released the following year, had entirely original music written by members of the band, and from then on, the Beatles very rarely recorded any covers.

[56] See "Chapter 7: The Sixties," in Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 316-33; Mann's criticism is discussed on pp. 318-19.

[57] Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1997), 40-43. In a 2004 article, David Nicholls critiques Macan's approach as too limiting, applying it to a wider range of rock material that borrows from the operatic tradition—commonly referred to as "rock operas"—which Nicholls refers to as "virtual operas"; see David Nicholls, "Virtual Opera, or Opera Between the Ears," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 129 no. 1 (2004): 100-142; Macan's book discussed on pp. 101-103. Rock artists themselves borrowed terminology from the classical tradition to legitimize their music, such as when the Who's Pete Townsend described their 1969 *Tommy* as "an opera" in the liner notes (liner notes to the Who, *Tommy*, Track Record 613 013/4, 1969, 2 LPs). Likewise, British progressive rock band Gentle Giant entitled their 1972 album *Octopus* as a pun on "octo opus" (eight works), represented by the album's eight tracks (see "Interview: Derek Shulman (Gentle Giant)," *Hit Channel*, April 22, 2014, http://www.hit-channel.com/interviewderek-shulman-gentle-giant/62545.

Other writers have made connections between rock and musical idealism, as in Deena Weinstein's discussion of the emergence of the "guitar god."[58] Weinstein outlines the rise of the electric guitar and the way powerful amplifiers and effects boxes gave the guitarist tools "to customize his equipment and thus individualize his sound," allowing for emotional expression through dramatic performances that emphasized displays of masculine power.[59] Like musical idealism (she uses the term "Romanticism"), rock in the 1960s was associated with youth subcultures, combining "American populism" and the "European avant-garde."[60] Hendrix is a particularly important figure here, cast as a hero worshipped by legions of aspiring guitarists.

As it happens, Hendrix's music, and the music of other so-called rock guitar gods, was not actually transcribed in detail consistently until well after my period. (I will try to explain why in Chapter 3 and my conclusion.) But the rising status of the guitar had more immediate effects on notational practices in my era, practices which had always been geared toward voice and piano; the necessary move to transcribing directly from records in the Rock Era meant that the hegemony of the piano as the domestic instrument *par excellence* would be challenged, and more sheet music was notated for the actual instruments used on popular records.[61] Transcribers of guitar music could draw on a long European tradition of *tablature*, a more accessible form of graphic notation designed for fretted instruments, which, as we will see, was reinvented for devotees of rock and folk who wanted to learn how to play without learning how to read music notation.

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[58] Deena Weinstein, "Rock's Guitar Gods: Avatars of the Sixties," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 70, no. 2 (2013): 139-54.
[59] Weinstein, "Rock's Guitar Gods: Avatars of the Sixties," 141 and 151-52.
[60] Ibid., 142-43.
[61] Interestingly, this was more common in folk music than rock music in my era, a topic of discussion in my Chapter 3.

Notation in the Rock Era

Though most rock musicians created their records by improvising in the recording studio without written music, some in the progressive rock genre did employ notation, acting like classical composers in crafting their primary recordings. Familiarity with the Western art tradition, particularly notation, endowed middle-class white rock artists with authenticity and legitimacy.

Jazz, on the other hand, has had a more complicated historical relationship with notation. For much of jazz's early history, to be "authentic" had little to do with notation, because the paradigmatic artists were Black: jazz critics (most of whom were white) valued spontaneous improvisation, ostensibly unmediated by traditional training or notation.[62] Indeed, throughout the history of jazz criticism, performers who used notation in creating music were commonly criticized as inauthentic. Swing band music in the 1930s, for instance, which used written-out charts akin to orchestral parts to keep larger performing forces coordinated, was criticized for its "fetish with regard to precision."[63] This image of jazz authenticity is a critical myth, of course: jazz musicians likely used notation more readily than progressive rockers. Jazz musicians bought into the myth, as they avoided using notated fake books when performing pop standards live in the 1940s and '50s, though they still used them as study aids in private; this view of notation in jazz would change when, during the 1970s, "jazz relocated itself from the nightclub to the academy" where reading music was normative.[64]

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[62] Knapp discusses "the category of the primitive" through the notion of high and low brow in *Making Light*, 242-43. This is a topic I cover at length in Chapter 2. For a well-known example of this early jazz primitivism see Hugues Panassié, *The Real Jazz, First Edition* (New York, NY: Smith & Durrell, Inc., 1942). A contemporary jazz historian, John Gennari, suggests that this book would become one of the first examples of a jazz writer taking an explicitly racially essentialist position (John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cold: Jazz and Its Critics* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006], 57).

[63] See Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cold*, 127.

[64] Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham: MD, Scarecrow Press, 2006), 125-27.

In any case, no matter how the music was created or performed, some kind of notation was necessary for securing copyright until the early 1970s. Before a rewritten U.S. Copyright Act came into effect on February 15, 1972, a sound recording was not an acceptable documentation of a musical composition for federal copyright, so some kind of notated music had to be submitted to the Library of Congress in order that the lyrics and notated melody of a popular song could be protected (this notably excludes stylistic elements of the recorded sound).[65] So, if a piece of rock or pop music was created without the use of notation then a transcription would have to be created for copyright purposes. As a result, if a work was composed before 1972, there is often quite a significant discrepancy between what producers/consumers assume that work is and what the law says it is. This ontological mismatch outlines a generative area of study. Take, for instance, a recorded improvisation over the chord changes of a popular tune: for consumers, this solo is often the most important and interesting part of what they think of as a single composition; legally, though, *it is not part of the composition*, and can be transcribed and published freely by anyone for profit.[66]

Examining the history of fake books also shows the ways in which recorded popular music and notation clashed in the Rock Era. As Kernfeld narrates it, the story of musical fake books does not begin with "books" at all, but with Tune-Dex cards, first published by entrepreneur George Goodwin in 1942 and continuously released through the early 1960s.[67]

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[65] See Demers, *Steal This Music*, 23 and 32. With the rewrite of the Copyright Act in 1972, though, a song could be copyrighted "whether it was handwritten, engraved printed, taped, recorded, filmed in performance, or fixed in any other manner" (Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 40).

[66] This remains a contentious issue in the internet era, as transcriptions of popular music can be uploaded and freely perused online. This is especially true with amateur-made guitar tabs, which are not necessarily legal under U.S. law; see Jason R. Simon, "Why Copyright Should Save Guitar Tablatures," *Arizona Law Review* 50, no. 611 (2008): 611-38.

[67] Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 20. It is worth noting the historical continuities between fake books and other forms of published music that stretch back to seventeenth-century Italy, as both showcase an interplay between oral and written musical practices. Cory M. Gavito explains this through the lens of *alfabeto*, a certain "system of chordal strumming notation first popularized in music prints during the 1610s" that, like fake books, present

These musical flash cards had one side dedicated to the melody, lyrics, and chord symbols of a given pop tune's chorus, while the back side included the song's copyright information; Goodwin originally intended these cards to function as "pop-song indexing tools" on which one could conveniently collate all of the copyright information of a song (21). But the cards quickly became useful for performing musicians as well, since the compact format of the melodies and chord changes—a highly-compressed lead sheet—served as an *aide-memoire* for live entertainers expected to play on demand hundreds of popular tunes.[68]

Tune-Dex lead sheets differ from sheet music in some important ways. Prior to my period, in the 1940s, printed popular sheet music took two forms: "orks," ORCHestrations of pop songs for combos or jazz orchestras, and "pros," which were PROmotional copies of piano and vocal sheet music given away to performers to "plug" a publisher's songs (33). As one could imagine, all the necessary information distilled down to a 3x5-inch index card was much more convenient than carrying around hundreds of pages of loose sheet music (6).[69] In reality, the loose cards were only slightly more useful than sheet music, as it would hardly be possible for performing musicians to flip through a thousand index cards in a performance situation to get to the correct one; the cards needed to be bound and organized in some fashion. Publishers chose not to create their own legitimate fake books until 1963. As a result, creating and selling bootlegged, bound copies of Tune-Dex songs was a lucrative black market by the late 1950s, a

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canonical chord progressions. Oral circulation of these canonical chord progressions would result in them being modified and elaborated on, something that could be seen in each "successive source," as they would have bass lines, melodies, and texts added to them; see Cory M. Gavito, "Oral Transmission and the Production of Guitar Tablature Books in Seventeenth-Century Italy," *Recercare* 27, no. 1/2 (2015): 185-208, esp. 185 and 188. Like these older guitar tablature books, contemporary fake books combine written and oral traditions: they emerge from the written popular tradition of Tin Pan Alley songwriting and are influenced by recording technology.

[68] Kernfeld details some advertisements from the mid-1940s that portrayed the Tune-Dex cards in this fashion (*The Story of Fake Books*, 17-30).

[69] It should be noted that this was all done with the permission of song publishers. Goodwin was able to publish Tune-Dex cards because they were (in theory) restricted to professionals, either performing musicians or music industry personnel, and so his product was not in any competition with publishers' lucrative sheet music sales.

practice that might directly have contributed to the decline of the legitimate sheet music industry over the following decade (52). The first authorized fake book, *Legit Fake Book*, was published in 1963 as an attempt to stop the hemorrhaging of sheet music sales, but it included only 192 tunes—one per page—far too few to be relevant for most performers who could get bootleg books with a thousand or more tunes set up with six or seven per page (121). *Legit Fake Book* was the only authorized fake book published until the 1970s, at which point music publishers released more substantial songbooks that mirrored the style of Tune-Dex cards and had copyright permissions in place (121).

Blues-based rock 'n' roll and its derivatives were infrequently notated in any way. Even if Goodwin had not retired in the early 1960s, it is easy to see how Tune-Dex cards would have become obsolete.[70] From the perspective of a cabaret or nightclub performer, there would be little use in having lead sheet for, say, the Kingsmen's version of "Louie Louie," released on record in 1963; as Theodore Gracyk observes, the appeal of this tune is not found in its melody or harmonies, but in the distinctive timbres employed on the record.[71] Many popular songs of the 1960s cannot be reduced to a single chorus printed on an intelligible lead sheet, like Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" (1967)—too simple and wordy—or Jimi Hendrix's cover released a year later, famous for its elaborate studio effects and idiosyncratic guitar soloing.[72]

As musical genres in which the record was the primary text rose in popularity over the 1950s, they overpowered the hegemony of written music; at some point, sheet music ceased to be a set of instructions for turning musical writing into original sound and began to function as a transcription of the existing sounds on an original recording. Gracyk positions the Sun Sessions

[70] Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 21.
[71] See Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 58-61. The Kingsmen, "Louie Louie," Wand 143, 1963, 45 RPM single.
[72] Bob Dylan, "All Along the Watchtower," on *John Wesley Harding*, Columbia CS 9604, 1967, stereo LP, and The Jimi Hendrix Experience, "All Along the Watchtower," Track Record 604025, 1968, 45 RPM single.

as a significant recording milestone, showcasing the emergence of the *recording as work* in rock music.[73] Yet, as Kernfeld indicates, even if a song Elvis sang, like 1960's "Stuck On You," existed primarily on record, it still had to be notationally presented, for copyright reasons at least, like any old Tin Pan Alley song.[74] Even as bootleg fake books were killing sheet music sales, creating notated music from rock recordings remained a lucrative business over the 1960s and '70s, as we will see in Chapter 3. In the process, however, complex recordings were reduced to glorified lead sheets, at best a pro forma keyboard-vocal score riddled with errors that the Beatles themselves criticized in 1969.[75]

Theorizing Genre in the Rock Era

We can now turn to some of the specific musical practices of the rock era. There are many ways to formulate musical genres, and while David Brackett's book, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music*, is one of the most comprehensive studies on this topic to date, in my project I am less concerned with how audiences and music industry personnel "categorize sound." Instead, I want to reenvision these categories through the lens of ontology, examining the relationship between a transcription and a recording. Of course, recordings themselves can have different functions depending on the musical practices involved.

[73] Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 12-16. These recordings would later be released as Elvis Presley, *The Sun Sessions*, RCA Victor APM1-1675, 1976, LP.
[74] Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 57. In this case, "Stuck on You" was notated as part of Goodwin's public-domain alternative to Tune-Dex, Song-Dex. Obviously, Elvis's tunes were not in the public domain, so it appears that Goodwin published his Song-Dex under this guise to skirt copyright laws. The recording was released as Elvis Presley, "Stuck On You," RCA Victor 47-7740, 1960, 45 RPM single.
[75] This is a topic of discussion among the four members of the Beatles and their music publisher Dick James, in Peter Jackson, dir., "Episode 1: Part 1: Days 1-7," *The Beatles: Get Back* (Disney Platform Distribution, 2021). While songwriters Paul McCartney and John Lennon would sign off on their lyrics, James would have an amanuensis do the actual musical transcription, since none of the Beatles knew how to read or write music notation.

Rock-era genres largely represent oral (and/or aural) traditions; left out of such music's material histories are descriptive accounts people have written *about* this music, accounts lacking something as precise as score notation. Transcriptions can thus provide a type of alternate history of American popular music if one examines some of the networks and discourses within which they operate. This history of non-notated music is not monolithic, though, and attention to genre is important. Different genres of music have different modes of production and different aesthetic priorities; what constitutes "the musical work" is not necessarily equivalent, and thus the role of notation is variable. The degree of correspondence between a transcription and its source recording depends on the musical practice being studied.

Like transcriptions, recordings have existed since the turn of the twentieth century, but it was the use of magnetic tape in creating records after World War II that wrought significant musical-ontological changes. To understand the ontology of a popular music transcription, it is necessary to theorize the new ontology of the studio recordings they are based on. As I have already suggested, some of this work has been done for rock, but the ontologies of other key musical genres of the Rock Era have yet to be studied in depth. For this reason, I find it helpful to draw on a distinction made by philosopher Lee Brown between what he terms an older tradition of *documentary recordings* and a newer trend toward *works of phonography*.[76] Brown argues that most music before rock's heyday was documentary in function: recording technologies were (in theory) meant to capture sonic elements of a live musical performance, typically undertaken in a recording studio, with as much transparency as possible. In documentary recordings, ontological priority is given to live performance, something common to theatrical works and jazz, for instance. Works of phonography, on the other hand, are "sound-

[76] Lee Brown, "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 361-72.

constructs created by the use of recording machinery . . . [for] an intrinsic aesthetic purpose."[77] Intentionality is crucial here, since in a sense all sound recordings are "doctored or manipulated" by the process of technological mediation itself. An ontological definition of "works of phonography" highlights sonic works that are *intentionally* manipulated, not meant to fool the listener into thinking they are "objective" attempts to capture musical performances in purely documentary fashion.[78] Built up painstakingly piece-by-piece in the recording studio, one could consider Brian Wilson's and the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966) as a paradigmatic "work of phonography"; most jazz recordings, on the other hand, are concerned with "documenting" improvisations in a single long take.[79]

In the Rock Era, a recording's shift from one of Brown's types to the other can result in controversy, especially when it comes to discourses surrounding racial authenticity. For instance, I have already referred to problematic primitivist language common in jazz criticism; recordings that "documented" the improvisations of Black musicians could be heard as "candid" phonography, capturing players expressing themselves in an unselfconscious, unmediated fashion. When a canonized Black jazz artist like Miles Davis incorporated extended studio techniques of post-production—multitrack layering that assembled group performances from multiple takes and edits—in his 1970 album *Bitches Brew* he was accused of being inauthentic, copying the recordings made by white mainstream rock groups such as the Beatles, the Beach Boys, and the Mothers of Invention. Jazz critic Stanley Crouch, for instance, described Davis' album as "formless" and "the most brilliant sell-out in the history of jazz," while Bob Rusch

[77] Brown, "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music," 361 and 363.
[78] Ibid., 368.
[79] The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*, Capitol Records DT 2458, 1966, LP.

proclaimed that "this to me was not great Black music."[80] Though relevant on the level of cultural discourse, such critiques neglect the fact that it was not Davis but producer Teo Macero who worked on the edits and drove post-production decisions.[81] There had been earlier "cool" jazz albums that used extended studio techniques before this, such as Lennie Tristano's *Tristano*, released by Atlantic in 1956; but there is no doubt that Davis's stature as a canonized *Black* jazz performer meant that his album garnered much more critical attention.

Brown's construction of two distinct categories of recorded music can lead to essentialisms of genre and race, wherein documentary recordings adhere to a fantasy of unmediated expression on the part of Black performers, while "works of phonography" are aligned with the white mainstream, even though *both* genres emerged from Black musical practices. So, as indispensable as Brown's distinction is, I want to treat "documentary" and "works as phonography" as two ends of a spectrum, not a strict binary. Most importantly, any distinction between the two types needs to be considered on the level of *discourse*: there are no "essential" racial differences between production practices, but they have been construed as such by historically contingent cultural values that often latch on to hegemonic notions of authenticity, as I have shown.[82]

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[80] These reviews and others are cited and contextualized in Andrew Read, "Miles Davis 'Bitches Brew': A Brief Look at the Album's Impact," *Jazz in Europe*, April 28, 2020, https://jazzineurope.mfmmedia.nl/2020/04/miles-davis-bitches-brew-a-brief-look-at-the-albums-impact/.

[81] For more on the production of this album see Paul Tingen, "Miles Davis and the Making of Bitches Brew: Sorcerer's Brew," *JazzTimes,* July 10, 2017, last updated October 7, 2021, https://jazztimes.com/features/miles-davis-and-the-making-of-bitches-brew-sorcerers-brew/. As Tingen points out, many of the musicians who performed during the recording sessions were not even sure if they had played on the music actually released on the recording.

[82] In thinking through issues of genre in this way, I am inspired by Diana Fuss's work on moving beyond the binary between "essentialism" and "constructionism." In her book, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), she makes the argument that deconstructionism, the prevailing approach in feminist scholarship in the late 1980s, is also underlaid by essentialism. What she suggests instead is that one should move beyond simply critiquing something as essentialist and to instead consider what "purpose of function" essentialism "play[s] in a certain set of *discourses*" (xii; emphasis added).

As discourse, rock music hews closer to the "works of phonography" pole, while jazz and folk stay closer to an older "documentary" style; other genres fit in somewhere between. What Brown's theorization suggests is that different types of music have distinct relationships with recording; though I take the position that a "work" in rock music is, by definition, the recording—otherwise it is not "rock"—such is not necessarily the case with other kinds of pop music. Teasing out generic practices, I can showcase the relation of a secondary, derivative written text (the transcription) to the primary work, however postulated. This requires a thorough investigation of how musical works function in popular music, a topic that has not yet been fully investigated and which I will address at length in Chapter 1.

It is important to also note the types of music excluded from such a study. On one hand, my project accords with a regrettable historiographical trend where accounts of popular music ignore musical theater, even though, historically, it is arguably the *most* popular form. As Knapp asserts in his book, this exclusion primarily occurs because musical theater stands in opposition to German idealism.[83] I am precisely interested in the ways that musical idealism affects popular music, and I want to examine direct translation between recorded sounds and notation. Musical theater and other theatrical idioms are based on written materials, then staged, and perhaps recorded for posterity.[84] The transcription of a recording of a musical is not the same as one that translates something that exists primarily on the recording as musical sound.

My first chapter functions as a literature review, compiling and narrating some of the ontological considerations brought up in this introduction in greater detail. To further elucidate what transcriptions are and how they are derived from musical works, I compare them to other

[83] Knapp, *Making Light*, 217.
[84] This is not to say that musical theater is relying on the same ontological model as classical music; in this tradition, written materials are merely pre-textual and strict adherence to them is not required nor expected.

musical objects, such as scores, arrangements, and recordings. I conclude that while "the work" in rock music is a *recording*, most transcriptions in this genre function only as lead sheets submitted for copyright. The African-American blues tradition, however, is ontologically distinct from rock music, as recordings here capture a particular *performance* of a lyric that exists in a constant state of variation. Because of the focus on lyrics and vocal melodies in this genre, though, blues transcriptions end up appearing like those in rock. I end this chapter by examining the ontology of jazz. Like the blues, this genre is dialogic in that it often refers to and draws on existing music; however, because of the importance of instrumental improvisation, transcriptions stabilize a *performance* as a primary sonic source, typically a performance documented by a recording.

Chapter 2 examines such transcriptions of recorded jazz improvisations around 1960. In this period, white critics, trained in the ways of Western art music, used transcription to legitimize jazz as a type of art music peculiar to African Americans, something exemplified in Gunther Schuller's 1961 collection of transcriptions of Ornette Coleman's controversial free jazz. One of these transcriptions, "Congeniality," is transcribed note for note, notated in such detail that it becomes visually similar to a classical musical score. Schuller even provides a motivic analysis of Coleman's "free" improvisation modeled on traditional music analysis, translating Coleman's solo into a "coherent" musical artifact, elevating him to Western art music standards, and (problematically) occluding other musical inheritances. Examining Schuller's intentions, I show how and why he employs the Western epistemological frame common for art music but anathema to many of the musical values expressed by contemporaneous Black cultural historians such as Amiri Baraka and Coleman himself.

In Chapter 3, I provide a history of the emergence of guitar transcriptions in the blues and rock music, classifying these into three types: (1) *guitar lessons,* which are common in folk music and aim to transmit stylistic elements of a certain performer or region, but avoid replicating recordings; (2) *lead sheets,* which are illocutionary in function as they instantiate a certain song's lyrics and melody for copyright, and are found in rock music; and (3) *note-for-note transcriptions* that aim to faithfully translate recordings or performances, and are surprisingly rare in the Rock Era. I move through these types in turn, profiling two significant blues guitar pedagogues and transcribers, Happy Traum and Stefan Grossman, after which I examine all of the transcriptions of Jimi Hendrix's guitar music over the 1970s. Taken together, these documents illuminate the period as a transitional moment for music publishers and consumers of rock, especially guitarists: though Hendrix's music first shows up in amusingly basic illocutionary lead sheets, across the decade more and more notational and pedagogical features are added.

If Chapter 3 looks at the increasing notational detail present in guitar transcriptions, Chapter 4 shows the logical conclusion of this trend through a documentary history of *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, originally published in 1982. Well-known today as one of the world's preeminent guitar virtuosos, Steve Vai started his musical career in the late 1970s as a freelance amanuensis for Frank Zappa, transcribing Zappa's most complex compositions from hand-dubbed cassette tapes, showcasing his technical virtuosity and dedication to the music. The *Guitar Book* includes exceptionally detailed and perhaps overly complex transcriptions of Zappa's guitar improvisations undertaken by Vai, which serve to impart a sheen of legitimacy and superiority to Zappa's music, aligning his improvised compositions with his written ones, particularly where complex, irregular, multi-leveled subdivisions of rhythm are concerned.

Vai's approach to transcription would become pervasive over the rest of the 1980s, and I use my conclusion to succinctly explain why published note-for-note transcriptions proliferated at that point. My argument is that this type of transcription becomes the norm after the mid-1980s rise of neoclassical metal, a subgenre which emphasized the legitimating connection to classical music through notation and music theory. At the same time, canonic rock music from the 1960s was newly transcribed in this manner because it provided a reservoir of "generational objects" that could be narrated to suit the economic demands of the 1980s. Overall, this conclusion serves to illustrate a substantial ontological shift over the Rock Era, which ends with the recording treated as the primary text in all the genres that I study.

Chapter 1: Musical Works and Transcriptions

"Transcriptions parasitize the identity of their models . . . [they] are not treated as interchangeable with the original. Instead, they are treated and advertised as works which stand in their own right."—Stephen Davies, "Violins or Viols?—A Reason to Fret"[1]

What sort of object is a musical transcription? As Stephen Davies suggests above, transcriptions are not equivalent to their models, yet they remain entrenched in a musical idealist ideology that emphasizes the creation and performance of musical works. What, then, is the relationship between a work and a transcription? This question is often posed in the context of Western art music, but much more rarely when it comes to popular music, even though the art of transcription is deeply embedded in both traditions. This chapter explores the basic ontological considerations brought up in my introduction in greater detail. Since ontology is a realm of inquiry concerned with the existence and relationship between objects, I examine the essential differences between transcriptions and other musical artifacts, such as scores, arrangements, and, most importantly, recordings.

In both classical and popular music, *transcriptions are notated translations of some primary source,* typically a musical work. As I will illustrate throughout this dissertation, Western musical notation is relatively limited in the amount of information it can contain, particularly when it comes to conveying specifics of rhythm and timbre. A recording, however, is a much stronger type of writing that reifies sound in profuse detail. Accordingly, I split this chapter into two halves: the first examines transcriptions that pre-date sound recordings, and the second focuses on those created in the age of recording. This organizational structure helps to illuminate what a transcription is and how its function differs between written (classical) and oral (vernacular) musical traditions.

[1] Stephen Davies, "Violins or Viols?—A Reason to Fret," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 (1990): 148.

A through-line will be the contentious nature of the musical work and how works relate to transcriptions in music. In its review of the relevant literature, this chapter broadly follows the chronology of arguments made about musical ontology, and so I will begin by summarizing the positions of the key twentieth-century philosophers who attempted to theorize Western art music's ontology with rigor, focusing particularly on the role that musical notation plays in the constitution of enduring works. I then compare derivative transcriptions to their original works, broadening the discussion to include musical *arrangements*, which I find are further removed ontologically from their working models. I am thus in general agreement with the sentiment expressed by Stephen Davies in this chapter's epigraph: transcriptions are intended to faithfully resemble their sources, even when re-written for a new medium. I also take Davies' observations one step further: in some cases, not only are transcriptions "treated and advertised as works," but they *function* as distinct musical works themselves.

Classical music transcriptions thus aim to translate the essence of a *work*. However, with the rise of recording technology, another function of transcription became much more easily achieved: to capture the nuances of a particular *performance*. This mode of transcription is more common in popular music, used to translate into written notation sonic source material that is not usually notated, such as a studio recording, a live performance, or even the material covered in a private lesson. What this source typically *is*, however, depends on genre. In the remainder of the chapter, I provide a selection of contemporary perspectives on the ontologies of rock, the blues, and jazz, respectively, and explore how studying transcriptions in each of these respective genres can further enrich such a discussion; the three chapters that follow each explore in greater detail the art of transcription in these genres as a cultural and ontological practice.

Following the work of Theodore Gracyk and Davies, I observe that in rock music the recording *itself* is the musical work, as exemplified in concept albums, a term coined by rock journalists that uses musical idealism as a way of legitimizing the music of certain (white, male) artists. It says something about the persistence of cultural hierarchies—and the exigencies of copyright law—that even the most prestigious sonic documents of "art rock" from the 1960s were never carefully transcribed into the kind of printed scores customary for classical musical works. Instead, printed music of the Rock Era provided the consumer with little more than a lead sheet—a melody, lyrics, and an indication of the underlying harmonies—sometimes presented alongside a basic, unidiomatic kind of keyboard accompaniment.

Construed as the folk music of a putatively non-literate world, the African-American blues tradition is ontologically distinct from rock music. Though recordings are important objects in this idiom, here they capture a particular performance of a lyric that exists in many different variations as part of an oral tradition. Notating the blues was a particular focus of academic and popularizing transcribers during the American folk music revival, and I profile some of the major scholarly studies of this subject in the 1960s and '70s. Blues transcribers seem primarily concerned with recorded song texts and the vocal melodies that carry them; blues transcriptions thus appear visually similar to rock in these decades, both emphasizing melody at the expense of musical accompaniment. Finally, we can note that jazz, like the blues, is dialogic in that it often refers to and draws on extant music, whether notated or recorded. To account for this, I conclude this chapter by asserting that jazz's ontology is best treated as *processual*; there might not exist any single "work" in jazz, but transcriptions stabilize a performed improvisation as a primary sonic source, even if it is also a fundamentally intertextual performance *of something else already written.*

I. Transcription Before the Age of Recording

Transcriptions, Notation, and Musical Works in Classical Music

As stated at the beginning of my introduction, one definition of a transcription is that it is a copy of a "musical work" with its layout or notation altered.[2] *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s definition is bit more specific: "a transcription is essentially the adaptation of a composition for an instrument or instruments other than those for which it was originally written."[3] This term is commonly used in the Western tradition to describe any composed out re-instrumentation of an original work, usually for ensemble, such as Franz Liszt's *Beethoven Symphonies* S.464 (published in 1865), which reduces each of Beethoven's nine symphonies into a derivative arrangement for solo piano; in other instances, a work for fewer instruments is re-written to be played by more, as with Anton Webern's ca. 1935 orchestration of J.S. Bach's second Ricercar from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079.

In a thorough scholarly examination of this type of musical object, Stephen Davies characterizes transcriptions by their changes in instrumentation, writing that they are "specifications for musical performance (and usually these specifications will be musical scores)."[4] Transcriptions are thus musical scores by definition, and scores (as he writes in a later study) are defined as "notations with the main purpose of prescribing works."[5] It follows, then, that "transcriptions are transcriptions of musical works."[6] For this reason, we must begin by defining a Western classical "work" of music, as only from that fixed point is it possible to begin

[2] Ter Ellingson, "Transcription (i)," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, last accessed July 27, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28268.
[3] Donald James Erb, "Arrangement and Transcription," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last accessed July 27, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/art/instrumentation-music/Arrangement-and-transcription.
[4] Stephen Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 216.
[5] Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 99.
[6] Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," 219.

a survey of transcriptions on their own account, and to see how well Davies' formulations hold up when translated to the world of popular music. So, let us review some of the most pervasive and persuasive theories of the musical work, the bedrock on which the ideology of musical idealism rests.

We can begin with a critique of Nelson Goodman's theory of symbols, as presented in a staple of mid-century aesthetic philosophy, *Languages of Art*, first published in 1968.[7] This book is particularly relevant for my study because Goodman is focused on the relationship between notation and works in any artistic practice that uses a "symbol system," such as architectural blueprints, visual art, scripts, and musical scores. As Davies reads Goodman, a musical score is not the work itself but *prescribes* works via notation; although Goodman's theory has often been mischaracterized as conflating the two, in reality he relies on the score because the symbols employed can (ostensibly) *identify* a work from performance to performance.[8]

For this reason, Goodman defines classical music, like literature, as an *allographic* art form. Music is allographic because multiple instances of the same score all equally instantiate the same work; the musical work thus cannot be forged, though there can still be forgeries of performances.[9] With *autographic* art, on the other hand, only one authentic copy of a given work can exist. A painting, for instance, is autographic because it can be forged; except for rare instances of process art (the art of Solomon "Sol" LeWitt comes to mind) there is no independent notational system that defines what is and is not an authentic instance of a certain painting.[10]

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[7] Originally published as Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968). In the remainder of the chapter, I cite a more recent version of *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976).
[8] See Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 128. I have personally heard this sentiment expressed in various scholarly contexts and conversations; Davies comments on this and provides some references in *Musical Works and Performances*, 102.
[9] Goodman, *Languages of* Art, 113 fn. 9.
[10] Ibid., 112-113.

Though Goodman does not discuss recorded music, this distinction indexes the main ontological difference between classical and rock music, as the latter is an autographic art form as instantiated in the singular recording.[11]

As indicated by the title of his book, Goodman sees musical notation as a type of language, and a given score for him contains both *syntactic* and *semantic* components of this language.[12] Because of these unique elements, the "identity of work and of score is retained in any series of steps" from a performance to a transcription of the score, and so forth (178). For Goodman, this symbolic language is defined by specifying pitches and rhythms, even though there is a wealth of information in scores—such as conventional tempo indications (e.g., "allegro" or "adagio")—that cannot be so classified. Unlike a specific metronomic mark, the evocative words that specify tempo ranges are *not* part of its notational system, and thus do not suffice to establish the identity of a work from performance to performance (185). In sum, Goodman finds that the notational system present in a score—both syntactic and semantic elements—must be suitably matched in a performance for the musical work to be instantiated; "all other variations are permitted" (212).[13] Goodman's theory, though I do not ultimately agree with it, has interesting ramifications in considering the ontology of classical music transcriptions:

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[11] For more discussion and specific examples see Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 32-33, which I write about in greater detail in the second half of this chapter. I highlight this dichotomy for clarity, but it is worth noting the inherent paradox of autographic recordings: unlike traditional paintings, the aesthetic and economic value of a musical recording is its potential for limitless reproduction.

[12] The syntactic requirements are "disjointness" and "finite differentiation" (Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 130-47); the semantic are "unambiguity," "disjointness," and "finite differentiation" (148-52). Goodman's confusing prose in this section does not make it easy for the reader to fully understand what these terms mean and how to identity them in a score, however.

[13] It follows, then, that a requirement of a notational system in an allographic art such as classical music is that the score could be recovered from a performance (183). Upon reflection, one can see why tempo markings, unlike metronome marks, are not part of the notational system of classical music: one can imagine reconstructing the notes and rhythms of a classical musical work from a recorded performance, and even determining the correct metronome mark to place at its head. But how would one know *from the recording alone* whether the composer wrote "Allegro vivace" or "Allegro con brio"?

because these would be written using a certain language (musical notation) but with different symbols from the original, they would create a distinct (if derivative) work, as long as a hypothetical performance of the transcription suitably matches the notation.

Many responses to Goodman's book explore the myriad ways his theory fails to match actual musical practice. Because pitches are indeed part of Goodman's notational system, a single note performed incorrectly in a concert would then mean that a given work was not actually instantiated. Goodman's ontological definition of a musical work, which foregrounds the linguistic role of the score, treats music like a visual art. This flies in the face of how performing musicians typically think of the score, which does not instantiate the work itself but instead presents *a set of instructions for them to follow to instantiate the work,* more like the written manuscript of a play than that of a novel. Davies himself comments on the absurdity of such a theory, writing that Goodman believes that "performance is a matter not of following a score but of matching its semantic content by any means whatever."[14]

My main criticism, however, is Goodman's explicit attempt to create an autonomous, quasi-mathematical system of symbolic notation divorced from "a history of production."[15] I would instead suggest that the exact elements of a score that are required for a genuine instance of the work have changed over time and depend on historically contingent musical conventions and performance practices. This line of inquiry is picked up by Jerrold Levinson, who updated Goodman's theory through two articles published in 1980. One argues that Goodman's definition of autographic art is flawed because he gives two logically incompatible definitions of the term, while the other pays attention to the crucial role of the composer who writes these scores at a

[14] Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 140.
[15] Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 212.

given historical moment.[16] Levinson is especially convincing on this second front: as he points out, a musical work is not a timeless, ideal sound structure waiting to be discovered by the composer who transcribes it, but one uniquely brought into existence in the moment of its composition.[17] To illustrate, Levinson considers two hypothetical composers who create the same sound structure at different moments in time, and argues that, like the two authors of the *Quixote* in the famous short story by Borges, do *not* create the same work, as our aesthetic response would be quite different in each case.[18] For Goodman, explicitly unconcerned with history, if Beethoven and Brahms somehow were able to independently write the same score at different times, they would both have composed the very same work.[19] For Levinson, though, a musical work is brought into existence by a composer at a certain historical moment that has a "specific means of performance or sound production"; performances are "instances" of this work if "prominent aspects" of the score are followed, and an "informed and sensitive" listener can grasp the sonic structure.[20]

More recent approaches to theorizing the classical musical work are less concerned with the relationship between notated score and performance, and instead consider the intellectual trends that have us speaking and thinking about musical "works" in the first place. Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* is a prime example, positioning classical music as a

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[16] See Jerrold Levinson, "Autographic and Allographic Art Revisited," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 38, no. 4 (November 1980): 372; and Levinson, "What A Musical Work Is," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 1 (January 1980): 5-28.
[17] Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is," 9.
[18] See Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," in *Ficciones* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1962), 45-56.
[19] Specifically, Levinson asks: what if Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) had the same sound structure as a piece composed by Richard Strauss fifteen years earlier? Through his theory, these would be distinct works as they would be received differently based on historical context and the musical development of each composer over time—that is, Strauss's version would be seen as a logical development from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*; see Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is," 11 and 11 fn. 16. I find this to be a strong point, though it requires a listener to be knowledgeable about each piece in question and the composers' respective oeuvres.
[20] Ibid., 26 and 26 fn. 33.

tradition of autonomous musical works conforming to a "work concept" derived from nineteenth-century German idealism.[21] In this sense, a piece like Bach's *The Art of Fugue,* when approached historically, is not a true "work" because it entirely predates this mode of musical thought. Conflating Goodman's and Levinson's theories as the "analytical approach" to the subject, she critiques them as unconnected to actual musical practice.[22] In their stead, she offers a line of historical inquiry that treats musical works as an ideal that slowly emerged throughout the eighteenth century and connected with broader Romantic ideals around the year 1800, when it assumed its place as a full-fledged "regulatory concept that continues to influence contemporary musical aesthetics."[23] The use of detailed score notation is just one result of this epistemic shift among many others. Goehr is less concerned with ontology (what a musical work *is*) and more concerned with epistemology (what thinking about music in such terms *does*).

Another influential line of inquiry decenters ontology in favor of *phenomenology*, which the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes as an approach that "attempts to determine what the ontological structure and status of objects of various types must be, based on examining essential features of any experience that could present or provide knowledge of such objects"; Roman Ingarden is a key example of someone holding this approach.[24] One of the primary

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[21] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music, Revised Edition* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1992]).

[22] An "analytical approach" being that which describes the existence of works and what conditions have to be met to count as genuine instances of them; see Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 4. Levinson is dealt with on pp. 44-63, though I disagree with her labeling Levinson as holding a "modified Platonic view": as I just illustrated, his theory presented in "What A Musical Work Is" is predicated on the fact that musical works are not "discovered" but are "created." Goodman is also critiqued at length on pp. 20-28 and elsewhere throughout Goehr's book.

[23] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works,* 111-15.

[24] Amie Thomasson, "Roman Ingarden," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of* Philosophy, Fall 2020 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/ingarden/. In discussing these "essential features" in Ingarden's 1931 book *The Literary Work of Art* (trans. George G. Grabowicz [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973]), he formulates that literary works have four "strata," each of which have their own aesthetic values and come together to form a unified whole: "phonetic formations," "meaning units," "schematized aspects," and "represented entities." Musical works, however, only have one single stratum: sound itself; see Maria Anna

aesthetic "objects" he concerns himself with is music notation and the score, something intentionally created by the composer. Like Goodman, Ingarden views notation as a sign system separate from the musical work.[25] Since notation is an imperfect writing system that includes many areas of indeterminacies, Ingarden finds that it must be filled out by the performers as the work is "articulated through a performance."[26] The musical work is not a single thing, like a painting hung in a museum; there are many possible correct performances of a given score, and each performance is also realized differently by the audience. The work, then, exists in "the interplay between the transmitting artist and the receiving beholder or listener."[27]

Critiques of Ingarden's theory are generally similar to those directed toward Goodman, primarily that Ingarden ignores the "cultural aspects of musical works," problematically attempting to subsume all music into the work concept, including experimental and improvised music, when really he is referring mostly to the German canon of instrumental, notated art music.[28] In other ways, though, Ingarden's phenomenologically-tinged writings have proved influential for later phenomenologists of music such as Thomas Clifton, who foregrounds the subjective experience of listening to music and describing it, allowing for more attention to be paid to our emotional responses and to musical parameters that are typically neglected when analyzing Western art music, like timbre.[29]

Harley, "At Home with Phenomenology: Ingarden's 'Work of Music' Revisited," *International Journal of Musicology* 6 (1997): 14.

[25] Harley, "Ingarden's 'Work of Music' Revisited," 13.

[26] Ibid., 11.

[27] Teddy Brunius, "The Aesthetics of Roman Ingarden," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 4 (June 1970): 591. In crafting an "anthropological theory of art," Alfred Gell further explores all the possible interplays between the artist ("the social agent") the "recipient, "the index" (the physical object of attention), and lastly the "prototype," which is the higher-level abstraction the index is representing; see Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), esp. 12-27. Though Gell's theory is centered on visual art and the material indices created in this medium, he leaves the door open for the application of his theory with other non-visual artistic media, such as "verbal and musical art" (13).

[28] Harley, "Ingarden's 'Work of Music' Revisited," 15-19.

[29] Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983). See also the work of Judith Lochhead, who has made the argument that musical works are equivalent (only)

I personally find Ingarden's theory of the musical work useful because it demonstrates the interplay between two ontological categories: the work as object and the performance as process.[30] In an article published in the 1960s, musicologist Patricia Carpenter pursues this line of thought through Gestalt psychology, drawing a distinction between a "piece of music" (object), and "music" (process).[31] Thinking of a piece of music, she argues, is a way of conceiving musical form unique to and emblematic of Western thought; notation, especially when it was able to be printed starting in the sixteenth century, allowed this objectification to occur, thanks to which music became "a heard thing, a thing ultimately made to be perceived for its own sake, something sheerly to be listened to."[32]

Though specific theorizations might vary, there is general agreement that the classical score is *not* the work, even if notation becomes a crucial part of the tradition because it provides an enduring musical artifact. Davies suggests, contra Goodman, that not all definitive features of a given work are indicated directly in the score. Instead, he presupposes that scores require knowledge of historical and cultural conventions to be read (interpreted) properly by a performer; not everything specified in a score is mandated, and some things *not* notated are mandatory. Fingerings, for instance, might be indicated in a score, but following these is not generally required for an authentic performance of a work to take place.[33] In this sense, scores

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to performances, and each is unique and unrepeatable in "Identifying Musical Works of Art," *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 12, no. 1-2 (1989): 126-37.

[30] Harley, "Ingarden's 'Work of Music' Revisited," 12. This is something I examine further in the context of rock musician Frank Zappa's notion of "project/object" in Chapter 4.

[31] See Patricia Carpenter, "The Musical Object," *Current Musicology* 5 (1967): 56-87. She provides three requirements for something to be an object: it is something perceived as separate from ourselves, it is perceived as a whole or a part of a whole, and lastly it is something that can be categorized as a "recognizable part of my world" (62).

[32] See Carpenter, "The Musical Object," 60; quote on 80. Carpenter avoids using the loaded term "the musical work" in her article, but in returning to this piece in the 2000s Matthew Butterfield writes that both her conceptions of music as an object and process fall under Goehr's work-concept; see Matthew Butterfield, "The Musical Object Revisited," *Music Analysis* 21, no. 3 (October 2002): 327-80.

[33] Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 103-107; fingerings discussed on p. 106.

"are not transparent to the works they specify," and do not directly represent the musical work's sound structure.[34] Ultimately, Davies concludes that a "musical work is a performed sound structure as made normative in a musico-historical setting."[35]

With this definition in mind, it is now possible to return to the issue at hand: defining a transcription. Davies provides some guidelines in his article "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance": first, "transcription presupposes the prior existence of an independently identifiable work" (216).[36] Next, authorial intention is required for the creation of a transcription, but it is not enough, as it will still have to "adequately resemble and preserve the musical content of the original work," while at the same time being different enough to not be a mere copy (216-17). The end result of this written process is a faithful recreation of a composer's extant work (222). As such, transcriptions can fulfill numerous functions: they can be of pedagogical value, helping students learn orchestration; they can make musical works more readily accessible for performance, such as in a piano-vocal reduction of an orchestral piece that can be played at home; they can allow transcribers to show off their dedication to the source material and their compositional skill; and they can also re-present and comment on their model, thus allowing a deeper "understanding and appreciation of the merits (and demerits)" of the original work (220-21).

Are transcriptions *new* musical works? I find Davies' publications maddeningly unclear on this point, as he often uses the word "piece" to describe transcriptions; while this is a term

[34] Ibid., 107. Davies provides the example of scores that include notation written for transposing instruments, which do not "map literally onto the pitches that are sounded" (104).
[35] Ibid., 97.
[36] The example Davies provides to illustrate this point is Stravinsky's *Les Noces (The Wedding)*, a ballet first performed in 1923, but which had gone through many different changes in instrumentation since it was first conceived by the composer in 1913. According to Davies' definition, the final published version is *not* a transcription because these earlier versions were not musical works—the work was completed with the final version (ibid., 217).

often used synonymously with "work," it might also be used to describe a separate object (like a score) that shares a "sound structure" with the original work. For instance, Davies discusses the ballet *Les Sylphides*, which is an orchestration of numerous Chopin piano compositions that is "so faithful to the originals it is not inappropriate that *the work* is attributed to Chopin"; however, something like Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* is more than a simple orchestration of (what was thought to have been) Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's pre-existing music as he, Stravinsky, adds his own compositional voice to it, thus making it "a *piece* by Pergolesi/Stravinsky."[37]

An article Davies published two years later—from which I took this chapter's epigraph—adds some clarity. Here, Davies expands on the ontological status of a transcription through performance practice, in particular the authenticity of performing classical music using historical instruments or replicas. The main question he poses is: are the means of performance (the instruments used) part of a work's determinative character?[38] If an authentic performance (a genuine instantiation) of a work has to take into account "the conventions which constrain both the composer and the performer of the day," then specific instrumentation could be an "essential" part of the work in question—if composers and performers from the time had no choice in what instruments to perform the music on.[39] Thus, the answer to my above question of whether or not a transcription, which relies on a change of instrumentation or medium, is a new work depends on the instrumental conventions present during the time of the original work's creation.

[37] Ibid., 219; emphases added.
[38] Davies, "Violins or Viols?," 147.
[39] Ibid., 151.

Transcriptions vs. Arrangements

Another way to decipher the ontological status of a transcription in the Western art music tradition is to compare it to another common object, an arrangement. What is the difference between an arrangement and a transcription? One well-known example of the latter is Liszt's piano transcriptions of Beethoven's orchestral works, *Beethoven Symphonies,* which is a virtuosic adaptation of all nine of Beethoven's symphonies for solo piano. Though this composition is commonly referred to as a piano transcription, could it also (or instead) be an arrangement? In providing a definition, Malcolm Boyd suggests that arrangements are a broader category of document than transcriptions as they incorporate any type of preexisting music. In this sense, a transcription is just one *type* of an arrangement that aims for a "straightforward, almost literal" use of original material.[40] *Encyclopedia Britannica* provides a similar definition where transcriptions and arrangements are similar, but in the latter, an "arranger often feels free to take musical liberties with elements of the original score."[41] A quodlibet, then, would be a type of arrangement through both of these definitions, as it compiles numerous extant melodies taken out of their original contexts into something new. So, while an arrangement might range freely from its original source, a transcription is a more specific type of document that closely resembles pre-existing material.

Ronald Broude approaches this distinction from a different angle, speaking to choral directors who must choose scores for their groups to perform but are overwhelmed by the plethora of terms used to describe them, such as "transcriptions," "arrangements," and "editions." His definitions generally align with those provided above: an arrangement is a

[40] Malcolm Boyd, "Arrangement," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, last accessed July 27, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01332.
[41] Erb, "Arrangement and Transcription."

"reworking" or "substantial re-conception" of an extant piece, not just through instrumentation but potentially "musical content" or "form."[42] A transcription, on the other hand, "will adhere relatively closely to the original work" as it is re-scored for different performing forces, such as a piano reduction of an orchestral piece.[43]

To me, then, the distinction between these two terms seems to be ontological: a transcription more closely instantiates the original work than an arrangement.[44] Perhaps the difference between a transcription and arrangement inheres in the level of mediation present in the translation from original to copy: the former is "re-written" while the latter is "re-composed." I have observed in my introduction how transcriptions are inherently mediated, especially in popular music, but one could argue that arrangements are even more so, due to the important role of the new author who is often given "equal billing with the composer."[45] Transcription, by contrast, abridges any "personality" the transcriber might possess; indeed, the aforementioned ballet *Les Sylphides* works as a transcription not only because of its sonic similarity to its model, but because "the names of the transcribers who collaborated on the work are not now widely known."[46]

Are Liszt's re-writings of Beethoven's symphonies truly transcriptions, then? The answer to this admittedly subjective question depends on the elements that one finds constitutive of

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[42] Ronald Broude, "Arrangement, Transcription, Edition: Some Problems in Terminology," *The Choral Journal* 18, no. 1 (September 1977): 25.
[43] Broude, "Arrangement, Transcription, Edition," 26. This is one of two types of transcriptions that he describes, one that is focused on the original music being re-written; as the author notes, though, there is a slightly different type of transcription that focuses on the process of re-writing itself, typically through a different notational system, such as the process of re-writing Medieval music into modern notation—though he notes this is not often referred to as a "transcription," as it is instead just an expected part of the editorial process (27).
[44] Davies clearly agrees with this notion, as he discusses arrangements and variations as less faithful to the original than transcriptions, as even something that is intended to be a transcription can fail if it departs too far from the original source material; this is discussed in Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," 218.
[45] Broude, "Arrangement, Transcription, Edition," 25.
[46] Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," 219.

Beethoven's symphonic works in the first place. Davies briefly addresses Liszt-Beethoven in one of his articles, and concludes that while we "treat the piece as a new work—that is, as a transcription," the "symphonies remain Beethoven's, rather than becoming Liszt's, for the reason that the transcriptions preserve the sound-structure of their models."[47] Certainly, the *symphonies* remain Beethoven's, and yet I agree that this is a new *work:* after all, Davies himself argues that Beethoven's symphonies are medium-specific, unlike, say, Bach's *Art of the Fugue*.[48]

Ultimately, Liszt's versions function more like arrangements than transcriptions: it is important that it was Liszt, an established performer-composer, who undertook the transcriptions; he necessarily had to heavily alter the original source, reducing a thick orchestral texture into one playable with two hands. Indeed, the immense labor required to arrange and perform these furthered his credentials as a virtuoso. In correspondence, Liszt recounts the difficulty of constructing these so-called arrangements and the importance of making sure all of the notated music was "*absolutely* correct"; he refers to the process as undertaking the creation of an "arrangement, or, more correctly speaking, the pianoforte *score*."[49] To me, this language implies that Liszt saw his arrangement as a distinct work that, while "[as] faithful an illustration as possible of Beethoven's genius," would always "remain a very poor and distant approximation."[50]

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[47] Davies, "Violins or Viols?," 148.
[48] Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," 217. As he points out, though, not all changes in instrumentation necessarily result in a transcription: Stravinsky's re-orchestrated *Petrushka* merely "involved reductions in the number of wind parts and such like alterations" (217).
[49] La Mara, ed., *Letters of Franz Liszt*, trans. Constance Bache, *Volume 1: From Paris to Rome: Years of Travel as Virtuoso* (London: H. Grevel & Co., 1894 [1893]), 22 and 29; emphases in original. One of the most comprehensive examinations of Liszt's process in creating the *Beethoven Symphonies* can be found in Alan Walker, *Reflections on Liszt* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 13-26; see esp. 19-26 where Walker compares Liszt's versions to Beethoven's original and others' "hack" arrangements from this era that captured fewer aspects of Beethoven's original scoring.
[50] La Mara, ed., *Letters of Franz Liszt*, *Volume 2: From Rome to the End* (London: H. Grevel & Co., 1894 [1893]), 35.

The degree to which one can hear Beethoven's original "sound-structures" in Liszt's composition is no doubt contingent; while I find it difficult, Davies—certainly a more seasoned listener to classical music than I am—clearly does not. Others, like Vladimir Horowitz, agree with him; the virtuoso pianist regretted never performing these transcriptions, as they are "the greatest works for the piano" where "every note of the symphonies is in the Liszt works."[51] Horowitz's claim is ludicrous when taken literally; it is impossible to compare a Beethoven symphony which demands forty or more performers sounding upwards of sixty notes at once to a work for solo piano. But understood figuratively, it provides yet another example of how classical musicians implicitly push back on Goodman's note-for-note theory of ontology: it is not that literally "every note of the symphonies is in the Liszt works," but rather, for Horowitz, every note *that matters* is there.

Perhaps, then, it is useful to view transcriptions and arrangements in Western art music as two points on a continuum where the latter is further removed from the original source than the former. One could follow this continuum even further to potpourris, which string together melodies from various sources, and fantasias, which in Liszt's era would elaborate on pre-existing thematic material. Today, one could imagine the furthest extension of this continuum into the ethos of the remix in popular music, many of which deliberately bear little resemblance to their supposed original.[52]

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[51] Anthony Tommasini, "Horowitz at 85: Still Playing Free," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/25/arts/horowitz-at-85-still-playing-free.html.

[52] In writing about remix culture, Simon Reynolds relays a "possibly apocryphal" anecdote about electronic musician Aphex Twin (née Richard James), a figure well-known for creating remixes in the 1990s. Though he had agreed to create a remix for a record company, when a courier showed up to collect it James realized that he had forgotten to create one and so he proceeded to grab a random track from his own backlog to present as the remix; even though what he selected had nothing to do with the source material, the label ended up being quite satisfied with it. This is recounted in Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2012), 469-70.

It is telling, though, that in Liszt's era potpourris and fantasias drew on music that had a weaker association to the work-concept, such as operas. Liszt himself wrote *Réminiscences de "Lucia di Lammermoor"* (S. 397), which was based on themes from Gaetano Donizetti's opera. While a transcription complicates notions of authorship, no one holds Liszt's composition to be Donizetti's work; the arranger has the ontological upper hand here. Beethoven's symphonies, on the other hand, possess the firmest underlying ontology possible in Western art music, and so Liszt created a transcription of them, rather than, say, a "Fantasia on Symphonic Themes of Beethoven" that would present a freer take. In doing so, Liszt created a new work: *The Beethoven Symphonies.* This is not an allographic performance of Beethoven's work, but, instead, something closer to an autographic work, one "recorded" through his fingers and reified via notation, a piano score that, to Horowitz, captures all the (essential) notes found in Beethoven's originals.

II. Transcription in the Age of Recording

Popular Music Works and Recordings

So far in this chapter I have explored how transcriptions in Western art music aim to re-write a musical work's score into another score that prescribes a distinct, but derivative work. There tends to be a general agreement that an arrangement more substantially re-works its existing source material. The transcription of a work is intended to capture an original's determinative components, though what exactly these are depends on historical context.

Such a document, however, is not primarily meant to capture a specific *interpretation* of a work, which would necessarily include capturing particular performing decisions made during its real-time instantiation. Indeed, this is an altogether different type of transcription, a

transcription of a *performance*, which requires translation of a heard event into notation. In this case, a transcription is not a score because instead of *prescribing* a musical work it *describes* the nuances of the performance of one.[53] This type of notated document has a different function than the transcriptions I have been discussing so far in this chapter: it is used to take music out of time and detail one specific interpretation of a work, or a performance of a non-work, analyzing the specifics of what a performer is actually playing. In doing so, such transcriptions allow for re-creation and emulation, as a form of devotion, idolatry, and/or pedagogical tool. One can imagine a view of the Liszt-Beethoven symphonies along these lines, as if they captured Liszt's own practice of reading Beethoven's scores *ex tempore* at the piano; but Liszt seems to have been at pains to cast his process of transcription as something done in a more premeditated fashion at a desk, akin to an original composition.

Because the allographic classical tradition includes both works and performances of these works, one can transcribe either, thus altering the function of the transcription. Transcriptions in Western art music are most frequently transcriptions of works; unsurprisingly, transcriptions of performances become much more common once music can be recorded and taken out of time. As we will see, the tradition of popular music includes transcriptions of both types, depending on the object of reification. Indeed, in some cases transcriptions aim to capture more than just a performance or an essence of a musical work, but serve as replacements for in-person instruction, providing students with notation that help them learn how to play in a certain style.

In the rest of this chapter, I make some determinations about what the musical work is in various genres of recorded popular music—namely rock, the blues, and jazz—and intersperse my

[53] This type of transcription is covered briefly in Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 130-34, though he approaches this through the lens of ethnomusicology, covering non-Western music instead of popular music, which is what my aim is in the following chapters of this dissertation.

own commentary on how the three different types of transcriptions I listed in my introduction relate to these. I conclude that in popular music, *transcriptions of works* are common in canonic rock, at least by the 1980s; *pedagogical transcriptions,* which include those that aim to transmit actual lessons are common in the revival of blues and folk music; and, lastly, *transcriptions of specific performances* are most commonly found in jazz. Recordings play an important role in each case, yet the precise relationships between recording and transcription differs according to genre.

Before the advent of recording, music was a fleeting event rooted in a certain place and time; recording allowed that event to be captured on tape and disseminated as a commercial object. Because popular music in the Rock Era was not typically notated, transcriptions of it are distinct from those in classical music, as they are often indexed to specific performances. This is truer of jazz and folk music than it is of rock, which employed studio wizardry to assemble and layer multiple performances, creating an autographic musical work that captures and fixes all the musical elements that written notation cannot.

I have thus far relied on Davies' scholarship to define and theorize classical transcriptions where, as we will recall, "transcriptions are transcriptions of [musical] works." Even in rock music, though, Davies' claim holds up: in this genre, the work is the recording, and transcriptions aim to translate it, in part or whole, into music notation. Recording technology creates a new ontological conception of music, primarily through altering the role of the performer. In the art tradition's avant-garde, purely electronic works do not require performers at all. For instance, John Cage's *Williams Mix* (1951-1953), is a musique concrète composition for eight reels of tape played simultaneously. The piece was premiered on May 15, 1958, in New York's Town Hall, and a documentary recording illustrates that audience members were not

particularly pleased when the composer merely played a recording in a live concert.[54] Cage was one of the members of the sonic avant-garde to realize that with advances in recording technology, what had been a purely allographic art form could now be fully autographic.[55]

In other situations, magnetic tape allowed performers like pianist Glenn Gould newfound agency to better realize the composer's work. Gould points out that, thanks to easily editable recording technology, the musical work does not merely correspond to a single, "correct" live performance of, say, a fugue from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* but can be represented by something pieced together in the studio from multiple takes. Like Liszt, Gould could create a note-perfect instantiation of an existing composition, since he now had as much creative control and agency as the composer; his obsessive process of recording Bach's "Fugue in A-Minor" from the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* exemplifies many of these points.[56]

Thus, the question: is Gould's recording (itself a literal sonic transcription of various instances of his playing) a distinct, if derivative musical work by him, or is it entirely a musical work by Bach, just performed (idiosyncratically) by Gould? As with Liszt's use of materials from Donizetti versus those taken from Beethoven, the answer seems to depend on the strength of the underlying ontology: Bach's compositional practice pre-dates Goehr's historical identification of the work concept and thus his music has a looser ontology, making it easier to

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[54] See "Williams Mix" on *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of the Music of John Cage*, 1959, 3 LPs, which was not originally released on a record label, and would later be re-released with the same title on Wergo 62472, 1994, 3 CDs.

[55] In theorizing an aesthetics of rock, this is essentially Theodore Gracyk's main point; though he points out that many of rock's detractors focus on the allographic components of rock music (songs and performances), it is the rock recording that is the common text and autographic work, and it includes "relevant properties and values like instrumental mix, stereo placement of various elements, echo on the voice, and even how ragged or nasal the singer's voice was at the time of the recording"; see Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 36.

[56] See Glenn Gould, "The Prospects of Recording," in *The Glenn Gould Reader,* ed. Tim Page (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 338-39, where he describes how he performed multiple takes of a small section of music, each with a different style, as allowed by the performing practices of Bach's time. In the studio, Gould was then able to seamlessly splice these different takes together to create the finalized version heard on the released recording, *Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1 / Preludes and Fugues 17*-24, Columbia 6776, 1965, LP.

envision the recording as Gould's "work." It is less common to mistake a Gould recording of a Romantic-era composition with a strong ontological basis, like one of Beethoven's piano sonatas, as a work itself, rather than one interpretation of it.[57]

A primary challenge in studying transcriptions and theorizing their ontological status is that classical and popular music traditions work very differently; most writers concerned with the ontology of music choose not to bridge the gap between live/recorded and allographic/autographic practices; commentary on transcriptions within such discussions is rarer still. Stephen Davies's theory of musical works remains the most satisfactory, since he covers both traditions; I also find his notion of "ontological thickness" and "thinness" particularly useful.[58] Explaining these key terms, Davies writes that "the totality of musical works from culture to culture and from time to time do not have any *single* ontological character. Some musical works are thick with properties, others are thinner—some works include the performance-means as part of their essential nature, and much more besides, while others are more or less pure sound structures;" thus, as I have shown, an "authentic" performance of a musical work depends on its historical context.[59]

Though variable in degree, classical works of music tend to be ontologically thin, as performers must make many choices beyond what is plainly indicated in a score; Bach's *Art of Fugue*, for which no instrumentation is specified, might represent a limit case for canonic music. Though Goehr argues in her book that the year 1800 was when the "work concept" was

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[57] See, for instance, *Glenn Gould Plays Beethoven: The Five Piano Concertos*, Columbia Odyssey 34640, 1977, 4 LPs.

[58] Though he uses them throughout his aforementioned book, these terms are first introduced in Stephen Davies, "The Ontology of Musical Works and the Authenticity of Their Performances," *Nous* 25 (1991): 21-41.

[59] Davies, "The Ontology of Musical Works and the Authenticity of Their Performances," 37; emphasis in original. One example Davies provides in this article is of the presence of "notated phrasing and dynamics" in a score: in the mid-eighteenth century, these symbols were merely recommendations, but a hundred years later, "notated phrasing and dynamics are determinative [of the work] and must be observed in an authentic performance" (ibid.).

crystallized, Davies is more nuanced, noting the increasing ontological thickness of classical music over its history.[60] I find Davies' approach quite convincing, with the extremely detailed scores of modernist composers such as Pierre Boulez or Frank Zappa in the twentieth century illustrating the culmination of this historical process. Zappa in particular loved to complain about the inadequacies of human performers in realizing the extremely detailed scores of his classical works (see Chapter 4).

Transcriptions of the Concept Album

Philosopher Theodore Gracyk applies Davies' notion of ontological thickness to rock music. For Gracyk, a rock recording comprises ontologically thick "tracks" that are created in the studio from an assemblage of many different sounds; a rock record is ontologically thick because it fixes many (in effect, *all)* properties essential to its status as a musical work, such as instrumentation and especially timbre.[61] These "thick" tracks then generate thinner "songs" when they are performed in concert.[62] A hypothetical live performance of the Beach Boys' album *Pet Sounds* (1966), for example, could never fully replicate all of the sounds found on the original recording, those very components that make it a (very) ontologically thick musical work.

The other reason I find Davies' approach to studying musical works so useful is that his theory encompasses both musical works that are meant to be performed—the traditional model where the composer creates something more ontologically thin than its performances will be—and musical works that can only be instantiated through electronic playback, such as a rock

[60] See Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 89.
[61] Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 19-21.
[62] Andrew Kania, "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 401-414. Though he generally agrees with Gracyk's main points in his book, Kania wrote this article as a response, as he felt that Gracyk did not pay enough attention to the role of live performance in rock, something that fans very much value.

recording, which are normally thicker than any performance of them could be.[63] By differentiating performed and recorded music, Davies is able to put forth a cohesive and expansive ontological theory that builds on those that I have discussed earlier in this chapter, including those of Goodman, Levinson, and Goehr, all of whom primarily write about musical works for performance. Davies is quite clear that for this type of musical work to be instantiated there are some requirements: that the performance "suitably matches" the work, that the performer should follow the "composer's work-determinative instructions (more or less)," and lastly, that the work is *intended* to be performed and thus there is a "causal chain" from the performance back to the original composition.[64] Musical works not for performance, on the other hand, are finalized when there is a master recording, and they are instantiated during mechanical (or digital) playback.[65] These differences aside, Davies and Gracyk both make a strong case for the recording—an arrangement of recorded sounds found on the master tape that can only be faithfully reproduced during playback—as the musical "work" in rock music.[66]

What about *transcriptions* of rock music, then? Because rock music exists primarily through recordings (which *are* the musical works), transcriptions of recordings function like transcriptions in classical music: they transcribe (not arrange) musical works and are intended to capture the work's determinative components. However, as I intend to show, these "determinative components" in rock music have long been contested: legally, they consist *only* of a track's written melody and lyrics; philosophically, though, they encompass *all* the thick sonic properties found in the recorded sound. While the limitations of standard musical notation

[63] See Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 20-36. Gracyk's treatment of rock music is unpacked through this second type.
[64] These are Davies's general conditions provided in *Musical Works and Performance*, 5, but he fleshes them out in much more detail on pp. 159-86.
[65] Ibid., 26.
[66] Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 1.

mean that any written transcription will always be ontologically thinner than the associated recording, a printed lead sheet (as found in a "fake book," and comprising the melody, lyrics, and designated harmonies of a given tune) will be thinner still, for it only needs to capture the legal essence of a given tune.

Let us clarify by looking at a transcription of rock's work concept *par excellence*, the aptly named concept album. For Gracyk, Elvis's 1954-55 sessions at Sun Records begin the narrative of autographic rock, because it is here that the studio sound of the records, Elvis's "signature," becomes as important as any other musical element, thus demonstrating that in rock, "musical works do not exist apart from the recording process itself."[67] In following these themes, I want to think about how rock albums became works at the level of *discourse* that foregrounds human agents; doing so allows for a deeper understanding of aesthetic trends at the time, especially the role that musical idealism played in creating popular music's most exalted object—the concept album. Indeed, concept albums helped form the canon of rock music, representing for their partisans the very best, unified, autonomous objects that would (and did) survive the test of time.[68]

Because 78 RPM discs could only contain a few minutes of music per side, they were often grouped together in a format akin to a photograph album, with sleeves for discs standing in for photographs. In popular music, these albums would occasionally be unified by a single topic. For instance, Woody Guthrie's 1940 *Dust Bowl Ballads* came in two "albums" of three 78s each, for a total of 36 minutes of music, all centered on Guthrie's re-telling of stories surrounding the

[67] Ibid., 13-14. That the 1976 album that collected these pioneering early singles was called *The Sun Sessions*—rather than, say, *Early Recordings,* or *Elvis's First Hits*—demonstrates how central a specific studio sound was to the expanding work concept of rock.

[68] For more on the canon of rock music, see Carys Wyn Jones, *The Rock Canon: Canonical Values in the Reception of Rock Albums* (Burlington VT, Ashgate, 2008). In this book Jones points out the similarities between the rock canon and its models: literature and classical music. What is canonized, she argues, is not those recordings that are played the most, but those that are written about the most by people in positions of power, such as rock critics (122).

Dust Bowl, many of which he himself lived through, with music and songs picked up and refurbished from refugee camps and migrant workers. Some have referred to this release as the first concept album, but though it was unified by a central topic and folky instrumental timbres, Guthrie's music was not authenticated by the album form, but rather by his own lived experience.[69]

It was the advent of the long-playing (LP) 33 1/3 RPM record in 1948 that opened new technological and aesthetic possibilities, as now eight to twelve songs could be presented on two sides of a single disc that sounded much clearer due to the use of vinyl rather than shellac. As Todd Decker notes, with these earliest LPs listeners were finally able to have a taste of the theater or concert hall at home, as they could sit quietly and listen to over twenty minutes of higher-fidelity music before having to get up to change sides, thus providing a unified theatrical experience.[70] Though Decker discusses earlier examples of unified LPs from the 1950s, fully conceptual albums are considered to emerge in the mid-1960s for aesthetic reasons, as popular artists started writing and performing their own compositions, thus more closely mirroring the Romantic ideal in which artists express themselves directly to listeners.[71]

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[69] See, for instance, Fiona Sturges, "The Return of Concept Album," *The Independent UK*, 2009, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-return-of-concept-album-1796064.html.
[70] Todd Decker, "Fancy Meeting You Here: Pioneers of the Concept Album," *Daedalus* 142, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 98-108.
[71] As discussed in Decker, "Fancy Meeting You Here," 101. As Decker describes throughout his article, because of the affordances of LP technology—namely having to manually move the needle if one wanted to skip tracks—track sequencing became an important component of these albums, as they were meant to be listened to from beginning to end. Broadway cast albums, such as 1949's *South Pacific* (Columbia Masterworks ML 4180), were particularly well-suited for the LP, as they had about 45 minutes of music once dialogue was stripped away and fans could listen to an abridged, chronological version of their favorite musical at home. Decker also provides a lengthy discussion of 1958's *Fancy Meeting You Here* (RCA Victor LPM-1854), which was a collection of pre-existing Tin Pan Alley tunes re-orchestrated for a duet format between Rosemary Clooney and Bing Crosby. Though excluded from common narratives of the concept album, this album is deeply conceptual: older tunes about falling in love in exotic places are framed by the newly written eponymous first track and then sequentially follow locales listed on a map on the back of the LP. The penultimate track, "Calcutta," musically references most of the earlier tracks, while the final track of Side A, "Love Won't Let You Get Away," also newly-written for the album, has Clooney and Crosby speaking directly to the listener, telling them that "we won't let you get away," as there are many locations they have yet to go and they need to flip to Side B to experience the rest of their trip around the world; this album is discussed by Decker on pp. 104-105. Keir Keightley similarly looks at the rise of the LP record in the 1950s and

Musicologist Alan Moore argues that unlike LPs in the 1950s and early 1960s, each comprising a "succession of separate items," the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), was a bona fide concept album because it was "concerned with the production of a unified whole, an entire package."[72] Moore goes to great length to employ traditional musical analysis to show how musically unified the album is; some compositional elements that contribute to this effect include "the modulatory bridge between the first and second songs," recurring musical motives, such as the "descending functional bass lines at the beginning of verses" of four of the tracks, and the reprise of the first track in the penultimate track, along with the fact that sound effects and instruments were used consistently over the album's duration that could never be reproduced live in the same exact way.[73]

Personally, I see Moore's analytical process as more concerned with providing some evidence for the high aesthetic value he places on this album and less with the actual experience of consumers listening to the album. If concept albums follow a narrative, or surround some central idea, which one is it here?[74] Outside of the reprise of the opening track "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" toward the end of the album, there are very few interconnections among the tracks, something that Lennon himself has noted.[75] I do, however, agree with the importance Moore places on the fact that "the whole album is clearly set within a non-musical

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how these developed into concept albums in "Music for Middlebrows: Defining the Easy Listening Era, 1946-1966," *American Music* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 309-335. Specifically, Keightley writes about the emergence of "mood music LPs" in the 1950s that functioned as background music to other non-musical activities, such as "Music for Dining" and "Music for Dreaming." Like some of the pop LPs Decker discusses, these "theme albums" also had a unified concept, and these theme albums "would later be renamed the 'concept album' when rock culture began to praise extended works evincing thematic or conceptual coherence" (319).

[72] Alan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2001 [1993]), 70.

[73] Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 95. Moore continues by writing about the various musical techniques bands like Yes and the Who employed to create unified concept albums in coming years (96-98).

[74] These are the two different types of concept albums David Buckley describes in "Album," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, last accessed July 27, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.47210.

[75] See David Sheff, *All We Are Saying: The Last Major Interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 197.

context," as it represents an idealized performance by the fictional Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, a "concept" I find is best suggested by the front of the album cover and the inner gatefold.[76]

Sgt. Pepper, like other so-called concept albums, exemplifies Gracyk's ontologically thick rock album. Oftentimes, the notions of unity and cohesiveness that are relied on to valorize these canonized rock albums function at the level of discourse: academics like Moore employ language associated with Western art music in order to confer authenticity on these albums, but the degree of "unity" in concept albums is deeply subjective.[77] Academics, though, were not the first people to elevate such recordings by borrowing values and terminology from musical idealism, as rock critics in the 1960s also toyed with notions of "unity," "originality," and "expressivity."

Indeed, it was these very rock critics who most likely created the term "concept album" itself during this decade. Though I have been unable to trace the precise etymology of the term "concept album," Google's *Ngram* viewer suggests it began to be used in 1967 (contemporaneous with *Sgt. Pepper* and The Moody Blues' *Days of Future Passed*) and slowly became more common in the coming years, alongside the term "rock opera."[78] It was around this

[76] Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text,* 94-95. Moore does not discuss the iconic album cover, but I find it is this component that most strongly suggests such an interpretation of the album's primary concept. By foregrounding new, psychedelic personas in contrast to those from the Beatlemania era (represented as their wax figures next to them), the four members of the Beatles were indicating that they had shed their youthful images for something more mature and experimental, creating an album that was not based on live music making at all; they had even stopped touring in the months before recording this album.

[77] This has been my personal experience as an instructor as well, as I have taught three undergraduate courses at UCLA on the history of the concept album. In these classes, I assigned over ten concept albums, both those from the canon and those typically excluded from it. At the end of each term, I asked my students which albums they found most unified; their opinions diverged significantly, ranging from Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) to Frank Zappa's *Joe's Garage* (1979), and Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* (1971). Not *one* student listed *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

[78] "Concept album" search in https://books.google.com/ngrams. "Song cycle" was also a term used to compare *Sgt. Pepper* to Romantic-era classical music; see, for instance, Albert Goldman, "A Grand Opera in Rock," *Life Magazine*, October 17, 1969, which also includes discussion of The Who's rock opera *Tommy* as "serious art."

time that rock music, and the music of the Beatles in particular, began to be talked about as cohesive albums; Lennon also notes that *Sgt. Pepper* was "called the first concept album."[79] By the end of the decade, however, rock artists themselves were talking about how concept albums "were suddenly perceived as rather naff and pretentious."[80] This was a common criticism made in rock journalism as well: Lester Bangs, writing in *Rolling Stone* in 1969, puts the term "concept" in scare quotes, suggesting it was a known term at the time, and he also uses it as a pejorative, flipping around the Romantic qualities imbued in this term as negative characteristics, labeling concept albums as "heavy-handed" and "self-aggrandizing manifestoes."[81]

Considering the ontological thickness of an album like *Sgt. Pepper*, along with the many ways writers compared it to Western art music in this era, one would think contemporaneous transcriptions of it would aim to transmit into notation the album's complexity and those elements that make the album a distinctive format, foregrounding timbre and any of its "unifying" musical devices. The Chas H. Hansen Music Corporation was the sole U.S. publisher and distributor of Beatles sheet music in this period; looking at what they actually published shows a complete lack of interest in "conceptual" unity and complexity. Though Hansen published various collections of the Beatles music at different price points, most of it was

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[79] Lennon's remarks on *Sgt. Pepper* can be found in a 1980 interview reprinted in Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, 197. For an early example of a publication that discusses the music of the Beatles through the lens of the album, see Richard Goldstein's 1966 review of *Revolver* ("Pop Eye: On *Revolver*," *Village Voice*, August 25, 1966). Though Goldstein does not use the term "concept album," he discusses the album *as an album,* writing that "there is some mediocre material on this album. But the mystique forming around 'Revolver' is based on more than one or two choice tracks—it encompasses the record as a whole." Comparing classical song cycles and concept albums, Martina Elicker similarly writes that *Sgt. Pepper* is considered the first pop music concept album, even if not intended to be so; see Martina Elicker, "Concept Albums: Song Cycles in Popular Music," in *Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field*, ed. Walter Bernhart, Werner Wolf and David L. Mosley (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2001), 227-46, esp. 230-31.

[80] See Gentle Giant's Derek Shulman interviewed by thodoris, *Hit Channel*, April 22, 2014, http://www.hit-channel.com/interviewderek-shulman-gentle-giant/62545.

[81] Lester Bangs, "Review of 'The Street Giveth and the Street Taketh Away,' by Cat Mother and the All Night Newsboys," *Rolling Stone*, August 9, 1969. Six months later Bangs would stop using scare quotes, suggesting that the term "concept album" had already become a mainstream term; see Lester Bangs, "Review of 'S.F. Sorrows (sic)' by the Pretty Things," *Rolling Stone*, February 7, 1970.

formatted similarly (see *Figure 1.1*): one or two staves that contain an organ accompaniment, with a vocal line above that includes a basic melody and lyrics, with chord symbols above that; occasionally there would also be chord diagrams included for the guitar.[82] Even in the 1970s, the Beatles' music would continue to be transcribed by other publishers in a lead sheet format, such as a 1977 publication that includes a vocal-keyboard reduction with basic guitar chords.[83]

Let us consider one of Hansen's transcriptions, of the song "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," which opens the album of the same name. This is a transcription of what Gracyk would call an ontologically thick work, not written for performance, but pieced together in the studio to be instantiated through mechanical playback. The sheet music, *Figure 1.1*, presents the reader with a shockingly thin song suitable for amateur home performance that, as Davies would observe, "under-specifies a great many of the details constitutive" of the work it represents.[84] For a listener of the actual recording, this track introduces the theatrical "concept" of the album as such: sounds of audience noise and an orchestra tuning up construct an aural frame for the fictional performance by Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band that is to follow. The strings at the opening and the French horns in the following section suggest that the album will use an instrumental palette extending far beyond the typical four-piece guitar-based rock'n'roll the Beatles were known for; ironically, given the conceit of a live performance from

[82] The most expensive line of Beatles sheet music published by Hansen is the Regency Line, which cost $5.95 in the early 1970s, and this includes a transcribed collection of nearly all the Beatles' recordings up through 1969's *Yellow Submarine*; see *Beatles Complete* (Miami Beach, FL: Hansen Publications, 1969).
[83] See *The Beatles Greatest Hits* (Creative Concepts: Ojai, CA, 1977).
[84] Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 125.



Figure 1.1: The entire transcription of "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," from The Beatles, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, in* The Beatles Complete*, 151.*

the "band," we immediately grasp how impractical this album would be for live rock'n'roll performance.

The sheet music transmits none of this, though the lyrics transcribed from the chorus ("We hope you will enjoy the show") hints at the fourth wall being broken. The music is also notated in C major even though it sounds in G, perhaps because it was easier to transcribe and play the tune in this key on the keyboard, or more likely because the transposed vocal melody fits more comfortably in the range of amateur singers. Even excusing this change, the opening chord progression includes dominant-seventh chords that are transcribed here as minor-seventh chords. What is the function of this Beatles sheet music, then? Considering its inaccuracies and the fact that it is transcribed for a keyboard instrument instead of the original instruments (or sounds) present on the primary recording, it has little analytical use, as it does not tell the consumer much about the music on the recording or how it was created; it also provides the bare minimum needed to perform this music, as the album's tunes would only be recognizable based on the lyrics and vocal melodies—those very elements that necessarily had to be transcribed for securing copyright. Considering *Figure 1.1* is the *entire* transcription, all the verses are also excised, treating this song as a jazz standard. So, while this transcription is a typical, if unusually perfunctory example of rock sheet music in my era*,* it cannot be taken as a score in Goodman's sense because it does not prescribe a performance of a work; if this sheet music could be used for performance at all, it would merely be as a mnemonic device for the recording.

When it comes to rock music, sheet music will always be ontologically thinner than the recorded work it aims to capture. However, these transcriptions themselves become thicker as the Rock Era continues. The lead sheet format, riddled with inaccuracies, is replaced, at the core of a growing rock canon, by note-for-note transcriptions, a process that occurs with other canonic

rock music transcriptions as well, such as those of Jimi Hendrix's music (see Chapter 3). By the 1980s, some rock albums were being transcribed as something akin to works, resulting in sheet music explicitly labeled as a "score," such as the collection of authoritative transcriptions of the Beatles music simply entitled *The Beatles: Complete Scores*.[85] (Though further discussed and contextualized in my conclusion*, Figure 1.2* includes a portion of the chorus of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" from this publication for comparative purposes.) While still ontologically thinner than the associated recordings, this sheet music corrected earlier inaccuracies and provided notation for most of the instruments that were originally performed on the recording, thus potentially prescribing a performance more closely resembling the original work. As the notational detail of such a transcription increases, it asymptotically captures more and more elements of the recorded work in question, becoming *like a* work and "parasitizing" the model's identity.

Transcribing the Blues as Literature

While rock recordings are ontologically thick works created from an assemblage of many different tracks, recordings of folk music tend to capture a single performance. What, exactly, is a folk musician performing, then? Happy Traum, one of the guitar pedagogues I will profile in Chapter 3, claims that the music of early blues guitar players was rarely notated but "survived and evolved into the collective consciousness" of African Americans through an oral tradition. Each individual that participates in this process changes "the song slightly to suit his own predicament . . . Thus, we have dozens of versions of the same song, often with a different title

[85] *The Beatles: Complete Scores* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989).



Figure 1.2: A transcription of the beginning of the chorus to "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," in The Beatles: Complete Scores, *858.*

and verses, but with that same thread running through."[86] Recordings, first made in the 1920s, reified this complex set of social relations, allowing a blues musician to "claim authorship over a song they had written. But still the process went on, and recorded songs often got the same treatment as songs heard by itinerant musicians and were changed and incorporated into the collective tradition."[87] A recorded version of a song, then, can be instructive, but it is not authoritative—it is just one snapshot of music that is always changing through each performance.

There is a split in how transcribers aimed to notate these changes in blues tunes over time. Guitarists were concerned with the process of learning and transmitting a given tune's guitar accompaniment, but this was not accomplished by using detailed transcriptions, rather by words and notation geared towards broader pedagogical goals, such as teaching students how to

[86] Happy Traum, *The Blues Bag* (New York, NY: Consolidated Music Publishers, Inc., 1968), 9.
[87] Traum, *The Blues Bag*, 9.

play and improvise freely in certain styles; this "conversational" approach to transcribing the blues is covered in Chapter 3, where I also detail a distinct approach to transcribing the blues that was also pervasive in this era, which treats the musical accompaniment to blues lyrics as outside the purview of transcription. Here, the essential part of a blues song worth capturing is the lyrics, as carried by a particular navigation of the blues scale and figuration—and these are transcribed from a given recorded performance of a song that, as Traum describes, is always being modified by performers and never exists as any single thing. Such an approach to transcribing folk music assumes a scholarly audience who do not necessarily want to learn how to play the music; instead, the record is treated as a field recording, with lyrics transcribed to document and analyze a certain type of commercial folk culture.

By focusing on the voice at the expense of the musical accompaniment, such transcriptions end up appearing surprisingly like rock sheet music from this period; typically, only the vocal melody (and perhaps harmonies) from one verse of a recording are transcribed, followed by the remainder of the lyrics in stanza form. This style of folk music transcription is quite old, as I noted in my introductory discussion of von Herder, but it also represents a distinct trend in scholarly work that survives through the 1970s as well. Jeffrey Todd Titon, for instance, is an American academic who, like Lomax, had a similar interest in the blues as a type of American folklore. One of his significant studies of this topic, *Early Downhome Blues*, uses numerous transcriptions of blues records from the 1920s.[88] Using an information theory framework, Titon concerns himself with blues structures and how they fit together like a

[88] Jeff Titon, *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977). What Titon means by "downhome" is covered in "Chapter 1: Down Home," 3-33; basically, he is using this term to talk about the blues recorded primarily by traveling men in the 1920s, thus differentiating it from the "vaudeville" blues, which was performed by blues women in an ensemble, such as Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's music. Notably, it was these "vaudeville" blues that were more commonly published, such as by W.C. Handy (25-26).

complicated jigsaw puzzle; by specifying all variables in order to account for every permutation, he creates a "productive system" that can be used to create new music.[89] Titon uses his transcriptions to derive "a melodic grammar" and "tonal lexicon" of early downhome blues; analysis then allows him to "demonstrate a song-making model, which, given words, will produce an acceptable blues melody and set those words to it."[90]

Figure 1.3 illustrates Titon's approach to transcription, something he finds "valuable to the extent that it identifies performance elements useful in analysis; transcription and analysis provide material for musical description, comparison, and the construction of song-producing models."[91] Titon tends to transcribe the entirety of the lyrics in a given performance (additional lyrics follow those given in *Figure 1.3*); he also provides the vocal melody to a "typical stanza," while others are provided if the melody is modified.[92] The recordings here are positioned as the primary object of transcription, as the precise pressing the transcription is taken from is always indicated; vocal melodies are also transcribed in greater notational detail. Because it is important for Titon to cross-index many different transcriptions, vocal melodies are all transposed to C, but the original key is noted at the beginning of the excerpt. The texts, then, are once again treated as the most important part of a given blues recording—Titon also dedicates an entire chapter to analyzing them.[93]

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[89] Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, xiv.
[90] Ibid., 173 and 137, respectively. In the 1990s, "new musicologists" approached blues forms very differently from Titon, such as Susan McClary, for instance, focuses on the ways that blues artists use form to carve out their own subjectivity; see Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), especially "Chapter 2: Thinking Blues," 32-62.
[91] Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, 66-67.
[92] Ibid., 65.
[93] See "Chapter 5: Formulaic Structure and Meaning in Early Downhome Blues Lyrics," in ibid., 178-93. This chapter is particularly influenced by contemporaneous publications in linguistics, particularly Noam Chomsky's theories of transformational-generative grammar. Titon mentions his indebtedness to Chomsky's work in ibid., 41 and 141 fn. 2.

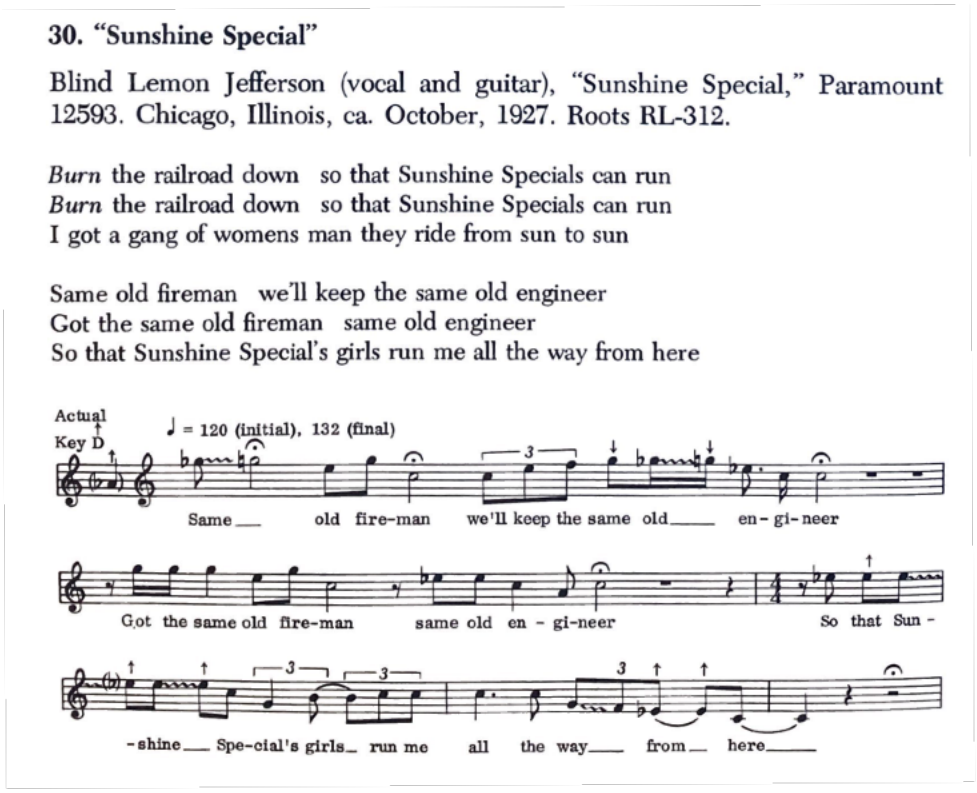


Figure 1.3: Lyrics and vocal melody of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Sunshine Special" (Paramount 12593, 1928), in Titon, Early Downhome Blues*, 112.*

Titon's study and the transcriptions he employs speak clearly to an ontological model of the blues that he subscribes to, one that, like Traum's, emphasizes varied repetition. Titon finds that performers singing a particular song typically work from a foundational stanza with set lyrics; other performances—either by the same singer or not—mix in other thematically related stanzas.[94] Titon's quasi-syntactic study leads him to conclude that though a blues song is never sung the same twice, blues singers keep a "skeletal tune" in the back of their minds while they sing; as he writes, this "skeletal tune may provisionally be defined as the melody which a stanza would take were it not for the demands of stress. For the analyst it most likely will remain a construct, for it is doubtful that a skeletal tune is ever sung. In principle, however, the skeleton is

[94] Ibid., 37.

derivable from the stanzas in a song which are, in fact, sung."[95] In this case, then, the "work" in the blues is a "construct"—a deep structure—that never actually shows up in the performed music. Titon's transcriptions capture the variations on this skeletal tune actually performed on a given record.

Other studies of the blues in the long 1960s use transcription in a similar fashion to Titon's book. Samuel Charters, a white man who traveled across the south in the 1950s and '60s and recorded music with some of his subjects, wrote what he claimed was the first serious study of the blues in 1959, *The Country Blues*; his 1967 book *The Bluesmen* serves as a revision.[96] While Charters makes some historical connections between the blues and music native to Africa, he is primarily interested in providing biographies and stylistic observations of male blues singers, organized by geography. As we have seen, transcribers in the Rock Era aim for a closer representation of a primary recording in notation than others had in previous decades, and Charters' transcriptions in this book illustrate this as well. Though he admits that translating Black music into Western notation is challenging, he still worked to get "as close as possible to the original" recording.[97] Yet, this only applies to the lyrics and vocal melodies, as once again, a verse's musical accompaniment is rarely transcribed, though its position within the verse might be indicated.[98] Because it would not capture "the complex structure of the original performance"—among other reasons—he does not include harmonic language, nor is anything

[95] Ibid., 170.
[96] Samuel Charters, *The Country Blues* (New York, NY: Rinehart & Company, 1959) and *The Bluesmen: The Story and the Music of the Men Who Made the Blues* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1967). Though the terminology is different, Charter's use of the term "country blues" can be seen as more or less synonymous with Titon's "downhome blues."
[97] Charters, *The Bluesmen*, 13.
[98] See, for instance, the example of Charley Patton's "Down the Dirt Road Blues," ibid., 51-52.

notated for the guitar.[99] One section of his book, "Some Other Texas Singers," includes only prose and lyrics.[100]

The rediscovery of these blues men's 78 RPM recordings in the 1960s led to a process of canonization, aided by the publishing of transcriptions. Robert Johnson, for instance, was recorded in the mid-1930s but did not receive much popular and scholarly attention until an album of his recorded performances was released by Columbia in 1961 as *King of the Delta Blues Singers*; this album would be very influential for canonized guitar players such as Eric Clapton, who, along with Keith Richards, would contribute some of the liner notes for the album's 1990 re-release.[101] Clearly, for these famous players, along with many blues fans, the most valuable part of Johnson's oeuvre was his guitar playing; academically-minded studies of the blues published in the coming decades, though, continued to focus on lyrics.[102]

The first collection of transcriptions focused exclusively on Johnson's recordings was released in the U.K. in 1969.[103] This publication functioned as an anthology, documenting every one of Johnson's twenty-nine commercially recorded tunes.[104] The transcriber, referred to only as "J.R.M," notes that he is *not* trying to capture in notation something akin to Titon's "skeletal

[99] Charters discusses this on ibid., 13.
[100] Ibid., 204-210.
[101] See Stephen C. LaVere et al., liner notes for *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*, Columbia C3 46222, 1990, 2 CDs. For more on Johnson and his rediscovery, see Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York, NY: Amistad, 2004).
[102] For some representative examples see Eric Sackheim, *Blues Line: A Collection of Blues Lyrics* (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1969) and Michael Taft, "The Lyrics of Race Record Blues, 1920–1942: A Semantic Approach to the Structural Analysis of a Formulaic System," Ph.D diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977. These sources and other similar ones are discussed in M.G. McGeachy, *Lonesome Words: The Vocal Poetics of the Old English Lament and the African-American Blues Song* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[103] As *Robert Johnson: King of the Delta Blues* (London: Immediate Music Ltd., 1969).
[104] Some of these tracks had an alternate take recorded, which is why *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings* (Columbia 46222, 1990, 2 CDs) had a total of 41 tracks, thus encompassing every single recording Johnson did excepting an alternate take of "Traveling Riverside Blues." The original 78 RPM releases, with the exception of "Kind Hearted Woman Blues," did not include these alternate takes, which started to be included on LP releases in the 1960s.

tune," a "hypothetical original melody line which served as the basis of the variation technique characteristically employed by Bluesmen."[105] Instead, the transcriptions are focused primarily on Johnson's precise words and vocal melodies as performed on these recordings.

Figure 1.4, a transcription of his 1936 recording of "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," looks like the other examples in this 1969 collection, a transcribed verse with a very brief guitar introduction, while the complete lyrics follow the notation (not pictured). This tune was recorded by Johnson during his first session on November 23, 1936, and is the only version released, though Johnson likely recorded another take of it, since lost.[106] Johnson's version follows other tunes from 1932 and 1933 that employ similar melodies and lyrics.[107] The transcribed lyrics and melody for the first verse closely match the recording, though they are not notated in concert pitch. The general swing feel of the guitar's introduction is also notated, albeit monophonically, as the recorded guitar part also includes a lower voice played with the thumb. As we will see in Chapter 3, transcribing a guitar part into tablature brings up a host of issues that must be dealt with by the transcriber, one of which is how to notate alternate guitar tunings that someone like Johnson would frequently use.[108] This is not a problem when transcribing music into standard notation, as it merely translates pitches, but tablature also indicates *how* a particular guitar part can be played.

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[105] *Robert Johnson: King of the Delta Blues,* 2.
[106] See LaVere et al., liner notes to *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*, 46.
[107] See Gayle Dean Wardlow, *Chasin' That Devil Music: Searching for the Blues* (San Francisco, CA: Miller Freeman Books, 1998), 168.
[108] The definitive collection of Johnson transcriptions, Woody Mann's *The Complete Robert Johnson* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1991), notates "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" in drop D tuning (see pp. 78-81). In the preface, Mann notes that Johnson used an array of guitar tunings in sequence during his first recording session, starting with "standard tuning in the key of A" and then moving through "dropped D tuning, standard tuning in E, open D tuning, standard tuning in E, open G tuning, and finally, standard tuning in A" (5). In some instances, the only significant difference between two of his recorded tracks is the guitar tuning used, such as in "Ramblin' On My Mind" (in open D) versus "When You Got a Good Friend" (in standard tuning).



Figure 1.4: Transcription of Robert Johnson's "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" (Vocalion 03475, 1937), in Robert Johnson: King of the Delta Blues, 8.

Other stand-alone publications on Johnson's music would soon follow. Charters himself would release a book in 1973 that included many transcriptions.[109] Though acknowledging that there would have been alterations in each performance, Charters notes his attempts to "notate Robert Johnson's blues as closely as possible from the recordings."[110] Charters is aware of the many alternate tunings Johnson used, but because he did not know the exact ones employed on each recording, he chose to transpose the tunes to "natural" guitar keys.[111]

[109] See Samuel Charters, *Robert Johnson* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1973).
[110] Charters, *Robert Johnson*, 23.
[111] See ibid., 17 for a discussion of this. Charters notes how complicated it is to deal with transcribing music created using alternate guitar tunings; in discussing his transcription of "Walkin' Blues," he writes that Johnson "sang in

None of the individual transcriptions in Charter's publication include any reference to Johnson's guitar accompaniment, but one way Charters gets around this is by asserting that Johnson used a generic pattern for all of his guitar introductions, which I provide in *Figure 1.5*. Ontologically, then, Charters also takes the view that "the work," at least regarding Johnson's music, exists beyond a specific recorded performance as some sort of generic model. His transcription of "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," *Figure 1.6*, is not substantially different from J.R.M's earlier transcription, though it is a bit more precise in notating the vocal melody. Again, the remainder of the lyrics follow the notated except.



Figure 1.5: Johnson's generic guitar introduction in Samuel Charters, *Robert Johnson*, 23.

concert B, but the guitar is tuned to open G. Transposing the song down to G lowered it too much, and lost the feeling of the performance, but to leave it in B gave it a sense of harmonic complexity that was misleading, so I took it up to concert C, with the note that the guitar accompaniment should be raised with retuning or a capo" (ibid.). This passage shows Charter's sensitivity to using the transcription as a "score" for performance, while also making his process seem closer to arranging than transcribing.



Figure 1.6: Transcription of Robert Johnson's "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom,", in Charters, Robert Johnson*, 28.*

Viewed through the lens of musical works, the blues and rock are distinct because recordings capture different things. In rock, the recording is the work and everything essential to that work is found on the recording. In the blues, though, a recording reifies a certain performance of an elusive, "skeletal" musical work constantly going through a cycle of variation but primarily based on lyrics, especially a tune's first, foundational verse. How interesting, then, that transcriptions of both genres appear visually similar in this era! Both resemble old-fashioned

pop lead sheets, which centered lyrics and vocal lines, and have historically included unrealized harmonic sonorities through chord symbols or diagrams above the melodic line. Clearly, then, such transcriptions were influenced by the hegemonic influence of previous sheet music practices, such as Tin Pan Alley songwriting and the Library of Congress's required format for securing copyright. Thus, in the Rock Era, there is a growing discrepancy between what the consumer and the law/publisher/scholar understand as "the work" in recorded popular music, a tension made clear in comparing rock recordings and sheet music created from them, a topic I cover in more detail in Chapter 3.

Jazz Works and Transcriptions

Earlier in this chapter, I examined musical works in rock from both ontological and historical perspectives, arguing that the recording is the primary object of attention, even though transcribers rarely approximated them as such until the 1980s. Instead, genres like rock and the blues were commonly transcribed into vocal lead sheets without much thought given to instrumental accompaniment. How might the ontology of jazz—as another genre that has historically employed lead sheets—differ from rock and the blues, and what might transcriptions tell us about this?

As we have seen, rock artists create autographic musical works through recording. American popular music predating rock, however, preserves the use of lead sheets as ontologically thin, allographic works including essential elements of a song (a melody, lyrics, and often harmony), which are then elaborated on through performance. Some of these lead sheets—taken from Tin Pan Alley popular songs, Broadway tunes, and Hollywood musicals—formed the canon of jazz standards that would be included in fake books, the history of which I

provided in my introduction. Unlike a classical music score, lead sheets are not meant to be followed closely but instead are used as the basis for improvisation. Symbols for harmonic progression—the chord "changes"—are very useful for this purpose: given these symbols, a pianist or guitarist does not need to follow a written-out part (as in vocal and piano sheet music), but can use the supplied chord symbols to make up their own accompaniment, even if they did not know the original—in other words, to "fake" it.[112]

Creating novel renditions of pre-existing material through improvisation is a crucial part of the jazz tradition, and fake books—later dubbed "real" books, to signify the centrality of creative remaking through improvisation to the jazz aesthetic—are central objects in this process; recordings document specific performances and serve as models that can also be referred to and elaborated on. Thus, an ontological study of jazz must honor the tension between written and improvised musical components, and between the allographic and autographic: jazz standards might be performed in many different ways, but notable recorded performances by canonical artists become an object of focus for transcribers. Because jazz combines these two different ontological models, "the work" in this genre can be challenging to identify with precision.

Composer and music theorist Chris Cutler details how one such standard tune exemplifies jazz music's clashes with copyright laws in the 1960s: "My Favorite Things" was written by Rodgers and Hammerstein for the 1959 musical *The Sound of Musi*c, and, as such, it originally existed as a notated score for performance, in this case by pit orchestra and vocal soloist. Just the notated vocal melody and lyrics were required to secure copyright; this transcription—a re-written, reduced version of the original "My Favorite Things," with chord symbols—would then become a standard inclusion in jazz fake books, such as the *Real Book*, reproduced in *Figure*

[112] Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham: MD, Scarecrow Press, 2006), 49.

1.7.[113] Jazz artist John Coltrane then recorded a version of this tune on his album *My Favorite Things* released in 1961.[114] Though the show tune's original melody can be heard at several places in Coltrane's recording, as Cutler writes, "a great percentage [of the recorded performance] contains no sequence of notes found in the [original] written score."[115] Further, Coltrane does not solo over the chord progression as provided in the lead sheet, but instead over two tonic chords (moving from a minor to major chord).[116]

Clearly, then, Coltrane's rendition differs wildly from the original and the lead sheet reduction. Yet, as Cutler points out, the composing rights of his version are assigned to Rodgers and Hammerstein, something that "hardly recognizes the compositional work" of Coltrane and his ensemble. Indeed, to claim credit for this before the new copyright law in 1972, "one had to produce some kind of score constructed from the record—a topsy-turvy practice in which the music created the composer."[117] Coltrane himself subscribed to an allographic interpretation of this piece, attesting that "My Favorite Things" was not his own composition but his performance of a copyrighted work by Rodgers and Hammerstein—a copyrighted work that his recording ineluctably reveals as ontologically very thin.[118]

Coltrane's recording captures a particular performance of a work, albeit a thin work that he performed differently many times in his career. However, it is *this* performance, captured in all its autographic thickness by Atlantic Records, for which he is best known. It is thus worth further theorizing the role of recordings in this genre. As a musical practice that emphasizes improvisation in live contexts, jazz tends to downplay the very artifacts that persist through time

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[113] See *The Real Book: Sixth Edition* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2004), 285.
[114] See John Coltrane, "My Favorite Things," *My Favorite* Things, Atlantic 1361, 1961, LP.
[115] Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonics," *Musicworks* 60 (Fall 1994): 6-19.
[116] Coltrane's recorded performance of "My Favorite Things" is analyzed in detail in Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 182-84.
[117] Cutler, "Plunderphonics."
[118] See Porter, *John Coltrane*, 182.



Figure 1.7: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, "My Favorite Things," from The Sound of Music *(1959), in* The Real Book, Sixth Edition, *285.*

and allow precise histories to be written. It is worth asking, then, an epistemological question: what forms our *knowledge* of jazz? Recordings tend to function as primary sources, while jazz criticism and transcriptions are secondary sources, as they stem from or comment on performances, whether recorded or live.[119] Less specialized forms of jazz knowledge are also distributed through representations in popular culture.[120] So, while jazz is typically treated (and highly valued) as a live musical idiom, historians and critics tend to know and write about jazz through its recordings.[121]

Is the "work" in jazz a given performance (live or in the studio), or the recording of this performance, then? Andrew Kania methodically covers four different potentials for a "work" in jazz: *first*, that there are "works for performance" (this would align jazz with an allographic, classical ontology); *second*, that a jazz performance is the work; *third*, that the recording is the work; and *fourth*, that there is no work in jazz at all. Kania begins with the first possibility, interestingly suggesting that the predominant view in academic literature is that jazz and

[119] In addition to recordings, criticism, and transcription, there is no doubt that oral histories also play an important role in constructing a body of jazz knowledge: lore and stories *from* musicians and *about* musicians also add to what we think and know about jazz, even if they are often impossible to corroborate or contain outright falsehoods. Indeed, before jazz became fully part of academic discourse in the 1980s and '90s, writers' reliance on this type of source was rightly pointed out as problematic; see Lewis Porter, "Some Problems in Jazz Research," *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (Autumn 1988): 196-98. Ken Burns' widely known documentary *Jazz* from 2001 deals little with notation in order to reach a more general audience, but he relies on these other types of jazz knowledge to construct a standard jazz narrative, including stories and biographies of the great jazz men (and they are almost all men), significant recordings, and influential writers on jazz, such as Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray. Porter, writing many years before Burns' documentary was made, directs strong criticism at the jazz biographer James Lincoln Collier, who Porter sees as often making implicitly racist statements in one of his well-known jazz biographies, *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Collier would end up being one of the primary voices used in Burns's *Jazz*.

[120] For some takes on how jazz is portrayed in non-musical media in the United States, especially through film, see the collection Krin Gabbard ed., *Representing Jazz* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). Kristin McGee discusses how film and television from the 1920s to the 1950s allow for more representation of women in jazz's history in *Some Liked It Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television 1928-1959* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009).

[121] For more on this see Jed Rasula, "The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press), 134-62.

classical music share an ontology.[122] He dissents, pointing out how unintuitive it is to think of jazz as an allographic art form: lead sheets are not prescriptive in the way that classical scores are; indeed, scores are not frequently used in jazz, and when they are, they function quite differently. Duke Ellington, for instance, certainly had many of his jazz compositions, such as "Concerto for Cootie" (recorded in 1940), "fully scored . . . leaving no more room for improvisation than a typical late-Romantic work for performance" (191). But a deeper exploration into Ellington's arrangement practices shows a distinct approach to music making. Kania notes different "arrangements" of a piece like "Rockin' in Rhythm," for example, that taken together suggest Ellington was more concerned with "thinking of new ways to produce exciting performances, rather than perfecting an enduring entity," constantly changing the instrumentation to better reflect the abilities of the individual players in his ensemble at a given time (191).[123] Ellington's reliance on tightly arranged charts is at the "classicizing" end of jazz practice, influenced perhaps by white attempts to fuse jazz with symphonic music; the essential pretext for modern jazz is live improvisation, and if so, a "performance cannot be of a pre-existing work," as none exist when it comes to improvisation (181-85).

Perhaps, then, the improvisation itself—as part of an ephemeral performance—is the work. This hypothesis is not compatible with Kania's definition of a "work," however, which is an "enduring object" that is the "primary focus of critical attention" in each art form. The

[122] See Andrew Kania, "Pieces of Music: The Ontology of Classical, Rock, and Jazz Music," Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2005, 168-92. Among those who hold this view, Kania emphasizes Carol S. Gould and Kenneth Keaton, "The Essential Role of Improvisation in Musical Performance," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (2000): 143-48 and James O. Young and Carl Matheson, "The Metaphysics of Jazz," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (2000): 125-34, though he also mentions that non-academics also have a tendency to treat jazz as similar to classical music in regards to its ontology, such as Ken Burns' documentary *Jazz*.

[123] Kania's language is interesting here: he uses "arrangement" to talk about this piece having different instrumentations. However, when considering the possibility of a classical ontology for jazz, he uses the term "transcription" instead, again suggesting that transcriptions are less ontologically removed from a work than an arrangement.

"durability" of a given work is particularly crucial to him, as a composed work is not just an occasion for "aesthetic appreciation" but is an aesthetic object that is *worked on* over time to "maximize" its aesthetic value (193-94). Privileging the recording of an improvisation might seem to address the problem: the album as an object is often the "primary focus" in jazz *and* it "endures" over time; improvisations on record might be created live in the moment, but the best often results from multiple recorded takes rooted in hours of practice, all of which serves to "maximize" its value.

Still, even this does not satisfy Kania, as he points out that if we consider jazz recordings to be works, then we must consider classical recordings to be works as well, since they meet all the same criteria; this, of course, is not something ontologists of art music accept (198). Ultimately, Kania concludes that there is no work in jazz at all. Writing again about Ellington, he makes this point clearly, writing that like in classical music, "Ellington wrote parts for his musicians to play, and he expected them to stick to what he wrote. Ellington thereby brought a re-instantiable sound-structure into existence. But where Ellington crucially differs from the classical composer is that he did not expect, or even desire, future performers—himself and his band included—to play what he wrote *on this occasion*" (199-200; emphasis added).

As with Gracyk, I find Kania to be more concerned with crafting a rigorous ontological formula than with using historical discourse to reach his conclusions. Improvisations—those musical moments that will never be played the same way again except on a recording—are what jazz transcribers aim to capture in notation. These improvisations are usually recorded, allowing for more accurate transcription to take place, but even in the 1920s some listeners had good enough ears to transcribe live jazz performances on tablecloths or napkins.[124] The earliest jazz

[124] This is discussed in Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 133 fn. 30, where he specifically cites the words of Preston Jackson

transcriptions were published in this decade and were also based on live performances over recordings, such as two standalone collections of Louis Armstrong's trumpet solos, published in 1927 as *50 Hot Choruses for Cornet* and *Louis Armstrong's 125 Jazz Breaks for Cornet*.[125] As Mark Tucker and Barry Kernfeld write, these two publications were consequential because they did not rely on the prior notation of the artist-composer but instead were compiled by transcribing Armstrong improvising live in the Melrose offices. (Unfortunately, the recordings from this sessions have never been found, so a direct comparison isn't possible).[126] This suggests that the goal of some of the earliest jazz transcriptions was not to capture a certain piece of music (which would have been aided by the artist's own notation and thus might have been closer to classical music's definition of a "transcription"), but were instead meant to capture a specific performance for posterity in the way a sound recording does.

Where does this leave us? Kania makes the ontologically radical claim that there is no work in jazz at all, and his argument is certainly convincing in its thoroughness. At the same time, though, jazz transcriptions illustrate the power vested in improvised performances. Indeed, perhaps the key component of jazz ontology is, as Georgina Born names it, *processual*. For Born, jazz is an interplay between a dialogic moment of performance, such as an improvisation, and the capture of that very moment of performance in commodity form by a recording, which can then serve as a reference for future performances; thus, jazz exemplifies a "processual ontology" that moves restlessly from performance, to recording, to performance, and so on.[127]

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and Mary Lou Williams in Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talking' to Ya: The Story of Jazz as Told by the Men Who Made It* (New York, NY: Dover, 1966 [1955]), 99 and 350.

[125] *50 Hot Choruses for Cornet* (Chicago, IL: Melrose Brothers Music Company, 1927) and *Louis Armstrong's 125 Jazz Breaks for Cornet* (Chicago, IL: Melrose Brothers Music Company, 1927).

[126] See Mark Tucker and Barry Kernfeld, "Transcription (ii)," in *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2002, last accessed August 4, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J454700.

[127] See Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 144.

This processual conception of jazz does seem to account for the way jazz standards are performed, recorded, transcribed, and re-performed, as well as the way jazz musicians learn to improvise from recordings of prior performances. Though Born does not refer specifically to jazz transcriptions, they fit into her processual ontology as artifacts that describe a performance that took place and offer potential for further performance and elaboration.

To summarize: We have seen the importance of works in classical music, and how these relate to notions of posterity and re-performability. While on the surface jazz occasionally mirrors a classical ontology, Kania illustrates the ways in which it is quite distinct; he is comfortable claiming that jazz has no works, because this genre treats musical idealism as anathema. In the early part of my period, however, academics like Gunther Schuller applied their training and experience in Western art music to jazz, treating recorded performances as works meant to be notated in detail. Indeed, jazz practice in the 1960s started to move away from pre-existing sources (e.g., lead sheets), so transcribers *had* to start transcribing heads and improvisations directly from recordings, applying classical music aesthetics to jazz in the process.

Chapter 2: "Black Dots on White Paper Just Can't Express What's in His Soul": Gunther Schuller Transcribes Ornette Coleman's Free Jazz

"Blacks create and move on. Whites document and then recycle. In the history of popular music, these truths are self-evident"-Nelson George, The Death of Rhythm and Blues[1]

In 2014, a group of conservatory trained jazz musicians named Mostly Other People Do the Killing (MOPDTK) released their album *Blue,* a note-for-note reconstruction of one of jazz's most iconic recordings, Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* from 1959.[2] In an article detailing MOPDTK's album, Tracy McMullen points out the rich historical precedent of such a project, explaining how "copying jazz artists' recorded performances" has been a centerpiece of jazz pedagogy over the twentieth century.[3] To sufficiently match Davis's recording, the musicians of MOPDTK used a common jazz technique: creating detailed, notated transcriptions as the basis for performance. Explaining the process, bandleader Moppa Elliott proclaims that he and his musicians are taking jazz transcription to its "logical extreme."[4]

In recreating a canonized recording note for note, Elliott and his bandmates are participating in a broader musical practice extending far beyond jazz in which artists "fetishize the live capture of the past-as-object."[5] In her book, *Haunthenticity*, McMullen adduces many

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[1] Quoted in John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cold: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 384.
[2] Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Columbia CS 8163, 1959, LP.
[3] Tracy McMullen, "Approaching the Jazz Past: MOPDTK's *Blue* and Jason Moran's 'In My Mind: Monk at Town Hall, 1959,'" *The Journal of Jazz Studies* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 2.
[4] Greg Elliott and Moppa Elliott, "Kind of, Kind of Blue: A Conversation with Mostly Other People Do the Killing," *Pop Matters,* 2014, https://www.popmatters.com/185662-kind-of-kind-of-blue-a-conversation-with-mostly-other-people-do-the--2495616921.html, as cited in McMullen, "Approaching the Jazz Past," 6. See the original source for a broader discussion of how the group uses transcription and how they think it functions in jazz pedagogy.
[5] Tracy McMullen, *Haunthenticity: Musical Replay and the Fear of the Real* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2019), 5. The obsession with perfectly replicating a canonized work is not limited to music; Gus Van Sant's shot-by-shot remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, released in 1998, comes to mind as a similar example in film. In a book on film remakes, author Anat Zanger describes Van Sant's film as a palimpsest and compares the opening scene between the two films; see Anat Zanger, *Film Remakes as Ritual and Disguise: From Carmen to Ripley* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 13-26. Thomas Leitch also provides a list of 101 differences between Hickcock's original and Van Sant's remake in "101 Ways to Tell Hitchcock's 'Psycho' from Gus Van Sant's," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (2000): 269-73.

examples, focusing on live performances by "clone bands" in the 1990s and 2000s that aim to replicate the experience of seeing original bands, such as ABBA and Genesis, perform live. There are numerous consistencies in these "authentic" live reenactments that "treat the past as a discrete object": the "fetishization of space, time, and material details"; reifying and perfecting past events as a form of control and domination; and emphasizing the immense labor involved in such a project. Taken together, these elements form what McMullen calls "Replay."[6]

Though McMullen is focused on live reenactments, MOPDTK's recording also draws on the aesthetics of Replay, using transcription and the affordances of recording media, like studio overdubs, to reenact and perfectly mimic Davis's classic album. In doing so, Elliott and his band illustrate a musical value system grounded in a Western epistemology.[7] That is, the band relies on the precision of notation to privilege the "objective over the subjective," using it to re-perform every surface-level musical element found in Davis's original album, reproducing each detail of instrumentation, pitch, tempo, and rhythm. MOPDTK thereby argues that "the work" in jazz is a static object from the past—in this case, a recording of a set of performances in a studio—created by a certain esteemed author.[8] The elements best captured by Western notation are emphasized by the act of transcription, as are broader values borrowed from musical idealism, in which an author's original work concept drives performers to expend significant labor to faithfully instantiate it in sound; here, at the "logical conclusion" of one tendency in jazz canonicity, a set of transcriptions is actually compiled into a musical score used for performance.

While MOPDTK's album showcases the aspects of jazz rooted in European art music

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[6] McMullen, *Haunthenticity*, 6-7. See ibid., 10; discussion of the "mimetic tradition" through this epistemological frame on pp. 90-92.
[7] This is discussed in McMullen, "Approaching the Jazz Past," 1.
[8] This is an important ontological distinction: yes, MOPDTK are replicating a recording, but it is a recording of live performances, as no post-production studio gimmickry was used in creating *Kind of Blue*, unlike later Davis albums such as 1970's *Bitches Brew*, Columbia GP 26, 2 LPs.

aesthetics, jazz music has always been a hybrid of Euro- and African-American traditions. McMullen tabulates some of the differences: while the European tradition "values private ownership, necessitating a clear object (the work) and an author," African-derived musics, such as West African drumming, prioritize subjective elements; instead of aiming for perfect repetition, a value is placed on "repeating with a signal difference."[9] This has been a topic in jazz criticism for decades, especially with reference to jazz improvisation. Ingrid Monson, for instance, draws on the writings of W.E.B Du Bois and Henry Louis Gates Jr. to foreground a notion of "doubleness," explaining how African and European value systems are both "clearly demarcated yet inextricably entwined" in the United States and especially in jazz.[10] Using Gates' notion of "signifyin(g)," Monson shows how jazz improvisers can speak to their audience by moving between these "two discursive universes" of Black and white through the deployment of a known musical quotation from a European source into a novel jazz context, for instance.[11] John Murphy similarly examines the positive role of "influence" among Black jazz improvisors who use repetition and variation to create meaning; in such a system, this is deemed creative and valuable, more so than any notion of "complete originality."[12]

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[9] Quotes in McMullen, *Haunthenticity*, 98 and McMullen, "Approaching the Jazz Past," 2 fn. 2, respectively. For more on the subjective elements of West African drumming, see the writings of Olly Wilson, who discusses the ways in which the music of the African diaspora reflects cultural values, especially through the role of timbre, such as Olly Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music," in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern,* ed. Josephine Wright with Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 327-38. A specialist on West African drumming, C.K. Ladzekpo explains polyrhythm through the cultural lens of the Ewe people, wherein they use rhythmic structures to represent the complexities of everyday life: when a beat and its cross-rhythm come together are moments of harmony, while the moments of disconnection in between represent struggles and chaos that must be overcome. This sentiment is best described by him in a 1994 lesson on polyrhythm; see "CK LADZEKPO (1) - Drum Rhythm Principles of Percussion Polyrhythm from Ghana, West Africa," uploaded by Englebert Humperdinck, December 5, 2012, YouTube video, 00:11:08, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK42w0H8rSU&t=210s.

[10] Ingrid Monson, "Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 288.

[11] Monson, "Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation," 290-92.

[12] John P. Murphy, "Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence," *The Black Perspective in Music* 18, no. 1/2 (1990): 9.

As illustrated in the epigraph above, often these epistemological dichotomies are cleanly mapped onto race. Nelson George's succinct—and reductive—commentary on popular music highlights a differential in power and position: though Black artists and musicians are responsible for many of the primary achievements in American popular music, white scholars and critics have been the ones explicitly concerned with documenting and recreating its artifacts, feeding into a need for mastery and control. This has certainly been true in jazz history: Amiri Baraka, in his 1963 essay "Jazz and the White Critic" notes bluntly that "most jazz critics have been white Americans, but most important jazz musicians have not been."[13] MOPDTK's *Blue* also speaks to George's observation, as transcription works here to both "document" and "recycle" pre-existing Black music through an album made by a group of non-Black, self-proclaimed "bourgeois, conservatory trained music nerds."[14]

Such a dichotomy between Black and white, however, tends to problematically foreground difference through the lens of racial essence. I find it more useful to follow the work of McMullen and Monson that emphasizes competing epistemological positions ("doubleness") in jazz, and their grounding in systems of knowledge and learned cultural practice. The high value MOPDTK places on a note-for-note recreation of a canonic jazz album certainly stems from their conservatory backgrounds, training that they themselves choose to emphasize. Though jazz encompasses both European and African American musical practices, young jazz musicians like MOPTDK have been trained in musical conservatories for decades, institutions rooted in Western modes of translation and value.[15] It follows, then, that if *Blue* is the "logical conclusion"

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[13] Amiri Baraka, *Black Music* (Brooklyn, NY: Akashi Classics, 2010 [1968]), 13.
[14] This is written by Elliott in the liner notes to *Blue*; McMullen cites this and points out that these terms are all "signifiers of white, middleclass-ness" in "Approaching the Jazz Past," 9.
[15] Lewis Porter discusses the state of jazz education in the late 1980s in Lewis Porter, "Jazz in American Education Today," *College Music Symposium* 29 (1989): 134-39, wherein he laments the lack of jazz education in American public schools and suggests that jazz study in higher education could benefit from a more critical and wholistic approach. In a more contemporary take, David Ake provides a literature review of writings on jazz education,

of using transcription to re-perform the music of others, it is part of a longer historical process of jazz institutionalization.

MOPDTK's *Blue* only makes sense as the "logical conclusion" of *musical idealism's* influence on conservatory jazz, as the band members use their knowledge of Western music to create detailed transcriptions of *Kind of Blue,* allowing them to precisely capture the sounds on Davis' recording and use them for their own purposes, demonstrating their mastery and control of the original material, along with their adherence to classical music values.[16] While jazz transcriptions often carry with them a musical idealist ideology, this is not the only way they have been used over jazz's history. Indeed, many artists have used notated transcriptions for different purposes, as an act of devotion, for example, in which they can learn from and embody the original performer, *not* precisely re-perform their music. Saxophonist Joe Henderson, for instance, discusses how he learned to improvise by transcribing recorded solos, a process that allowed him to "have a conversation" with other jazz performers, and to "incorporate" and transform their improvisations into his own.[17] Here, creativity does not stem from Romantic notions of originality but from *varied repetition*: by learning Charlie Parker's solos, for example,

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illustrating that there has always been a tension between learning jazz in its "natural" environment (such as clubs and concerts) and learning how to play jazz in the academy—yet, as he suggests, nearly everyone learning jazz over recent decades has learned it in some sort of formal educational setting; see David Ake, "Crossing the Street: Rethinking Jazz Education," in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries,* ed. David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 237-63. Writing in the *New York Times* in 2007, Nate Chinen underscores the substantial shift that has occurred in jazz education over the twentieth century: around mid-century, jazz pedagogy had more in common with folk music, as it was something that was often learned orally from a mentor or teacher; fifty years later, jazz's success is relegated to the classroom, where academic jazz programs and jazz education conferences proliferate, even as album sales and performances continue to diminish (Nate Chinen, "Jazz is Alive and Well, in the Classroom, Anyway," *New York Times*, January 7, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/07/arts/music/07chin.html). For more on the various methodologies present in academic jazz instruction see Tony Whyton, "Birth of the School: Discursive Methodologies in Jazz Education," *Music Education Research* 8, no. 1 (2006): 65-81.

[16] Transcription has long been used for purposes of ownership and control; for an ethnomusicological take on this, see Bruno Nettl, "I Can't Say A Thing Until I've Seen the Score: Transcription," in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 74-91.

[17] Murphy, "Jazz Improvisation," 15.

Henderson can transform these pre-existing themes into a novel musical context, emphasizing his own "knowledge of, and admiration for, Parker's work . . . which he not only repeats, but transforms so as to imprint his style on Parker's."[18]

If, as McMullen argues, jazz institutionalization via the conservatory problematically downplays or even erases some of the values characteristic of Black music and culture, then it is worth examining its early history and the extent to which transcription as a practice contributed to it. Such origins fall squarely in the Rock Era: McMullen locates the emergence of Replay in the 1960s, with the advent of instant replay in televised sports and the rise of modern reenactments of historical battles.[19] The process of jazz institutionalization accelerates in the following decade, cropping up alongside what McMullen calls "modern memory culture"; she writes that during this period, in order to capture and objectify jazz's "fading past . . . the practice of signifying turned toward a practice of preservation and an emphasis on origin."[20] This historical process results in the subsumption of jazz "within the Western epistemology," problematically deemphasizing the music's Afrodiasporic roots.[21] Though jazz has always been a hybrid musical practice, in the process of its institutionalization over the second half of the twentieth century Western musical values have been emphasized at the expense of other cultural inheritances.

While the history of jazz pedagogy has been well-documented, in this chapter I will focus on the role of modernist composer and jazz scholar Gunther Schuller in catalyzing trends around 1960.[22] Though historically one of jazz's most influential critics, Schuller became interested in

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[18] Ibid., 13.
[19] McMullen, *Haunthenticity*, 8.
[20] Ibid., 104.
[21] Ibid., 103.
[22] For a brief history of jazz education in the United States see Gary W. Kennedy, "Jazz Education," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., ed. Barry Kernfield, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Macmillan, 2002), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J602300. Though Kennedy's history starts in the late 1940s, he

jazz only after a thorough conservatory training in classical music, having attended the Precollege Division at New York's Manhattan School of Music. He was appointed principal horn of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra before he was twenty and his exuberant classical virtuosity landed him an opportunity to record with onetime conservatory student Miles Davis himself as a horn player in 1949 and 1950.[23] By the late 1950s, Schuller was on the faculty at one of the first academic jazz programs, the Marshall Stearns Lenox School of Jazz, founded in 1957, which attracted already famous jazz musicians like Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman in the summer of 1959.[24] Schuller went on to start one of the very first jazz programs at a major music conservatory when he became president of the New England Conservatory in 1969.

Schuller's classical music background strongly informs his writing about jazz; it is thus no surprise that his approach to this music is deeply rooted in musical idealism. If, as McMullen argues, the American conservatory apparatus has historically contributed to decentering Black inheritances in jazz, then Schuller's own work as a jazz analyst and pedagogue persuasively stimulates the process. Leveraging his exceptional musical literacy, Schuller analyzed by ear "virtually every record made, from the advent of jazz recording through the early 1930s," many of which would be elegantly transcribed in his 1968 study *Early Jazz*: *Its Roots and Musical Development*.[25] Schuller thereby created, almost singlehandedly, "an archive of musical texts—recordings that could be listened to and studied, written scores that could be performed—that

is quick to state that there were many *Black* educators at the beginning of the century who taught the history of numerous types of Black music. Alice Goldfarb Marquis also provides a rich history of jazz education over the second half of the twentieth century and its intersections with classical music; see Alice Goldfarb Maquis, "Jazz Goes to College: Has Academic Status Served the Art?," *Popular Music and Society* 22, no. 2 (1998): 117-24.

[23] For more on Schuller's musical background and career up to 1960 see his autobiography, *A Life in Pursuit of Music and Beauty* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011).

[24] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 217.

[25] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), xi.

were held to represent an empirically knowable artistic tradition."[26] Schuller's transcriptions thus exemplify an early example of Replay in the world of jazz.

In this chapter, I focus on Schuller's transcriptions of Ornette Coleman's free jazz, published in 1961.[27] I pay special attention to the most detailed transcription in this collection, an analysis and note-for-note translation of Coleman's recorded saxophone solo from "Congeniality," an early example of a detailed music transcription created directly from a commercial recording without the use of the artist's own notation. Because Coleman was frequently criticized in this period due to his supposedly disruptive approach to jazz, Schuller uses transcription and musical analysis to claim that his music has aesthetic merit, illustrating its connection not only to other jazz forms, but to high art. Overall, Schuller's project epitomizes the midcentury approach to jazz through a Western epistemological frame. Though I agree that Schuller's approach to transcription is problematic for all that it erases, I aim to detail his work with more nuance than is usually afforded to it: trying to explain Coleman's jazz to contemporaneous intellectuals in the 1950s and '60s, he uses the tools, language, and (white) academic privilege he had acquired over his life to elevate and legitimize it.

Coleman's free jazz was certainly controversial; though he was a masterful bebop player before his widespread notoriety, much of the criticism directed at him by other jazzmen suggested that he was a fraud, who did not "really" know jazz. Interestingly, this was the thing that attracted critics such as Schuller to his music in the first place; he was treated as a

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[26] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 343. Guthrie Ramsey Jr. also mentions Schuller's commitment to transcribing just about every historical jazz record he could find in *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bepop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 159.

[27] These were originally published as Gunther Schuller, ed., *A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, transcribed Gunther Schuller (New York, NY: MJQ Music Inc., 1961). The preface to this collection without the musical transcriptions is reprinted in Gunther Schuller, "Ornette Coleman's Compositions," in *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 80-85.

"primitive" player, ostensibly unconstrained by traditional musical training. Coleman's actual training does not bear out either fantasy, but it is worth examining as a necessary foundation for any epistemological study of his music. Schuller, of course, had very different musical proficiencies, more indebted to classical music, which colored his approach to jazz (many of which he would pass on to Coleman through private instruction). A comparison of their distinctive musical values leads us to an in-depth discussion of Schuller's transcriptions of Coleman's free jazz and the networks of influence within which this document existed.

It is also worth examining a contrasting perspective on the value of Coleman's music, one that foregrounds "free" jazz not as a decontextualized art music but as an important strand of Afrocentric culture that reflects lived realities in the American 1960s. Among contemporaries of Schuller, cultural critic Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones) was arguably the most vocal supporter of Coleman. I will use Baraka's writings as a foil to Schuller's, highlighting a distinct epistemological position that highlights important elements of Coleman's music that cannot be captured by music notation.

The futility of capturing the essence of jazz through notation has long been an article of faith among jazz transcribers. In his preface to a 1947 collection of Louis Armstrong's trumpet solos, transcriber Lee Castle writes, "I have tried to compile what I think to be typical Louis. It wasn't easy, for black dots on white paper just can't express what's in his soul."[28] Instead of seeking jazz *essentialism*, this case study sheds light on the way that transcription has historically been employed as a tool of musical *idealism* to obtain and bestow cultural power. While notation can capture at least some of the musical elements present in a jazz recording—often those most

[28] See Lee Castle, ed., *Louis Armstrong's Immortal Trumpet Solos*, transcribed Lee Castle (New York, NY: Leeds Music Corporation, 1947). Castle's use of the verb "compile" here is interesting and suggests that the solos were not transcribed directly from a recording, but from other (or additional) sources such as lead sheets. This further adds credence to Schuller's claims about the rarity in transcribing jazz directly from a recording.

valued in classical music—there is much more it fails to represent, most notably the cultural attitude and influences behind the music.

Coleman's "Revolutionary" Free Jazz

Though he had made a living in jazz for over a decade, Ornette Coleman's "free" music of the late 1950s was immediately divisive among jazz critics and practitioners. In November of 1959, only months after Davis' *Kind of Blue*, Coleman released his first album on a major label, Atlantic Records, under the magniloquent title *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. Coleman's album self-consciously mapped out a new path in jazz: no one in Coleman's quartet played a chording instrument, Coleman played a plastic saxophone and Don Cherry a pocket cornet, and the whole album sounded "strange" due to the use of natural instead of tempered tuning.[29] Upon the release of the album, Coleman made his East Coast nightclub debut at the Five Spot Cafe in lower Manhattan. David Lee foregrounds the Five Spot as a jazz club that favored "innovative" performers, such as Thelonious Monk, Cecil Taylor, and Charles Mingus, over the most commercially successful; its downtown location near Greenwich Village also meant it was frequented by important New York intellectuals like Baraka, Norman Mailer, and Leonard Bernstein.[30]

Writing in *The Atlantic* many years later, Francis Davis summarizes responses to this live engagement that would influence Coleman's reception in the jazz world for years to come:

> In *Down Beat*, George Hoefer described the reactions of the audience at a special press preview at the Five Spot: "Some walked in and out before they could finish a drink, some

[29] See Stephen Rush, "'Shape of Jazz to Come'—Ornette Coleman (1959)," *Library of Congress*, 2012, https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/ShapeOfJazzToCome.pdf.
[30] David Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field* (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2006), 11-12. I find Lee's book particularly useful because of the way in which he positions the Five Spot as a Bourdieuian field regarding its geography and clientele, a location where artistic figures of the time gathered and from which influence radiated.

> sat mesmerized by the sound, others talked constantly to their neighbors at the table or argued with drink in hand at the bar." Many critics, finding Coleman's music strident and incoherent, feared that his influence on jazz would be deleterious. Others doubted that he would exert any influence on jazz at all. Still others, bewildered by Coleman's music and preferring to take a wait-and-see position on its merits, accused Coleman's supporters at *Jazz Review* of touting Coleman for their own aggrandizement. Musicians—always skeptical of newcomers, and envious of the publicity Coleman was receiving—denounced him even more harshly than critics did. Some questioned his instrumental competence; the outspoken Miles Davis questioned Coleman's sanity.[31]

Coleman biographer John Litweiler also surveys the controversial performances at the Five Spot, pointing out that drummer Max Roach punched Coleman in the face after one of his sets.[32] Coleman's live performances had been the object of criticism stretching back into the mid-1950s because he refused to play bebop chord changes *verbatim*, leading many to suggest that he had no idea how to play jazz in the first place.[33]

Extant critiques illustrate that Coleman's music was primarily controversial because of how much it differed from previous jazz models, especially the then-dominant style of bebop—at least on the surface. Starting with this first Atlantic record, Coleman avoided using pre-determined chord changes in the lengthy improvised sections; though Coleman was outwardly the band's front man, he made sure not to tell the other players what to do musically, only that they should express themselves and play what they feel.[34] The lack of chord changes in the solo sections caused Coleman to be seen by other jazz artists as untrained and unknowledgeable; unlike so many other jazz artists who, like Joe Henderson, had spent years transcribing

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[31] Francis Davis, "Ornette's Permanent Revolution," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1985, https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/jazz/dornette.htm. Note that "Coleman's supporters at *Jazz Review*" would most certainly include prominent critics Gunther Schuller and Martin Williams, who were frequent contributors to this magazine during this period. Lee provides numerous responses to Coleman's Five Spot performances in *The Battle of the Five Spot,* 14-15 and 63-71. For focused, contemporaneous accounts of Coleman's Five Spot performances see George Hoefer, "Caught in the Act," *Down Beat*, January 7, 1960, and Whitney Balliet, "Jazz Concerts: Historic," *The New Yorker*, December 5, 1959.

[32] John Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1992), 78-79 and 83.

[33] Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman,* 46-47.

[34] See Ornette Coleman, liner notes to Ornette Coleman, *Change of the* Century, Atlantic B000002IIL, 1992, CD.

improvisations as an act of devotion, Coleman had not publicly proven his worth by learning how to improvise over well-known bebop changes.[35] Musicologist David Ake takes a slightly different angle in explaining the controversy over Coleman's free jazz, suggesting that it was disruptive because it pushed against entrenched forms of masculinity in the jazz world and "regendered" them. Status in advanced swing and bebop was negotiated in public by macho "cutting contests" where players would compete in improvising over fast, difficult chord progressions; it seemed that such shows of mastery were simply not possible in Coleman's style of free jazz.[36]

Thus, Coleman was a controversial figure because he was ostensibly ignorant of jazz, something that was indicated by the lack of fixed chord changes in his music. Because this chapter examines epistemological positions present in this genre, it is worth examining these two related criticisms in more detail. As I have suggested, colleagues attacked Coleman for not paying his jazz dues like they themselves had, while others decried his supposed lack of musical knowledge. Mingus, for instance, made clear his disdain for Coleman and all the attention he got from critics for not being able to read music; as Fred Moten summarizes, Mingus thought that Coleman "exhibits a harmonic ignorance that is manifest as an inability to navigate the music's spatiotemporal structure. The origin of these faults is double: idiomatic strangeness and technical incompetence."[37] Lee also points out that unlike many of his canonized contemporaries who had

[35] Lee suggests that these negative reactions are less about Coleman himself and his music and are more about a generational divide between new jazz performers and established bebop performers; the older generation saw him as "devaluing . . . their entire body of work and [a] threat to their status within the jazz field" (*The Battle of the Five Spot*, 71).

[36] See David Ake, "Chapter 3: Regendering Jazz: Ornette Coleman and the New York Scene in the Late 1950s," in his book *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 62-82. The rise of the single jazz soloist is best covered in Scott DeVeaux's seminal study of bebop, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

[37] I take this quote from Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 90, which is preceded by lengthy passages on pp. 88-90 from an interview Mingus did with the French magazine *Jazz* (Jean Clouzet and Guy Kopelowicz, "Interview de Charles Mingus: Un Inconfortable Après-midi," *Jazz*, June 1964,

been performing in New York for years, Coleman was fresh off the plane from Los Angeles and had never worked his way up into that established local network.[38]

White jazz *critics*, however, have historically lauded the lack of musical knowledge as an asset among jazz artists. Lee Brown notes how jazz critics publishing in the 1930s and '40s "sentimentally touted the earliest forms of jazz as the most authentic forms, on the assumption that they were its most intuitive, least disciplined versions. For these critics, execution was valued over conception, nature over tutelage"—a pervasive position among jazz critics over many decades.[39] Pushing back from the late twentieth century, Monson cites Ted Gioia on "the primitivist myth" to argue that jazz musicians themselves have long despised being treated as "instinctual over knowledgeable."[40] Thus, while Black jazzmen flaunted their disdain for Coleman's free jazz, its very "primitivism" is arguably what drew white jazz critics to his music, far removed from both established jazz circles and the Western classical tradition, neither of which could be drafted to validate his music.

A frequent attendee at the Five Spot, Schuller was attracted to the alien-ness of Coleman's music: in the preface to his Coleman transcriptions he writes that "it is precisely

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27), and a recollection from his widow, Sue Graham Mingus (Sue Graham Mingus, *Tonight at Noon: A Love Story* [New York, NY: Da Capo, 2002], 13 and 18-19).

[38] Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot*, 79-80.

[39] Lee Brown, "Musical Works, Improvisation, and the Principle of Continuity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 236.

[40] See Monson, "Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation," 286-87, where she draws on Ted Gioia's *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19-49. Black cultural historians have also produced writings on jazz that are explicitly anti-primitivist to fight against this historiographical trend; see, for instance, Albert Murray's *Stomping the Blues* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017 [1976]), in which the author examines the foundations of blues music as a type of ritual that functions as a cultural universal. Chapter 7, "Playing the Blues," exemplifies his anti-primitivist position, as Murray here illustrates typical formal and musical components of the blues, especially improvisation, of which he writes that "such skill and taste are matters of background, experience, and idiomatic orientation. What they represent is not natural impulse, but the refinement of habit, custom, and tradition come second nature" (98). In a *New York Times* article published in 1988, Wynton Marsalis similarly pushes back on what he terms the "noble savage cliché" in jazz, arguing that through his programming of "compositions of major writers" and their improvisations at the Lincoln Center's Classical Jazz Series, their craft and "discipline" can be better understood; this was reprinted with commentary as Winton Marsalis, "The Neoclassical Agenda," in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 334-39.

because Mr. Coleman was not 'handicapped' by conventional music education that he has been able to make his unique contribution to contemporary music."[41] For Schuller, Coleman's very lack of musical training was the key to his musical genius: "the originality of these compositions is all the more startling when one remembers that they are *not* the product of book learning or conventional musical education, but instead intuitive creations whose genuineness is for that reason alone unassailable."[42] "Intuitive" can certainly be seen here as synonymous with "unmediated," a key term of primitivist jazz discourse. Coleman was exceptional because he was able to create meaningful improvisations without the typical "book learning." Schuller's avant-gardist primitivism is worth noting as typical, even though musicians of color did not always have access to formal training in jazz's early years.[43]

The actuality of Coleman's musical background and training is more contradictory than has been sufficiently detailed in the literature. Coleman absolutely had some familiarity with Western music theory and even some formal training in the history of jazz, both of which he studied at Marshall Stearns's Lenox School in the summer of 1959 with Schuller himself, an experience that helped him "gain an appreciation of Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton."[44] These classes often taught jazz history in a similar manner to the history of art music, where jazz was positioned as "a network of traceable genealogies and transgenerational alliances," a pedagogical method that helps to illustrate the "stylistic resemblances" between different strands

[41] Schuller, *Musings,* 80.
[42] Ibid., 82; emphasis in original.
[43] Philipp Teriete has argued that, in fact, many early Black jazz players did go to music school; see his "The Classical Training of Early African American Jazz Musicians: Der musikalische Ausbildungskanon an den Historically Black Colleges and Universities im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert und der Einfluss auf den frühen Jazz, in Wolfram Knauer, ed., *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Jazzforschung/Darmstadt Studies in Jazz Research Bd. 17* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2022).
[44] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 217. Coleman took this course with Don Cherry, who played cornet on Coleman's free jazz recordings from this period. See also Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 69, where he notes that Atlantic Records gave Coleman the funds to attend the summer session.

of contemporary jazz and earlier folk music.[45] In other venues, Schuller would provide an alternate reading of Coleman: in his entry on Coleman for the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, Schuller explains that in the early 1950s "Coleman evolved a radically new concept and style, seemingly out of combination of music intuitions born of southwestern country blues and folk forms, and misreading (in part)—or highly personal interpretations— [of] theoretical texts," such as textbooks in harmony and theory.[46]

Though Coleman actually studied music theory and notation with *him* privately around 1960 or 1961, as far as I can tell Schuller never mentions this in his publications; as he recounted to Litweiler, during a lesson Coleman supposedly became physically ill after coming to the realization that he had been reading and notating music incorrectly his entire life, especially when it came to writing for transposing instruments, like the alto saxophone he himself played.[47] Coleman also performed in concerts of Schuller's notated jazz compositions, and in the later decades of his life would write many compositions that combined classical and jazz elements.[48] However, because of the idiosyncratic nature of his notation, Coleman required the work of a different kind of transcription when composing notated music for performances later in his life: someone would have to "transcribe" Coleman's unique, personal notation for the purposes of having an orchestra or smaller ensemble perform it; Schuller explains that such a process might not accurately reflect Coleman's original intention.[49] Coleman's "misreading" of notational

[45] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 217.
[46] Printed in Schuller, *Musings*, 76-79, quote on 76. It would be fascinating to know exactly which textbooks Schuller is referring to here, but I have been unable to uncover this information.
[47] Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 93-94.
[48] Litweiler points out that by the mid-1960s, Coleman was very concerned with composing music that combined classical and jazz elements; he even won a Guggenheim fellowship in 1967, the first Guggenheim for jazz composition (see ibid., 123). For a representative piece, see 1967's *Forms and Sounds* (from the 1967 LP *The Music of Ornette Coleman: Forms and Sounds* [released in the US by RCA Victor Red Seal LSC 2982, 1968, LP]), a scored piece performed by the Philadelphia Woodwind Quartet with trumpet interludes played by Coleman.
[49] Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 104 and 94.

convention is particularly significant; in an interview with *People* magazine in 1986, Coleman was clearly annoyed by criticism of his unique way of notating music, spinning an anecdote about visiting the British Museum where he "saw the original manuscripts from Beethoven, Mozart and all those guys, and it looked like chicken scratches."[50]

So, while Coleman and Schuller were quick to realize that his image as an "illiterate" jazz musician might be advantageous to his success (because of jazz criticism's bias towards the primitive), Coleman clearly had *some* grounding in both sides of jazz's hybridity: he had experience with Western music and its notational conventions (at least by the 1960s) and he also had a deep knowledge of earlier jazz forms and how to play bebop changes, even if his new music eschewed them. In the years before his experiments in free jazz, Coleman was a masterful bebop stylist who made a living touring across the American South and West.[51] Coleman's first two Contemporary recordings from Los Angeles (*Something Else!!!!* from 1958 and *Tomorrow Is the Question!* from 1959) could arguably be categorized as bebop, employing determinate chord changes carried by a chordal instrument like the piano. Bassist Charlie Haden, who had worked with Coleman in Los Angeles in the 1950s and played on *The Shape of Jazz to Come,* points out that Coleman's primary way of composing for these recordings was by dictating the chord changes he heard in his head to Haden, who would then put a bass line to them.[52]

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[50] David Grogan, "Ornette Coleman," *People*, October 13, 1986, cited in Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 144. As I have suggested earlier in this dissertation, in the Rock Era many artists were aware of the ways in which employing notation can confer musical legitimacy—but that this also depended on race. Many years earlier Coleman had even commented on this problem, saying that "I really wrote the music because I have the ability to write the music. I wasn't trying to change my class or category or become blacker or whiter. I was just doing something that I could do" (J.B. Figi, "Ornette Coleman: A Surviving Elder in the Universal Brotherhood of Those Who Make Music," *Reader*, June 22, 1973, cited in Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 145).

[51] Though published many years ago, I find that Coleman's musical background and training is still best covered by Litweiler in his biography, *Ornette Coleman.*

[52] Litweiler reproduces an anecdote from an interview with Haden, with an excerpt of the transcript provided in ibid., 60.

By not including any chordal instruments like the piano in his later free jazz ensembles recorded by Atlantic, Coleman and cornetist Don Cherry "were free to strike out on new paths at the right moment, and pull the other with him," something that Schuller points out is "the essence of collective improvisation."[53] Indeed, "collective improvisation" was a term Coleman frequently used to provide critics and listeners some context for his music: it might not anymore be based in a bebop style, but it was still "authentic" jazz because it was rooted in legendary jazz practices of the past, specifically the "collective improvisations" of early New Orleans jazz bands.[54] Though frequently criticized for neglecting chord changes, Coleman stated that his approach to playing jazz was in reality an extension of those changes *beyond* bebop which required a deep knowledge of all possible changes; only then could one intentionally play outside or around them.[55]

Playing outside the strict confines of pre-determined chord changes was seen by biographer John Litweiler as his singular achievement in the history of jazz, allowing Coleman to break "the bondage of chord structures over meter."[56] This was what made Coleman's music "revolutionary," as he was able to find new ways of freely expressing himself outside of a bebop context.[57] Coleman gave his albums from this period titles explicitly concerned with revolution and change, such as *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959), and *Change of the Century* (1960).[58] Liner notes for these albums show Coleman's stance of innovation, especially on *Change of the Century* where he writes that "the members of my group and I are now attempting a break-

[53] Schuller, *Musings*, 83.
[54] See Ornette Coleman, liner notes to *Change of the Century*.
[55] See Conrad Silvert, "Old and New Dreams," *Down Beat*, June 1980, quoted in Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 148.
[56] Bill Smith, "Paul Bley Interview," *Coda*, April 1979, cited in Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 62; for more commentary on this, see ibid., 60-62 and 164.
[57] Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman,* 47.
[58] As Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, Atlantic 1317, 1959, LP, and Ornette Coleman, *Change of the Century*, Atlantic 1327, 1960, LP.

through to a new, freer conception of jazz, one that departs from all that is 'standard' and cliche in 'modern jazz' . . . [which was] once so daring and revolutionary [and] has become, in many respects, a rather stale and conventional thing."[59] Such a stance, where Coleman calls his jazz competitors old-fashioned and, in effect, sellouts, might explain why Roach felt the need to punch him in the face.

One way that Coleman defended his art from these critics was by placing it into a longer lineage of jazz, emphasizing its connection to the "true" jazz age of the 1920s where collective improvisation was standard practice, a period that just about every jazz critic venerated.[60] Although free jazz was denounced because it purposely exceeded verbal explanation, Coleman uses the liner notes to 1960's *Change of the Century* to compare himself to Jackson Pollack, another "intuitive" artist originally panned by critics. He writes that just as with abstract expressionism, "the only thing that matters [in free jazz] is whether you *feel* it or not. You can't intellectualize music; to reduce it analytically often is to reduce it to nothing very important."[61]

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[59] Ornette Coleman, liner notes to Ornette Coleman, *Change of the Century.*

[60] Coleman's statement regarding his free jazz continuing early collective improvisational practices could be contested with a more thorough examination of the important role that notation and lead sheets played in early jazz. Lawrence Gushee has shown how written arrangements predated Swing and were an important part of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band; see "King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band," in *The Art of Jazz: Essays on the Nature and Development of Jazz*, ed. Martin Williams (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 43-48. More recent scholars have similarly suggested that collective improvisation was actually less common of a practice than typically thought and notation was more commonly used; see, for instance, David Chevan, "Written Music in Early Jazz," Ph.D diss., City University of New York, 1997, for an in-depth study of this. As Gennari illustrates in his study of jazz criticism from its origins, the first full-length studies of jazz were written by critics in the 1930s responding to the enormous popularity of Swing. He suggests that because fans' favorite jazz musicians were white, critics felt it necessary to focus their efforts on Black musicians from the "true" jazz age of New Orleans in the 1920s, leading many to make essentialist arguments that only Black musicians could properly play jazz; see Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 94-101. Though French, Hughes Panassié exemplifies such a position; his published books would become well-known in the United States in the 1930s, especially *Le Jazz Hot*, originally published in 1934 and then published in the United States in 1936 (New York, NY: M. Witmark & Sons). For a specific take on essentialism in this book and Panassié's other writings, see Tom Perchard, "Tradition, Modernity and the Supernatural Swing: Re-Reading 'Primitivism' in Hugues Panassié's Writing on Jazz," *Popular Music* 30, no. 1 (January 2011): 25-45.

[61] Coleman, liner notes to *Change of the Century.*

Gunther Schuller's "Internalist" Analyses

Gunther Schuller thus appeared to go against Coleman's wishes when he transcribed ten tracks from *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and *Change of the Century*; his transcriptions have the deliberate intellectualizing and reductive effect Coleman set himself against. Perhaps it is impossible to write about his music without intellectualizing it, as this chapter demonstrates. To me, though, the operative phrase in Coleman's proclamation is "to reduce [music] analytically," and by scrutinizing Schuller's reductive transcription process I hope to bring attention to certain elements of Coleman's music that might otherwise be dismissed by the very practice of transcription itself, in turn suggesting other possibilities for analysis that do not show such blatantly reductive disregard for social context and cultural identity.

Indeed, it is quite possible that Coleman meant to push back directly against contemporaneous jazz traditions that borrow from the Western tradition to appear intellectual, such as Schuller's own "third stream" of jazz, a movement he catalyzed and defined as "the improvisational spontaneity and rhythmic vitality of jazz with the compositional procedures and techniques acquired in Western music during 700 years of musical development."[62] In fact, Schuller's transcriptions of Coleman make more sense in this context: using notation, he combines "improvisational spontaneity" with the "compositional procedures" of classical music.[63] A representative third stream composition, for instance, is Schuller's *Transformation*

[62] Schuller, *Musings*, 115. Writing in 1972, Robert Ehle provides an overview of third stream, making it clear that he finds it completely separate from the fusion of popular music and jazz, writing that "true third stream composers are always deeply involved and thoroughly committed to a jazz esthetic separate from popular music. Thus, a third stream composer may be a serious artist and a dedicated individual not just a commercial opportunity" (Robert C. Ehle, "Jazz Classics or Classical Jazz: The Story of Third Stream Jazz," *American Music Teacher* 22, no. 1 [September-October, 1972]: 22-24 and 31).

[63] Schuller wrote these pieces primarily in the late 1950s and '60s, participating in and responding to prevailing jazz criticism of the time. Gennari details how jazz critics in the late 1950s argued at length over how to write about jazz as an autonomous art form, especially through the work of Williams and Nat Hentoff who founded the *Jazz Review* in New York in 1958. Other critics such as Dan Morgenstern agreed with the overall mission of the *Jazz Review* in

from 1957, which is mostly written out, but does provides space for improvising over chords, especially in the piano part.

Like other jazz critics, Schuller was invested in jazz as a uniquely American music on par with that of the European classical tradition. He construed jazz history like classical music history, as an organic developmental narrative where canonized figures build on the techniques of the past and add something new.[64] Schuller published books and articles on the whole of this jazz narrative, from its origins to swing and bebop, and from hard bop to free jazz.[65]

What differentiated Schuller was that he used musical analysis to illustrate the relationship of modern jazz to its antecedents, using the same tools and language one would use for classical music. This approach made him one of the first to analyze the workings of jazz in depth, as with his 1958 article and transcriptions of Sonny Rollins' jazz.[66] Treating jazz as a series of autonomous, recorded art objects, he could locate in them "unity" and "cohesiveness," key modernist measures of aesthetic value borrowed from classic music. Schuller's analytical approach can be deemed "internalist," in that he employs Western-analytical methods to treat jazz's history as an organic narrative that develops at the level of style; at the same time, internal

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focusing on jazz as an autonomous art form and not just another musical commodity, but he pushed back against the trend of intellectualizing it to such a degree; see Gennari, *Blowin Hot and Cool*, 180-86.

[64] There is much to be said about how narratives of twentieth-century jazz players and classical composers mirror one another in historical writing. Both sets of artists are grappling with "tradition," which functions as a non-human agent and pushes music creators to present themselves as part of an existing tradition who are simultaneously moving it forward; clearly, such an approach inscribes an evolutionary model on either music's history. For a classical perspective on this in the twentieth century see J. Peter Burkholder, "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years," *The Journal of Musicology* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 115-34 and Joseph N. Straus, "The 'Anxiety of Influence' in Twentieth-Century Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 430-47. For a jazz perspective see Murphy, "Jazz Improvisation," 7-19.

[65] Schuller's two books on jazz are *Early Jazz* (1968) and *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). *Musings* includes articles published in journals, encyclopedia entries he wrote, speeches, and liner notes. His pieces on jazz illustrate his tendency to write about important jazz figures from all of these areas, including Duke Ellington, Paul Whiteman, Cecil Taylor, Sonny Rollins, and, of course, Ornette Coleman.

[66] See Schuller's "Sonny Rollins and the Challenge of Thematic Improvisation" originally published in *The Jazz Review* and since reprinted in *Musings*, 86-97.

formal characteristics serve to "unify" the very best jazz improvisations, rather than any response to a social context, typically downplayed or ignored.[67] Transcription is a key tool because the music needs to be notated, fixed out of time, in order to be scrutinized and analyzed in detail.

Foundational as they are to musical idealism, internalist values have also been employed to validate other spheres of art. As postwar intellectuals, Schuller and his critical contemporaries like Martin Williams were inspired by the New Criticism, a method of literary analysis that also foregrounds unity and structural coherence at the expense of social context.[68] Literary works that achieved New Criticism's ideal of internal unity were seen as canonical; such "autonomous" works of literature were also "insulated from the realm of mass culture," making them even more valuable.[69] Schuller was no doubt borrowing from this method to elevate the legitimacy of jazz as a serious art music akin to the classical music canon—even though jazz at the time was still relegated to a marginal spot in the academy.

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[67] I borrow this term from Krin Gabbard's "The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard, (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 1-28, wherein he describes how jazz has been canonized based on an "aesthetic of unity and coherence" even though such metrics of value have been hotly questioned in other disciplines (12). The use of an "internalist" analysis in jazz—something used in much classical musical analysis—thus makes an implicit or explicit connection between canonized jazz and canonized European art music compositions. Gabbard and his collaborators in this collection are pushing against this internalist approach to analyzing and evaluating jazz, a method championed by jazz critics in the 1950s such as Schuller, Martin Williams, and André Hodeir. Lee Brown later terms Gabbard et al.'s anti-internalist methodology as "a critical theory of jazz," as it prioritizes "improvisational freedom, even at the price of formal incoherence." Brown suggests that in doing so, these authors are in fact problematically relying on an Afrocentric essentialist point of view, where "the authentic jazz player [is seen] as one whose playing is situated outside the conventional, outside the systematized. Both equate authentic jazz with its supposedly more natural, unrefined forms, by contrast with more sophisticated, more formally elaborated" like European musics. And, these "natural" elements of "authentic" jazz have a "specific ethnic charge"; see Lee Brown, "Postmodernist Jazz Theory: Afrocentrism, Old and New," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 235-246, quote on 238.

[68] Gennari defines New Criticism as a "doctrine" in which "the art work—usually, for the New Critics, a poem—was seen as a self-contained, self-sufficient object, and criticism was the investigation of how the works resolves its formal tensions to achieve structural coherence" (*Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 186). For a paradigmatic example of this type of literary criticism see Cleanth Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York, NY: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), which primarily includes close readings of poems by canonized writers such as Shakespeare, Milton, and T.S. Eliot; unlike other academic readers from the time, Brooks avoided drawing on authors' biographies or providing historical context, instead focusing exclusively on the texts themselves.

[69] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 181.

Poems were already textual, making them easy to analyze *as* self-contained texts. Jazz is typically improvised in real time; even as preserved by recording, it requires a literate translation in the form of a transcription—and a detailed one at that—for it to be analyzed internally. Using analytical categories borrowed from art music and New Criticism, Schuller takes aim at the very critics who disparaged Coleman's debut at the Five Spot, connecting free jazz historically to bebop while simultaneously providing an internalist analysis refuting claims that Coleman and his improvisations were "chaotic," "formless," "incoherent," and, above all, "fraudulent."[70]

Schuller's published transcription packet is particularly useful because he provides a wealth of opinions on Coleman's music in his preface, more than he would write on this topic in any other place. Schuller begins with how unusual his transcription collection was at the time (1961), due to the myriad editorial decisions made in notating them. This differs considerably from other accounts of Coleman's music from this period that focused on biography and positioning Coleman within a larger jazz network.[71] As Schuller points out, notated pieces of music are typically published based on the composer's own materials, such as lead sheets or sketches—exceptions, he writes, are often found in folk song transcriptions, but in Schuller's mind, these require fewer editorial decisions because they are "of such a simple nature."[72] Coleman did indeed use lead sheets at times, but they were "written in a highly 'personal' notation [that] rarely coincided rhythmically with his own performances of these works."[73] As

[70] See Schuller, *Musings*, 82.
[71] See, for example, Nat Hentoff, "Ornette Coleman: Biggest Noise in Jazz," *Esquire*, March 1961, 84, reprinted in Hentoff, *The Jazz Life* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 233.
[72] Schuller, *Musings*, 80.
[73] Ibid., 81. Note here Schuller's use of the term "works" to describe Coleman's music, something showcased in the amount of detail he provides in some of the transcriptions. One wonders what Coleman's lead sheets looked like, as these would be enormously useful for the comparison that I am undertaking here; in this same document, Schuller describes them as "notations of his own compositions that are imprecise and graphical, giving interpreter free rein" (79). Unfortunately, and surprisingly, I have been unable to find any representative examples, though Coleman's website does use a portion of a handwritten score as a background graphic: http://www.ornettecoleman.com, last accessed October 19, 2020.

these would not be suitable for formal analysis, Schuller thus had to transcribe every note straight from the Atlantic LPs.

Schuller's written preface is worth noting for its broader comments on transcribing practices in the early 1960s. Schuller is focused on how unusual it was for published notation to come into existence entirely without the input of the actual composer. This speaks to how rare notated transcriptions of *recordings* were at the time, not becoming common until the following decades, especially in rock music, where many artists similarly did not read music or use notation to create recordings. Schuller is clearly quite aware of how epistemologically risky his project is, which he hopes to mitigate by making "every effort at accuracy," even while conceding that some "notational problem[s]" cannot be "solved unequivocally."[74] He ends his preface by stating the problem directly: "it should be remembered that in view of the fact that jazz is largely an improvised music, in which the personal interpretation takes precedence over the composition, these scores were intended to serve only as a moderately detailed outline to help the student, music lover and aficionado."[75] Based on this statement, it is possible that Schuller is directing this document toward jazz fans who want to understand, and perhaps emulate Coleman's unique music, but it seems more likely that Schuller's audience comprises aspiring third stream composers. So, while Schuller's transcriptions might have pedagogical value, his detailed analysis of "Congeniality" also shows how he uses transcription to legitimize Coleman's music by fitting him into the jazz (and Western analytical) tradition while downplaying his formal training.

[74] Schuller, *Musings*, 81.
[75] Ibid., 85.

Schuller Interprets Coleman's Free Jazz

Though Schuller suggests in his preface how novel his approach to notating jazz is, a quick glance through the transcription packet suggests many connections to earlier forms of jazz and standard notational practices. Indeed, for every piece except "Congeniality," only the heads of the songs are transcribed, making them appear like lead sheets, which have been published for copyright purposes and as jazz performance aids in fake books since the late 1940s.[76] As in most lead sheets, Schuller provides a melody (typically from the two melodic instruments), while only some rhythmic aspects of the bass lines are transcribed. And one of the key components of lead sheets, the chord changes, are only occasionally indicated (see *Figure 2.1*). This makes sense in free jazz, considering that all of the instruments in Coleman's ensemble were monophonic and prioritized melody over harmony; as Stephen Rush writes, in Coleman's free jazz "the melody is the source code for all the other musical events, harmonic or contrapuntal," and unlike other types of jazz that focused on chord progressions, "Ornette's approach is much more straightforward: 'top down' instead of 'bottom up.'"[77] When he does show the concurrent melodies of two (or three if you include the sketch of the bass) monophonic instruments improvising together, Schuller seems to be gesturing at New Orleans-style collective improvisation. Though the exact extent to which the heads in Coleman's music were improvised is not completely clear, some pre-planning was certainly involved, even if notation was not used for performance.

[76] The history of fake books, and how lead sheets were used for securing copyright, are topics written about in Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), which I cover in the introduction to this dissertation.
[77] Stephen Rush, *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2017), 157.

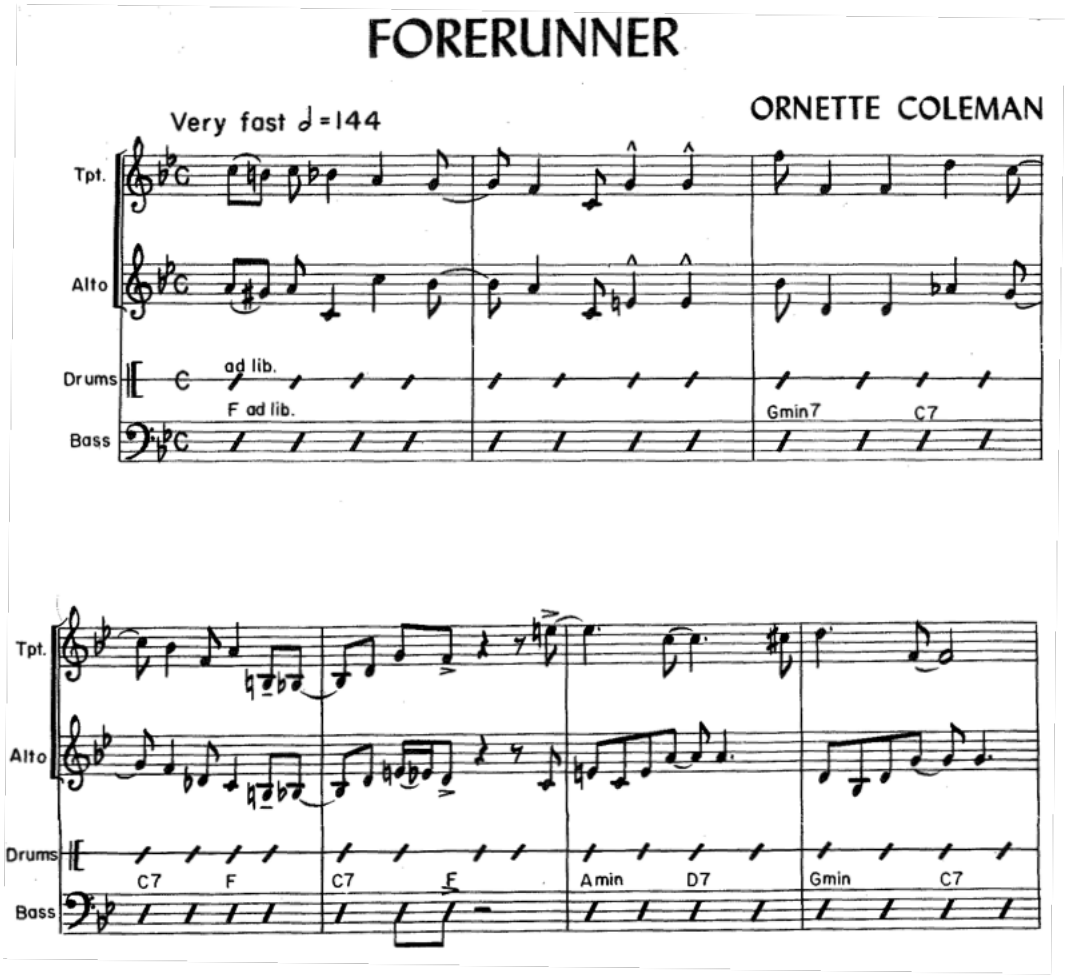


Figure 2.1: The first seven bars to the head of Ornette Coleman's "Forerunner" from Change of the Century*, in Schuller, ed.,* A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, 9.*

In many cases, Schuller's transcriptions connect Coleman's music to earlier jazz forms, especially bebop, where the head is pre-conceived and provides the chord changes that will later be soloed over. At a formal level, many of Coleman's tracks do follow the structure of head–improvisation–head reprise, just like bebop. By providing a detailed transcription of one improvisation, Coleman's saxophone solo in "Congeniality," Schuller also makes an implicit connection to bebop, where extended improvisation is the object of study. By neglecting to notate Cherry's following cornet solo, Schuller inscribes bebop (and classical) models onto the music, treating Coleman as the composition's driving force, even though Coleman himself was

adamant that the music purposely banished the typical jazz band hierarchy.[78] That said, it is Coleman's name that is printed on the albums and he was the one to write the liner notes, so treating him as the primary artist is quite understandable.[79]

Though none of the ten tracks from this collection are transcribed in their note-for-note entirety, "Congeniality" is Schuller's most detailed transcription, including the head of the tune, Coleman's long solo, and a recapitulation of the head played at the end of the track. "Congeniality" opens with a quick unison line played by Don Cherry on trumpet and Coleman on alto saxophone, followed by a slow 3/4 section where the two performers play in harmony with Charlie Haden's bass. These slow melodic lines are immediately juxtaposed with a new section that is much faster, consisting of downward flourishes that employ a host of notes that do not belong to the previously established key. Billy Higgins' drums add to the texture here and increase the forward momentum of the section, as he frantically improvises to keep pace with the speed of the melodic instruments, which play at 216 beats per minute. These slow and fast sections alternate with one another for the first minute of the track until Coleman breaks out into an extended improvisation that lasts for almost five minutes.

Schuller's transcription, reproduced here as *Figure 2.2*, depicts these contrasting musical sections with painstaking accuracy, even including articulations and expressive remarks, something not common in lead sheets but found in most post-1800 classical music scores. For the non-improvised parts of the piece—the first three pages of the transcription—Schuller

[78] See Ornette Coleman, liner notes to *Change of the Century.*

[79] Such a contradiction over authorship was certainly present among other avant-garde artists at the time. John Cage, for instance, wanted to break down the traditional division of labor present in classical music and to downplay (or entirely negate, in the case of *4'33"*) the domineering influence of the composer. David Grubbs notes Cage's failure to achieve this goal, writing that "Cage never ceased to create works in the form of copyrighted musical compositions that ambiguously identity Cage as the author . . . Cage's compositions and their published scores are works that lead to performance"; see David Grubbs, *Records Ruin the Landscape: John Cage, the Sixties, and Sound Recording* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 77.

notates the trumpet, alto saxophone, and upright bass, and provides a rough outline of the drums, typically just to show whether they are sounding. Once Coleman begins his long solo, though, Schuller's notation (as he himself points out in the preface) becomes a less accurate reproduction of what is heard on the recording because of the complexity of capturing the nuances of Coleman's playing. At this point, only Coleman's saxophone line is notated as a melody, along with the underlying chords suggested by the bass, which itself is not notated (*Figure 2.3*). Both aurally and visually, Coleman's idiosyncratic saxophone playing shines through here: his improvisation employs various non-diatonic notes and unique rhythmic groupings. This is truly a missed opportunity by Schuller to showcase how Coleman's collective improvisation worked:



Figure 2.2: A transcription of the first 10 bars of Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality" from The Shape of Jazz to Come*, in Schuller, ed.,* A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, 11.*

Haden is not just filling out pre-planned chords with his bass playing but is also playing as a melodic equal with Coleman, a fact that the transcription complete occludes.



Figure 2.3: A transcription of the first 34 bars ((0:57-1:32 on the recording), of Coleman's solo in "Congeniality," in Schuller, ed., A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, 14.*

Schuller's transcription of "Congeniality" also functions as an analysis, written about in the preface—though one could rightly argue that all transcriptions are a type of analysis in that they emphasize certain elements over others, depending on the point the author is trying to make.[80] However, Schuller's clear editorial remarks and notational additions take this a step further than most: typically, scholars use transcription to illustrate their analytical points.

[80] Laurent Cugny makes this point in his book *Analysis of Jazz: A Comprehensive Approach* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 256.

Schuller, on the other hand, treats the transcription itself as the primary text, which is then further narrated and elaborated on in his preface.

Figure 2.3 shows that Schuller has added letter marks above certain musical phrases, which continue and return through the rest of the transcriptions. This is Schuller's main way to demonstrate that Coleman's music is not "chaotic and formless," "disorganized," or "meaningless."[81] Schuller provides a motivic analysis, showing that similar melodic statements appear throughout the solo, some of which are varied, thus giving the piece a strong sense of "unmistakable phrase-to-phrase logic" with "interesting internal relationships."[82]

Whether or not this analysis is "correct" is a different line of inquiry, less interesting to me in this chapter. Clearly, by crafting this transcription, Schuller can prove what he wishes, emphasizing certain materials and choosing motives to characterize as such. The resulting tautological structure is evident in other forms of musical analysis that focus exclusively on the notes on the page in the mode of New Criticism. For example, Schuller's motivic analysis is similar to modernist composer's Pierre Boulez's rhythmic "cell" analysis of the "Augurs of Spring" in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*; considering this essay was published in 1953, it is likely that Sculler was familiar with it.[83] I am also reminded by the work of Allen Forte, who employs pitch class set theory to show how motives present in some twentieth-century classical compositions relate and thus create coherence, such as in his famous analysis of *The Rite of Spring*.[84] Musicologist Richard Taruskin reviewed this book, criticizing Forte's supposed

[81] This is best shown in his "Congeniality" transcription but Schuller writes that all of the heads he provides in his transcription packet actual illustrate a certain logical structure, such as "the pyramid-like form of 'Focus on Sanity,' with its related tempo levels; the ingenious meter relationships of 'Una Muy Bonita'; the simple yet original formal designs of all the other pieces, would indicate that Mr Coleman's music is anything but chaotic" (Schuller, *Musings*, 82).
[82] Ibid.
[83] This can be found in Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paule Thévenin, trans. Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 55–110.
[84] See Allen Forte, *The Harmonic Organization in the Rite of Spring* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

"objective" theory for overlapping analytical and compositional processes, and especially for his system's tautological criteria for "segmentation." Taruskin asserts, not without reason, that Forte chose certain sets *ad hoc* as significant to his analysis to prove the viability of his system itself.[85]

While I find there are some similarities between their methods, Schuller is not a theorist in the same way that Forte is; pitch class set theory is much more reductive and abstract than a motivic analysis of a single melodic line. Nevertheless, Schuller's analysis focuses exclusively on the elements of the music that "prove" that Coleman's music is internally consistent, and to further assure that Coleman himself intended this, as connections between improvised materials are "surely not mere accident."[86] Pitch-class set theory also relies heavily on the composer's written score, while Coleman's jazz is reified in its primary form to disk. Thus, perhaps the better question to ask here is the *degree* to which listeners can actually hear these internal relationships. This will undoubtably depend on the listener's generic competence—Forte claimed to hear many of relationships he describes in his analyses, and it is likely that Schuller could as well. As to critics and jazz fans, I am not sure if they could *precisely* indicate the web of connections Schuller suggests when listening to the record, but once directed to some of these

[85] See Richard Taruskin, "Review of *The Harmonic Organization in the Rite of Spring*," *Current Musicology* 28 (1979): 114-29. This debate continues contentiously over the 1980s, starting with Forte's "Pitch-Class Set Analysis Today," *Music Analysis* 4, no. 1/2 (1985): 29-58, which Taruskin responded to in "Letter to the Editor from Richard Taruskin," *Music Analysis* 5, no. 2/3 (July-October 1986): 313-20. Taruskin also makes similar points in his review of James Baker's *The Music of Alexander Scriabin* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1986), which was published in *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (Spring 1988): 143-69. In this review, Taruskin argues that Baker is "amalgamating the reductive techniques of voice-leading analysis devised by Schenker—'which are now widely accepted as a basis for demonstrating structural coherence in tonal music'—with the 'theory of set relations and complexes of relations'" as most widely used by Forte (145-46).

[86] Schuller, *Musings*, 83. The importance Schuller places on artistic intention separates his analyses somewhat from literary New Criticism where "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" as discussed in one of the classic tenets of the New Criticism, W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and M.C Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (July-September 1946): 469. There is a deeper issue with the "intentional fallacy" that is worth calling attention to: both sides of the debate—those arguing for intention and those finding such arguments fallacious—privilege conscious intention, producing results that can operate as if they are autonomous and intentional. Focusing only on the "work" ignores the important contributions of unconscious intention and systemic, practice-based processes.

spots it is not too challenging to hear the recurring melodic themes and contours that Coleman improvises.

Benjamin Givan does an elegant cross-examination along these lines of Schuller's best-known analysis, of Sonny Rollins's "Blue 7," originally published in 1958.[87] Though Schuller does not provide a full transcription, he notates a number of shorter excerpts and one longer example; none of them include anything but Rollins's saxophone. Just as with "Congeniality," Schuller incorporates a motivic analysis into his transcription, arguing that Rollins is one of "a number of jazz musicians to bring thematic (or motivic) and structural unity into improvisation."[88] In this instance, Schuller examines how Rollins composed a "theme" and then "developed" it through his solo; the theme is provided in *Figure 2.4*.[89] Givan dissects this analysis in depth and reveals many of its flaws. First, he notes that Rollins did not "compose" the theme as Schuller claimed, but instead improvised it on the spot.[90] Second, he points out that the thematic motives Schuller specifies were common to many of Rollins's improvisations all through the 1950s.[91] Dissecting Schuller's "Congeniality" analysis will undoubtedly uncover similar tautological faults.

Critiquing Schuller's modernist aesthetic, musicologist Robert Walser suggests that Schuller employed analytical methods that "radically reduce musical activities to formal abstraction that often shed little light on how the music is experienced," and labeled "chords and motives without seriously questioning the appropriateness of such wholesale methodological

[87] See Benjamin Givan "Gunther Schuller and the Challenge of Sonny Rollins: Stylistic Context, Intentionality, and Jazz Analysis," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 167-237.
[88] Schuller, *Musings*, 88.
[89] While Givan provides his own transcriptions of "Blue 7," I find it more useful to provide Schuller's, which is printed in *Musings*, 88.
[90] Givan, "Gunther Schuller and the Challenge of Sonny Rollins," 180-82.
[91] Ibid., 211-15.

transference."[92] Walser derives nothing more from Schuller's analysis than a claim "that [Rollins's] improvisations are coherent; it says nothing about why we might value that coherence, why we find it meaningful, or how this solo differs from any of a million other coherent pieces of music. The price of such classicizing formalism is always the loss of affect and history," a characterization that "effaces both [jazz's] complex cultural history, including the myriad effects of racism and elitism on the music and the people who have made it, and the dialogue that is at the very heart of the music."[93] Most of the same criticism could be leveled against Schuller's motivicization of "Congeniality."

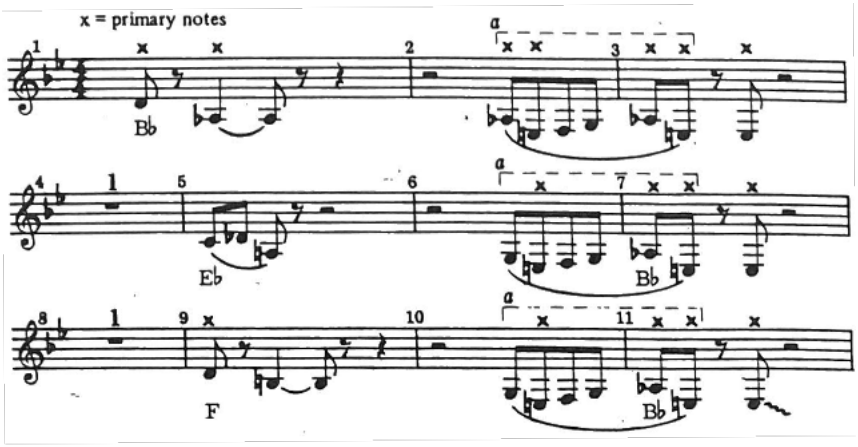


Figure 2.4: Schuller's transcription of Sonny Rollins's theme in "Blue 7," from Saxophone Colossus *(Prestige 7079, 1957), in Gunther Schuller,* Musings, *88.*

Schuller uses transcription to *transform* Coleman's music into a coherent artifact that displays a web of musical connections worthy of a Brahms symphony—a document of Romantic idealism that Coleman might not have been able even to read. For Schuller, of course, this untutored drive toward motivic coherence is precisely what makes Coleman's contribution to music, jazz in particular, distinctive. Schuller wields his musical transcription skills to turn

[92] Robert Walser, "'Out of Notes': Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, 165-88; quotes on 169 and 171, respectively.
[93] Ibid.; quotes on 171 and 170, respectively.

"Congeniality"—a recorded performance—into a *work*, a term he explicitly foregrounds in his preface. Envisioned as an ideal type of musical work, then, the piece necessarily must be transcribed with fidelity, specifying dynamics and articulations, even though some musical elements simply cannot be translated into notation. But fidelity to *what*? Schuller's project here is to overlay (white) European models onto Coleman's playing, legitimizing it as serious art music. Publishing transcriptions also served to increase access to Coleman's music, promulgating it to a wider (as long as musically literate) population while multiplying Schuller's cultural capital—and perhaps his economic capital as well.[94] Above all, transcription allowed Schuller to lose himself analytically in something he clearly loved, preserving Coleman's music not just for study but for engagement, for holding in the hands and the mind longer than one could with a recording, certainly longer than with a live performance. Like the touring tribute bands McMullen follows, Schuller fetishizes the past by making its ephemeral "material details and space" permanent through commodification.[95]

Schuller's analytical transcriptions were certainly meant as a gesture of respect, and his privilege as a respected white jazz critic no doubt helped Coleman become a central jazz figure of the 1960s. But there is a cost. The transcription and its internalist analysis can displace the unique situated meaning and knowledge imbedded in Coleman's performance, "reducing it analytically" to a color-blind abstraction denuded of cultural power. By minutely transcribing a static recording to demonstrate and promulgate knowledge, Schuller clearly sets the stage for the

[94] It would be interesting to know how well this publication sold, and if Coleman received any royalties for it—something I find unlikely. According to the transcription packet, each track was published by MJQ Music Inc., likely referring to the Modern Jazz Quartet; some of Schuller's third stream compositions were also published by MJQ. Interestingly, at some point MJQ Music was bought out by Hal Leonard, a major publisher of transcriptions in the 1980s, as discussed in my conclusion. This information is taken from MJQ Music's website, http://www.mjqmusic.com, last accessed May 22, 2023.
[95] McMullen, *Haunthenticity*, 6.

"logical conclusion" of jazz transcription taken up in the conservatory by artists such as MOPDTK—all that is missing would be Schuller's own re-performance.[96]

"Externalist" *aka* Epistemological Approaches to Jazz History

Schuller's New Critical take to studying jazz would become quite influential in the academy, but even at the time it was not the only approach. Indeed, Black cultural historians were more apt to come at this music with an eye towards examining how an artist's music reflects their lived reality. Though this mode of inquiry stretches back to the earliest days of jazz criticism, it was particularly pervasive among Black intellectuals who were contemporaries of Schuller and continued to be a popular approach for black scholars into the 1990s and beyond.[97]

Amiri Baraka, for instance, took up the nascent viewpoint of Black nationalism and the Civil Rights Movement to reclaim jazz as essentially Black, even as Schuller was simultaneously demonstrating its similarities with the Western art tradition. In *Blues People* (1963) Baraka describes at length the contingent, always-changing nature of blues and jazz, arguing that this music should be segregated from the white mainstream—even though it is defined by its very

[96] Schuller did, in fact, put together an ensemble in 1972 to perform his orchestrated versions of ragtime tunes, particularly those written by Scott Joplin. The group of musicians, named The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, were extremely popular in the 1970s, and they even performed at a state dinner at the White House for President Gerald Ford and his wife in 1974 (see "New Englanders at the White House," *The Boston Globe*, September 27, 1974, 42). Their most popular release was The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, *Scott Joplin: The Red Back Book*, Angel Records S-36060, 1973, LP, which won a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance in that same year.

[97] In summarizing Sidney Finkelstein's book *Jazz: A People's Music*, published in 1948, Gennari writes that the author finds that "because African Americans had to change their social circumstances if they were to achieve their full humanity, their cultural expressions—especially music—contained an intrinsic urge to innovation." This is Gennari's summary (*Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 140), but Finkelstein makes this point explicit in his book, writing that "experiment and change are in the *essence* of jazz"; see Sidney Finkelstein, *Jazz: A People's Music* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1988 [1948]), 111, emphasis added. This mode of inquiry since the 1990s has been particularly prevalent in the "new jazz studies," a term that was codified with the publication of *Uptown Conversations: The New Jazz Studies*, ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), but is best exemplified in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, an edited collection that was reviewed by Mark Tucker in "Review: Musicology and the New Jazz Studies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 131-48.

relationship to mainstream white culture.[98] A few years later Baraka directly stated that "whites could never understand the music of Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman, or Albert Ayler."[99] Clearly, Baraka valued avant-garde jazz, which he believed Coleman part of, because of what he understood as its essential Blackness, an essence that—to him—could not be captured through musical notation.

Baraka's work is deeply indebted to an early Black independent film from 1959, Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*, a documentary written against the backdrop of whitened "cool" jazz, which Baraka had seen sometime in the early 1960s.[100] As Bland explains through his fictionalized characters' dialogue, jazz is a necessary result and expression of the poor societal conditions of Black Americans in the United States. The basal nature of this music, then, is historically contingent: its rationale will end once the lives of these people improve. Jazz, like Western tonal music, employs dialectical structures that counterpoise freedom and constraint: in Bland's theorization, its underlying cyclical chord progressions are its constraining structures, representing the "futureless future" of African Americans. At the same time, the melodies improvised over them designate moments where the musicians can break free of these constraints and experience freedom in the moment. Through this conception of jazz, then, freedom is celebrated; the musical lines extemporaneously created by these musicians allow them to negotiate systems of oppression as they momentarily escape time-as-enemy and forge a

[98] Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York, NY: Harper, 1999 [1963]). This book is summarized at length in Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool,* 271-79.
[99] See Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 283. As he illustrates, though, Baraka soon became much less enthusiastic about the jazz avant garde by the late 1960s, something he believed was "just the music of another emerging middle class"; to him, the "contemporary blues" attitude is better illustrated in rhythm and blues and the early music coming out of Motown and especially Stax Records, something he writes about in 1966's "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," in *Black Music*, 173-203.
[100] Edward Bland, dir., *The Cry of Jazz* (Chicago, IL: KHTB Productions, 1959), available at https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01195283/, last accessed August 5, 2023. Baraka states that he saw this film in *Black Music*, 125.

future not marred by oppression. Even while admitting that there are many good white jazz players, one of Bland's characters makes it clear that jazz is the *product* of Black musicians, and that every major development in the genre was catalyzed by them, as well.

It seems easiest to generalize these arguments as engaging primarily with Black musical epistemology. Geographer Clyde Woods's framework is perhaps the most compelling way to do so. In *Development Arrested* he takes what one might typically consider separate styles of Black music (blues, jazz, hip-hop) and groups them together under what he terms "the blues epistemology"—a term that functions similarly to Travis Jackson's "blues aesthetic."[101] Woods proposes that these musics are not merely *styles*, but also constitute "a knowledge system indigenous to the United States that is expressed through an ever-expanding variety of cultural, economic, political, and social traditions;" the blues epistemology, which originally came to fruition during Reconstruction, thus functions as a way for Black working-class communities of consciousness to organize and as a way for them to understand and *change* their collective realities.[102] For those people at that time (and still today), "the blues epistemology is embedded, necessary, and reflective."[103]

Viewing Afrodiasporic music like jazz as a way of knowing traces a line of thought stretching from the 1940s to the present. For Black cultural historians, changes in the lives of

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[101] Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York, NY: Verso, 1998) and Travis Jackson, "Jazz Performance as Ritual: The Blues Aesthetic and the African Diaspora" in *The African Diaspora: A Musical* Perspective, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2003), 51-55. Jackson defines the "blues aesthetic" as "the sum of the reflective and normative assertions that musicians have made regarding processes of performance, interaction, and evaluation. In the simplest terms, it is constituted by (learned) practices derived from and continually fed by African American musics and culture" (52).
[102] Clyde Woods, "'Sittin' on Top of the World': The Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2007), 49-51. I choose to cite this source because of the brevity of Woods's statement in summarizing the blues epistemology; note, however, that the primary text for understanding the blues in this way is Woods, *Development Arrested*, esp. 25-39.
[103] Woods, *Development Arrested*, 25.

Black Americans are mirrored by the ever-shifting landscape of Black music. Such music has less in common with the European tradition and functions instead as a response to a set of shared cultural concerns; the blues, jazz, and hip hop are all intrinsically tied to the lives of the (Black) individuals composing, playing, and listening to it, thereby reflecting the crucial social, contingent meaning of Black music for the Black community.

There is no doubt that had Bland made his film a few years later Ornette Coleman would have been included within its framework. "Chord changes as binding structures," one of Bland's "essential" jazz elements and one pole of his dialectic of freedom and constraint, are left behind in the extended improvisations of Coleman's free jazz. Perhaps then, Bland would have theorized Coleman as the endpoint of the broader jazz narrative, a celebratory "death" of jazz because the music is totally free, since the musicians in his band are able to play whatever they would like. From the perspective of modernist criticism, this musical freedom is understood as "incoherence"; like Forte's analysis of European atonal music, Schuller's motivic analysis of free jazz thus aims to "discipline" this freedom. Unlike an internalist analysis that undertakes close readings of the inner workings of a given improvisation, a thorough "externalist" analysis, then, would connect particularities of Coleman's disruptive style of jazz with his lived experiences—Coleman and his group's musical freedom, after all, did not reflect the freedom of Black Americans around 1960.[104]

Studying Black music through the lens of blues epistemology differs significantly from Schuller's classicizing approach, which positions jazz like the modernist avant-garde treated European art music: as a self-reflexive musical practice with internal elements that develop from earlier stylistic forms, where the best works maintain an inner cohesiveness. Though he does not

[104] To be clear, "externalist" is my own term used as a means of contrast to Gabbard's "internalist."

discuss Schuller, David Ake finds this type of approach to Coleman's music both typical and problematic:

> Coleman was not satisfied with reproducing the musical world configured by bebop approaches, and he sought new ways of understanding himself as a jazz musician. For historians to place the musical developments in the European avant garde next to the musical developments in the jazz avant garde without consideration for the social and cultural perceptions of each tradition creates a kind of "blind" formalism. In the end, such an approach works to conceal rather than to reveal the meanings and values of both music communities.[105]

Ake's critique usefully implicates Schuller, who evaded any specific discussion of Afrodiasporic meanings or values in Coleman's music while simultaneously inscribing values important to Western art musical culture.

What does Schuller's transcription miss or erase that a contrasting epistemological position might call attention to, especially one informed by Black musical practices? To examine this, I want to return to Coleman's solo in "Congeniality." Schuller notates it entirely in common time, a decision made primarily out of convenience, I would imagine, though I personally do not hear much of a meter beyond a basic pulse.[106] There is one section in which Schuller changes the steady meter, measures 126-133, shown in *Figure 2.5*. It is debatable how audible this particular change in meter is, but Schuller is right to call attention to this section: certainly, something special is going on musically, though it is hard to describe exactly what. It is worth quoting Schuller's comments on these bars in their entirety:

> In bar 121 motive *d* is altered to produce an unexpected polymetric pattern with the bass. At the conclusion of this phrase (bar 127) whether by *accident or intent*, Mr. Coleman starts a new phrase which is one beat off from the rhythm section. Now it is easy to assume that Mr. Coleman erred in his entrance. Yet this kind of polymetric displacement is the heart and soul of one of the primary antecedents of jazz, an anomaly native to African music, and is certainly not known in jazz improvisation. It is conceivable then that Mr. Coleman *instinctively* and *deliberately* made this choice, especially in as much

[105] Ake, *Jazz Cultures*, 81, emphases added.
[106] Coleman himself states that his music "doesn't have any real time, no metric time. It has time, but not in the sense that you can time it. It's more like breathing—a natural, freer time" (see Hentoff, "Ornette Coleman").

as he likes to 'turn phrases around on a different beat, thereby raising the freedom of my playing.'[107]



Figure 2.5: Measures 117-135 (2:58-3:16 on the recording) of Coleman's "Congeniality" solo, in Schuller, ed., A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, 16.*

This is the only comment Schuller makes in his preface about the Afrodiasporic musical elements of Coleman's playing, and as I have highlighted, it also relies on artistic intent, even if the intent was "instinctive" (a term that certainly sounds more than a little bit essentialist in this context). In this example Schuller attempts to capture this non-Western inheritance in notation, but it is quite audible, as well. Most Western music employs structures of freedom and constraint, and I find the most interesting moments of "Congeniality" take place when Coleman escapes any semblance of pre-established regularity, such as here. While one may take issue with the meters that Schuller notates, there is certainly a sense of the performers moving outside of time altogether by skipping or adding beats independently; Coleman's running septuplet in measure 132 particularly has this effect. If I were to use Bland's language, I would say that such moments exemplify Black jazz musicians like Coleman "escaping the enemy of time" and breaking the "bondage" of fixed chord changes.

[107] Schuller, *Musings*, 84, emphases added.

Other scholars working in the field of Black studies have similarly commented on how "Coleman exemplifies the irruptive musical liberator's challenge to time and space," as Fred Moten describes Baraka as doing; Moten also mentions Samuel R. Delany as someone who also explores in Coleman's music "what might be called the political feelings that attend an escape that is somehow both from and within the musical bar line."[108] Moten himself suggests that Coleman is after the "*deliberate* aesthetic effect and affect of wanting out" of a network of standardized Black music and knowledge.[109] It is in this musical moment that Coleman's solo moves outside of the confines of Western notation, reaching what Jackson calls the "next level"—a state of transcendence where Coleman's "sense of self is temporarily suspended," where he "becomes part of something else."[110] If this is a moment of self-transcendence where the ego of the performer is suspended, then Schuller's attempt to notate Coleman's utterances with precision and thus confine them to the page does a disservice to the original performance on the recording; as Amiri Baraka cautions, Coleman's "extemporaneous statements cannot be reproduced by any notation."[111]

Baraka's declaration has been echoed by countless transcribers, including the one in my epigraph. One of Schuller's contemporaries, Whitney Balliet, talks about the importance of describing jazz through metaphor instead of notation, stating that "you're not going to be excited by a notation of a Pee Wee Russell solo. Because it's almost impossible to notate jazz. You can't

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[108] See Moten, *Black and Blur*, 114, where he draws on Delany's short story, "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones," originally published in *New Worlds* 185 (December 1968): 40-47.
[109] Moten, *Black and Blur*, 91, emphasis in original. Moten brings this up in the context of Mingus' aforementioned condemnations of Coleman's music, writing that to Mingus, Coleman "can't keep up, can't return and so the very figure of the black musical centrifuge stands in for what Mingus despises . . . Coleman's music exhibits the deathly gravity that foes with being out of the loop, outside the circle of occult musical understanding and interpretive im/possibility" (90). I find "the black musical centrifuge" a powerful phrase as it positions Coleman's supposed lack of traditional training (something that I have contested in this chapter) as a refutation of his Blackness in the eyes of other contemporaneous jazz performers.
[110] Jackson, "Jazz Performance as Ritual," 48-51.
[111] Baraka, *Blues People*, 225.

get the sound of the instrument. You can't get the placement of the notes, whether they're a little ahead of the beat, or behind it. So I try to *describe* solos, try to describe how a musician sounds."[112] Baraka also responded to the trend in jazz criticism to exquisitely notate improvisations—something certainly advocated by Schuller—writing that

> the notator of any jazz solo, or blues, has no chance of capturing what in effect are the most important elements of the music . . . A printed musical example of an Armstrong solo, or of a Thelonious Monk solo, tells us almost nothing except the futility of formal musicology when dealing with jazz . . . most jazz criticism tends to enforce white middle-brow standards of excellence as criteria for performance of a music that in its most profound manifestations is completely antithetical to such standards.[113]

Baraka's stance on the "futility" of transcribing Black music comes across as more than just a little polemical, but his perspective is useful for its distance from Schuller's. A more moderate approach would be to view the art of transcription as maintaining some kind of dialectical tension between form and meaning.

There are many other elements of Coleman's music that cannot be captured by Schuller's notation but can be emphasized through the lens of epistemology. For instance, perhaps the most noticeable element in the recording is the sound of Coleman's saxophone. As Baraka points out in *Blues People*, it is not just *what* these jazz musicians play but *how* they play it; having a personal sound is a key part of jazz's cultural inheritance from African music, and it also relays an important sense of the authenticity of the performer.[114] Baraka was explicit that Coleman's playing is a direct expression of himself, writing that "Coleman's screams and rants are only musical once one understands the music his emotional attitude seeks to create."[115] That the

[112] Cited in Gennari, Blowin' *Hot and Cool*, 195, emphasis added.
[113] Baraka, *Black Music*, 16-17. Nevertheless, I do not want to follow Baraka all the way down this ideological rabbit hole into thinking that transcribing someone's unique sound is truly impossible; this "authenticity" does leave a material trace in the sound that can then be captured on record and analyzed.
[114] Baraka, *Blues People,* 28.
[115] Baraka, *Black Music*, 17.

rhythm instruments are omitted in Schuller's transcriptions, especially during Coleman's "Congeniality" solo, is also notable, since how performers play with rhythm has always been an integral part of Western popular and art music, especially so in African-derived musics that regularly confound notational structures. Western rhythmic notation, though, struggles to capture rhythmic nuances, making the notated music seem much more mechanical than it would be if performed.[116]

Furthermore, Coleman's playing constantly draws on vocal sounds that are almost impossible to reproduce on the fixed Western tempered scale but can still be played on many Western instruments. Indeed, Coleman's sound exemplifies what George Lewis might call an "Afrological" improvisation. Unlike the "Eurological" variety of improvisation which "excludes history or memory," an Afrological improvisation prioritizes freedom and emphasizes a personal narrative and a unique sound.[117] This approach greatly contrasts with the European tradition that trains musicians to forgo unique timbres and an individual sound for merely an artifact of sound, something which can be found in Schuller's own music or, perhaps, in the music created by other conservatory-trained jazz performers (a perspective displayed by Bland in his documentary). But Lewis's distinction is particularly useful because these two systems of improvisation are "theorized here as historically emergent rather than ethnically essential"—the way one plays jazz is not based on genetics, but on how one is trained, broadly construed.[118]

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[116] Cugny agrees that rhythm is one of the hardest things to notate in a transcription (251-256) and that most jazz improvisations are transcribed without any attention paid to "contextual elements" such as the rhythm section; see *Analysis of Jazz* 243 and 251-56. That said, the process of realizing via performance any musical notation relies on conventions and rules that reside outside of the text. One would think that Schuller would know this, but as expressed in his book, *The Compleat Conductor* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), he actually believes that conductors must follow the composer's intentions as laid out in the score as closely as possible.

[117] George E. Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives of Improvisation," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 91-122.

[118] Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950," 93.

Coleman's personal sound, which could be characterized as harsh and noisy, can be heard throughout his solo, and it serves as a marked contrast to an "artifact of sound" mentality common in Eurological improvisations; Ekkehard Jost similarly argues that Coleman's unique sound was meant to contrast with the "sterilized tone quality" of West Coast jazz.[119] Specifically, Measure 108 of Coleman's solo includes a good example of his idiosyncratic voice (*Figure 2.6*). Schuller transcribes this line into standard notation, but Coleman does not quite hit the notated pitches. One strategy Schuller employed in assisting him in notating these areas was to write numerous grace notes; aurally, though, Coleman's characteristic upward scoop leaves the exact pitch indeterminate, making these pitches operate in an in-between space that is difficult to precisely capture through notation, and whose nature notation falsifies by indicating an arrival pitch.[120]



Figure 2.6: Measures 105-116 (2:44-2:57 on the recording) of Coleman's "Congeniality" solo, in Schuller, ed., A Collection of the Compositions of Ornette Coleman*, 16.*

It is worth pointing out the obvious: that Schuller, trained in the Western classical tradition, focuses his transcription on Lewis's Eurological aspects, as these are the very elements Western notation aim to capture. But an externalist account can also ground this unique aspect of

[119] Ekkehard Jost, *Free Jazz* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1981), 53.
[120] It seems likely that Schuller is recording the notes that Coleman fingered on his saxophone, even if he did not hit them all on the center of the pitch. As a saxophonist—and not, say, a vocalist or violinist—Coleman had to start from a Eurological reality, which was the tempered scale built into this instrument.

Coleman's music—the sound of his saxophone—with biographical data. Indeed, Coleman's sound is unique because he is playing an alto saxophone made of plastic, something he was forced to purchase because he could not afford a used, traditional instrument in 1954. Thus, his idiosyncratic sound—arguably one of the most distinctive aspects of his music—was not originally intentional but was made out of necessity, and though Coleman had the means to purchase a standard instrument if he wanted to after his success with Atlantic Records, he continued to play with this unique instrument simply because it had become associated with him and he found it easier to get the sound he wanted out of it.[121]

Conclusion: Schuller's Influence and The Ethics of Transcription

While it is not possible to precisely quantify the effect that Schuller's criticism and transcriptions had on canonizing Coleman in the pantheon of jazz greats, jazz writers in the early 1960s were quick to note the immense attention a historian and intellectual like Schuller focused onto Coleman's music. Gene Lees, for instance, wrote in *Down Beat* in 1961 that once "[John] Lewis and Schuller had put their seal of approval on Coleman, some critics began acclaiming him vociferously: others stayed neutralized, afraid of exposing themselves, afraid that Schuller and Lewis, because of their erudition, were able to see things in Coleman's music that they could not."[122]

So, while Schuller was partly responsible for Coleman's popularity, his formalist approach to using transcriptions for jazz analysis was also highly influential for decades afterwards. Indeed, Givan argues that the analysis of Rollins' "Blue 7" that Schuller published in

[121] The shift to this brittle instrument, and how it became key to his sound, is narrated in detail in Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 42-46.
[122] See Gene Lees, "The Compleat Jazz Critic," in *Down Beat's Music 1961: The 6th Down Beat Yearbook* (Elmhurst, IL: Maher Publications, 1961), 14.

1958 would become the foundation for all jazz analysis to follow.[123] Into the 1990s it remained part of current academic jazz pedagogy, evidenced by its inclusion in jazz history textbooks aimed at conservatory jazz students.[124]

Other academics analyzing jazz would also adopt a decontextualized approach, including one of the first book-length studies on the musical intricacies of free jazz, published by musicologist Ekkehard Jost in 1974. Jost makes it clear that his book is meant to push back on writers who focus on free jazz artists' "socio-cultural and political background," on scholars "who saw themselves as spokesmen of a 'black cultural revolution."[125] Though he does not name names, it seems clear to me that he is criticizing writing on free jazz like Baraka's, or any other cultural historians who abstain "from detailed analyses of musical formative principles" and ignore "the autonomous musical aspects of the evolution of free jazz."[126] Although Jost purports to show "how tight the links between social and musical factors are," in the end, his approach to Coleman's music ignores external considerations of his music and serves instead to expand on Coleman's supposed "motivic improvisation," in a way that directly follows from Schuller's analyses.[127] Unsurprisingly, as a German, Jost most commonly cites other German research on jazz, a collection of scholarship strongly connected to German musicology, rooted in the aesthetics of Western art music. His evolutionary approach examines the style of free jazz that is exemplified by certain "pioneers and initiators . . . whose music may be considered to represent its different phases of evolution."[128] Many years later, Litweiler's biography also includes a

[123] Givan "Gunther Schuller and the Challenge of Sonny Rollins," 167.
[124] See, for instance, Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History,* 2nd ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1993), 352-53.
[125] Jost, *Free Jazz*, 7-8.
[126] Ibid., 9.
[127] Ibid., 9 and 48. See, for instance, Jost's transcription of Coleman's "Tears Inside" that includes similar motivic identifications as Schuller's "Congeniality"; transcription on 49 and written analysis are on 47-51.
[128] Jost, *Free Jazz*, 10. The beginning of the discipline of musicology in the early twentieth century seems to serve as a model taken up by jazz historians, such as Jost, where classical music is an autonomous art form that organically develops over time, especially through evolving stylistic elements. Such "great" composers can draw on the music

motivic-based analysis and transcription, which aims to show how a "four-note motive" functions as a "cell that is quickly atomized into a three-note motive," thus creating "unity" in the solo.[129]

Though these transcriptions employ language and a methodology like Schuller's, they are less detailed than Schuller's transcription of "Congeniality." Transcriptions of popular music, designed to go hand-in-hand with a recording, can never be fully autonomous, but this transcription in particular gets close to an imagined ideal in which a new performance could be recreated without using the original recording as a reference point.[130] "The [notated] work" starts to become something distinct from a lead sheet, performance, or recording, in a similar way that would happen in the rock world twenty years later.[131] Using a detailed notational and theoretical system created by dominant Western musical culture, Schuller "whitewashes" Coleman's music, diluting some of the social or racial significance imbedded in it. Indeed, the most interesting musical moments in "Congeniality" are those that clearly demonstrate Coleman's position outside of the tradition of European-originated music—the exact moments that Schuller's transcription attempts to capture but cannot quite do so.

Such a study brings up the question of scholarly authority: whom should we consider the "experts" on Coleman's music and what it means? So far, I have teased out two main tendencies

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of the past to innovate and point the way forward. For a representative example of this approach see Guido Adler and W. Oliver Strunk, "Haydn and the Viennese Classical School," *The Musical Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (April 1932): 191-207.

[129] Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman,* 204.

[130] Cugny describes how "the use of transcriptions is perfectly compatible with references to audible musical elements that cannot be written. As long as transcriptions are not confused with the actual objects of reference—the recordings—there is no reason to discard what they can offer, just as there is no reason to use them alone with any complementary tools" (*Analysis of Jazz*, 261).

[131] Into the 1980s canonized jazz improvisations continued to be compared to classical music works. Marsalis, for instance, suggests that contemporary performances of the music of Louis Armstrong at Lincoln Center are warranted because his original "improvisation works so well that it can stand on its own as composition" ("The Neoclassical Agenda," 337).

in jazz writing contemporaneous with Coleman's first albums. On one hand, the "internalists" were trained musicians, familiar with then-current academic trends such as the New Criticism. Such training allowed them to study Coleman's music at a higher level of specificity, emphasizing its musical connections to both the jazz and the Western art tradition. Alternatively, cultural historians viewed Coleman's music as one link in a long chain of Black musicians who communicated their cultural inheritances in a society that sought to appropriate them at best and erase them at worst. In the end, we see that while both camps were deeply concerned with writing contiguous musical narratives, their material for constructing them quite distinct.

Schuller certainly has his reasons for undertaking this transcription project, some of which operate out of a place of love and respect, but his transcriptions also indicate the hazards in reifying music that is part of a broader, necessary epistemology. Schuller here is trying to elevate Coleman's music to Western art standards instead of allowing it to stand on its own—or, more accurately, as part of the lineage of Black popular music before and after it.[132] Borrowing language from Ralph Ellison, one might claim that an improvisation like "Congeniality" creates meaning by expressing Coleman's individuality while also presenting himself as a "member of a collectivity and as a link in the chain" of a learned idiom.[133] For Travis Jackson this is precisely why such a musical performance might be meaningful, as it "assumes a metaphoric or synecdochic relationship to other aspects of African American culture"; viewed from the vantage

[132] Schuller does deserve some credit for attributing some of the unique moments in Coleman's music to the cultural inheritance of African music, but the fact that he tries to notate these moments (such as aforementioned measures like 126 and 132) at all is problematic to me. Taking this music out of context erases not only its African roots, but its *African-American* roots and its placement in larger nodes of Black knowledge and traditions of resistance to hegemonic systems of oppression.

[133] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York, NY: Random House, 1964), 234, as quoted in Jackson, "Jazz Performance as Ritual," 28.

point of Woods' blues epistemology, a performance "comments on, reflects, and articulates actual and idealized visions of existence."[134]

By turning Black music into a whitened visual artifact, Schuller's transcriptions illustrate one way in which white supremacy discreetly operates—Western culture has long been biased toward the visual, as I suggested in my introduction, and transcriptions of recordings feed into this. Schuller cannot possibly capture everything in his transcriptions, and what he does capture for study and posterity are the parts of the music that he finds most strongly connected to the Western musical tradition; any portions that have a different cultural inheritance are erased by the very notational system itself.

This case study speaks to the larger problem of institutionalizing jazz and other non-Western musics. Like many other scholars, Schuller uses transcription to stop time and contemplate music that he finds interesting; in doing so, he brings other senses into play and unwittingly complicates the location of musical meaning. Using Schuller as a negative exemplar, scholars may want to think about how to teach free jazz as historically situated and not as a reified artifact; clearly, there are ethical problems in teaching this music "autonomously" in any university system that is founded on Western modes of translation and value.[135] In fact, Schuller's transcriptions represent part of the early process of jazz institutionalization, something that he played a major part in, not only by providing a corpus of written materials but also by establishing one of the first jazz programs as part of a classical conservatory at New England Conservatory in 1969. It was this very institution that Henry Kingsbury chose to study in

[134] Jackson, "Jazz Performance as Ritual," 35.
[135] The inherent dangers of turning the blues or jazz into an autonomous artifact can be illustrated in other artistic media. As Angela Davis observes, the 1929 film *St. Louis Blues* similarly reifies Black music without consideration for its context. To her, this film's "direct translation of blues images into a visual and linear narrative violates blues discourse, which is always complicated, contextualized, and informed by that which is unspoken as well as by that which is named" (Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* [New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999]), 61.

examining the ways that Western classical music is taught in a conservatory setting. In the book created from this research, Kingsbury provides detailed insights into the conservatory culture that Schuller built at NEC, highlighting the pervasive toxicity of musical idealism policed by slavish and arbitrary policing of performers' fidelity to the musical text, along with the ways in which "talent" is a "cultural symbol" garnered through exploitative social relationships in a highly competitive environment.[136]

One can only imagine how this allegiance to music-textual idealism influenced the way that jazz was taught at the New England Conservatory, and it would be interesting to trace the outsize role that Schuller played in building the curriculum of jazz instruction there. Indeed, Schuller's attempt to produce such a detailed transcription of Coleman's solo in "Congeniality" foreshadows the way he would treat the classical musical score in the decades to come. Published in 1997, Schuller's book *The Compleat Conductor* exemplifies his position as a score fundamentalist who would pursue the most extreme version of a *Werktreue* aesthetic, as he spends pages lamenting the fact that, unlike him, so many other conductors do not suitably follow the composer's intentions as laid out in the score—he even listens to over four hundred recordings of eight symphonic works to illustrate how improperly written scores are followed.[137]

Though Schuller's work is not often studied in such a context, other scholars have examined the institutionalization of jazz over the twentieth century, whether through its emergence in academic literature, or by characterizing jazz as "America's classical music."[138]

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[136] Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory System* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988), 77-79.
[137] See Schuller, *The Compleat* Conductor. For a critique of Schuller's approach, see Janice Waldron, "A Discussion of Gunther Schuller's Approach to Conducting: Implications for the Instrumental Music Classroom," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 97-108.
[138] See William "Billy" Taylor's "Jazz: America's Classical Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, no. 1 (1986): 21-25. Since the late 1970s jazz has also become influenced by neoliberal capitalism, especially through corporations and non-profits, a topic covered in Dale Chapman, *The Jazz Bubble: Neoclassical Jazz in Neoliberal Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

Indeed, it is this very period—the 1960s—where jazz would become a bigger part of the university apparatus. One can imagine that through this process notated jazz transcriptions gained popularity in such a context. Questions of what musical aspects are erased through transcription become re-centered when focusing on jazz pedagogy and on what materials should be used in the classroom.[139]

It is to be hoped that the potential downsides of teaching Black music in a conservatory, the bastion of Western musical high culture, have, by the example of Gunther Schuller, become apparent. Musicologist Sherrie Tucker offers some suggestions for teaching the history of jazz designed to avoid essentialism and strict evolutionary models by challenging the jazz canon as an objective truth.[140] Her approach allows for a more inclusive narrative that encompasses, for example, the important (and neglected) role women have had in jazz over its history. Eric Porter similarly condemns "the jazz tradition" as an exclusionist canon, suggesting that instead of placing jazz into a "larger framework of something like 'jazz culture,'" or policing what is or is not jazz (thus relying on essentialist conceptions of jazz), one might instead "identify and write about various spheres of musical activity that intersect with but are coterminous with jazz but whose existences are still determined, at least in part, by the idea of jazz and the political economy of the jazz world."[141]

One way forward, then, might be to consider the type of texts used in collegiate approaches to jazz study. The most common textbooks still provide standardized jazz narratives

[139] The first jazz fake book, *Modern Jazz*, was published in 1962 illegally in regard to copyright, and reflected an acceptance of notation in the jazz world that ran in parallel with jazz being taught more widely in a university setting; see Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 124-28.
[140] See Sherrie Tucker, "Deconstructing the Jazz Tradition: The 'Subjectless Subject' of New Jazz Studies," in *Jazz/Not Jazz,* 264-84, and her book *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).
[141] Eric Porter, "Jazz History and Historiography," in *Jazz/Not Jazz*, 25.

buttressed by decontextualized transcriptions of canonic masterworks.[142] While it is understandable that many conservatories favor these textbooks to prepare their students for performing jobs in the jazz world, we must continue to be mindful of everyone and everything such narratives exclude. As this chapter has attempted to show, the use of transcriptions to present "the music itself" is especially problematic with jazz; a responsible teacher will need to supplement, even to replace, sometimes, the gleaming *a*-historicism of jazz transcription with a messier historicist approach—one that emphasizes, rather than eludes, the Afrodiasporic inheritances of jazz and the lives of the artists playing it.

[142] Scott DeVeaux, for instance, suggests that college textbooks present jazz music as a "coherent whole": the music is treated not as a fad or a mere popular music, but as an autonomous art form that has evolved over time in a way that mirrors the development of classical music; see Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 525-26. A key example of such a college textbook is Mark Gridley's textbook, first published in 1978, examines stylistic changes in jazz over the twentieth century; see *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997).

Chapter 3: Guitar Transcriptions in the Rock Era

Don't use the piano. The piano is no good at all for music like this. It will throw you off every time—make you think there are mistakes where there are none . . . Many who buy your book will not be able to read music (a difficulty with putting together any book of folk music). And there's no reason why they should. Learning from listening is unquestionably the best way, the only way that suits this kind of music. You're setting the notes down for a record of what happened, a record that can be studied, preserved and so on—a necessary and useful companion to the recordings of the actual sounds. I keep thinking of this as I transcribe; if you could do it, it would be good to have a legend across each page reading: Listen to the record if you want to learn the song.

—*Transcriber Hally Wood, quoted in the* New Lost City Ramblers Song Book[1]

Formed in New York City in 1958 during the folk revival, the New Lost City Ramblers were an old-time string band founded by John Cohen, Mike Seeger, and Tom Paley. The group was focused on introducing a contemporary audience to the hillbilly music of the 1920s and '30s; because such music was not part of a written tradition, the Ramblers learned how to play it by listening to 78 RPM recordings.[2] Those who had a vested interest in folk music and the blues—both at midcentury and before—were primarily interested in song lyrics, paying minimal attention to vocal melodies.[3] Musical accompaniment, on the other hand, was outside the purview of transcription, and when provided (as a convenience) would be notated for the piano, even if the original source (whether a performance or a recording) used genre-specific instruments—in the music the Ramblers were interested in, usually some combination of fiddle, open back banjo, and flattop guitar.

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[1] This was included in a letter sent to John Cohen from the transcriber, Harriet Elizabeth "Hally" Wood, shortly after beginning her work on this publication, which is printed in John Cohen and Mike Seeger eds., *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1964), 6.

[2] See Judith McCulloh, "Hillbilly Records and Tune Transcriptions," *Western Folklore* 26, no. 4 (October 1967): 225-44, where she discusses early publications of folk music transcriptions, including *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book.* Wood writes about the process of the Ramblers learning this music in *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 30. Though he does not speak about this book, Jeff Titon provides an overview of the Ramblers and the ways in which their music was viewed through the lens of authenticity in the 1960s and '70s in his article "Authenticity and Authentication: Mike Seeger, the New Lost City Ramblers, and the Old-Time Music Revival," *Journal of Folklore Research* 49, no. 2 (May-August 2012): 227-45; the process of the group learning from 78s is written about on p. 228.

[3] For additional examples of this trend beyond those covered in my dissertation see McCulloh, "Hillbilly Records and Tune Transcriptions," 239-41.

The *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book,* published in 1964, was designed to redress the balance. In compiling the *Song Book*, Cohen explains that the publication was meant to push back on the "literary content" focus that had dominated "the study of folklore" in previous decades. It would foreground full and accurate musical transcriptions of recordings "as a means of documenting and preserving *performance and style*."[4] Rather than vocal lead sheets with piano accompaniment—the most common type of popular music transcription in the 1960s—the *Song Book* would provide students with notation of the actual instruments performed on a given recording. As the transcriber Wood points out, this allows the book to be useful to players who wanted to learn how to play old-time music on vintage instruments, serving "as a jog to memory, a source of details to help in working out particular passages."[5]

Popular music transcribers in the long 1960s explored new notational possibilities that would broaden their reach to those who did not play the piano or even read music at all; young revivalists who were interested in learning folk or rock music fit this demographic profile particularly well. The guitar was the foundational instrument in both musical genres, and it was the ideal candidate to challenge the piano's long hold on domestic music making. A guitarist can learn to accompany their favorite tunes relatively quickly with little training: unlike other instruments such as the violin, the fretted nature of the guitar makes it easier to hit precise pitches (though there tends to be a lot of dead notes and un-pitched noise until one learns to place their fingers correctly). Frets also enable guitar lines to be notated in *tablature*, which directly visualizes the fretboard, instructing the player exactly where to put their fingers; standard musical notation, on the other hand, records the resulting sounds without giving a clue as to how they are produced. Tablature is thus much more accessible, as anyone can learn how to read it

[4] *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 10, emphases added.
[5] Ibid., 30.

relatively quickly without any knowledge of music theory.[6] Transcription using tablature allows players to imitate recorded music, both the melodic lines (tablature supplemented by standard notation, for singers), and chordal accompaniment (through chord letters, diagrams, or photographs). Even guitarists who know how to read pitch notation have problems when they read music on their instrument. For instance, the standard tuning of the guitar has overlapping scales on adjacent strings, allowing for any pitch to be fretted in numerous ways, making sight reading more difficult than it might be on instruments where each pitch is found in only one location.

There was no uniform approach to guitar tablature in the long 1960s, nor had there ever really been a standardized pedagogical model for learning how to play the guitar in the first place.[7] Little scholarly attention has been paid to the history of guitar transcriptions in general, partly because of the historical association of the guitar with lowlier forms of music: though the "modern six-string guitar and its standard tuning came into existence only in the early 1800s," it was often seen as connected to "folk music of troubadour, gypsy, and flamenco cultures."[8] The bias only worsened through late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which the flattop guitar played "fingerstyle" fell out of favor in genteel musical circles, but continued to be used in vernacular music practices. Before the 1960s, there was little pedagogical demand for

[6] As Eli Harrison argues, because popular music guitarists do not need to learn how to read standard notation they are often treated as "poor music readers"; see Eli Harrison, "Challenges Facing Guitar Education," *Music Educators Journal* 97, no. 1 (September 2010): 53. Other scholars have written about how guitarists' aural learning habits are often ill-suited for university settings that prioritize stricter instructional environments and emphasize written music, such as Clive Maxwell Harrison, "Rock Guitar in the Conservatoire: The Confluence of Informal and Formal Music Education," *College Music Symposium* 57 (2017).

[7] In their *Grove Music Online* article that provides a brief history of the guitar in Western music, the authors point out that "instruction books reveal that there was no standard approach to playing technique" even before this era; see Thomas F. Heck et al., "Guitar," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27338, last accessed July 18, 2022.

[8] Harrison, "Challenges Facing Guitar Education," 52-53. For more on the reception of the classical guitar in the nineteenth century see Maurice Joseph Summerfield, *The Classical Guitar: Its Evolution, Players, and Personalities Since 1800*, 5th ed. (Braydon on Tyne: Ashley Mark, 2002). For a broader historical overview of the guitar in Western music see Heck et al., "Guitar."

instruction except on archtop guitar, where standard notation and chord symbols were used to introduce jazz rhythm guitarists to the complexities of music theory. As we will see, melodic guitar transcriptions started to proliferate in the 1960s and reached critical mass in the 1980s, at which point editorial styles for transcriptions would become standardized; by the 1990s, almost 10% of all pop titles in print had been published as guitar tablature, while 25% of *new* pop music titles were presented this way.[9]

The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book illustrates the newfound attention paid to transcribing parts for guitar and other fretted folk instruments in the 1960s. Despite Cohen's comments to the contrary, many of the transcriptions still maintain a focus on lyrics and melody; each transcription includes a vocal melody, but only some have instrumental accompaniment. The pieces written for fretted instruments, such as the banjo and guitar, occasionally include tablature and chord diagrams, such as in *Figure 3.1*, which shows the beginning of the transcription of David McCarn's "Everyday Dirt," recorded in 1930. Here, the guitar is notated in both standard musical notation across two clefs with the same part notated in rhythmic tablature below. Chord symbols are given using letters, but a specific voicing of the A-major chord is provided as a diagram so the player can finger the chord in such a way as to hit the specific notes heard on Victor V-40274.

Even though countless aspiring rock guitarists picked up the instrument in the late 1960s, inspired by the music of the Beatles and venerated guitar gods such as Eric Clapton and Jimi

[9] For these figures, Mark Gaare cites a telephone conversation he had in the mid-1990s with Randy Rucker, owner of the Musi*Key catalogue, where Rucker estimated "that guitar tablature represents 1-2 percent of all titles currently in print, and 7-8 percent of all pop titles" in the United States. Gaare also interviewed Ted Piechocinsky, the senior vice president of Cherry Lane, a major player in publishing guitar transcriptions, some of which are discussed in this chapter; it is Piechocinsky who gives the 25% figure. See Mark Gaare, "Alternatives to Traditional Notation," *Music Educators Journal* 83, no. 5 (March 1997): 9.

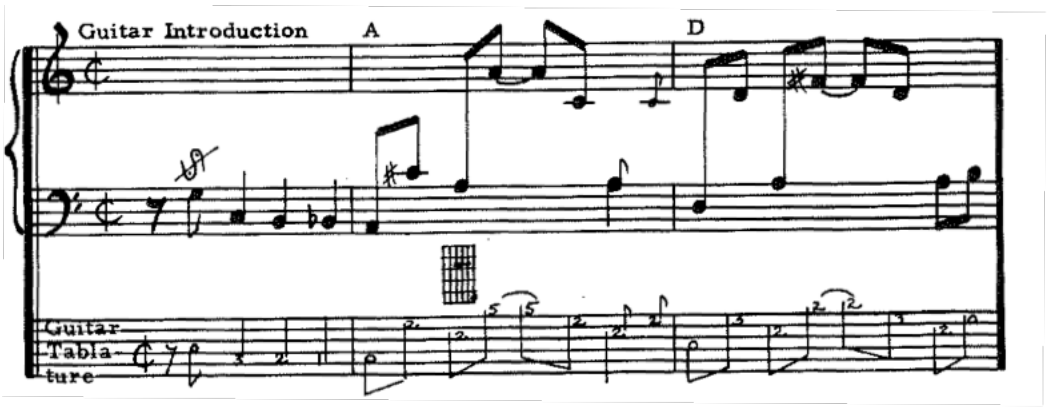


Figure 3.1: The beginning of the transcription of David McCarn's "Everyday Dirt" (Victor V-40274, 1930), in The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 168.*

Hendrix, most popular guitar pedagogy was based in folk music.[10] The world's most commercially successful solo guitar performer, Joe Satriani, recounts how he decided to pick up the guitar after Hendrix's death in 1970; as he tells it, learning how to play like Hendrix in the 1970s was laborious in the extreme, because of the lack of educational materials.[11] Guitarists today have myriad resources available for improving their craft, such as instructional books, which teach scales and chord shapes, and note-for-note transcriptions, which teach entire songs; many of these skills can now be learned freely online through YouTube or TikTok, while tabbed melodies and chords for just about any well-known pop song can be perused online for free.

For Satriani and other aspiring guitarists in the long 1960s, though, there were few pedagogical resources available outside of basic instructional books such as *Mel Bay's Modern*

[10] Robert Bune, a high school choir director, discusses some of the pedagogical materials available for guitarists in the mid-to-late 1960s, concluding that the vast majority of guitarists were learning how to play in the folk idiom, with some classical guitar instruction also available; rock guitar instruction and associated instructional materials, on the other hand, were completely lacking. See Robert W. Bune, "Let the Guitar Light Your Fire," *Music Educators Journal* 56, no. 5 (January 1970): 83-85 and 135-37.

[11] Satriani talks about this in the forward he wrote to Jim Crockett with Dara Crockett, *Guitar Player: The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever* (Milwaukee, WI: Backbeat Books, 2015), ix. Satriani's commercial success is described on his official website, http://www.satriani.com/about/, last accessed August 5, 2023; his indebtedness to Hendrix is covered here and elsewhere throughout numerous biographies and interviews, such as on his main fan website, https://www.joesatrianiuniverse.com/joe-satriani/biography/, last accessed August 5, 2023. He has also been a frequent performer on the Experience Hendrix tour as recently as 2019. In other interviews Satriani details his musical background and how he was taught music theory at a young age; see, for instance, Joe Satriani, interview by Ivan Chopik, *Guitar Messenger*, March 28, 2006, https://guitarmessenger.com/joe-satriani-interview/.

Guitar Method, which was first published in 1948.[12] While useful for those who wanted to learn how to read music and develop basic proficiency on the instrument through scales and chords, this book was not particularly helpful to guitarists who wanted to learn how to create or imitate blues-based popular music, as guitar tablature was not used, and the few transcriptions provided were of (pretty corny) folk music.[13] For guitarists who wanted to learn and imitate up-to-date rock music in this era, learning by ear from a recording, or watching a skilled player, was the only way.[14] The trade journal *Guitar Player* magazine, first published in 1967, was a resource, as it provided rock guitarists numerous exercises and examples to play in various styles, some even in tablature, but full-on transcriptions of rock guitar riffs and solos remained uncommon until the end of the 1970s.

In my first chapter, I argued for the ontological primacy of recordings in rock. How interesting, then, that so few rock recordings were actually transcribed until the 1980s. Even in the late 1950s, however, *folk* music transcriptions were frequently identified as taken directly from a specific recording. The *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* provides a typical example: because folk music was not a literate tradition, folklorists like the Ramblers deliberately learned their music by ear from recordings, and their transcriptions are footnoted by text that describes precisely which recording (or recordings) were used as sources. Yet, as Judith McCulloh points out, there is a fuzzy relationship between transcription and source recording in this publication:

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[12] As *Mel Bay's Modern Guitar Method Grade 1* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 1948). It is telling that the next edition would not be published until 1972 under the same name (also Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications). After this point, though, it would be updated regularly, with revised editions were published in 1975, 1980, 1990 and beyond.

[13] In discussing instructional materials available to nascent guitarists such as himself in the 1970s, Jeff Schwartz describes this publication as "legendary" and mentions that it included pieces such as "Down in the Valley," and "John Henry"; see Jeff Schwartz, "Writing Jimi: Rock Guitar Pedagogy as Postmodern Folkloric Practice," *Popular Music* 12, no. 3 (October 1993): 281.

[14] This method for learning popular music is detailed by numerous scholars and guitarists, both then and now; personal anecdotes are described by Schwartz in "Writing Jimi," 281-22; a broader pedagogical perspective is provided in Harrison, "Rock Guitar in the Conservatoire."

only a third of the examples are taken from historical recordings, rather than the Ramblers' own recreations.[15] Other transcriptions amalgamate numerous recordings, and in just about every case the transcriptions provided are excerpted, not complete.[16] Transcriptions are not usually in the original keys of the source recordings, as the vocal melodies are transposed to "the usual singer's range."[17] Though the relationship between transcription and recording is equivocal, the recordings *are* positioned as primary, and melodies and accompaniments are transcribed for the instruments originally used, illustrating a trend towards fidelity that would culminate in note-for-note transcriptions in the 1980s.

In the almost seventy years since the *Song Book* was published interest in the guitar and guitar pedagogy has exploded, with a concomitant increase in published transcriptions; it is thus worth pondering what trends—whether technological, historical, or aesthetic—contributed to this rapid market saturation. Examining notated transcriptions available to guitarists in the 1960s and '70s, I narrate some of these shifts, mapping out a textual history of guitar transcriptions over the Rock Era, paying particular attention to the relationship between recordings and transcriptions. In Chapter 1, I surveyed secondary literature to argue that in rock music, the recording is considered the work while in folk music and the blues the recording is taken as a reproducible snapshot of an authoritative performance. In this chapter, I re-engage these ontological distinctions from the perspective of a performing guitarist and use primary sources—the published transcriptions themselves—to argue that not only did transcribers not treat recordings as works until the 1980s, but that this ontological perspective developed slowly over decades along with the slow rise of rock ideology.

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[15] See McCulloh, "Hillbilly Records and Tune Transcriptions," 243 fn. 37.
[16] See, for instance, the transcription of "East Virginia Blues," in *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 43, which is a transcription of a recorded recreation by Mike Seeger of three earlier versions of this song.
[17] Ibid., 30.

To explore this topic, I provide a taxonomy of guitar transcriptions in this period, which I divide into three general categories that overlap in interesting ways:

1. *Guitar lessons*. Like I described in my introduction, these are pedagogical transcriptions commonly found in folk music, and they primarily aim to transmit the stylistic legacy of a certain performer (or set of recorded performances) to folk-blues guitarists who want to learn how to play "authentically" in a certain regional or historical style. Guitarists can use these to improve their instrumental dexterity and capability, thus developing their own individual voice. These transcriptions rarely aim to capture the exact sounds on a recording, but instead function as a reified replacement for in-person instruction.

2. *Lead sheets*. Unlike pedagogical transcriptions, these are not pedagogical but illocutionary, as they instantiate (and distill) a certain song's lyrics and melody for copyright purposes. While these are not meant for performance, they were often marketed and sold as sheet music, even if they were impractical as such.

3. *Note-for-note transcriptions of a recording*. While ubiquitous today, these were surprisingly uncommon in this period outside of the jazz tradition. Such transcriptions are descriptive, as they document a certain recording the way a score would a musical work in the Western tradition, documenting through notation what has occurred on a recording while providing players the necessary information to replicate it note for note, usually through tablature, standard notation, and prose. These treat the recording as a work.

If Chapter 1 was theoretical, this chapter is meant to be practical, as I collate and narrate a representative historical collection of published guitar transcriptions in the Rock Era. Each category of transcription defines a different view of the "work" being transcribed. During this period, much sheet music exists for extra-musical reasons, namely, to secure federal copyright; it thus matters very little that it hardly resembles an associated recording. Detailed transcriptions, however, have a high degree of what Goehr would call *regulative power* for devoted aficionados; following the most minute notational details, both hobbyists and professionals can internalize and embody a talismanic figure like Hendrix, since transcriptions provide a written record of how he performed some of his most canonized guitar parts, providing an extra resource beyond the recording itself. Following my three-way taxonomy, I illuminate a shift in rock listening habits and connoisseurship from the 1960s to the 1980s: if at the beginning of this period

transcriptions had functional and provisional ontologies, in later years they become art works with stable shelf lives, like the recordings they mirror.

Because of the embryonic state of guitar transcription in this period the guitar is notated in diverse ways, but most transcriptions in folk and rock music utilize some kind of guitar tablature. I begin this chapter by looking in detail at the notational challenges of vernacular guitar transcription. I then examine several guitar lesson transcriptions of type (1), particularly those published in the late 1960s, a time when folk-blues guitar was exploding in popularity, and a growing number of revivalists wanted to learn how to play in this idiom. These transcriptions function as written documents that transmit pedagogical knowledge as part of the broader folk process. It is thus not surprising that many of these documents, such as the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book,* were first published in the 1960s, popularizing the music of earlier folk groups and blues guitarists like Robert Johnson and Son House, as recorded in the 1920s and '30s, and "re-discovered" by record collectors and revivalists in the 1950s.

The second half of this chapter narrates the trajectory from lead sheets of type (2) to detailed transcriptions of type (3) over the course of the 1970s, a shift from *illocutionary* to *descriptive* transcriptions in rock music. The focus here is specifically on transcriptions of Jimi Hendrix's guitar playing, as I examine every published collection of his music into the early 1980s, starting with the first published collection from 1975. To maintain continuity in my comparative analyses of this canonic reservoir of rock guitar technique, I focus mainly on transcriptions of Hendrix's 1967 recording of "Purple Haze": as one of his best-known tracks, it is represented in almost every publication, and is also ideal for my project because it includes a short, improvised solo featuring extended studio techniques; improvisation in rock was an important legitimizing development of the music in the 1960s, and a revered aspect of Hendrix's

music for fans and budding guitarists. Thus, we will ask specifically if and how his "psychedelic" guitar solo on this track was transcribed over the years.

The Guitar and Musical Notation

The guitar fretboard is well-suited to representation through tablature, more so because many skilled players do not read music notation. Guitar transcriptions published today typically provide both standard notation and tablature, which allows players of all backgrounds to read them, but contemporary tablature does not have a standard for notating rhythms and some knowledge of notation can be useful for hearing the song in one's head (there is also an implicit expectation that the player will simply imitate the rhythms they hear on the source recording, even if they do not understand rhythm and meter on a technical level). Further, because tablature represents frets and not pitches, it works very well for music originally performed in non-standard guitar tunings, common in older blues music and its derivative blues rock. Fingerings are not typically included in either type of notation, though finger-style guitar music will indicate the exact fingers to pick with where necessary.

This editorial style is common in note-for-note transcription books, which aim to translate entire albums faithfully into both types of notation, simultaneously delineating the resulting sound (standard notation) and telling players how to play it (tablature). *Figure 3.2* reproduces a representative example, a transcription of Joe Satriani's "Always With Me, Always With You," published in 1988, one year after the source album *Surfing with the Alien* was released.[18] A few things are worth noticing in this example: First, in addition to the tablature and standard notation parts, chord diagrams form a third layer of notation presented at the beginning

[18] *Joe Satriani: Surfing with the Alien*, transcribed Jesse Gross (New York, NY: Cherry Lane Music, 1988), 39.

of the excerpt. These provide a fretboard visualizations of a chord grips required to match the sound on the recording, something also seen in *Figure 3.1*. This type of reference notation is distinct from both standard and tablature, as it is not read in time. Diagrams have some disadvantages: they can be confusing for novice players because they are positioned vertically, thus not accurately representing how the guitarist would see the fretboard from their own perspective; they are also designed for right-handed guitar players.[19]



Figure 3.2: The opening of the transcription of Joe Satriani's "Always With Me, Always With You" on Surfing with the Alien *(Relativity 88561-8193, 1987), in* Joe Satriani: Surfing with the Alien*, 39.*

[19] See Harrison, "Challenges Facing Guitar Education," 53. Crump et al. designed an experiment that compared the response time of guitarists examining three different types of chord notation—simple chord letters, photographs of hand positions, and chord charts—in different rotations, finding that there was no significant difference between the time it took players to realize chord charts and photographs. There was, however, a difference in response time depending on the orientation within these formats, as familiar angles (such as their view of the fretboard, or that of their instructor's) would be read faster. As the authors conclude, this is not particularly surprising because most guitarists do not look at printed music but instead at their own hands; however, even in this study all the players were right-handed. See Matthew J.C. Crump et al., "Keeping an Eye on Guitar Skill: Visual Representations of Guitar Chords," *Music Perception* 30, no. 1 (September 2012): 37-47.

Figure 3.2 also includes editorial marks added to both streams, especially to the top staff in standard musical notation. Some of these marks describe elements of the recording, such as dynamics, tempo, and the timbre of the guitar—all of which are useful pieces of information for the performer should they wish to match the playing on the recording, which is, after all, the primary goal of these publications. The "expression marks" added to the transcription makes it appear visually like a classical music score, which, in its mature post-1800 form also includes instructions for articulations, tempo, and dynamics. There are additional symbols in the tablature part that tell the guitarist how to play certain notes, such as slides (indicated by "*sl.*"), finger vibrato (the wavy lines above the staff), and artificial harmonics (A.H.). These techniques, along with others such as pitch bends and tremolo, are all explained in greater detail in an initial "tablature explanation" section, a legend commonly included in transcription books like these, even back as far as the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book.*[20]

At a broader level, other notational decisions demonstrate that this Satriani transcription is meant to fully represent the associated recording as a primary text. Note the four bars of rest that begin the transcription while a programmed drum machine sounds on the recording. This is not necessary information for someone just looking to learn Satriani's guitar part, and most online tabs omit such "tacet" sections. However, in this case the transcription is not just notating a single guitar line in a vacuum, but instead "extracts" a single instrumental part from an imaginary "score" for larger (rock) ensemble—even if Satriani actually performed every part in this case.[21]

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[20] See *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 31.

[21] In the 1980s, it became common for transcribers to also include parts to other instruments that make up the ensemble, most commonly drums and bass. Sometimes these are included in the same system (see Chapter 4), and other times they are provided separately, either later in the same book or in a separate publication entirely. Considering Satriani's music strongly emphasizes the guitar at the expense of other instruments, it is not surprising that the "authoritative" transcription excludes parts for these other instruments. Other publications that emphasize an

This note-for-note transcription visually and functionally resembles many other such publications that have been available since the 1980s. Before a house style was codified in this decade, however, guitar transcriptions were notated in many ways, as illustrated by a quick visual comparison of *Figures 3.1* and *3.2*. Tablature, though, has been used in the Western musical tradition for centuries.[22] Meanwhile, chord symbols and diagrams like those seen above have been provided in lead sheets since the early twentieth century. While written-out lead sheets were necessary before 1972 for securing copyright, they often included chord symbols and diagrams to indicate underlying harmonies, even though this was not strictly necessary. Detailing the history of lead sheets and fake books, Barry Kernfeld argues that the inclusion of harmonic symbols in lead sheets goes back to the 1920s, when many amateur musicians would play popular songs on the ukulele, or the hybrid four-string banjo-uke. Chord diagrams visualizing the lower end of the instrument's fretboard were added above the standard vocal-piano layout in tablature, allowing for additional performance variety, using instruments commonly found in the home at the time. (Most of the chords were fingered in first position, so the diagrams only needed to cover only about four to five frets.) The banjo and ukulele have different tunings, however, and multiple diagrams had to be used; around 1930 simple chord names replaced them

ensemble over a single instrument will include all the parts, such as *The Beatles: Complete Scores* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989), which I write about in my conclusion.

[22] In examining alternatives to standard musical notation, Mark Gaare argues for the efficacy of instrument-specific tablature, a system that has been used for hundreds of years; indeed, he points out that "the first music printed from engraved plates is thought to be a piece of lute tablature from 1536"; see "Alternatives to Traditional Notation," 18. Thurston Dart et al. provide a more substantial history of tablature in Western music in "Tablature," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27338, last accessed July 18, 2022. As the authors point out, tablature was used in Western Europe starting in at least the early fourteenth century in keyboard music. In regard to fretted stringed instruments, music for the lute would often be written in tablature and would include rhythmic indications; around 1550 each string would be given its own staff line, visually resembling tablature today. Thomas F. Heck et al. write about the use of tablature for the guitar specifically, something that was commonly employed until it was replaced by staff notation in the second half of the eighteenth century, at which point it started to be written as a transposition instrument, sounding an octave below how it was written; see "Guitar," in *Grove Music Online*. Clearly, though, in some more recent cases, such as *Figure 3.1*, the guitar was still written across two clefs.

for simplicity's sake.[23] As the guitar rapidly gained in popularity over the 1950s, it became increasingly common to include in sheet music both chord diagrams for 6-string guitar and harmonic symbols like the ones we see today.[24] In some pedagogically-oriented guitar publications, photographs of actual chord grips would replace diagrams, but these serve a similar function.

Transcribing Folk and Blues Guitar in the Long 1960s

Though song lyrics and melodies were clearly still paramount, the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* illustrates a shift in thinking, as mid-1960s transcribers paid more attention to the instrumental/dance side of folk music, not just its literary content. For the Ramblers, transcribing instrumental lines preserved aspects of an earlier tradition that would normally be ignored, such as the specific folk instruments used and their associated techniques.[25] But notating this music also allowed it to be studied more abstractly than would be possible by just listening to the records. The country blues worked particularly well, as one could just focus on transcribing a single guitar part and a single vocal line.

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[23] See Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham: MD, Scarepress Press, 2006), 43; notated examples from the 1930s can be found on p. 45 and pp. 48-49. Though most sheet music published before the Rock Era included parts for vocal and piano, some collections did include additional parts for stringed instruments such as the banjo and ukulele. For instance, earlier in this dissertation I brought up W.C. Handy, ed., *Blues: An Anthology* (New York, NY: Albert and Charles Boni, 1926). While mostly written for piano, a tune like "St. Louis Blues" (printed on pp. 71-74) includes chord diagrams for a "ukulele in D." The banjo was a key instrument in the American folk scene in the 1950s, as many aspiring musicians learned from Pete Seeger's banjo instruction book, *How to Play the 5-String Banjo*, which was originally self-published in 1948; this is briefly discussed in David King Dunaway and Molly Beer, *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 110-11. Other sources have commented on the importance of Seeger's book, such as Michael John Simmons, "Banjo Bible: Pete Seeger's Book that Launched a Thousand Fingers," *Fretboard Journal*, January 2014, https://www.fretboardjournal.com/features/banjo-bible-pete-seegers-book-launched-thousand-fingers/.

[24] See Marvin E. Paymer, ed., "Sheet Music" in *Facts Behind the Songs: A Handbook of American Popular Music from the Nineties to the '90s* (New York, NY: Garland, 1993), 265.

[25] In the beginning of the *Song Book*, Cohen writes in detail about the typical instruments used and the history of these instruments in American music; see *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, 11-20.

Given the lack of printed pedagogical materials for playing country blues, this process of transcription and intabulation was a particularly useful way for instructors to transmit knowledge to their students or other fellow guitarists. Those who wanted to succeed in the folk revival scene had to learn tricks of the trade by attending performances, participating in hootenannies, and taking lessons from the few surviving musicians from the pre-war blues culture. Folk musicians learned from surviving recordings, too, but these could not (in the main) tell them how things were played, only how they sounded; direct observation and instruction provided insider knowledge that books and academic courses could not.[26]

Famed folk musicians spoke directly to this method of learning the guitar. John Cohen of the Ramblers, along with another key folk guitar evangelist of the 1960s, Happy Traum, conversed about learning folk music with Bob Dylan in 1968:

> You have to have some [training]. I can remember traveling through towns, and if somebody played the guitar, that's who you went to see. You didn't necessarily go to meet them, you just went necessarily to watch them, listen to them, and if possible, learn how to do something . . . whatever he was doing. And usually at that time it was quite a selfish type of thing. You could see the people, and if you knew you could do what they were doing with just a little practice, and you were looking for something else, you could just move on. But when it was down at the bottom, everyone played the guitar, and when you knew that they knew more than you, well, you just had to listen to everybody. *It wasn't necessarily a song; it was technique and style*, *and tricks*, and all those combinations which go together—which I certainly spent a lot of hours just trying to do what other people have been doing. That's what I mean by training.[27]

Learning to play the guitar in this idiom was more about becoming fluent in an idiom ("technique, style, and tricks") than reproducing a pre-existing "work"; aspiring guitarists strove to be part of this oral culture, which was the primary form of "training" available to them.

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[26] Arlo Guthrie discusses this in Dunaway and Beer, *Singing Out*, 111-12.

[27] Bob Dylan interview with John Cohen and Happy Traum, *Sing Out!*, October/November 1968, as printed in David Brackett, ed., "'For a Man to Be At Ease, He Must Not Tell All He Knows, Nor Say All He Sees,'" in *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 162-63, emphasis added.

Harry Peter "Happy" Traum (b. 1938) grew up playing the banjo and guitar and was active in the Greenwich Village folk scene in the 1950s and '60s; he first recorded with Bob Dylan in 1963. A key enabler of the folk revival, Traum was invested in teaching others the kind of "techniques" and "tricks" that Dylan discusses, having himself studied with blues guitarist Brownie McGhee. Traum started releasing his own recorded music lessons on "Homespun Tapes" in 1967 and continues to teach in-person and virtual guitar lessons to this day. Traum first published a guitar instruction book in 1965 as a way to document "the playing of the great traditional guitarists."[28] Though "observation" was still held to be the most effective and authentic way to learn folk music, after the guitar exploded in popularity during the 1960s, printed guitar transcription and instruction books arose to disseminate folk guitar techniques and the musical language of legendary blues musicians across the country (and the world); these books also provided revivalists like Traum additional income and brought in private students.

In this section, I examine some of these publications from the 1960s and '70s, focusing particularly on Traum's transcription and pedagogical practices, alongside those of his most prolific NYC contemporary, Stefan Grossman. I find that these published transcriptions only rarely match a specific race or hillbilly recording, whether taken as a musical work or a documented performance of it. Instead, these transcriptions aim to supplement pedagogy, fixing and codifying the key aspects of an important player's musical language, and unlocking fretboard patterns and fingering tricks that the contemporary player could use to become more

[28] The most complete biography of Traum is found on his website, https://www.happytraum.com/about-happy, last accessed August 5, 2023. Traum frequently discusses his background and the pedagogical materials he has created in interviews; for representative examples see Ken Hunt, "An Interview With Happy Traum," *Folk* Scene, 1981, hosted on *Rock's Backpages*, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/an-interview-with-happy-traum, last accessed May 18, 2022, and Ken Hunt, "Happy Traum: A Homespun Tale," *Dark* Star, 1980, hosted on *Rock's Backpages*, http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/happy-traum-a-homespun-tale, last accessed May 18, 2022. Michael Francis Scully provides additional context for Traum's role in the New York folk revival scene in the third chapter of "American Folk Music Revivalism, 1965-2005," (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2005), 93-160.

adept. Though Traum's and Grossman's transcriptions carry similar musical values, their transcriptions differ in the degree to which they translate source recordings.

Traum's 1968 *Blues Bag* exemplifies his approach to transcribing the blues. Traum describes it as both a "song book" (a preserved anthology of music he found valuable) and an "instruction book"; in this sense, the publication can help guitarists learn new music while serving as a mnemonic device for songs they are already familiar with.[29] Traum emphasizes the pedagogical angle, setting forth a decidedly anti-primitivist view of the folk process, explaining how the guitarists represented in his book did not magically or essentially inherit this knowledge, but learned their music by ear, as it had been developed and passed on by successive generations, stretching back to the early blues, ring shouts, and hollers (6-7).[30] Unlike some Black musicians he himself studied with, like Brownie McGhee, Traum used notation to mediate his own contribution to the folk process; though the transcriptions themselves cannot "teach anyone how to play the blues . . . [they] will open doors to the student that had been closed to him without the guidance of a good teacher or a book such as this," allowing new players to develop their own personal style (4).

The format of this transcription book is similar to others from the era: Traum includes a brief overview of guitar tablature, and explains how common guitar techniques, such as hammer-ons and pull-offs, will be notated; each transcription is also preceded by some prose observations. Traum's transcriptions look like a combination of lead sheets and contemporary guitar transcriptions: vocal melodies are prioritized, and the guitar part, when included, includes guitar tablature printed underneath standard musical notation. A single written-out guitar break

[29] Happy Traum, *The Blues Bag* (New York, NY: Consolidated Music Publishers, 1968), 4. This seems like a useful distinction when it comes to function; as we have seen, the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* is more of an anthology and mnemonic device than a pedagogical resource.
[30] For more on "primitivist" views of music in this era, particularly jazz, see the previous chapter.

typically follows the guitar-vocal staves, with the guitar part written in both standard notation (on top) and tablature (underneath), with chord symbols provided above the staff.

All these components can be seen in Traum's transcription of "Good Mornin' Blues" (15-16), illustrated in *Figure 3.3*. Though Traum lists the numerous artists who performed this song, he does not reference any specific recording, nor does his transcription match any single performance I have been able to find. The walking bass line in the guitar most closely resembles a 1941 Lead Belly recording, though in a different key; the vocal melody does not align with what Traum notates, and the recording also includes an additional part for a second guitarist.[31] The break which follows after *Figure 3.3* continues the walking bass line, but its transpositions to the subdominant (A7) and dominant (B7) are written out, unlike in the verse. In all recordings of this song the vocal and guitar parts employ swing rhythms.[32] Traum's notation, written in straight time, completely ignores this, nor does he describe it in his accompanying prose. His transcription does not match *any* specific performance of this tune, nor does it, if read literally, even match the general blues style of which the song partakes. Instead, it presupposes that the aspiring blues guitarist is familiar enough with the style to incorporate swing rhythms not present in the printed text.

Like Traum, Stefan Grossman (b. 1945) was a key figure in publishing folk guitar pedagogical materials in the 1960s, and he continues to publish instructional material today through his "Guitar Workshop" website.[33] Grossman first started publishing recorded lessons in

[31] The recording is Huddie Leadbelly [Ledbetter], "Good Morning Blues," Bluebird B8791-A, 1941, 78 RPM.
[32] Swing, a term typically used to characterize jazz performance, is a phenomenon that escapes a clear definition, but typically describes "the conflict between a fixed pulse and the wide variety of accent and rubato that a jazz performer plays against it" (J. Bradford Robinson, "Swing [I]," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27219), last accessed July 18, 2022). For recent scholarship on this topic, I recommend the work of Matthew Butterfield, such as "Why Do Jazz Musicians Swing Their Eighth Notes?," *Music Theory Spectrum* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 3-26 and "Race and Rhythm: The Social Component of the Swing Groove," *Jazz Perspectives* 4, no. 3 (2010): 301-335.
[33] See https://www.guitarvideos.com, last accessed August 5, 2023.

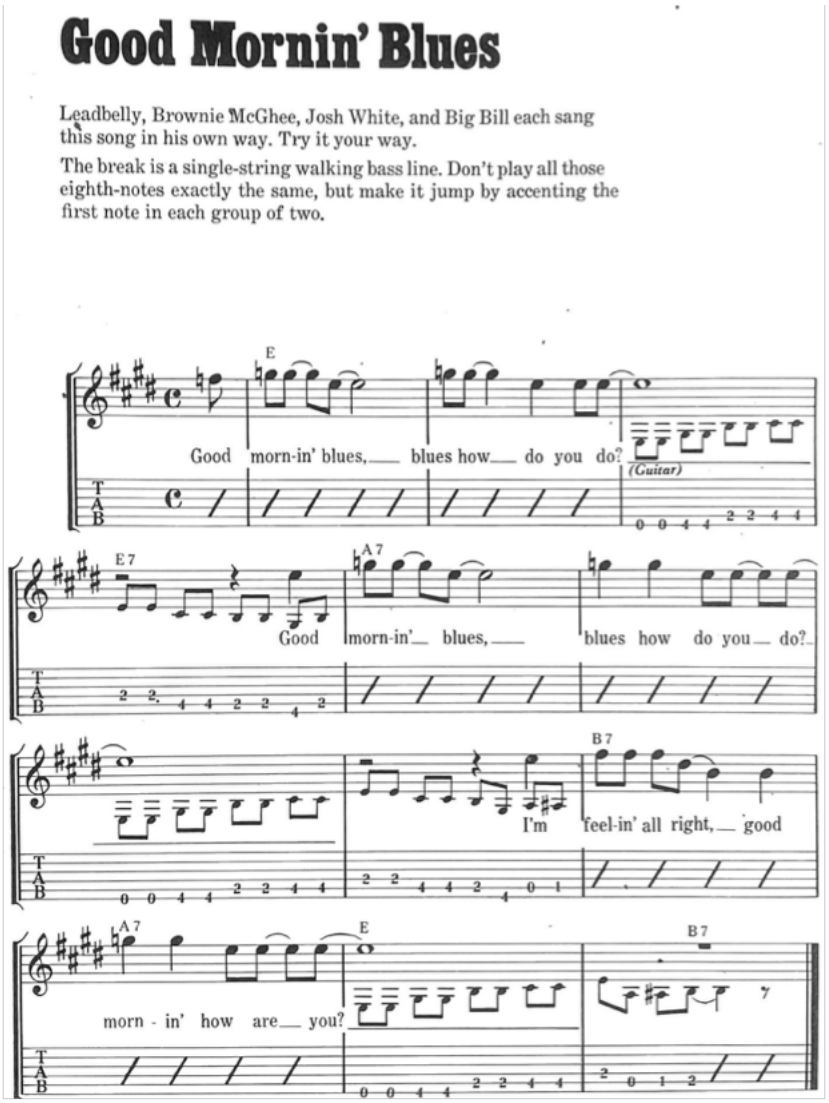


Figure 3.3: Transcription of "Good Mornin' Blues," in Traum, The Blues Bag*, 15.*

1966 with his album *How to Play Blues Guitar*, which he released on an LP with an accompanying tablature booklet.[34] The books he published in this period, including some stand-alone transcription collections without an accompanying recording, were "unique" for the time, as "the concepts and scope of his vision were much more ambitious than other one-shot method books, and his tablature, though idiosyncratic, was extremely accurate. In addition, he explained

[34] Stefan Grossman, *How to Play Blues Guitar*, Elektra 324, 1966, LP.

how to capture the tone of the original work," detailing what sort of vintage equipment would be best used to sound like guitarists such as Reverend Gary Davis and Mississippi John Hurt.[35]

Grossman recounts learning the guitar in his youth; he explains that many of the printed materials available to him concerned "organized music theory," and that this originally discouraged him from learning the guitar, as he had particular trouble with reading standard musical notation.[36] Instead, he concentrated on translating what he heard in his head to the instrument, foregrounding the importance of learning by ear from established performers. Specifically, Grossman wanted to "teach the music of some great guitar bluesmen," not just by providing a notated transcription of a performance or a lesson, but by including additional components that foregrounded "historical, personal and emotional value," such as "photographs, interviews, and records."[37]

One of the bluesmen Grossman particularly focused on was his own teacher, Reverend Gary Davis, and one of his most widely circulated publications was devoted entirely to this legendary blind guitarist and his huge repertoire of traditional sacred and popular music.[38] The book showcases Grossman's attempt to capture Davis' pedagogy through interview, photographs, prose, and musical notation. Indeed, because Davis did not use notation to create and teach his music, Grossman had to "devise a method for writing down the material" that he was being taught, reifying Davis's instruction "to learn more in a lesson and remember it all";

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[35] See Mark Humphrey, "Stefan Grossman: A Retrospective," which is hosted on Grossman's website, https://www.guitarvideos.com/about-stefan-grossman, last accessed May 28, 2023, which is the most detailed biography of Grossman that I have found.
[36] Stefan Grossman, *Rev. Gary Davis: Blues Guitar* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1974), 18.
[37] Stefan Grossman, "Introduction to the Country Blues Guitar Series," which is found at the beginning of each of the five publications in this series, such as in *Rev. Gary Davis*, 4.
[38] Drew Daniels-Rosenberg profiles Davis as part of the American Folk Music Revival and discusses the impact he had on other guitarists, such as Stefan Grossman, through his teachings; see Drew Daniels-Rosenberg, "'I Am the Light of the World': The Legacy of Reverend Gary Davis's Musical Language," (MFA Thesis, Brandeis University, 2021).

the method he devised "showed only the fret positions of the strings [while] the sound, rhythm, and accent of the piece were all in [his] head."[39] Grossman would subsequently use this notation he developed, along with photographs of hand positions he took during lessons with various instructors, to publish five transcription books in the "Country Blues Series," each of which circumscribes a regional or personal blues style to "allow you to play anything in any style with the hope that from here you could develop your own sound."[40] Grossman consistently reminded readers that his books were meant to be used in conjunction with listening to recordings and (if possible) meeting with the performers in person.[41]

Viewed through the lens of linguistics, Grossman's *Rev. Gary Davis* book, then, is a "prescriptive" document meant to capture and transmit the musical language of a famed blues guitarist. Grossman accomplishes this not by capturing a performance (like one would in jazz) or a recorded work (like in rock), but by reifying the lessons he took with Davis and the site of instruction itself, creative pedagogical transcriptions in the process. *Rev. Gary Davis: Blues Guitar* was written "in the same way as Rev. Davis would teach a new student" where the "first months were usually spent studying various blues, carnival show tunes, and ragtime songs," which are duly included in this volume (7). Grossman uses his idiosyncratic notation (see below for details) to transmit Davis' instruction to readers, supplementing his transcriptions with an interview where Davis explains how he teaches his students, favoring picking with two fingers

[39] Grossman, *Rev. Gary Davis*, 18. The fact that Davis did not use musical notation is written about by Sam Charters in "Reverend Gary Davis," printed in ibid., 97.
[40] This quote is taken from the second publication in the series, Stefan Grossman, *Delta Blues Guitar*, (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1969), 8. This book was preceded by *Country Blues Guitar* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1968), and followed by *Ragtime Blues Guitarists* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1970), *Rev. Gary Davis: Blues Guitar* in 1974, and finally *Texas Blues* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1984). Considering the ten-year gap between these last two publications it is interesting to examine some of the differences; indeed, *Texas Blues* is similar to the earlier publications in all regards except that Grossman's idiosyncratic tablature (shown in *Figure 3.4* below) is replaced with a standard tablature style, a trend common in the 1980s, as I argue in my conclusion.
[41] See Grossman, *Rev. Gary Davis*, 8.

(as that is what he does himself), and some of his opinions on practicing the guitar (14-16). One wonders if Davis, blind from birth, knew that Grossman was notating these lessons to be sold for profit through this publication. In any case, Grossman notes the symbiotic relationship Davis had with his students, as he would teach them what they needed to know to perform publicly, while they would then do "their part in enhancing his [Davis'] reputation" (6).

This book also showcases the social barriers a white man like Grossman had to overcome to learn the blues from one of its important figures, as he recounts the pilgrimage he had to make across the color line to study with Davis in the Bronx in 1960 (6). Grossman claims that he merely introduced himself to Davis at his home and then studied with him for two years, though it seems likely that Grossman's skills on the guitar were sufficient enough at the time to warrant Davis' attention in the first place. From here, Davis provided him with the skills and social capital to go on to study with other "black bluesmen" afterwards and make a career out of doing so (6). The value of this book is certainly derived from Grossman's pilgrimage, as he gives paying consumers the opportunity to "study" with Davis, as he himself did, without the accompanying effort and potential risks.

I now turn to examining the information that the Rev. Gary Davis transcriptions, representative of others in the "Country Blues Series," provide the student of the blues guitar. In the second publication in the series, *Delta Blues Guitar* from 1969, Grossman makes it clear that his transcriptions there are not translated directly from a lesson, but from prewar recordings.[42] Due to the difficulty of finding reissues, he also provides a discography at the end of the publication. That said, Grossman's transcriptions might be *based* on the original recordings, but they are not designed to *mimic* them through notation; instead, this publication, and the series as

[42] See the publisher's forward in Grossman, *Delta Blues Guitar*, 2.

a whole, are intended to help guitar players learn patterns and stylistic elements that can then be adopted as a basis for further improvisation.[43] Indeed, one of the "tricks" Grossman provides is insider knowledge of the alternate guitar tunings used on some tracks, which he spells out in advance of any transcription that does not use standard tuning. This is crucial information for a guitarist learning the blues, as a recorded performance will not easily disclose which tuning was used, thus making it impossible to replicate; once known, however, the tuning makes playing much easier.[44] Tablature is key, since standard notation only provides a pitch and not how to create it.[45]

The function of these Grossman publications is indicated by their layout and notation. As in Traum's *The Blues Bag*, each transcription is preceded by a written introduction, in which Grossman outlines the player's distinctive guitar style, either using the player's own words or by providing a brief style analysis of the music. The transcription itself is then provided, presented in an idiosyncratic tablature only, accompanied by photographs of hand positions rather than chord diagrams; the tune's lyrics are next, followed by the guitar part transcribed in standard musical notation. As in *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* and *The Blues Bag*, the entire recording is not transcribed from start to finish; instead, Grossman includes only what he deems

[43] See ibid., 8. In creating these transcription books, Grossman was clearly inspired by the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* and the emphasis it put on learning from recordings, as he quotes the transcriber's letter to John Cohen as I do in my epigraph (in Grossman, *Rev. Gary Davis*, 18). Still, unlike the *Song Book* and even Traum's aforementioned publication, Grossman is less interested in documenting extant music as an anthology, and instead chooses to emphasize pedagogical elements.

[44] A basic understanding of alternate tunings is often considered a prerequisite for those learning the guitar; see, for instance, Wolf Marshall, *Stuff! Good Guitar Players Should Know: An A to Z Guide to Getting Better* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2008), 9-10. Learning to aurally recognize chord shapes and non-standard tunings is a key part of blues guitar pedagogy; for a representative example of this see the instructional DVD John Miller, dir., *Improving Your Ear for the Country Blues Guitarist* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 2012), 2 DVDs, which has an accompanying PDF booklet to help students recognize different tunings and chord positions. For a broader take on learning blues and rock music by ear see Lars Lilliestam, "On Playing By Ear," *Popular Music* 15, no. 2 (May 1996): 195-216; alternate guitar tunings are briefly discussed on p. 203 and p. 207.

[45] This remains an issue in classical music when dealing with "scordatura," where stringed instruments are tuned differently than usual. Composers have never agreed on whether to write the sounding pitches and let the player adjust the fingering, or whether to use notation to show where the notes to be fingered are.

necessary to communicate the player's style—typically a single verse, occasionally with an introduction or an instrumental break included as well. Sometimes Grossman includes additional sections of a recording in his transcription because a player's guitar style is more varied throughout, such as in Bukka White's "Buck's Jitterbug Swing," where Grossman includes the introduction, one verse, and the break to "give you all the insights necessary into White's guitar style."[46] Grossman's transcription of Skip James's "Special Rider" combines two different performances, an old prewar race recording and a "modern" performance captured after James had been rediscovered in the 1960s.[47] There are also transcriptions in the "Country Blues Series" not based on recordings at all, such as Grossman's version of Rev. Gary Davis's "Save Up Your Money, John D. Rockefeller Put the Panic On," a transcription based directly on what the author learned from Davis himself.[48]

In every example, though, it can be challenging to align the written transcription with the associated recording, because Grossman does not timestamp his musical excerpts; finding the transcribed sections would no doubt be even more challenging using a record player from the time, moving the needle around to find the notated sections. Ultimately, the transcriptions Grossman provides are not meant to produce a definitive "text" from the source recordings; instead, they are pedagogical fragments, meant to give a guitarist the tools to work out how other verses or sections would be played, and then to construct their own performance. *Figure 3.4*, a transcription of Elvie Thomas' "Motherless Chile Blues," provides only the guitar introduction, which "differs from the verse accompaniment," telling the reader that "you should have no

[46] Grossman, *Delta Blues Guitar*, 79; transcription on 80-83.
[47] Ibid., 121-27.
[48] See Grossman, *Rev. Gary Davis*, 77-80.

problem in figuring this [the verse accompaniment] out."[49] The circled numbers differentiate musical ideas that often recur with some amount of variation.

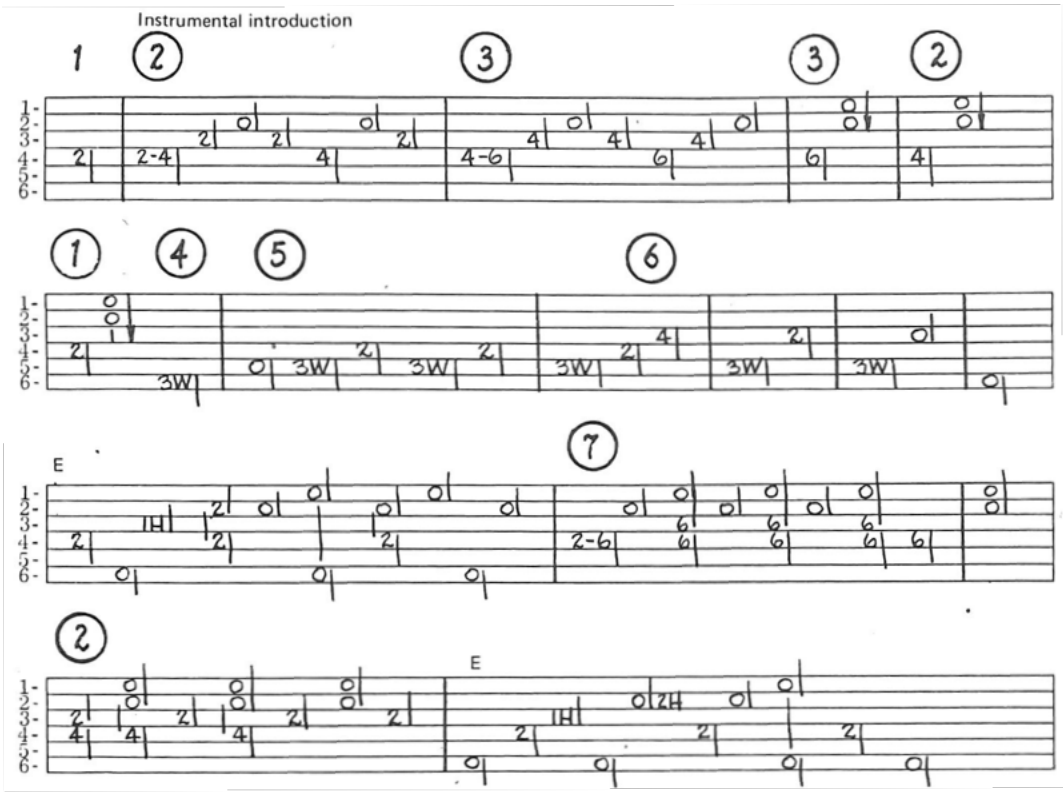


Figure 3.4: Transcription of the introduction to Elvie Thomas' "Motherless Chile Blues" (Paramount 12977, 1930), in Grossman, Delta Blues Guitar, *108.*

Figure 3.4 also illustrates Grossman's idiosyncratic tablature, which speaks to the notational challenges present in guitar transcriptions and the many decisions a transcriber must make to visually represent sonic information. Fret numbers are indicated in the space between the six strings of the guitar instead of on the strings/staff lines themselves as they would be in contemporary guitar tablature; these numbers form pseudo noteheads whose stems determine whether they should be played with the thumb (downward stem) or the fingers (upward stem); vertical arrows following groups of notes indicate whether the strumming hand should stroke up

[49] Grossman, *Delta Blues Guitar*, 107; transcription on 108-110.

or downwards. Grossman's publication includes commentary on his use of this tablature and its function as a pedagogical shortcut to stylistic and improvisational fluency:

> To me the tablature is intended for those people who want to learn how to play first and learn the theory second. In this type of "primitive" music the theory becomes very involved since there were no rules in the beginning. The artist did what and how he wanted on his instruments. This feeling is hopefully continued in the spirit of the tablature. It is to help you find the notes. The records give you the feel. You then are left to put the song together. No matter what, it will come out unique![50]

Each transcription also ends with the tablature part itself converted into standard musical notation, giving additional information about key, meter, and rhythm. While all books in this series include an explanation of Grossman's tablature system, only the first in the series explains how to read *standard* musical notation. This was likely included at the behest of Grossman's publisher, and once he got to know his audience, he insisted it be excised in subsequent volumes.

For all his focus on the technique of blues guitar, Grossman does include complete lyrics for each track. As we have seen, for academic and antiquarian folk song transcribers, the words were more important than any musical accompaniment, and even other pedagogical transcriptions from this period place the sung melodies on par with the guitar accompaniment. Though a tune's lyrics seem less relevant for Grossman's stated intentions, we will remember that they are necessary for copyright purposes. In a note from the publisher introducing Grossman's *Delta Blues Guitar*, Oak Publications describes this book's illocutionary function, as the tunes included therein had never received copyright, and "since all of these songs have been transcribed as faithfully and accurately from performance as possible, we believe they represent, in printed form, original creative works."[51] I find it likely that the publisher is asserting copyright

[50] Ibid., 129.
[51] Ibid., 2.

over these specific *arrangements* of the tunes—the notated guitar parts—and not the melodies and words, thus keeping someone else from just republishing Grossman's transcriptions.

Traum and Grossman both agree that *listening* to the blues is the best way to become a better blues musician, but their transcriptions differ in how precisely they reify the sonic legacy of old recordings.[52] These representative publications illustrate two different approaches to pedagogical transcription: Grossman notates specific recordings (sometimes more than one), enabling him to characterize, categorize, and teach different historical and regional styles of blues guitar, styles after which his books are named; his focus on capturing Davis' lessons in print also shows the value he places on discipleship. For him, the "song" in the blues is a given recording (or performed lesson), which is treated as primary.

Traum, on the other hand, is less interested in replicating a recording through notation, as he does not list specific recordings from which a given transcription is taken (though he does mention which artists have performed a certain tune). Instead, *The Blues Bag* reifies the practice recalled by Dylan: picking up tips and tricks from various performers to develop one's own distinctive voice. This is showcased by the title of the publication itself, providing the student with a "bag" of tricks they can incorporate into their own playing. As he writes in his introduction, "I have tried to keep each break as close as possible to the style of the person from whom I learned the song, without actually *copying* that person's break note-for-note."[53] The notated selections Traum provides are not transcriptions of a work or a performance, nor are they transcriptions of a lesson that was given to him, but are instead meant to *be* the lesson itself; they are fantastical amalgamations of numerous performances he is familiar with—some of which

[52] For Traum's commentary on listening to the blues, see *The Blues Bag*, 12.
[53] Ibid., 4, emphasis added.

might never have been recorded—presented in notated form.[54] Indeed, one could view any of these transcriptions as representing a relatively *negative* ontological stance: the "song," constantly in process of adaptation and recording, never exists as any one thing. What is in *The Blues Bag* is thus Traum's own personal take on a given tune, one step of the folk process that he is both participating in and capturing through written notation, gesturing at a certain version of a tune through a visual artifact in an idiom where music is primarily disseminated by ear.

To conclude this section: As transcribers, both Traum and Grossman were interested primarily in developing pedagogical materials for the guitar in the late 1960s, filling a void that they themselves noted. At the same time, though, copyright considerations might also play a role in their functions and layouts. Type (1) transcriptions, then, do not treat recordings as "works" that must be studied and interpreted like texts, but as repositories of valuable pedagogical information that should be listened to repeatedly. As Robert Fink has illustrated, "repetitive listening" became part of a "revolutionary new pedagogical method for Western music" in the United States at about the same moment through the rise of the Suzuki Method for violin; Shinichi Suzuki created his own recordings of classical music that would transmit the spirit of the master—famous violinists with the great composers behind them—to students he could not teach personally, disciples who were expected to listen to, play along with, and closely imitate the recording.[55]

While the primary function of both of these collections is clearly pedagogical, inconsistencies remain in *ontology* (what is "the work" worth transcribing?) and *epistemology* (how should "the work" be written down?). Consider a representative collection from 1975,

[54] For a transcription like "Kansas City Blues" (on ibid., 21-22), Traum mentions recordings by Jim Jackson and Brownie McGhee, but I cannot find any verse or break on their recordings that sounds like what Traum notates.
[55] See Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 214-16.

Arlen Roth's *Traditional Country, and Electric Slide Guitar*.[56] The basic pedagogical imperative is the same as we have seen above: Roth believes that the book can teach players "licks" and stylistic conventions so they can discover their own voice and "improvise upon any of the musical ideas."[57] Ontologically, Roth's transcriptions borrow elements from both aforementioned approaches: some parts of a given transcription are taken from a listed recording, while others are "in the style" of famous performers and correspond to no existing recording—except the one made by Roth to be distributed with his book. For instance, Roth provides a transcription of Robert Johnson's "Ramblin' On My Mind," shown in *Figure 3.5*. While the introduction was transcribed ("as accurately as [he] could") from the canonized Vocalion recording reissued on *King of the Delta Blues Singers,* Johnson's 1936 recording did not actually have an instrumental break, so Roth wrote one out intended to match his style.[58] Notice in this example that the tablature part differs, placing the fret numbers on the staff line, but using standard rhythmic notation that matches the music notation below. Clearly, even as late as the middle of the 1970s there was no single house style for notating guitar tablature, something also evident in early issues of *Guitar Player* magazine, to which we now turn.

Transcriptions in *Guitar Player* Magazine

For folk guitarists in the 1960s without access to a live instructor, instructional books and published transcriptions like those detailed above were some of the only resources available; those wanting to learn how to play in the rock idiom would have even fewer options. This is the primary void that guitar magazines would fill starting in the late 1960s. In addition to his

[56] Arlen Roth, *Traditional, Country, and Electric Slide Guitar* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1975)
[57] Roth, *Traditional, Country, and Electric Slide Guitar*, 5.
[58] Ibid., 55-57. The reissued recording is *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*, Columbia C3 46222*,* 1990, 2 CDs.



Figure 3.5: Transcription of the opening and break of Robert Johnson's "Ramblin' On My Mind" (Vocalion 03519, 1937), in Roth, Traditional, Country, and Electric Slide Guitar*, 55 and 57.*

unparalleled influence on electric guitarists, Jimi Hendrix's playing catalyzed the creation of *Guitar Player* magazine, founded in 1967 in response to Hendrix's entrance to the music scene at the Monterey Pop Festival earlier in the same year.[59] *Guitar Player* was not the first trade magazine focused on the guitar (*S.S. Stewart's Banjo and Guitar Journal* was first published in 1882); nor was it the first aimed towards aspiring popular musicians.[60] *Guitar Player*, though, would quickly become the preeminent guitar magazine in the United States until competitors such as *Guitar World* (1980) and *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* (1982) entered the space.[61] Because of the lack of other pedagogical materials available to guitarists in the 1960s and '70s, *Guitar Player* would become an indispensable resource for guitarists who rose to fame in this era, such as Steve Morse and Eric Johnson; Satriani himself was asked to write the foreword to the main book that details its history, Jim Crockett's *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever.*[62] The magazine was designed to appeal to a wide array of guitarists from different backgrounds who played many different types of music, something explicitly stated by the editor of the first issue, Maxine Block, who writes on the very first page that "It's about time. There are 9 million guitarists in the United States, and perhaps 25 million guitar players in the world. A strong international voice of, by, and for guitar players everywhere has been needed for some time. Here, then, is the *inside* story, the information you

[59] The origins of this magazine are best described in Crockett, *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever*, 28-29.
[60] *Beat Monthly* (later *Beat Instrumental*) was first published in 1963, but it was not focused exclusively on the guitar, but all other types of gear pop musicians would use. It did, however, include a wide array of materials aimed towards both fans and musicians, such as interviews, advertisements, and music news. In the U.K., *Melody Maker* had been around since 1926, and was similar in scope to *Beat Monthly*; England's own guitar-centric magazine, *Guitar*, would start publishing in 1972. This history of guitar magazines is provided in Tony Bacon, "A History of Guitar Magazines: From S.S. Stewart's to She Shreds," *Reverb*, September 13, 2019, https://reverb.com/news/a-history-of-guitar-magazines.
[61] Crockett, *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever,* 21.
[62] Satriani details the ways in which this magazine helped start his career in ibid., vix and xii; Morse and Johnson talk about the publication on pp. 159-60 and pp. 192-93, respectively.

want and need as an amateur or professional. It doesn't matter if you play Indonesian folk songs or Arkansas chicken rock, this publication is for you . . . We can't please everyone, but we'll try."[63]

As one of the few pedagogical resources available to rock (and other) guitar players, what role did transcriptions originally play in *Guitar Player*, and how has their function changed over the ensuing decades? Though transcriptions have always been a key part of each issue of *Guitar Player,* even Crockett's historical treatment hardly mentions them.[64] My goal in this section, then, is to tell the story of transcription, and notation more broadly, in the first decade of *Guitar Player,* starting with the first issues in the 1960s and continuing through the 1970s, examining the types of transcribed resources available, and their changing relationship to recordings. Though Hendrix's playing was the main impetus for the creation of this iconic magazine, it is surprising how little of his music—or rock music in general—was transcribed in the early issues. Indeed, one of the magazine's writers admits that in the early 1970s his technical knowledge of the guitar "was limited to about 10 chords and a little theory. Fortunately, that was all that was necessary in those days."[65] As I discuss in my conclusion, a much deeper knowledge of music theory became central to this magazine and guitar culture more generally by the 1980s; issues of *Guitar Player* in the 1970s reflect this trend, as detailed transcriptions and analyses of an array of popular music begin to appear.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, however, *Guitar Player* was a different publication. In fact, most of the notated musical examples found in the magazine then were similar to those

[63] Maxine Block, "Publisher's Privilege," *Guitar Player*, January 1967, 1.
[64] The only instance I found was when one of the magazine's contributors speaks briefly about the process of using a musicwriter instead of a typewriter in editing transcriptions done on pencil and paper for publication around 1976; see Crockett, *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever,* 58-59.
[65] Ibid., 46.

created by Stefan Grossman and Happy Traum, whose authority as publisher transcribers gave them, along with Arlen Roth, the credibility needed to be consistent contributors to *Guitar Player* in the 1970s. Their transcriptions in this magazine were all quite similar, designed to aid guitarists in learning how to play and improvise in various acoustic styles—jazz, folk, country, and blues/folk—all of which were represented quite equally. Note-for-note transcriptional fidelity to a primary recording—what I defined as type (3) transcriptions above—would be rare until the 1980s, though there are some interesting exceptions.

The first issue of *Guitar Player* profiled guitarists in a wide range of genres, ranging from Chet Atkins' contribution to the Nashville country sound, to Charlie Byrd's jazz guitar, to a profile of Jefferson Airplane psychedelic rock. The included topics cover a range of subjects that would be of interest to guitarists from all backgrounds: current news, artist interviews, letters to the editor, gear advertisements, lessons, and even some sections on the bass guitar.[66] Though the magazine would increase in length over the following decades, the first issues were quite small, ranging from thirty to forty pages, many of which include musical notation.[67] The type of notation used typically depended on the genre represented: exercises in folk and rock music, for instance, include standard notation and tablature underneath.[68] Jazz, on the other hand, is a tradition in which learning how to read standard musical notation is commonplace, and so

[66] The first example of a bass guitar tab I found in this magazine is "Electric Bass," in *Guitar Player*, January 1968, 22, where the editor writes that "we've had many letters from bass guitarists asking that *GP* includes some music for the electric bass." Indeed, the first bass guitar magazine would be a *Guitar Player* spinoff, *Bass Player Magazine*, first published in 1988. Until then, short sections of this magazine would often be dedicated to the bass guitar—though transcriptions would not typically be presented through tablature, interestingly enough. For an early example of a note-for-note bass transcription, see "Bass and Beyond," in *Guitar Player*, July 1984, 141, which is a transcription of Jeff Berlin's bass solo from Alan Holdsworth's "Water on the Brain, Part II."

[67] Though Crockett does not really cover the economics of the magazine, the increase in length has a lot to do with an associated increase in the amount of advertising included in each issue.

[68] For a folk example see "Strictly Folk: Hammering On," *Guitar Player*, January 1967, 8-9; for rock see "Ad Lib Patterns: Blues—Rock n Roll," ibid., 10-11.

similar exercises in this style never provide tablature.[69] None of the notated excerpts in this first issue correspond to a specific recording, instead setting guitarists exercises to improve their basic technique.

For the remainder of the decade, *Guitar Player* issues were similar in content and scope. In addition to genre exercises in folk, rock, and country, some numbers would add more exotic pedagogical content, ranging from a study of "Latin rhythms" to guitar arrangements of popular hits.[70] While most uses of notation are relatively brief, there are longer examples, such as the notation of swing guitarist George Van Eps' "Midnight," which is presented in standard musical notation, with chord symbols, over two pages.[71] This is not a transcription of a recording, though: it is re-printed verbatim from a separate publication, *George Van Eps: Original Guitar Solos*.[72] This book, which includes six notated "solos," does not seem to stem directly from recordings, but was instead most likely originally written—not recorded—by Van Eps.[73]

There are a few notable examples of transcriptions that appear to align more closely with a source recording. One of the most substantial transcriptions printed in *Guitar Player* in this

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[69] See, for instance, "Some Jazz: Jazz Intro" ibid., 18-19.

[70] See, for instance, "Latin Rhythms," *Guitar Player*, August 1967, 19. The guitar arrangement of "Summer Wine" (*Guitar Player*, December 1967, 22-23) is particularly interesting: There is no specific recording of this song listed in the magazine, but the best-known version was sung by Nancy Sinatra, and it had become a hit on *Billboard's Hot 100* chart the same month this issue was released. *Guitar Player* presents this transcription as a lead sheet with the vocal melody and chords provided in the same musical line, with the lyrics for the full song are provided at the end. Considering the popularity of this tune at the time, it seems likely that this lead sheet serves as a mnemonic device for a guitarist who wants to perform it on their own. Another example of this would be the transcription of "Scarborough Fair," where a basic vocal melody is provided in notation with chord diagrams provided above, and the lyrics presented separately ("Strictly Folk," *Guitar Player*, December 1968, 22).

[71] George Van Eps, "Midnight," *Guitar Player*, December 1967, 12-13.

[72] George Van Eps, *George Van Eps: Original Guitar Solos* (New York, NY: Plymouth Music Co. Inc., 1964): 12-13. Reprinting copywritten notated music appears to be common practice in these early issues of *Guitar Player*, and because most music submitted for copyright was in a lead sheet format it makes sense that so much notation in these early issues is presented in such a way. After all, if one can secure the rights to reprint existing material to create content, it was unnecessary to pay transcribers to do the work themselves.

[73] A 2011 reprinting of this publication by Mel Bay labels these as "original guitar solos written for the six-string guitar," and it comes with a recording of these by a different guitarist, Charles Chapman. Indeed, I cannot even find an original recording of Van Eps performing "Midnight," suggesting that this was originally written down; this notation provided in *Guitar Player*, then, is not a transcription as I have defined it, but functions like a score.

decade was Pete Seeger's "Living in the Country," an excerpt of which is provided in *Figure 3.6*. Unlike many other examples provided in this magazine, standard musical notation is not included underneath the tablature, as the tablature itself has basic rhythmic information included. This speaks to the fact that many string band players at the time did not find it necessary to read standard notation. Further, because this piece is in an alternate tuning, standard notation would tell one very little about how to play it on the guitar. Typical for the period, it is hard to make an exact connection between this transcription and a recording, as no correspondences are indicated.

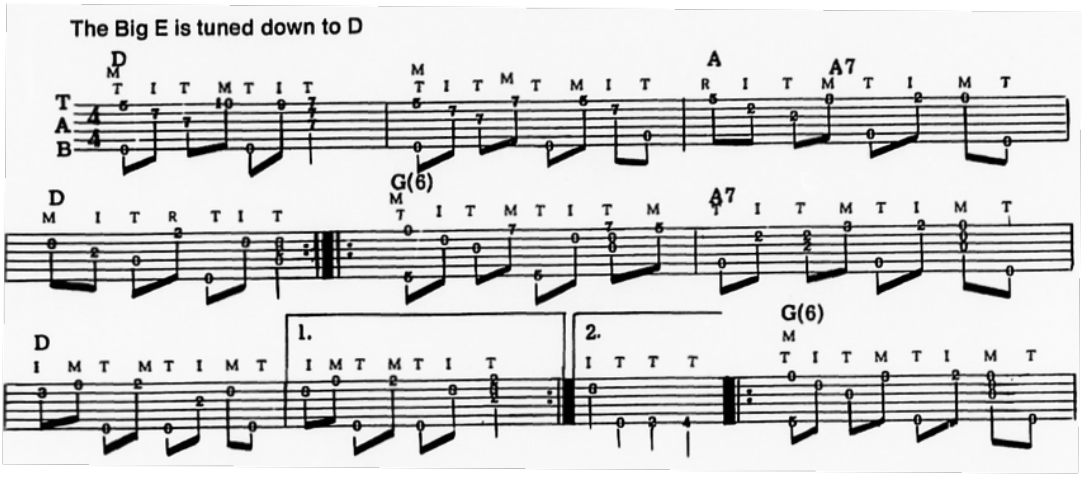


Figure 3.6: Transcription of Pete Seeger's "Living in the Country," in Guitar Player, *December 1967, 14.*

A similar example is a transcription of the introduction to blues guitarist Mance Lipscomb's "Sugar Babe." Chord diagrams are presented along with the guitar part in both standard notation and rhythmic tablature. The point of the transcription is to "give the guitar student some insight into one of the finger-picking styles (alternating bass-duple rhythm)"; the author notes that Lipscomb learned this piece himself by ear.[74] While a specific recording is not indicated, the transcription sounds like the performance on his album *Texas Sharecropper and Songster*, sharing a similar key and rhythmic motion.[75] Like the others I have examined, the

[74] See Mike Birnbaum, "Mance…and His Music," *Guitar Player*, October 1967, 10-11.
[75] Mance Lipscomb, *Texas Sharecropper and Songster*, Arhoolie Records F1001, 1960, LP.

function of this transcription is not to replicate a recording, but to show the guitarist a basic technique—the hammer-on—common in a certain guitarist's unique style.

Guitar Player in the 1970s was not substantially different, but even more styles and genres are covered: steel guitar, progressive rock, and even occasional inclusions of big band and fiddle music arranged for guitar. This, along with an added emphasis on technology and gear, meant that what had been a forty-page publication now was consistently around sixty pages when including both advertisements and editorial content. *Guitar Player* in this decade also started to advertise taped lessons, highlighting the magazine's pedagogical aspirations; in the 1970s they began including a vinyl record that had snippets of licensed music to accompany the cover story.[76]

If we focus on just the issues published in 1975, we can see that guitar pedagogy was covered from a multitude of angles, including detailed studies of rhythm, brief notated exercises in many styles (jazz, rock, blues, folk, country), improvising in jazz, chord construction, ear training, and practice in writing lead sheets.[77] The magazine would even provide simulated guitar seminars in print, given by well-known guitarists.[78] Surprisingly, there seemed to be less notation used in the 1975 issues than those from the late 1960s; I think it is safe to say that *Guitar Player*, like others publication of the era, was struggling to decide exactly how to display lessons while

[76] The advertisements for taped lessons are written about in Crockett, *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever*, 215-16; the insertion of this vinyl record is discussed in ibid., 79. As the author notes, this inclusion would help fledgling artists gain presence in the guitar community, even boosting them to stardom. This is what happened with Satriani's best-known student, Steve Vai, as *Guitar Player* included a track from his debut album, "The Attitude Song" in the October 1984 issue, which Vai believes led to greater sales of this album and his new position in David Lee Roth's band (see ibid., 177). Vai, who I profile in the following chapter and my conclusion, would become a key contributor to *Guitar Player* in the 1980s because of his skill in transcribing guitar parts from recordings.

[77] For representative examples of improvising in jazz see Howard Roberts, "On Jazz Improvisation," *Guitar Player*, February 1975, 47; chord construction see Joe Pass, "Tips from GP's Advisory Board: Chord Melody Solos," *Guitar Player*, January 1975, 46; ear training see Jimmy Stewart, "The Complete Musician: Ear Training, Part IV," *Guitar Player*, January 1975, 53; writing lead sheets see Bob Baxter, "Quickie Lead Sheets," *Guitar Player*, June 1975, 58.

[78] See, for instance, the one hosted by Paul Simon in *Guitar Player*, April 1975, 20-22.

reaching the widest possible audience. Since no uniform style for writing guitar music had been adopted, tablature was written in different ways, if included at all. Prose, though, is a *lingua franca*: the many long, technical discussions that appear regularly often eschew notation altogether.[79]

Notation never disappears, however. Indeed, to create additional notated content, 1975's *Guitar Player* continued to rely on contributions from prolific transcribers such as Grossman, Traum, and Roth. Though we have seen how loosely Grossman's transcriptions in the "Country Blues Series" are based on original prewar recordings, his *Guitar Player* columns include transcriptions from his *own* more recent recordings (*Figure 3.7*): Grossman does not mention an associated artist, but he does say that he recorded "this arrangement" on his album *Finger Picking Guitar Techniques*.[80] Unlike the example in *Figure 3.3,* swing rhythms are notated in a 12/8 meter here, allowing the transcription to be read note for note. What might explain the change? *Guitar Player* is clearly meant for a wider audience than the blues-specific publications Grossman published in the late 1960s, and so this transcription is directed at players who might not know the rhythmic nuances of this musical language. Additionally, by the 1970s there is enough guitar music in straight time that Grossman does not assume that guitarists would necessarily know how music is played in this blues idiom (the passage of time also means that the old notational conventions of jazz/swing have slipped further into the past).

[79] See, for instance, the beginning of *Guitar Player*, January 1975, 10-18, where guitarists playing in numerous styles—jazz, Nashville country, bluegrass, and the sitar—are profiled only through prose. Also from this issue is a detailed instruction on "how a fingernail should pluck a string," which is written about in detail and even includes diagrams of fingernails to aid the guitarist (Bob Baxter, "Fingernail Care," 47).
[80] Stefan Grossman, "Some Blues," *Guitar Player*, January 1975, 48; the album is Stefan Grossman, *Finger Picking Guitar Techniques,* Kicking Mule Records 112, 1974, LP. This approach is typical for him, though he does occasionally mention other recordings of a given piece, such as in Stefan Grossman, "Skip James Once More," *Guitar Player*, March 1975, 48.



Figure 3.7: The entire transcription of "Blues Ain't Dry" from Grossman, "Finger Picking Guitar Techniques," Guitar Player, *January 1975, 48.*

This transcription of "Blues Ain't Dry" indicates the continuing popularity of pedagogical recordings in the 1970s and is a visual supplement (and plug) for Grossman's own album. At other points during the year, he merely provides *Guitar Player* readers stylistic exercises unlinked to specific records.[81] Happy Traum's contributions to the "Strictly Folk" column were a bit more varied, though they generally aligned with Grossman's style, transcribing a recorded performance that he himself had made, and referring to only the earlier recordings upon which his version was based.[82]

In general, more transcriptions are based on original recordings in 1975 than there were in the 1960s, but these are still in the minority, such as Grossman's transcription of Mississippi

[81] See, for instance, Stefan Grossman, "East Colorado Blues," *Guitar Player*, February 1975, 53.
[82] For a representative example see Happy Traum, "Strictly Folk," *Guitar Player*, February 1975, 49.

John Hurt's "Spider, Spider."[83] Visually, it resembles *Figure 3.7,* including only standard musical notation. There is no vocal line included in the twelve measures of music, making it difficult to follow along with the recording. There are also some transcribed jazz solos, for instance a characteristic outing by Tal Farlow from the album *The Red Norvo Trio*.[84] While chord symbols are provided above the melody, rhythm is not notated precisely—only eighth- and quarter-notes are used. The function of the transcription is as a lead sheet for jazz players learning how to improvise, showing how a melody can be built over an underlying chord progression. While many of the other transcriptions in *Guitar Player* include a publisher's credit at the bottom, this one does not. Copyright, after all, is not concerned with improvisation, so it was considered legal to transcribe Farlow and include his "work" in a publication such as *Guitar Player* without having to pay for the rights.

Transcribing Hendrix in the 1970s

Even though one of the stated reasons for creating *Guitar Player* was to explore Jimi Hendrix "in depth," it is surprising how infrequently rock music is transcribed directly within its early issues.[85] Instead, guitarists are provided a lexicon of concise, newly written riffs they can quickly pick up for themselves. There just were not many pedagogical resources available in the 1970s for those who wanted to learn rock guitar, especially from music notation, an issue that guitarist and author Jeff Schwartz tackles in an important article on transcriptions of Hendrix's music; the following discussion is indebted to Schwartz's experience and reflections.[86] Schwartz

[83] Stefan Grossman, "Mississippi John Hurt," *Guitar Player*, April 1975, 53. He mentions that the transcription is taken from *Last Sessions of Mississippi John Hurt*, Vanguard 79327, 1972, LP.
[84] Robert Yelin, "Tal Farlow," *Guitar Player*, June 1975, 17.
[85] Crockett, *The Inside Story of the First Two Decades of the Most Successful Guitar Magazine Ever*, 28-29.
[86] See Schwartz, "Writing Jimi."

points out that for an aspiring guitarist like he was in the 1970s, guitar pedagogy was an oral tradition in which students learned directly from an instructor and there was little use for printed music (281). This mode of transmission worked well for folk and blues guitar, and published transcriptions served as a way for a master instructor, like Grossman, Traum, or the prewar blues players they themselves had studied with, to extend their pedagogical reach beyond the one-on-one teaching session.

Schwartz suggests, however, that the new "rock" music was distinct from folk and blues precursors in that it was disseminated through recordings, not the "folk process of local oral transmission" (284). Schwartz's musical idealism ("The popular music recording serves as an even stricter model than the classical music score") differentiates rock from folk music, and the goal of his article is to determine how the proliferation of written material across the Rock Era (as I define it) affects "the oral discourse of popular instrumental learning" (281-82). Schwartz and I agree that it was not until the 1980s that truly accurate representations of rock music were published; until that point, popular music transcriptions did not even seek to model a recording "accurately." Schwartz provides numerous examples—primarily transcriptions of Hendrix's music—as proof. By the 1980s, however, my own research shows that *Guitar Player* fills up with detailed transcriptions of famous recordings, particularly of rock, a development that can be traced through transcriptions of Hendrix's guitar playing from the 1970s into the '80s.

My goal in the rest of this chapter is to expand on Schwartz's examples and commentary from a different perspective. Writing as an academic in the early 1990s, Schwartz applies a time-honored idealist lens to rock music: if a guitar transcription does not appropriately model a single canonic recording, then it is of little pedagogical (or epistemological) value. Schwartz's article does provide an index of every published transcription of Hendrix's guitar playing, ranging from

the earliest publication in 1975 to the first complete note-for-note transcription in 1985. Replicating Gunther Schuller's stance, Schwartz's version of musical idealism assumes that the most valuable transcriptions of Hendrix's music are those that reproduce in notation most precisely what can be heard on a specific recording; he spends little time discussing the purposes of earlier, looser transcriptions or explaining the transition to note-for-note transcriptions in the 1980s. Looking at these transcriptions in more detail can provide additional information about the landscape of guitar pedagogy in the long 1960s—and illuminate pop music epistemology more broadly.

Considering what a "god" he was for the first generation of rock guitarists, I was personally surprised by how few transcriptions of Hendrix's guitar playing came into existence at all in the decade and a half after his untimely death in 1970. This dearth of materials certainly indexes a basic taboo against notating popular music, implicit in the aversion of blues transcribers to replicate another's playing note for note. Schwartz recounts an interview with a guitar instructor who claimed that "rock can be written down, 'but it has to be felt,'" and, he notes more cynically, that, once written down, it obviates the need for a teacher, putting his and other's incomes in jeopardy (283). Much of what attracted aspiring guitarists to Hendrix's playing were those exact elements that could not be represented in a lead sheet, like the unique sounds he produced using a mix of extended techniques and electronic effects. Musicologist Sheila Whiteley posits that these unwritten elements were key to Hendrix's status in psychedelic rock, providing listeners with a "hallucinogenic experience"; the track "Purple Haze" not only refers to psychedelic drugs, but actually simulates a trip through sonic devices, some (harmony,

rhythm) tricky but still possible to notate, but most not (timbre, playing style, and advanced recording techniques).[87]

Another aspect of Hendrix's music that inspired budding guitarists was his skill at improvisation, something hardly captured by a lead sheet. David Brackett notes how rock gained cultural legitimacy in the mid-1960s by borrowing elements from non-popular music, especially melodic improvisation, which he argues became key to the definition of "rock" by the end of 1966, the same year that Hendrix and his band achieved widespread success. Drawing on South Asian music, jazz, and blues, "popular music during 1966 marked the entrance of an art/non-art distinction into the popular music field, whereas before this distinction divided popular music from jazz and classical music. The new stratification within popular music made it possible for one genre within the popular music field, rock, to acquire critical prestige relative to other pop music genres."[88]

Given that recordings were rock's primary medium, one would think that detailed transcriptions of them would play into critical discourses meant to augment the genre's legitimacy, employing notation from the classical tradition to do so. For amateur performers in the late 1960s, though, there were very few "high fidelity" resources available to learn how to mimic the guitar playing of someone like Hendrix. By 1970, the year of his death, there was little in the way of accurate sheet music for sale in rock and associated genres, as a major retrospective sheet music publication from 1970, Milton Okun's *The New York Times Great Songs of the Sixties,* demonstrates.[89] Though the book's journalistic introduction reported how popular music

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[87] Sheila Whiteley, "Progressive Rock and Psychedelic Coding in the Work of Jimi Hendrix," *Popular Music* 9, no. 1 (January 1990): 38; analysis of "Purple Haze" on pp. 41-47.
[88] David Brackett, "Improvisation and Value in Rock, 1966," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 14, no. 2 (May 2020): 214.
[89] Milton Okun, ed., *The New York Times Great Songs of the Sixties* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1970). It is worth noting that Okun founded Cherry Lane Music in 1960, which would end up as a major publisher of guitar transcriptions in the 1980s by figures like Joe Satriani.

in the 1960s had moved away from the noisy upright pianos of Tin Pan Alley, all the transcriptions in the book were still arranged to be consumed at the keyboard.[90] Though Hally Wood, transcriber of the *New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, had already been arguing the importance of notating music for the instrument it was performed on for over a decade, the piano was still the domestic instrument *par excellence* into the 1970s. Sometimes, as with Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water," or Carole King's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," the gospel roots of the music come alive at the piano. But even music created uniquely on and for the electric guitar, such as the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" (*Figure 3.8*), was clumsily reworked for piano by Okun's transcribers. Piano arrangements of James Brown or Arlo Guthrie make even less sense: both "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud" and "Alice's Restaurant" read like absurdist documents, with strange, desiccated snippets of unidiomatic piano score surrounded by literally pages upon pages of unattached lyrics.

The strangeness of *The New York Times Great Songs of the Sixties* can be explained by the changes that popular music was going through: pop music was no longer written at the piano, nor was it necessarily "written" at all. This publication, although it purported to anthologize a great transformation in popular culture, had clearly not adapted to the altered landscape of music production. As with piano sheet music from earlier decades, chord diagrams for the now-ubiquitous guitar, in standard tuning, allowed guitar players to at least accompany the pianist and, perhaps, sing the notated melodies at the same time. But—as will be obvious to anyone who knows how a song like "Satisfaction" was actually played by Keith Richards—the chord symbols are useless as pedagogy and almost offensively wrong as a "transcription."

[90] Schwartz, "Writing Jimi," 282.



Figure 3.8: The opening of the transcription of The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" (London Records 45-9766, 1965), in The New York Times Great Songs of the 1960s, *224.*

If Okun's collection is typical of the early 1970s, then we should not be surprised that the first collection of Hendrix transcriptions, the *Jimi Hendrix Anthology* (1975), is just as useless.[91] Because Hendrix was only an active musician for a short span of time, the book's title is technically correct: it is an anthology that includes a version of "all officially issued Jimi Hendrix compositions."[92] The anthology opens with a collage of short statements about Hendrix's influence as a guitarist, foregrounding the unique sounds he was able to create on his instrument, yet the notated music does not attempt to capture any of these. The transcription of "Purple Haze" (*Figure 3.9*), for instance, is just one printed page, and appears as a lead sheet, with the vocal melody and all of the song's lyrics printed beneath, though there are some small errors even here that betray how the lead sheet was transcribed by someone unfamiliar with

[91] *Jimi Hendrix Anthology* (New York, NY: A. Schroeder International, 1975).
[92] Schwartz, "Writing Jimi," 285.

Black vernacular English (the opening line of each stanza is represented as "Purple Haze *was* [*sic*] in my brain" and "Purple Haze *was* [*sic*] in my eyes," when Hendrix clearly sang "*all* in my brain" and "*all* in my eyes"). Three major triads—F, Ab, Bb—are presented above the vocal line in a diagram format.



Figure 3.9: The entire transcription of The Jimi Hendrix Experience's "Purple Haze" (Track Record 604001, 1967), in The Jimi Hendrix Anthology*, 143.*

As Schwartz points out in his article, such a transcription is completely useless for a guitarist who wants to learn this tune or others like it. Not only is "Purple Haze" in the wrong key—F-Major instead of E-Minor—but none of the famous guitar riffs are included, and the chords do not even match what Hendrix actually played: the progression is, as Schwartz perhaps too tolerantly writes, "over-simplified"—it's not simple; it's simply wrong—writing that "a crucial part of the sound of 'Purple Haze' is that the first chord is a dominant seventh with a sharp ninth on top. Without this distinctive voicing, the harmonic movement is basically indistinguishable from that of the Monkees' '(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone.'"[93] Even to perform just the vocal line on guitar one would have to know how to read standard musical notation, knowledge not necessarily common at the time. The rhythm of the vocal line itself is also incorrectly notated; the alternation between triple and duple suggests the melody is being forced into a swing context which does not exist, adding needless rhythmic complexity.[94] What is the point of this non-transcription, then? As explained in the previous chapter, until 1972, lead sheets—namely the lyrics and melody—were required to copyright a piece of music. Schwartz suggests that this is the primary function of *The Jimi Hendrix Anthology*, and while I agree, it is worth noting that when this was published, a recording by itself could be used to secure copyright, making lead sheets technically unnecessary.[95] Because Hendrix died before this change in federal copyright laws, I find it likely that the publisher of this *Anthology* heedlessly collected all the lead sheets that had been filed with Congress and bundled them together as an "anthology" for a quick buck. Aaron Schroeder sanctimoniously notes in the

[93] Ibid. Schwartz does not elaborate, but what he means is that a song like "(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone" starts with three major chords whose roots ascend up a minor third and then a major second (E-G-A) just like the chords found in the transcription of "Purple Haze" (though the former track moves up to a fourth major chord, a C, before repeating the pattern).
[94] The "authoritative" transcription of "Purple Haze" notates the vocal melody in duple with added grace note scoops; see my conclusion for an example.
[95] Schwartz writes about copyright briefly in "Writing Jimi," 285.

volume's introduction that he was "the publisher of Jimi's music throughout the all-too brief period his candle became a torch and lit the way for others to follow," and thus his company, A. Schroeder International Ltd., although they did not have rights to any recorded *performances* by Hendrix, owned the publishing rights for his musical *compositions*.[96] I imagine that musicians would have been brutally disappointed if they purchased this collection as fans of his recordings; in 1975, though, if you wanted to learn Hendrix's music, this was all that was available to supplement learning it by ear from those recordings, or from an instructor who had already done the same. Why is it in the wrong key? Because only relative pitch matters for copyright purposes, it seems likely that whoever originally transcribed this track either heard it a half-step higher because of an uncalibrated turntable, or simply found it easier to play in this key at the piano.

Other pieces included in the collection are instrumental, though, and were probably newly transcribed. "Pali Gap," for instance, was taken from a posthumous concert album released in 1971, *Rainbow Bridge*, and is nothing but a guitar solo played over a vamped minor chord and repeated bass line (*Figure 3.10)*.[97] The bass line mostly repeats as printed throughout the five-minute solo. Since there is no vocal, the melody of Hendrix's guitar solo is treated like the composition's "lead," captured with relative accuracy in pitch and rhythm, although almost a minute into the track the notation ends, indicating that Hendrix continued improvising ("Ad lib. take-off") over the repeating bass line. (This is about as infuriating as the label "fill" and a dotted line over blank staves, in *Figure 3.9*'s "Purple Haze.") So, while the transcription of "Pali Gap" clearly uses the *Rainbow Bridge* recording as its source material, it captures only a bare essence of the tune. Indeed, many of the elements on the recording that give it a distinctive sound are omitted, like the string bend Hendrix uses to scoop into the second note of his solo; Hendrix also

[96] See *Jimi Hendrix Anthology*, NP.
[97] Jimi Hendrix, *Rainbow Bridge: Original Motion Picture Sound Track*, Reprise Records MS 2040, 1971, LP.



Figure 3.10: The entire transcription of The Jimi Hendrix's "Pali Gap" from Rainbow Bridge *(Reprise Records MS 2040, 1971), in* The Jimi Hendrix Anthology, *142.*

adds some ambient effects over the bass line before the solo, one of which sounds like him scraping his distorted guitar string with a pick, also not notated. The transcription also does not notate the key heard on the recording—Eb minor—but instead the one presumably played in the studio where Hendrix tuned his guitar down a half-step, something he often did to make string bends and whammy-bar manipulations easier. One can also hear at least one other guitar on the recording, especially during the solo, implying that one of the parts was overdubbed by Hendrix after the basic tracks were cut. Because "Pali Gap" is not being transcribed verbatim from the

recording, these additional effects and overdubs can (and were) easily excluded, but as I show in my conclusion, transcribers aiming for complete fidelity must address such issues.

Considering the lack of notational detail—and lack of tablature—*The Jimi Hendrix Anthology* is type (2) transcription, albeit one that could be considered "extractive" in that it simply reproduces extant lead sheets for profit. Like songbooks, this packet constitutes a comprehensive written archive of every officially released Hendrix track, many of which presumably had already been transcribed for copyright purposes by A. Schroeder International. Yet, in doing so, it "does almost nothing to affect the guitarist's learning process; it is still necessary, patiently by ear, to come up with an approximation of what Hendrix actually played. The recording stands as the absolute authority."[98]

The next Hendrix sheet music collection was published three years later in Milwaukee by Wise Publications as *Jimi Hendrix: The Forty Greatest*.[99] Schwartz only mentions this publication in passing, but there are some differences worth noting. Yes, the main transcription of "Purple Haze" is exactly the same as it was in the previous publication, and *The Forty Greates*t similarly opens with photos of Hendrix followed by published excerpts wherein writers comment on his musical "genius" and influence. But unlike the *Anthology*, this collection has (admittedly minimal) pedagogical value for those wanting to learn to play like Hendrix: at the end of the book, the vocal melodies from before are reproduced with a second musical line underneath presented in rhythmic tablature (*Figure 3.11*).

To me, this inclusion fits with the tendency by the late 1970s for publishers to include some guitar tablature alongside standard musical notation in the same staff system (cf. Arlen Roth's example in *Figure 3.5)*. Still, there was no standard way to notate guitar tablature.

[98] Schwartz, *Writing Jimi*, 286.
[99] *Jimi Hendrix: The Forty Greatest* (Milwaukee, WI: Wise Publications, 1978).

Though difficult to see in my reproduction, the tablature line includes fret numbers for the guitarist to finger on each string in addition to stems for rhythm. The stems are, of course, redundant when the top line is included, so it is not much of a surprise that in the following years rhythm would only be indicated by standard musical notation and not in the tablature itself, thus making it easier for players to read.

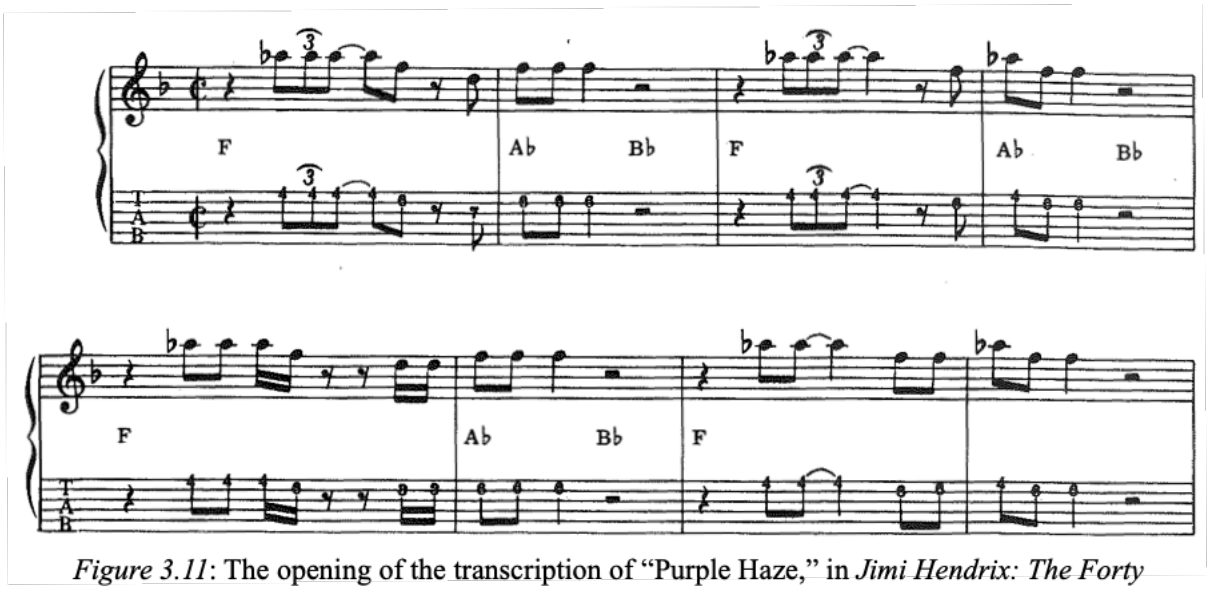


Figure 3.11: The opening of the transcription of "Purple Haze," in *Jimi Hendrix: The Forty Greatest,* 40.

The Forty Greatest is a bit of a strange document, then. Guitarists from all backgrounds would be able to read the music because both standard notation and tablature were included, but what constitutes "the music" is often just the *vocal* melodies themselves, and not the guitar parts. Likewise, a version of "Machine Gun" (from the 1970 live album *Band of Gypsys*) is included in both sections of *The Forty Greatest*; the recorded track is almost thirteen minutes long with extended guitar solos, yet only the vocal melody is notated, *without* lyrics. Some of the transcriptions in the collection do, however, include brief instrumental guitar introductions, such as the opening of "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)," so if a guitarist turned to the back of the book, they would be able to learn to play this introduction using only tablature. While chord names are provided, the chord diagrams themselves are only included on the vocal lead sheet.

One would imagine that for most people interested in his music, Hendrix's guitar lines are the most valuable parts to listen to and to learn how to play—and yet the guitar lines are rarely transcribed, and even when they are, remain subservient to lyrics and vocal melodies. However, in *The Forty Greatest* we see some small shifts in the paradigm, foreshadowing the obsessive, note-for-note transcriptions that appear in the following decade, which still include a notated vocal melody, but also, in the same system, complete guitar parts in both standard notation and tablature.

The two publications are equally confounding from a contemporary perspective. Though Hendrix is valorized for his guitar playing, sheet music for his songs in the 1970s does not actually include much guitar outside of occasional, sparsely notated introductions and vague references to (often incorrect) chords. Neither of these publications even credits the transcriber, which, given the manifest carelessness they display, might be a mercy. But this would change in the coming years, as professional musician-transcribers would foreground their authorship, their labor, and their dedication to the source material.

Though Schwartz does not cover them, transcriptions of Hendrix's music can also be found in some issues of *Guitar Player* in the 1970s, particularly in a special number dedicated to him at the midpoint of the decade.[100] The editorial content is similar to other issues from this year, but everything is focused on Hendrix: a biography, an unpublished interview, detailed summaries of the equipment he used, and quotes from other guitarists who discuss his influence. Because the magazine was geared towards pedagogy, the transcriptions included are more detailed than those in the *Anthology* and *The Forty Greatest*. Most are still relatively brief: one examines the interplay between bass and guitar in a few measures of "Can You See Me" and

[100] *Guitar Player*, September 1975.

"Them [*sic*] Changes," though it is hard to know exactly where in the record the notated music appears, as timestamps would require both a record player and a stopwatch.[101] Grossman discusses Hendrix's connection to older blues styles, providing his own arrangement of "Mississippi Blues," a tune Grossman himself taught to Eric Clapton and also jammed on with Hendrix.[102] Another contributor, Jimmy Stewart, provides a bunch of representative Hendrix licks in standard notation, but does not identify which recorded tracks they are taken from. He also notes that when it comes to transcribing Hendrix's music, fidelity is not his goal: "It's almost impossible to duplicate Jimi's licks notes for note, but the most important thing to strive for is his sound."[103] Indeed, most of this special issue is dedicated to sound, as evidenced by the lengthy sections on the gear Hendrix used in the studio and on tour.

There is one transcription in this issue, however, that does in fact aim to replicate Hendrix's music note for note, something worth calling attention to because of how much it differs from the other Hendrix transcriptions published in this decade. Here, guitarist and transcriber Lee Ritenour provides a surprisingly detailed translation of an unreleased Hendrix solo entitled "Beginnings," shown in *Figure 3.12*. Ritenour claims that through the transcription of this solo, "guitarists can gain some very valuable insight into his genius."[104]

This transcription of Hendrix as "genius" is visually distinct from the other Hendrix transcriptions we have seen in the 1970s; indeed, it functions perfectly as a type (3) transcription, a rarity for rock music in this era. What explains this? The notation itself gives us a major clue:

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[101] Chuck Rainey, "JH: A Bassist's Inspiration," ibid., 69. These tracks, "Can You See Me" and "Changes," can be found on The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Are You Experienced?*, Track 612 001 [UK mono release] or Reprise 6261 [US stereo release], 1967, LP, and Jimi Hendrix, *Bandy of Gypsys*, Capitol STAO-472, 1970, LP, respectively.
[102] Stefan Grossman, "JH: Dipping Into Acoustic Blues,"*Guitar Player*, September 1975, 71.
[103] Jimmy Stewart, "JH: Performer, Lyricist, Guitarist," ibid., 73.
[104] Lee Ritenour, "Beginnings," ibid., 38. This track was available on a 7" vinyl record included with this *Guitar Player* issue but was never commercially released; as of this writing, it can be found on YouTube, however. What sounds like a separate take, with a similar groove but completely different solo, was released on a compilation album, *Jimi Hendrix, First Rays of the New Rising Sun*, MCA MCAD-11599, 1997, CD.



Figure 3.12: Transcription of Jimi Hendrix's "Beginnings" (unreleased), transcribed by Lee Ritenour, Guitar Player*, September, 1975, 38.*

as we have seen, jazz is frequently transcribed in *Guitar Player* in standard notation without tablature; indeed, the transcriber, Lee Ritenour, was trained in jazz, and was just at the beginning of a famous career in jazz-funk music. His transcription, then, treats Hendrix as a jazz soloist; as we saw in the previous chapter, by the late 1960s, note-for-note transcriptions of a recorded performance were already commonplace in jazz, if not yet in rock. Remember that a piece like Coleman's "Congeniality" was transcribed like bebop, with the head provided and his solo matched as closely as possible to his recorded performance in notation. Similarly, in the Hendrix example, six measures of the basic groove are outlined, but the focus is on Hendrix as soloist, and his improvisation, like a jazz solo, is transcribed in detail from beginning to end. This is the

path not taken for Hendrix transcriptions: in the 1980s, entire tracks would be transcribed with an eye towards total fidelity, not just to a solo played in an ensemble setting.

Taken together, these various documents illuminate the 1970s as a transitional period for publishers and consumers of rock, especially guitarists. Rock transcriptions foreground a musical-ontological frame long in decline, arguing implicitly that the "work" in question can be represented by a bare lead sheet, submitted to secure copyright; it seems likely that even under new copyright laws, a lot of recorded music was still being transcribed in the same way it had been for decades. Thus, the function of these two earliest publications of Hendrix's music is *illocutionary* and *extractive* rather than descriptive or pedagogical: they instantiate his "work" legally, for money, providing little in the way of useful performance information. The transcription of "Beginnings" included in *Guitar Player*, though, is a sign of things to come: it aims to describe and transmit nuances of Hendrix's improvising to guitarists who crave detailed knowledge—knowledge they would not be able to get anywhere else except the recording itself.

Transcribing Hendrix in the Early 1980s

For listeners and performers in rock music, though, the "work" was simultaneously becoming the recording itself, which by definition contains more of the elements most valued by rock music producers and consumers.[105] In the early 1980s transcribers would start to foreground this understanding of the rock "work," a recording that needed to be captured and described by their notational translations of it. Indeed, as guitar-based music proliferated, performers quickly

[105] Theodore Gracyk argues that one of the reasons rock consumers listen to the same recordings over and over again is precisely because a listener is not able to keep "nuances" of timbre in their "auditory memory"; thus, "when timbre is the basis for expressive qualities of a work—and it seems very important for recorded rock—it will have an expressive impact in direct experience that will be absent in our memories of it. Hence listening to it will be important in a way that remembering it is not." This is discussed in Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 57-61, quote on 60.

realized that much of it was too complicated to learn by ear, and transcription became a tool used to aid them in understanding how certain extended techniques, like pinch harmonics and two-hand tapping, worked. The next collection of Hendrix transcriptions was published in 1980 under the significant title, *Jimi Hendrix: Note for Note*. This is an important publication, different from anything else on the market at the time. The author, Richard Daniels, lays out an unbroken chain of musical events from the records to the transcriptions, in which the "sequence we are concerned with goes like this: Jimi's thought, the guitar, the amp, into the mike and onto the tape, duplication, repeated playback to obtain transcription to paper."[106] Daniels succinctly outlines an ontology of recorded music including written transcriptions as derivative texts, as long as they are taken directly from the recording; this process of music making is differentiated from earlier classical music, which Daniels describes as starting "in the composer's mind, written on paper, read by the musician, and played on the instrument for all to hear."[107]

Like earlier guitar transcriptions discussed in this chapter that employ tablature, there is a lengthy section in the beginning of this publication that tells guitarists how to read the music; and like the other examples I have provided, the guitar tablature itself is in a unique editorial style and is relatively challenging to read. Interestingly, Daniels provides *only* tablature in his transcription, without notated rhythms, a decision that makes listening to the recording in conjunction with reading the transcription essential. Daniels also gives detailed instructions to the player as to how they can play along with the record and includes numerous timestamps to do so.[108]

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[106] Richard Daniels, "Transcribing Jimi's Music," in *Jimi Hendrix: Note for Note* (New York, NY: Cherry Lane Music, 1980), 11.
[107] Daniels, *Jimi Hendrix: Note for Note,* 11.
[108] Ibid., 12.

"Purple Haze," reproduced in *Figure 3.13*, is one of twelve transcriptions included in the publication. In many ways, this version of the tune is the supplement of the one printed in the 1975 *Hendrix Anthology*: only the parts of the track of interest to guitarists are included, the introduction and solo. These are now notated in the player's key of E minor; the distinctive chords that Hendrix uses, particularly the E-augmented 9th, are provided as diagrams at the beginning of the transcription. The function of this transcription is purely pedagogical: it tells the player exactly where on the guitar to fret and even which fingers to use, something even modern transcriptions rarely do. Daniels also follows Grossman and Traum's model by first providing a descriptive analysis of a given track in prose. This collection demonstrates a distinct shift in ontological perspective: while earlier publications treated Hendrix's words and vocal melody as "the work," *Note for Note* relegates the lyrics to the very end of each example, and instead focuses on the parts of a track where the guitar is most prominent, such as the introduction and solo. While timbre is not indicated in the transcription itself, Daniels' prose does include some discussion of it.

This publication is also useful for the commentary that Daniels provided outlining his process of making the transcriptions. Because Hendrix's guitar lines are too fast to accurately notate while listening to the recording, Daniels borrowed a technique from folklore and ethnomusicology, using a Sony TC-377 reel-to-reel tape player which allowed him to slow down the recording to half speed and to isolate phrases for repeated listening. Most readers would not have access to such expensive equipment, however, and so he recommends dubbing the LP onto a portable cassette player so one can stop and rewind passages as needed.[109]

[109] Ibid.

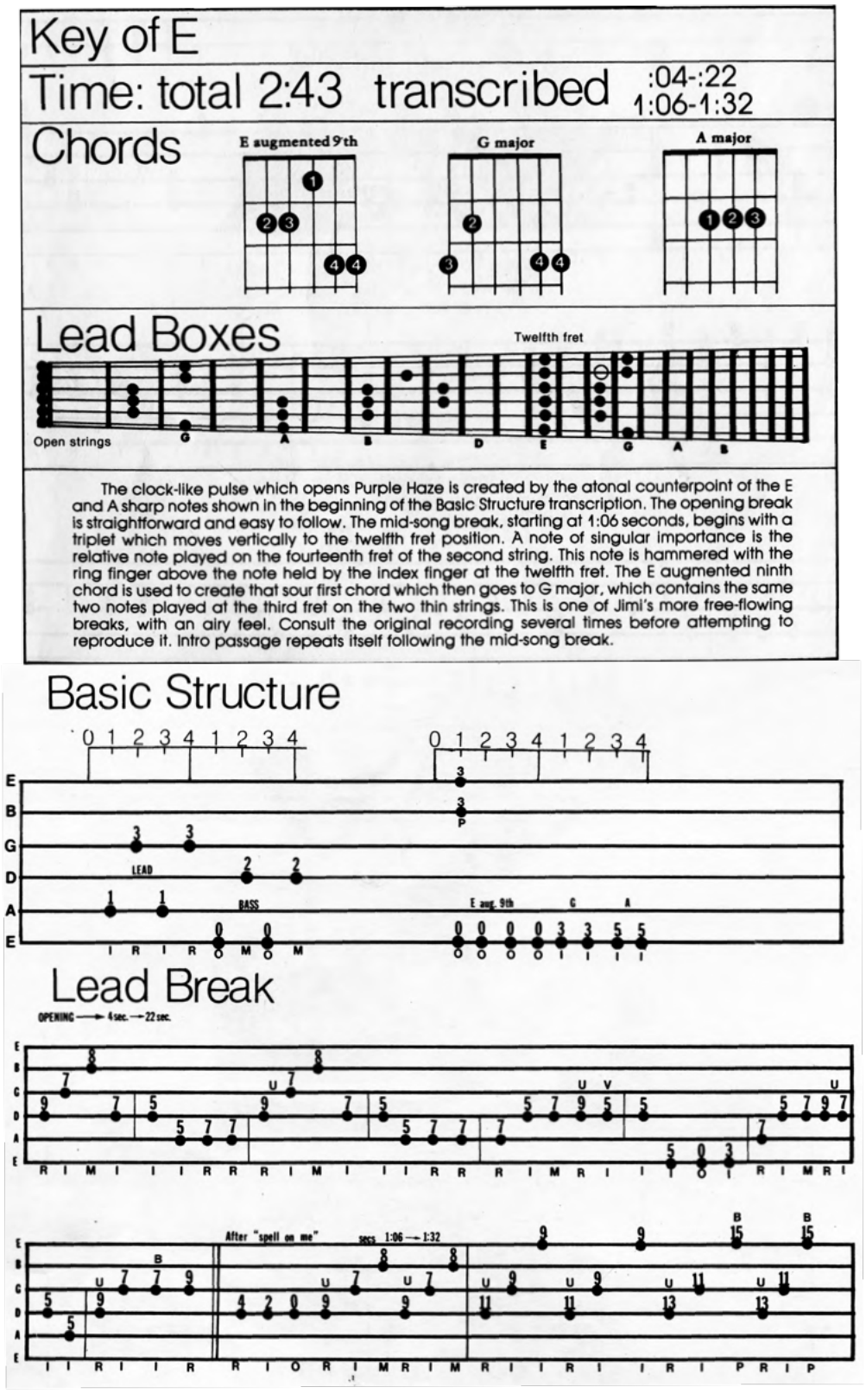


Figure 3.13: Excerpt of the transcription of "Purple Haze," in Richard Daniels, Jimi Hendrix: Note for Note, 23-24.

In the coming years, transcriptions of "Purple Haze" would become more detailed and standardized in their layout as publishers would combine both these approaches, transcribing an entire track's guitar part from beginning to end in both standard and tablature notation, while also including the vocal melodies and lyrics in the same system. In doing so, transcribers modeled Daniels' approach, finding ways to accurately transmit Hendrix's sound and techniques, treating the recording as a primary text to be analyzed and translated for consumers.

A host of transcriptions like these quickly followed, culminating in the "complete, authoritative transcriptions" of Hendrix's album *Are You Experienced?* published in 1989, including not only vocal and guitar parts but also drums and bass, essentially capturing each instrumental part for the entire album in detailed notation.[110] In many ways, such detailed transcriptions not only "describe" the album as a work, but *become* works themselves, type (3) transcriptions, which exist independently of the album, and have an aesthetic value in addition to pedagogical value. I will turn to these Hendrix "scores" briefly in my conclusion, but they were anticipated by other note-for-note transcriptions that similarly relied on the emerging technology of the portable cassette player, first released as the Sony Walkman in 1979. As Daniels notes, this new technology allowed the average consumer to listen to snippets of music repeatedly, a very useful component for creating accurate, detailed transcriptions.

Long before he become one the world's most esteemed guitar virtuosos, a teenaged Steve Vai would use a Sony Walkman to transcribe some of Frank Zappa's famously complicated rock music into written notation. Not only would this win him a job with Zappa's touring band, jumpstarting his musical career, but it would also lead to one of the earliest instances of a published type (3) rock transcription: *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, first released in 1982. This

[110] See *The Jimi Hendrix Experience: Are You Experienced?* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989).

volume remains one of the most notationally complex rock transcriptions ever undertaken. As we will detail in the following, culminating chapter, it is this complexity—and *not* any underlying pedagogical function—that bestowed aesthetic value on the book, and on Zappa himself as a composer of avant-garde rock.

Chapter 4: Notation and the Construction of Genius: Steve Vai Transcribes Frank Zappa Note for Note

How can someone use this book? A few ways. Firstly, admire the beauty of the score. How Gabriel [the transcriber] could wrangle these wicked knotworks of music into a coherent score is a feat unto itself. Secondly, as a study score. Listen along with the recording and dig into how certain passages are held together. Or, finally, how I see it. Like a book of poetry. Where the words come to life only when you voice them aloud. —Trey Gunn, preface to King Crimson: The Discipline Era Transcriptions *(2021)*[1]

Though best known as a musical satirist and rock guitarist, Frank Zappa (1940-1993) saw himself primarily as a composer who worked in a variety of idioms and media.[2] As he explained to biographer Barry Miles, "I never had any intention of writing rock music. I always wanted to compose more serious music and have it performed in concert halls, but I knew no one would play it. So I figured that if anyone was ever going to hear anything I composed, I'd have to get a band together and play rock music."[3] The musicians he worked with agreed that Zappa's main goal was to get his music "performed correctly once in [his] entire life," and their role as hired performers was to slavishly follow his instructions to accomplish this.[4]

As Jonathan Bernard argues, Zappa did not just have one foot in classical music and the other in rock; his compositions combined both traditions.[5] From a young age, Zappa was a fan of both modern classical music and popular music: the first LP he bought was a compilation of performances of works by composer Edgard Varèse, and the second featured works by Igor Stravinsky; he also loved collecting rhythm & blues records.[6] Paul Carr tracks some of the musical borrowing and allusions Zappa uses in his second album, *Absolutely Free*, which, like a

[1] *King Crimson: The Discipline Era Transcriptions, Second Edition* (Seattle, WA: 7d Media, 2021), 4.
[2] Frank Zappa and Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1989), 139.
[3] Zappa quoted in Barry Miles, *Zappa* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), 91.
[4] See Thomas Wictor, *In Cold Sweat: Interviews with Really Scary Musicians* (New York, NY: Limelight Editions, 2001), 172 and 205-207, where he interviews Scott Thunes, Zappa's bassist throughout the 1980s.
[5] Jonathan W. Bernard. "The Musical World(s?) of Frank Zappa: Some Observations of His 'Crossover' Pieces," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: Critical and Analytical Essays, Second Edition*, ed. Walter Everett (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2008), 1-44.
[6] Recounted by Zappa in Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 31-34.

lot of his music, seamlessly blends pop music (referencing "Louie, Louie," "Duke of Earl," "Baby Love," and some Irving Berlin songs) with staples of twentieth-century art music (numerous Stravinsky compositions and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*).[7]

Hybridizing high and low musical traditions, Zappa's own music does not cleanly fit into any of the culturally marked ontological models I discussed in Chapter 1. Using the recording studio was certainly "an integral part of the composing process" for him, and nearly all of the albums he released were thoroughly mediated by studio techniques like tape editing and multitrack recording.[8] But Zappa's approach to musical creation does not fully align with Gracyk's rock ontology: yes, some of his compositions were "ontologically thick" in that they lived primarily on record and were often performed live the same way every time, but many others were altered substantially from the studio recorded version during live concerts.[9] Zappa would frequently alter a song's lyrics during a live performance to reflect current events or in-band jokes.[10] Zappa also enjoyed freely improvising with his ensemble during live shows, and he released many concert recordings, all of which—to reverse ontological direction again—were heavily manipulated in the studio after-the-fact.[11]

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[7] The Mothers of Invention, *Absolutely Free*, Verve 5013, 1967, LP. Carr provides tracks and timestamps for each of these references in Paul Carr, "Introduction," in *Frank Zappa and the And*, ed. Paul Carr (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2013): 1-2.

[8] This is discussed by James Gardner, "Zappa and the Razor: Editing, Sampling, and Musique Concrète," in *Frank Zappa and the And*, 67-84, quote on 75. The author points out that some of these edits were intended to be audible to the listener (the "radical" or "structural" edits), while others were not ("remedial" edits) (77).

[9] See James Borders, "Frank Zappa's 'The Black Page': A Case of Musical 'Conceptual Continuity,'" in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, 46.

[10] This process is discussed in an interview with Paul Colbert in "Zappa: Speak Out," *Musicians Only*, January 26, 1980, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1980-01_Musicians_Only.htm. One example is "Cosmik Debris," which was first released on Frank Zappa, *Apostrophe (')*, Discreet 2175, 1974, LP, and then was subsequently performed on most tours with some of the lyrics altered; numerous versions of the song appear on official and bootleg releases.

[11] The six-volume *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore* series, for instance, was *advertised* as unmediated—the liner notes proclaim "no overdubs"—but in reality Zappa made countless edits to piece together the best live performances into a virtual concert for the consumer that would have been impossible to experience. "Lonesome Cowboy Nando" from *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol.* 6, Rykodisc 100091/92, 1992, 2 CDs, showcases this impossibility, as Zappa describes it in the liner notes as a "mutant blend of two performances, 17 years apart," as he pasted together performances of "Lonesome Cowboy Burt" from both his 1971 and 1988 bands.

In this chapter, I examine the various ways Zappa uses musical notation—specifically transcription—to connect these competing ontological models in his body of work. It was the "look" of Western musical notation that drew Zappa to music as a young child in the first place, and he spent copious amounts of time over his career writing out immensely complicated scores that he hoped would one day be realized by classically-trained performers.[12] Zappa eagerly showed these scores to key validating figures in the classical music world, such as Nicolas Slonimsky and Pierre Boulez, who was sufficiently impressed to perform and record Zappa's works with his own Ensemble InterContemporain.[13]

This chapter is divided into two halves. The first is designed to illustrate Zappa's commitment to a classical music ontology that employs Western musical notation to demand precision on the behalf of performers, whether they were classical music ensembles or his own hired rock bands. I suggest that the complexity of Zappa's music stems mostly from his usage of complex polyrhythms, as exemplified in his composition "The Black Page." The chapter's second half examines how Zappa aligned his live-in-the-moment improvisations—the parts of his music furthest removed from this classical music ontology—to his meticulously notated scores. Zappa's solution was to commission painstaking transcriptions of his recorded guitar improvisations, transcriptions designed to appear as visually complex as notated compositions like "The Black Page." These transcriptions would then serve as prescriptive scores to be executed with the utmost accuracy.

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[12] See Neil Slaven's biography, *Electric Don Quixote: The Definitive Story of Frank Zappa* (New York, NY and London: Omnibus Press, 2003 [1996]), 17.

[13] Slonimsky's association with Zappa is covered in Nicolas Slonimsky, "Meeting Zappa," *Harper's Magazine* 276, no. 1655, April 1988, 32 and 34, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1988-04_Harpers.htm. Boulez's work with Zappa is best described in Ben Watson, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 427-32. The InterContemporain performances can be heard on *Boulez Conducts Zappa: The Perfect* Stranger, Angel Records DS-38170, 1984, LP.

Zappa's primary transcriptionist was a young Steve Vai, who would use the education he received from transcribing Zappa's guitar solos to jumpstart a highly successful career as a guitar virtuoso that would garner him multiple Grammy Awards. The similarities between Zappa's scores and Vai's transcriptions were primarily rhythmic, as Ben Watson points out: "Zappa is aware of the deficiencies of Western classical music as regards to rhythm. The transcriptions—made possible by Steve Vai's Berklee education and a long apprenticeship of Zappa obsession—were an attempt to bridge the gap."[14] Zappa published many of them in 1982 as *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, and a thorough examination will disclose many similarities between Zappa's improvisations and his written music.[15] However, the transcriptions also illustrate Zappa's tendency to fetishize notational complexity for its own sake as a bid for the cultural capital of the high modernist avant-garde.

Transcriptions were key to Zappa's compositional process throughout his career, but Vai's attention to detail allowed Zappa to use Vai's transcription as a basis for new musical works, some for performance (live or recorded) and others for electronic reproduction via New England Digital's Synclavier™, an early digital synthesizer and music workstation. "The Jazz Discharge Party Hats" is an extreme example of Zappa's hybridization of high and low: while the subject matter is among the most obscene and misogynist in his massive oeuvre, he performs it in an expressionist vocal technique that sounds like something between speech and song, directly connecting the piece to the modernist classical tradition, where Arnold Schoenberg had pioneered the practice of elaborately rhythmic speech-song (*Sprechstimme*).[16] Vai was then

[14] Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 416.
[15] Frank Zappa, *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, transcribed Steve Vai (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2017 [1983]).
[16] Zappa directly stated in a 1988 interview how he admired composer Arnold Schoenberg's use of this technique in his melodrama *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912); see "The Frank Zappa Interview" by Bob Marshall from October 22, 1988, which was originally published in the liner notes to the bootleg recording *Apocrypha (Thirty Years of Frank Zappa);* it has since been digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1988-10_Bob_Marshall_Interview.htm.

tasked with notating Zappa's vocal performance in order to double it on guitar, which he reported to be the most challenging transcription he ever undertook.

These transcriptions confirm that Zappa was a modernist composer whose "work is loaded with ideological and political implications [that] challenge its audience to critical reflection."[17] Indeed, Zappa's indiscriminate use of musical borrowing from all types of source material connects his compositional practice to that of Charles Ives, who incorporated American vernacular song into the tradition of European art music.[18] Ives was writing art music at a time when the tradition was rapidly being seen as less "manly" than in the past, partially because women were starting to participate in classical music culture.[19] In his own writings, Ives employed highly-gendered prose to take aim at the classical music establishment, including performers who forced him to "emasculate" his scores by removing difficult sections.[20] Ives projected masculinity in his music by making it challenging to perform and listen to, exemplified in his Piano Sonata #2, most commonly known as the Concord Sonata, written from 1911-1915 and first performed by John Kirkpatrick in 1938.[21] Zappa's own combination of modernism and

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[17] Martin Knakkergaard, "Zappa and Modernism: An Extended Study of 'Brown Shoes Don't Make It,'" in *Frank Zappa and the And*, 168-69. The author also points out that Zappa only wrote music using a modernist vocabulary, as he employed standard musical notation within tonal and atonal systems (170).

[18] Zappa entitled a piece "Charles Ives" (found on *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 5*, Rykodisc 10089/90, 2 CDs), and in his autobiography Zappa points out that there is a reference to Ives at the end of *Absolutely Free*'s "Call Any Vegetable," where there are three marching band themes played simultaneously (Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 167). For more on Ives and musical borrowing see J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

[19] See Judith Tick, "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship,* ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 83-106, esp. 87 where Tick briefly discusses the significant changes in socioeconomic status of women from around 1890-1930 and how the opening of conservatories to women as performers and composers created tension because of the shift in power away from male hegemonic musical life.

[20] See, for instance, Ives's description of a rehearsal of his *Washington's Birthday,* where "the best men in the orchestra . . . made an awful fuss about playing [it], and before I got through, this had to be cut out, and that had to be cut out—and in the end the score was practically emasculated" (Charles Ives, *Memos,* ed. John Kirkpatrick [New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1972], 98). Similar themes are drawn on in Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, The Majority, and Other Writings,* ed. Howard Boatwright (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1972).

[21] Geoffrey Block points out that "Each of the five published responses to the *Concord Sonata* in 1921 commented on the difficulty of the work, either as a consequence of its dissonant musical language, its unplayability, or its lack

misogyny could also be seen as a negative response to the second wave of feminism in American society.[22] Specifically, I will argue for a psychoanalytic connection between Zappa's lyrical treatment of women and the way he uses notation: both express a sadistic need to objectify and control.

Critics of Zappa have offered other explanations for the vulgarity of his lyrics. Michel Delville and Andrew Norris, for instance, are interested in Zappa's focus on the human body and its orifices, reading his lyrics through the lens of abjection following the work of Rabelais and Bakhtin; a Bakhtinian dialogic frame seems appropriate given Zappa's consistent attempts to bring together "popular and learned idioms."[23] Barry Miles frames his entire Zappa biography around an early experience that would end up shaping his entire career: In 1965, a 25-year-old Zappa was entrapped by an undercover police officer into creating a pornographic recording, supposedly for an upcoming stag party. Zappa, trying to eke out a living as a musician, spent the night crafting it with completely simulated effects. Nonetheless, he was arrested for two felonies: suspicion of conspiracy to manufacture pornographic materials and sex perversion. Though he ended up pleading guilty to a misdemeanor, Zappa spent ten days in the San Bernardino County

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of professionalism" (Geoffrey Block, *Ives: Concord Sonata* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 8). After hearing it performed by Kirkpatrick in 1938 some critics lauded it as "the greatest music composed by an American," and "the most formidable piano composition to have come out of America"; see Lawrence Gilman, "A Masterpiece of American Music Heard Here for the First Time," *The New York Herald Tribune,* January 21, 1939, and Goddard Lieberson, "An American Innovator," *Musical America* 59, no. 3 (February 1939): 323.

[22] Among many disturbing examples one might adduce Zappa's "Bobby Brown Goes Down," where the eponymic protagonist questions his sexuality after performing oral sex on Freddie, a "dyke" involved with the women's liberation movement that had been "creepin' all across the nation" (Frank Zappa, *Sheik* Yerbouti, Zappa Records SRZ 2-1501, 1979, 2 LPs).

[23] As they write, "like Rabelais's work—which mixed popular and learned idioms, classical and modern languages, lewd jokes and erudite Humanist talk—Zappa's music brings together not only different musical genres and sub-genres, from the most refined to the most trivial, but also antipodal modes of apprehension of the real. His imaginary mediations between the subjective and the objective, the abstract and the concrete, are important because they create a pivotal space where opposites meet and where the interpenetration of low and high art, film, orchestral music, blues-rock and noise is part of a larger conceptual nexus where ideas, feelings and gestures are exchanged and where Zappa's carnivalesque aesthetics contributes to the creation of alternative art forms that encourage an integrated approach to life and art in general (his role as a 'documenter' of life on the road is crucial in this respect)" (Andrew Norris and Michel Delville, *Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart, and the Secret History of Maximalism* [Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2005], 33).

Jail.[24] From then on, as Miles puts in, Zappa "made sure that his pornographic tape was heard by everyone—he remade it time and time again, at least a couple of times on each album, rubbing it in the face of respectable society, making America see itself as it really was: phony, mendacious, shallow, and ugly."[25]

What is missing from this discussion of Zappa's troubling lyrics are the voices of women. Miles' biography is the only book I have read that takes a critical stance on Zappa's sexism; he also spends some time writing about Zappa's affair with Nigey Lennon, an underage girl who unsuccessfully tried to get a record deal with him, and whom Zappa brought on tour during 1971 despite the fact that she was only 17.[26] Zappa did have some women in his band, most notably percussionist Ruth Underwood, who worked with him from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s.[27] Zappa also hired Bianca Thornton as a keyboardist and vocalist to accompany him on his September 1976 tour, but she quit after only a few shows because Zappa's audience kept calling for her to undress on stage (as Miles writes, "no matter how Zappa tried to defend his sexist lyrics, his audience took them at face value").[28]

To my knowledge, there is no academic scholarship on Zappa written by women, nor any pieces that fully deal with his misogyny—except those that aim to excuse it.[29] In regard to this lacuna, I am inspired by Ellie Hisama's writings on saxophonist and avant-garde composer John

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[24] As covered in the introduction to Miles, *Zappa*, xi-xv.
[25] Miles, *Zappa*, xv.
[26] This is covered in ibid., 218-19 and 227-28. Lennon writes about experiences with Zappa in this time period in Nigey Lennon, *Being Frank: My Time With Frank Zappa* (Los Angeles, CA: California Classics Books, 1995). Pauline Butcher, Zappa's secretary from 1967-1971 also wrote a memoire describing her experience working with him during this period; see Pauline Butcher, *Freak Out! My Life with Frank Zappa* (Medfod, NJ: Plexus Publishing, 2011).
[27] For an overview of Underwood's work with Zappa, see Ingrid Marie Jensen, "Ruth Underwood: A Mother of Invention," *Please Kill Me*, November 15, 2021, https://pleasekillme.com/ruth-underwood/.
[28] Miles, *Zappa*, 255.
[29] I find Kelly Fisher Lowe's *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006) to be the most egregious example of this; he completely dismisses Lennon's book as "a scandalous recounting of Lennon's affair with Zappa that seems to serve the higher purpose of selling Lennon's records" (238). His lyrical analyses also tend to downplay Zappa's sexism, one of which I cover at the end of this chapter.

Zorn.[30] There are numerous similarities between Zorn and Zappa: though they work primarily in popular music, both consider themselves classical artists, inspired by the compositions of Stravinsky, Ives, and Boulez.[31] Zorn—like Zappa—is often written about in an acclamatory fashion in academia, though, as Hisama illustrates, his music is full of sexism and violence towards women, elements that both scholars and Zorn himself downplay or outright ignore.[32]

With this absence in mind, I want to briefly comment more generally on the sources I utilize in this chapter. The material I cite does not comprise an exhaustive literature review of all things written about Zappa, but I have tried to pull the most relevant materials from the different types of sources available: academic scholarship, biographies, interviews with Zappa and the musicians he worked with, album liner notes, and magazine articles. For readers not familiar with Zappa's music, his recorded output can often seem impenetrable in its stylistic heterogeneity and scope, with more than sixty albums released during his life and just as many released since through the Zappa Family Trust.[33] I have cited a range of official recordings in my footnotes when appropriate so that readers can listen along to relevant tracks should they desire to. Author Kelly Fisher Lowe observes in a bibliographic appendix to his 2006 monograph that "the state of Zappa scholarship is, with perhaps one or two exceptions, pretty sad."[34] The situation has improved recently, spearheaded by the work of Paul Carr.[35]

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[30] Hisama first writes about Zorn in Ellie Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn," *Popular Music* 12, no. 2 (May 1993): 91-104, esp. 95-97; her article is then expanded on in Ellie Hisama "John Zorn and the Postmodern Condition," in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, eds. Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 72-84.
[31] See Hisama "John Zorn and the Postmodern Condition," 72-73.
[32] Ibid., 72-78.
[33] The Zappa Family Trust recently sold Zappa's estate to Universal Music Group; their press release announcing this in June 2022 mentions the scope of his discography at https://www.umusicpub.com/au/News/2022/6/Universal-Music-Group-becomes-the-permanent-home-of-Frank-Zappa-estate.aspx. Since the UMG press release, more Zappa albums have been officially released; these are listed out with additional details on Zappa's website, last accessed February 2, 2023, https://www.zappa.com/music/official-discography/#/.
[34] Lowe, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, 237, with the complete bibliographic essay on pp. 237-40.
[35] In addition to other published articles, Carr's most significant contribution to Zappa scholarship is an edited collection, Paul Carr, ed., *Frank Zappa and the And.* For additional readings that view Zappa's music through the

Alongside Zappa's musical prolificacy over his nearly thirty-year career, he gave many interviews, most of which have been digitized thanks to a committed fan base.[36] When available, and with appropriate skepticism, I try to use Zappa's own words in these interviews or his autobiography, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, even though his statements can be riddled with contradictions, much like his music itself. I have supplemented his testimony with that of people he worked with, including fellow musicians, his recording engineer, and his full-time copyist. Zappa has also been the subject of several biographies, some of which are helpful for summarizing interviews and other articles; I will not cite every published Zappa biography, as I choose to rely on those that best cover the focus of this chapter, the notationally complex second half of his career.[37]

Orchestras, "The Black Page," and Adherence to the Score

Zappa's insistence that his musicians faithfully transmit the work indicated in his meticulous scores aligns his music with a classical music ontology. Many of Zappa's tunes were never notated, especially when he was knocking together rock songs on the fly, but his formal

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lens of cultural theory, particularly Theodore Adorno's "negative dialectics," see Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*; Arved Ashby, "Frank Zappa and the Anti-Fetishist Orchestra," *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 557-606; and David Wragg, "'Or Any Art at All?': Frank Zappa Meets Critical Theory," *Popular Music* 20, no. 2 (May 2001): 205-22. An exploration of Zappa's theory of art that makes comparisons to some of the writers I cite in Chapter 1 is covered in Elliot Marlow-Stevens, "'What Is Music? Anything Can Be Music': Frank Zappa's Theory of Art," *Popular Music* 41, no. 1 (2022): 37-55.

[36] See the non-profit website dedicated to writings about Zappa, https://www.afka.net/. Numerous Zappa interviews are available here, many of which include scans of the original source material; there are some digitized interviews hosted here that do not have full citational information provided, so in the footnotes that follow I have cited as much information about a given source that I have access to.

[37] Lowe provides an overview of Zappa biographies in *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa,* 239-240. I agree with him that Slaven's biography, *Electric Don Quixote*, is often the most factual, and I use it for such purposes, though even here I have found some basic mistakes (see fn. 120, below). As Lowe points out, Miles' biography, *Zappa*, is harder to take at face value because the biographer clearly finds Zappa's personal life repugnant, particularly his views towards women. I, for one, appreciate Miles' perspective, as his book avoids the hero worship that other Zappa sources frequently participate in. For those who are more interested in a complete accounting of Zappa's recorded music, I recommend Watson's *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* and Kevin Courrier's, *Dangerous Kitchen: The Subversive World of Frank Zappa* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002).

compositions were typically written out by hand during any downtime he had while touring or at home.[38] Zappa was a musical graphomaniac; Vai recounts that he saw Zappa working on manuscripts almost every moment that he was not on stage performing.[39] In his autobiography, Zappa writes that "I used to love putting little black dots on music paper. I'd sit for sixteen hours at a time, hunched over in a chair with a bottle of India ink, and draw beams and dots. No other activity could have enticed me away from the table."[40] In a pre-MIDI age, Zappa's primary goal as a working composer was the chance to hear the elaborate music that he wrote down.[41] Considering the notational difficulty of the music he wrote, though, this was easier said than done—notice the past tense in the statement he makes in his autobiography: by the late 1980s, Zappa said that "I don't write 'music on paper' anymore. The incentive to continue was removed by having to deal with symphony orchestras."[42]

Indeed, Zappa's biography is, in one sense, one long struggle to get his serious music performed seriously, and he had extremely high standards. Despite his claim to have given up, he would keep trying to get classical musicians to perform his music correctly right up to his death in 1993. He came closest to achieving this goal when the vaunted Ensemble Modern released *The Yellow Shark*, which was the last Zappa recording in his lifetime.[43] The composer noted that

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[38] As he discusses in Tom Mulhern, "'I'm Different,' or, 'Not Exactly Duane Allman,'" *Guitar Player*, February 1983, digitized at https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/I%27m_Different_or_Not_Exactly_Duane_Allman.
[39] Andy Aledort, "Zappa's Universe," *Guitar World*, February 1999, 68-72, 74, 92, 94, 96, 98, 101-02, digitized with full scans of the original article available at https://www.afka.net/Mags/Guitar_World.htm.
[40] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 142; emphasis added.
[41] He states this directly in John Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar," *Guitar [UK]*, May 1979, 20-26, and June 1979, 23-31, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1979-05_Guitar.htm. This brings up an interesting question about Zappa's compositional process: in a typical classical ontology, the music begins as imaginary sound in the composer's mind, and then the composer "transcribes" it into notation so that others can hear it. Zappa's fixation on musical notation from a young age suggests an alternate ontological chain that *begins* with the act of writing; he then must wait for someone else, such as his bands or a professional orchestra, to realize the notation so he can hear it for the first time. To my knowledge, Zappa has not commented directly on this matter, but considering his tendency to fetishize notation, I am intrigued by the possibility of the second option.
[42] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 142.
[43] Originally released as Frank Zappa, *The Yellow Shark*, performed by Ensemble Modern, Barking Pumpkin Records 71600, 1993, CD. Zappa certainly spoke more fondly of the Ensemble Modern than any other classical

these concerts presented the most accurate live performances of his music to date, though he still corrected numerous mistakes in editing as even these new music virtuosos were "not 100 percent accurate."[44]

In his autobiography, Zappa bemoans his repeated attempts to get his notated music performed at enormous financial cost, lambasting the classical musicians who took his money and hampered his efforts. His first experience of having a classical composition performed in a live setting was in 1970 at UCLA's Pauley's Pavilion with Zubin Mehta conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra—an event that Zappa thought would be "a pretty big deal."[45] The reality was more prosaic: the orchestra wanted a rock group to be part of the concert, Zappa had to pay to have all of his parts copied (costing him $7000 at the time), and the Musicians' Union refused to allow him to tape the show.[46] The music Zappa wrote for this performance would form the basis of the soundtrack for his film *200 Motels*.[47]

Over the next two decades Zappa would spend enormous sums of money to get professional orchestras to play his modern classical music correctly—projects which all took substantial rehearsal time due to the difficulty of the music. In fact, by the early 1980s Zappa claims to have spent $250,000 on his "serious music investment" despite the fact that he "still

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ensembles he worked with over his lifetime; his experiences with them and the compositions performed are best covered in Miles, *Zappa*, 369-74 and Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen*, 486-90.

[44] Rip Rense, liner notes to Frank Zappa, *The Yellow Shark*, performed by Ensemble Modern, Rykodisc 40560, 1995, CD, which also includes a long narrative about how this recording came to be, including an interview with Zappa and many photos from rehearsals and performances.

[45] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 109.

[46] See ibid., 110-111. Thus began Zappa's long-running distaste for labor unions, something he wrote many songs about, spanning from "Rudy Wants to Buy Yez a Drink" (*Chunga's Revenge*, Bizarre Records MS 2030, 1970, LP) to "Stick Together" (*The Man From Utopia*, Barking Pumpkin Records FW 38403, 1983, LP). As Ben Watson points, by the time this latter track was released, "Zappa's condemnations of unions is sounding distinctly right-wing," and he discusses Zappa's opinions on unions at length in Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 404-407, quote on 404. Zappa refers to this group as the "Musicians' Union" in his autobiography, but it is likely that he is mistaken, as symphony musicians are represented by the AFM, the American Federation of Musicians.

[47] The soundtrack was originally released as Frank Zappa, *200 Motels*, United Artists Records 9956, 1971, 2 LPs, with the film released in the same year, co-directed and co-written by Zappa.

hadn't heard a note of it."[48] This money was taken from his modest success in the rock world, particularly his track "Valley Girl," co-written with his fourteen-year-old daughter Moon Unit, which became his only Top 40 hit in the United States, peaking at #32 on *Billboard* Hot 100 in September 1982.[49] Zappa turned around and used these proceeds to fund his most ambitious classical music project yet, a live performance by the London Symphony Orchestra, with Kent Nagano conducting, at London's Barbican Hall on January 11, 1983, followed by three days of recording that resulted in two LP releases.[50]

Zappa thought that the LSO "had the chance to make musical history" by performing some of his largest and most complex scores.[51] Even in 1980 Zappa talked about how some of these compositions that would later be recorded during these sessions had been sitting around for a few years as huge orchestral scores; he had never even heard what they sounded like because of the labor (and thus finances) required to get them performed.[52] The LSO gave Zappa his best

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[48] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 150. Zappa's distaste for working with orchestras is detailed at length in this autobiography, particularly on pp. 142-50.

[49] The track was originally released on Frank Zappa, *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch*, Barking Pumpkin Records FW 38066, 1982, LP. The inception of this tune and its commercial success is covered in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 304-307, with the lyrics discussed in further detail in Lowe, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, 177-78.

[50] Originally released on separate LPs as Frank Zappa, *London Symphony Orchestra Vol. 1*, Barking Pumpkin Records FW 38820, 1983, and Frank Zappa, *London Symphony Orchestra Vol. 2*, Barking Pumpkin Records SJ-74207, 1987, later released as a single CD, as Frank Zappa, *London Symphony Orchestra Vol. I & II*, Rykodisc 10540/41, 1995. Zappa directly states that he used profits from "Valley Girl" to fund these LSO recordings in a 1984 interview: Bill Milkowski, "Orchestral Maneuvers (1984)," as reprinted in *The Frank Zappa Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1994), 117.

[51] Robin Denselow, "The Father of Invention," *The Guardian*, January 11, 1983, cited in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 309. Zappa wrote the clarinet solo in *Mo n' Herb's Vacation* for David Ocker, who was his copyist from 1977-1984, and so he ventured with Zappa to London for the performance and recording sessions. Ocker thus knew the composition well, and claims that it had the most complex polyrhythms of any piece he had worked with him on, including "in the first movement [where] there's a place where 4 clarinets are playing 17 tuplets in parallel harmony . . . once I asked him why he didn't seem to write 13 tuplets—I was familiar with 11 tuplets and 15 and 17 tuplets at the time. Naturally, he pulled out a page that he had just been working on and there was a 13 tuplet (it's now in the last movement of *Mo 'n Herb* somewhere)"; he talks about this piece and the entire LSO project in great detail in David Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview," interviewed by John Steinmetz, Bill Lantz, Art Jarvinen, and various contributors from alt.fan.frank-zappa (a Zappa online newsgroup), 1994-1995, last accessed February 5, 2023, http://fzpomd.net/mitb/ocker/.

[52] See Colbert, "Zappa: Speak Out." The compositions Zappa mentions that end up on the LSO recordings are *Mo 'n Herb's Vacation*, *Bob in Dacron*, and *Sad Jane.*

chance to get a satisfactory recording of his most ambitious compositions, and thanks to the success of "Valley Girl," he could afford to pay for everything. The recording itself would even be historic, as it would be "the first multitrack digital recording of a symphony orchestra—ever."[53] The single performance at the Barbican, on the other hand, was merely "the obligatory 'live concert' [undertaken] to satisfy the union rehearsal requirements."[54]

Unsurprisingly, Zappa found the entire experience to be disastrous, and he would spend the rest of the 1980s complaining about it. Zappa was particularly critical of the recording sessions and the mistakes the musicians made, indicating their supposed lack of professionalism and dedication to his music.[55] As he would later write in the liner notes to *Vol. 2*, the recording was "infested with wrong notes and out-of-tune passages. I postponed its release for several years hoping that a digital technologist somewhere might develop a piece of machinery powerful enough to conceal the evils lurking on the master tapes," but there was not anything "sophisticated enough to remove 'human elements'" peppered throughout his pieces.[56] Recording engineer Mark Pinske recalls the immense labor involved working with Zappa to "perfect" these mistakes, going bar-by-bar to find the best take (of which there was up to 12 total takes available to choose from) and then editing in the best one.[57] As Miles points out, it was

[53] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 152.
[54] Ibid.
[55] See, for instance, ibid., 156, where Zappa talks about the end of the recording sessions where the trumpet players came back fifteen minutes late to record "Strictly Genteel," having "invaded a pub across the street." Miles pushes against Zappa firmly here, noting in a quote taken from Paul McCartney that trumpet players would need to go to the pub to produce "plenty of spittle." In addition, it was quite clear that Nagano and the performers were extremely dedicated to performing Zappa's music correctly and that they really enjoyed working on it, but it was simply too much difficult music to record in the span allotted to them; discussion in Miles, *Zappa*, 315-16. I find it likely that Zappa, having never formally studied composition, was himself guilty of a lack of professionalism when it came to over-complicating his notation. I studied composition during my undergraduate degree, and I remember being told by experienced composers to simplify my notation wherever possible to increase the chances of a successful performance.
[56] Frank Zappa, liner notes to Frank Zappa, *London Symphony Orchestra Vol. 2* and reprinted in the liner notes to the CD *London Symphony Orchestra Vol I & II*.
[57] See Chris Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day 3, Pt. 2," *Mix*, January 2003, https://www.mixonline.com/recording/complete-mark-pinske-interview-day-three-part-two-373056.

perfectly normal for hundreds of edits to be made to an orchestral recording, but Zappa was making an "absurd exaggeration" when he complained in an interview of having to "edit the tape about 8,000 times"—thus claiming to have had to make "three edits every second," certainly an impossibility.[58]

Zappa expected similar levels of perfection from his rock musicians, but perhaps the major difference between orchestras and his own ensembles is that his bands would have much more rehearsal time and would be completely focused on meeting his demands: in a 1982 interview, Zappa mentions that his current group had rehearsed for two months, five or six days a week, for 6-10 hours before going and tour; if musicians are unable to keep up, they are immediately fired, something he claims happens "all the time."[59] They were also required to memorize insane amounts of complicated music; for the 1982 tour, guitarist Steve Vai claimed to have had to learn 85 tunes.[60] Even in the early years with the Mothers of Invention, Zappa took an autocratic approach to the group and castigated band members when they made mistakes.[61] This would be a recurring pattern throughout his performing career, as Zappa would humiliate band members who made a mistake during a live performance by stopping the rest of the band and making them play the part again; fans themselves would also demand perfect performances

[58] See Miles, *Zappa*, 315, though it is not clear which exact interview Miles is quoting here.
[59] See John Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview," *Guitar World*, March 1982, 34-35, 37-38, 40, 45-46, 48-49, 72-73, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1982-03_Guitar_World.htm. George Duke describes Zappa recording sessions in the early 1970s and compares them to an orchestral rehearsal where tough passages are played over and over again; see Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 194.
[60] See Tom Mulhern, "Steve Vai: Zappa's 'Little Italian Virtuoso,'" *Guitar Player*, February 1983, 80, 102, 104-106, 108, 110, 113-16, 118, 121, 124, digitized at http://www.mulhern.com/articles/vai1983.htm. Slaven notes how happy Zappa was to tour with musicians in the early 1970s who did not require any music on stage in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 197. Zappa's final touring band imploded in spectacular fashion before completing its engagements in 1988, and they had to learn over 100 distinct tunes. The story of this band is recounted in Andrew Greenaway, *Zappa The Hard Way* (Bedford: Wyler Publishing, 2010), with tour dates and set lists listed out on pp. 150-79.
[61] Miles, *Zappa*, 171. Slaven notes that Zappa was happy to refer himself as a "tyrant" who would discard musicians all the time if they were not up for the job in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 265.

from the musicians.[62] Like the compositions presented on the *London Symphony Orchestra* albums, some of Zappa's rock pieces were so complicated that his band never once performed them to his standard, requiring him to stitch together various performances to release a single track on a recording, such as "Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch" from the eponymous album, which had a basic track taken from fifteen different cities. As Zappa said about this piece, "some of the edits are like two bars long. And they're written parts—all that fast stuff. It was very difficult for all the guys to play that correctly. Every once in a while somebody would hit the jackpot, but it's a very hard song to play. So there was no one perfect performance from any city. What I did was go through a whole tour's worth of tape and listen to every version of it and grab every section that was reasonably correct, put together a basic track, and then added the rest of the orchestration to it in the studio."[63]

There is one composition Zappa wrote for his rock ensemble that exemplified his love for complexity, appropriately titled "The Black Page." The piece was originally written out as a solo for Zappa drummer Terry Bozzio (later of Missing Persons fame); according to him, Zappa once "overheard the studio musicians talking about the difficulty of the music and how they all lived in mortal terror of coming in to a jingle session one morning and being presented with a

[62] There are many examples of Zappa stopping a performance to address mistakes made by a band member, some of which have been put out on official releases by Zappa himself. See, for instance, the live performance of "Montana (Whipping Floss)" at the Helsinki 1974 concert (documented on *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 2*, Rykodisc 10083/84, 1988, 2 CDs), where the drummer, Chester Thompson, cannot play the introduction at the tempo Zappa wants and he stops the band to restart the tune; when the drummer once again fails to play it properly, Zappa finally slows down the tempo, sardonically stating in the performance of the song that "it is such a ballad at this tempo." Other examples of Zappa making his band repeatedly perform his pieces until they are correct are covered in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 138 and 210. Regarding the fans themselves insisting on accurate performances, Zappa recounts one such incident when his band was playing "Stinkfoot," which opens the album *Make a Jazz Noise Here*, Barking Pumpkin Records D2 74234, 1991, 2 CDs, an album that is comprised of music from the 1988 tour. As Zappa puts it, an audience member treated his percussionist Ed Mann "like a war criminal because he fucked up the lick on "Dickie's Such An Asshole" several weeks ago." Zappa then has Mann perform the part both correctly and the way he had incorrectly played it at that previous show, thus making sure the "deeply offended" fan "gets his money's worth tonight"; this is written about in Greenaway, *Zappa The Hard Way*, 95.
[63] Mulhern, "'I'm Different,' or, 'Not Exactly Duane Allman.'"

mythological 'Black Page,' a piece of music so hard and filled with notes that it appeared 'black.' He joked about it and I soon forgot, but that was the initial incentive for the 'The Black Page' drum solo he would write for me."[64] Zappa then kept the original rhythms but added a melody and chord changes, thus creating "The Black Page #1," both of which would be performed live in December 1976, but would not be released until 1978 on *Zappa In New York* as "The Black Page Drum Solo/The Black Page #1," where Zappa delivers a monologue describing its aforementioned genesis.[65]

Bassist Patrick O' Hearn, who was in the 1976-77 touring band, described "The Black Page #1" as Zappa's toughest chart.[66] *Figure 4.1* illustrates the rhythmic density Zappa employs in his notation.[67] The piece is in a slow 4/4, with the drums emphasizing each quarter note on the hi-hat. Zappa particularly enjoyed toying with rhythms that deviated from a basic pulse as he does here, stating in a later interview that "I think that the real interest of what to do with rhythm is to have people's feet tapping to a normal beat, and then superimpose interesting things against that steady beat."[68] Throughout the piece, the steady quarter-note pulse is subdivided into basically every possible permutation and combinations thereof, including duple divisions (32nd, 16th and 8th notes); sometimes a note is held for multiple pulses, as well, creating longer

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[64] See Brett Clement, "Little Dots: A Study of the Melodies of the Guitarist/Composer Frank Zappa," Masters of Music Thesis, Florida State University, 2004, who takes this quote from Bozzio's website, http://www.terrybozzio.com, a quote that does not appear to be hosted there anymore as of February 7, 2023. In discussing this piece, Watson quotes composer Cornelius Cardew referring to a "black page" as a piece full of "semiquavers and demisemiquavers" that instills "hysteria . . . in young learners"; see Watson, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 334.

[65] Frank Zappa, *Zappa in New York*, Discreet 2290, 1978, 2 LPs. Archives of set lists from *Zappateers* indicate the first performance at New York's Palladium on December 26, 1976; see https://www.zappateers.com/fzshows/7677.html, last accessed February 7, 2023.

[66] See Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 239.

[67] Unfortunately, it is notoriously difficult to freely acquire official scores of Zappa's compositions either online or in libraries. In this case, though, Zappa provided the score to "The Black Page #1" in Jim Aiken, "Pervasive Polyrhythms in Zappa's 'The Black Page,'" *Keyboard*, February 1987, 66-67, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Mags/Keyboard.htm.

[68] Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar."

moments of static that contrast with the quick flourishes of notes. This duple subdivision of the beat is frequently supplemented with irregular rhythmic groupings that divide this steady pulse into groups of three, five, six, seven; by the end of the piece there are even runs of eleven notes. Measure 4 in the example showcases many of these subdivisions: the first beat is divided cleanly into eight 32nd notes, while the next beat is divided into a group of three 16th notes followed by a group of five 32nd notes—each played in the span of one eighth note. The measure then ends with two septuplets that evenly subdivide the beat.



Figure 4.1: Frank Zappa, "The Black Page #1," mm. 3-6 (2:01-2:17 on Zappa in New York*)*

In his analysis of "The Black Page #1," James Borders calls such tuplets "first-generation complexities," as they divide "a regular metric unit."[69] With some practice (and a steady metronome) most performers can learn to perform these tuplets accurately, and they are not what makes Zappa's piece difficult. Instead, what is truly "frightening" are the "second-generation complexities," which are themselves "part of a larger-level tuplet" and severely distort the continuous pulse. Such an example can be found in the second half of measure 5; as Borders writes, "this gesture, which comprises two groupings of five equal note values plus one of six, is placed within a higher-level quarter-note triplet. The performer must not only feel the quarter

[69] Borders, "Frank Zappa's 'The Black Page,'" 45-61, quote on 51.

note as the basic pulse but must also sense the first-generation quarter-note triplet, simultaneously placing five notes within the first and second triplets, and six within the third."[70]

Indeed, "The Black Page #1" is difficult because it contains a preponderance of both "first-generation" and "second-generation complexities," particularly the infamous measure 15, shown in *Figure 4.2*. At first glance, the way this measure is notated makes it seem enormously complicated; Borders even includes an incorrect, simplified reproduction of it in his chapter, which has the tuplet encompassing only the second half of the bar, following the straight quarter note and two eights (thus, making the complexity of the musical gesture more similar to measure 5).[71] However, comparing this measure to the recording makes it clear that Zappa intended the "first-generation" tuplet to encompass the entire bar, and he includes it this way both in the aforementioned *Keyboard* article and also in a *Guitar Player* magazine article.[72] In this latter article Zappa was asked directly how he would count this bar by the interviewer, a question which he side-steps by stating that "unless you're really skilled at sight-reading that type of material, you have to start by reading it slowly. . . that's a tricky bar to play. But it *can* be played and it has been played over and over again by a lot of different musicians in and out of the band."[73]



Figure 4.2: Frank Zappa, "The Black Page #1," m. 15 (2:47-2:52)

[70] Ibid., 51.
[71] See ibid., 52.
[72] See Aiken, "Pervasive Polyrhythms in Zappa's 'The Black Page,'" 66-67, and Frank Zappa, "Absolutely Frank: First Steps in Odd Meters," *Guitar Player*, November 1982, 114, 118, 121, digitized at https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Absolutely_Frank:_First_Steps_In_Odd_Meters.
[73] Zappa, "Absolutely Frank."

It is easy to assume that Zappa is just a pretentious composer who exploits his musicians' willingness to dedicate themselves to performing his scores even though he himself could not perform them correctly. There is some evidence to the contrary, though. Zappa was no doubt accustomed to working with classical musicians who thought his music was too difficult to play, like, for instance, the 1967 recording sessions for his album *Lumpy Gravy* where members of the orchestra complained that his scores were too difficult to perform. In response, Zappa took out his guitar and played the bassoon and bass clarinet parts in question, perfectly, on the spot.[74] While this anecdote could certainly be part of Zappa mythology, Nagano also noted Zappa's ability to comprehend his own written music, saying that "Frank Zappa is a great musician. He has ears that can hear things that are just phenomenal: extremely complex textures . . . I could call a lot of wrong notes, but actually so could he. He could hear these incredibly complex orchestrations and identify what wasn't working right. And because of that, he earned my great respect and the London Symphony's respect."[75]

Part of the confusion in counting measure 15 comes from the way Zappa notates it, making it appear even more complex than it is, namely the "7:2" designation in the third group of notes. If Zappa re-wrote this as "7:8," it would make it clear that the performer is meant to perform seven sixteenth-notes in the span of eight; it would also visually clarify that the entire bar has six main "beats" (second-level complexities) that have to be played in the span of four, hence why the tuplet encompasses the entire bar of 4/4. The performer must be able to subdivide the bar into three half-note triplets, and then to be able to further subdivide those: the first one in

[74] This is recounted in David Fricke, liner notes to Frank Zappa, *The Lumpy Money Project/Object*, Zappa Records 20008, 2009, 3 CDs.
[75] Quoted in Miles, *Zappa*, 312. Zappa stated in an interview that he did not have perfect pitch (Michael Bourne, "Frank Zappa: A Mother Only a Face Could Love," *American Eye*, October 23, 1974, digitized at https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Frank_Zappa:_a_Mother_Only_a_Face_Could_Love), making Nagano's claim about Zappa's aural prowess a bit more meaningful than it might otherwise be, though note that he does not mention Zappa's ability to hear complex polyrhythms performed correctly.

half, the second into a septuplet, and the final one again into half, with four notes played in the first half and five in the second. There is no doubt that such levels of subdivision made this the toughest measure of the piece, as the steady quarter-note pulse coincides only with the "first-level complexities" on the downbeat of the measure and nowhere else until the downbeat of measure 16, which is, mercifully, a single quarter note.[76] "The Black Page #1" overall is essentially a high-level rhythmic exercise, dividing measures of a slow 4/4 into nearly every possible subdivision, but what I find impressive is how Zappa turns this into something that is musically interesting to listen to once the rhythms are combined with a melody and chord changes.[77]

Considering the manifest craft involved in this composition, it is strange that the drum solo and "Black Page #1" were performed *only* at the Palladium engagement over four nights in December 1976, and never again on tour. Borders suggests that this was because "Zappa was unhappy with the level of performance" demanded by the "second-generation" rhythmic complexities. This, then, explains why Zappa created "The Black Page #2"—what he referred to on the *Zappa in New York* album as the "Easy Teenage New York Version"—as it added a disco

[76] Considering Zappa's interest in rhythmic diversity, it might seem surprising that he never employs metric modulation in his written music, a technique popularized by composer Elliott Carter, which he first used in his *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* (1948). As Fernando Benadon illustrates, metric modulation (which he calls "tempo modulation" because it does not require a change of meter) allows the composer to use a larger rhythmic palette than might be otherwise possible. For example, if one wrote a piece in a steady tempo where a quarter note is played at 60 beats per minute, the speed of notated rhythms in the piece is often going to be a multiple or factor of 60: a half-note at this speed would have a tempo at 30 B.P.M, an eighth-note at 120 B.P.M, and so forth. The only way to get tempos in between would be to notate complex polyrhythms—as Zappa chooses to—or to use metric modulation, which produces new subdivision values that were not available at the original tempo; the new tempo can then be modulated over and over again to create an incredible range of possible rhythms that are all proportionally related to one another (see Fernando Benadon, "Towards A Theory of Tempo Modulation," in *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Music Perception & Cognition*, eds. S.D. Lipscomb, R. Ashley, R.O. Gjerdingen, and P. Webster [Adelaide: Causal Productions, 2004], 563-66). That said, we have seen how Zappa enjoys superimposing polyrhythms over a steady pulse, which would make this technique less feasible. Besides, the visual complexity of his scores and the difficulty in performing them are key parts of Zappa's compositional aesthetic, both of which would be diminished if he used metric modulation.

[77] For a robust analysis of the "The Black Page #1" see Clement, "Little Dots," 29-48.

vamp and excised all of the "second-level" rhythmic complexities found in the first version.[78] "The Black Page #2" would continue to be performed on subsequent tours, often in different styles: 1976 was in the style of disco, while a reggae version was performed in 1981, followed by a polka version in 1984 and a new age style in 1988.[79] Clement questions Borders' conclusion, suggesting instead that the reason Zappa stopped performing "The Black Page #1" was that it "so perfectly represented Zappa's compositional aesthetic that it prevented him from adapting it further."[80] Particularly, the piece combined his aesthetic appreciations for Western score notation with the polyrhythmic components of his guitar improvisations (I draw out this connection myself in greater detail below).[81]

Though Zappa himself might not have had his bands perform "The Black Page #1" again in his lifetime, the piece would become a key part of his legacy. When gathering previous Zappa touring alumni to perform his music on a worldwide tour in 2006, Zappa's son Dweezil enlisted Bozzio to perform the drum solo and "The Black Page #1," with Steve Vai joining in when the band segues to "The Black Page #2," performances captured on recording and video.[82] By performing one of Zappa's most complicated compositions—one that had not even been

[78] Harmonically, though, this version was quite similar to "The Black Page #1"; Borders provides a comparative analysis in "Frank Zappa's 'The Black Page,'" 52-53. The way in which Zappa presents the three versions on the *Zappa in New York* album—drum solo, #1, #2—makes it seem like the piece had a trajectory that did not exist in actuality. As Borders illustrates, set lists from these 1976 shows illustrate that "The Black Page #2" was performed *before* the other two versions, which were "seamlessly and anonymously worked into another Zappa instrumental 'A Pound For a Brown (On the Bus),'" (ibid., 50).
[79] Clement ascribes these terms to the official releases of "The Black Page #2" in "Little Dots," 27, ranging from *Zappa in New York*, *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 4*, *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 5*, and *Make a Jazz Noise Here*, respectively. Unofficially, bootleg recordings showcase additional performances of this tune, as covered in Borders, "Frank Zappa's 'The Black Page,'" 54-58.
[80] Clement, "Little Dots," 27.
[81] Ibid. 28.
[82] The deluxe set includes a two DVDs and three CDs comprised of two 2006 performances; see *Zappa Plays Zappa,* Strobosonic 7930182995-9, 2008.

performed by him live after these 1976 concerts—Dweezil was showcasing his own legitimacy as bandleader and as the rightful heir to the performance of his father's music.[83]

Enter Steve Vai, Zappa's "Little Italian Virtuoso"[84]

Steve Vai was a college student when "The Black Page" was released on *Zappa In New York*, and the composition forever changed his life. Vai and his transcriptional skills would serve as a key link between Zappa's improvised and written music. Born in June 1960 to Italian immigrants in Long Island, Vai was inspired to learn how to play the electric guitar after hearing Jimmy Page playing with Led Zeppelin.[85] As I noted in the previous chapter, there were few pedagogical resources for aspiring rock guitarists in the 1970s, and so, like many others, Vai took private lessons to develop his skills. Luck would have it that a teenage Joe Satriani, also a Long Island native, was giving guitar lessons, and Vai studied with him throughout high school. Satriani taught Vai how to use his ears and develop his own voice on the instrument.[86]

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[83] Since Zappa's death in 1993 until these performances in 2006, numerous tribute and cover bands would perform Zappa's music, many of which included previous bandmates; these tribute bands and other ensembles try their best to adhere to his original compositions. I myself saw a performance by the band Project/Object in 2010 and I recall them halting the performance of a certain tune to correct mistakes that they made. The Zappa Family Trust had a relatively low opinion of these tribute acts, even though Zappa himself would perform many covers and freely borrow from popular music that was not in the public domain. The irony of the ZFT and their stances on Zappa tribute bands is covered in Paul Carr, "An Autocratic Approach to Music Copyright?: The Case of the Zappa Family Trust," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 21, no. 3 (2011): 302-16.

[84] Zappa would often refer to Vai by this title on tour, such as when introducing the band at the start of their Halloween show at New York City's Palladium in 1981; see Frank Zappa, "'The Finest Night of the Year,'" *Halloween '81* Highlights, Zappa Records ZR20034Z, 2020, CD.

[85] There is no official, detailed biography available of Vai. In this section, I draw on many different sources to create my own biographical narrative, including digitized interviews with Vai and others who worked with him, published books, and information available on Vai's official website. However, even in the interviews that Vai has given over the years there are some inconsistencies, and when possible I try to note them as such in my footnotes. In general, I found that Vai's most detailed recollection of his life right before and after entering Zappa's orbit is found in Aledort, "Zappa's Universe." I have tried my best to present a factual overview of Vai's early career using these sources, but considering these inconsistencies and that exact dates to key events are not typically provided in interviews, I have had to make some educated guesses regarding the precise chronology of Vai's early career.

[86] Vai discusses his lessons with Satriani in Bill Milkowski, "Steve Vai: The Sorcerer's Apprentice," *Guitar World*, March 1987, https://www.guitarworld.com/gw-archive/steve-vai-discusses-joe-satriani-frank-zappa-and-ry-cooder-1987-guitar-world-interview.

Vai did not learn music theory or how to sight read on the guitar until he enrolled in the Berklee College of Music in Boston, something he was able to do only because his father sold his life insurance policy to pay for it.[87] We will recall that the guitar is a particularly difficult instrument to sight-read on, a fact that Vai himself discovered, stating in an interview that "I think the guitar is one of the hardest instruments to sight-read on. But one summer I was determined to learn," something he accomplished by checking out scores from the Berklee library written for various instruments in numerous clefs and working through them on his instrument.[88] While at Berklee, Vai claims that he had a roommate who had created a transcription of a Larry Carlton solo from a record, inspiring Vai to try his own hand at transcribing guitar solos recorded by Carlos Santana and Alan Holdsworth.[89]

Vai had been a fan of Zappa's since before his Berklee years; he might also have had prior experience notating Zappa's guitar music, claiming in 1999 that he had once transcribed the iconic "Inca Roads" guitar solo from memory while riding a bus.[90] Having received Zappa's phone number from a friend of his at 15 years old, Vai attempted to make contact but limited himself to calling once a year so that he would not "overdo it"; his first few attempts were

[87] This is mentioned on the website of Berklee College, at https://college.berklee.edu/people/steve-vai, last accessed February 2, 2023. It is interesting that Berklee refers to him as a "1979 Berklee College of Music graduate" considering that in a 1983 interview he said that he did not actually finish his degree because it was impossible to continue his schooling once Zappa hired him as a transcriptionist in his fourth semester; see Mulhern, "Steve Vai." I assume this would mean Vai first attended Berklee when he was 17 in Fall 1977 and left in Spring 1979.
[88] See Milkowski, "Steve Vai."
[89] Ibid. Vai also states in this interview that until seeing this Carlton solo he had "never heard of transcribing," yet in the published book of his Zappa guitar transcriptions he claims that he had been transcribing music since grade school (*The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 4). Vai's biography is expanded on in Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen*, 348-49, but Courrier frustratingly does not cite the sources he uses in his book, as he only provides a general bibliography, referring to his publisher's website for chapter notes (a website that does not seem still to be active); from what I can tell, though, Courrier seems to be primarily drawing on Mulhern's 1983 interview.
[90] See Aledort, "Zappa's Universe," where Vai is asked if this anecdote is true, and he claims that it is. However, it is unclear if this transcription was created before his Berklee days—if it was, it would reinforce the claims he made in my previous footnote; Vai would have been 15 when "Inca Roads" was released on *One Size Fits All*, Discreet 2216, 1975, LP.

unsuccessful, though he was able to speak to Zappa's wife, Gail.[91] Vai was 17 and studying at Berklee when he first heard "The Black Page." This composition made quite a splash among his peers at music school; according to Vai, many would show off by performing their best rendition of the piece, and he himself decided to try his hand at transcribing it, a process that took him months, as he would slowly add to it, week after week.[92] As he recounted years later, working out Zappa's complex rhythms opened up new technical horizons for him: "that piece of music is a historical monolith in the pantheons of unique rhythmic ideas. In the realms of polyrhythmic composition it's akin to the discovery of electricity."[93]

Vai finally connected with Zappa in the first half of 1978; aware his idol was looking for scores of Varèse's music, Vai offered to photocopy some scores held by the Boston Public Library, piquing Zappa's interest. Vai deftly included some of his own materials with the Varèse scores: a finished transcription of "The Black Page" and a tape of his band at the time, Morning Thunder, featuring his guitar virtuosity.[94] Zappa was duly impressed with the accuracy of Vai's transcription, later noting that from what Vai mailed him, "I could tell that he had a superior musical intelligence and very great guitar chops . . . That's why he got the job."[95] Evidently, Vai's transcription perfectly replicated the notation of measure 15, since it appears, attributed to Vai, in a 1982 interview Zappa gave to *Guitar Player*, and matches Zappa's own score as

[91] Aledort, "Zappa's Universe."
[92] Mulhern, "Steve Vai."
[93] Vai writes about this in the intro to the republished edition of *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 5. His statement certainly sounds a bit naive and parochial; after all, nothing Zappa does in "The Black Page" is particularly unique when compared to other postwar modernist compositions; perhaps Vai was unfamiliar with such music at the time. In the domain of *progressive rock*, however, "The Black Page" was quite different from anything else released at the time.
[94] Zappa clearly liked Vai's playing enough to share it with his recording engineer Mark Pinske, who recounts this in Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day Two," https://www.mixonline.com/recording/complete-mark-pinske-interview-day-two-373054.
[95] Mulhern, "Steve Vai."

reproduced in the 1987 *Keyboard* article referenced above (as *Figure 4.1*).[96] Capturing both Zappa's "first-level" and "second-level" polyrhythms by ear was an extraordinary feat, and in response, Zappa mailed him back the actual chart for "The Black Page," along with one of his orchestral scores; also included was a hand-written note asking Vai to send back a tape of him playing "The Black Page" as fast as possible on the guitar, which Vai spent the next month working on.[97]

In true Zappa fashion, the next time Vai spoke to him he complained that Vai played "The Black Page" *too* fast, typical for a "Berklee guy, where faster is better."[98] Still, Vai was invited to meet Zappa for the first time in New York City, probably in 1978, where Zappa showed him some scores and the precocious Vai pointed out errors in his notation (again speaking to Zappa's lack of formal compositional training and unidiomatic writing). Pleased with Vai's grasp of notation, Zappa offered him $10 a page to transcribe cassettes of his guitar solos that would show up on later albums.[99] Specifically, the first transcriptions Vai did were of Zappa's guitar solos titled "He Used To Cut the Grass" and "Outside Now," "using a cassette recorder that was so small and weak and lousy. It was really hard. I used to sit and listen to one bar of music maybe a hundred times—hours and hours and hours of music."[100] These guitar solos would end up on the 1979 album *Joe's Garage Acts II & III*, and Vai's transcriptions would be published in the *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book,* published in 1982, which I will

[96] The 1982 interview is Zappa, "Absolutely Frank: First Steps in Odd Meters."
[97] Aledort, "Zappa's Universe."
[98] Ibid.
[99] On his website, Vai claims that Zappa first put him on salary as a transcriptionist in the summer of 1978, suggesting Vai had first met him in New York around this period; see "Tempo Mental," which was an article written in 1983 for a magazine but was never published in which Vai goes into great detail on how to notate complex polyrhythms in a way that he "had never seen before," but was soon taken up by other "contemporary composers" (Steve Vai, "Tempo Mental," unpublished article, 1983, https://www.vai.com/tempo-mental/, last accessed February 3, 2023).
[100] Mulhern, "Steve Vai."

consider in more detail below.[101] Zappa's improvisations were as rhythmically dense as his scores, and $10 a page was really a pittance (though Vai admits it was more than he had been making as a musician before Zappa hired him).[102] Vai clearly wanted to show Zappa his commitment as a transcriptionist, working 10-15 hours a day and taking upwards of three days to complete a single page of music, though he kept the full extent of his labor from Zappa.[103] Vai would also "cram this stuff on the page and cram all the staffs so that Frank would see that [he] wasn't trying to rip him off."[104] Zappa was clearly satisfied, extolling Vai by name in interviews and thus introducing the young guitarist to his fanbase.[105]

Vai's success in integrating himself into Zappa's world no doubt came from his complete dedication to Zappa and his music, something that Zappa demanded from just about everyone who worked for him, exemplified by the grueling auditions he would hold to form his touring bands.[106] Though it is unclear if Vai knew this at the time, Mark Pinske, Zappa's audio engineer

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[101] See *Joe's Garage Acts II & III*, Zappa Records SRX-2-1502, 1979, 2 LPs. In the introduction to the transcription book, Vai writes that all of the "works" in the book were "transcribed between January 1979 and August 1981" (*The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 4). Perhaps, then, Vai started working on these two solos in the second half of 1978 and had finished them by January of the following year.

[102] Mulhern, "Steve Vai."

[103] In one interview Vai claimed to have started off transcribing 13-15 hours a day (ibid.), but elsewhere would say "up to 10 hours a day" (for instance in Aledort, "Zappa's Universe"). When working with Zappa and his recording personnel in person, Vai asked his recording engineer to never tell Zappa how much time he spent transcribing a single page (recounted in Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day Two").

[104] Mulhern, "Steve Vai."

[105] This is mentioned in Aledort, "Zappa's Universe," where Vai says he was first mentioned in print by Zappa in an interview with a San Francisco magazine which I am unable to locate at the time of this writing. Guitarist and keyboardist Mike Keneally, a future member of Zappa's touring band, recalls in the same interview that seeing this magazine article was the first time he became familiar with Vai's name. I assume this would have been sometime in 1979, as an interview with *Guitar* published in May-June 1979 has Zappa referring to a "guy" who transcribed "The Sheik Yerbouti Tango" from 1979's *Sheik Yerbouti*; this transcription would end up published in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book* with Vai's name attached, so it follows that this "guy" was, in fact, Vai (see Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar").

[106] There are many examples of the intense audition process to be part of Zappa's band. For instance, bassist Arthur Barrow was asked to learn the instrumental part in the middle of "St. Alfonzo's Pancake Breakfast" (from *Apostrophe (')*). He had to transfer the track from the LP to a reel-to-reel tape so he could slow it down and write it down. After performing it at tempo during his audition, Zappa predictably complained about a few wrong notes, but Barrow's audition was able to proceed; see Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen*, 315. Anyone can now learn how to play this part of "St. Alfonzo" using tablature or standard notation, as *Apostrophe (')* has since been transcribed in its entirety and published by Hal Leonard (*Frank Zappa: Apostrophe (')*, transcribed Andy Aledort [Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003]). Scott Thunes would replace Barrow as Zappa's bassist in the early 1980s, and he describes his

in the late 1970s (who himself had to audition for the job) reveals that Zappa had a habit of sending tapes of his playing to aspiring musicians all around the country for transcription. According to Pinske, Zappa clearly thought that Vai did the best job of "charting out the sheets," thus prompting him to consider flying Vai out to Los Angeles to audition for the band.[107]

Indeed, Vai's high-octane performance of "The Black Page" demonstrated to Zappa that "there was a possibility to write things that were even harder for that instrument than what had already been used in the band," something Zappa would take advantage of in new pieces that featured Vai playing intricate, fully-composed guitar lines.[108] Before hiring Vai, Zappa had never had another lead guitarist in his band, as he himself usually took on this role.[109] By the late 1970s, however, Zappa had lost some confidence in his own guitar playing, and he was often only using the instrument to play solos.[110] Outside of these extended solos, he would soon relegate guitar playing to others such as Vai and Mike Keneally, participating by singing some of

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challenging audition in detail in Wictor, *In Cold Sweat*, 176. Open auditions were particularly competitive as a huge group of perspective instrumentalists all had to listen to each other audition in one big space. Drummer Terry Bozzio was apparently so impressive at his open audition that all of the other drummers, having witnessed him sight reading "frightfully difficult sheet music" and "jamming in a very odd time signature, like 19/16," refused to audition themselves, at which point Zappa turned to him and said, "Looks like you've got the gig if you want it" (from an interview Bozzio gave to Andy Greenaway, as cited in Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen*, 272). Vai's own formal audition is detailed at the end of this section.

[107] See Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day One," https://www.mixonline.com/recording/complete-mark-pinski-interview-day-one-373053.

[108] Mulhern, "Steve Vai." See, for instance, the pieces "Moggio" (*The Man From Utopia*, 1983) and "What's New In Baltimore" (*Frank Zappa Meets the Mothers of Prevention*, Barking Pumpkin Records ST-74203, 1985, LP). Though these are both studio recordings, live performances of these pieces and others, such as a new rendition of "The Black Page #2," exemplify the difficulty of the guitar parts Zappa wrote out for Vai. All three of these compositions were performed live by the 1982 touring band and can be listened to on the second CD of *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 5*.

[109] In addition to solos, Zappa also played many intricate guitar lines on his music from the early-to-mid 1970s, particularly the music presented on the live *Roxy and Elsewhere* album (released in 1974 [Discreet 2DS 2202, 2 LPs] but mostly pulled from performances in December 1973); though Jeff Simmons is credited for playing rhythm guitar on this album, Zappa's European tour in the latter half of 1974 featured only himself on guitar, and live concerts from this tour showcase his playing as a key part of the smaller sextet he was touring with. *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 2* encapsulates performances from two or potentially three Helsinki concerts in September of this year edited together; Zappa's lead guitar playing is particularly audible on the tracks "Don't You Ever Wash That Thing" and "T'Mershi Duween."

[110] Pinske recounts Zappa's "loss of confidence" in Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day Two," while Zappa himself mentions that he is playing the guitar less frequently except to improvise in a 1979 interview (Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar").

the vocals and taking up the role of a director, akin to a classical music conductor; this was a goal he was explicitly fantasizing about in 1979: "eventually I want to have a situation where all I have to do is sing my stupid songs and just pick up the guitar and play, and then put the guitar down and sing some more stupid songs, and then go back to the hotel."[111]

Based on Vai's transcription work and the newfound compositional possibilities his guitar playing would unlock, Zappa clearly wanted Vai to audition for his band, but the fact that Vai was only eighteen made him too young to do so in Zappa's eyes.[112] Having left Berklee sometime in the first half of 1979, Vai was considering moving to Los Angeles, even though Zappa clearly told him "don't come only because I'm here."[113] Vai moved anyway, settling close to the Zappa compound in Laurel Canyon in 1979. Vai was not allowed formally to audition for the band but would occasionally play some guitar parts to Zappa over the phone.[114] Most of his days at this time were spent transcribing Zappa's music:

> 'I was literally working 10 hours a day doing nothing but transcribing . . . All day, every day. I was transcribing guitar solos, lead sheets, orchestra parts. There's a stack of stuff at my house that's four feet high. There's a book of guitar parts and drum parts from Frank's music that's four inches thick. So when I was with him. I was working on Frank's music all day, every day whether I was learning it on the guitar, practicing or transcribing it. That's all I did. That's why I got along great with Frank. I was very dedicated to his music. It's what he needs out of his employees.'[115]

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[111] Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar." Elsewhere, Zappa talked about how he wanted to avoid just strumming a few chords and muddying the arrangement, but he also noted how he struggled with his breath control while holding a guitar, so he had to put down his guitar to sing in tune (see Mulhern, "'I'm Different,' or, 'Not Exactly Duane Allman'").

[112] The chronology is a little tough to piece together here. Vai was born in June of 1960, so this means Zappa wanted to audition him in the second half of 1978 or the first half of 1979.

[113] Recounted by Vai in Aledort, "Zappa's Universe."

[114] Ibid.

[115] Milkowski, "Steve Vai." Though Vai created the transcriptions, Ocker was Zappa's full-time copyist at the time, so he would end up transforming Vai's manuscript notation into readable scores or parts. He noted that at this point in time Zappa was working Vai to death, and that Vai did tons of transcriptions that were never even released or used in the studio, including annotated sections of Zappa's composition *The Adventures of Greggery Peccary* (first released on Frank Zappa, *Studio Tan*, Discreet 2291, 1978, LP), which was entitled "The Peccary Project," and was never used for any purposes; see Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview."

One particular transcription that Vai did for Zappa would serve as the catalyst for entry into his band. Zappa gave Vai a tape called "Persona Non Grata," a seven-minute guitar improvisation from the beginning of a 1978 Halloween concert at the Palladium in New York City.[116] Pinske recalls being in the studio when Zappa arrived with Vai's fresh transcription, recounting that he "came out there with the sheet, and held it up to me, and he said, 'Look at this, Mark. You gotta see this. Look at the way he transcribed my guitar solo here. *He makes me look like a genius*.' He did some triple-dotted eighth notes, or some darn thing that just looked immaculate. And Frank said he was just screwing around [during the recorded improvisation], but Steve made it look really like it was some elaborate thing. And Frank got a kick out of it."[117]

This quotation speaks plainly to the crucial role that notation played in constructing Zappa's legitimacy as a *composer* who happened to be a rock *artist*; though he might just have been "screwing around" onstage, Vai's transcriptions reified the improvisation into a score that appears as complex as anything being done in contemporary music. (Rhythmically, it appears similar to "The Black Page #1.") Zappa himself considered his guitar solos to be de facto *compositions*, albeit impromptu ones, illustrated by the fact that he would give them specific titles even when excerpted from the middle of his well-known tunes.[118] To be sure, this was not

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[116] The original guitar solo has never been officially released, but a bootleg recording from the Palladium on October 27, 1978 is available on YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUFFTWse7Wo, last accessed February 6, 2023. There were seemingly six shows performed during this Palladium engagement over four nights, with numerous shows opening with "Persona Non Grata," what was clearly just an E lydian vamp that Zappa would solo over; because Zappa sent this one particular performance to Vai, one must assume it was his favorite of the bunch. Details of these shows and set lists are provided on the Zappateers website, https://www.zappateers.com/fzshows/78.html, last accessed February 6, 2023.

[117] Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day Two," emphasis added.

[118] Zappa has talked about this in many different sources; in one interview he says that "once I get out onstage and turn my guitar on, it's a special thing to me—I love doing it. But I approach it more as a composer who happens to be able to operate an instrument called a guitar, rather than 'Frank Zappa, Rock and Roll Guitar Hero'" (Steve Rosen, "One Size Fits All Interview," *Guitar Player*, January 1977, digitized at https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/One_Size_Fits_All_Interview). Zappa eventually began releasing recordings comprised entirely of guitar solos, such as the triple-LP set, *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar*, Barking Pumpkin Records 1111-13, 1981, 3 LPs; originally available by mail order as individual albums), which I discuss in greater detail below. Clement points out that Zappa clearly intended the solos on these albums "to be considered as separate

the first time Zappa had used transcriptions of recordings as part of his compositional process. He loved the sound of his solos doubled on other instruments, something only made possible by someone who had the requisite skill and dedication; a few years prior to meeting Vai, Zappa had Bruce Fowler (his trombonist at the time) transcribe his guitar solo during the 1975 performance of "Music for Guitar and Low-Budget Orchestra" at UCLA, and then had him overdub the solo on trombone, orchestrating it for four trombones that played in harmony with Zappa's solo for the release first heard on 1978's *Studio Tan*.[119] As we will see, Vai's notational accuracy allowed Zappa to use transcriptions much more readily in the 1980s.

Considering Zappa's penchant for using transcription to organize overdubs of his improvisations, he was no doubt enthralled at the possibility of a guitarist taking part; Vai's instrumental capabilities and his transcriptional skills made "Persona Non Grata" a good candidate. Once Vai was in Los Angeles, Zappa asked him to learn a transcription note for note for an upcoming studio session where Vai would double Zappa's own part.[120] Pinske remembers that Vai, who had just turned nineteen, had just arrived at Zappa's newly built home recording studio in Laurel Canyon prepared to play the entire solo. Vai was understandably nervous, having spent years of his life, and the bulk of every recent day, completely consumed by Zappa's music. This was the teenage guitarist's best opportunity to impress Zappa.

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compositions" because the original pieces they are extracted from are not even listed in the liner notes, including personnel, date recorded, and equipment used (Clement, "Little Dots," 10 fn. 33). Courrier notes exactly which songs and live performances the *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* tracks were taken from in *Dangerous Kitchen*, 356.

[119] The guitar solo in question can be heard on this track from 4:25-5:51. This process is briefly described in Miles, *Zappa*, 267, who likely took this information from Dalton, "Shut up and Play Your Guitar."

[120] Slaven's biography seems incorrect in this regard, as he claims that it was percussionist Ed Mann who originally transcribed the solo, creating a score that Vai played from (Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 291). Meanwhile, Vai himself in an interview claimed that it was his transcription and overdubbing of "The Deathless Horsie" that marked his transition from Zappa's transcriptionist to a fully-fledged band member (Mulhern, "Steve Vai). Vai must be mistaken here, as "The Deathless Horsie" was indeed released on *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* (and he did create a transcription of it), but it did not feature Vai's guitar overdubbed after-the-fact on Zappa's solo.

Zappa had the "Persona Non Grata" recording fed into the studio without his original guitar part for Vai to use as a reference. Vai performed his transcription, and Zappa then fed his own guitar part back into the mix, panned to one side with Vai's on the other for reference. According to Pinske, Zappa was shocked by what he heard: "you couldn't hardly tell the difference of the two guitars. I swear to God. The bends, and the articulation, which pretty much told you how much time [Vai] spent on it, were…and Frank—[it was] probably the only time in my life I actually saw Frank's mouth just drop open."[121] Ocker was also present at this recording session and has a similar memory of it: Vai had done the overdub in one pass, but immediately wanted to try again so he could "do it better"; Zappa would apparently not allow Vai another try, though, stating that "if I let him do it again it would be perfect, and no one would believe me that there are two guitars on it."[122] Vai recounts that a change in instrumentation also helped aurally clarify that there were two parts on the recording: he originally performed the part on an acoustic guitar, but this was replaced by another take on electric guitar because it was hard to hear that Zappa's part was doubled; the use of the whammy bar differentiated his part from Zappa's, and Vai's was panned to the left in the mix against Zappa's to the right.[123] Clearly, Zappa *wanted* people to know that his guitar was doubled because of what a musical feat it was, even at the cost of Vai's performance from the score not being absolutely perfect. This was a rare occasion where Zappa chose to emphasize diversity over perfection.

That performance was *still* not enough to secure Vai a spot in Zappa's band. At twenty, Vai would have to audition just like everyone else for the American tour in the second half of 1980. Zappa was particularly sadistic during the process: as Vai recounts, Zappa gave him a tape

[121] Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day Two."
[122] Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview."
[123] Aledort, "Zappa's Universe."

of the material to learn and then, during the audition, only had him play pieces that were not on the tape—in front of other prospective guitarists. Zappa also asked Vai to imitate guitar lines he would improvise on the spot, translating them into different meters and musical styles, finally asking Vai to do something that Vai thought was physically impossible, to which Zappa responded, "I hear Linda Ronstadt is looking for a guitar player."[124] Thinking he had failed the audition, Vai started to apologize for wasting Zappa's time, at which point the composer finally told him that he had secured a spot in the band. Vai's first shows were in September 1980, and he would continue touring with Zappa and transcribing for him through 1982.[125] Considering Zappa's tendency to complain about working musicians and the mistakes they would make, it is remarkable that he never had any complaints about Vai: Zappa professed joy in playing with him and was clearly excited about having someone around who could play the most complicated guitar lines.[126] As he said in a 1991 interview, "I always saw [Vai] as a thoroughly professional, on-the-case, totally talented, fabulous musician, and you couldn't ask for a better guy to be in your band."[127]

The Frank Zappa Guitar Book: "Xenochronous" Solos

Vai's transcription of "Persona Non Grata" was useful for Zappa as a studio project, but he also published it alongside many others, thus allowing his fan base, rock critics, and fellow

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[124] Vai has recounted this legendary audition in numerous places, such as Aledort, "Zappa's Universe," and he speaks about it on YouTube: "Steve Vai Talks About Zappa Audition," uploaded by Ray Lemos, October 5, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx1RguHA4XE.

[125] Dates and set lists from this September-December 1980 tour are available from *Zappateers* at https://www.zappateers.com/fzshows/80fall.html, last accessed February 6, 2023. One complete performance from this tour was officially released after Zappa's death as Frank Zappa, Buffalo, Vaulternative Records 2007-1, 2007, 2 CDs, with Steve Vai's contributions labeled as "stunt guitar"; on other albums, Vai would be listed as providing "Strat abuse" (see the liner notes to Frank Zappa, *You Are What You Is*, Barking Pumpkin Records PW2 37537, 1981, 2 LPs.) and "impossible guitar parts" (see the liner notes to *The Man From Utopia*).

[126] See Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview," where Zappa discusses his experiences touring with Steve Vai and how difficult and time-consuming it is for his touring musicians to learn the necessary material.

[127] Matt Resnicoff, "Poetic Justice: Frank Zappa Puts Us in Our Place," *Musician*, November 1991, 66-68, 70, 72-77, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1991-11_Musician.htm; quote on 76.

composers to see just how rhythmically complex his improvisations were. *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, published and distributed by Hal Leonard in 1983, includes those first *Joe's Garage* guitar transcriptions Vai did from a "small Sony tape machine" in addition to Zappa solos from *Shut Up N' Play Yer Guitar* that Vai transferred to a four-track tape deck in order to slow them down to half speed, allowing him to transcribe the solos with extreme notational precision.[128] Publishing this book of music, Zappa was able to bridge an important gap between his elaborate avant-garde scores (available by mail order) and the parts of his music that one might assume are further removed from the Western art tradition, his improvised guitar solos. The reader will recall that, before the 1980s, note-for-note transcriptions were most commonly found in jazz. Because Zappa's music was thoroughly mediated by recording technology, there is a bit of an ontological mismatch between what is heard and what is seen: some of Vai's transcriptions are created from live concert recordings, but others translate "virtual performances" that never actually took place in the real world.

Take "Persona Non Grata," for instance. Vai's doubling of Zappa's guitar solo in the studio was released on 1981's *You Are What You Is* with some important modifications: it was retitled as "Theme from the 3rd Movement of Sinister Footwear," having been expertly edited down to half the length of the original solo; percussion and bass clarinet parts were added to the track using Vai's transcription as a basis.[129] Vai's transcription was published under this new title in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*; some representative measures, reproduced in *Figure 4.3*, illustrate how laborious it would have been for Vai to notate Zappa's guitar solo in the first

[128] See Steve Vai's introduction to *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book,* 4. This book was re-released in 2017; readers do not want to know how much I spent to get a used copy of this in the late 2000s.
[129] Vai provides the genesis of the original piece and a brief overview of how it was recorded and orchestrated in Michael Brenna and Rune Karlsen, "Stevie's Spanking," *Society Pages*, no. 12 (September 1982): 9, quoted in Watson, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 390-91. Listeners can particularly distinguish Vai's guitar in the mix (which is panned completely the left) when he uses his whammy bar, an effect particularly audible at 0:33-0:35 on the *You Are What You Is* recording.

place, and how technically demanding it would have been to perform it back in the studio.[130] As in "The Black Page," we see first- and second-level polyrhythms, now created extemporaneously. Strangely, the drum part included in the publication is from the *original* "Persona Non Grata" live recording; Zappa had further edited his original improvisation by using his technique of *xenochrony*, replacing the underlying rhythm track from the Palladium concert with one taken from a different performance for the album release.[131] So, while the original improvisation had a clear 3/4 groove (indicated by the meter in Vai's transcription where the drummer tends to emphasize the downbeat with the crash cymbal and kick drum), the rhythm track that replaces it on the studio recording is in a meter that is more difficult to identify by ear; to this author, this lack of an audible meter allows Zappa's improvised polyrhythms to sound like they are occupying a different metrical level. Ben Watson describes this piece well; as he writes, for Zappa to use a live guitar solo, to turn it into a score, and then "double up the instrumentation with the precision of new-complexity chamber music and to [finally] spread it across an alien rhythm track is truly alchemical."[132] Improvisation, after all, is something "conventionally deemed a means of personal expression," and Zappa combines this with Vai

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[130] "Theme from the 3rd Movement of Sinister Footwear," is printed in the *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 206-12.
[131] Arved Ashby claims that the rhythm track found on the final album version was "pre-existing" rather than something newly recorded to this solo in the studio, but it is unclear to me how he knows this (see Ashby, "Frank Zappa and the Anti-Fetishist Orchestra," 582). The term "xenochrony" is created from two Greek words, "*xenos*" (strange or alien) and "*chronos*" (time). Tracking down when Zappa first coined this term has proven difficult, but Slaven writes that it was a technique Zappa had already used in putting together the track "The Blimp (Mousetrackreplica)" on *Trout Mask Replica* (1969), an album he produced for Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band. By the mid-1970s, Zappa was using this studio method more readily as demonstrated in "Friendly Little Finger" from 1976's *Zoot Allures* (Warner Bros. Records BS 2970, LP) (see Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 231). Zappa then described this technique in the liner notes to 1979's *Sheik Yerbouti,* although here he refers to it as "experimental resynchronization." For more discussion of how this technique was used on this album see Paul Carr, "Zappa and Technology: His Incorporation of Time, Space and Place when Performing, Compositing and Arranging Music" in *Frank Zappa and the And*, 140-41. Watson writes that Zappa used the term "xenochrony" on the sleeve notes to a promotional sampler for the upcoming boxset *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar* (*The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 303 fn. 61). Meanwhile, Lowe writes that Zappa called it "xenochronicity," although he gives no citation for this term and I have yet to see it used elsewhere; Lowe provides an overview of how this studio technique works in *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa,* 6-7, with specific applications on *Zoot Allures* detailed on 126.
[132] See Watson, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 391.

playing from a detailed, "objective" score. Watson concludes that "transcription gives Zappa's temporal excursions the externality of spatial objects."[133]



Figure 4.3: "Theme From the 3rd Movement of Sinister Footwear," mm. 28-33 (ca. 0:44-0:56 on the recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 208.*

The first transcriptions Zappa hired Vai to do, the guitar solos from *Joe's Garage Acts II & III*, were also included in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*. Nearly all of the guitar solos on this album were performed live in concert and then combined with new rhythm tracks in the studio.[134] This technique was particularly appropriate: because, in the world of the opera, music has been made illegal, the only way the main character, Joe, can hear his guitar solos is in his head; it thus follows that their xenochronous nature places them "outside the present" into time

[133] Ibid., 391, with further discussion provided in Ben Watson, "Frank Zappa as Dadaist: Recording Technology and the Power to Repeat," in *The Frank Zappa Companion*, 166-167.
[134] This is briefly discussed by Mark Pinske in Michie, "The Complete Mark Pinske Interview, Day One." Zappa has discussed how this process works in the solos of *Joe's Garage*: "You try to find something that's in the same key [as the original live guitar solo] but the time signature could be different. In 'Packard Goose,' the backing is in 4/4 and the solo was played in 15/16 in a totally different tempo. It was from the last show in Zurich during a song called 'Easy Meat.' The solo in 'Keep It Greasy'—the rhythm background I think is in 21/16 and the guitar is in 11/4. The beats come together about once a month" (Colbert, "Frank Zappa," 15).

that never really existed.[135] The ontological significance is that in Zappa's work *everything is happening at the same time*; specific loci of performance lose meaning since all his performances are, in principle, available to be spliced and merged together. This accords with Zappa's focus on "conceptual continuity," where any piece, like a guitar solo from *Joe's Garage*, or a drum track taken from another piece, are all part of "one unified work, one massive opera."[136]

The *Joe's Garage* solos and drum accompaniment were transcribed by Vai note for note just as they were presented on record. So, even though these instruments never corresponded in real time, they are merged in the transcription as a sort of stochastic free jazz, where interactions between the musicians happened only when the basic tracks were superimposed on one another in the studio. The combination might have been made at random, but it is more likely that Zappa was able to hear some of the artifactual connections through a process of trial and error, as he listened to numerous rhythm tracks underlying his guitar solo and picked the one he liked best.[137] *Figure 4.4* showcases one of these fleeting simultaneities, where the guitar and drums play a similar polyrhythmic figure over the last two beats in measure 23 of the solo in "He Used To Cut The Grass." Vai's transcriptions of these xenochronous "coincidences" allows them to be *seen* when they might otherwise be missed by the ear; their trace in notation also suggests the possibility that they are not coincidences at all.

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[135] Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 366 and 375. As Paul Carr writes, "this technique exemplifies Zappa's tendency toward self-reference [as it] has the capacity of simultaneously combining otherwise incongruent times, places and spaces" ("Introduction," in *Frank Zappa and the And*, 9).
[136] Kevin Seal, "Zappa and Religion: Music is the Best," in *Frank Zappa and the And*, 64.
[137] Ocker suggests that this was typically how Zappa employed xenochrony in Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview." Some hardcore Zappa fans have made efforts to trace some of these artificial connections: Watson notes that Matt Galaher's recurring "Statistical Density" column in the Zappa fanzine *T'Mershi Duween* often includes transcriptions of "xenochronic 'coincidences' that are astonishing" (referred to in Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 376).



Figure 4.4: "He Used To Cut the Grass," mm. 23-24 (ca. 2:02-2:06 on the recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 252.*

The transcription of "Watermelon in Easter Hay," another guitar solo from *Joe's Garage*, appears visually similar to the others, a guitar solo with drum accompaniment.[138] However, this track is unique because it is the only guitar solo on the album that is *not* created xenochronously, positioning it as the emotional climax of the album's narrative.[139] Zappa singled out "Watermelon" as "'the best song on the album. . . . It was supposed to be that character's last imaginary guitar solo before he quits the music business. So it's a sad song.'"[140] Zappa's guitar conveys this sadness through its melodic contour: as one evocative critical account puts it, the opening D-sharp in the guitar "sounds in a medium-high register and then soars like the soul from the body towards unfathomed heights. The opening phrase comes to rest and the concluding note is held in suspension, the mortal fingers straining to maintain the spirit's

[138] See "Watermelon in Easter Hay," in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 214-25.
[139] In true Zappa fashion, the plot of *Joe's Garage* is bizarre and disjunct. Act I introduces the listener to Joe, the opera's protagonist, who is an average guy who enjoys playing guitar with his amateur rock band. He also lives in a dystopian world where music is in the process of being made illegal. In Act II, Joe explores his bizarre sexual fetishes and ends up destroying his robotic sex toy via golden shower. This unfortunate event sends Joe to prison, where he begins to feel depressed—the only guitar solos he can play now are those that take place in his mind (such as "He Used To Cut the Grass)." Joe is then released from prison in Act III. Living in a mindless consumer society, Joe's depression deepens; he imagines one final guitar solo, "Watermelon in Easter Hay," before deciding to move on with his life, by working a day job assembling muffins at the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen, at which point the opera ends.
[140] Quoted in Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 275-76.

vibration."[141] "Watermelon" functions as a cathartic release at the end of the lengthy album, as an expansion within and beyond; Zappa keeps bending up into the high D-sharp, the leading tone, only for it to fall down to a G-sharp, having never reached the tonic E (*Figure 4.5*). Its pervasive melancholy is perhaps the most audible gesture in the piece.

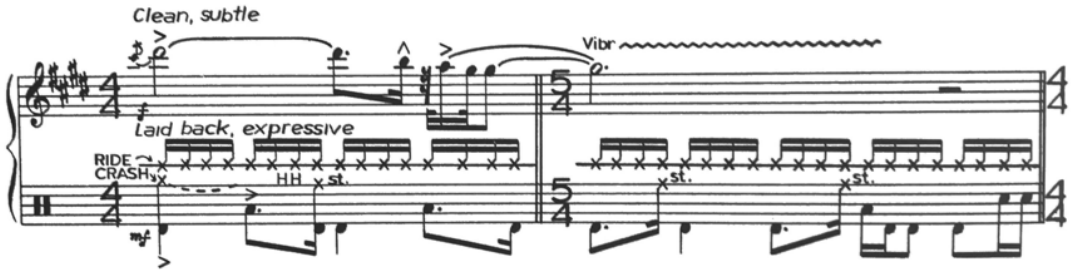


Figure 4.5: the opening guitar melody of "Watermelon in Eastern Hay" (1:20-1:30 on the recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 214.*

Moments of emotional sincerity are relatively rare in Zappa's music at this time, and "Watermelon" serves as a rare example.[142] Even so, the full title of this track—" Playing A Guitar Solo With This Band Is Like Trying To Grow A Watermelon In Easter Hay"—again refers to Zappa's frustrations with the balance between him and his hired rock ensemble.[143] Zappa himself considered "Watermelon" to be one of his few signature pieces; Lowe points out that according to his official website, he "left specific instructions with the Zappa Family Trust that no permissions be given for people (other than his son Dweezil . . .) to record these songs."[144] Dweezil has stated directly that "Watermelon" is the most meaningful song in his

[141] T.H.F. Drenching, "'Watermelon In Easter Hay': The Function of the Reverb Unit & the Poverty of the Individual Spirit," in *Academy Zappa: Proceedings of the First International Conference of Esemplastic Zappology* ed. Ben Watson and Esther Leslie (London: SAF Publishing Ltd, 2005), 91.
[142] One of Zappa's biographers, Barry Miles, compares Zappa's cold, sardonic irony with the thoughts expressed by classical composer Igor Stravinsky who felt that music was "by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all"; quoted in Miles, *Zappa*, 287.
[143] This full title is mentioned by Zappa in Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview." At the same time, this very frustration expressed through the title can be seen as creating expressive power in a live performance, which is precisely what differentiates this track from others on the album: Zappa is constantly fighting against the band who is supposed to support him, making it possible to hear his guitar solo's suspensions and displaced phrases not merely as expressions of angst but as expressions of frustration. Moreover, the full title also represents a further deflection on the part of Zappa as it suggests a visual mismatch: an Easter basket typically includes delicate, colorful Easter eggs that represent the beginning of life, displaced in this example by a massive, fully-evolved fruit.
[144] Lowe, *The Words and Music of Frank* Zappa, 126; the other signature pieces being "Zoot Allures" and "Black Napkins," both from *Zoot Allures.* I myself have heard that Zappa wished no one to record (or even perform) these

father's output; as late as 2012 he still had not performed the piece live, commenting that it is something "that I will play eventually. For many people, that is a devastating piece of music to listen to. It really is powerful and emotional."[145] In 2013, Dweezil finally played it in concert; a video recording of this performance shows him crying throughout.[146]

As one of Zappa's few signature pieces, "Watermelon in Easter Hay" has been turned into a type of musical work, as part of a recorded, "virtual opera" that that is exactly the same every time it is played.[147] The Zappa Family Trust does not treat "Watermelon" as a musical work in the classical sense, where a work is a type, outlined in a score (the transcription?), that is instantiated through individual performances. Instead, they act like "Watermelon" is a musical work that they own, and it must be kept close by never being replicated live outside of the family. In this case, it was Dweezil, the composer's heir and bloodline, who alone is supposedly allowed to play this track. In an interview a few months prior to finally performing the piece live, Dweezil remarked that when he was ready to perform the piece he would "learn the whole thing in its entirety, note for note, because it's so perfect. You can't possibly make it any better."[148]

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songs in many different contexts, but have yet to find a source that firmly attributes this statement to either Zappa or the Zappa Family Trust; Lowe might have seen this somewhere on Zappa's website (which is managed by the Z.F.T.), but he does not provide any additional information in his book at this point, such as a weblink. This rumor has popped up multiple times over the years, such as when the band Phish refused to play "Watermelon in Easter Hay" live even when their fans voted for them to perform *Joe's Garage* in its entirety during a 1994 show; this is briefly discussed on the Phish fandom site at http://phish.net/faq/halloween, last accessed February 16, 2023. Regardless of the veracity of Lowe's statement, the fact that it circulates so readily in rock music culture speaks magnitudes about the meaningfulness of "Watermelon."

[145] A.H. Goldstein, "Dweezil Zappa on his father's music and the degree of difficulty of playing his songs live," *Westword*, December 11, 2012, http://www.westword.com/music/dweezil-zappa-on-his-fathers-music-and-the-degree-of-difficulty-of-playing-his-songs-live-5672883.

[146] See Dweezil Zappa [as TheDweezilZappa], "Dweezil Zappa— 'Watermelon in Easter Hay,'" YouTube Video, 5:10, November 8, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI7G5-BNY6k.

[147] David Nicholls defines *Joe's Garage* and other famous rock operas using this term, as they share characteristics with staged opera but are meant to be—or at least *may* be—consumed aurally; as such, the ideal performance of *Joe's Garage* takes place within the mind of the listener. See David Nicholls, "Virtual Opera, or Opera between the Ears," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129, no. 1 (2004): 100-142, with *Joe's Garage* discussed on pp. 136-40.

[148] Scott Bernstein, "Dweezil Zappa Plays 'Watermelon in Easter Hay' For First Time," *JamBase*, November 9, 2013, https://www.jambase.com/article/dweezil-zappa-plays-watermelon-in-easter-hay-for-first-time.

Although the video recording of Dweezil's performance appears to start after the piece has begun, it is clear that he is trying to play all of the elements found in the original album version. What is perhaps most interesting is that Dweezil does attempt to recreate what we assume was an extemporaneous solo of his father's; it is not a note-for-note duplication of Vai's transcription, but the younger Zappa replays many of the complicated idiosyncratic phrases that the elder improvised on the spot, and hews closer to the album version than his father himself would have played in concert.[149] Indeed, the fact that Dweezil learned the piece "note for note" means any and all accidents from 1979 are now reified and essentialized, flattening and merging the insignificant with the expressive to make all equally important.[150]

Thus, Vai's transcription of "Watermelon" is not the musical work, nor a score that prescribes the performance of it. Rather, the work is the recorded musical track and its particular spectrum of guitar "tones" that reflect and augment its soulfulness, a timbral component the transcription cannot capture. Zappa's beautifully resonant guitar sound is a crucial part of the recorded work's existence, a sonic signature that, within the ideological framework of rock guitar, most directly expresses Zappa's interiority.[151] By publishing Vai's transcription of his solo as if it were a composed-out work, Zappa augments its importance in his massive oeuvre, and allows consumers to visualize one of his most beautiful guitar melodies.[152]

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[149] Though this piece was occasionally performed live in the 1980s, only one rendition was officially released during Zappa's lifetime as part of a July 1984 concert, released on Frank Zappa, *Guitar*, Rykodisc 10079-10080, 1988, 2 CDs.

[150] Frank himself was aware of this, and in an interview explained how he preferred using live over studio guitar solos on his records for such a reason: "I try to have the event that's going on the record make musical sense and fit in with what's going on; because a record is a fixed object, it doesn't change. It's not a song anymore, it's an object. If you're playing a song on the road it can change every night. It can be something, it comes alive each time you play it, and it has its own existence. But once you've committed it to wax, it never changes. So if you're going to leave your guitar solo on, you're stuck with that for the life of the record"; see Rosen, "One Size Fits All Interview."

[151] See Drenching, "'Watermelon In Easter Hay,'" 92-95. He also comments on the recording's "narcotic effect" that is created in the studio by the immense amount of reverb added to the track, particularly the drums.

[152] It is worth noting that *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book* also includes the guitar melody to one of his other signature pieces, "Black Napkins" (292-301).

The Frank Zappa Guitar Book: Live Solos and Harmolodics

"Theme From the 3rd Movement of Sinister Footwear" and the *Joe's Garage* solos comfortably fit in the rock tradition: these were improvisations that were fully mediated in the recording studio, not only meticulously edited but also with rhythm tracks rearranged and put back together like jigsaw puzzles. The bulk of the music printed in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, however, is made up of transcriptions that Vai made of Zappa performing live with his drummer Vinnie Colaiuta released on the three albums of the *Shut Up N' Play Yer Guitar* set. Zappa might have lost some confidence in the sheer technical perfection of his guitar playing, but this set showcases Zappa's inexhaustible inventiveness as an improviser; as Watson points out, four of the albums' solos were extracted from the middle of the same song, "Inca Roads," over three days of performances, and yet they are all completely unique.[153]

Originally distributed only through mail order in 1981 and released as a triple album box set a year later, the three *Shut Up 'N Play* albums sold surprisingly well, better than Zappa's contemporaneous recordings that had been conventionally released.[154] Zappa knew he had a dedicated fanbase of guitar fetishists, and *Shut Up 'N Play* was put out to address the demand for a collection of his best guitar solos.[155] As the title makes clear, Zappa knew that some of his fans were tired of his increasingly controversial lyrics, and an instrumental album was a way to appease them (though there are snippets of *musique concrète* that serves as breaks between some tracks, which occasionally includes dialogue). At the same time, *Shut Up 'N Play* also buttressed Zappa's claim of conceptual continuity, as the guitar solos presented therein were to be

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[153] The tracks are "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar," "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More," "Return of the Son of Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar," and "Gee I Like Your Pants"; see Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 411.

[154] Zappa claims that the *Shut Up 'N Play* albums made a profit within two weeks on the market and were selling better than his recent releases *You Are What You Is* (1981) and Frank Zappa, *Tinsel Town Rebellion*, Barking Pumpkin Records PW2 37336, 1981, 2 LPs; see Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview."

[155] As discussed in Zappa, "Absolutely Frank" and more briefly in Dalton, "Shut Up And Play Your Guitar."

considered on par with his written compositions: "To me, if every one of those [solos] was written down as I played it I would be just as happy to sign my name to it as a musical composition than I would to sit down and write on a table, cause that's what I'm doing, I'm a composer, it's just that instead of a pencil I'm using a guitar."[156]

The cover art of the box set bears this connection out: the front presents Zappa holding a guitar, dressed elegantly in a scarf and fedora. Behind him sits a piano—the archetypical composer's instrument of choice—with illegible sheet music perched on top. Particularly telling, however, is the inner sleeve to the *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* LP: pages of Vai's transcriptions are juxtaposed with an overlaid copy of the beginning of the score of "The Black Page" (*Figure 4.6*).[157] The connection could not be more clear: Vai's transcriptions actualize the exact thought experiment from the Zappa interview reproduced above; through the visual complexity of notation, his guitar solos are converted into musical compositions, as if he had sat down at his composing desk and worked them out in advance. The resulting pseudo-works are to be considered as "serious" as his most difficult written compositions.

Zappa had an idiosyncratic approach to rhythm that manifested itself in both his written and improvised compositions. Specifically, he conceived of his rhythms as stemming from human speech rather than being "mathematically derived" like those created by other composers in the New Music tradition, such as Boulez.[158] In a 1977 interview, Zappa mentioned that he is basically incapable of playing basic duple and triple rhythms on his guitar, but that he can play quintuplets and septuplets all day: "the hardest thing for me to do is play straight up and down,

[156] Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview."
[157] Frank Zappa, *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar*, Barking Pumpkin Records 1111, 1981, LP. Vai's transcriptions, which had yet to be assembled into the finalized *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, were also advertised for purchase via mail order on this sleeve.
[158] See Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 311. Zappa also talks about the connection between the rhythms he uses and human speech in Dalton, "Shut Up And Play Your Guitar."



Figure 4.6: The inner sleeve to Frank Zappa, Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar *LP*

absolutely the hardest to do. Stuff that everybody else does naturally just seems as impossible as shit to me. I don't think in little groups of twos and fours and stuff—they just don't come out that way. I can sit around and play fives and sevens all day long with no sweat. But the minute I've got to go do-do-do-do, do-do-do-do it feels weird, it's like wearing tight shoes."[159] For Zappa, this separated his guitar playing from that of his contemporaries who might be able to play much more quickly than he could, but were nowhere near as rhythmically advanced.[160]

Zappa enjoyed soloing over very basic harmonies—typically two alternating chords or just a single drone tone—so that he could emphasize melodic and rhythmic dissonance on the guitar.[161] Zappa found it challenging to instruct his rhythm section exactly how to support him during solos, to stay aware of the basic pulse while leaving him space to provide contrast. Just

[159] Rosen, "One Size Fits All Interview," with further discussion in Swenson, "Frank Zappa: The Interview."
[160] See Dalton, "Shut Up And Play Your Guitar," 22. Watson provides the most substantial overview of Zappa's approach to rhythm while improvising in *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 415-18, where he cites Dalton's interviews and others.
[161] Resnicoff, "Poetic Justice," with a complementary discussion in Dalton, "Shut Up And Play Your Guitar."

keeping time was not enough, of course, as Zappa wanted an ensemble who could accurately hear what he was doing rhythmically in real time; as he complains in his autobiography, "The chances of finding a drummer, a bass player and a keyboard player who can *conceive* of those polyrhythms—let alone identify them fast enough to play a complementary figure *in the moment*, are not good. . . It's hard to explain to a rhythm section during rehearsal what to do if I'm playing seventeen in the space of fourteen."[162]

According to Zappa, the musician best suited to such rhythmic accompaniment was drummer Vinnie Colaiuta, who toured with him in 1978 and 1979.[163] Colaiuta had attended Berklee shortly before Vai did, and his audition for Zappa's band in 1978 was as demanding as any other, a "cattle call" with over a hundred drummers lined up in a massive sound stage and the average player lasting fifteen seconds before Zappa would move on to the next. Colaiuta himself lasted fifteen *minutes*, playing on Terry Bozzio's unfamiliar kit.[164] At one point, Zappa had him sightread "The Black Page," but Colaiuta had in fact already transcribed and memorized it, impressing Zappa mightily and helping him secure the gig.[165] In Colaiuta, Zappa finally found a drummer who could follow along with his polyrhythmic excursions, a fact best represented on the *Shut Up 'N Play* series, where the bulk of the live solos feature him. Zappa was so happy with Colaiuta's rhythmic accompaniment that he would go on to instruct all of his future touring bands to study the interplay on this record to understand how to improvise with him during a guitar solo; Zappa bassist Scott Thunes recounts this and adds that "one of the very first things

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[162] Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 180; emphases in original.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Colaiuta describes this in "Vinnie Colaiuta—Session Drummer (Frank Zappa, Sting, Joni Mitchell, Jeff Beck)," interview by The Sessions Panel, uploaded June 2, 2017, YouTube video, 0:44:46, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxOirev4Nqk.
[165] See Robyn Flans, "Vinnie Colaiuta," *Modern Drummer*, November 1982, 8-11, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56-58, digitized at https://www.moderndrummer.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/md37cs.pdf; this audition is covered on 10-11.

that Frank does when you join his band is he sits you down and he says 'This is how we work. I don't want you *copying* my riffs. I want you *supporting* them. I want you playing complementary motifs.'"[166]

Zappa was clearly excited at the way Vai's transcriptions showed off his musical connection with Colaiuta. Preselling *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, set to be published in a few months, he lauded Vai's *Shut Up 'N Play* transcriptions to the *Guitar Player* audience in 1982: "it gives you a kind of positive proof that ESP does exist: The guitar parts and the drum parts for some of the things are transcribed and notated together on two staves, and you can see that the drummer—in this case Vinnie Colaiuta—and myself were playing exactly the same thing in a number of places where it would have been impossible to guess what was going on."[167] Unlike the coincidental moments of rhythmic simultaneity in the *Joe's Garage* solos, these transcriptions demonstrate live, in-the-moment interactions that are presumed to be intentional, showcasing virtuosity *and* communication.

Take, for instance, the best of Zappa's four distinct solos taken in the middle of "Inca Roads," one labeled in the *Guitar Book* as "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar" but confusingly renamed as "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More" on the CD release.[168] Of the twenty solos across the three albums, this is my personal favorite: the tempo is a moderate 4/4, with the bass alternating between C-Major and D-Major chords and Zappa almost exclusively using pitches from the G-Major scale. Over about seven minutes, the bass gradually moves to A-Dorian (ii-V in the key of G), as the band establishes to a swinging 12/8 time signature; the end of the track

[166] Wictor, *In Cold Sweat*, 248; emphases in original.
[167] Zappa, "Absolutely Frank."
[168] See "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar," in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 23-43. It is not clear why the titles do not align between the transcription and recording, but I assume it is because Vai was working off of material that Zappa had yet to finalize for the commercial recording, something borne out by the fact that the end of this transcription includes vocal melodies that are part of "Inca Roads" but had been excised on the record.

features a return to the original key and meter. *Figure 4.7* exemplifies the rhythmic support Zappa valued so highly: Colaiuta plays a clearly accentuated 4/4 duple pattern underneath while Zappa articulates first- and second-level polyrhythms over the top as a form of rhythmic dissonance, first breaking two measures of 4/4 into 11 even beats, and then further subdividing these into swinging triplets. This rhythmic phrase continues into the next bar, ending with a quick flourish.



Figure 4.7: excerpt of "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar," mm. 42-45 (1:29-1:38 on the "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More" recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 27.*

The true moment of "musical ESP," though, appears a bit further into the solo. Once the bass starts exploring A-Dorian mode, Zappa and Colaiuta align in spectacular rhythmic fashion: as the excerpt begins, Zappa starts to toy around with forming his eight-note triplets into groups of two. Colaiuta, who had previously been articulating every quarter-note beat regularly, subdividing them into duple or eighth-note triplets, is able to recognize what Zappa is doing, resulting in confluence shown in *Figure 4.8*, where both drums and guitar play triplets in groups of two: Zappa articulates these through his picking accents (which Vai notates), while Colaiuta

accentuates his groups of two by alternating kick drum and snare. Zappa then adds further rhythmic complexity by sustaining some of the notes into the next group and across the bar line from measure three to four of the excerpt. In the final measure, Colaiuta returns with a resounding crash to the basic 4/4 duple pattern while the guitar's triplet figures continue, providing the clear rhythmic contrast Zappa prized so highly.

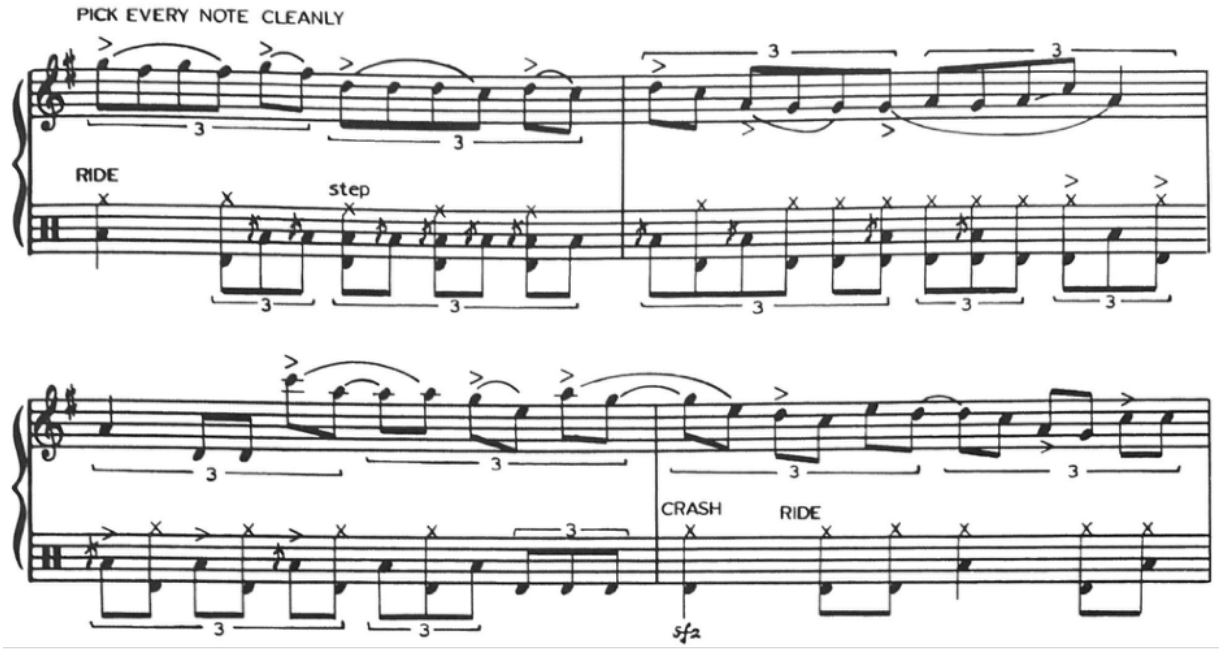


Figure 4.8: excerpt of "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar," mm. 80-83 (2:51-3:00 on the "Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More" recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 31.*

It is worth making the comparison to Schuller's transcription of Ornette Coleman in Chapter 2. Given that Coleman was interested in exploring non-hierarchical free improvisation, Schuller's decision to transcribe the saxophone line by itself seemed disappointingly retrograde. The solos on Zappa's *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* are similar to Coleman's free jazz, showcasing a group of musicians freely improvising with very little structure. (Zappa was known to enjoy listening to Coleman's jazz in the late 1950s).[169] By transcribing the drums in as much detail as

[169] See Miles, *Zappa*, 39.

the guitar line, Vai can demonstrate the real-time interaction between the two musicians as they improvise, listening to each other and reacting appropriately.[170]

"While You Were Out" is probably the most complex transcription in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*; absent any predetermined structure or chord changes, it comes closest to Coleman's free jazz.[171] Vai broadens the scope of this transcription to include another ensemble member, Warren Cuccurullo, playing a second guitar part; adding the additional part makes the transcription look even more like a score, perhaps something avant-garde for chamber trio in polymetric style. The transcription struggles with the lack of audible meter in certain spots, particularly in the very beginning; without even a steady pulse in the drums, the music floats in air with very little pulse, making it very hard, if not impossible, to capture in standard notation. According to David Ocker, who prepared the fair copy of Vai's handwritten manuscript for publication, Zappa strongly believed that "everything is in a meter," and was displeased with Vai's decision to avoid metric notation in some sections of the transcriptions, which he thought was essentially a cop out.[172] Zappa appears to have relented for some spots on the "While You Were Out" transcription, but even so, some of the meters indicated are rather ambiguous: Vai was likely doing whatever he could to accommodate Zappa's ear.

Colaiuta does define both a steady pulse and a meter later on, allowing incredible moments of synchronization inside what Zappa heard (and played) as a complex, multi-leveled metric framework. Cuccurullo's rhythm guitar is mixed low in the recording; its primary function seems to be to fill out the musical texture with full sustained chords that do not

[170] I am indebted to Watson for the idea of thinking of Zappa's music through the lens of Coleman's harmolodics in the first place; for him, Coleman "takes the idea of simultaneous musics into the method of improvisation itself," something that Zappa extends through the use of xenochrony in his guitar solos (*The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 304).
[171] "While You Were Out," in *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 44-69.
[172] Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview."

contribute to the establishment of meter. Colaiuta, on the other hand, starts to define a clear, repetitive beat thirty seconds into the improvisation, lightly touching the crash cymbal on most downbeats, articulating a bar of 5/4, followed by two bars of 3/4. With this meter established in the drums, Zappa starts to play with a rhythmic figure in measure 64 that functions as a recurring motif over the rest of the solo: a hemiola that includes a group of four, cleanly accentuated notes that are played in the span three quarter notes (see *Figure 4.9*). The effect of this is that in the bars of 3/4, Zappa sounds four audible notes over the three beats provided in the drums, and he often keeps sounding this figure in the 5/4 bars. Zappa continues to toy with this 4:3 idea over the remainder of the improvisation; after he plays this figure five times in a row, Colaiuta aurally identifies it and uses it himself immediately after Zappa's final iteration on the downbeat of measure 95. Finally, both musicians play this polyrhythm simultaneously in measure 135, after which Zappa continues to use it by himself seven times in a row, extending beyond the measures printed in *Figure 4.9*.

The Frank Zappa Guitar Book was fundamentally different from any guitar-oriented material published before its appearance in 1982. Even at that time, there were few pedagogical resources available to rock guitarists and note-for-note transcriptions were almost unheard-of outside jazz. Vai's Berklee-style education informed his understanding of what transcription is, and this pulled *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book* into the jazz tradition, with its particular relationship between notation and ontology. This might help explain the strangeness of Vai notating the guitar and drums in the *Joe's Garage* solos as if they were live improvisations even though they were assembled through xenochrony in the studio. Because Zappa considered his improvised compositions equivalent to his written ones, it was essential for Vai to notate them precisely, in enough detail, using expression marks for dynamics and articulations, that it *looked*



Figure 4.9: Combined excerpts of "While You Were Out," mm. 63-65; 93-95; 133-138 (1:41-1:46; 2:27-2:32; 3:48-3:58 on the recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 52, 55, 62.*

like one could play from his transcriptions as if from a score. In fact, *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book* is of little use to the typical rock guitarist (tablature, the most efficient way to notate *how* to play the solos, was not provided). Instead, the book's purpose seems exclusively descriptive, reifying a sonic performance as a visual score. The unique polyrhythms might be valuable to study, but considering how long some of the improvisations are, and that timestamps are not included in the transcriptions, it would be quite time consuming to correlate Vai's text with Zappa's recordings, especially if someone was listening to the original LPs, having to drop the needle by trial and error to find individual passages (though anyone serious enough about Zappa to buy this book in the first place might dub the solos onto cassette tape so they could be rewound and played over easily, as Vai himself did). I would argue that this book is, as my opening epigraph implies, a species of *Augenmusik*, a piece of music-themed visual art that represents Zappa's supposed compositional "genius" through the complexity of his notation. Like "The Black Page," which "posits unplayability as an aesthetic strength," the "aesthetic of impossibility" found in these transcriptions "suggests that any intended meaning is to be considered beyond the aural experience."[173]

Indeed, there are ways in which Vai's notation might have been made *overly* complex just to serve such a purpose; Ocker, the copyist, suggests as much. It is worth quoting him at length:

> The transcriptions were a lot more complicated than they needed to be—especially if they were intended to be used for anyone to play from. Often I would find places where Steve's notation could be reduced to something simpler, but Frank would always resolve the differences in favor of the most complicated notation. In Steve's preface to the book he says "on a few licks, where there are several ways to write them, I chose the way which accents the phrasing." Ultimately I never really believed that—no matter how precise the transcriptions got, a performer still has to add his own phrasing to a

[173] See Marlow-Stevens, "'What is Music? Anything Can Be Music,'" 48, where he cites Andrew Durkin, *Decomposition* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2014), 228.

> performance or listen to the tape of the original performance to get the little nuances that didn't get (or couldn't be) written down.[174]

Ocker continues with an example of a polyrhythm that appears much more complicated on paper than it would be in (re)performance, the rhythmic figure from "Pink Napkins" shown in *Figure 4.10*. The improvisation is notated in 6/8, and Zappa plays a recurring pattern that encompasses 25 sixteenth-notes over two measures, resulting in what is perhaps the most complex polyrhythm in the entire book, a 25:24 figure. However, as Ocker points out, it is unlikely that Zappa actually *intended* to play this exact figure: he might have been approaching this (and others from the album) as a "sort of live xenochrony" where he played in a slightly different tempo than the band.[175] In this case, it is not difficult to "unpack" the polyrhythm: each cascading group of notes corresponds to an eighth note beat, as Vai clearly notates; if Zappa plays each of these beats rushing just *a little bit* ahead of tempo he will gain an extra half-beat (the 25th sixteenth-note) by the downbeat of measure 59. One can imagine other ways that this effect could be notated more simply, such as indicating a slight accelerando over the two measures, returning to the original tempo on the downbeat.



Figure 4.10: excerpt of "Pink Napkins," mm. 57-58 (3:13-3:19 on the recording), in The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 157.*

[174] Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview."
[175] Ibid.

Ocker continues by speculating on why Zappa chose to keep the transcriptions so unnecessarily complex:

> there's the "feeding Frank's ego" answer, there's the "weeding out the weak players" answer, there's the "lack of formal training" answer (both for Frank and Steve—please note: I do NOT think either of them were hampered by not studying these things in college—probably they were liberated by not having to reconcile some professorial attitudes), there's the "Frank never had to learn it off the page so it didn't matter" answer, there's the "Steve was trying to notate the un-notatable" answer, and, finally, there's the "there really is a difference but I just can't hear it but Frank and Steve could" answer.[176]

I am most persuaded by the first possibility Ocker offers up, in which Zappa was using Vai's transcriptions to legitimize his guitar playing as worthy of serious study. But all these scenarios are plausible: some of what Zappa played is likely within the realm of the "un-notatable," especially when there is not a steady pulse in the rhythmic section. Further, based on the eyewitness accounts, Zappa clearly had a deep intuitive musical knowledge and was capable of recognizing—and at times performing—complex polyrhythms, a topic to which he devoted an entire *Guitar Player* article in 1983.[177]

In Conclusion: Notation as Bondage

Considering the notational complexity of Zappa's written music, numerous writers have made comparisons between it and the music of the New Complexity, a term used to categorize a strand of art music in the 1980s and '90s that had scores that were notationally "complex" and "meticulously written," creating a difficulty of performance that is a main aesthetic characteristic of the music—but it was not meant to be *impossible* to play.[178] Watson, for instance, makes this comparison when talking about Vai's transcriptions of Zappa's guitar playing: "when frozen on

[176] Ibid.
[177] Frank Zappa, "Non-Foods: Coming to Grips With Polyrhythms," *Guitar Player*, April 1983, 101, digitized at https://www.afka.net/Articles/1983-04_Guitar_Player.htm.
[178] Richard Toop, "Four Facets of The New Complexity," *Contact* 32 (1988): 4-50; quote on 5.

the page, his music looks like something out of the new complexity."[179] Marlow-Stevens further draws out this comparison, pointing out that New Complexity composers were concerned both with extending the limits of what was possible in notated compositions and with exploring the limitations of the medium; Zappa certainly did the same on the page, but his use of xenochrony in recording also pushed the boundaries of "live performance and the normative musical experience."[180]

But the comparison between Zappa and New Complexity composers, easy (and flattering to Zappa) though it may be, may be misleading. Brian Ferneyhough, the standard-bearer for the New Complexity, clearly works in the Western art music tradition: he transmits abstract musical ideas using music notation which then must be realized in sound by musical performers. Ferneyhough's stature as a modernist composer defines his reception and legacy, and the extreme notational complexity of his scores groups him with first-wave modernists like Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky (purveyors of the "old" complexity), both of whom often expressed their disdain for performers who would not take the trouble to read their carefully notated scores correctly.[181] This certainly sounds like Zappa, as both he and Ferneyhough employ notation within a classical music ontological frame to exploit their performers who must dedicate their time and bodies to realize their music properly.

That said, Lois Fitch has demonstrated how nuanced Ferneyhough's role as a modernist composer is: at times the composer *does* ask the performer to adhere to the notated music as closely as possible, but Ferneyhough's works are also fundamentally "open," giving significant

[179] Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 415.
[180] Marlow-Stevens, "'What is Music? Anything Can Be Music,'" 48.
[181] Lois Fitch, *Brian Ferneyhough* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), esp. 34 and 54.

freedom of choice to performers.[182] For Fitch, *Unity Capsule* (1975-76) for solo flute exemplifies the open nature of Ferneyhough's compositions and indicates his interest in exploring the boundaries of human performance; here, the performer creates the musical work by struggling through the incredibly dense notation and by attempting to play the piece as accurately as possible. Through a performer, Ferneyhough can explore the point at which his music becomes impossible to perform. His music is never *truly* impossible—no notes in *Unity Capsule* exist outside the range of the flute—and yet the boundary of impossibility depends on multiple variables that differ for each flutist and performance. Indeed, because these boundaries are not marked and bounded by the score itself, Ferneyhough's notation always has a degree of indeterminacy to it.[183]

Zappa was similarly interested in exploring the boundaries of the possible in musical performance, often working with specific musicians to locate them. Miles describes how Zappa worked with the viola soloist for the 1975 UCLA Royce Hall performance, rewriting the solo to be more and more difficult for the performer until she said "enough," at which point the part was deemed finalized.[184] Though skirting the impossible was a key part of Zappa's compositional process, he still expected what he wrote in his scores to be performed verbatim; Ferneyhough, on the other hand, is interested in the indeterminacy that dense notation provides. Ferneyhough never pursued electronic composition, with its unique ontology, in any systematic way, suggesting that "the work" in which he was interested depended on the variable limits of human performance.

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[182] See especially Fitch's discussion of the difference between "fidelity" and "exactitude" in performers reading his notation in *Brian Ferneyhough,* 35-53.
[183] *Unity Capsule* is discussed throughout "Chapter 3: The Solo Works: 'Black Scherzo,'" in ibid., 65-100, and also on 44-47.
[184] See Miles, *Zappa*, 248-49; a recording of these performances was first officially released as *Orchestral Favorites*, Discreet 2294, 1979, LP.

It was Zappa who turned to technology, specifically the Synclavier, which he used to realize his increasingly-complex notation with effortless precision and escape what he began to dread as the "human element."[185] Zappa has more in common with a serialist like Milton Babbitt, who labored with the earliest, most cumbersome synthesizers in an attempt to gain total control over his music's realization, as showcased in his 1961 *Composition for Synthesizer*. Vai's transcriptions occasionally served as the basis for electronic works: the elaborate solo in "While You Were Out" analyzed above was re-orchestrated and programmed into Zappa's Synclavier, then recorded and released as "While You Were Art II" on *Jazz From Hell*, an altered title that Watson notes is "a nod to a high-art context," as "the expressive line of the original guitar solo becomes an absent center, resulting in a delicate, sparse world of glancing notes that are reminiscent of Webern."[186]

One might assume that once Zappa could get his Synclavier to perform anything he programmed, he would never again rely on human beings to help him realize his music. (After all, he had paid close to a quarter-million dollars for it!) Interestingly, this turned out not to be the case. Yes, Zappa used the Synclavier to avoid having to pay musicians to play his music that was otherwise too "impossible" or "boring," but he loved group improvisation, in which other humans are a necessary part.[187] Outside of the arduous process of programming it, the Synclavier

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[185] Zappa pejoratively refers to the "human element" when talking about the London Symphony Orchestra in Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 155. Outside of Zappa's autobiography, my favorite discussion of Zappa's turn to digital technology is found in Ben Watson, "Chapter 11: Synclavier and Total Control," *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play,* 457-72.

[186] Frank Zappa, *Jazz From Hell*, Barking Pumpkin Records 74205, 1986, LP. Quote from Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 470-71. Watson does not note that "Art" also refers to Art Jarvinen, who led an ensemble that was originally going to perform this piece in a live concert; unfortunately, due to time and budget constraints, they would end up mimicking it live to a recording—which apparently no one in the concert hall noticed except Ocker and Vai, the latter of whom was deeply disappointed (discussed at length in Ocker, The David Ocker Internet Interview").

[187] As discussed in Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 172-73. A good example of this interplay between human and machine is found on the *Jazz From Hell* album, which includes a single guitar solo, "St. Etienne," sandwiched between Synclavier works.

provided Zappa with no musical or libidinal tension; as I have argued throughout, Zappa can be diagnosed as a musical sadist who gained satisfaction from seeing musicians struggle to play his music correctly; if (or when) they were unable to do so, they were publicly humiliated. Many of Zappa's Synclavier works had performance scores created after-the-fact, since the Synclavier did not have the ability to translate its data structures into music notation on its own.[188] Zappa even attempted to get his 1988 touring band to perform some of his Synclavier pieces, including an unreleased composition "Forty-Four," a title that "came from the impossible-to-play rhythmic figure in the opening bar: 44 notes spaced evenly across the bar"; the band could not play it, and so Zappa stopped them after fifteen seconds and shelved the idea permanently.[189] The fact that Zappa even attempted to get these pieces performed live suggests that he was interested in presenting to audiences a spectacle of virtuosity that could only be created by humans in a live setting.

As a transcriber and performer, Vai exemplified this spectacular virtuosity, and it is telling that the most difficult piece he ever had to transcribe, "The Jazz Discharge Party Hats" from 1983's *The Man From Utopia,* was claimed by Zappa as one of the best pieces he'd ever done.[190] This is quite a statement considering the gross misogyny of the lyrics, which, like so many others in across Zappa's oeuvre, mock and belittle female groupies in offensively scatological detail. The narrative concerns some band members ("who shall go nameless because their girlfriends might find out") trying to sleep with a group of women from the local college. Once they shed their clothes to skinny dip in the hotel pool, a couple of the men picked up their

[188] Detailed in Ocker, "The David Ocker Internet Interview." This brings up comparisons between Zappa and other composers such as Conlon Nancarrow and Karlheinz Stockhausen who wrote music that was not originally designed for human performance (the player piano and computer, respectively) but then had to be transcribed, either by the composer or other individuals, to create scores for live performance.
[189] Recounted by members of the ensemble in Greenaway, *Zappa The Hard Way*, 22.
[190] See Miles, *Zappa*, 382; Vai claims this was the most difficult transcription he did for Zappa in Milkowski, "Steve Vai."

discarded underwear and wore them on their heads—hence, the "party hats" (I will avoid covering the "discharge" part, but one can be assured that Zappa wastes no detail in doing so himself).

In an exculpatory analysis of these lyrics, Lowe claims that "Zappa is, as always, far more critical of the guys in the band than he is of the girls," and that he is merely describing "one of the central hypocrisies of the groupie scene: Many men get a tremendous amount of power by using, abusing, and putting down groupies, yet, as Zappa repeatedly points out, men will go to desperate and hilarious lengths to be with these girls."[191] Zappa no doubt takes a certain glee in recounting the ridiculous sexual exploits of his band members, but Lowe hastily glosses over the basic misogyny of Zappa's story: the women are brutally objectified ("One of 'em thought she was a beauty queen / The other one was a walking blowjob / And then there was a skinny girl") and hysterically positioned as diseased and abject (the track goes into nauseating detail about the eponymous vaginal "discharge"). Their only function in the song's narrative is as dirty sex objects who still would not relent to constant sexual pressure from the men.

These lyrics were pre-written and sung by Zappa in a *Sprechstimme* manner in the middle of a live performance of "The Torture Never Stops" in 1980.[192] Zappa then requested Vai to transcribe this vocal performance, and, as with the "Theme from the 3rd Movement of Sinister Footwear," Zappa had Vai play from his transcription in the studio. This time Vai doubled Zappa's improvised vocal melody on acoustic guitar, "scoring every word, every laugh, every er, ah, and um that Frank uttered," thus creating the "jazz" accompaniment heard on the finalized recording.[193] The fact that one of Zappa's most disgusting songs is combined with Vai's most

[191] Lowe, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, 183.
[192] See ibid.
[193] Ibid.

labor-intensive transcription is certainly worth attention; Watson also notes the connection between low and high art in this piece, writing that "In the airbrushed, homogenized world of chart music [scores], any old rubbish suddenly looks like the most intricate, faceted art on display."[194] Although this score was not available as an official part of *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, Vai included an excerpt of it in his written introduction, and it was available to purchase (presumably by consenting adults) by mail order.[195] In case the consumer wanted more doubled *Sprechstimme* gross-outs, *The Man From Utopia* also includes "The Dangerous Kitchen," in which Zappa describes in great detail the horrors of a dirty kitchen, which Vai again transcribes and doubles on guitar. As with "The Jazz Discharge Party Hats," the process of transcribing Zappa's voice on this track is immensely challenging, and yet Zappa still had the audacity to complain that Vai's transcription was only 99% accurate—this even though Vai's notation was so detailed that it had him scraping his strings to perfectly match Zappa's recorded laugh.[196]

The importance Zappa places on a track like "The Jazz Discharge Hats" clearly illustrates his deep connection to musical modernism; Kevin Courrier even compares this track directly to James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, which he notes also "made an art out of panty fetishism . . . The only reason Zappa's work is condemned as filth while Joyce's is lauded as art is that Zappa focuses his obsession in American vernacular rather than lyrical prose."[197] The protagonist Courrier is referring to in *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, is for all intents and purposes a masochist, though, and Zappa here occupies the other side of the (heteronormative) power dynamic, the

[194] Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, 402.
[195] Steve Vai, "Introduction," *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, 4. A longer excerpt of the official score is provided in Kaspar Sloots, "The Man From Utopia: Recitatives," in *Frank Zappa's Musical Language: A Study of the Music of Frank Zappa,* 5th ed. (Utrecht: Kasper Sloots, 2020), which is provided on his website at https://www.zappa-analysis.com/the-man-from-utopia.htm.
[196] See Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote*, 315-16.
[197] Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen*, 376.

sadist.[198] It is meaningful that "Jazz Discharge" comes from the middle of a performance called "The Torture Never Stops," a song that directly continues the simulated sex scenes that sent Zappa to jail decades ago, though this sex leans heavily into sadomasochism: Zappa describes a torturous "dungeon of despair" with its "tools of pain" while women simultaneously express pain and pleasure through their moans.[199]

Zappa's spectacular perversity and sadism, then, connects the way he treats imaginary female groupies, his musicians, and notation itself. Complex notation certainly helped him accrue cultural capital as a rock artist, but it also functions as a kind of fetish wear for his musicians to put on (like party hats). It is not surprising that Zappa did not fully commit to the Synclavier, as this notational power dynamic only worked with humans who (a) were willing to go to absurd lengths to please him and (b) could feel pain and humiliation. This is especially true of Steve Vai, arguably the most dedicated musician with whom Zappa ever worked. Vai could even be seen as Zappa's most successful groupie: their relationship was non-sexual, but it was by fully submitting to his music and enduring a punishing audition that Vai secured a place in Zappa's heart—and a spot in Zappa's band. Vai credits his post-Zappa musical success to the time he spent in bondage to Zappa as a transcriptionist: "Through all the transcribing, it's made it possible for me to hear things and visualize them on my instrument better and see them on paper better. Now I can look at a piece of music and pretty much have an idea of what it's going to sound like, just by looking at it. Or if I get an idea for a melody line. I can instantly commit it to

[198] For a further discussion of this see Christine E. Coffman, "'The Missus is Master:' Fetishism and Masochism in *Ulysses*," *Literature and Psychology* 48, no. 3 (2002): 56-76.
[199] Zappa referred to S&M in other songs, such as "St. Alfonzo's Pancake Breakfast" (on *Apostrophe (')*), but it is "Penguin in Bondage" (from *Roxy and Elsewhere*) that comes to mind as yet another example of female objectification; further discussion of this track's lyrics is provided in Lowe, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, 114-15.

paper, just like I'm writing a letter to somebody. It's not a hard thing to do. It's just a question of sitting down and doing it and being disciplined about it. I learned that much from Frank."[200]

[200] See Milkowski, "Steve Vai."

Conclusion: Transcribing Recordings Note for Note in the 1980s

Driven by Frank Zappa's fetish for notation, *The Frank Zappa Guitar Book*, first published in 1982, was exceptional, given that except in the jazz tradition, note-for-note transcriptions of recordings were actually quite rare in the Rock Era. These Zappa transcriptions foreshadowed a flood of note-for-note transcriptions of rock recordings to come. In this conclusion, I will wrap up the rock narrative that has formed the bulk of this dissertation by arguing that the process of rock canonization reaches its zenith in this decade, with the accumulation of fully notated scores for rock music that serve no practical purpose for performance. Instead, these scores function as ersatz "critical editions" for (and by) the academics who started studying high-status popular musics in the 1980s and '90s.

To recap: though ontologically distinct from other types of popular and classical music, rock music in the 1960s and '70s was first transcribed into sparse lead sheets comprising little more than a song's melody and lyrics, neither of which was expected to stand in for the ontologically "thick" rock recording. Such *illocutionary* transcription secured copyright, allowing intellectual property to be consolidated and exploited in a capitalist system. Though publishers were happy to sell collections of these copyright-registering transcriptions to consumers for an easy buck, the books provided almost no information for those who wanted to perform the music as it sounded on record. This lack encouraged the creation of *pedagogical* transcriptions in the 1970s that were intended to teach rock instrumentalists, particularly guitarists, the musical language of famous styles and performers; many were published in trade magazines like *Guitar Player*. Toward the end of the decade, the parts of a recorded performance that could not be protected via copyright, notably the improvised solos, started to be transcribed directly from a record.

Aided by the culture surrounding neoclassical heavy metal music, guitar-centric recordings released in the 1980s were often accompanied by books of note-for-note transcriptions, in which entire guitar parts for each track were notated from start to finish.[1] Older rock recordings, many of which I covered in Chapter 3, were also given this transcriptional treatment, resulting in the print publication of *Jimi Hendrix's Are You Experienced?* (1989), *The Beatles: Complete Scores* (1989), and *The Complete Robert Johnson* (1991).[2] The hodgepodge of notational systems used for transcribing guitar music that I covered in Chapter 3 was standardized for commercial publications, with three overlapping notational systems commonly used: standard musical notation, guitar tablature, and chord symbols, the last indicated by letters and, occasionally, diagrams.

Why did it take until the second half of the 1980s for transcriptions of rock recordings to become commonplace, even when much of the music being transcribed had been released two decades earlier? One reason might be the explosion of interest in classical music among heavy metal musicians and their dedicated fanbase. A new emphasis was placed on the knowledge of complex notational systems and advanced music theory; extended instrumental techniques were also introduced by virtuoso guitarists like Eddie Van Halen. Precise transcriptions were a way to teach new techniques like two-hand tapping to an emerging cohort of dedicated (and literate) guitarists. Trade magazines, most successfully *Guitar Player* and *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* (the latter first published in 1982) were the main repositories for this new knowledge, publishing myriad note-for-note transcriptions and lengthy columns on music theory. Standalone

[1] I mentioned one example of this in Chapter 3: Joe Satriani's second studio album, *Surfing With the Alien*, was released in 1987 and had guitar transcriptions published in the following year as *Joe Satriani: Surfing with the Alien*, transcribed Jesse Gross (New York, NY: Cherry Lane Music, 1988).
[2] As *The Jimi Hendrix Experience: Are You Experienced?* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989); *The Beatles: Complete Scores* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1989); and Woody Mann, *The Complete Robert Johnson* (New York, NY: Oak Publications, 1991).

transcriptions, some of which originated in these magazines, were published and distributed at the end of the decade by Hal Leonard, and it is important to highlight this one publishing giant's contribution to the standardization and popularization of rock transcription; transcriber and *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* editor Andy Aledort was a particularly crucial link in this chain.

Robert Walser's *Running with the Devil* provides an especially useful account from just after the period, tracing the close connections between "neo-classical" heavy metal and actual classical music; but Walser does not address why so much countercultural rock music from the 1960s was also being freshly transcribed in the 1980s.[3] I suggest that such music serves as what psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas terms a "generational object"; many participating in the canonic networks around '80s heavy metal were impressionable adolescents when the music of Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles, for instance, was originally released.[4] Mitchell Morris has applied Bollas' theory to pop music revivals and I use his thoughts to think about the ways in which some pop music from the 1960s was faithfully transcribed and published in the 1980s as a form of canon making.[5] During this period, many of these transcriptions were explicitly labeled as "authoritative": the artists, now past the peak of their careers (or, in many cases, dead), now had their most celebrated recordings perfectly reified and anthologized for posterity.

Most of these recordings, such as Hendrix's *Are You Experienced*, were transcribed into self-contained parts for individual rock instruments (lead guitar, rhythm guitar, and bass, with drums often sketched out and other parts added where necessary), theoretically allowing for

[3] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014 [1993]).
[4] See Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1992), 255-61.
[5] See the introduction to Mitchell Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment: Display and Feeling in Popular Music of the 1970s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2013), esp. 6-11.

actual ensemble performance from notation. Here, *The Beatles: Complete Scores* is an interesting exception, with every commercially released recording by the Beatles transcribed into an actual *Partitur,* or conductor's score. This is, in a sense, the logical end of the rock narrative, one in which the Beatles' recordings are finally reified in music notation that has little to no practical function other than canonization. After all, without individually extracted parts for each instrument (which were never made) these "complete scores" could be of no use to performers.

Before continuing with rock in the 1980s, let me briefly sketch out the stories of jazz and folk music transcriptions from earlier chapters. In Chapter 3, I explored the importance of pedagogical transcriptions in the folk music tradition, where professional guitar teachers used notation to reify instruction from the original culture bearers. Originally, such instruction was distributed in print, either via individual publications or through periodicals like *Guitar Player*. This process of teaching guitar through print was already highly mediated, with figures like Happy Traum and Stefan Grossman including photographs of hand positions and techniques in their pedagogical transcriptions. However, with the development of videotape in the 1970s, folk guitar lessons were able to be distributed directly to the consumer by VHS (and later DVD, Blu-ray, and streaming). If pedagogical transcriptions were meant to replace in-person instruction, lessons on video would be even more effective than print alone, especially as many instructional videos are meant to be supplemented by music and tablature books.[6] It goes without saying that the internet made such instruction even more accessible, as many instructional videos can now be perused freely on platforms like YouTube. (Indeed, transcription as I have traced it is historically bounded by the internet for these reasons.)

[6] See, for instance, *Easy Bluegrass and Country Guitar, Taught by Happy Traum*, which was released on VHS in 2000 and DVD in 2004, and came accompanied with a music and tab book published by Hal Leonard.

We have seen how transcribers in the rock era had to make numerous decisions about what exactly the object was that they were trying to capture in their notation. Influenced by the written tradition of Tin Pan Alley songwriting, rock music was often treated as a repertoire of songs, i.e., vocal melodies with lyrics over a certain harmonic progression were in essence, "the work," as if recordings merely presented one performance of this work. This ontology aligned well with copyright laws at the time, which did not account for the important ways in which technology mediated records, especially the important placed on timbre.

This song-ontology did not effectively account for improvised solos, to which rock transcribers did not pay much attention until the 1980s. As I discussed in Chapter 2, though, jazz transcribers have been concerned with notating improvisation throughout the twentieth century, and this is really the only genre that relied on note-for-note transcriptions in the period. Even so, jazz transcriptions became *further* aligned with recordings in this decade, as seen through the publication of jazz lead sheets. The most famous fake book, *The Real Book,* was put together in the 1970s without publishers' permissions and black market editions proliferated in the 1980s; Hal Leonard begun securing the rights to the tunes included in the original *Real Book* in 2003 and published the most recent sixth edition in 2004.[7] Before the 1980s, lead sheets were often compiled from original manuscripts written in earlier decades; *The Real Book* though, exemplifies the shift in jazz culture across the Rock Era: now, even jazz records are the primary texts, and the lead sheets found in *The Real Book* are not taken from old copyright manuscripts but instead painstakingly *transcribed from specific performances found on canonized recordings,*

[7] As *The Real Book: Sixth Edition* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2004). For more background on this publication and its genesis see Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham: MD, Scarecrow Press, 2006), 129-39, and Hal Leonard's website for the publication, *The Official Real Book*, last accessed July 6, 2023, https://officialrealbook.com/history/.

resulting in chord progressions and melodies that reflect actual ("real") performances of jazz or standard material.[8]

Heavy Metal Meets Classical Music

Guitarist Steve Vai, one of the subjects of the previous chapter, is a key link between rock music of the late 1970s and the American heavy metal scene of the 1980s, which Walser described in 1993 as "the most important and influential" musical genre of the previous decade.[9] Vai left Zappa's band in 1982, and the solo career he is best known for would not take off until his breakout album, *Passion and Warfare,* released in 1990. In the interim, Vai toured with heavy metal stars such as Alcatrazz, David Lee Roth, and Whitesnake; he also continued to work as a transcriptionist. For Walser, one of the main characteristics of heavy metal in this decade is the way it borrowed classical music values; it is thus not surprising that Vai found commercial success in metal, having just completed an intense apprenticeship with Zappa that had introduced him to the many ways in which art music aesthetics could be successfully deployed in a rock context.

Walser opens his book with a fascinating comparison between the rehearsal spaces of heavy metal in the 1980s and those of a classical conservatory from a hundred years earlier: in both settings, there would be young adults and teenagers spending hours in complete seclusion practicing scales and performing musical works; they would also take lessons on their instruments of choice and in music theory (xix-xx). But the primary circulation between these

[8] Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books*, 129-34; as he writes, the name of this book stems from the fact that melodies and chord symbols were notated in such a way that they "represented what professional jazz musicians would *really* play, in contrast to the simplified chord progressions typically given on sheet music and reproduced in pop-song fake books" (129; emphasis in original).
[9] Walser, *Running with the Devil*, xx.

traditions, he argues, is cultural prestige: "instrumental virtuosity, theoretical self-consciousness, and studious devotion to the works of the classical canon means that their work could be valorized in the more 'legitimate' terms of classical excellence" (59).[10] Metal musicians—like Zappa—claimed classical composers as direct influences and borrowed values from classical music to climb the social ladder.

Walser profiles some of the era's preeminent guitar virtuosos, such as Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, and Yngwie Malmsteen, all of whom studied or played classical music in their youth. Rhoads was particularly important for his use of musical notation in practicing, performing, and teaching other guitarists (84). As in Vai's studio work for Zappa, Rhoads became a master of double-tracking, which required him to play the same exact "solo" more than once; thus a solo became less improvisatory expression and more a chance to show compositional and technical knowledge rooted in classical music (84). Walser employs transcriptions of guitar solos to show connections to (notated) classical music, particularly of the Baroque. Because he was writing his book in the early 1990s, though, Walser could rely on the transcriptions made by others that were printed in guitar magazines, such as Wolf Marshall's transcription of Rhoads's guitar solo in Ozzie Osbourne's "Mr. Crowley," published in *Guitar for the Practicing Musician.*[11]

Music tablature was also used to teach guitarists extended instrumental techniques, such as two-hand tapping. Walser notes how Edward Van Halen "revolutionized metal guitar technique" with the release of the first Van Halen album in 1978, noting specifically Van Halen's furious solo "Eruption" (11).[12] This showpiece turns the electric guitar into a virtuoso

[10] As Walser points out, though, the blues is perhaps an even more important line of inheritance for heavy metal, but the influence of this tradition is frequently and problematically occluded by artists in favor of that of classical music (57-58).
[11] Walser discusses this transcription (79-80) and prints it on pp. 82-83, but he does not include a dated reference; according to my research, it appears in the April 1986 issue of *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, beginning on p. 37.
[12] See Van Halen, *Van* Halen, Warner Bros. Records Inc., BSK 3075, 1978, LP.

instrument on par with Nicolo Paganini's violin; Van Halen even quotes a Kreutzer violin étude in his solo, transforming a pedagogical transcription from the beginning of the nineteenth century into a recorded musical work.[13] Though he was not the first guitarist to use two-hand tapping, Van Halen showed how this technique was not "merely a fad or gimmick but a genuine expansion of the instrument's capabilities, the most important technical innovation since Jimi Hendrix"; indeed, this fundamentally contrapuntal method of playing the guitar "directs musical interest toward harmony, the succession of chords through time," much like common-practice tonality in the music of Antonio Vivaldi and J.S. Bach.[14]

Two-hand tapping was originally a foreign technique for guitarists in the blues-rock tradition, and as it gained popularity examples had to be transcribed to be adequately explained and taught. Guitar magazines quickly started using tablature to teach tapping over the 1980s, with *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* including a recurring monthly column on it in 1988 (though it was a subject the magazine covered in earlier years as well).[15] And to capture this painstaking technique, alongside all the other displays of guitar virtuosity used on "Eruption," who better for the job than Steve Vai, fresh off of his stint as Zappa's transcriptionist?

Vai had, in fact, been hired by *Guitar Player* magazine in July 1984 as a regular contributor to supply the magazine with "note-for-note" transcriptions.[16] In this same issue, Vai transcribed the entirety of "Eruption," explaining in prose some of the idiosyncratic tablature

[13] Walser notes the use of this étude in *Running with the Devil*, 69.
[14] Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 70 and 74, respectively. Zappa, for instance, used his guitar pick to tap on the fretboard during his "Inca Roads" solo in the mid-1970s, but guitarists like Harvey Mandel from Canned Heat were known to have been using this technique in the late 1960s (Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore discusses this in Mordechai Kleidermacher, "When There's Smoke…There's Fire!," *Guitar World*, February 1991). It is worth noting that Emmett Chapman designed an instrument played exclusively with two hands "tapping" on the fretboard with his Chapman Stick in the early 1970s, but he had already been exploring the technique on the guitar in the late 1960s.
[15] See Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 70. For an earlier example of this technique being taught in this magazine, see Andy Aledort's lesson, "Guitar in the '80s," *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, September 1985, 24-25.
[16] See J.C., "From the Publisher," *Guitar Player*, July 1984, 4.

symbols he uses to teach readers to perform it themselves.[17] Though Vai's transcription does include standard musical notation, tablature is necessary to capture all the nuances of how Van Halen's right hand tapped antiphonically on the same string that the left hand was fretting, extending the hammer pull-off technique most guitarists were already comfortable doing. After Zappa's immensely complicated polyrhythms, "Eruption" must have seemed quite easy to transcribe, since, like much virtuoso guitar shredding of the 1980s, Van Halen emphasized regularity and speed over complex irregular rhythmic subdivision of the beat.

Walser does not use Vai's transcription to discuss "Eruption" in his book, instead printing one created by Andy Aledort. Walser does not provide the publication he took the transcription from, but Aledort was the music editor for *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* in the mid-1980s, and I think it likely to be taken from one those issues. This implies that Vai and Aledort were the main contributors in this space, creating note-for-note transcriptions for competing magazines. A comparison between both of their respective "Eruption" transcriptions is outside the scope of this dissertation, but I will point out that the level of accuracy among numerous "Eruption" transcriptions remains a topic debated at length in online forums, suggesting just how much emphasis has been placed on transcriptional fidelity since the 1980s.[18]

[17] See Steve Vai, "Van Halen's 'Eruption,'" *Guitar Player*, July 1984, 62-66.
[18] Rich discussions on this topic can be found on various online forums, such as the "How Did You Learn Eruption?" thread on *VHlinks*, last accessed August 4, 2023, https://www.vhlinks.com/vbforums/threads/65952-How-did-you-learn-Eruption, and "Van-Halen-Eruption (I want to learn it)" on *Harmony Central*, last accessed August 4, 2023, https://www.harmonycentral.com/forums/topic/1714126-van-halen-eruption-i-want-to-learn-it/. Vai, for his part, makes it clear that to him all transcriptions are mediated by the transcriber and that there will always be differences between them, as "the art [of transcription] is a *relative* one" (Vai, "Van Halen's 'Eruption,'" 62; emphasis in original).

Transcribing Hendrix, One More Time

Guitar Player (GP) and *Guitar for the Practicing Musician (GfPM)* both reflect trends in heavy metal music in the 1980s that Walser highlights in his study. Early issues of *GP* were typically fewer than 60 pages long and rarely included detailed transcriptions from record. A scan through issues published in 1984 shows just how much had changed since the magazine's inception: issues are *much* longer, regularly reaching 140 pages or more; and though numerous musical genres are still represented in each issue, rock and heavy metal in particular are at the center. The influence of music theory and classical music on heavy metal is also particularly apparent.[19] Notation is frequently a topic of discussion, used uniformly in transcriptions, with standard musical notation printed above guitar tablature and chord symbols or diagrams provided above that; only jazz transcriptions consistently avoid tablature.[20] Detailed note-for-note transcriptions now proliferate alongside analysis and performance instructions, giving the guitar player all of the tools they need to understand and re-perform a given solo.[21]

GfPM, in contrast to *GP,* was even more stuffed with discussions of technique and note-for-note transcriptions. Though I have not read anything that discusses his contributions, Aledort's position as music editor of this magazine in the middle of the 1980s was no doubt deeply important for solidifying the commercial potential for stand-alone publications of detailed transcriptions that would be released at the end of the decade. *GfPM* was, in fact, the best-selling popular music publication at newsstands in 1992.[22]

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[19] See, for instance, a lengthy article on Malmsteen's guitar playing: Jas Obrecht, "Yngwie Malmsteen," *Guitar Player*, March 1984, 21-33.
[20] For an example of jazz see Lenny Breau, "Fingerstyle Jazz: Chordal Organization," *Guitar Player*, April 1984, 93. Notation is discussed in an article on arranging piano music for the guitar, "Bob Davoli, "Stride Guitar," *Guitar Player*, January 1984, 54-65.
[21] The written analysis and note-for-note transcription of Angus Young's guitar solo at the end of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long" is typical: Jas Obrecht, "Angus Young Solo: 'You Shook Me All Night Long,'" transcribed Wolf Marshall, *Guitar Player*, February 1984, 80.
[22] "Guitar for the Practicing Musician Tops Newsstand Sales," *Music Trades* 139, no. 12 (January 1992): 60.

As far as can be told, it was in *GfPM* that the first note-for-note transcription of the entirety of Hendrix's guitar part in "Purple Haze" was published, transcribed by Aledort himself.[23] We will recall from Chapter 3 the various lead-sheet versions of "Purple Haze" published in the 1970s as a lead sheet that provided only (often inaccurate) lyrics, vocal melodies, and background harmonies.[24] Richard Daniel's *Jimi Hendrix Note for Note* from 1980 reverses the ontology of earlier lead sheet publications, shifting to teaching the song's guitar solo and introduction to guitarists, with nothing else transcribed beyond these areas, and that only notated in an idiosyncratic tablature system.[25] It was Aledort's transcription in *GfPM* in 1985 that influentially merged the two approaches, standardizing the process of transcribing a recorded track from beginning to end, including the vocal melody, lyrics, and harmonic symbols, and using both standard notation and tablature for the guitar line. Unlike many of the *GP* transcriptions from previous decades, it is clearly spelled out that what is being transcribed is the recorded track from the original album *Are You Experienced*. Aledort transcribes exactly what is heard on the record, including overdubs and "unintentional" notes, such as the open string struck by mistake, shown at the end of the excerpt provided in *Figure 5.1*. Along with the transcription, Aledort provides specific performing directions and equipment suggestions for the guitarist to most effectively approximate Hendrix's recorded sound.[26]

When *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* published Aledort's "Purple Haze" transcription it was filling an economic demand for note-for-note transcriptions; it was likely the

[23] See "Purple Haze," transcribed Andy Aledort, *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, September 1985, 89-98.
[24] For the examples of "Purple Haze" as a lead sheet that I wrote about in Chapter 3 see *Jimi Hendrix Anthology* (New York, NY: A. Schroeder International, 1975), 143, and "Purple Haze," *Jimi Hendrix: The Forty Greatest* (Milwaukee, WI: Wise Publications, 1978), 40-41, with associated tablature on 117.
[25] As "Purple Haze" in Richard Daniels, *Jimi Hendrix Note for Note* (New York, NY: Cherry Lane Music, 1980), 23-25.
[26] See Andy Aledort, "Performance Notes: Purple Haze," in *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, September 1985, 14.



Figure 5.1: The opening of "Purple Haze" showing the transcription of overdubs and unintentional notes, transcribed by Andy Aledort in Guitar for the Practicing Musician *September 1985, 89.*

first such transcription of this famous record, ironically evidenced by an advertisement on the page preceding the transcription for extant Hendrix sheet music books that includes both of the decidedly not note-for-note transcription collections covered in Chapter 3, the *Jimi Hendrix Anthology* and *Jimi Hendrix 40 Greatest*, both of which treated "Purple Haze" as a popular *song,*

not a recorded *work*.[27] Also advertised was a book entitled *Original Hendrix*, primarily a style guide centered around defining Hendrix's guitar technique using tabs of his riffs, not full songs.[28] It is noteworthy that all of this Hendrix sheet music was distributed by Hal Leonard, the same company distributing the *Frank Zappa Guitar Book* at the time. In the mid-1980s, Hal Leonard was one of many companies advertising their sheet music in *GfPM*, but by the end of the decade they would dominate market for note-for-note transcriptions, particularly of entire rock albums.[29]

In 1989 Hal Leonard capitalized on Aledort's "Purple Haze" transcription by hiring him to transcribe the guitar parts for *all* the tracks on *Are You Experienced?* The resulting publication, *Hendrix: Are You Experienced?*, is advertised as "the complete, authoritative transcriptions," including the album's bass and drum parts separately after Aledort's guitar transcriptions, theoretically enabling a trio to perform the entire album themselves.[30] The "Purple Haze" transcription printed in *GfPM* is kept mostly intact, though a few small changes address some minor mistakes in the original; his transcription of the guitar solo is also rewritten with a bit more rhythmic precision.

Generational Objects in the 1980s

It makes sense that detailed transcription was used in heavy metal in the 1980s as part of the music's closer association with classical music, but, as I have shown, older music from the 1960s was given a similar treatment, something I believe has to do with its status as a generational object. Many of the heavy metal guitarists who rose to stardom in the 1980s were

[27] See the advertisement at the bottom of *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, September 1985, 88.
[28] Steve Tarshis, *Original Hendrix* (Milwaukee, WI: Wise Publications, 1982).
[29] For an example of another company advertising their music, see the ad for Warner Bros. Publications in *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, September 1985, 8.
[30] *The Jimi Hendrix Experience: Are You Experienced?*.

fans of Hendrix, studying his records intensely while growing up in the 1960s and '70s. Mitchell Morris notes how recordings of popular music heard during childhood represent a collective consciousness and then "become crucial tokens of temporal consciousness in young adulthood. In the post-WWII era pop culture revivals have usually occurred after a space of a decade-and-a-half or so. The imaginary 1960s began to achieve full force in the 1980s."[31] It is logical that the music of the 1960s would be revived in the 1980s; the most prolific transcribers from this decade attest that they took up music after listening to just this music as kids. Aledort, for instance, remembers that "I was initially inspired to pick up the guitar because of the Beatles. I saw them play on the Ed Sullivan show in 1963 when I was 7 . . . by 1973 I had my own band that played about thirty Hendrix songs, plus Beck, Johnny Winter, Zappa, Trower, Mountain--anything with heavy guitar on it. It was a power trio and we learned all of the songs on our own. We were obviously very into Hendrix."[32]

The original recordings made by these artists represent generational objects translated "out of their temporal bound constituencies, [allowing] them to circulate in altered forms in our meta-generational culture," which was done primary by "historical narrative and canon making."[33] One form of canonization was by re-release in the 1980s in a new (and lucrative) format, the digital compact disc. For musicians, though, these generational objects were also translated through the process of transcription, and the most prized music of the 1960s received the full treatment, with notated music, artist photographs, and historical anecdotes on the importance of the music, a totalizing process of "historical narrative and canon making," as Morris puts it. For some dedicated fans, purchasing transcription books allowed a deeper

[31] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, quotes on 6 and 5, respectively.
[32] Joe Matera, "Interview: Andy Aledort," *Guitar Nine,* October-November 2000, https://www.guitar9.com/column/ interview-andy-aledort.
[33] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, 10.

connection to the music, giving them visual input alongside listening to the music. This was especially true for those musical fans who could analyze and perform the transcriptions, a discipline strongly encouraged by 1980s guitar culture.[34]

Hendrix's music exemplifies the process, but other genres were also transcribed this way, including some further removed, such as the music from Motown Records' peak in the 1960s. Like Hendrix, Motown's bassist James Jamerson was a virtuoso highly influential to countless artists making records in the 1980s, to the point that a mystique had formed around him and his role in the assembly line of Motown records, addressed by Dr. Licks (née Alan Slutsky) in his *Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson*, distributed by Hal Leonard in 1989.[35] The first part of the book works to decode the mystique of Jamerson himself, discussing his background and the ways in which he and other Motown musicians used (or did not use) notation in the studio to create some of the label's most canonized recordings. It was hard to discern his bass part through the mix on many of the early Motown records—primarily due to technological limitations of recording technology at the time, but also because he played upright bass on some recordings, making it harder to hear in the mix.[36] For these reasons, it had been hard for others to figure out exactly what Jamerson was playing; Slutsky solved this "problem" with his publication, having transcribed hundreds of Jamerson's bass lines, which were then sent to numerous well-known contemporary bassists to

[34] In many instances transcriptionists would provide an analysis of the music, particularly a given tune's harmonic language. Walser provides an example of a discussion of the modes used in one of Joe Satriani's tracks, from the same transcription packet I cited in Chapter 3 (*Running with the Devil*, 46-47). Elsewhere, Walser points out how similar these analyses are to the ones made by musicologists, something he illustrates through a transcription and analysis of Malmsteen's "Black Star" as presented in a 1990 issue of *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* (*Running with the Devil,* 95).
[35] Dr. Licks [Alan Slutsky], *Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson* (Wynnewood, PA: Dr. Licks Publishing, 1989).
[36] Dr. Licks, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 16.

play along with and to elicit testimony about the ways Jamerson's distinctive style influenced them. The resulting book was "authoritative" in an almost perfectly musicological way.[37]

It Was Twenty Years Ago Today: The Beatles Meet Musical Idealism

Hal Leonard's comprehensive collection of Beatles transcriptions, *The Beatles: Complete* Scores, was also released at the end of the 1980s. While the other transcriptions discussed in this chapter include instrumental *parts*, this publication is significant because it is comprised of full *scores*. Surely part of the reason is that the Beatles used an extended instrumental palette requiring the notation of many distinct parts, unlike, say, Hendrix's *Are You Experienced?,* performed by a trio with some studio overdubs. But the visual (and ideological) correspondence between *The Complete (Beatles) Scores* and scores for classical orchestra is impossible to ignore.

The Complete Scores dramatized the vast change rock music transcription had undergone over the previous twenty years. Recall the early-70s sheet music for "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" presented in Chapter 1. This illocutionary transcription included minimal information about how the track actually sounded; it was transcribed for voice and organ in the wrong key; and only a portion of the short tune was included in the first place. As the publisher, Hal Leonard has now shifted allegiance to the other ontological side: each Beatles recording is now transcribed not as a thin *song*, but as a thick *track* where every sound is transcribed, with the intention of being "as faithful as possible to the original recordings" (see *Figure 5.2*).[38]

It is also noteworthy that Hal Leonard chooses to include cover songs in this publication. In effect, what is being transcribed are not the complete *compositions* of the Beatles, but the

[37] This takes up the third part of his book; see ibid., 99-182.
[38] This quote is taken from the "A Guide to the Music," included at the beginning of *The Beatles: Complete Scores,* 11.



Figure 5.2: Opening of the transcription of the Beatles, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," in The Beatles: The Complete Scores*, 856-57.*

complete *recordings*, suggesting a retrospective treatment of rock recordings as musical works. (Perhaps one can consider the Beatles' cover of "Twist and Shout," originally written by Phil Medley and Bert Berns in 1961, as akin to Mozart using transcribed fugues from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in his String Quartet K. 405. Also, it says a lot about race politics in popular music that no one has yet proposed the publication of *Chubby Checker: The Complete Scores.*) This publication clearly positions certain rock recordings as primary texts, but doing so creates a strange aporia where the publication is saying two contradictory things at once: (a) the Beatles (primarily Lennon and McCartney) are like classical composers, and this is a collection of their complete works; yet (b) the scope of "works" here is defined by what the Beatles *recorded* and not what they *composed*. *The Complete Scores* is thus a fantasy, made up of works "written" by a composer as imaginary as Sgt. Pepper. Though producer George Martin did notate some of the material on Beatles records, the band members did not read notation, let alone use it themselves as a compositional aid. There is also no acknowledgement of a transcriber, which contributes to the fantastical nature of the publication. Perhaps this was Hal Leonard trying to save royalties by treating the transcriptions as "works for hire" (we paid for it, thus we "made" it), but it also gives the distinct impression that these scores were created *a priori* by the Beatles-as-composers to be performed and recorded later—and not, as actually happened, the other way round, with a twenty-year lag time.

What, then, is the point of this publication? The other transcriptions discussed in this chapter, whether distributed by Hal Leonard or printed in *Guitar Player*, assume an audience of performers who want to pick up knowledge of specific instrumental techniques demonstrated on records or to re-perform specific parts of canonized recordings. Like those of Gunther Schuller's examined in Chapter 2, the transcriptions in *The Complete Scores* function primarily as study

scores. At this point, by the late 1980s, the music of the Beatles had been fully, finally canonized as art music, validating the early comparisons made between their songs and the art songs of composers in the classical tradition like Schubert. With *The Complete Scores,* the Beatles' oeuvre was finally realized in material form as what German musicologists of the nineteenth century would have called a *Gesamtausgabe*, a comprehensive and authoritative printed edition whose publication definitively concludes the process of scholarly canonization.[39]

The development of rock music transcriptions traced in this dissertation thus mirrors the evolution of notated Western music over the last millennium. Narratives of European art music often begin with discussions of Medieval chant, which, like rock music, began as an oral tradition. Various types of chant notation were used in the second half of the ninth century, but generally as mnemonic and pedagogical aids (exactly reproducible pitches were not uniformly specified in notation until the early eleventh century).[40] By the fifteenth century, singers and instrumentalists would use part books to perform from, perhaps even at sight. By the nineteenth century, full orchestral scores were commonly created by composers, from which parts were extracted by copyists, and which skilled performers were expected to read like a musical book. Finally, in the second half of the nineteenth century, at the height of musical idealism, critical editions of canonized composers started to be put together, which were intended as "authoritative" (unmediated) collections of a given composer's notated music.[41]

The Beatles: The Complete Scores, then, can be seen as a "critical edition" of their recorded works, leaving us with an enduring, "authoritative" visual object. Like critical editions

[39] It took much longer, but Hendrix's music also received this musicological treatment by Hal Leonard: see *Jimi Hendrix: The Complete Scores* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2019).
[40] For a concise overview of notation in Medieval music see Margot Fassler's textbook *Music in the Medieval West* (New York, NY and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), esp. 44-48.
[41] The first "complete" works of Beethoven, for instance, were published in 1894-1865 by Breitkopf and Härtel.

of classical music, the intended audience for such a publication is primarily academic. (Although no self-respecting academic who had this much editorial work at stake would ever consent to remain so anonymous!) The gesture makes perfect sense since academic musicology had just started taking popular music seriously. Walser's musicological treatise on heavy metal was published just a few years later; as noted earlier, he did not even need to do his own transcriptions, because they had already been created by people working in the rock industry. *Running With the Devil* represents a certain moment in the canonization of rock music where musical academics started to become invested in its study, which had up to then been the purview of sociology, literary criticism, and cultural studies. Considering the influence of textual studies and philology on musicology as a discipline, it is thus not surprising that *The Beatles: Complete Scores* was published around this time. Indeed, there were many similar developments on this front: the decade began with the first issue of the academic journal *Popular Music* (1981), the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) held its first conference in the same year in Amsterdam, with the first US chapter meeting following two years later in 1983, in Dartmouth, New Hampshire.

Rock music was also not the only genre given an idealist treatment in this period. Ronald Broude, for instance, discusses a scholarly edition of comic operas by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan published in 1994.[42] As anyone knows who ever had to lead the orchestra for something like *H.M.S. Pinafore*, full scores rarely got published in the first place (they certainly never came along with the rental of the parts), and even commonly circulated vocal scores rarely corresponded to what actually got performed at the Savoy Theatre on a given evening. Thus, in a

[42] The publication is *Gilbert and Sullivan: The Operas* (London: Folio Society, 1994), as discussed in Ronald Broude, "The Gilbert and Sullivan Critical Edition and the Full Scores that Never Were," *Textual Cultures* (Autumn 2008): 71-89.

most amusing paradox, Broude argues against the authority of such "authoritative" documents: "the adjustments that must be made in order to produce a text suitable for use by musical theorists, theater historians, and teachers often alter—sometimes subtle and sometimes grossly—important elements of the original sources, conferring a sense of permanence on texts that were originally at best provisional."[43]

Musical idealism is thus deployed in the 1980s and 1990s to bring all types of music that had been beyond the pale into the academy. Broude outlines the many problems inherent in doing so with a living, breathing tradition like musical theater. Rock music, however, is based around the unchanging ontology of a musical recording, minimizing the need for historical reconstruct of written documents: instead, the recording can be transcribed at any time, from start to finish, in as much detail as one can afford. To borrow a phrase from Chapter 2, then, *The Beatles: The Complete Scores* represents the "logical conclusion" of twenty years of rock transcription: a set of exquisitely notated musical works, sitting on a musicologist's bookshelf, sandwiched between critical editions of Beethoven's symphonies and the critical edition of Gilbert & Sullivan operas.

[43] Broude, "The Gilbert and Sullivan Critical Edition and the Full Scores that Never Were," 72.

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